

**CONTEXT AND COMPLEXITY: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY  
OF MOTIVATIONAL DYNAMICS AMONG SOUTH KOREAN  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis reports on a longitudinal qualitative study of the L2 motivational systems of a group of South Korean university students. The study adopts a complex dynamics system approach to the collection and analysis of data, and develops an original three-level model of context to investigate the interaction of elements within the learners' motivational systems and to track how these interactions led to perceptible changes in these systems over the course of the research.

The study highlights the complex, dynamic nature of L2 motivation and the necessity of including context as a key part of the L2 motivational system. It further calls into question traditional conceptions of autonomy in the field and the general applicability of some current concepts in L2 motivation. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of non-quantitative approaches in illuminating the motivational processes at work within individuals.

On the basis of these findings, the thesis calls for the general incorporation of complexity perspectives in L2 motivation research and for language pedagogy to incorporate the insights gained from such studies to enhance the classroom environment and learners' investment in language learning.

## **DEDICATION**

Couldn't have done it without you, hon!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMTB (Attitude/Motivation Test Battery)

CDS (complex dynamic systems)

CSAT (Korean College Scholastic Ability Test)

EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

EGL (English as a Global Language)

EIL (English as an International Language)

ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)

ESL (English as a Second Language)

GDP (gross domestic product)

GPA (grade point average)

L1 (first language)

L2 (second language)

OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development)

SDT (Self-Determination Theory)

SLA (second language acquisition)

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication)

WTC (willingness to communicate)



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

A self is not something static, tied up in a pretty parcel  
and handed to the child, finished and complete. A self  
is always becoming

Madeleine L'Engle: *A Circle of Quiet*

### 1.1 Aims of the Thesis

This thesis seeks to identify the elements at play within the motivational systems of second language (L2) learners of English, how these elements interact with each other and at what levels, and how these interactions affect the system as a whole. Empirically, this is achieved by investigating the motivational profiles of a group of South Korean students studying at a mid-level university located outside the capital region. At the same time, a major focus of the research is to incorporate context as an integral part of the system. The study is qualitative and adopts a complex dynamic systems (CDS) approach in both the preparation and conduct of data collection procedures and the analysis of the data. It thus seeks to contribute to research on L2 motivation at both a theoretical and methodological level and to consider the implications of the knowledge gained for language pedagogy.

## 1.2 Background to the Research

The past 15 years have seen an unprecedented interest in conceptions of the self in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Mercer & Williams, 2014). In few places is this as evident as in the field of L2 motivation, where “self-related constructs of one type or another have become ... core” (Ushioda, 2014, p. 128). Although such constructs were somewhat late in making their appearance in the field, undoubtedly due to the enormous influence of the seminal work of Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) and the predominance of the integrative motive, they have now come to occupy a preeminent position in motivational thinking. As Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009, p. 1) put it, “L2 motivation is currently in the process of being radically reconceptualised and re-theorised in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity.”

This movement away from the social-psychological perspectives of Gardner and Lambert is in no small way due to the changing nature of the world in which English learning and teaching take place. With the vastly increased mobility and access to information that has accompanied the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the very nature of English is under question in this “proverbial global village” (Crystal, 2003, p. 178). In such a situation, with not only a variety of established versions of English to choose from, but also an increasing variety of local dialects springing up, it has become increasingly problematic to conceive of a “standard” form of English, much less a specific language community with which a learner can identify. It has also led to the breakdown of the traditional dichotomy of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the coining of terms such as English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Global

Language (EGL), and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Paralleling developments in how English is perceived has been an increasing interest in the local context of English language learning and the specific purposes for which the language is being learned (Ushioda, 2013c).

At the same time, the recognition of motivation as “a highly situated, composite structure, with a strong developmental character” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 104) has led to a surge in the number of researchers moving away from the traditional quantitative methodology of the past and utilizing a variety of qualitative and mixed-methods approaches. Research by Bonny Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997) and Ema Ushioda (1996, 1998) has been in the vanguard of such approaches, and has been followed by an increasing number of studies investigating everything from changes in learner motivation in formal school contexts (Lamb, 2007, 2011) to the effect of the learning experience on motivation (Ryan, 2009). The methods used in such studies have also expanded well beyond questionnaires and interviews with one recent study making use of multimedia and collages in an attempt to uncover aspects of the L2 self that learners’ may not be consciously aware of (Mercer, 2014). Such approaches have increasingly been influenced by complex dynamic systems perspectives (de Bot, 2008; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a). Such approaches, with their emphasis on multiple elements interacting within a system to produce (often unpredictable) change over a variety of timescales, hold the potential to illuminate the often seemingly impenetrable murkiness that is a learner’s motivation for learning a second language.

As mentioned in the previous section, the research to be reported on in this thesis took place in South Korea, a country which has a particular resonance with the researcher as it is where he has lived and worked for the past 15 years. In addition, it is particularly fertile ground in which to investigate a concept such as L2 motivation given its well-documented obsession

with education (Seth, 2002) and English in particular (Park, 2009). This will be elaborated in more detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.1). Korea is also a relatively under researched context with the majority of recent studies originating with a handful of authors (T.-Y. Kim, 2009b, 2014; Yang & Kim, 2011). This, coupled with the development of new paradigms in motivational research, presented the opportunity for such research to make a genuine contribution to research in the field.

### **1.3 Outline of the Thesis**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of relevant literature in the field of L2 motivation research with particular reference to developments over the last 15 years. Of necessity, it also outlines a variety of theories from psychology which have proven to be influential in the development of recent theory. As such, it seeks to locate the present research within a tradition of self-related enquiry, both within the field of psychology and more recently L2 motivation.

Mention is also made of relevant research that has been undertaken in recent years and new paradigms that have become available for the conduct of such research.

Chapter 3 details the development of the research methodology. It begins by discussing the place of qualitative enquiry within the field of applied linguistics before going on to look at a number of issues common to qualitative research in general. It then deals specifically with the development of the research design for the present study. This involves a description of the data collection procedures chosen, the trialing of the research design, and the selection of research participants. The final section of the chapter describes the various stages of data

collection and the procedures undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data.

Chapter 4 deals with the coding of the data. It begins by presenting the codes that were created before moving to a detailed description of how the coding scheme was applied and the various stages of the coding process. There follows a section which describes the revisions to the coding scheme that were required and how these were applied. The chapter concludes with a brief section outlining how the data were reduced to a manageable quantity for the purposes of analysis.

Chapter 5 charts the development of a framework of analysis for the data through the use of a CDS perspective. It begins by providing a rationale for the choice of a CDS framework before presenting the three-level contextual model of the motivational system created on the basis of an analysis of the data. It then outlines the elements that were identified as being at work within this system and how these were apportioned between the three levels of context. The chapter contains multiple excerpts from the data to illustrate and define the elements identified.

Chapter 6 focuses on the interaction of the elements identified in the previous chapter and how such interactions produced system change over time. It begins by presenting a visual representation of the interactions of these elements before going on to describe and illustrate how these occurred both within and between levels of context. The second part of the chapter deals with how these interactions lead to perceptible changes in the system over the course of the research. To illustrate these changes, a number of specific areas of change are isolated and the course of these changes exemplified.

Chapter 7 discusses the significance of the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6 for the field

of L2 motivation and for language pedagogy. The chapter seeks to contribute to theory building in the field and to illustrate how insights from the research might be operationalized in the language classroom. Taking as its starting point a number of propositions stemming from the findings, it evaluates the significance of each statement for our understanding of L2 motivation and how it is studied.

Chapter 8 presents concluding remarks based on the discussion and recommendations in the previous chapter. It summarizes the main arguments presented and reiterates the contribution that studies from a CDS perspective can make to our understanding of L2 motivation. In addition, while recognizing the limitations of the present study, it emphasizes the pioneering nature of the study, particularly in the Korean context, and the contribution it makes to our understanding of L2 motivation, both in the Korean context and more generally. The chapter closes the thesis with a call for similar research to be undertaken in a wider variety of contexts, and highlights the potential benefits that could accrue from a comparison of findings across multiple contexts.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEVELOPMENTS IN L2 MOTIVATION

#### 2.1 Introduction

Initial theories of L2 motivation sprang from work originating in social psychology. The seminal work in this area was done by Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) beginning in the late 1950s. Their ideas, in particular their concept of the integrative motive, would come to dominate thinking in the field for most of the following several decades (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) and influence practically all studies into and models of SLA at the time (Giles & Byrne, 1982; Krashen, 1985; Schumann, 1978, 1986). In addition, an instrument specifically designed to measure attitudes and motivation, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985), has been widely adapted and used in L2 motivational research. However, by the late 1980s, researchers had begun to question the applicability of the integrative idea, especially in EFL and classroom-learning contexts, areas where a relevant first language (L1) community was not readily identifiable. In addition, the globalization of English (Crystal, 2003) called into question the idea of any one community of English speakers laying claim to the language. As such, researchers increasingly began to look at the influence of social and environmental factors in L2 motivation.

In their influential report on the state of the L2 motivation field, Oxford and Shearin (1994) lamented the fact that the dominance of a social psychological approach had resulted in the

ignoring of potentially influential theories from a wider variety of areas of psychological research. Not coincidentally, at the same time, a number of other researchers began to formulate alternative theories of L2 motivation, e.g., Dörnyei's (1994) three-level framework and Williams and Burden's (1997) social constructivist model. Ideas such as these drew more from the fields of educational and cognitive psychology. There then followed a period characterized by more process approaches to L2 motivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998), and now, according to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012, p. 396), we have reached yet another stage in the evolution of L2 motivation research, a "socio-dynamic period."

As hinted, researchers into L2 motivation have made considerable use of ideas from the field of psychology in their attempts to formulate richer and more explanatory models of L2 motivation. A number of theories have proved to be influential in L2 motivation research. Among these are ideas such as expectancy-value and attribution (Atkinson, 1957; Eccles et al., 1983; Weiner, 1986), possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987, 1996), and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). In looking at these theories, it is possible to find evidence of several common ideas and to identify a number of factors that have particular relevance for L2 motivation. A number of these factors will now be outlined and discussed.

## **2.2 Achievement – Expectancy, Value, and Attribution**

### **2.2.1 Expectancy-Value**

According to Brophy (2009, p. 147), "much of the existing literature [on motivation in



education] is about achievement motivation in particular situations.” Not surprisingly, the field of L2 motivation has sampled several of the theories from this area of enquiry. The classic formulation of these ideas came from Atkinson (1957) in his expectancy-value theory. In this model, the quest for achievement is driven by “needs, expectancies, and affective anticipations (hopes and fears regarding the possible future experiences of pride and shame)” (Weiner, 1992, p. 284). However, other researchers have looked at the motivational effects associated with these ideas in a slightly different way. Weiner (1992, p. 259) formulated an “expectancy principle” stating that “[c]hanges in expectancy of success following an outcome are influenced by the perceived stability of the cause of the event,” with stable causes producing more definite expectancies. In addition, Weiner focuses on the motivational effects of experienced rather than anticipated emotions, with individuals drawing on previous successes to push them forward rather than on those they hope to experience in the future.

More recent work in the area of expectancy-value theory has been done by Eccles and her collaborators (Eccles, 2005, 2009; Eccles et al., 1983). In her model, Eccles (2009) relates the concept of expectancy-value to learners’ identities. She argues that expectancies are related to people’s perceived competencies and that the value that is placed on an activity is a product of that activity’s relation to his or her identities; that is, a person will place value on an activity if it is seen as being related to and supportive of that person’s view of him or herself. The implication of this is that an individual will be motivated to follow a course of action if it is seen as beneficial to an identity he or she has constructed or is in the process of constructing. Brophy (2009), in commenting on Eccles’ ideas, goes a step further. He argues that expectancy-value theory “is applicable to decision making across the full range of ‘grain sizes’” (Brophy, 2009, p. 150). For him, expectancy of success is not a factor in situations

where success is not evaluated and where an individual is relatively certain of succeeding, areas which could encompass a large spectrum of life choices. In his view, the value aspect of the model is by far the more important, suggesting that a learner's identification with a particular activity will increase its value and by extension the motivation to attain it.

Higgins (1996) also deals with the interplay of expectancy, value, and self-concept. In his formulation of the expectant self, the actual self contains tendencies to view particular situations in a relatively stable manner, and these tendencies condition anticipations of what to expect in these situations, e.g., success or failure. As such, they are clearly related to the sort of self-regulation one employs, i.e., promotion or prevention. Citing research by Shah and Higgins (1997), he illustrates how individuals with a promotion focus tended to adopt the strategy of "approach matches" and thus pursue "highly valued goals with the highest utility" (Higgins, 1998, p. 35), thereby maximizing the combined effect of value and expectancy and moving directly towards the attainment of goals. On the other hand, he explains how those with a prevention focus were negatively affected by the value of a particular goal to the extent that expectancy of achieving the goal becomes a much less important motivational factor. It was found that the higher the value of the goal, as it took on the character of a necessity, the smaller were the increases in motivation to attain it relative to low value goals. Such findings have clear implications in relation to individuals' motivation and the way they approach the attainment of their goals.

Markus and Ruvolo (1989) have also looked at expectancy of success and value in relation to the self-concept. They link expectancy of success and value of a goal to the ability of the individual to construct a convincing desired possible self achieving the goal. This has the effect of making success in achieving the goal more probable and thereby also potentially

making it more desirable. They report on a number of studies (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Smith, Snyder, & Handelsmann, 1982) that appear to show that individuals who are successful at creating an appropriate desired possible self in relation to a goal are more confident in their chances of achieving that goal and that they work harder and longer to do so. As such, they draw a clear link between possible selves, expectancy of success, and motivation.

### **2.2.2 Attributions of Success**

Another factor related to ideas on achievement motivation that would seem of relevance to L2 motivation is how a person perceives the success or failure of a particular event and how this impacts motivation and potential courses of action in the future. The most influential work in this area has been done by Weiner (1986, 1992, 2005) in his formulation of attribution theory. He postulates that how and why an individual attributes success and failure, either to internal or external factors, conditions that person's expectancy of success in the future and can have a profound effect on persistence with and success in a particular discipline. In this regard, attribution theory delineates three key factors: locus, stability, and controllability.

Locus refers to where an individual locates the cause of an outcome in relation to him or herself, either internal or external. An internal ascription of success is viewed as positive in that it reinforces the learner's self-esteem and leads him or her to expectancies of success in similar situations in the future. On the other hand, an external ascription of success, for example, a test being easy, is likely to be less personally rewarding. Similarly, an internal ascription of failure (e.g., lack of ability) may have a significant negative effect on a person's concept of self-worth, while an external ascription (the test was particularly difficult) will

actually be less destructive. In fact, Weiner (1986) claims that the emotions felt due to these ascriptions are actually quite different, e.g. pride/gratitude vs. shame/guilt.

The second element, stability, refers to whether a cause can be expected to remain constant over time (ability) or whether it can be expected to change (amount of effort). Stable causes produce relatively certain expectancies, with outcomes likely to be repeated. On the other hand, less stable causes are more motivationally ambiguous, with expectancies of both repetition and change available. The motivational effects of success ascribed to stable causes are quite predictably functional. However, the ambiguity of success/failure ascribed to an unstable cause could be both “functional” and “dysfunctional” (Weiner, 1992, p. 264), leaving open the possibility of both success and failure in the future, something that could be potentially motivating. In contrast, failure perceived as due to stable causes would be “dysfunctional,” potentially leading to decreased levels of motivation or abandonment of a particular course of action.

The final causal factor in attribution theory is controllability, which refers to the perceived ability of an individual to alter a cause. In this regard, given that ability is a stable cause, though also internal, it is not amenable to control. However, effort, while also an internal cause, is potentially unstable and amenable to control. As such, an individual who, for example, perceives a failure as due to lack of effort can take control of this situation and redouble his efforts, whereas one perceiving an outcome as due to lack of ability can realistically do nothing to change this situation.

The importance of an individual’s attributions of success and failure in motivation has been supported by a variety of researchers in psychology and L2 motivation. Dörnyei (2003, p. 8) acknowledges the importance of learners’ “causal attributions” and how these link past

experience with future behavior. Williams and Burden (1999) further recognize the importance of how learners perceive themselves and their successes and failures in terms of their attitude toward their learning and how they go about this learning. Similarly, Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna (2001) emphasize how ascriptions of success or failure to the self or someone or something else are likely to have a considerable effect on one's subsequent actions. Higgins (1987) also draws attention to the potential effect of reaction to performance on future motivation and action. He notes the possibility that interpretation of performance as a success or failure may be one of the most important differences between low- and high-achievement learners. Cantor *et al.* (1986) also identify attributions as being intricately tied to the self-concept in a reciprocal relationship that has important implications for individuals' monitoring of their progress and future direction of effort. It is to this idea of the "self" that we now turn.

## **2.3 The Self in Motivation Theory**

The concept of the "self" has become a key component in theories of motivation. Most modern researchers have placed this firmly at the center of understanding what drives individuals and directs their actions. The self-system is seen as active and dynamic and as having an important regulating effect on an individual's actions (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Some researchers have gone even further, suggesting that "the self lies at the very core of human experience and must be part of any theoretical formulation in the field of human motivation" (Weiner, 1986, p. 286). There are a number of aspects of the self that can be clearly linked to an individual's motivation, and these will now be elaborated and discussed.

### 2.3.1 Identity

In recent times, much interest in psychology, particularly educational psychology, has focused on the relationship between identity and motivation. In their introduction to a special issue on the topic in *Educational Psychologist*, Kaplan and Flum (2009, p. 74) allude to this, stating:

... in the current zeitgeist of socio-cognitive theorizing, with its focus on the role of self-processes in people's motivation, the general statement that academic motivation and students' self and identity are related is rather conspicuous

They also give a basic definition of the relationship between identity and motivation as “the relations between a person's goal-directed action and ‘the kind of person’ ... he or she is or may become” (Kaplan & Flum, 2009, p. 74). Although just as in other fields, there is disagreement over definitions of both concepts, this does point out an important reciprocal relationship between the two. According to Brophy (2009), taking cognizance of identity in relation to motivation allows researchers to take a longer-term view of motivation and also promotes an awareness of its dynamic nature. Just as our identities undergo change, so too can our motivation, and in fact, there is every reason to believe that the two are linked. Individuals' identities make certain pathways or activities attractive or meaningful to them, and these in turn shape how individuals view themselves and the ways in which they approach, for example, their learning.

The relationship between motivation and identity naturally focuses attention on the factors influencing them. La Guardia (2009) has investigated the relationship between significant others and identity formation from a self-determination theory perspective. Her findings suggest that “socializers,” i.e., significant others who can influence the choices, experiences, and opportunities available to an individual, can have an important effect on identity

development. She concludes that through the provision of “autonomy-support,” individuals can benefit in terms of “self-organization and ultimately personal and relational well-being” (La Guardia, 2009, p. 98). McCaslin (2009) looks at how cultural factors, the influence of significant others, and the individual’s own inclinations influence his or her motivation and in turn identity. In her words, “who I am includes what I am and am not willing to do or become” (McCaslin, 2009, p. 139). She also investigates the way in which similar opportunities can be perceived by different individuals in completely different ways depending on how the three aforementioned factors relate within the individual. A further area under investigation is the orienting effect of identity “toward or away from potential action choices” (Brophy, 2009, p. 155). This potentially has both positive effects, in terms of directing individuals toward definite courses of action, and negative, given the potential of individuals to either reject or not consider other courses of action. Such research into the relationship between identity and motivation thus has considerable potential to uncover new and potentially crucial influences on motivation. This can then be added to a strong body of literature in similar areas of enquiry, among them research on the self-concept.

### **2.3.2 The Self-Concept**

The self-concept basically refers to how an individual views his or her abilities and attributes. It relates to the idea of that individual’s self-knowledge, i.e., the knowledge, ideas, feelings, hopes, and fears that the individual possesses in relation to him or herself (Cantor *et al.*, 1986). As Rubio (2014, p. 43) defines it:

... self-concept is a complex construct consisting of different dimensions or selves, namely physical, social, familiar, personal, academic, and many other situational ones. Someone's self-concept defines his/her individuality and predicts his/her behaviours, and is informed by 'the beliefs ... about oneself' (Hamlyn, 1983, p. 241)

These conceptions are important in that, as Williams and Burden (1999) point out, they have a large impact not only on the way we view ourselves but also on how we approach learning and indeed on our attitudes toward that learning. In addition, self-concepts include both a personal and a social component (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006), meaning that a person's self-concept is not dependent just on his or her perceptions, but is also potentially substantially influenced by the immediate environment. Although individuals have definite personally relevant and important identities, they are also influenced by norms and expectations held by those in their immediate social contexts or by society at large (see Section 2.5 for a more detailed discussion of the influence of social context).

An important aspect of the self-concept in terms of motivation is the idea of the working self-concept, "the set of self-conceptions that are presently active in thought and memory" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 957). The self-concept is not seen as a static, "lump-like" (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 301) entity. It changes according to an individual's experiences, emotions, and circumstances. At any one time, a certain cocktail of these may be particularly relevant, with this being influenced by immediately preceding self-conceptions, the particular situation in which a person finds him or herself, and prior experience. As such, the working self-concept is neither static nor one-dimensional. It is composed of elements of the past, the present, and indeed, perceived possible futures or outcomes (Cantor *et al.*, 1986). It is thus clear that, just as an individual's self-concept can vary from moment to moment, so too can that person's motivation based on the particular working self-concept that is in evidence. One of the ways in which this potentially manifests itself is in the formulation of perceived



possible selves.

### **2.3.3 Possible Selves**

Possible selves refer to individuals' conceptions of who they want to be, who they think they can be, who they think they ought to be, and even who they want to avoid being. Any given individual has any number of these selves available at any given time, the importance of any particular one being conditioned by a number of factors. Among these are those mentioned previously and an individual's "sociocultural and historical context and ... the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and ... the individual's immediate social experiences" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). As an individual develops, the importance of various possible selves varies in salience according to the goals and aspirations of the individual. These are ever changing and are based on both past experience and future directions.

The importance of possible selves is in their potential to be "specific representations of one's self in future states and circumstances that serve to organize and energize one's actions" (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 212). The formulation of vivid possible selves through the visualization of oneself in a desired (or feared) state has the potential to provide a link between desire and action. Trzebinski (1989) refers to possible selves as being facilitative of both formulating and carrying out appropriate actions in pursuit of goals, while both Cantor *et al.* (1986) and Markus and Ruvolo (1989) have outlined their importance in the recruitment of appropriate strategies. They thus provide a clear link between the motivation to achieve a goal and the potential accomplishment of that goal through the provision of future self-guides.

#### 2.3.4 Self-Guides

While the previous section made clear that possible selves can have a distinct guiding function, there are several types of self-guide that have been found to be motivationally different. Markus and Ruvolo (1989) differentiate between positive and feared possible selves. On the one hand, positive possible selves are seen as having a promotional effect in that they are motivating and allow an individual to focus and organize his or her actions. On the other hand, a feared possible self can actually retard action. Similarly, Higgins (1998, p. 2) found positive reference points to be “discrepancy reducing,” promoting action to reduce the discrepancy between the actual self and an ideal self, while negative reference points were “discrepancy amplifying.” However, there is also an interplay between these self-guides. Oyserman and Markus (1990) proposed that the ideal motivational situation was having a balance between such self-guides, with positive self-guides providing a means of avoiding the feared self, and feared self-guides providing a vision of the consequences of not achieving the desired self. This claim has been supported by research by Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) who found that high school students with such a balance chose strategies that both facilitated achievement of the positive possible self and avoided the negative possible self.

Another school of thought (Higgins, 1987) has used the words “ideal” and “ought” to describe the motivational effects of various possible selves. Higgins (1987, pp. 320-321) defined the ideal self as “your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you, ideally, to possess,” while the ought self is “your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you should or ought to possess.” The self-guides associated with these selves are seen as having quite different motivational effects. These

ideas are key in terms of Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, which predicts that individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy between their present state and a desired end state. The means through which they achieve this is through a self-regulatory system.

### **2.3.5 Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation refers to the way in which an individual regulates his or her behavior based on the relationship between his or her self-concept and self-guides. As Cantor *et al.* (1986) state, self-knowledge provides not only a sense of identity but also a means of viewing the past and formulating future behavior. As such, it has a regulatory focus which may be either promotion or prevention, the former being associated with an ideal self-guide and the latter with an ought self-guide. The effects of these types of regulatory focus have been shown to be important in terms of both an individual's motivations and actions. According to Higgins (1996), a promotion focus is predicted to encourage behavior that moves the individual closer to the desired end state; on the other hand, a prevention focus would encourage the avoidance of behavior that could threaten the attainment of the desired state. As Higgins (1998, p. 16) puts it, a promotion focus is associated with "accomplishments, hopes, and aspirations" while a prevention focus is associated with "safety, responsibility, and obligations." These associations have consequences in terms of the emotional responses that they produce. For example, promotion-focused individuals tend to feel more "cheerfulness-related emotions," while those with a prevention focus feel more "quiescence-related emotions" (Higgins, 1998, p. 19). It has also been found that a promotion focus is correlated with increased persistence on tasks (Roney, Higgins, & Shah, 1995).

Another aspect of self-regulation is a monitoring function. As individuals strive toward a particular desired self, one aspect of self-regulation is “keeping tabs” on their progress in order to reduce the discrepancies between their present actual selves and the desired end state. The “monitored-self representation” (Higgins, 1996) allows a person to evaluate the differences between his or her actual and desired selves. This can then provide feedback which can be used to formulate action to reduce this discrepancy. As such, this monitoring function is an active promoter of change, suggesting avenues that the individual can take to achieve his or her desired end state. In terms of motivational impact, this negative feedback can actually be quite distressing to the individual, especially if the desired self is genuinely an important part of the individual’s self-concept. However, according to Higgins (1996), individuals with strong desired selves are likely to have smaller discrepancies between their actual and desired selves, the feedback available having provided information that makes accomplishing their goals more probable.

### **2.3.6 Self-Determination**

Another theory dealing with the role of the self in determining motivation and action is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). The theory takes cognizance of individuals’ desire to construct a self that is both integrated within itself and also with the environment and those within it. It thus deals with the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which Ryan and Deci (2002, p. 10) define as follows:

... intrinsic motivation is noninstrumentally focused, instead originating autotelically from satisfaction inherent in action, whereas extrinsic motivation is focused toward and dependent on contingent outcomes that are separable from the action *per se*

In essence, this means that individuals who are intrinsically motivated engage in an activity for its inherent satisfaction and are motivated to face the challenges that may lie on the road to mastery. However, extrinsically motivated individuals indulge in an activity to gain some external reward or to avoid an unpleasant consequence. On the surface, this may seem quite similar to Higgins' (1987) ideas. However, Deci and Ryan (2008b) have expanded this idea to encompass the ideas of autonomous and controlled motivation.

Autonomous motivation is a mixture of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation which has become, if not wholly, at least part of the individual's self-concept. As such, an individual's actions can be classified as more or less self-determined. Controlled motivation, on the other hand, is a mixture of what Deci and Ryan (2008b, p. 182) call external regulation and introjected regulation, the former being "a function of external contingencies of reward or punishment" and the latter "in which the regulation of action has been partly internalized," meaning that an extrinsically motivating factor has in some way become associated with one's own self-concept. The effects of these two types of motivation are seen as being quite different. In a review of studies conducted on autonomous and controlled motivation, Deci and Ryan (2008a) found that the former produced more persistence on activities, more positive feelings, better performance, and greater psychological health.

As suggested by the previous discussion, internalization forms an essential aspect of the effect of a motivational stimulus. It is suggested that for a motivating factor to have maximal effect, it needs to relate to and be made part of the individual's self-concept, i.e., integrated into the individual's view of him or herself. Ryan and Deci (2002) claim that individuals tend to regard input as either informational (promoting and enhancing self-determination) or controlling (suggesting outside agency). The former (e.g., positive feedback) is considered

supportive of intrinsic motivation as it adds to the individual's self-knowledge while the latter (e.g., rewards) can actually undermine it. As such, it is input seen as informational that is most likely to be internalized.

Ryan and Deci (2002, p. 18) introduced the idea of a "relative autonomy continuum" to indicate the various levels at which input can be internalized. This stretches from amotivation through external regulation, introjected regulation, regulation through identification, and integrated regulation to intrinsic motivation. The continuum offers the possibility of internalizing input at a variety of levels, from complete rejection to total acceptance and thus identification with the self-concept. Although a linear relationship between these components may seem implied, this is not in fact the case. In practice, an individual's response to input from his or her environment can lie anywhere along the continuum depending on how relevant the input is felt to be to the individual's self-concept. The continuum also allows for a certain level of internalization of extrinsic factors to the extent that the individual can be seen to be operating in a self-determined manner. This appears to be especially likely when the external factors are associated with and supported by significant others (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). However, in SDT, an even more important factor in the potential to internalize input and to act in a self-determined manner is the satisfaction of an individual's basic needs. Deci and Ryan (1985) posit that human beings have particular basic psychological needs, labeled as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and it is to a discussion of these needs and their relationship to self-determined behavior that we now turn.

### **2.3.6.1 Needs**

The need for autonomy is at the center of self-determination as it refers to an individual's need to feel that his or her behavior is indeed self-determined, i.e., originating from the self. According to Ryan and Deci (2002), a feeling of autonomy is crucial in the integration of values and regulations into the self-concept. As they say, "... engagement with the activity and with the process of internalization is most likely to occur when people experience a sense of choice, volition, and freedom from external demands" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 20).

Competence is a related need as it refers to an individual's capability in dealing with his or her environment. The more competent the individual feels, the more autonomy is strengthened. In addition, as Weiner (2005, p. 83) points out, "competence is automatically considered from the perspective of what it means to the one who possesses (or does not possess) it," suggesting a host of personal and social judgments that can be made about an individual based on this. Finally, relatedness is a measure of an individual's need to be part of "a larger social whole" (Noels, 2001, p. 54) and the security and support that this provides. This is important in that when the social context provides for the individual's needs, it has a positive effect on his or her willingness to engage with an activity, to persevere with it, and eventually to internalize it. On the other hand, should these needs not be catered for, this is likely to lead to demotivation, lack of goal direction, and disengagement.

Deci and Ryan (2008b) suggest that the satisfaction of basic needs plays a crucial role in the level of self-determination an individual possesses. They refer to three "causality orientations" (Deci & Ryan, 2008b, p. 183): autonomous, controlled, and impersonal, which are directly related to the satisfaction of basic needs. People who are autonomously oriented are those

whose basic needs are generally satisfied. Such individuals are actively self-determined, their behaviors regulated by intrinsically motivated goals. In addition, they are capable of processing information related to their goals and internalizing information that may be relevant to them. Those labeled controlled find their need for autonomy unsatisfied. They are regulated more by extrinsically motivating factors. Such individuals exhibit little self-determination as they may see their behaviors as not being within their own control. Finally, those with impersonal orientations are those who have none of their needs satisfied and are likely to suffer from amotivation. Such individuals may feel incapable of regulating their own behavior and have a general sense of helplessness. Although it might seem that individuals can be classified according to these orientations, in practice, they have general tendencies toward particular orientations. However, in terms of motivational effect, autonomous orientation is seen as being the ideal. Much of this has to do with such individuals being able to internalize a variety of inputs and “synthesize that meaning with other aspects of their psychic makeup” (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 20), thus potentially putting them on a much firmer footing in terms of achievement of their goals.

The idea of “life goals” forms the second individual difference concept in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008b), the first being causality orientations. However, Deci and Ryan (2008b) prefer the term “aspirations.” Again, SDT divides aspirations into intrinsic and extrinsic categories, the former including affiliation and personal development, while the latter include wealth and fame. They also relate these aspirations to the degree that basic needs are satisfied. They claim that those individuals whose basic needs are not met will tend to focus on extrinsic goals in an attempt to find external satisfaction. In fact, they refer to such goals as “need substitutes” (Deci & Ryan, 2008b, p. 183). However, the problem here is that not only will the



pursuit of extrinsic goals not lead to genuine feelings of satisfaction and self-worth on the part of the individual, but it may also interfere with the individual actually attaining need satisfaction. The importance attached to goals in SDT is clear, and this is a factor that is shared by most theories of motivation. The following section will outline some of these.

## 2.4 Goals

The setting, pursuit, and attainment of goals are intricately linked with theories of motivation. Gardner himself (2001, p. 6) defined integrative motivation as “a complex of attitudinal, goal directed, and motivational attributes.” In psychology, this focus on goals has also been evident. Markus and Ruvolo (1989) emphasize the importance of learners having specific goals as these are more efficient in helping learners formulate vivid possible selves. These can then more easily become part of the learner’s self-concept, thereby increasing their relevance and importance to the learner. As a result, as Cantor *et al.* (1986, p. 103) state, “a goal is not abstract; rather it takes a cognitive form that is specifically meaningful for a given individual in a given context.” Markus and Nurius (1986) report on several theories from psychological research (e.g., Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985) that expressly view the self-concept as being deeply entwined with goals. According to them, possible selves provide not only the vision to strive for, but also potentially the strategies they need to get there. Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) further underline the importance of possible selves for recognizing goal-supportive behaviors, clear standards of achievement, and self-regulation.

Higgins (1996) speaks of the effects of different types of regulatory focus on the achievement

of goals. In his view, a promotion focus encourages individuals to “approach states that promote the desired goal” (Higgins, 1996, p. 1067) and to demonstrate “eagerness to attain advancement and gains” (Higgins, 1998, p. 27). Higgins (1991) also emphasizes the knock-on effects of having an important desired self. This has a positive effect on motivation which in turn enhances the prospect of the goal being attained. As Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006, p. 201) found, “active engagement in goal attainment (discrepancy-reducing self-regulation) is likely to increase chances for success.” Ryan and Deci (2002), however, argue that the importance of goals is not necessarily in their attainment but in the character of the goals themselves. They claim that a goal does not promote well-being, and by extension intrinsic motivation and autonomy, unless it has some relation to an individual’s basic needs. Indeed, should these basic needs not be met, an individual is likely to focus on extrinsic goals, potentially to the detriment of his or her own self-concept (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). Their research shows that emphasis on intrinsic goals promotes “greater health, well-being, and performance” (Deci & Ryan, 2008b, p. 183), and that performance on tasks suffered when the subjects performing the tasks were extrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).

## **2.5 Social Context**

Although much research into motivation makes clear the internal nature of motivational perspectives, there is also little doubt that the surrounding context has an important influence. In fact, in both psychology and L2 motivation research, there has been a general trend towards “contextualization” (McGroarty, 2001). Both Markus and Nurius (1986) and Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) have emphasized the importance of social contexts and influences in

both forming possible selves and making them available at appropriate times. Ryan and Deci (2002) speak of the importance of the social environment in promoting or retarding the individual's ability to integrate and internalize extrinsic factors. They further emphasize the importance of the environment in fulfilling an individual's basic psychological needs, which "support[s] people's inherent activity, promote[s] more optimal motivation, and yield[s] the most positive psychological, developmental, and behavioural outcomes" (Deci & Ryan, 2008a, p. 15). Even in more situational contexts, such as the home or classroom, they claim that the creation of a supportive and informational atmosphere can be a great aid to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).

Williams and Burden (1999) point out that in such situational contexts as schools, attributions of success and failure can be profoundly influenced by such external influences as teachers and the curriculum. These influences can play a large part in shaping students' internal attributions of success and failure. Similarly, Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006, p. 189) ascribe considerable importance to the role of social identity in the self-concept, which of necessity will have to take on some "group-based traits and goals" to maintain a balance between personal and social identities. Based on this and other research, Noels (2009) advocates the necessity of taking into account the whole idea of individuals' relationships, group status, and opportunities for contact with the community in thinking about motivation. This inevitably focuses attention on culture and its potential influence on motivation.

## **2.6 Culture**

### **2.6.1 Culture in Psychology**

The place of culture in the field of psychology is a disputed one, with some psychologists feeling that it has no place in a discipline that aims at understanding the workings of individuals. However, for others:

... bringing concepts of culture into psychological theories is an abstract, disputed, and inherently unresolvable process, yet ... doing so is crucial to both social science and policy in multicultural societies, particular democracies (Cooper & Denner, 1998, p. 563)

In their review of research into the treatment of culture in the psychological literature, Cooper and Denner (1998) outlined seven theoretical perspectives which have been used to look at culture from a variety of standpoints, from universal to situation-specific. Although a deeper investigation of the various theoretical orientations and their findings is beyond the scope of this chapter, the general consensus appears to be that the role of culture in psychological processes is an important area of research. Whether these investigations take place at the level of cultural-universal or community-specific or within or across nations, “psychologists are coming to understand cultures as developing systems of individuals, relationships, material and social contexts, and institutions” (Cooper & Denner, 1998, p. 579).

### **2.6.2 Culture in Motivation Research**

In terms of the research that has taken place linking motivation and culture, some researchers

have explored the possibility that psychological concepts may differ according to the culture of the individual. Higgins (1996) has considered the possibility that non-Western cultures may have different concepts of the self. He has identified a number of potential areas of difference that could have a major bearing on individuals' motivation, among these the standpoint from which the self is viewed (e.g., own, significant other, our), the target of behavior (e.g., me, us, everyone), and regulatory focus (promotion or prevention). He suggests that although the same variables may be available to all cultures, the combination of variables represented could be quite different. Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) have elaborated on these notions by suggesting that, for example, East Asian students tend to find prevention-focused strategies and actions more attractive than promotion ones. In contrast, in reviewing a variety of studies from different cultures, Deci and Ryan (2008a, p. 18) suggest that the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are common to all cultures and that "underlying optimal motivation and well-being in all cultures are very basic and common psychological needs."

Markus and Kitayama (1991) have explored the link between possible selves and culture. Their research suggests that, at least in certain cultures, for example, Asia, the self is deeply influenced by, and perhaps dependent on, social and personal relationships. In this sense, in what they refer to as "interdependence" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 225), others will take on a much stronger position in the self-concept. This can have an important impact on motivational profiles to the extent that "the goals of others may be experienced as personal goals" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 229). This may be particularly important for achievement motivation. Markus and Kitayama (1991) report on research by Yang (1982, 1986; Yang & Liang, 1973) that suggests that individuals in such interdependent situations

may possess more socially-oriented achievement motivation, which is more concerned with satisfying the desires of significant others. Although motivational intensity to achieve a particular goal may be quite similar to those with more individually-oriented motivational profiles, some evidence suggests that the former may lack persistence in motivation once a goal has apparently been achieved.

## **2.7 Influence of Psychological Theories on L2 Motivation Theory**

As suggested at the outset, theories from a variety of branches of psychology have come to shape modern L2 motivation research to a great extent. This in no small way has led to the development of a number of new models of L2 motivation, among them Williams and Burden's (1997) social-constructivist model. Williams and Burden (1997, p. 121) highlighted the fact that "motivation is more than simply arousing interest" and divided motivation into three phases: a learner's reasons for doing something, deciding to do something, and persisting in something. These basically represented two types of motivation, i.e. the motivation to start something and the motivation to see it through, which are seen as qualitatively different. The model also ascribed a far greater role to social and environmental factors in L2 motivation, while also acknowledging that language-learning motivation was prone to variation over time. The model was a genuine attempt to bring together ideas from a variety of psychological perspectives on motivation, to the extent that it is described as "cognitive and constructivist, socially contextualized and dynamically interactive" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 137).

At the same time, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) were developing their process model of L2 motivation. According to its creators, the model was “a synthesis that attempts to integrate propositions and models from several sources into a more comprehensive scheme” (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 64). It elaborated on Williams and Burden’s ideas by classifying the different phases of motivation as the “Preactional Phase,” the “Actional Phase,” and the “Postactional Phase,” identifying the processes at work within each phase, and highlighting the links between the three. It further sought to identify the different motivational forces at work during each phase and the possibility of using a variety of self-regulatory strategies at various phases to maintain motivation. The model was also innovative in that it was one of the first models with a direct relation to classroom practice. In addition, the model represented a renewed emphasis on the complexities of the motivation concept and its dynamic nature, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998, p. 64) concluding their article with a quote from Graham (1994, p. 47): “No single word or principle such as reinforcement or intrinsic motivation can possibly capture this complexity.”

Throughout this period, there was an increased emphasis among researchers on the cognitive aspects of learners’ motivational orientations. Ushioda (1996), for example, applied attribution theory to how learners perceived success and failure and how this affected their motivations. In addition, with the advent of process approaches, the idea of time began to be seen as important, specifically the recognition that motivation can and does change dramatically. This new focus also led to the beginnings of a change in research methodology in the L2 motivation field, a field that had been dominated by the quantitative methodology of social psychology. There now began to appear a number of studies following more qualitatively-based lines of enquiry (e.g., Ushioda, 1998). As the 1990s came to an end, and

as research such as the longitudinal studies of Dörnyei and Csizér (2002; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005) in Hungary pointed up once again problems with traditional conceptions of integrativeness, L2 motivation research began to move into a period characterized by an increased focus on learners' concepts of themselves as language learners, their interactions with their learning contexts, and the dynamic nature of motivation.

In terms of those researchers spearheading work in the L2 motivation field, among the most prominent is Kimberley Noels, who has been greatly influenced by the ideas inherent in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). Noels *et al.* (2000) began to apply self-determination theory in an effort to identify L2 learners' orientations and how these potentially affected both their initial approach to language learning and the potential path they might follow in their learning. She sees self-determination theory and its ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as useful predictors of individuals' attitudes toward and persistence in particular activities. She also sees in the fostering of the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness a means of helping learners develop more intrinsic forms of L2 motivation. Through this, the learner's engagement in L2 learning, in which she includes "effort (i.e., motivational intensity), persistence in learning, and willingness to communicate" (Noels, 2001, p. 60), can be enhanced.

Zoltán Dörnyei (2005, 2009b) has proposed the L2 Motivational Self System as a way of making sense of the complex relationship between motivation, the learner's concept of self, and the learning context. Basing his ideas on work on possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987, 1996), discussed earlier in this chapter, Dörnyei identifies two aspects of the learner's self-concept, the ideal self and the ought to self, the first corresponding to the person the learner personally aspires to



be and the latter to the person the learner feels an obligation to be or not to be. Dörnyei postulates that a vivid conception of an ideal L2 self can act as a powerful motivator by providing a clear image for the learner to strive for. This in turn can act as a guide for the setting of intermediary goals on the way to achieving this vision. The ought to self, on the other hand, is more to do with the vision others, be they teachers, family, or society, have of the learner. Although these visions may not be closely related to the learner's ideal self-concept, they can have a considerable influence on the learner's motivation, as pointed out by Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006), given the social, educational, and familial obligations that people have to conform to.

One area of Dörnyei's model that has received some criticism is in its third aspect, the L2 learning experience. As Ushioda (2011a, p. 201) notes, "How these situated processes interact with the development of possible future selves remains to some extent less clearly theorized." However, she offers modern global identity perspectives as a means of linking present experience and motivation to the future direction that motivation can take, the vehicle for this being possible future selves. Ushioda (2009) further calls for a "person-in-context relational view" of motivation. By this, she means looking at learners as real people rather than numbers on a statistics sheet. Her argument is that learners are individuals with unique identities, experiences, and goals who interact with their context in unique and meaningful ways. Drawing on ideas from educational psychology (Brophy, 2009; Kaplan & Flum, 2009), Ushioda (2011b) argues that identity and L2 motivation are intricately linked and that for students to maximize their motivation and create genuine possible selves, their identities must be involved. She advocates the engagement of learners' "transportable identities" and allowing them to "speak as themselves" (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 17) in the target language. By so

doing, not only will students be more motivated as they engage their real selves in genuine communication, but also they can formulate a more vivid image of themselves as users of the language, i.e., a future possible self. She further refers to Brophy (2009) and the crucial role of “socializers” (teachers, parents, peers) in the support and encouragement of healthy identities which “can solidify and develop into core values and more long-term stable identities” (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 21).

Ushioda is not the only researcher working with the concept of identity in L2 motivation. Ryan and Mercer (2011) propose that the inability of a learner to construct an identity as an autonomous learner can have negative effects on motivation, effort, and self-esteem. Using the concept of mindsets, “a framework of core beliefs that operates as a constant backdrop to the construction of ‘a larger system of allied beliefs and goals’ (Molden & Dweck, 2006, p. 201)” (Ryan & Mercer, 2011, p. 163), they look at the potential effects on EFL learners of believing that the best, if not only, ways to acquire a language are through natural talent or natural acquisition contexts. They hypothesize that such beliefs may have negative effects in terms of negative thinking both about classroom learning and one’s self, demotivation, and unrealistic expectations. These ideas suggest a potentially powerful relationship between identity, motivation, and autonomy.

Lamb (2004, 2011) has added weight to the consideration of identity and autonomy in L2 motivation research. In a longitudinal study of a group of learners in Indonesia from 2002 to 2004, he found that those highly motivated learners were also those who exhibited the most autonomous learning behavior, linking this to their ability to visualize a clear future self (Lamb, 2007). Returning to Indonesia in 2008, and in interviewing the same learners, he found that their motivational profiles remained relatively unchanged. However, although the

less motivated learners still lacked a clear future self, those categorized as motivated had both an even clearer vision of their future selves and an increased desire and ability to communicate in English (Lamb, 2011). He claims that the motivated learners' ability to construct and maintain clear identities as users of the language has resulted in more motivated and autonomous behavior. However, he also makes note of the potential influence of context as the learners in the study were all from middle-class backgrounds, giving them clear advantages, both in education and in world view, over many students in their country.

It is clear from this brief overview that the conceptualization of motivation has undergone considerable changes over the last 40 years. With the increasing acceptance and use of theories from a variety of branches of psychology, research into L2 motivation has moved far beyond the original conception of integrativeness and has entered a phase characterized by “a focus on the situated complexity of the L2 motivation process and its organic development in interaction with a multiplicity of internal, social, and contextual factors” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012, p. 398). Ideas related to the self and identity are crucially relevant to any enquiry into L2 motivation within this paradigm, and it is thus appropriate that a brief discussion of the consequences of this follows.

## **2.8 Implications for Research**

This chapter has shown that modern theories of L2 motivation are now firmly rooted in an increasingly mature and sophisticated psychological perspective that pays due regard to both the self-concept and the learning and social context. In addition, with the recognition of the

complex interplay of various elements in L2 motivation (e.g., self, identity, context), new approaches to making sense of motivation are being proposed. Dörnyei (2009c) has advocated the use of a complex dynamic systems (de Bot, 2008; de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005, 2007; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a) perspective in an attempt to make sense of the myriad interactions that encompass motivation. Such approaches “concern the behavior of complex systems that contain multiple interconnected components, where development is characterized by non-linear growth as systems adapt and evolve organically in response to contextual processes and in ways that contribute to shaping context” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012, p. 400). One of the leading proponents of CDS approaches, Diane Larsen-Freeman (2002, p. 38) refers to them as:

... the synthesis of emergent wholes from studying the *interactions* of the individual components. Outcomes arise that cannot be anticipated from an examination of the parts independently ... the agents/elements act, react to, and interact with their environment (i.e. the other actors/elements and any features of their environment) without any reference to global goals ... The net result of these local transactions is a pattern that emerges at a global level

This is important in that it moves the researcher away from a focus on traditional individual differences and toward a focus on individuals as whole persons. As de Bot and Larsen Freeman (2011, p. 18) put it, “if everything is interconnected, how is it possible to study anything apart from anything else?” Given the availability of such theories to guide investigations into motivation, what has until recently seemed an almost impossible task, that is, relating the various elements implicated in motivation, is now within our grasp. Furthermore, we can not only identify these elements but also see how their interactions produce “complex and dynamic organic systems emerging and evolving over time” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 32).

Such approaches parallel recent calls for the incorporation of more qualitative studies, not just in L2 motivation, but in SLA in general (Lafford, 2007). Given the dynamic nature of self-concepts and motivation as outlined in this chapter, it is difficult to see how these can be rigorously investigated without attempting to track learners' developing self-conceptions over time. As Dörnyei (2007, p. 36) states, "almost every aspect of language acquisition and use is determined or significantly shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors, and qualitative research is ideal for providing insights into such contextual conditions and influences." According to Syed (2001, p. 128), "this need for a holistic and emic perspective demands a qualitative approach."

Despite a greatly increased number of studies of L2 motivation in recent years (Csizér & Magid, 2014; Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015b; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011; Ushioda, 2013c), many of them qualitative and mixed methods research, there has been a general dearth of studies conducted from a CDS perspective (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015a). Although some research has been done in East Asia (Chan, Dörnyei, & Henry, 2015; Nitta & Baba, 2015; Yashima & Arano, 2015; You & Chan, 2015), South Korea is virgin territory for such explorations. There is in addition a general lack of detailed, sustained longitudinal studies, much of the research here having been conducted from a quantitative perspective (T.-Y. Kim, 2010, 2014). Such studies lack the sustained engagement with learners necessary to further our knowledge of L2 motivation and the variety of elements implicated in its development. As such, what is needed are studies that investigate the groundbreaking ideas that have come to the fore in recent years and their applicability across a wide variety of contexts. It is in this context that the present study seeks to contribute to our growing knowledge of L2 motivation in general and in the Korean context in particular.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

#### **COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

##### **3.1 Introduction**

The following chapter outlines the methodology developed for the present study. It will begin by establishing the place of qualitative research in modern SLA studies before dealing with a number of issues which need to be considered in the adoption of a qualitative approach. It will then proceed to describe the various stages in the research design, from the choice of data collection methods to the creation of questions to the initial piloting of the interview method and the two stages of data collection.

##### **3.2 Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics**

Until recently, the place of qualitative research within the field of applied linguistics in general and SLA in particular had been a subject of some debate. In a special edition of *TESOL Quarterly*, Kathryn Davis (1995) outlined how quantitative methodology had become the dominant paradigm in SLA research, while at the same time calling for the incorporation of more qualitative studies in the field. In the same issue, Anne Lazaraton (1995) reported on

the relative dearth of qualitative studies accepted for publication by peer reviewed journals, while also noting the underrepresentation of qualitative research methods in reference texts within applied linguistics. She concluded her article with a call, not for a choice between one paradigm or another, but for the principled choice of research methodology in the quest for “quality research” (Lazaraton, 1995: 468). At the same time, Firth and Wagner’s (1997) influential paper was lamenting the seeming schism between those in SLA who considered language acquisition a cognitive process and those who saw it as a social process. They called for the incorporation of more holistic and emic perspectives within the field of SLA, a direction that was certainly in line with an increased use of qualitative research methods.

Within the field of L2 motivation, the dominant research paradigm long remained that associated with the social psychological approach of Gardner and his associates (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972). Data collection methods were heavily influenced by such instruments as the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985), with data generally subjected to sophisticated statistical analyses with the express intention of generalizing findings from particular settings to wider populations (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012). However, just as in mainstream SLA research, the validity of such an approach to L2 motivation research was questioned. Researchers such as Ushioda (2001) criticized the quantitative paradigm for its narrow focus on cause and effect in relation to motivation. Looking at L2 motivation from a qualitative perspective, she claims, implies “a fundamentally different concept of motivation itself” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 96). This concept includes the temporal nature of motivation, which has become a key component of recent attempts at producing adequate models of the concept (Dörnyei, 2003). As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 198) state, motivation “is not stable but changes dramatically over time as a result of personal progress as

well as multi-faceted interactions with environmental ... variables.” In addition, new conceptions of motivation such as Dörnyei’s (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System have brought into play a whole new set of variables ranging from learners’ conceptions of what is possible or desirable for them in learning a language to their language learning experience to “the way they value and interpret goals and how such differences in motivational thinking may affect their involvement in learning” (Ushioda, 2001).

In order to do justice to the complexities of motivation, researchers are now moving away from methods that utilize only quantitative instruments such as questionnaires at just one point in a learner’s development. In fact, in reviewing published output in the motivation field in the last 10 years, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) found that fully 50% of studies employed a qualitative or mixed methods approach. As Richards (2003: 11) states, “Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.” As such, it is eminently suited to the study of a phenomenon such as L2 motivation. However, that is not to say that qualitative enquiry can be undertaken haphazardly. A number of important factors need to be taken into consideration for such a research project to bear fruit.

### **3.3 Issues in Qualitative Studies**

#### **3.3.1 Reliability**

Reliability in second language research refers to the ability to repeat a study and, all other factors being equal, achieve the same or very similar results. However, as Dörnyei (2007: 57) points out, this can be problematic in qualitative research “where any conclusion is in the end



jointly shaped by the respondents' personal accounts and the researcher's subjective interpretation of these stories." There are, fortunately, a number of checks and balances that can be utilized to offset potential problems with interpretation of data. Mackey and Gass (2005) recommend the use of multiple raters of the data, rater training, and the reporting of inter-rater reliability statistics as ways of increasing both perceived and actual reliability in coding data. They further recommend that procedures for dealing with disagreements in coding data be fully reported. In addition, research subjects themselves can be involved in the process by consulting them on the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations of data, a technique used by Campbell and Storch (2011).

### **3.3.2 Validity/Trustworthiness**

Just as with the concept of reliability, validity can also seem problematic in a qualitative paradigm. One of the best known attempts to address this was Lincoln and Guba's (1985) use of the term "trustworthiness." There are four components of trustworthiness that correspond to terms commonly used in quantitative research.

#### **3.3.2.1 Credibility**

The term credibility resembles "internal validity." In essence, it refers to the "truth value" (Dörnyei, 2007: 57) of the study, that is, that the results of the study are actually a function of the variables investigated in that particular setting. Richards (2003) recommends long-term experience of the context under investigation as well as the use of multiple methods of data

collection as ways of enhancing the credibility of a study. Mackey and Gass (2005) also mention the importance of collecting data over an appropriate length of time as a means of ensuring that research subjects are actually behaving in a natural fashion and are not in some way modifying their behavior due to the researcher's presence.

### **3.3.2.2 *Transferability***

Transferability is the equivalent of “external validity” in quantitative terms. It is a measure of how well the results of research can be applied to other contexts. Given that qualitative enquiry tends to deal with small samples in quite specific settings, this may prove problematic. However, as Maxwell (1992) points out, although the specific study may not transfer appropriately to other contexts, the theory developed and methods used may very well be applicable to different settings. In addition, according to Richards (2003), the forging of a relationship between the researcher and his or her audience is of vital importance. This means that the audience needs to be able to relate to the researcher's experiences and interpretations, something that can be achieved through the use of “thick description.”

#### **3.3.2.2.1 Thick Description**

The term “thick description” refers to “the process of using multiple perspectives to explain the insights gleaned from a study, and taking into account the actors' interpretations of their actions and the speakers' interpretations of their speech” (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 180). Davis (1995) emphasized the necessity for an emic perspective in this and elaborated three key components. These she referred to as particular description, general description, and

interpretive commentary (Davis, 1995: 447). Particular description entails providing specific details and examples from the research that prove the researcher's involvement in and understanding of the research setting. General description requires the researcher to recognize and illustrate patterns within the data in an attempt to establish their generalizability. Finally, interpretive commentary, as the word suggests, is the process of explaining the significance of particular data from the standpoint of what they illustrate, how they relate to other research or theory, and their potential theoretical significance. Through such description, the reader can form a clear picture and understanding of the research undertaken, thereby allowing him or her to determine whether the research can be generalized to his or her own context.

#### **3.3.2.3 *Dependability***

Dependability is in many ways related to reliability, or as Dörnyei (2007: 57) calls it, the “consistency” of findings. Various methods are appropriate to establish dependability, but perhaps the most important is a thorough description of each aspect and phase of the research. As such, “researchers aim to fully characterize the research context and the relationships among the participants” (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 181). Key to this is the possession of recorded data, particularly in electronic form. This provides the researcher with a more dependable resource than simply text from which to make inferences as a whole host of extra indicators are available. In addition, such a resource can be used with research participants themselves to confirm inferences made, while other researchers with access to the recordings can more effectively assess the dependability of the researcher's claims.

#### **3.3.2.4 *Confirmability***

One criticism that has been made of qualitative research is that the data is in many ways at the mercy of the researcher's subjective interpretation. As Dörnyei (2007: 28) says, "at the heart of any qualitative analysis is the researcher's subjective sensitivity, training, and experience." As such, the idea of confirmability seeks to establish the researcher's objectivity in reaching his or her findings. One of the ways of achieving this is by leaving an "audit trail" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 282). This entails rigorously documenting every aspect and stage of the research and explaining, for example, how decisions on coding were made and how themes emerged, thus allowing a reader to evaluate how systematic and legitimate the research has been. As previously mentioned, thick description is another key player in establishing confidence in a study, as is the researcher identifying his or her own biases. As Creswell (2007: 208) states, it is important that "the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study." Showing that one is aware of these will undoubtedly inspire more confidence in the reader that the researcher has in some way compensated for such potential bias.

In terms of the data the researcher actually collects, Dörnyei (2007) recommends that rather than ignoring results that do not suit the findings of the research, these should be discussed and explained. He calls this "examining outliers" (Dörnyei, 2007: 60). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 109) recommend the use of "member checks," "debriefings by peers," and "reflexive journals" as ways of establishing researcher objectivity. Member checks involve having research participants confirm interpretations, while debriefings are a mechanism for the researcher to discuss aspects of the research with fellow academics, thus potentially

receiving a valuable outside perspective on the research. Davis (1995) also recommends consulting researchers from both within and outside the context under investigation, thus guarding against cultural biases from either perspective. Finally, reflexive journals are the researcher's personal perspectives on various aspects of the research and can provide a clear window into his or her thought processes at various stages of the research. Such mechanisms as these can strengthen the researcher's standing with a reader and lead to the acceptance of the research as legitimate. However, there are further checks that can be used to solidify the overall research design.

### **3.3.3 Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to “getting a fix on a particular point by viewing it from different perspectives” (Richards, 2003: 251). Various methods of achieving this have been suggested including theoretical, methodological, investigator, and data triangulation. Theoretical triangulation involves analyzing data from different viewpoints, while methodological triangulation suggests the use of a variety of methods of collecting data. The use of more than one investigator, for example, in coding transcripts, also enhances the validity of the data. In addition, collecting data at different times or from different types of subjects allows for more definite conclusions to be reached. In essence, the purpose of doing this is “to arrive at the same research findings” through “the use of multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation” (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 181). This thus increases confidence that the findings presented are actually representative of the context studied.

### **3.3.4 Prolonged Engagement & Persistent Observation**

As Dörnyei (2007) points out, a study's face validity is enhanced by demonstrating that the researcher has been present in the research context for an appropriate period of time prior to the beginning of the research. The assumption would be that the researcher has developed an innate understanding of the situation and that he or she is in a position to make inferences based on this experience. However, it is not simply the time that is important, but also the level and quality of interaction with the specific context that is important. For example, one could treat with skepticism the claims of a researcher who had spent limited contact time with the research participants despite living in the research context for a considerable period of time.

### **3.3.5 Longitudinal Design**

Qualitative studies have an almost unique advantage in that they lend themselves to a long-term investigation of a phenomenon. This not only makes them ideally suited for research on phenomena such as motivation, but also potentially increases their validity. As Dörnyei (2007: 86) points out, through a longitudinal study, "the individual's story can be understood in terms of *turning points* or *defining moments*." This allows for a much richer and more accurate picture of the context to emerge and provides the reader with a much more detailed and satisfying insight into the phenomenon being studied.

### **3.3.5.1 *Problems with Longitudinal Designs***

A number of potential problems with longitudinal studies have been identified. Both Dörnyei (2007) and Mackey and Gass (2005) mention the problem of participant attrition. The longer a study goes on, the higher are the chances that, for a variety of reasons, several of the participants will drop out. This implies that thought needs to be given to what kind of participants to recruit for a study and once involved, how their involvement can be retained. In addition, procedures need to be put in place so that should a subject drop out, this can be dealt with in a principled and consistent manner. A further problem associated with research participants and identified by Mackey and Gass (2005) is the Hawthorne effect, in which the very fact of being part of the research results in students modifying their behavior in positive ways, something which might not have happened were they not involved in the study. A related problem is known as the halo effect, where participants provide the information they think the researcher wants to hear rather than genuine responses. Dörnyei (2007) mentions this panel conditioning as a potentially major problem for validity. Should the participants start to behave in ways that are not “natural” for them, the data collected can no longer be viewed as representative of the phenomenon under investigation.

Despite these caveats, the present study utilizes a longitudinal qualitative method of enquiry. The following section will explain the development of the research from the initial planning stages to the beginning of data collection.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Given recent developments in L2 motivation thinking (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012) which emphasize the changing nature of motivation over time and the influence of both internal psychological processes and external influences, the choice of a longitudinal qualitative enquiry seemed logical. However, the means of data collection and the choice of participants was something that required more serious thought. In this regard, the context that the research was to take place in took on added importance. The following section will provide some background information on South Korea and the specific context of the research.

#### **3.4.1 The Research Context**

##### **3.4.1.1 *South Korea***

The present investigation took place in South Korea in a large city with a population of approximately 2.5 million. Korea has long been known for its passion for education. This has been ascribed to the historical status of formal education in Korea as of “fundamental importance ... in confirming or securing social status” (Seth, 2002, p. 14). With the rapid modernization of Korea since the 1970s, this passion for education has, if anything, intensified. As Lee and Shouse (2011, p. 221) point out, the majority of Koreans continue to feel that “prestigious academic credentials represent the primary key to ensuring high future occupational and social status.” According to the latest figures from the OECD (2014), in 2012, 66% of those aged between 25 and 34 had attained a third-level qualification. In addition, figures for 2011 show that Koreans spent some 8% of total GDP on education. Much



of this expenditure goes on private education, which has become a huge industry. It has been estimated that some 85% of Korean school age students receive some form of private education, and that for the vast majority (85%), this is solely focused on improving school grades (S. Kim & Lee, 2010). Spending on such education amounted to some 18 trillion won (\$16 billion) in 2014, of which approximately 30% went on English (S.-j. Kim, 2015).

The education system itself is heavily test oriented. The major focus in middle and high school is the Korean College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), a one-day test taken in the final semester of high school. This test is the single most important determiner of which university a student can attend, something which is seen as having great importance in Korean society, where the status of the university from which one graduates has a substantial bearing on future social and employment prospects (S. Kim & Lee, 2006).<sup>1</sup> As a result, the content of everyday instruction in schools is in large part determined by the CSAT, with the vast majority of teachers forced to teach to the test (Hu & McKay, 2012). English forms one of the major required sections on this test, and thus occupies a position of considerable importance with teachers, students, and parents. However, the test itself is only 70 minutes long and includes a 20-minute listening component. The remaining sections focus on reading comprehension and grammar, while all questions are in a multiple choice format. According to T.-Y. Kim (2010, p. 217), the test and the importance it is ascribed have important washback effects for many high school students, to the extent that “English is perceived not as a communication tool but as an important school subject that influences future university placement.”

Once Korean students reach university, English continues to be important. All universities are required to have freshmen take at least one English communication class regardless of their

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of prestigious universities in South Korea are located in the capital, Seoul. Of these, the so-called SKY (Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University) are the most highly ranked

majors, and a considerable number of universities are now offering content courses in English (Kang, 2012). In addition, many departments have as a requirement for graduation the achievement of a score on a standardized English test, by far the most common of which is TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). Even after graduation, English plays a major role in employment with the majority of employers specifying a score on an English language test as one of the essential application criteria, regardless of whether English is required in the job description (Choi, 2008). As such, English has come to play something of a gatekeeping role in Korean society (Hu & McKay, 2012; Song, 2011), both for entry into university and into the working world.

With such an emphasis on English in South Korea, it is an ideal location to investigate the actual motivations of its learners. As suggested, there are numerous stakeholders involved in the learning of the language, and it enjoys substantial social capital. With such a variety of actors and institutions involved, it thus represents an ideal location to investigate the specific elements at play within learners' L2 motivational systems and whether and how the interplay of these elements produces changes in their motivations.

#### **3.4.1.2 *K University***

The research reported in this thesis took place in a mid-level South Korean university outside the capital region. The university is quite large with an undergraduate population of some 25,000 spread throughout 19 colleges and 97 majors. The stated aim of the university is to become a global university, and there is quite an international presence with over 100 non-Korean academic staff as well as over 100 exchange students from various parts of the globe and almost 900 Chinese students. As in most universities in Korea, there is a considerable emphasis on English, with specified TOEIC scores being a graduation requirement for many

majors. Although the concentration on English varies according to department, four departments (English, American Studies, European Studies, and Hotel and Tourism Management) offer English conversation classes, while the international college conducts all classes solely in English. The Department of English Language and Literature is the single largest department in the university with over 600 students. At the time the study took place, the researcher had been part of the Department of English Language and Literature for 10 years, and he had lived in South Korea for a total of 12. As such, he can claim to have an intimate knowledge, both of the students in the university and of Korea itself.

### **3.4.2 Data Collection Procedures**

Given the researcher's situated knowledge, his experience of conducting questionnaire surveys with Korean university students, and a thorough survey of the literature in both L2 motivation and related psychological fields (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2002), it was felt that a quantitative approach would not be effective in looking at L2 motivation in this context. Such approaches have received criticism for a predominant focus on linear cause-effect relations in relation to L2 motivation (Lafford, 2007; Ushioda, 2001). In addition, such approaches may not be the most suitable for investigating a phenomenon such as motivation, which involves the interaction of multiple elements and which changes over time. Rather than approaching data collection with a preconceived set of concepts, the research thus sought to adopt a more grounded approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and "to allow theory to develop from the data" (Richards, 2003: 17). As Lincoln and Guba (1985: 208) state, a research design that seeks to investigate a phenomenon in this way

“must be emergent rather than preordained.”

Having settled on a qualitative approach to data collection, however, the form of the enquiry still remained to be decided. Van Dijk, Verspoor, and Lowie (2011, p. 62) recommend that “if we really want to know how an individual (or group) develops over time we need data that is dense (i.e. collected at many regular measurement points), longitudinal (i.e. collected over a longer period of time), and individual (i.e. for one person at a time and not averaged out).”

Although a variety of options are available to collect such data, including diaries (Bailey, 1991; Murphy, 2011), observations (Kubanyiova, 2009), and more novel approaches such as using images and multimedia (Mercer, 2014), each invited a number of problems. For example, diaries risked participant attrition through the need to keep them regularly over quite a long period of time, while observations were more suited to investigating situated motivation. As such, it was decided that an interview study would be most appropriate.

#### **3.4.2.1 Interviews**

Interviews have been widely used in qualitative studies and have become ever more common in applied linguistics (Mann, 2011). They generally fall into one of three categories: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Given the exploratory nature of the research, it was felt that structured interviews would be too limiting in terms of the participants’ answers and would not allow them the freedom to express concepts and ideas that they felt were important or relevant. On the other hand, unstructured interviews have the potential to reveal unexpected information and promote quite a relaxed format. As Dörnyei (2007: 136) states, “This kind of interview is most appropriate when a study focuses on the deep meaning of particular phenomena.” However, it is difficult to compare participant responses in such a format as

each participant is basically free to say whatever is on his or her mind, and there is no guarantee that participants will deal with the same topics let alone questions (Richards, 2003). As such, the semi-structured interview has proven popular. In such a format, although the interview is generally guided by a number of specific questions, enough freedom is available to follow up on interesting ideas or to delve deeper into a participant's response. It also provides more opportunity for comparison of various participants' responses. Having settled on how to conduct the interviews, it was then necessary to formulate the interview procedure and formulate questions for the initial interviews.

### **3.4.3 Interview Question Formation & Pilot Interviews**

The research project began with three specific research questions:

1. What are the elements implicated in the participants' L2 motivational systems?
2. How do these elements interact and at what levels and timescales?
3. What changes are observable in the participants' L2 motivational systems over time?

On the basis of these questions and a thorough review of the literature, both from psychology and L2 motivation research, a list of seven general areas of investigation was developed (language learning experience, immediate environment, learning environment, attitude to English/English-speaking cultures, autonomy, identity, and self). In each of these areas, several potential interview questions were then formulated which it was felt could promote genuine student responses. In formulating the questions, a variety of qualitative studies from L2 motivation research were consulted (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Gan *et al.*, 2004; Ushioda, 2001) and their interview questions reviewed. Surprisingly, in all these studies, the word

“motivation” appeared prominently in the questions. This seemed to be rather leading and to potentially influence the mindset of the interviewees. As Charmaz (2014, p. 63) points out:

The wrong questions fail to explore pivotal issues or to elicit participants’ experiences in their own language. Such questions may also foist the researcher’s concepts, concerns, and discourse upon the research participant’s reality – from the start

Given that the purpose of qualitative enquiry into motivation is to reveal ideas that learners may not even be consciously aware of, the very use of the word motivation may have activated particular schemata that they associated with it and consigned other potentially more valuable information to the wastebasket. It was thus decided to avoid the use of what could be termed “leading words” and to focus instead on creating questions that encouraged more narrative answers on the part of the interviewees. The following are examples of the questions that were prepared:

1. Please describe your language learning experience up to now
2. Tell me about the people who are important/influential in your life
3. Do you ever lose interest in English? Can you tell me about something that made you lose interest in English?
4. How do you feel about people who speak English/ English-speaking cultures?
5. How do you plan your learning? Do you feel you need guidance in what to study?
6. What are your goals in English? How did you choose these goals?
7. How important to you is succeeding in English? How do you define success?

However, before starting data collection procedures, it was necessary to gauge participant responses to these questions and how they felt about the whole interview format. As such, an initial pilot interview was scheduled.

As Gass and Mackey (2007: 3) point out, “it is in fact critical to allocate additional time to conduct pilot tests” of the research tool. As such, prior to the beginning of focus group interviews (April 2012), a small number of students were recruited from the researcher’s own

classes to take part in a pilot focus group interview. The purpose of the pilot was to gauge the responses of the interviewees to the interview questions and the interview procedure itself. Also in attendance was the researcher's assistant (Joo), who was to act as interpreter/translator for the interviews and their subsequent transcription. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were offered the choice of responding in either English or Korean. The whole interview lasted for almost exactly 90 minutes.

Following the interview, the students were asked for their comments on the questions asked, the interview format, and their feelings about speaking in front of others and being recorded. No major difficulties were reported in answering the questions, although a general feeling was they could have been more concise. Similarly, the fact of being recorded did not cause any discomfort; however, the prospect of a video recording was received somewhat less positively. The students also felt that knowing each other had made it easier for them to open up, an important point to bear in mind for future interviews.

Once the students had left, the researcher and his assistant then discussed the interviews and came to a number of conclusions. In the first place, in explaining the interviews at the beginning, Joo had used the Korean for motivation, which could perhaps have colored the students' responses. In addition, she had displayed a tendency to lead the students at times, sometimes finishing their answers or jumping in too quickly where waiting could have produced more information from the student. It was also agreed that the interview procedure needed some revision, including the minimization of interaction between the researcher and Joo and more focus on promoting deeper responses from the participants. Finally, the need for the revision of some of the questions was agreed.

### **3.5 Selection of Research Participants**

In selecting participants for the research, it was decided that as far as possible, students from the Department of English Language and Literature would not be recruited. The reasoning behind this was that the majority would have known the researcher in some capacity and the data collected from them could have been contaminated in some respects by their affective reaction toward him, a sense of obligation, or a desire to curry favor with him. The only exception to this was freshmen, who it could be assumed did not know the researcher very well and in any case, could not take his classes until their sophomore year.

Prior to the recruitment of volunteers, the chairs of other departments offering English language courses were approached and the research explained to them. Their permission was sought to approach teachers within their departments with a view to taking up a short amount of class time to explain the research and ask for student volunteers. Three of the four chairs approached granted permission, and individual teachers were then approached. All of them showed enthusiasm for the project and a schedule of class visits was drawn up. These visits took place in the second week of April 2012.

Before visiting classes, information and consent sheets were developed detailing the main points of the research and explaining the rights of the participants (see Appendix II for English and Korean versions). The information sheet contained details on the research, its aims and how it would be conducted, an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, details on how the participants' data would be handled and safeguarded, and a guarantee that they could withdraw at any time with no explanation. The consent sheet established that the participants understood the research, their roles in it and their rights, and that they had



voluntarily agreed to participate. These sheets were translated into Korean by Joo, who had previous experience of working as an assistant on a doctorate level research project. Both English and Korean appeared on the final version of the text.

On visiting classes, the researcher was accompanied by Joo. To reduce the probability of any miscommunication, she provided a simultaneous interpretation of the presentation. Students were informed of the purpose of the research and their roles should they choose to take part. They were also made aware of their rights, in particular the fact that they could withdraw at any time with no explanation. At the end of the presentation, participant information sheets were distributed and any volunteers asked to contact the researcher or his assistant to confirm their participation, the rationale being that putting the onus on the students to contact the researcher suggested the commitment necessary to stay with the project over the long term. Again, contacts were available in both English and Korean. In all, 18 separate classes were visited. However, the initial take up from students was quite low. This necessitated a re-evaluation of the decision not to include English Department students and the conduct of a second series of class visits before the quota of participants was filled.

### **3.5.1 Research Participants**

In the end, 41 students volunteered for the project: 21 freshmen, 11 sophomores, and 9 juniors/seniors (see Appendix I). Unfortunately, the recruiting process was unsuccessful in attracting male students, with only two male sophomores agreeing to take part. The majors represented were English language and literature (14), English education (12), European studies (5), and American studies (4), with the other 6 coming from a variety of other majors.

The participants' language learning experience varied from a low of 6 years to a high of 17 for an average of 11 years. The participants also varied in how they evaluated their proficiency in English. Of those who responded to this question, only one claimed to be of upper intermediate level, while 17 classified themselves as intermediate. Eight of them felt that they were of lower-intermediate level, with the same number indicating a beginner level. 18 of the participants indicated that they had taken the TOEIC test, with the scores ranging from a high of 900 to a low of 365 for an average of 695. Only two had taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), one scoring 55 and the other 107.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

#### **3.6.1 Focus Group Interviews**

In keeping with common practice in applied linguistics, it was decided to conduct focus group interviews during the first phase of the project. These have the advantage of “generating ideas to inform the development of ... subsequent deep interviews” (Dörnyei, 2007: 146). By conducting such interviews at the beginning of the research, a substantial amount of data can be generated. Through an analysis of this data, potential themes can be identified which can then provide the blueprint for later more focused follow-up interviews. In addition, it was felt that the group format was potentially a more secure and comfortable environment for the participants than a one-on-one interview with the researcher. As Miller and Glasner (1997, cited in Richards, 2003, p. 88) point out, “how interviewees respond to us [is] based on who we are – in their lives, as well as the social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender,

class and race.” By grouping participants according to age and, where possible, major, it was hoped that they would feel less inhibited in their responses and more comfortable expressing their personal ideas.

The interviews took place in May 2012. Eight interviews were conducted over the space of two weeks with groups of between four and six participants. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the researcher confirmed that each of the participants had read and understood the participant information sheets and clarified any remaining questions they had. The participants then signed both the information and consent sheets, with the researcher co-signing the consent form. One copy of each was retained by the researcher and the participants to ensure that both sides had documentary evidence of willingness to participate and the rights of the participants.

The purpose of these interviews was twofold. The first was to gauge the participants’ response to the prepared interview questions while at the same time collecting data from which to begin the identification of themes to investigate in further interviews. Second, given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, there was scope to allow the pursuit of unexpected or interesting ideas that arose during the interviews themselves. It was also important to begin to get a sense of each of the participants as individuals as the next phase of the research involved individual interviews. In order to maximize both participant comfort and the richness of data collected, the participants were given the option of speaking in either Korean or English or of code switching should the situation demand. Joo was present for all the interviews.

### **3.6.2 Follow-Up Interviews**

In September 2012, the first round of individual follow-up interviews was conducted. Prior to their conduct, the focus group interviews were transcribed and where necessary translated. They were then analyzed and coded for common themes using NVivo 9 (see Chapter 4 for a detailed account of the coding process). These themes then formed the basis for the formation of common questions for the interviews. However, in addition to these common questions, personalized questions were also created for each participant. These were based on an analysis of each participant's responses during the interviews and on personal profiles created following the focus group interviews. In these and in all subsequent interviews, the participants were given the option of speaking in either English or Korean, and Joo was present as interpreter at each interview.

Following this round of interviews, the same procedures of transcription, translation and analysis were followed as after the focus group interviews. On the basis of emerging themes, the interview questions were refined, and both common and individual questions were prepared. However, at this point, it also became possible to investigate any changes apparent in the participants' attitudes and behaviors, and this became a key focus of questions for the remainder of the interviews. It also became important to not only refine the areas under investigation but also to attempt to differentiate the questions in each round of interviews. This was done as a means of avoiding panel conditioning (Dörnyei, 2007) and to elicit as genuine a response as possible from the participants. The second round of individual interviews took place in November 2012, and this was followed by a third round in December 2012/January 2013. In all, 33 of the original participants completed the full four interviews.

Following the third individual interview, the sophomore and junior participants were thanked for their participation and released from the research. Of the freshmen, 10 were retained for a further year of interviews. All 10 were volunteers, and those who were excluded included those who no longer wished to be part of the research and a number excluded for other reasons, predominantly taking the researcher's classes. Of the remaining participants, eight completed five more interviews in April, June, September, and December 2013 and March 2014.

### **3.6.3 Quality Control**

In any study, but particularly a qualitative study, it is vital that a reviewer of the research can have confidence in the data collected and the procedures employed in both collecting and analyzing them. This was ensured in the present study in a number of ways. In the first place, the longitudinal nature of the enquiry was a means of confirming that any inferences drawn from the data could be followed up and tracked in future interviews. It was also a means of monitoring the behavior of the participants and ensuring that they were not altering their behavior in response to the researcher's presence (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Data collection procedures were also formulated with the necessity of guaranteeing the quality of the data for analysis in mind. At every interview, the participants had the option of communicating in either Korean or English, with the same interpreter (Joo) being present at every interview. The interviews were also audio recorded using multiple devices. Joo had been involved in a previous doctorate-level research project and had experience of both simultaneous interpretation and transcription/translation. She performed the same role for all interviews

requiring translation in this study, and her transcripts were then proofread by the researcher. Any problematic sections, ambiguities, or other such problems were then discussed.

In order to avoid any element of cultural bias entering the process, as Davis (1995) recommends, advice from both within and outside the research context was sought in order to ensure the quality of the translations produced. As such, two independent translations of one of the interviews were made, which were then evaluated by a Korean academic well-versed in the field. Taking into account her suggestions, meetings were held with the two translators and strategies developed to deal with such issues as vagueness of language, interpretation of the participants' utterances versus faithfulness to the words spoken, and the translation of Korean idioms. These strategies were then discussed and further guidance sought from a translation studies expert in the UK before completion of the translations of the first round of interviews.

The thematic coding of the data was also enhanced by enlisting the assistance of another academic from outside the Korean context. Again, a single interview was selected and independently coded by the academic and the researcher. The coding was then compared and any discrepancies discussed before a final coding was agreed. Reliable coding was further ensured by the longitudinal nature of the project, which allowed the researcher to continuously check inferences from the data in subsequent interviews with the research participants. Each of these interviews contained a number of questions based on what each participant had said in his or her previous interview. These "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 109) allowed for both a confirmation of the researcher's interpretations of the data and the elicitation of the participants' impressions of these interpretations. The next chapter will outline in more detail how the data collected from these interviews were handled, the coding procedures put in place, and the finalizing of the coding scheme.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA CODING PROCEDURES**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Once the transcription of the first phase of interviews had been completed, the work of coding the data began. This was done using NVivo 9. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of specific areas of enquiry had been developed prior to the interview process. However, as the interviews progressed, a variety of other categories suggested themselves. As such, the creation of nodes was very much an emergent process. Throughout the coding and revision process, nodes were created, modified, and in some cases discarded. These three areas will be dealt with in detail later in the chapter, but the following section lists the nodes that were created. The chapter will then go on to describe the creation of each node used in the coding, from the initial nodes formulated to those that emerged during the coding process. It will also detail some issues that arose during the coding process and how these were overcome. Finally, it will deal with how the data were reviewed and reduced to a manageable size for analysis. Throughout the chapter, excerpts from the data will be used to illustrate the decisions made at various stages of the process.

#### **4.2 Nodes**

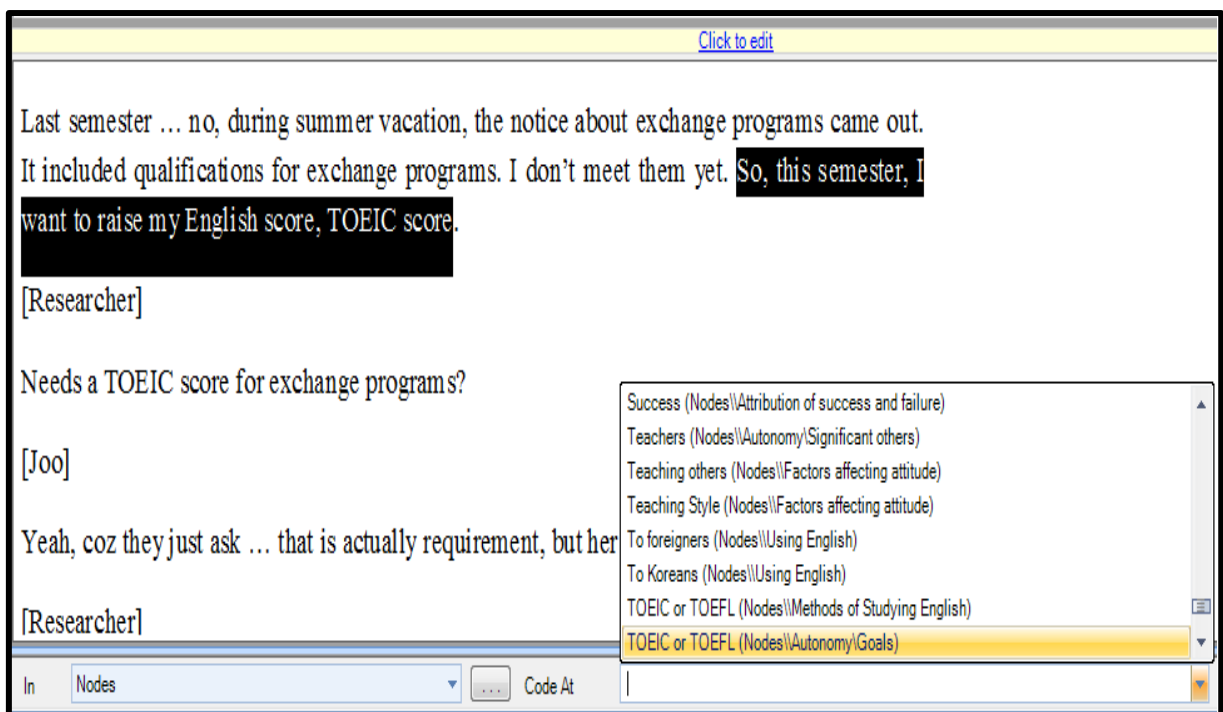
The following table contains the main nodes and sub-nodes created during the coding.

NODE	SUB-NODE	SUB-NODE
ASSESSING PROFICIENCY	CONFIDENCE	
	FLUENCY	
ATTIBUTION OF SUCCESS/FAILURE	SUCCESS	
	FAILURE	
AUTONOMY	ASSESSING PROGRESS	
	CHOOSING MAJOR	
	GOALS	COMMUNICATION
		FLUENCY
		GRADES
		STUDYING ABROAD
		TOEIC OR TOEFL
		TRAVEL
		WORK
		SHORT-TERM
		MEDIUM-TERM
		LONG-TERM
	GOAL-DIRECTED BEHAVIOR	LACK OF
	OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION	PROGRAMS
		SOCIAL MEDIA
	PLANNING LEARNING	
	SIGNIFICANT OTHERS	PARENTS
		OTHER STUDENTS
		TEACHERS
	SOCIETAL INFLUENCE	
CULTURE	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	
	MUSIC /TV/	
	LITERATURE/MOVIES	
FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE	CLASSES	
	INFLUENTIAL EXPERIENCES	
	INTERACTION WITH FOREIGNERS	
	PERCEIVED ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE	
	SCORE	
	TEACHING STYLE	
FACTORS AFFECTING WTC	EVALUATION	
	FEAR OF MISTAKES	
	OTHER PEOPLE'S LEVELS	
	OTHERS' FEELINGS OR PERCEPTIONS	
FOCUS OF STUDY		
IDENTITY		
INFLUENCE OF TOEIC/TOEFL	PROGRAMS	
	EMPLOYMENT	
	GRADUATION	
LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE	ELEMENTARY	
	MIDDLE/HIGH	
	UNIVERSITY	
LEARNING CONTEXT		
METHODS OF STUDYING ENGLISH	CLASSES	
	MEDIA	
	TOEIC OR TOEFL	
REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH	MONEY OR EMPLOYMENT	
	COMMUNICATION	
	TOOL	
	TRAVEL	
SELF-CONCEPT	IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH	
	NEGATIVE	
	POSITIVE	
	PERCEPTION OF NEEDS	
	SELF-AWARENESS	
	SUCCESS	
	VAGUE OR ABSENT	
	VISION	

**Figure 4.1 Nodes used in coding**



Before proceeding to a description of the development of the coding scheme, it is appropriate to clarify the use of the same labels for different sub-nodes as illustrated in Figure 4.1. For example, TOEIC OR TOEFL appears as a sub-node of both GOALS and METHODS OF STUDYING English. Although at first glance this might appear potentially confusing or at worst misleading, the hierarchical structure of node families in NVivo prevents this from occurring. The nodes on the left of the table are of the highest order, known as “parent nodes.” Such nodes can contain multiple sub-nodes or “child nodes,” each of which in turn can contain multiple child nodes of its own. However, when coding or analyzing the data, these nodes are completely separate, meaning that the researcher has to choose between nodes from different node families, for example, TOEIC OR TOEFL (Nodes\\Methods of Studying English) or TOEIC OR TOEFL (Nodes\\Autonomy\\Goals). This is illustrated by the following screenshot, where the selected text is to be coded.



**Figure 4.2 Coding References**

A similar procedure is necessary when running queries on the data, as illustrated by the following screenshot.

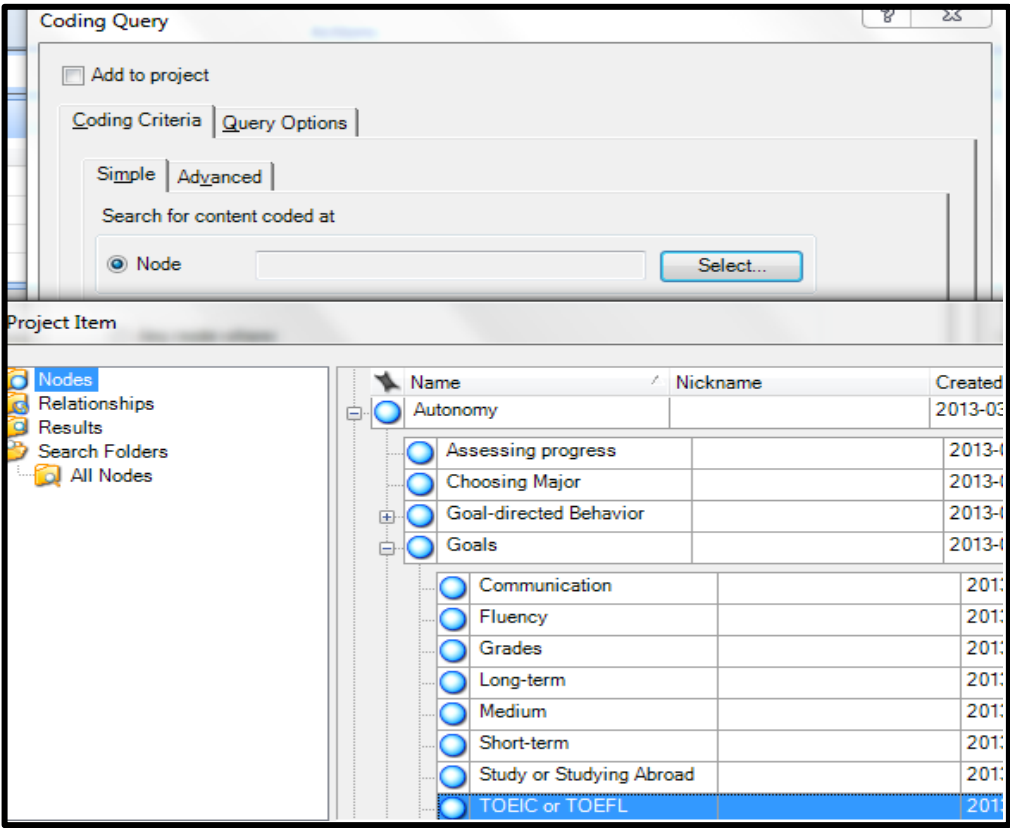


Figure 4.3 Running Coding Queries

Here, one must first select the appropriate parent node (AUTONOMY) and navigate the hierarchy of the node family (through GOALS) before choosing the appropriate sub-node on which one wants to run a query (TOEIC OR TOEFL). As such, the use of the same label for different sub-nodes has no negative impact on either coding or analyzing the data.

### 4.3 Creation of Nodes

Coding of the data and creation of nodes was a process that began soon after data collection and transcription had begun and continued throughout the data collection period. This is in keeping with the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), who advocate commencement of the coding process at an early stage of the research to deal with the large amounts of data that are likely to be collected and to identify areas that may be worthy of pursuit during follow-up data collection. However, this is not to say that the coding was a linear process. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011: 560) point out, “the process is iterative and requires the researcher to go back and forth through the data on maybe several occasions, to ensure consistency and coverage of codes and data.” In this regard, the six-stage process outlined by Kelle (2000) proved useful. These stages include the entering of data into the computer software, initial coding of the data, writing memos or notes suggested by particular elements of the data, comparing text coded in the same way in the interests of consistency, identifying relationships between codes, and finally developing theory on the basis of these relationships. In many ways, this whole process can be seen as conforming to the principle of “Ockham’s Razor” or “law of parsimony,” the aim being to reduce the immense complexity of relations to a number of key ideas, thus giving them greater explanatory power.

In order to illustrate how this process was conducted, the following section will show how and when the codes were developed, the rationale behind the creation of these codes, and examples of each. It will further discuss various revisions that became necessary as more data were coded and as previous data were revisited.

### 4.3.1 Initial Categories

Initial codes were suggested by areas that had been chosen for investigation in the formulation of interview questions for the focus group interviews. However, once the process of working through the data began, the data began to suggest further categories that needed to be included in the analysis. The following section deals with the categories that were created as the coding began, in the main in reference to the interview questions asked. In the example excerpts, the text in bold indicates the key part of the reference that justified its coding at the designated node. Excerpts in italics indicate that the participant spoke in Korean.

#### 4.3.1.1 *Autonomy*

Among the first codes to be created was the general category of AUTONOMY. This was created to identify behaviors or statements that indicated a level of self-sufficiency on the part of the learner. In this regard, it refers to the learner's capacity for self-directed learning, for assessing this learning on the basis of self-formulated criteria, and for self-regulating behavior in the pursuit of clear learning goals. It also contains instances of behaviors that can be considered the opposite of those just outlined, i.e. that indicate a lack of autonomy. The following excerpts illustrate this dichotomy.

#### **Autonomous**

[Sarah]

*... foreign people who teach their language do not teach first but make me study first and ask questions to them. And then they explain to me. In that way, I get more interested and I want to do better. Now I have a habit that is I carry a small*

*notebook and I write down what I don't know or my wrong English expressions. I think guidance, I have to follow the style even if I am not sure it is effective to me or not. I'd prefer advice. I study first and I want to have feedback later (Interview 2)*

### **Lack of Autonomy**

[Julia]

It is so hard question because it is my own way definition is so ... is so difficult. Because my own way is ... I did not think my ... me just not me ... just **me is consist ... consist by many other people. So, and I have many role ... roles, so I have to do because I'm living in social. So, it's hard. I want to ... want to walk my own way, but it's [unintelligible]. Most of people also thinking my own way ... which is my own way? Own way is one. So, I want to, but it's hard (Interview 2)**

However, it soon became clear that a category as general as AUTONOMY lacked explanatory power and subsumed potentially important ideas within it which could become obscured. As such, the sub-categories ASSESSING PROGRESS and PLANNING LEARNING were created to illustrate the learners' level of autonomy in terms of monitoring and directing their learning and developing learning strategies specific to their hopes and dreams. At a slightly later stage, the sub-category CHOOSING MAJOR was added as it became clear that making decisions such as this, which constitute significant life choices, could provide a good indication of the level of autonomy of a learner.

### **ASSESSING PROGRESS**

[Vicky]

***There is nothing I can check my English ability with. So, test scores are visible results (Interview 2)***

### **CHOOSING MAJOR**

[Emily]

**Actually, my parents want me to go that department. But I also want to go English-related department. So, first there was a conflict between me and my parents, but finally I choose here.**

[Researcher]

What was the other thing ... what other things were you thinking of?

[Emily]

I want to go English literature, not education. But my parents said if you go English education, there are ... there are more way to get a job. So, I choose here (Interview 3)

## PLANNING LEARNING

[Dana]

Well, it's the same, just starting TOEFL for ... during this vacation. And ... **I don't know how to do, but I want to improve my English, so I asked my ... I asked my professor, and he said study vocabularies ... I mean the ... I don't know. How can I say? Academical vocabularies or using phrasal verbs as well ... as much as you can ... as many as you can. And ... I don't know, but I didn't find any answers yet, so I don't know what to do** (Interview 4)

### 4.3.1.2 *Self-Concept*

A vitally important part of the research was discovering how English fitted in to the self-concepts of the participants. In this regard, self-concept refers to the participants' beliefs about themselves, their attributes, abilities, priorities, and concerns. This had been of primary concern in the initial construction of interview questions, and as such, was one of the first categories outlined. The node SELF-CONCEPT was created to code references where the participants spoke of ideas such as those mentioned above. Although the majority of these references did involve the position of English within their idea of self, references where the participants spoke about their general concept of self were also included.

... these days, what would you say your number one reason for learning English is?

[Una]

**To satisfy myself.** And I wanna ... I wanna get the career and proper ability, and English is the basic and essential ... essential, so ...

[Researcher]

When you say ... interesting you say, interesting way of putting it. When you say satisfy yourself, what do you mean by satisfy yourself?

[Una]

**Self-esteem** (Interview 4)

However, it rapidly became clear that with an area of this size, considerably more differentiation was required to make the data manageable. As such, SELF-CONCEPT was further differentiated into POSITIVE and NEGATIVE sub-nodes. References coded at POSITIVE related to the participants having a positive viewpoint towards the language, its place in their lives, and their abilities in the language.

[Robert]

[long pause] **English become to second mother language** because after enter university ... *I'm ... exposed to English a lot ... I'm ... exposed to English as much as I am exposed to Korean* (Interview 4)

On the other hand, references coded at NEGATIVE indicated negative attitudes on the part of the participants toward English itself, its importance relative to their view of self, and their evaluation of their ability in the language.

[Lena]

*... I have been studying for a long time. Therefore, I am supposed to have that much English ability, but I don't. That's why I feel ashamed of myself. Foreigners don't know how long I have been studying English for, but I know myself. I am ashamed because I can talk in English in front of foreigners far less than what I have studied. For example, if I have studied English for ten years, I should speak English like a person who has been studying English for ten years, but I don't* (Interview 4)

As the coding progressed into the second set of interviews, that is, the individual interviews, further aspects of the self-concept began to be elicited and had to be accounted for. One of these related to the ability of the participants to create a vision of themselves using English in their lives or a use for English in the future, an ability that has been theorized to promote

motivation and goal formation (Dörnyei, 2009b). References to the participants' future possible selves were coded at VISION.

[Michael]

Yeah, of course. **I want to study abroad, so my view ... my vision for my English using English ... like reading English journals and writing English essays of journal and speak in English with other people about something scholaric fluently.** That's what I want to be (Interview 2)

As the individual interviews allowed for a much more personal expression of the participants' views of themselves, it became a richer source of information related to the self-concept. Just as a number of participants exhibited positive self-concepts and the ability to visualize a place for English in their futures, some participants seemed to have considerable difficulty elaborating any definite view of themselves or of how English fit into their lives and future plans and dreams. References such as these were coded at a sub-node of SELF-CONCEPT called VAGUE OR ABSENT.

In the future, when will you need fluent English? When?

[Nicola]

***I am not sure I will need it*** (Interview 3)

In line with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's (2011: 560) stipulation that "... coding is not a 'one-off' exercise," the completion of the initial coding of the first phase of interviews (one focus group and three individual) provided a logical opportunity to re-examine the coding that had taken place up to that point. As such, each category was revisited in an attempt to ensure both consistency and comprehensiveness of the coding (see Section 4.4 for a detailed discussion of the various revisions made). In doing this, it appeared that in addition to the participants' ability to elaborate what might be called a "stable" concept of self, another important aspect of their self-knowledge was their ability to detect and explain aspects of the



self that had changed. This is basically an ability to monitor the self, in many ways a noticing function. On the basis of this realization and its appearance in the data, the sub-node SELF-AWARENESS was created.

[Mandy]

*I have become more active. One of reasons I applied for the Buddy program was for the exchange student program. I am going to apply for it in the fourth semester. For that, I have to study TOEFL. But communication in English is the basis for that. I am responsible for my buddy, so in some ways it is difficult, but it will be helpful for the exchange program. I am more active now compared to last semester. I am doing many things now and I am trying to get information from my seniors who were abroad as exchange students. Now I think I know how it goes. Last semester I didn't know anything, so I followed others. Now I want to find my way.*

#### **4.3.1.3 Identity**

Issues related to identity have come to be seen as cornerstones of modern L2 motivation theory (Block, 2007; Murray, 2011). In this sense, identity refers to learners' views of themselves and their place in the world. It encompasses the social and cultural groups that they belong to or aspire to belong to and by association, those they see as being unrelated or alien to the self. In a language learning context, this can refer not only to the language community that the learner is potentially entering, but also the entire set of norms and practices associated with the use of language in these communities, which may very well conflict with the learner's L1 community. As a result of this, questions aimed at eliciting information related to the participants' identities had been built into the interview format from the beginning. At an early stage in the coding, it became clear that the data contained references that clearly indicated issues related the participants' identities. As such, the category IDENTITY was created.

[Samantha]

*I have had a difficult time since I came back to Korea. I spent my adolescence outside Korea, so **I think I differ from Korean people in my way of thinking**. Korean people tend to talk around a subject. It is OK to say something outright, but they beat around the bush. I understand the reason they do that is they are trying not to hurt others' feelings. In that respect, I think it is good in some ways. If I talk straightforwardly or speak my opinion clearly in Korea, people think "Who does she think she is?"*

(Interview 1)

[Lily]

*Now English is an official language. That's why **native speakers ask directions in English lightly as if they were in their country although they are in Korea. That makes me feel offended and bitter. My pride was hurt, too [as a Korean]*** (Interview

1)

#### 4.3.1.4 *Reasons for Studying English*

A vitally important consideration in language learning is a student's reasons for beginning or sustaining that learning. This provides insights into the student's perception of him or herself, the importance of English to him or her, and the motivation that can be expected to sustain him or her through the course of learning the language. As such, it was crucial that the participants' reasons for studying English were elicited. This also meant that REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH was one of the first categories created in coding the data.

[Lily]

**Because it's my major**, and when I said people my major is English literature and language, they always said, "Oh, so you are very good at English. Speak something." But I always said, "Oh, I'm not good at English." So, I wanted ... I want to feel confidence in English. And ... when I ... during last semester, I thought that even though I'm not good at English, my English skills is maybe helpful to someone, so ...

(Interview 4)

However, it rapidly became apparent that there were a number of quite common reasons why

the participants were pursuing their studies in English. Not surprisingly, a major reason was related to their future jobs or employment prospects. To code such references, the sub-node MONEY OR EMPLOYMENT was created.

[Kate]

*... **when I want to get a job, great English ability is plus factor to get a job.** Or else I go to America, the origin of my major, there are much more chances to work in that field than in Korea. There are so many kinds of sports such as futsal and American football. Anyway, we are going to have a new baseball club in Korea. The new club hired its people. When they hired people, they didn't care people's major but they cared about English ability. Because they have foreign baseball players in the team so they need translators. The other teams used to hire contract translators, but if your employee can speak English well enough to communicate foreign baseball players, you can save money. So I think it will be advantage for me if I speak English well and I study about sports marketing, too (Interview 1)*

Although employment was clearly uppermost in the minds of many of the participants, they also made mention of a variety of other reasons. Among these, a desire to communicate with people from other countries was evident. The sub-node COMMUNICATION was used to code these references.

[Robert]

[long pause] It was very become to change. When I ... when I started this semester ... this year ... or last year? Last year, I think English just a language for exam and to ... need to study. It is not important to me. But **after this year, I think English is just communication tools. If I can more comfortable and fluent English, I met many people and I get ... I will get various experience to talking with another country people. So, nowadays, I thought ... I think English is communication tools** (Interview 4)

Participants also mentioned travel in other countries as a factor involved in them studying English. These references were represented by the sub-node TRAVEL.

[Hanna]

**Just for traveling** (Interview 3)

In coding the initial interviews, quite a few references were coded simply at REASONS FOR STUDYING English. However, after a larger sample of the data had been coded, it became clear that many of these references involved English being viewed as a means through which the participants could receive a variety of benefits. Among these were access to information, social advantages, and the ability to function independently in foreign contexts. To code references such as these, the sub-node TOOL was created.

[Lily]

... some day, my competence in English is needed I think ... Ah, before I said ... as I said before, **to be a public servant in that, English is needed. And I hope that before graduating my school, I want to travel foreign country and that day, I want to do ... travel freely without any help or guide or tour.** Even though I ... I can't find the clear reason to study English, but I believe that competence is helpful to me (Interview 3)

#### 4.3.1.5 *Significant Others*

Right from the beginning of the research, it was assumed that people who were close to the participants could have a considerable influence on how they looked at themselves, their learning, and indeed their lives. As such, the node SIGNIFICANT OTHERS was created to code references to these people. In this regard, it seemed logical that such references would most likely fall into three main groups, these being PARENTS, TEACHERS, and OTHER STUDENTS. A cursory coding of the initial data bore this out.

#### **PARENTS**

You want to be policeman, police officer?

[Cathy]

**No, parents ... my mother and father want me to take that test** (Interview 6)

## TEACHERS

Her class, what effect do you think it's had on you?

[Michael]

**I ... I have opportunity to think about myself, not my job, my future, just myself**  
(Interview 2)

## OTHER STUDENTS

[Emily]

... in summer vacation, I met a person ... I met one of my friend. Her major is English education and business. And I heard that she did really many things about ... for her dream. She want to ... she wanted to get a job in abroad. For that, she and I are ... **she and me are same age, but I didn't do anything. But she did countless things that I can't follow. So, thanks to her, I got many motivation. So, from that time, I make a plan what I wanna do and what I have to study for my dream**  
(Interview 4)

### 4.3.1.6 *Language Learning Experience*

In Korea, the vast majority of learners begin their study of English in elementary school, and they have approximately 10 years of English learning behind them by the time they enter university. As such, the instruction that they receive and the learning environments that are created can have a considerable influence on both their learning of English and their attitude toward that learning. A major goal of the focus group interviews was investigating the participants' perceptions of their language learning experiences up to that point. LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE was created to highlight references where the participants referred to these experiences.

[Michael]

**For me, the first time I start to learning English, 10 years old. Actually until 17, I wasn't interested in English because there is a lot of thing to memorize. I don't like it. I don't like to memorize something. So, Korean education system, they**

**push to students a lot of thing just memorize. So, I just wanted some kind of atmosphere, just communication and interaction, but there ... [laughing] ... wasn't that system. But when I was 17, I took a lecture in online institute. The teacher changed a lot of thing for me (Interview 1)**

However, it very quickly became apparent that attempting to deal with the participants' language learning experience as a whole was ineffective. Not only did the type of instruction received at different levels vary, but also the participants had quite different responses to and memories of their learning experiences at different periods in their life. To account for this, the sub-nodes ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL, and UNIVERSITY were created.

[Hilary]

***From elementary school and up until my middle school years, I learned English because it was fun, and that was also the reason I started learning in the beginning (Interview 1)***

[Julia]

***... high school forces you to, brainwashes you to unconditionally pursue one goal. As teenagers, our self-identity is indefinite, and considering the overall situation, we're just forced to go along with it. They lock up students 24 hours a day and use the carrot and stick on them, so I think the problem does not lie solely in the curriculum. I followed the carrot, because everyone else did. After following for so long, I find myself here, realizing that I was running all this time without any sense of purpose. I just didn't have a dream. I had something I liked but was baffled ... so you find yourself frustrated and lost without a sense of motivation (Interview 1)***

[Sarah]

***I like the way K University teaches English compared to the way my high school did. In high school, teachers' lectures had to be accepted without question. For example, English teachers said, "Tomorrow's test covers this page through that page." On the other hand, here, K University focuses more on conversational skills. In classes, I listen to this kind of question and I can give my opinion. That provides me with a wider perspective. My attitude towards English also changed. Just like my young days, I think English is attractive and my mind starts to open to it (Interview 1)***

#### 4.3.1.7 Culture

Given the ever-increasing access of learners in Korea to a variety of media, particularly the Internet, and the increasing numbers of foreign residents in Korea (over 3% of the population), it seemed potentially worthwhile investigating whether such contacts played any role in the participants' attitudes toward or desire to learn English. As such, questions designed to evaluate this had been included in the focus group interviews, and this was taken on board in the initial coding. The general category CULTURE was created to code references where the participants spoke about their impressions, feelings, and perceptions of non-Korean cultures, particularly English-speaking cultures.

[Sharon]

**... it's really interesting that foreigners' culture and our culture different. And when we have some situation ... same situation that foreigners think totally other way. It's really interesting, so I want to know about other cultures**  
(Interview 2)

However, given the breadth of this category, it was almost immediately necessary to create a number of sub-nodes to record references where the participants made specific mention of various aspects of foreign cultures. Among these was the node CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, which was used where the participants referred to specific differences that they perceived between their home culture and others.

[Dani]

*We have a native-speaking professor teaching chromatics. He gives grades according to a foreign system, not according to the Korean system. One of my friends is taking his class and she has been late for the class many times by one or two minutes. In Korea, one or two minutes late is not late at all. But her one or two minutes late for the class several times counted as an absence in the class, which she didn't know. Besides, she was absent for last week because of the graduation exhibition. So, the professor warned her not to be absent again. He said in that case she would fail. My*

*friend was shocked. I admit his concept is right, but it is not suitable for Korean people's emotion. Different from Korean* (Interview 3)

While CULTURAL DIFFERENCES was one of the most commonly mentioned aspects of culture, a number of other ideas presented themselves as relevant. Among these was MUSIC/TV/LITERATURE/MOVIES. For many of the participants, a considerable amount of their exposure to foreign culture had come through these media and had very much influenced their thinking about these cultures.

[Sue]

*When I watch their movies or dramas, I feel they are freer than us and their lives seem more fun than ours. They usually have many things to enjoy in their lives* (Interview 2)

In addition, it became clear that for some learners, their interest in certain aspects of foreign cultures, particularly music, was directly related to their desire to learn English.

[Hanna]

*I like Mama's Gun, an English band. The band isn't popular at all in Korea. Some time ago, they had a fan meeting in Korea. I talked with them because I can speak English. Since then I have talked to them on Twitter. English helps me talk with the members of my favorite band and have a relationship with them* (Interview 1)

#### 4.3.2 Development of Additional Categories

The categories mentioned thus far were formulated on the basis of questions prepared for the initial focus-group interviews. As such, they were in many respects predictable, and indeed, the data examined validated their construction. However, in addition to these anticipated categories, the data revealed that there was a much richer variety of factors that had to be accounted for in the coding scheme. This necessitated the development of additional



categories. The following section will provide an explanation of these categories, how they were determined, and the type of reference they were used to code.

#### **4.3.2.1 *Factors Affecting Attitude***

Understanding what influences a learner's attitude toward a language can provide an important insight into what not only promotes but also potentially retards that learner's development. This resulted in the creation of a new category labeled FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE. Although this node was rather wide ranging in its application, it was predominantly used to code references where the participants spoke of important influences on their feelings about English and their desire or ability to learn the language or in some way to make it part of themselves.

[Una]

**The feeling like ... *sense of crisis*. ... Age. One, two, three, and if I don't ... if I don't have break time for one year, I'm in next semester, I'm the fourth grade ...**  
(Interview 4)

However, it soon became clear that there were several main influences on the participants' attitudes toward the language, and it was necessary to create new nodes under FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE to deal with this. Among the first to be created was INTERACTION WITH FOREIGNERS. It was immediately obvious that such interactions, although often infrequent and not without discomfort, affected the participants in a number of ways. This node was thus used to code references where participants highlighted how interacting with people from other countries in English had in some way influenced them. As the coding progressed, this node took on increased significance as participants identified a

wide range of effects produced by their experiences with people from other countries.

[Mandy]

*Before I met my buddy and built a relationship with foreigners personally, I saw some foreigners in my classes and just said a few words. At that time, I knew I should talk English more with them and practice English for future, but I didn't. But **now is totally different situation. I have to use English. I can't delay using English anymore. When my buddy asks me a favor, I need to do it. I have to study English for that. I study English not only because my major is English education but also because English is very useful in daily life*** (Interview 2)

However, just as a large number of participants indicated the, generally positive, effects of developing relationships with English speakers, so too did a considerable number indicate that academic concerns were conspicuous in their thoughts. Among these, the most influential was grades, be these for English classes or assignments or on standardized language tests such as TOEIC. On the basis of this, a new sub-category was created called SCORE. This was used to code references where students spoke about the effect their scores had on their desire to study English.

[Emily]

It was nice because **I got a good grade all my major subjects ... English class, so I satisfied with that. So, I think in terms of English, my last semester was perfect** (Interview 4)

[Binny]

**... because that's grade, I take another conversation class. So, nowadays, this class, I want to try speak more** (Interview 2)

As the previous point suggests, the English classes that the participants took also had a considerable effect on the participants' attitudes toward their studies. This tended to be very much affected by their perceived enjoyment of the classes, which, in general, was determined by both the conduct and content of the class. To code references such as these the sub-category CLASSES was thus created.

[Lisa]

**Communication English is especially big influence because there keep trying to express what I'm thinking and what my emotional things or my opinion. Then keep ... it keep changing me like being outgoing ... more outgoing** (Interview 4)

Another factor that affected the participants' general attitude was their own perceptions of their ability to communicate in English. This could affect both their willingness to enter into communicative encounters and even their motivation to study English. References such as this were coded under PERCEIVED ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE.

[Emily]

**I ... in middle school, I think ... in classroom, I thought that I'm the best person who speak English well. And in terms of English, I always ... I always ... I always try to do anything related to English** (Interview 2)

It also became apparent that there were instances where participants were considerably affected by events that were outside their normal realm of experience. In some cases, these affected how they viewed English in relation to themselves. As such, the sub-node INFLUENTIAL EXPERIENCES was created.

[Hanna]

Yeah. I could have more ... I don't know. I became the ... what can I say? I don't know. I'm not afraid to talk in front of many people because **in ... model international conference I have to speak in ... speak at the lots of people ... in front of lots of people. So, at first time, I was nervous about it, but not ... so, after that, I have no fear about talk in front of lots of people** (Interview 4)

#### **4.3.2.2 Factors Affecting Willingness to Communicate**

A learner's willingness to involve him or herself in communicative interactions in English was taken as one potential indicator of the learner's motivation to learn English and the place

of English within that learner's self-concept. References to this were immediately recognizable in the data and resulted in the creation of the category FACTORS AFFECTING WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC). However, it soon became clear that there were a variety of different influences on the participants' WTC, and as such a number of different sub-nodes were created to illustrate this. Among the more important of these was a participant's belief that he or she was being evaluated by others in a communicative encounter. This node was termed EVALUATION.

[Mandy]

*Ah! That was this. In Prof. K's class, we had group discussion. Some of my classmates were good English speakers. It is personal stuff, but some of them showed off their English ability. I didn't want to talk in front of them in English. **Whenever I spoke in English, they pointed out my English was wrong. That's why I didn't want to speak English, not because I wasn't interested in English. I wanted to take part** (Interview 2)*

[Michael]

... when Korean people learn English, the system focuses on the grammatical rule. I think always the rule ... the rule always makes problem. So they learn rule, so **whenever other people speak in English, they want to judge ... They want to judge it is ... whether it is correct or not. So, that's why many people feel anxious when they speak in English in front of other people ... other Korean** (Interview 2)

Another factor that presented itself as being quite influential was the participants' tolerance of producing incorrect language. FEAR OF MISTAKES was used to code references where participants spoke of the (mainly negative) reaction they had to the idea of making language mistakes in communication.

[Lena]

*Yes. Especially, I feel more ashamed in front of Koreans. While foreigners focus on conversation itself, Koreans focus on pronunciation and grammar and so on. **I am worried about my pronunciation, and someone who knows grammar very well will laugh at me when I am wrong in English** (Interview 2)*

The data also suggested that the participants' WTC was considerably influenced by their

perception of others as having a lower, higher, or even the same level of English. This necessitated the creation of the sub-category OTHER PEOPLE'S LEVELS, which was used to code references where participants spoke of how this affected their willingness to involve themselves in communication.

[Anna]

***I have difficult speaking English when I am nervous or I am in front of people who speak English very well. But if I am with people whose English ability is worse than mine or I am with people who don't care about English, what I learned from those days such as pronunciation, tone and accent can be shown naturally. That gives me confidence, so I can speak English naturally with confidence*** (Interview 2)

It also became clear that some of the participants were quite influenced by what they perceived as the effect they had on others by speaking or trying to communicate in English. There was a clear element of being aware of their relationships with other people and not wanting to in some way upset or in some cases overshadow those around them. To signify this, the sub-node OTHERS' FEELINGS OR PERCEPTIONS was created.

[Sue]

*Now I am taking Communication English. I like that class. Our class students are so quiet, so I can't talk my professor. I feel like I blew my opportunity ...*

[Researcher]

... But if you want to talk, why are they important?

[Sue]

***If I talk in English in that situation, I think others think that I am showing off*** (Interview 2)

#### **4.3.2.3 Societal Influence**

In Korea, English proficiency is highly prized and is in many ways seen as a gateway to social advancement (Hu & McKay, 2012). Therefore, at both a social and an institutional level, there

is considerable pressure on learners to advance their language skills. Clearly, this has the potential to play a role in learners not just taking up language studies but also the direction they take in these studies. As such, it was not surprising when the data revealed that social pressures were indeed influential in the participants' language studies. References to such influences were then coded as SOCIETAL INFLUENCE.

[Emily]

I said before **in Korea, speak English well is really important and get higher ... get higher position in society**. Supposing that if there is two person, who is good at English and not, many people think that she is better than ... he ... she or he is better than this person. So, I want to be successful in the future and to become successful, for me, English is very essential (Interview 4)

#### 4.3.2.4 *Methods of Studying English*

In coding the data, it became apparent that the participants employed a variety of methods of studying English. This is potentially revealing as it can provide an insight both into their priorities in studying the language and their ability to create clear visions of themselves as users of the language. It can also be illuminating to compare their methods with their professed goals in the language and to see whether there is actually a link between the two. To keep track of references where participants outlined what they did to study the language, the category METHODS OF STUDYING ENGLISH was created.

[Michael]

**... during the part-time job, if the foreign customer come to our pub, I try to use English because there was not many opportunities to speak English. And I try to speak alone, for example, during taking shower, because if I don't do that, I think I will have the anxiety again. And during watching the American drama, I try to repeat the ... some interesting expressions** (Interview 4)

It soon became clear that there were a number of common ways in which the participants approached their language study. One of the most common of these was taking classes. These ranged from required language classes in the participants' majors to classes in private language schools to intensive vacation programs. To code references such as these, the node CLASSES was created.

[Lisa]

Ah ... **I did a class, ELF, here, and I studies TOEFL in my academy** (Interview 2)

In addition to taking classes, the participants had a variety of other methods of studying English. Many of the participants made reference to using video or audio materials in their studies, while the Internet was also quite often mentioned either as a means of finding such resources or in other ways related to their study of English. The node MEDIA was created to encompass the variety of such resources.

... do you think that watching TED is useful for you?

[Lily]

Yeah, **very useful because I always think that my vocabulary is short. And I wanted to improve my listening skill. That was really helpful** (Interview 4)

The importance of standardized English tests in Korea also affected the way many students approached studying the language. Given that the two most important of these tests are TOEIC and TOEFL, the node TOEIC OR TOEFL was created to code such references.

[Elizabeth]

And I think that **when I study TOEFL, listening, I learn lots of vocabulary and listening skill and reading skill**. So, I will study TOEFL and then ... actually in TOEFL, there is speaking and writing. It also improving to ... improving my English skill. And then, next, I will focuses on speaking (Interview 3)

#### 4.3.2.5 Goals

As a recognized indicator of motivated behavior, goal-formation is an important measure of a learner's investment in language learning. As such, a portion of each interview was devoted to enquiring about the participants' present and future goals in regard to English. These references were then coded as GOALS.

[Eunice]

**Getting job and use English in my job and keeping in touch with foreign friends**  
(Interview 4)

However, it rapidly became apparent that this category was too general to deal with the multitude of goals that the participants spoke of. As such, a series of sub-nodes was created to group the participants' goals into related categories. Among these was COMMUNICATION. This was used to code references where the participants indicated a desire for interactions with speakers of English from other countries. This was often, but not always, accompanied by a professed desire to improve their speaking or listening skills. However, the determining factor in coding references at this node was the desire for interaction with others.

[Hilary]

In terms of English ... *I am not thinking of TOEFL and TOEIC now. **I want to communicate well with my roommate and I want to talk a lot with her*** (Interview 2)

[Sharon]

In my opinion, I think the most important thing why we study English is to communicate with other people. So, **I think conversation is the most important thing**, I think (Interview 2)

It was necessary to make a distinction between COMMUNICATION and references where participants referred to a desire for an increase in their ability to express their ideas in English



but not necessarily to a desire to use this ability in interactions with others. This node was called FLUENCY and was used to code references where participants spoke either directly of spoken fluency as one their goals or of expressing their thoughts with an increased facility but without necessarily having any particular interlocutor in mind as the recipient of these ideas.

[Dana]

***I also want to become fluent in English. I want to be able to communicate confidently, regardless of the place I go, whether it be undergraduate or graduate school. I want to be able to understand everything, to speak, and to write plainly and clearly. I want to become capable of using English like a native speaker, even in terms of pronunciation. That's my final goal*** (Interview 1)

In addition to a desire to develop their ability to express themselves in English, many participants were preoccupied with more instrumental goals such as attaining a score on standardized English tests. This goal was so common that it was necessary to create the node TOEIC OR TOEFL to highlight the multiple references present in the data.

[Vicky]

Goal? **To improve my TOEIC score** (Interview 4)

[Elizabeth]

Short-term, **I will focuses on TOEIC. And more intermediate, my goal is TOEFL, TOEFL study and I will get TOEFL score** (Interview 3)

The participants also made reference to a range of occupations that they envisioned themselves doing in the future. It became apparent that many of these occupations potentially involved the necessity of some facility in English. As such, the node WORK was created to code such references.

[Blair]

***I want to work in a foreign affiliated company. I live in a foreign country and work with foreigners. For that I need to be good at English. I want to be treated the same way they are treated. I want to work equally with them. I can communicate but in work place if my English is wrong, it won't work*** (Interview 1)

The participants also mentioned goals which involved English as both a goal and the means of achieving a goal. Among the most important in this category were a considerable number of participants whose professed goal was studying abroad. For many of these, this desire was directly related to improving their proficiency in English, while for others, it involved studying a completely different subject but through the medium of English. Such references were coded as STUDYING ABROAD.

[Lena]

***Like foreigners come to Korea to study Korean, I want to go abroad. I think studying abroad is more effective and faster to learn than studying here. ... if I go abroad, not only study but also daily life, I can learn the language. So I want to go abroad to learn*** (Interview 2)

Not surprisingly, a good number of the participants also expressed a desire for the opportunity to see other countries and cultures firsthand. These references were coded as TRAVEL.

[Lily]

*I want to travel freely alone, but my English ability does not allow it, and I can't help joining a package tour. **After graduating from university, I hope my English ability lets me travel abroad alone*** (Interview 1)

In addition to the specific types of goals identified above, it was felt that it could prove informative to further differentiate these goals in relation to their immediacy to the participants, thus potentially informing the types of behavior that might be expected in terms of fulfilling these goals, providing a useful resource for estimating the consistency of the participants' goals, and ascertaining whether goals had been fulfilled or not. As such, the sub-nodes SHORT-, MEDIUM-, and LONG-TERM were created.

#### 4.3.2.6 *Goal-Directed Behavior*

In addition to identifying the participants' goals in English, it was also important to investigate whether these goals promoted associated learning behaviors. This became possible once the focus group interviews had been completed and transcribed and the individual interviews had begun. At this time, the category GOAL-DIRECTED BEHAVIOR was created to code references where the participants spoke of following a particular course of action and related this quite directly to the achievement of a specific goal on their part. The important factor here which distinguished references coded at this node was the directed nature of the behaviors indicated rather than simply an area of study or following a course of study.

[Michael]

... this is first time I go to America, so I want to ... I want to see the world, and for more specifically, I want to ... **I want to gain some information about graduate school in America. So, I have three or four time for meeting English ... some professors in university in US. So, I want to ask them how and what do I need to prepare for entering graduate school, and there, what kind of support do they have. Actually, it is the most important thing** (Interview 4)

However, just as some participants exhibited genuinely motivated and directed learning behavior, others singularly failed to do so. As such, the node LACK OF was created to indicate references where the participants referred to either a lack of action directed at achieving their professed goals or action that did not seem related to any particular goal.

*... speaking and listening ability are needed. After I have those abilities, I can do other things.*

[Researcher]

OK. So, apart from your TOEIC class and OPIC study group, **do you do any other studying for communication?**

[Vicky]

No (Interview 6)

#### 4.3.2.7 *Success*

The idea of goals naturally brings up the complementary idea of success and what this means to an individual. How learners perceive success in studying a language can provide important insights into both their goals and the place of the language within their self-concept. In this regard, participants were asked to define what success in English meant to them. These references and others similar to them were coded as SUCCESS.

[Vicky]

***The English ability I want to have is whatever I want to express, I can express it in English. I hope I have no problem communicating in English and I can watch TV or other stuff in English.***

[Dorothy]

***I hope I can speak English as fluently as Korean.***

[Lisa]

***I think my success in English means I can get my dream job abroad with great English just like I can get it in Korea*** (Interview 1)

#### 4.3.2.8 *Attribution of Success/Failure*

Although defining success in English is potentially influential in terms of goal formation, the ability to monitor progress toward such goals is also an important attribute. For the majority of the participants, their idea of success was very much a long-term goal, not something that was realizable in any immediate sense. As such, the participants' sense of themselves as either succeeding or failing tended to be very much tied to more tangible measures, for example, tests. Given that it has been suggested that learners' attributions of their perceived successes and failures can have an important effect on their motivation (Weiner, 2005), it was appropriate to investigate the data for such references. On the strength of this, the category

ATTRIBUTION OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE was created to code utterances where the learners discussed their successes or failures in learning English and what they felt was responsible for these.

[Hilary]

**Better one is ... was ... I did good in mid-term and final and presentations. Overall, I did good on the class. The other class, I didn't do well on the paper tests. I was expecting those grades** (Interview 2)

This excerpt shows quite a surface level attribution of Hilary's success and failure. However, there were also examples where the participants gave more specific attributions. As such, the node was subdivided into both SUCCESS and FAILURE.

[Michael]

I feel very proud. I got better score I thought, so I felt very good, very proud.

[Researcher]

That's great. Why do you think you got those good scores?

[Michael]

**I think the score is from my effort** (Interview 2)

[Binny]

... she [old teacher] breed baby last month 5 or 6. So, she asked me could you help me, and I just think ... I just think it will not so hard, and I accept. So, because I'm a student and my final exam is last month, so I know someone who lived America for four years. So, I ask her could you with me teach children, and she accept. And her age is 26 and we together teach children about over 30. From 4 p.m. until 11:30 every day we teach children, and every day I go to Daegu and back to Gyeongju, took a bus. **It was crazy busy, so I couldn't study much time, so my grade ... final exam grade is not so much good** (Interview 4)

#### 4.3.2.9 *Opportunities for Communication*

The data also provided insights into the opportunities, or lack of said, that were available to the participants for communicating in English. These can be informative in that they provide

insights into both the opportunities available and the initiative taken in creating or seeking out these opportunities. The category OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION was created to record the participants' references to the availability of chances to use English.

[Sharon]

... actually, about two weeks ago, **I saw foreigner in our school, and ... actually speaking, he was quite good, so I want to talk to him. So ... I saw him at East Gate, but I couldn't ... I couldn't, but few days later, I saw him in our school, so I talked to him. "Ah, hello. Nice to meet you. Just I want to get friendly with you. So, is that possible that give me your phone number?" But he don't have any phone, so he ... he told me his mail address, so we mailed each other and ... at that time, I thought I'm not really worried about that which I told you ... I'm a little bit worried about talk to foreigners. So, at that time I thought it's quite changed my mind, so ... yeah. We sometimes contact each other** (Interview 3)

As the coding proceeded, it became clear that the participants tended to take advantage of two main types of opportunities for communication. The first of these was signing up for a variety of programs that involved interactions with people from other countries. Often, these programs were run through the university, but participants also involved themselves in programs in the wider community. The sub-node PROGRAMS was used to code these references.

[Mandy]

*This semester, K University has many international exchange students. **I joined Buddy program, so I have my buddy, Merlin from Germany. She is a very nice person. ... Because of that, she and I met a lot. We went downtown together to get her cell phone. I guided her. We had meals and drank together. I hung out with my buddy and her friends, other foreigners. It is good fun to hang out with foreigners. I have appointment with her this weekend. They are cheerful and older than me. Merlin is 22 years old. Her friend I hang out with is 26 years old and he speaks 3 languages and he is very intelligent. I learn a lot when we hang out. They want to know our culture so I am thinking about taking them to my house at Chuseok*** (Interview 2)

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the rate of Internet usage in Korea, another common method of

communication was through social media, ranging from a variety of messaging applications to Facebook. The sub-node SOCIAL MEDIA was created to code references to this type of communication.

[Sarah]

*I don't think I have it [opportunities to use English]. **Kakao Talk<sup>2</sup> with my foreign friends.** These days, we can't meet each other because of our schedule. These days Kakao Talk is the only one (Interview 4)*

#### 4.3.2.10 *Teaching Style*

In an environment such as Korea, the majority of opportunities that learners have to interact with the language are in classroom environments. Among the factors affecting the student experience in such environments, one of the most important is the teacher and how he or she chooses to conduct the class. This can have a great influence on learners not only in terms of their enjoyment of the experience but also in terms of how they perceive language learning and the course they take in it. Learners' responses to different styles of class can also potentially give an insight into their preferred learning styles and their attitude toward studying the language. On numerous occasions in the data, participants made reference to their classes and particularly how their teachers conducted both the class and themselves. To highlight these references, the category TEACHING STYLE was created.

[Sarah]

*Last semester, I was dissatisfied with speaking class. That was speaking class but it was not speaking class at all, and some students were even sleeping in the class. The funny thing was that the test for the class was speaking face to face. It was ridiculous. The teacher didn't teach anything. Why did the teacher teach like that? I took Academic English last semester and I liked the teacher, who is Korean,*

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<sup>2</sup> The most popular free messaging application for mobile devices in Korea.

*because the teacher taught many English expressions. “If you want to express this, you can use this English expression.” The teacher made us try to use English and corrected our pronunciation. I still give the teacher a warm greeting. I say to the teacher, “I will take one of your classes.” I like foreign teacher’s class, but I can’t say that. I like an open and suitable method for the content. I like a student-first class* (Interview 3)

#### 4.3.2.11 *Assessing Proficiency*

It became clear from the data that the participants’ perceptions of language proficiency, both their own and that of others, had an important influence on their concept of self and their willingness to take part in certain learning behaviors, for example, communication. It thus seemed germane to highlight their opinions on what in fact constitutes proficiency in the language or the characteristics that they focus on in judging the proficiency of others. This category was called ASSESSING PROFICIENCY.

[Gina]

*I have to make an English sentence in my head first, but they don’t need that process. They speak English spontaneously and their speed of talking is different from me and pronunciation also* (Interview 4)

However, as the coding progressed, it became clear that a number of specific characteristics were focused on by multiple participants in describing and assessing proficiency. The two most common of these were CONFIDENCE and FLUENCY.

[Blair]

I think their confidence when they talk. **If they have confidence when talking in English, it looks they are really good at English** and good to me. It looks like (Interview 4)

[Binny]

*We are learning English, so I think **speaking like a native speaker is considered being good at English**. When Koreans speak Korean, they don’t talk slowly, so people*



*who are good at English also speak English at a reasonable pace* (Interview 1)

#### **4.3.2.12 Influence of TOEIC/TOEFL**

The social and institutional emphasis on standardized language tests such as TOEIC and TOEFL within Korea made this a potentially important influence on how participants perceived their studies of English, and this was apparent during the interviews. As these progressed, both through specific questions focused on the importance of TOEIC and TOEFL to the participants and through incidental references, a considerable amount of information was collected relating to these two tests. In coding the data, the need to highlight references such as these was clearly evident. As such, the category INFLUENCE OF TOEIC/TOEFL was created.

[Anna]

***I let TOEIC go. Before that, English was a burden. It's kind of burden before I gave up TOEIC.*** But now it is kind of friend. I like it very much so (Interview 3)

[Mindy]

***These days, TOEIC test. Its score is needed in ... community? Many people emphasize it, so I think I have to study for it*** (Interview 3)

However, it became apparent that TOEIC/TOEFL had an important influence in a number of specific areas. One of these was very much related to being able to get involved in a variety of programs, for example, exchange programs, and the language proficiency demanded for acceptance on one of these. This was generally demonstrated by having an official score on one of these tests. The node PROGRAMS was created to highlight participants' references to this.

[Emily]

These day, I study TOEFL, and I have a test on 26th. **If I have good score in this test, I will apply in February and maybe go exchange student in fall semester, September. But if I have ... if I don't have enough score for that, maybe next year, March, I will go** (Interview 4)

In addition to being a qualifying measure for a variety of programs, standardized language tests occupied an important position in terms of job prospects. To highlight this potentially important influence on the participants and their attitude to English, the node EMPLOYMENT was created.

[Anna]

Ah, public company. So, **if I apply for that kinds of company, I need that score because of score. It is the standard is more than 800 but every apply ... applicant has a score more than 900, so ...** (Interview 2)

The extent to which TOEIC was a factor in the participants' language learning was also highlighted at the institutional level, that is, the university. All the participants had a specified TOEIC score as part of their graduation requirements. References to this were coded as GRADUATION.

[Blair]

This semester? My goal? TOEIC. Get better TOEIC grade.

[Researcher]

That's the only goal this semester?

[Blair]

**Because ... next year, I need to graduate, so I ...**

[Researcher]

**Need the score?**

[Blair]

**Yes** (Interview 2)

### 4.3.3 Categories Suggested by Revision of Coding

Once the coding scheme had been created and applied to the data set, it was necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the categories created and whether these had genuine explanatory power. This necessitated a comprehensive revision of all the coded data. In doing this, each interview was once again examined, the coding evaluated, and notes made of possible revisions. As a result of this, it was decided that the coding scheme required further development. On the strength of this, a number of additional categories were created and then applied to the data. The following is a selection of the categories created at this point.

#### 4.3.3.1 *Focus of Study*

This node was created due to a perceived tension between what had at first glance appeared to be learning goals but were in fact short-term learning behaviors or foci. The node was created to highlight instances where participants spoke about which aspects of their language development they were working on at a particular point in time. However, it differs from GOALS in that the focus in question lacks a specific direction or intent, i.e., it is simply something that the participant is doing in relation to English. As such, it does not carry with it connotations of motivated behavior or even behavior that is informed by a learner's perceived needs.

[Binny]

**Nowadays, focus on word. So, every day I study words** (Interview 4)

#### 4.3.3.2 *Learning Context*

As the coding progressed, it became obvious that there were a considerable number of references to factors external to the participants' actual studying of the language that affected their willingness or ability to invest time in studying English. As these were not adequately dealt with by the existing nodes, the node LEARNING CONTEXT was created to code references where the participants mentioned aspects of their lives or situations that impacted their study of English.

[Anna]

*My major is getting more and more difficult and it is getting harder and harder for me to follow.*

[Joo]

She had ... can't keep up her major.

[Anna]

*So, I cut down the time for studying English to study my major. Finally, I can't study English at all (Interview 3)*

#### 4.3.4 **Issues with Coding Scheme**

As the previous section indicated, the coding of data was not a linear process. It involved considerable amounts of reevaluation, revising, and recoding. Throughout this process, a number of different issues had to be addressed. The following section will detail these and the measures taken to overcome them.

#### 4.3.4.1 *Deletion of Nodes*

One major issue that had to be dealt with was that in trying to divine the specific meaning of the participants' utterances, quite often nodes had been created that proved to be of limited explanatory power. The following are a number of examples.

##### 4.3.4.1.1 Benefits of English

This node was initially used to code references where the participants spoke about the advantages they could gain through learning or being able to use English or receiving a formal qualification in English. It was mostly used to code references that were not already covered within the REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH and GOALS nodes.

[Emily]

**In Korea, if I study ... if I speak English fluently like native speaker, I can more opportunity than other people to get a job. So, to ... for live in Korea, I think English ... speaking English like native speaker can get more chance and people also see me differently.** So, in that terms, I think English like native speaker is important (Interview 2)

However, as coding continued and became more refined, the usefulness of this node was called into serious question. In the above reference, one can easily see how the reference could be justifiably, and potentially more usefully, coded at REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH – MONEY/EMPLOYMENT or indeed SOCIETAL INFLUENCE. As a result of instances such as this and a thorough review of references coded at this node, it became clear that it was no longer performing a useful function and was thus deleted.

#### 4.3.4.1.2 Varieties of English

This parent node had initially been created in the belief that the participants might show preferences for particular types of English and that this could have an influence on how they viewed learning the language. In the Korean context, there is a genuine social and institutional preference for American English, and American conventions are followed in everything from spelling to punctuation. On the strength of this, it was assumed that such “prejudices” might color the participants’ attitudes to learning English, and this was investigated in the focus-group interviews. Such references received this coding:

[Jina]

I think this is my prejudice but **I think when people speak British accent, it is much greater than American accent or other things** (Interview 1)

However, after the first revision, it became clear that the number of references which had been coded at this node was completely insignificant (total 10). Given that the vast majority of parent nodes had at least 50 references (SELF-CONCEPT had 821), any node with fewer than 20 references was excluded from the analysis and those below 50 were carefully evaluated. As such, VARIETIES OF ENGLISH was deleted<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4.3.4.2 *Merging of Nodes*

It was only once a considerable amount of coding had been done that it was possible to make

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<sup>3</sup> The nodes FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE – UNDERSTANDING, MONEY, and REACTIONS FROM OTHERS were also deleted at this point for the same reason. In addition, at a later stage, COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES (not significantly represented among 2<sup>nd</sup> year participants), BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING (relevance), GLOBALIZATION (number of references – 20), GETTING INVOLVED IN RESEARCH (relevance), and USING ENGLISH (subsumed within FACTORS AFFECTING WTC) were excluded from the analysis.

comparisons between the references coded and to see what commonalities or relationships there might be between them. At this stage, it became clear that in some cases, the hierarchical structure of the nodes was problematic and that what had been initially been created as parent nodes could, in fact, be subsumed within other nodes. A particularly good example of this involved SIGNIFICANT OTHERS.

By the time the initial coding of the focus group interviews and the first three individual interviews had been completed, it became clear that there was a strong connection between this and the participants' capacity to act in an autonomous fashion, which implied a connection to AUTONOMY. The fact that these had been created as separate parent nodes had resulted in several instances of what might be termed "double-coding," where both labels had been applied. This is illustrated by the following excerpt:

**You said that you needed some pressure to do the things that maybe you don't like to do.** Is that right? Where does the pressure come from? Who or what gives you that pressure?

[Joo translates]

[Judith]

Where ... I join in the group or study group, so it needs to speak English very fluently ... and ... in there groups, many people can English very well, but I am very ... *frustrated. The other people can speak English well. I can listen to them but when I speak English, not like my Korean, my English is not precise and correct. That gives me pressure. I myself create pressure* (Interview 2)

This had originally been coded as both AUTONOMY and SIGNIFICANT OTHERS – OTHER STUDENTS. However, this double coding had come about simply to get the idea of autonomy into the coding, and on review, it became clear that the category SIGNIFICANT OTHERS already included this idea. In this excerpt, although the learner claims to create her own pressure, this pressure needs an outside agent to become manifest, which is not particularly indicative of autonomous behavior. This is perfectly illustrated by the use of the

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS label only. Due to instances such as this, it was decided that SIGNIFICANT OTHERS should be re-categorized as a sub-node of AUTONOMY. For exactly the same reasons, SOCIETAL INFLUENCE was also relocated to this category. Later revisions of coding continued to add to this process. As a result, AUTONOMY came to be recognized as a particularly significant category which now included nodes such as GOALS, GOAL-DIRECTED BEHAVIOR, and OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION.

In addition to the major additions to the AUTONOMY category, it also became clear that on their own, several nodes had both limited explanatory power and, in some cases, had been used to code references that were markedly similar. A very good example of this was the nodes FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE – INFLUENTIAL EXPERIENCES and EXPERIENCES ABROAD. These nodes had been used to code 35 and 21 references respectively. However, one of the main criteria for creating separate nodes had been that the category should have genuine explanatory power. This was not the case with having the two nodes separate, particularly as the majority of the participants had not had substantial experience of being abroad, which had resulted in the node being applied to any experience abroad, regardless of its significance, for example:

[Lisa]

**I went to vacation with my mom. And there wasn't really a place using English, but I can hear some non-English person's English. Yeah, so I think that was another experience for me because ...** (Interview 7)

On the strength of this observation, it was decided that it would be more effective to merge the two nodes, providing a more effective resource that now included genuinely influential experiences, for example:

... you'll be doing more debates this year. In terms of your English ability or your feeling about English, has that made any changes do you think?



[Gina]

*I don't know whether my English ability changed or not, but **it definitely affected my attitude toward English a lot in a positive way. I am not sure whether my English ability has improved or not, but I have confidence such as I can do better next time. I got techniques too*** (Interview 7)

Another node that was illustrative of this process was TEACHING STYLE. This had originally been created as a parent node, but the references that this had been used to code were in very many cases clearly linked to student attitudes toward their learning, for example:

**Why do you think the classes were not interesting for you?**

[Vicky]

**The lecture style was not ... fit for me** (Interview 4)

The reference here clearly shows how Vicky's interest in her language studies had been affected by the style of her teacher, something which is clearly related to her attitude toward the language. On the strength of observations such as these, it was decided to merge the node into the general category of FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE, particularly as it could now be clearly juxtaposed with the sub-node CLASSES.

#### **4.4 Revision of References Coded**

The previous section dealt with issues related to the development of the overall coding scheme. However, an equally important part of the coding process was the evaluation of the information collected at each node. This is not to say that there was a linear relationship between finalizing the coding scheme and evaluating the information at each node. Both occurred simultaneously and in a recursive pattern. The following section will deal with the most important revisions made to the coding and the rationale behind these revisions.

#### 4.4.1 Overview

Reviewing the coding involved looking at each node that had been created and evaluating the references that had been collected at it. In doing this, the NVivo Coding Stripes function proved invaluable. By using the Coding Density option, it was possible to see whether each reference had received just one or multiple codes. This made it much easier to evaluate the coding of each reference and to decide whether a change of coding or additional coding was necessary. The following screen shot illustrates this:

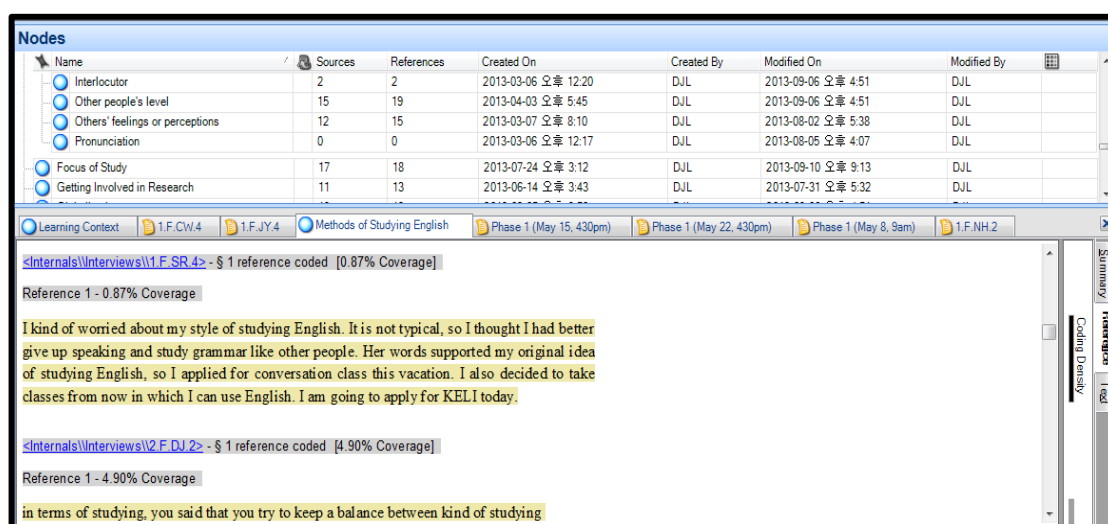


Figure 4.4 NVivo reviewing pane

By placing the cursor over the Coding Density stripe, which appears on the right hand side of the screen, it is possible to see all the coding applied to a particular reference. These are displayed as:

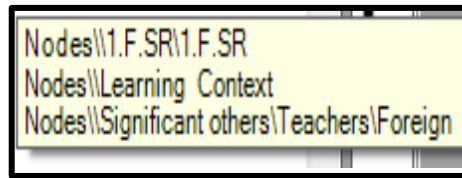


Figure 4.5 NVivo coding stripes

The darker the color of the stripe, the more codes that have been applied to a particular reference. In addition, it is possible to see where the coding has begun and ended in the reference as the stripes also have barriers between them. This is very effective in illustrating the decision-making processes of the coder at the time he or she coded the reference as well as preventing any double coding during revisions.

#### 4.4.2 Nodes Requiring Extensive Revision

Reviewing the coding of references revealed a number of nodes that required quite extensive revision. Among these was the node AUTONOMY – PLANNING LEARNING. It appeared that I had on occasion confused the concepts of “plan” and “method.” A plan implies a clear strategy for achieving a goal. In other words, it is a process that the learner has formulated to achieve that goal. However, a method is just one aspect of this process, a particular way of studying the language that can help to achieve the goal. The following extract illustrates this:

[Dorothy]

*In a class, the professor advised us to practice speaking, watching American dramas. So, I am doing it. I just started doing it (Interview 4)*

This is clearly not part of any overarching plan that Dorothy has formulated by herself. It is

simply a method that she has decided to use on the recommendation of her professor. It was thus recoded as such. The following excerpt also refers to methods of studying English rather than planning learning.

... what do you think are the methods that you kind of use most to find your way or to help you get through the things that you need to do?

[Hanna]

**I think most of them are Internet, on the Internet, yeah. Or sometimes books. ... Because, you know, sometimes when I learn grammar, it is more useful searching on Korean Website for a word. Another things like information about, you know ... sometimes when I don't know slangs or something, I searching on Google and yeah ...** (Interview 2)

This was also recoded at METHODS OF STUDYING ENGLISH.

In addition, several references had been coded at PLANNING LEARNING purely in an attempt to signify the level of autonomy of the learner in question. The following is a good example of this:

[Lisa]

**I can do my own, but sometimes I really don't want to do what I have to do, but then some people have to be around ... I mean not exactly next to me or my friends, but near somebody who is studying has have to be ...**

In this reference, the participant is clearly talking about her needing outside influences to focus or concentrate her on what she needs to do. This is essentially an autonomy issue, and not a question of the steps that she takes to achieve her goals or how she formulates strategies to do this. It was thus recoded at SIGNIFICANT OTHERS – OTHER STUDENTS. In the same way, the following example illustrates how a tendency to try to force references into particular nodes had resulted in what in essence was inaccurate coding:

[Nicola]

*I am not willing to study for myself. At first, **I need somebody who leads me to study.***

***I don't study at all if no one leads me to study. I want native teacher or teachers who can give me good experiences*** (Interview 2)

This clearly shows a lack of autonomy on the part of Nicola, and is only tenuously related to planning her learning. It was thus recoded at AUTONOMY.

Another node that necessitated closer attention was REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH. Quite a number of the problems here stemmed from my failure at times to differentiate between a reason for studying English and a goal in the language. A reason is in some ways paralinguistic; that is, it is not contained within the language itself but within what one will use the language for. A goal on the other hand is a desire to attain some specific facility in the language. This differentiation had not been made in several cases. The following excerpt is illustrative of this:

[Lena]

Reason ... ***just because I want to talk fluently. These days, the only studying in English I do is speaking*** (Interview 4)

Although Lena was clearly asked for a reason for studying English, and she apparently signals an understanding of this, the answer refers more to a goal in English, one which does not seem to have any clear purpose behind it. However, this is perhaps illustrative of Lena herself. It suggests she has difficulty formulating a clear reason for studying the language and falls back on a target in the language to fill this void. However, this was not reflected in the initial coding of the excerpt, which was REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH – COMMUNICATION. To more accurately reflect what the learner said, it was necessary to recode it as both GOALS – FLUENCY and FOCUS OF STUDY.

The following is an even clearer illustration of this problem:

... what would you say your absolute number one reason for studying English these days is?

[Michael]

Whenever I start to speak English, I mumble. I mean “buh, buh, buh, buh, buh.” So, **my first goal is no mumbling, just fluently convey my thinking in English.** This is my first goal (Interview 4)

Once again, it became clear on rereading the excerpt that Michael was talking about a goal, not a reason. As such, it was recoded as GOALS – FLUENCY. This once again pointed out the necessity of not allowing the initial question asked to color the coding of the reference itself. It was also important in that it showed the necessity of taking into account the entire stretch of conversation when analyzing a participant’s responses. It is quite possible that Michael was influenced by the question immediately preceding this one, which was indeed goal-focused. This seems quite likely as on other occasions, he had shown himself to be capable of self-reporting quite effectively.

Substantial revisions were also necessary in relation to the node FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE. Many of these were as a result of creating new nodes later in the coding process which then had to be applied to previously coded sources. An example of this is the following excerpt which was initially coded as FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE – INTERACTIONS WITH FOREIGNERS:

[Elizabeth]

Actually, during contest, I must speak in English. So, actually the Thai professor is so good at English, but member, the member ... students is not good at English, so **he translated all Thai language and I will also translate in Korean to English, and we are talking about 2 members, so I’m so tired and it is so stressful, but I think that it’s very good experience because I think my English speaking ... there it is time for English speaking, so maybe my skill is a little improve** (Interview 2)

Although this coding did have relevance to the information presented here, it failed to bring out the fact that this was quite an eye-opening experience for the learner in question. Instances such as this had to be retrospectively coded at FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE – INFLUENTIAL EXPERIENCES.

It also became clear that there was a problem with the way the node FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE – CLASSES had been applied. On reviewing this, I discovered that I had often used this to code references the participants made to their majors. Obviously, a class and a major are at two very different levels, both of them potentially influential but in quite different ways. In addition, the influence of a participant's major was often not on his or her attitude to English:

***My major is getting more and more difficult and it is getting harder and harder for me to follow. ... So, I cut down time for studying English to study my major. Finally, I can't study English at all*** (Interview 3)

Here, it is not so much Anna's attitude that is affected by her major as much as it is her ability to focus on English. As such, this was recoded at two nodes created quite late in the initial coding. These were LEARNING CONTEXT, illustrating the learning situation she found herself in, and SELF-CONCEPT – IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH, demonstrating the fact that English had taken a back seat to her major studies in terms of her priorities.

#### **4.4.3 Creation of New Nodes**

One factor that had a considerable effect on the revision process was the creation of new nodes at different stages of the coding process. As more interviews were coded, the necessity

for either additional nodes or sub-nodes became clear. Among the nodes affected by this was GOALS. This was as a result of a necessity to differentiate between goals, as in a particular use or facility in the language to strive for, and focus, this being the part of the language that the learner was concentrating on at a particular time and that was not necessarily related to goal achievement or a definite plan. This necessitated the creation of a new node, FOCUS OF STUDY, which then had to be applied to a considerable number of references originally coded at GOALS.

... what are you focusing on in terms of studying English these days?

[Hilary]

***Memorizing many English words*** (Interview 4)

There is little clear purpose to the apparently random learning of vocabulary that Hilary intends to carry out. This is just what she is doing to study English at the moment. The creation of this new node impacted the coding of a not insignificant number of references.

The creation of a new node also substantially impacted SELF-CONCEPT. This originally had been created as a measure of self-knowledge, the ability to vocalize beliefs about attributes, abilities, talents, and priorities. However, the later creation of the sub-node SELF-CONCEPT – SELF-AWARENESS (see Section 4.3.1.2) meant that it had to be applied to a considerable number of references which had been coded only at the head node.

[Mandy]

***Now, I don't insist on only my opinion and I listen to others. It could make my pride lower like "Whatever I do, I am wrong" kind of attitude. But Professor Kim prevented that attitude. With his praise, I can accept feedback without hard feelings. I have a person who appreciates my ability. Without his support, maybe I wouldn't change*** (Interview 3)

Here, Mandy is able to identify changes in behavior or belief and to explain aspects of her



behavior in relation to her overall self-concept, something which had not been adequately highlighted by the initial coding. However, it was not just references at SELF-CONCEPT that had to be re-evaluated. It was necessary to revisit all previously coded transcripts to ensure that the full range of nodes was applied across all the interviews. The following passage is illustrative of this:

[Lena]

I don't think I have favorite learning style but teachers are really important to me. **I get more motivated when I study with teachers or professors who give me favorable impression. But my interest drops sharply when first impression of teachers doesn't appeal to me or when I hear a teacher's teaching style which I don't agree with. I learn well when I have interest** (Interview 2)

This had initially been coded only as SIGNIFICANT OTHERS – TEACHERS. However, Lena here illustrates a good degree of knowledge about herself, an idea that was not recorded with the previous coding. As such, it was additionally coded as SELF-CONCEPT – SELF AWARENESS.

A node that became particularly important at this stage was LEARNING CONTEXT (see Section 4.3.3.2). The following is illustrative:

[Vicky]

**This semester is very hard for me because I learned northern [modern? Western?] literature.** It was very difficult for me. This semester is very tough for me. And I think I didn't study English very much this semester ... in this semester.

[Researcher]

Why was that do you think?

[Vicky]

I did other activities, so ... and I feel lazy, truly

[Researcher]

What other kinds of activities were you doing?

[Vicky]

**I did mentoring program and Vision camp and many ... *special lectures?***  
(Interview 4)

Although Vicky here is doing a variety of different things that don't seem particularly connected, it is perhaps too much to say that this is indicative of a lack of goal-directed behavior. It seems more appropriate to say that this is more a comment on the situation that she finds herself in and what is going on in her context. As such, references such as this often necessitated a recoding as LEARNING CONTEXT. Such references give potentially important insights into what else is going on in the participants' lives, which can have a major effect on their concepts of themselves and English and its importance to them at a particular point in their learning. This became particularly important as they progressed through university and the hard realities of imminent graduation and the search for employment dawned on them.

#### 4.4.4 Definitions and Application of Nodes

A number of other issues regarding the coding came to light during the review process. One of these was that over the course of the coding, my definitions and applications of some of the nodes had changed. This was illustrated by two interviews, one from the second round and the other from the third.

... how do you measure your progress in English?

[Justine]

**Compare with other people** (Interview 2)

In this excerpt, the only coding applied was ASSESSING PROGRESS. However, other students were evidently an important measure against which Justine evaluated herself.

... how did you choose English Education in the first place?

[Emily]

Actually, **my parents want me to go that department** (Interview 3)

Similarly, in this excerpt, which was originally coded only as CHOOSING MAJOR, the major influence of her parents in her decision was not highlighted, a potentially important omission. It became apparent that although the node SIGNIFICANT OTHERS had been one of the first created, I had not always applied it consistently. This necessitated a revision of a considerable number of references, particularly those that had been coded ASSESSING PROGRESS and CHOOSING MAJOR.

Another issue was that sometimes in the coding, I had been too influenced by the initial question or the first part of the answer and had applied the coding too extensively. However, there were numerous instances where either the question had not been answered in the way expected or the answer had veered in a different direction as the response progressed. This can be illustrated by the following:

... the last time we were talking, **you said that you'd kind of begun to feel that English conversation ability was a necessity** ...

[Una]

Necessity?

[Researcher]

Necessity. Do you feel that way now? Why do you feel like that?

[Una]

*Did he ask if English conversation is necessary?*

[Joo translates]

[Una]

***Because I have to get a job, and apart from that, my major is English. Besides, I want to have good English ability, fluency in English*** (Interview 3)

This had initially been coded as FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE, but Una here doesn't really talk about anything that has influenced her attitude to English. She is actually talking about why she is studying English. As such, the reference was recoded as REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGLISH. Examples such as this highlighted the necessity of dealing directly

with what participants had actually said rather than what they were asked, in other words coding their utterances on face value. This resulted in a closer examination and reevaluation of multiple references.

## **4.5 Preparing the Data for Analysis**

Once the coding categories had been finalized and a final review and revision of the coding undertaken, the data could then be prepared for analysis. This was in many ways a process of data reduction, one in which the mass of data which had been coded was reduced to manageable quantities. To achieve this, the coded data from each participant was examined and notes taken of salient ideas that he or she had alluded to. This was done on a node-by-node basis and allowed for the reduction of the data to be dealt with from dozens of pages of text to 10 to 20 pages of annotations. However, these annotations required further modification to provide genuine explanatory power. As such, they were reviewed and separated into distinct categories based on the nodes and sub-nodes they related to. It was thus possible to reduce the data which had been coded at a node such as GOALS down to approximately one page of annotations per participant. This made it considerably easier both to track a participant's development throughout the interview process and to compare him or her with other participants in the study. As a result of this process, it then became possible to utilize the data for a principled analysis of the participants' L2 motivational systems.

## 4.6 Conclusion

As can be seen from the information presented in this section, the coding process was by no means a linear one and involved a recursive process of coding, evaluation, and revision. In addition, it is important to realize that the final coding scheme was not based on theoretical concepts. It was created empirically in response to the data collected. In other words, it was driven by what the participants attended to, or, to use a phrase from conversational analysis, oriented themselves toward. As such, it cannot be claimed that the coding scheme presented here can be applied in contexts outside the one under immediate investigation. However, it can provide a useful point of reference for other researchers conducting investigations into learner motivation and the self-concept in their own contexts. Finally, although the coding scheme was not created with particular theoretical constructs in mind, it does allow for the formation of hypotheses related to these participants' motivation to learn a second language. These findings will be investigated in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined how NVivo was used to code the data, the nodes that were created during this process, and the process of revision that took place to finalize these nodes. Such software has brought immense advantages to qualitative researchers in that it has facilitated the annotation and management of large datasets such as the one created for this study, where the use of NVivo enabled the identification of important themes in over 100 hours of transcripts. However, as powerful a management tool as NVivo is, it has limitations when it comes to analyzing the data. Unlike quantitative software such as SPSS, one cannot simply run Pearson's correlations or ANOVA to gauge the relationship between items or their significance. Responsibility for this rests with the researcher. Nevertheless, the temptation with the categorizations offered by NVivo coding is to focus too much on the individual themes and not on how and at what levels these themes interact and how this affects the learner. This is clearly anathema to contemporary thinking in the field, which sees a learner as being a system which can only be understood through an analysis of the interactions of the various elements that make up that system.

To facilitate such an approach, the present research made use of an analytical framework which allows for a directed focus on key elements of a system but at the same time facilitates

an investigation of how and at what levels and timescales interactions between these elements take place. This framework was developed through the adoption of a *complex dynamic systems* (CDS) approach (de Bot *et al.*, 2007; Dörnyei *et al.*, 2015b; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a). This chapter will begin by outlining the process through which this approach was adopted and developed. It will then move on to present and illustrate the elements that were identified and the levels of context to which these belonged. Although this might seem to suggest a discrete focus on particular elements, this is not in fact the case. Before any relational analysis of these elements can take place (something which will be the focus of Chapter 6), it is first necessary to identify and define what they are.

## **5.2 Developing an Analytical Framework**

### **5.2.1 CDS in Motivation Research**

From its inception, the whole direction of the research had been influenced by the growing [adoption](#) of CDS approaches in looking at [L2 motivation](#). The work of researchers such as Dörnyei (2009b), Ushioda (2009), and Lamb (2007), all of whom stress the multifarious internal and external influences on motivation, had been significant in the formative stages of the research and had played a considerable role in how the research was designed and conducted. In addition, much of the most recent research (Dörnyei, 2014; Mercer, 2014) has explicitly taken a CDS approach to the investigation of the L2 self and motivation. As a result of such research, a number of new terms have begun to enter the L2 motivation lexicon.

### 5.2.1.1 CDS Terminology

One of the most basic concepts in CDS is the idea of *attractor states*. These refer to “critical outcomes that a system evolves toward or approaches over time” (Hiver, 2009, p. 21). This is not to say that these states exert any form of attraction. It simply describes the tendency of systems to move toward certain areas and away from others. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) identified three types of attractor states, which they labeled *fixed point attractors*, *cyclic/closed loop attractors*, and *chaotic/strange attractors*. The first type represents a system moving into a particular area and settling there. Such a system will exhibit a *dynamic stability*, apparently having settled into a preferred attractor state. However, dynamic stability “is different from stasis because it includes local variation and is open to future change” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008, p. 56). The second type refers to a system moving back and forward between a number of different attractor states, while the third indicates a system that is unstable and moves toward one attractor state after another in ways that are quite unpredictable but never quite settles in any. All these movements take place within the *state space*, “a collection of all the dimensions, factors or constituents one needs to describe the dynamic system at issue” (Van Geert, 2009, p. 82). In other words, the state space represents all the possible positions that a system can occupy.

Which attractors the system settles in is determined to a large extent by the *attractor basin*, “a region in which the attractor exerts an influence” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008, p. 52). The strength of this influence is determined by two factors, its width and its depth. According to Nowak, Vallacher, and Zochowski (2005, p. 356), “[a]n attractor with a wide basin will ‘attract’ a relatively large number of nearby values. ... The depth of an attractor corresponds



to the force required to move the system out of the attractor.” As such, the width of an attractor corresponds to its ability to capture the system, while its depth is a measure of how stable the system’s presence there will be. This will also be affected by the *initial conditions* of the system. As Verspoor (2015, p. 38) points out, “in a complex dynamic system, in which many kinds of sub-systems interact over time, small differences in sub-systems at one point in time may have an impact on the eventual outcome.” As such, although changes in a system may be gradual, they can also be sudden and unpredictable, a so-called *phase shift*, “a major transition for the system; what the system does after the phase shift is qualitatively different from what it did before” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008, p. 58).

This section has outlined some of the terminology that has entered SLA research as a result of CDS approaches. The following section will detail how such an approach was adopted in the development of an original analytical framework for the present research.

### **5.2.2 Developing an Original Analytical Framework**

There are a number of obstacles to overcome in attempting to analyze data from a CDS perspective. One of the main ones is the fact that “... there are simply no tried and tested research methodological templates available” (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 84). As such, the present study necessitated the development of an original methodological framework. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008b) outline a number of recommendations for research using a CDS perspective, including a preference for qualitative, longitudinal studies, an avoidance of narrow linear cause-effect assumptions, a focus on change, and the inclusion of context, not as an external variable, but as part of the system under investigation. The qualitative,

longitudinal design of this study, the use of a grounded approach, the deliberate attempt to discover how the participants' motivation changed over time, and the inclusion of context as a central construct within the research design were all implemented as a means of making the data amenable to a CDS analysis.

While these are of course very general desiderata, more concrete and specific methodological frameworks are now starting to emerge. Dörnyei (2014), for example, has recently proposed “retrodictive qualitative modelling” as a means of investigating instructed language learning. In this method, the researcher begins at the end, with the perceived outcomes, and works backward to identify the elements that led to these outcomes. Another important contribution has been made by Ushioda (2009), who advocates a “person-in-context relational view” of motivation, which stresses context as an integral part of the motivational system. She has recently developed this idea to focus on what she calls “learner-internal and learner-external contextual processes” as a means of understanding “the person, their motivation and their behavior, and the interconnected contextual factors involved” (Ushioda, 2015, p. 53). Another approach has been suggested by Mercer (2015), who recommends the use of social network analysis (Carolan, 2014) in illustrating the “interconnectedness of individuals” (Mercer, 2015, p. 74).

While all of these approaches offer principled means of working with the data, the framework that appeared best-suited to the analysis was Larsen-Freeman and Cameron's (2008a) concept of “complexity thought modeling.” This means of conceptualizing the data offered a logical means of both determining and presenting the findings from the research. This framework involves a five-step process, as follows.

1. Identify the different elements of the system
2. For each component, identify the timescales and levels of social and human organization on which it operates
3. Describe the relations between and among components
4. Describe how the system and context adapt to each other
5. Describe the dynamics of the system (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a, p. 41)

This suggested a principled and rigorous means of both investigating the data and presenting the results of this investigation. However, it, too, required some amendment before it could be effectively utilized. This was very much bound up with the perception of context and how this would affect the interpretations of data. At stage 2 of the process, the delineation of different levels of social and human organization requires a clear statement of what these are, something that will vary depending on the researcher's conception. In addition, the description of how system and context adapt to each other in stage 4 will also be affected by how important a component of the system context is perceived to be. The role and definition of context thus had to be overtly stated before any genuine analysis could begin.

While context is assigned a place within any complex dynamic system, the definition of what context is and the role it plays in the system vary. Ushioda's (2015) conception of learner-internal and learner-external contexts has an immediate appeal as it puts context right at the heart of any complex dynamic system. One potential issue, however, is the delineation of only two levels of context. As Ushioda (2015, p. 53) herself admits, "The research challenge is to describe interactions among internal contextual processes as well as contextual processes in the external environment." One potential way of achieving this is through the provision of a third level of context, thus enabling a deeper analysis of the interactions between elements in a system and providing more descriptive power. One such classification that has been proposed is Kashima *et al.*'s (2001) concept of individual, relational, and collective selves.

These are defined as follows:

... self in a goal-directed activity (individual self), self in relationship with other individuals (relational self), and self in relationship with groups (collective self) (Kashima et al., 2001, pp. 277-278)

As the definition suggests, individual self is that aspect of the self associated with goal-directed, autonomous behavior and personal agency. Relational self is very much bound up with one's relationships with others, which could include ideas such as dependency and competition. Finally, collective self moves beyond a focus on individuals to the relationship of an individual to a group. Such groups can be thought of not only as collections of individuals but also as being on a more macro level, thus making it possible to conceive of them in terms of nationality or class. However, one potential criticism of this conception is the potential to focus too much on culture and the attendant bias that this can bring with it.

Having explored the possibilities offered by the conceptions outlined above, it was felt that, in a similar vein to the choice of a framework, none of them quite fit the requirements of the present analysis. A more workable solution was to appropriate the most applicable aspects of each and create a new conception that could provide the maximum utility in analyzing the data. In this regard, the three-level structure of Kashima *et al.* (2001) offered an appropriate means of delineating contextual elements, which while being large enough to provide classifications with genuine explanatory potential, did not risk complicating the analysis to the extent that it was impossible to identify the levels at which various elements were operating. In addition, Ushioda's (2015) location of context as both within and outside the learner solved the problem of context too often being seen as in many ways external to the learner. As such, it was decided to adapt her terminology in the definition of context as it would be used in the analysis. This led to the creation of three terms to identify the three

levels of system organization in the data. These were labeled Internal Context, Immediate Context, and Outer Context.

The Internal Context corresponds in many ways to Kashima *et al.*'s (2001) individual self. It refers to elements of the self that would be seen as being located at the heart of an individual's self-concept. It includes such elements as autonomy, agency, conceptions of one's abilities and potentialities, and both cognitive and affective processes. The Immediate Context has much in common with Mercer (2014, 2015) and social network analysis. It refers to contextual elements that can be said to be immediately relevant to the learner, that are in many ways in an ideal position (both physically and metaphorically) to interact with the learner. Such elements could include, in a relational sense, significant others or the immediate learning context and environment in which the learner operates. Finally, the Outer Context includes elements that, although perhaps not consistently interacting with the learner in direct or overt ways, nevertheless can impact the learner's self-system in profound ways. In this regard, one could include elements such as societal norms or even globalization.

A crucial point to note about these levels of context is that they are not discrete categorizations. It should not be thought that by placing a particular element in one of these levels, it can operate only at that level. In any complex system, elements may be more or less in focus at a particular time, and there is always the potential for migration. As Ushioda (2015, p. 49) has pointed out, "To make our research manageable, we are obliged to make certain pragmatic decisions about the contextual elements to be included and excluded, and pragmatic choices about the nested levels of analysis to focus on." As such, it may be more useful to think of this three-level structure as being metaphorically analogous to a biological cell. At the internal level, we have the cell nucleus, the core of the cell, containing the DNA that makes

the cell what it is. Around this, at the immediate level, is the cytoplasm in which is suspended a variety of elements which can and do interact with the nucleus. Finally, beyond the cell membrane, and corresponding to the outer level, is the world outside the cell. Again, it is possible for this outside environment to interact with the cell, to enter it, and indeed to change its internal structure, while the cell itself can also have an effect on its environment. Thus, the model proposed here should be seen as based on pragmatic concerns related to providing a usable framework of analysis.

In essence, formulating the analytical framework for the data involved “adopting a complexity perspective” (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a, p. 41). Each of the approaches outlined in this section had potential advantages, but each, to a certain extent, involved looking at the data with pre-conceived notions, something that was not in keeping with the initial research design. However, the adoption of a “dynamical perspective” provided “a general apparatus for understanding the way systems – including, in particular, non-linear systems – change over time” (van Gelder & Port, 1995, p. 17). It was with this in mind that the final framework borrowed from several different sources while incorporating a CDS approach. The following section will elucidate this framework and its application in more depth by identifying the key elements of the L2 motivational system as suggested by the data and the levels of organization at which these operated.

### **5.3 The Elements of the L2 Motivational System**

The coding of the data revealed that there were numerous potential elements that could be

included as part of the participants' L2 motivational systems. However, attempting to deal with all of these would have precluded any prospect of achieving a coherent analysis. As such, decisions had to be made about which elements to include. In doing this, the significance of potential elements was determined by a number of criteria. The first of these was that the data contained numerous references to a particular element. In addition, these references needed to occur at several different points in time, not just in the context of one instance of data collection. Similarly, elements that were mentioned by only one participant had to be carefully evaluated. For example, experience of living abroad could clearly have a major relationship to a learner's motivational system and should be included. By the same token, having a crush on a foreign pop singer, while potentially relevant for an individual learner in the short-term, was unlikely to reward the effort of including it as part of the learner's motivational system. A major consideration in which elements to include was those that the participants themselves had made salient, either through overtly stating them as important or by the consistency with which they manifested themselves throughout the interview process. This latter criterion was particularly important in identifying elements which the participants may not have been consciously aware of. By applying these criteria in choosing elements and by then apportioning these to the three contextual levels of system organization, it was thus possible to create a representative model of the participants' L2 motivational systems.



**Figure 5.1 Elements and levels of context of the L2 motivational system**

In this model, the elements at the center (the orange circle) correspond to the Internal Context, those in the green to the Immediate Context, and those in the outer, blue circle to the Outer Context. The terms used in the model are, for reasons of space and utility, rather broad. As such, the following section will provide a more detailed description of what is meant by these terms and illustrate them using references from the interview data. It should also be borne in mind that the elements in the above diagram are not to be understood as forming any kind of order or hierarchy. As Larsen-Freeman (2015, p. 14) points out, "... learner factors overlap



and interact interdependently, with factors playing a larger role at certain times and not at others.” As such, there is no suggestion here that certain elements are more important than any others. They are presented simply in the order in which they will be dealt with in the following sections.

### **5.3.1 The Internal Context**

At the center of the model lie those elements that can be thought of as lying at the heart of the self, those processes which can be seen as fully internalized and that shape who each individual is. These were the elements that the data suggested were the most closely linked to the L2 self-concept for the participants in this study. As will be shown in Chapter 6, however, the actual situation is not quite as clear cut as this, the boundaries of the various levels of context proving to be eminently permeable. Nevertheless, for the purposes of analysis, it was necessary to make these classifications.

#### **5.3.1.1 *Reasons for Studying English***

The data showed that for the participants in this research, the reasons underlying their studies provided a genuine insight into how they viewed the language. It was possible to divide these reasons into a number of distinct areas. One of these was communication. Mandy, for example, quite often mentioned communication as one of the reasons that she chose to study English.

What’s your number one reason for studying English? Your number one reason.  
[Mandy]

Number one reason? *The reason I want to go abroad, the reason I want to do an exchange student program is that I want to speak English very fluently. I want to hang out with foreigners naturally* (Interview 4)

Lena also identified communication as one of the reasons she was learning English. Similarly to Mandy, she expressed an interest in meeting people from other countries and a desire to communicate with them.

*If I go to other countries, I can communicate with them fluently. I like meeting those people* (Interview 1)

However, communication was not the only or indeed the major reason the participants were studying English. Many of them saw English as more of a tool. Lisa put it succinctly when she said:

... the English have to be a base for everything (Interview 5)

Samantha put it in a similar way when she stated:

... it doesn't really matter if you don't know anything, but if you do know how to speak English and write and, you know, feel comfortable. That's done, like. You can get your job (Interview 2)

In this regard, the participants quite often linked their study of English directly to future employment.

*... my objective in applying to the English Education Department was to become an English teacher, and the reason I study English is for the same reason. I want to improve my English skills in order to be capable of teaching others* (Gina, Interview 1)

Other participants had a decidedly instrumental focus in their studies.

... what's your major reason for studying English these days? Major reason.

[Cathy]

*Test score and ... extra points for the test. Except those, I don't have a particular*

*reason* (Interview 6)

However, just as many of the participants had clear reasons for studying English, for others, they were, if not absent, then at least considerably vague. One of the participants who illustrated this was Lisa.

... what is your number one reason for studying English?

[Lisa]

Number one reason. I think there's no reason, like kind of habit (Interview 4)

Regardless of the clarity or otherwise of the participants' reasons for studying English, they provided a clear indicator of the place of English within their self-concepts, thus justifying their inclusion at the level of Internal Context.

#### **5.3.1.2 Vision**

Clearly linked to the reasons the participants gave for studying English was their visions of themselves as future users of the language. It has been claimed that a learner's ability to visualize a definite future use of English is strongly related to motivated, goal-directed behavior and persistence in the effort required to achieve that goal (Dörnyei, 2009b; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). As such, the strength of a learner's vision of him or herself as a user of English is an effective indicator of how deeply ingrained English is within the self-concept. The data in this study showed that there was considerable variation in the participants' ability to perceive a clear place for English in their future. However, these visions tended to fall into one of several general areas.

When asked what they thought they would use English for in the future, several of the

participants indicated visualizing themselves using English to travel independently or even to live in other countries. Lisa was one of those who saw herself traveling.

... do you have a kind of a vision of yourself using English in the future? ... Do you have that kind of imaginary picture?

[Joo translates]

[Lisa]

When I always thinking about that, I think only one situation that I go trip alone or only with my friends, so ... and not package tour, so ... and just go by looking maps, like that. (Interview 2)

Lena at the outset of the interview process presented a very clear vision of her future, one that was very much associated with living in another country.

*Now, my goal is to be an interpreter. I need to get high grades on TOEIC and I want to study TOEFL as well. Then when I'm a sophomore, things like being an exchange student, but not only being an exchange student. There seem to be a lot of programs that the government supports, but not only those programs. I can go by applying for the overseas volunteer program. Through those, I want to go abroad and study and if it's okay, I want to go to programs that give credits instead of taking classes here. Then after coming back, I want to transfer to a university abroad. In the universities in Korea, there aren't actually many majors that have interpreting, but in Hankuk University of Foreign Studies they have one. I want to transfer to a famous university in Australia to major in interpreting. After graduating, I want to work in a foreign country (Interview 1)*

Penny was in some ways similar to Lena, also seeing the potential for studying abroad and a working future outside Korea. She also emphasized the necessity for a command of English in this potential future.

*I could go to a graduate school abroad and I could work abroad. In those cases, if I can't talk in English, I will get damage and give damage.*

[Researcher]

You want to go graduate school abroad?

[Penny]

*Right now, yes. It is not confirmed yet (Interview 2)*

This link between potential future employment and English was quite common among the participants. Samantha was one of these. Despite not being quite clear about what her future path would be, both her options were related to a need for English.

One is being employed by like foreign company, working in company like that. I like to work with many people, where I can do plan for something and ... managing things. I really like that. And another thing is teaching. But that will be either kids or university students, not the middle or high school students. I don't really want them (Interview 2)

However, just as these participants were able to picture a place for English in their future, so too were there those who struggled to do this. Cathy was one of these. She was both unsure about her future and the potential for English to play any part in it. For her, English was necessary as a means of getting a job, but not necessarily for doing the job.

... do you think will you use English in your job or ...

[Cathy]

No, no, no.

[Researcher]

Just to get your job?

[Cathy]

Just use English to get, not ... I don't know not ... *I don't know if my job will be directly related to English. However, now, in my view, I have to use English to get a job. But I don't know if my job will be related to English* (Interview 5)

Vicky was very similar in this regard, basically describing English as having a gate-keeping function rather than being needed for the actual job.

*... many people consider English as a way to get a job, but they don't think English itself will become their job* (Interview 9)

As the preceding examples attest, the ability of the participants to visualize a genuine future use of English was an important indicator of the depth to which it had permeated their self-concepts. This was a clear justification for including vision at the level of Internal Context.

### 5.3.1.3 Goals

It is not possible to talk about the participants' reasons for studying English and their visions of themselves as future users of the language without also investigating the goals they set for themselves. The data revealed that the participants' goals generally fell into two categories: goals related to English itself and their own future goals. The most commonly identified of these were those related to studying abroad, exam scores, and future careers. Each of these will be illustrated in turn below.

#### 5.3.1.3.1 Studying Abroad

A common goal for a considerable number of the participants was securing a place on a program that would allow them to study abroad. Mandy, for example, was intent on doing such a program from early on in the interviews. With this end goal in mind, she settled on a number of intermediary goals that would help her to achieve it.

*One of the reasons I applied for the Buddy program was for an exchange student program. I am going to apply for it in the fourth semester. For that, I have to study TOEFL. But communication in English is the basis for that. I am responsible for my buddy, so in some ways it is difficult, but it will be helpful for exchange program. I am more active now compared to last semester. I am doing many things now and I am trying to get information from my seniors who were abroad as exchange students. (Interview 2)*

Vicky was another participant who had a desire to take part in some kind of overseas program. Although she was not quite as focused as Mandy, she was still quite clear about the benefits it would offer her.

*Any English major student wants to do a student exchange program. It is being conducted by K University and it is different from going abroad in person. My senior*

*also studies hard for it.*

[Joo]

*What benefit do you think you will get from that program?*

[Vicky]

*If you study in an English-speaking country, your pronunciation will be better, you will use English in daily life and your listening will be improved. I think it will be quick to study English there (Interview 2)*

This reasoning was in many ways echoed by Lena, who perceived distinct differences between studying English in Korea and what she could do abroad.

*Like foreigners come to Korea to study Korean, I want to go abroad. I think studying abroad is more effective and faster to learn than studying here. In Korea, I don't have many chances to use English. I go to an English academy for one hour a day, but the rest of the day I speak Korean. But if I go abroad, not only study but also daily life, I can learn the language. So I want to go abroad to learn (Interview 2)*

However, it was not just the perceived language benefits that prompted the participants to want to study abroad. As Gina indicated, the opportunity for new experiences was often just as powerful a motivation.

*My English ability will be improved because I will be exposed to an English speaking environment. The biggest reason I want to go abroad is because I have never been abroad. I want to go sightseeing there and meet new foreign friends, which are bigger reasons than studying to me. (Gina, Interview 5)*

These references show that studying abroad occupied the thoughts of the participants and was a genuine goal for many of them. However, it was by no means the only goal related to learning English.

#### **5.3.1.3.2 Scores**

Right across the sample, there was a remarkable consistency in terms of the participants' focus on scores on standardized language tests as a main goal. By far the most common of

these was TOEIC. This was mentioned on numerous occasions by every participant. Vicky, for example, started off the interview process as a freshman by declaring, “*I want to improve my TOEIC or TOEFL score*” (Interview 1). Just like Vicky, Gina identified TOEIC as a goal right at the beginning, stating, “*[m]y immediate goal is also to raise my TOEIC score*” (Interview 1). In a similar vein, Lena was focused on achieving scores on both TOEIC and TOEFL. As she asserted, “*I need to get high grades on TOEIC and I want to study TOEFL as well*” (Interview 1). Even someone like Samantha, who had studied abroad for approximately 5 years, admitted to scores being a priority: “*I do care a lot about the score*” (Interview 5). There was a clear emphasis on score-based goals, particularly TOEIC and TOEFL, in the participants’ formulation of short-term goals in English. The importance of these scores to the participants justified their inclusion at this level of context.

#### **5.3.1.3.3 Work**

Given the age of the participants, it was not surprising that considerations of future employment were often at the forefront of their thoughts. In some instances, the participants’ job-related goals were directly related to English. Gina’s future job, for example, was almost inseparable from studying English.

*... when I think about something else besides [English] teaching, I want to work at an international trade company. I like to get around and meet people. It would be good. I can use English in that situation* (Interview 3)

In a similar vein, Lena professed “*[t]he jobs I want are all related to English*” (Interview 1). These jobs included potentially being a reporter or a translator/interpreter. Mandy at this point exhibited the same type of indecision as Lena. However, her potential options all had a clear relationship to English.



*... I thought about becoming a teacher, lecturer or translator. Becoming a translator was my initial goal, but I changed my path to becoming an English teacher. At the moment I am unsure which of a teacher or translator I will become (Interview 1)*

This was often the case even for participants whose future job was still somewhat unclear.

Lisa, for example, had no clear idea of what she was going to do, but in visualizing herself moving abroad, created a clear need for English.

*I want to go abroad job because I can ... when I go abroad, I can see more them about, so I can understand better than other people in here, so I want to get a job in a foreign country (Interview 2)*

On the other hand, some of the participants had little conception of what they wanted to do in the future. As such, it was not possible to form any real connections between studying English and future employment.

*Job. My job. ... I have been thinking a lot these days. ... I don't have a definite dream yet (Cathy, Interview 2)*

All of the references here give an insight into the place of English within the participants' self-concepts, potentially revealing another way in which it was (or was not) associated with their actual lives. This justified including it at the level of Internal Context.

#### **5.3.1.4 Cognitive Processes**

In addition to the elements already described, a variety of internal processes were identified as being at work within the participants. Among these were what I have termed cognitive processes. These as used here refer to a capacity for self-reflection, the processes whereby the participants took stock of their learning, how they had progressed and what they still needed

to do, and the significance of English to them. These were located at the level of Internal Context as they indicated the level of personal investment of the participants in their learning, signifying a desire and capacity to monitor this learning and to make decisions related to it. This section will outline the four major cognitive processes identified in the data, namely assessing progress, perception of needs, importance of English, and self-awareness.

#### **5.3.1.4.1 Assessing Progress**

Assessing progress refers to how the participants felt they were progressing in their language studies and the means through which they arrived at this conclusion. In this study, the most common methods utilized by the participants were test scores followed by evaluations of their skills in the areas of speaking, writing, and listening.

##### **5.3.1.4.1.1 Scores**

Just as scores were revealed as an important goal for many of the participants, so too were they one of the ways in which the participants kept track of their progress in learning English. This illustrates the interconnectedness of a complex system and how the elements making up that system can interact in a variety of different ways. Vicky was one of those participants who referred to test scores when evaluating her progress.

*When my grade improves on tests, I feel I've made progress in English (Interview 1)*

Some of the participants were more precise than this, using their scores to focus on particular aspects of their English competence.

*When the grade was good, I felt my English writing ability was getting better but when the grade was bad, I ... (Cathy, Interview 3)*

However, it was not uncommon for some participants to base their judgement of their general English ability on a specific test, particularly a language test with official sanction.

*I think now my English ability is better than freshman days. My TOEIC score improved since the beginning of freshman year. I personally think it is developing (Lena, Interview 5)*

#### **5.3.1.4.1.2 Speaking**

Although scores were used by a considerable number of the participants as an indicator of their progress, some of them also referred to looking at their use of language. Samantha, for example, referred to aspects of her speaking that had improved, in her case, the speed of her delivery.

*... I'm living in KELI and the foreign students have seen me, especially my roommate, since the start of the semester. So, she told me that my speaking got a bit faster than the first time she saw me. ... She told me that "Your speaking got faster than the first time I saw you." But I didn't notice. I think those ... I think those are the things I can tell that "Oh, maybe my English is getting better little by little" (Interview 3)*

Gina was another participant who measured her speaking proficiency through her ability to produce language without having to put too many of the elements of the utterance together in her head beforehand, in many ways, to produce fluent speech.

*... when I speak English freely without thinking for a long time, I think my English is improving (Interview 2)*

#### 5.3.1.4.1.3 Writing

As most of the participants took dedicated writing classes during the period of the interviews, it was not surprising that writing became an important source of feedback on their progress in the language. One participant who exemplified this was Mandy, who had put together some detailed strategies for analyzing her writing and was able to identify specific aspects of improvement.

*We have a course called Academic English. We're given writing assignments. The first time I was doing it, when I went through it, it looked like a primary student wrote it ... the expressions that were used and all ... but I did 6-7 similar assignments. The topic was similar. I saved them on a USB drive at the time, and I went through them again recently. I was able to see that I was improving when I compared the first assignment to the second, and the second assignment to the third. Others may not be able to notice the difference, but in my perspective, the vocabulary I used changed, and the contents improved as well. I felt that I have improved by looking at that kind of thing (Interview 1)*

Gina was also able to point to specific improvements in her knowledge as progress when it came to writing in English.

*... this semester I am taking a composition class, so I think my writing in English has improved. I learned formality of writing such as travel essay, expository writing (Interview 3)*

In the same way, Samantha found her learning of some of the particular characteristics of written English to be a measure of progress.

*I think I will say only in writing coz ... in writing, campus class, yeah, I'm learning in, especially the article, pronun ... punctuation ... (Interview 5)*

However, for some of the participants, it was the simple fact of seeing fewer correction marks on their assignments that became a barometer of progress, indicating to Penny, at least, that

her writing was improving.

First time, teacher editing my essay ... essay?

[Joo]

Composition?

[Penny]

Almost red, red, but now is less ... less than ... less. So, I think, ah, my essay skill is more (Interview 6)

One could argue that in some ways, this assessment was based less on any deep cognitive processing and more on affective considerations, that is, on the positive feeling of having fewer correction marks. On the other hand, the reference highlights the problematic nature of attempting to assign the participants' statements to discrete categories. With borderline cases such as this, one could argue that Penny's assessment of her improvement was both a function of reviewing her returned work (a cognitive process) and the happiness she derived from seeing fewer corrections (an affective process). However, this distinction is less important than the fact that writing was one method Penny used to assess her progress. Writing was thus quite commonly utilized as a means of assessing progress in English, although the participants differed considerably in what aspects they chose to focus on.

#### **5.3.1.4.1.4** *Listening*

A final method that participants used to assess their progress was their listening ability. One of those who mentioned this was Penny, particularly in terms of her ability to understand the content of utterances.

*I am taking Reading Comprehension class which provides listening. I can understand more than before (Interview 3)*

Like Penny, Vicky sometimes focused on her listening ability when gauging any

improvement in her language skills. When asked what signs she used to tell her whether she was improving in the language, she replied:

*When I can understand what others say in English (Interview 3)*

Another participant who referred to her listening ability when assessing her progress in English was Samantha. However, she was much more specific in her explanation of her progress, highlighting not just an improved ability to deal with the pace of native speaker speech but also an intangible improvement.

... she [foreign roommate] tends to talk fast. It's like "zzz zzz zzz zzz" [noise like something going fast]. It's like "OK!" At first, honestly, I had ... I didn't catch her fully, like maybe just 85 or 90 coz her speaking speed was so fast. But now I'm OK with it, and I just thought that maybe I'm just used to her speaking speed, but it wasn't just that (Interview 3)

There was thus quite a variety of processes involved in how the participants evaluated their progress in English. The variety of these and how they differed between individuals implied a clear relationship to the participants' priorities in their language. This in turn justified their inclusion at the level of the Internal Context.

#### **5.3.1.4.2 Perception of Needs**

Just as how and to what degree the participants assessed their progress in the language indicated the place of English within their self-concepts, so too did their perception of what they yet needed to accomplish in the language. These perceived needs often related to specific language skills.

A considerable number of the participants identified their speaking skill as something that was in need of development. Lena was one of these.

*I think my listening ability is OK, but I have difficulty speaking English, so I have to make more opportunities to talk in English. I practice listening, too, though*  
(Interview 4)

In a similar way, other participants felt that their writing skills were lacking.

I think in writing because I'm not good at writing. Yeah, and many ... I wrong many grammar things like a little things, "a," "the" ... "from," "a," "the," like this, to a big words or the order of the letters. Yeah, so I think I have to ... need improvement in there (Lisa, Interview 3)

While this illustrates a somewhat general need to improve her ability in written English, there were also participants who linked a present need to a future use of the language.

... I know that I'll be studying for a long time, and that's why I want to enhance my writing skill because I'll definitely be writing when I study, right? So, that's my reason why I need to ... I want to enhance my writing skill (Samantha, Interview 4)

As such, the participants' perceptions of their needs in the language had the potential to illuminate connections between their use of English and other aspects of the self, hence their inclusion at this level of organization.

#### **5.3.1.4.3 Importance of English**

Another element of the participants' thinking about English was the importance they ascribed to the language. In general, it occupied a significant position on their list of priorities. Early on in the interview process, Samantha summed up the importance of English for her.

... English ... it's really important like even if you can speak like four or five languages, English should be one of them (Interview 2)

In a similar vein, Lena was convinced of the necessity of English for her.

*English ability is a must for me because I wrote a to-do list. English is required for almost every job on the list (Interview 5)*

Just like Lena, Vicky also saw English as something that would help her achieve success.

*These days, people emphasize English, so I am affected by that. It is said people who can express themselves achieve success easily (Interview 2)*

This general feeling of the importance of English characterized many of the participants' statements on the subject.

#### **5.3.1.4.4 Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness, as used here, differs somewhat from those elements already described. It refers to the participants' capacity to recognize changes in themselves, be these in their priorities, their development, or indeed their personalities. Cathy, for example, was able to vocalize the increased importance of English as she pursued studies in her major (American studies).

*English has become more important to me because my major is about English. The textbooks for my classes are in English, not only in foreign professors' class but in Korean professors' class. I have to translate to study. English is important to study TOEIC. I feel more pressure studying English (Interview 5)*

In another example, Gina recognized that she was more able to accept criticism of her performance and acknowledged the attendant benefits of this.



*... when I was compared, I felt upset. The professor kept pointing out the same thing, which was the student was great but I was bad. After I came back home, the professor's remark kept recurring in my head, so I practiced English pronunciation. To be honest, I had hard feelings at that time, but now I look back at that time, pointing out my shortcomings in front of others made me change that. I was a little embarrassed in front of others, but unless he did, I might not change that (Interview 3)*

In a similar way, Mandy was able to see how her personality had changed in the short time that she had been in university.

*I am more active now compared to last semester. I am doing many things now and I am trying to get information from my seniors who were abroad as exchange students. Now I think I know how it goes. Last semester I didn't know anything, so I followed others. Now I want to find my way (Mandy, Interview 2)*

All of these references give insights into the development of the participants, observations not formed through observation or inference, but as stated by the participants themselves. They are thus an important means of accessing their beliefs about themselves.

#### **5.3.1.5 Sense of Self**

“Sense of self” is a term borrowed from Schwartz (2007, p. 99), who defines it as “the individual’s experience of himself as a coherent being.” It thus refers to aspects of the self of which an individual is to some degree consciously aware. It is used here in preference to the term self-concept, which might be seen as denoting the totality of an individual’s attributes, talents, priorities, and emotions. In this regard, sense of self is a more limited term, referring in this analysis to the participants’ appraisal of themselves in relation to English and the place of English in their lives. These appraisals often fell into two areas, a tendency to view the self either positively or negatively.

#### 5.3.1.5.1 Positive

There was a variety of situations in which the participants expressed a positive impression of themselves or their capabilities in English. Among the situations mentioned in this regard were references to specific aspects of English that they felt proficient in. Lisa, for example, was particularly positive about the place of English in her life and her ability to use it to communicate.

... I do most of my life with using English, not good at grammar, but speaking or going foreign country or doing a lot with English ... (Interview 2)

In a similar way, Samantha expressed great confidence in her ability to communicate in the language.

I had no problem expressing myself in English. So, I'll be fine (Interview 3)

Other participants had positive views of different skills in English. Penny, for example, had quite a positive view of her listening ability.

... always listening is no problem (Interview 3)

Similarly, Gina was quite confident in her listening and reading skills.

*I am good at English reading and listening* (Interview 2)

Lena was also satisfied with her ability to comprehend English.

I think my listening ability is OK ... (Interview 4)

Just as revealing as evaluations of their English ability was the place the participants assigned to English in their lives. Some were able to elucidate quite a positive link between English and how they perceived themselves.

*For me, English is something that I have to do and a thing that I like best (Lena, Interview 1)*

This was also true of Samantha, who in some respects felt that she was closer to and better at English than her native Korean.

... I took a course which is understanding the literature, like the Romanticism, Modernism, those things, in Korean. And she's a Russian Literature ... Russian Language and Literature professor. And she wanted us to write some kind of book review and ... book review ... yeah, like other reviews. And I really had hard time writing it. I felt like I was jumping from one point to another point without connection that makes them flow smoothly. But in English, it's easier for me to do that (Interview 6)

Such positive feelings often inspired confidence in the participants. Lisa, for instance, based on her positive evaluation of her ability to communicate, was quite confident in her ability to deal with foreigners.

... when I see foreigners, I'm not really ... now, I'm not afraid about them, and if they are talking to me to ... how to ask me where to go when they don't know, I can say easily when, how to ... what, I know how the ... what answer they want to hear, so I can answer what they want. So it makes me more convenient to talk (Interview 2)

In fact, affect often had a considerable influence on how the participants viewed themselves in relation to English and their beliefs about their abilities. Gina, for example, made a close connection between her confidence in using English and her ability in the language.

*I have problem speaking English and I am shy, so when I speak English well, I think my English has improved (Interview 2)*

Lena also mentioned her level of comfort in using English as being linked to the evaluation of her competence.

... when you say, "Yeah, I feel my speaking has got better," what do you think has got better? Or how has it got better?  
[Lena]

When I talking with other foreigners, I feel more comfortable and not ... less shy. Not shame ... no shame, but less (Interview 5)

Another participant who equated her level of comfort in the language with progress was Cathy.

Grammar is so-so, but conversation ... mood ... *I feel more comfortable speaking English* (Interview 4)

There was thus a strong affective dimension to many of the participants' sense of self. This also revealed itself in statements detailing negative impressions they had of themselves in relation to English

#### **5.3.1.5.2 Negative**

Just as the participants had positive views of certain aspects of their linguistic competence, so too did they have areas that they evaluated negatively. This was particularly evident in many of their pronouncements on their speaking ability. Cathy was particularly negative about her ability in this regard, right from the beginning of the interviews.

*... for me, speaking is the worst ability in English* (Interview 2)

Cathy was not alone in this negative evaluation. Penny also bemoaned her perceived failings in speaking English.

*Always ... always ... always listening is no problem, but talking, many problem* (Interview 3)

It was not just in speaking that Penny felt a deficiency in her English skills; she was also quite negative about her writing ability.

I feel I'm very not good at writing because in Korean ... in Korea I write some ... something in Korean, it was quite good, so the other people said me, "Oh, you write so good." But writing in English, it look like Engl ... foreigner elementary student like.

So, I feel very depressed (Interview 6)

Mandy, too, felt her writing skills needed improvement.

... especially on writing, I really hard to it and I feel difficult. For example, writing according to logically and ... grammar. I really hate it ... *I'm really poor at it* (Interview 4)

As these references suggest, particularly Penny's second reference, in the same way as positive evaluations of their skills enhanced their confidence and affective well-being, negative assessments had the opposite effect. Gina, for example, saw a direct link between her perceived shortcomings in the language and a lack of confidence.

*If I can use correct English sentences, I think I will get confidence. In fact, I feel my English is wrong, and that feeling comes from grammar, I think. I am not perfect in English grammar, so I worry that I don't understand them and they don't understand me. That makes me lose my confidence* (Interview 3)

Lena was another participant whose self-image was negatively impacted by her perception of her abilities in English.

*What do you think about yourselves speaking English?*

[Some students laugh]

[Lena]

*Ashamed of myself. Because I want to say something, but I can't speak* (Interview 1)

The participants' sense of self thus manifested itself in several ways in the data. Each of these aspects of sense of self gave important insights into how the participants saw themselves in relation to English, illuminating to a great degree what lay at the heart of their conception of themselves as language learners.

This section has outlined the elements at the level of Internal Context. Through the use of excerpts from the data, it has defined these elements and justified their inclusion at this level. The following section will deal with the next level, that of the Immediate Context.

### **5.3.2 The Immediate Context**

The Immediate Context lies directly outside the Internal Context. It contains elements that are immediately relevant to a learner, those that are “near” enough to interact with him or her directly. These elements include both the learner’s influential relationships and the specific environment in which he or she operates. This section will present and describe these elements in more detail.

#### **5.3.2.1 *Significant Others***

Considerable research from the field of psychology (La Guardia, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; McCaslin, 2009) suggests that significant others have an important influence on learners in terms of, for example, the choices available to them and the decisions they make. The data from this research showed that these influential people could be separated into three categories: other students, parents, and teachers, as will be discussed in more detail below.

##### **5.3.2.1.1 Other Students**

The first of these significant others was other students or friends of the participants. The data showed that of the references compiled at SIGNIFICANT OTHERS, approximately 40% referred to OTHER STUDENTS. They also demonstrated that these students affected the participants in both a direct and an indirect fashion. This can in some ways be related to the Korean concept of relationships between “seniors” (*seonbae*) and “juniors” (*hubae*), in which someone who is even a year older is seen as a superior or at least someone who has more

experience and wisdom than the younger person. As such, in Korea, younger students very often look up to these older students. Gina gave an insight into how their direct effect could manifest itself.

*... after this semester started, I joined in activities in my major, so I got close to my seniors. The number of students in my major is small. The first question from my seniors is the same: "Are you going to take the Teacher's Certification Exam or get a job?" even before they are close to me. Anyway, since we are close, we naturally talk about my concerns such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and the exchange student program which they have already experienced (Interview 3)*

In addition to the direct influence other students had on the participants, they were also influential simply through their actions and examples. A statement from Mandy illustrates this quite effectively.

*Four female seniors who are now in the seventh or eighth semester came back from foreign countries such as Sweden ... Two of them used to have two future dreams like mine and they were indecisive between the two options. Now they decided to get a job in a company ... Through them, I realized students in English Education do whatever they want to do (Interview 3)*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given their everyday interactions, other students were significant members of the participants' inner circle and were ideally placed to influence them. However, they were not the only members of this circle.

#### **5.3.2.1.2 Parents**

Parents were also strongly represented in the data, comprising approximately 20% of the references collected at SIGNIFICANT OTHERS. They were involved in their children's lives in a variety of ways, not least of which was their language education. This often started at quite a young age.

*When I was young, my mother, who was an English teacher, made opportunities for me to meet foreigners (Mandy, Interview 2)*

There was also a more direct involvement in the participants' education.

... my mom's always saying you have to study. So she always interact ... intervene kind of my studying. Then when ... in my test week, she always checking I'm studying. I know all Korean moms are doing that but she ... And after the test, she always asking me when the score is coming out, so she want to know my score, and she keep want me to studying, so she talks me a lot of studying (Lisa, Interview 2)

Parents were also quite involved in many of the decisions that the participants made, among these what to study at university.

*My mother thought studying mass communication in not prestigious universities is not going anywhere. She preferred I choose English as my major. She thought I could learn English perfectly in English major (Lena, Interview 2)*

However, parental guidance was evident in decisions that went beyond the participants' education.

My job, future job. So, I think many ... many thing and fight my parents (Cathy, Interview 4)

It was thus clear that parents were a significant presence in the participants' lives and were often quite directly involved in them.

#### **5.3.2.1.3 Teachers**

The final component of this group was the participants' teachers, both past and present.

Traditionally in Korea, and in other countries in East Asia, the relationship between student and teacher was of great importance, second only to that between child and parents. Although this is in many ways a thing of the past, many students still have strong relationships with particular teachers. Mandy, for example, was quite influenced at one stage by one of her



teachers in university.

*He said he wanted to be our advisor professor. I think he proposed us because we were good at English in the gathering, so I am happy with the proposal. I find myself preparing a lot before the gathering because I want to do well. I practice reading, checking my English pronunciation before the presentation. The important thing is I can get a lot of information now and more opportunities related to English in the future since I become close to a professor who is related to English. So, I can say Professor K is the person who pushes me from this semester (Interview 3)*

In this reference, one can see the quite direct influence that the professor had on Mandy.

However, it was not always necessary to have a personal relationship with a teacher to be affected by him or her.

*... teachers are really important to me. I get more motivated when I study with teachers or professors who give me favorable impression. But my interest drops sharply when my first impression of teachers doesn't appeal to me (Lena, Interview 2)*

From the preceding references, it is clear that those people who were in many ways closest to the participants had both the opportunity and the ability to affect them in a variety of ways.

However, it was not just individuals that were significant at this level. Another element that was included here was the actual learning context.

### **5.3.2.2 Learning Context**

Learning context refers to the immediate environment in which the participants were undertaking their language studies. Its meaning is, however, twofold. In the first place, it refers to the language opportunities that were available to the participants and how they interacted with these. In the second, it denotes elements external to the participants' actual studying of the language that affected the participants' willingness or ability to invest time in

studying English. This section will begin by looking at the language opportunities available to the participants before moving on to deal with other learning considerations that affected their study of English.

#### 5.3.2.2.1 Language Opportunities

Although the research took place in an EFL setting, there was still a variety of language opportunities available to the participants. One of the most common opportunities the participants had to use English was in classes offered by either the university or their own departments.

This semester, did you have many opportunities to speak in English?

[Penny]

Communication English. That class talking ... with others in English (Interview 4)

However, some participants also attended classes outside the university. These were generally offered through private language institutes. One of those who attended such classes was Lena.

*Now I am taking two classes. One is with a teacher who can speak Korean twice a week. The other is with a teacher who can't speak Korean at all 3 times a week*  
(Interview 2)

In addition to these classes, a number of the participants were also able to enroll in a special program run by the university. In this program, the students lived in an English-only dormitory and took extracurricular English classes.

I apply for KELI coz at least I speak in English there (Samantha, Interview 2)

Another program that several of the students enrolled in was the Buddy program. In this, Korean students are assigned to an exchange student from another country, and they help that student to settle in and adjust to life in Korea. Mandy applied for this program in her second

semester in university.

*I joined the Buddy program, so I have my buddy, Merlin from Germany. She is a very nice person. K University doesn't take care of them well. The University didn't convey the information international students should know. Because of that, she and I met a lot. We went downtown together to get her cell phone. I guided her. We had meals and drank together. I hung out with my buddy and her friends, other foreigners (Interview 2)*

In addition to programs offered through the university, a number of the participants found programs outside the university where they could use English. Among these was Lisa.

I am doing a Korean American Friendship Circle. I don't know.

[Researcher]

Oh, OK. That's with the military base?

[Lisa]

Yeah. So, when I meet them, I can speak in English (Interview 5)

This gives a sampling of the main types of language opportunities available to the participants in their learning context. However, it is important to remember that within this context, English was not the only thing occupying their minds.

#### **5.3.2.2.2 Other Learning Considerations**

Although all of the participants came from majors which had a specific focus on English, this did not mean that they were concerned only with learning the language. Some of them were considering broadening their options, for example, by taking a double major.

Yeah, because I have any things about double major and pharmacy ... going pharmacy. So, thinking about that, so I didn't really think a lot about my English (Lisa, Interview 3)

Others were involved in a variety of other activities related to their future which limited the time available for a focus on English.

I did mentoring program and Vision Camp and many ... *special* [employment] lectures? (Vicky, Interview 4)

Some participants found that the workload from their major and other classes demanded more of their time and attention.

*I had a lot of different subjects. Since I am a freshman, I had many Christianity classes, too. I didn't study English that much* (Gina, Interview 4)

In addition, in one or two cases, a general dissatisfaction with their university life affected the participants' general attitude toward their studies.

*My interest has dropped. I dislike studying for tests this semester. I didn't last semester. Studying itself is difficult and gives me a hard time this semester. I don't know why. I have a difficult time concentrating on studying* (Lena, Interview 3)

There was thus a variety of factors not directly related to the participants' study of English that could affect both their ability and willingness to pursue their studies. These elements of the learning context, although external to the participants themselves, were ideally placed to interact with elements within the internal context. However, another element that was in some ways a part of this learning context but in other ways transcended it was TOEIC.

#### **5.3.2.3 TOEIC & TOEFL**

As the most commonly used measure of English proficiency in Korea, TOEIC factored into the participants' considerations in a number of ways. Not least of these was the need to obtain a high score on the test before applying for employment.

In Korean, TOEIC score is very, very important to get a job. If I don't have the score, I can't get a job (Lena, Interview 8)

However, TOEIC was also used in other situations relevant to the participants. One of these was as a qualification for a variety of programs in which they wanted to be involved.

... to participate in every programs in K University, we need TOEIC grade (Vicky, Interview 2)

Among these programs were exchange student programs. For these, a qualifying score on TOEFL was even more advantageous than a TOEIC score.

... *TOEFL score has more advantage for exchange student program* (Gina, Interview 2)

In addition to being a qualification for a considerable number of school programs, it was also a necessary condition for receiving a scholarship from the university.

Why are you studying TOEIC these days?

[Cathy]

Because my major is necessary to ... *what is scholarship in English?* (Interview 5)

On top of this, many majors had mandated a specific level of achievement on TOEIC as a graduation requirement.

... *the university asks for a TOEIC score, so I have to get it* (Penny, Interview 3)

TOIEC and to a lesser extent TOEFL thus had the potential to interact with the participants on a variety of levels, ranging from the immediate learning context in which they found themselves to their future position in society.

#### **5.3.2.4 Influential Experiences**

An element that in many ways overlapped both this level of context and the outer context was

influential experiences. These were experiences that had affected the participants in more than a cursory manner. Such experiences either had a long-term influence or produced a changed conception of the self. They were often related to experiences abroad. Samantha, for example, credited her time in the Philippines and Australia with giving her enhanced knowledge.

I learned a lot, in terms of like education or about relationships things, friends  
(Interview 2)

In a similar way, even a short trip to Hong Kong had quite a pronounced effect on Gina.

*I had to speak at least one word in English to get our place and food even though my English was wrong. Those experiences were difficult but interesting for me. That affected me a lot for this semester* (Interview 7)

However, it was not only time spent abroad that could affect the participants in such ways.

Some of the participants took part in intensive language programs, generally during vacation, which often left them with a different impression of themselves.

*... although my English ability didn't improve a lot, I ... just ... I got confidence*  
(Vicky, Interview 7)

Even one-off experiences could affect the participants. Mandy, for instance, spoke of her feeling having taken part in an official debate competition for the first time.

Unless professor ... recommendation, I didn't experience that contest because it is not usual contest and especially in K University and in D City. It was great experience, and I think that my English is ... *not rubbish* (Interview 9)

There was thus a considerable number of elements in the participants' immediate environment that had to be accounted for in considering the makeup of their L2 motivational systems.

Combined with the important relationships that have been described in this section, they made up the Immediate Context, a level that had the potential to interact with both the Internal Context and the subject of the next section, the Outer Context.

### 5.3.3 The Outer Context

This level of context includes elements that although perhaps not in everyday interaction with the learner, nevertheless can affect him or her in quite fundamental ways. These elements to a certain extent are those that define the context within which the learner operates. They have the potential to constrain his or her choices, actions, and behaviors on the most basic level. They exist on a macro-level, and their influence can permeate right to the heart of the self-system. Not surprisingly, the data showed Korean society to be a major element at this level.

#### 5.3.3.1 *Societal Influence*

There can be little doubt that the social setting in which an individual functions can and does play an important role in the process of language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002; Ushioda, 2006, 2013c). Each society has slightly different expectations and norms which in many cases constrain or at the very least interact with the individual's conceptions, motivations, and behaviors. This is without a doubt also the case in Korea, where there is a clear emphasis on and regard for English.

... if I use English, I can achieve 70 or 80 in Korean society. So, I think it is not just a goal. It helps me a lot. Because many ... in here, many people likes me ... wants me to speak English or other foreign languages, so that helps me a lot (Lisa, Interview 8)

Samantha echoed these sentiments.

I think this is a general reason for all the students. English ... now, English is must, it's a must (Interview 3)

There was thus a clear understanding among the participants of the place English occupies in

Korean society. However, this was not the only societal influence observable in the data.

There was also mention of expectations that university students were in many ways expected to fulfil.

I am a junior and next year I'm a senior and in Korean society ... when graduate the university, most of them ... have a job. So, recently I am very ... I am thinking about my job every moment, so it is very confusing (Penny, Interview 9)

There were also suggestions of certain constraints put on the participants by society, in one respect as a result of gender.

... our society say English teacher is good, and husband say ... future husband say English teacher is good, but I don't know merit of this job. So ... but realistic maybe ... half and half because I woman. If I a man, I think little bit changed because here is in Korea, and I'm a woman (Mandy, Interview 5)

In another situation, these constraints were related to where someone goes to school.

*I am a student from a local university and it is no merit* (Lena, Interview 8)

It is thus clear that Korean society itself had the potential to affect the participants in a variety of ways. However, as some of the previous references suggested, another significant element at this level was employment.

### **5.3.3.2 Employment**

As university students, the question of their future jobs was one often on the minds of the participants. However, the employment situation for college graduates in Korea has been quite poor for a number of years now. According to a recent Bank of Korea report (Han, Jo, & Do, 2015), the unemployment rate for those aged between 15 and 29 reached 8% in 2013.



Although this is nowhere near as high as many European countries, it is higher than the 6.5% in Japan and 7.3% in Germany. In addition, it is 3.7 times the rate of unemployment of those in their 30s and 40s, far higher than the OECD average of 2.1. Samantha had a particularly good example to illustrate this.

... you know, getting a job for us is now really, really tough. Like today, my brother called me and “Sis” ... like he’s the ... he’s working in the tower controlling air traffic something ... So, he called me up and “Sis, a student who graduated from like Seoul, he applied for 70 companies and he ... only passed 4 out of 70 [resume screenings].” And his TOEIC score was 920, and he had TOEIC speaking which was like advanced. And he’d been to Samsung internship. And those things are kinda hard to get, right? But he only passed 4 in document evaluation (Interview 7)

With this in mind, the participants consistently sought ways of increasing their employment prospects. For many of them, there was a clear link between English and not just securing employment but also promotion prospects.

*In the future, English will be important for me to get a job. After getting a job, English will still be important because companies check English scores for employee’s promotion. Even when changing jobs, English score is important (Vicky, Interview 7)*

The job market in Korea was thus something that, if not ever-present in the participants’ thoughts, was certainly never far removed. In addition, given the perceived relationship between employment prospects and English proficiency, there was considerable scope for interaction between this element and others within the participants’ L2 motivational systems.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined how a CDS approach was adopted in the analysis of the data. It has

further explained how this was used to create a three-level model of context, namely, the Internal Context, the Immediate Context, and the Outer Context. The main elements present at each level of context were then identified and illustrated using specific references from the data. It is at this point that more traditional analyses could be expected to stop, having identified the “factors” involved in the participants’ motivational processes. However, identifying these elements is but the first step towards understanding the complex processes at work within individuals that shape their attitudes toward and behaviors in their English studies. This analysis seeks to delve still deeper into the complexity of the L2 motivational system. To do this, it is necessary to identify and describe the interactions among the elements at all levels of the system and the changes that these interactions produce within the system. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **INTERACTION OF ELEMENTS AND SYSTEM CHANGE**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In the early stages of attempts to apply complex dynamic systems perspectives to L2 learning motivation, Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006, p. 563) pointed out that “Motivation is ... fluid play, an ever-changing one that emerges from the processes of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner.” As such, simply identifying these “agents” or elements is only the first step in illuminating the processes at work within the learner and how these affect his or her motivation to learn a language. Having identified the elements at play in the L2 motivational systems of the participants in this study, it is now necessary to describe the interactions between these elements, at what levels these occurred and over what timescales. The present chapter will begin by presenting the interactions observed both within and between the various levels of context. It will then proceed to reveal how over the course of the research, these interactions led to a number of identifiable changes within the participants’ motivational systems.

#### **6.2 Interaction among the Elements of the L2 Motivational System**

At the outset, it is crucial to emphasize that the elements in this system are not discrete. As

was suggested in the previous chapter (see Sections 5.3.1.3.2 and 5.3.1.4.1.1), where scores appeared as both a goal and a means of assessing progress, myriad potential interactions are possible between the elements in any system. In keeping with Larsen-Freeman and Cameron's (2008a) concept of "complexity thought modeling," this section will outline how the elements presented in the previous chapter interacted with each other, both within and across levels of organization. This is illustrated in the following interaction chart (Figure 6.1). Taking this chart as the starting point, this section will discuss these interactions at the three levels of context previously identified, i.e. Internal, Immediate, and Outer.

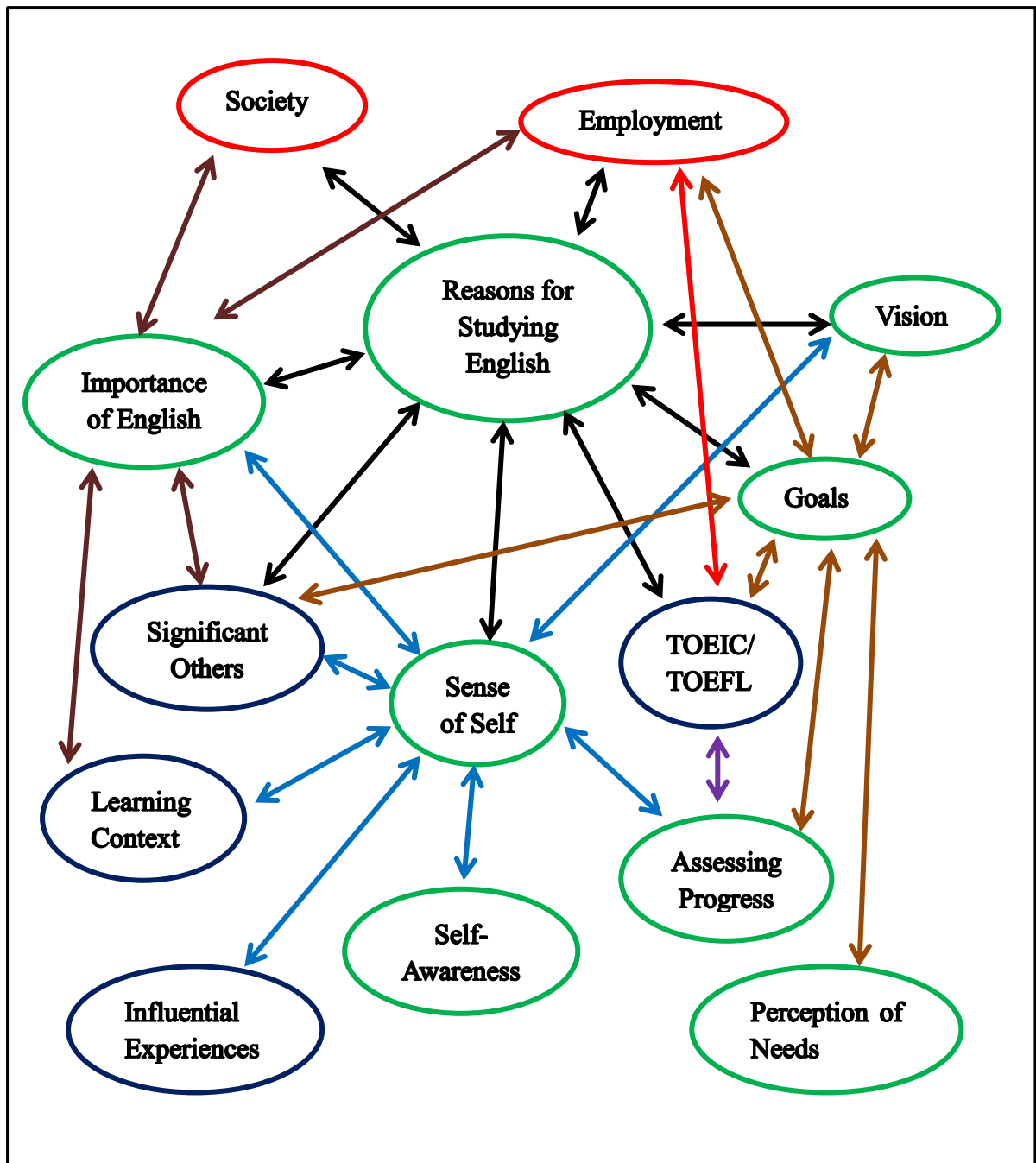


Figure 6.1 Interaction of Elements

### 6.2.1 The Internal Context

As was outlined in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1, the internal context contained the elements reasons for studying English, vision, goals, cognitive processes, and sense of self. This section will illustrate the interactions between these elements and how these affected the system itself using specific references from the data.

#### 6.2.1.1 *Reasons for Studying English and Vision*

There was a clear interaction for many of the participants between their reasons for studying English and their visions of themselves as users of the language. This was very much a two-way interaction. On one level, visualizing themselves as, for example, speakers of the language or at least being able to visualize a future use for the language gave them a definite reason for studying English. Gina, for example, right from the first interview, had quite a clear vision of her future that was directly linked to her reason for studying English.

*... my objective in applying to the English Education Department was to become an English teacher, and the reason I study English is for the same reason (Interview 1)*

By the same token, some participants who had difficulty imagining a future use of English also found it difficult to communicate a clear reason why they were studying it. Cathy was one participant who found it rather difficult to visualize a place for English in her future.

... can you see situations in the future where you will need to use English?  
[Cathy]  
No. If I live in Korea, I don't think I need to use English (Interview 8)

Her reasons for studying the language similarly lacked any sense of personal investment.

*Test score and ... extra points for the test. Except those, I don't have a particular reason (Interview 6)*

However, the interaction between vision and reasons for studying English was not one way. The reason a participant had for studying English could be directly related to the ability to visualize any real use of the language. Vicky, for example, whose primary reason for studying English was getting a job, did not see any real place for the language in her future, viewing it simply as a tool for advancement.

... what would you say is your number one, main reason for studying English?  
[Vicky]  
[long pause] To get a job. Yeah (Interview 4)

The pure instrumentality of her reasons for studying English precluded any development of a genuine vision of herself using the language in the future.

*I don't know what job I want to do yet, so I don't know whether I will use English in the future or not ... I am studying business administration, so if I get my job in that field, I think my job will not need English that much (Interview 8)*

There were thus clear interactions between these two elements, potentially affecting both how the participants viewed English and their futures and why they were studying it in the present. However, vision was not the only element with which reasons interacted.

#### **6.2.1.2 Reasons for Studying English and Goals**

Just as the participants' reasons for studying English and their visions of their future selves were connected, so too were the goals they set themselves in the language. Mandy expressed these quite succinctly in one interview, referring to her desire to communicate fluently in

English and the steps she intended to take to achieve this.

*The reason I want to go abroad, the reason I want to do an exchange student program is that I want to speak English very fluently. I want to hang out with foreigners naturally* (Interview 4)

On the other hand, participants such as Vicky who had more instrumental reasons for studying English exhibited somewhat different goals.

... do you have any goals in English this semester?

[Vicky]

*Now, the only thing that occurs to me is TOEIC* (Interview 7)

Although in common with Mandy, Vicky also professed a desire to study abroad, the rationale behind this was somewhat different.

... the title I went to exchange student is big merit to get a job (Interview 9)

However, the attainment of goals could also affect the participants' reasons for studying English. Gina, for example, having achieved her desired TOEIC score and secured a place on an exchange program, lacked a clear purpose for continuing her studies.

*... there is no reason for studying English ... I mean it's my major and it is something I have to do. I study because it is interesting. I don't have a particular reason for studying English* (Interview 9)

There was thus a definite relationship between why the participants were studying English and the goals they set themselves. A similar relationship was present between participants' reasons for studying English and the importance with which they viewed the language.



### 6.2.1.3 *Reasons for Studying English and Importance of English*

The data also showed that there was a connection between the reasons the participants were studying English and its perceived level of importance. Again, this relationship went both ways. Gina, for instance, had a clear purpose in studying English, becoming an English teacher. As such, English occupied an important position for her.

... on a scale of one, not important, ten, very important, where is English for you?

[Gina]

*Absolutely ten*

[Researcher]

Ten?

[Gina]

*Because my dream is directly related to English (Interview 5)*

On the other hand, a perceived importance of the language could also give some participants a reason for studying. Lena was one participant who was in many ways motivated by the fact that English was a tool that could help her to achieve other things.

... is it more a desire to study English or more kind of an obligation to study English?

[Lena looks for clarification]

[Joo clarifies]

[Lena]

Half and half because my major is English and also I want to study English because of to achieve ... because of achieving my goal (Interview 9)

These two elements thus had the potential to interact with each other in significant ways. A comparable interaction was observed between reasons for studying English and the participants' sense of self.

#### 6.2.1.4 *Reasons for Studying English and Sense of Self*

Intuitively, it would seem logical that a learner having a positive view of a language or his or her facility in the language would promote a desire to study that language. Evidence for this was found in the data. Lisa was one participant who viewed her ability in the language quite positively, and this was influential in helping her decide to study it at university.

... after I failed the nursing course, I keep thinking that what kind of things, major I can do. Then I thought I can ... I do most of my life with using English, not good at grammar, but speaking or going foreign country or doing a lot with English, so I think I only learn about ... I started about science when I was middle school, but I know more about in English than science, so I think that English is better than going science (Interview 2)

On the other hand, a negative sense of self in relation to English had the potential to rob a participant of a reason for studying. This was illustrated by Penny, whose negative evaluation of her writing skills caused her to in some ways give up on her study of writing.

Were you disappointed in your writing ability, or were you disappointed in your final score last semester?

[Penny]

My skill and my mind, but professor gave me good score. I'm very thanks for him. But ... *I think I had a problem ... I didn't study hard for the class because I thought I was bad at it* (Interview 7)

There was thus the potential for both positive and negative interactions between these two elements. However, reasons for studying English was just one of the elements with which sense of self shared a relationship.

#### 6.2.1.5 *Sense of Self and Importance of English*

From the data, it was apparent that sense of self interacted with the importance that some of the participants ascribed to English. A positive sense of self established a personal investment in the language, a belief in their abilities, and the utility of English in their lives. Samantha demonstrated all of these qualities, linking her belief in her abilities to how these would help her in the future.

... I don't know if it's talent coz I consider myself like I'm not yet that good in English. But if I come to think of it, like English is my ... what? Something that I'm confident at, I think. So, that's the biggest reason why. And I'm kind of sure that if I study English continually, I know that I'll ... I'll be able to be something. It's like teacher or ... or even teaching abroad, like teaching Korean in a foreign country (Interview 9)

Mandy also illustrated a relationship between her sense of self and the importance of English. In her case, English had definite importance as a major component of the Teacher's Certification Test. However, at the same time, the language was something that appealed to her at a cognitive level. As such, English had both positive personal and practical relevance to her.

*Now I have to take the Teacher's Certification Test, so the second one is more correct ... I have to have a job, so I have to take the test. But in addition to Teacher's Certification Test, I want to keep studying English maybe in academic aspect (Interview 9)*

On the other hand, a negative sense of self in relation to English could decrease the importance of English in the eyes of a participant. Cathy, for example, was consistently negative in how she described herself in relation to English.

*I am not good at English (Interview 3)*

Such negative evaluations contributed to a lessening of the importance of English for her as anything but a tool.

*What I learn from my major is related to English. Civil service examination also is related to English in terms of extra points ... important ... it is important, but ... not very important. Same, same with others (Interview 6)*

This lack of any positive personal investment in English led to a very narrow definition of the importance of English.

*Just ... getting good scores in English is enough for me ... It is not important unless I work in a field related to English (Interview 9)*

The amount of personal investment a participant had in the language, whether this was cognitive or affective, potentially interacted with the level of importance he or she ascribed to English. A similar interaction took place between sense of self and self-awareness.

#### **6.2.1.6 Sense of Self and Self-Awareness**

The data showed that awareness of a changing sense of self could be linked to a reorganization of the self-system and vice versa. Gina exemplified this in describing how she felt she had changed in terms of how she had moved away from caring about grades so much. She explained how this change came about from no longer finding affirmation in scores but rather in relying on her own standards.

*I used to believe that I was good at English if I was good at outside stuff [e.g., scores]. When I got a good grade, I thought I was good at English. However, I realized that belief was false these days. I realized I can do better with the thought that is "I want to do better," rather than outside stuff. I try to keep the thought even when I don't want to study. ... I didn't do special things, but I just changed from inside for myself.*

### *Change from inside me (Interview 7)*

In this case, it is difficult to say which came first, the awareness of the change in her self-system or the change itself. This change may very well have been underway when she “realized” it, or it may have been sparked by questioning her reliance on grades. In either case, there is clearly a positive interaction here between her sense of self and self-awareness.

Mandy was another participant who found that in becoming aware of changing aspects of her self, she actually enhanced her sense of self. In this case, she realized how much agony the decision over whether to go on an exchange program had caused her and how distracted her problems with her friends had made her.

*During vacation ... I find my peace, peace of mind ... I recovered inner peace after one year. I just focus on studying English now. I just let the exchange program go from my mind for a while. ... I have ... last year and nearly ... until recently ... I have trouble myself and with my friends. ... I am sensitive ... I had a disease in my mind, but ... now, I can filter those things. Everything is good now (Interview 9)*

The sense of relief and her enhanced sense of self are palpable here, again illustrating the interaction of sense of self with self-awareness. As can perhaps be guessed from this interaction, a final element with which sense of self was related was vision.

#### **6.2.1.7 Sense of Self and Vision**

The data also suggested that there was a relationship between the participants’ sense of self in English and their ability to formulate visions of themselves as future users of the language. Lisa, for example, consistently saw her strengths in English as lying in her abilities in spoken communication.

... speaking more than writing because I ... my activities are ... some things are related to writing and some things are related to speaking, but I learned from ... when I'm from ... when I learned in young, I was learned how to speak, not how to writing. Like other kids are hard to writing, they learn, but I'm ... I learned how to speaking, so that makes me to focus a little bit more on speaking and more things to speaking, like that (Interview 8)

It was thus not surprising that when asked about her vision of herself using English, she pictured a situation where communication was prominent.

Me. I'm just enjoying for sightseeing at the outside. That's just I can think about my speaking when I speak in English (Interview 9)

On the other hand, participants who had either a vague or negative sense of self when it came to English had more difficulty picturing themselves using English in the future. Penny was one participant who was often somewhat unsure about her future uses of English.

I'm not sure, but I will ... trip the other countries, so I think communicate with there people (Interview 6)

This was coupled with a somewhat negative view of her English ability.

*My English is not good* (Interview 8)

This lack of any real belief in her facility in the language often made her pronouncements on the future seem more like wishful thinking than any clear vision.

*I can't imagine it well but ... I hope fluently, I hope* (Interview 9)

There was thus a relationship between the participants' sense of self and their visions of themselves as future users of the language. However, vision also interacted with other elements within the L2 motivational system.

#### 6.2.1.8 *Vision and Goals*

The data provided evidence that having a clear picture of their future uses of English was related to the goals the participants set themselves. Gina, for example, saw her future as being an English teacher in high school. In part to make this a reality, she set herself the goal of taking part in a student exchange program.

*As an exchange student, I'd like to go to Poland. Because I heard Poland is famous for its English education system. I can learn the difference of education system from Korea and Poland (Interview 2)*

In addition, to enhance her prospects of securing a place on an exchange program, she focused on attaining a suitable score on TOEFL, something she felt would also enhance her English skills.

*... I want to get a good TOEFL score so that I can be an exchange student. TOEFL has four sections of English, so not only for TOEFL test itself, but also it will help improve my English ability (Interview 8)*

There was thus a direct link between Gina's vision and some of the goals she set herself.

On the other hand, for some of the participants with less clear visions of their future use of English, it could be more difficult to formulate personally relevant goals. Cathy was one participant who struggled to find a place for English in her future.

*If I study English very hard from now on, I will use English in my future, but I don't think I will (Interview 4)*

In tandem with this lack of any real vision was a lack of any goals in the language.

... what are your goals in English?

[Joo translates]

[Cathy]

[long pause] *I don't have specific ones* (Interview 4)

As such, one can see how vision interacted with goals in both positive and negative ways. In a related fashion, goals also interacted with perception of needs.

#### **6.2.1.9 Goals and Perception of needs**

Just as the participants' goals were often influenced by their visions of themselves, so too did clear goals help them realize what they needed to do to achieve these goals. Mandy, for example, had a longstanding desire to become an exchange student. On the basis of this, she identified two specific needs.

Speaking English and TOEFL score ... (Interview 6)

These then became foci for her in preparing to become an exchange student. However, in addition to being a goal in itself, the exchange program was a means of addressing a previously identified need, that of her speaking proficiency. Ironically, this was something she noticed by taking steps to prepare for an exchange program.

*One of reasons I applied for the Buddy program was for an exchange student program. I am going to apply for it in the fourth semester. For that, I have to study TOEFL. But communication in English is the basis for that* (Interview 2)

However, in taking part in the Buddy program, she noticed that her communicative ability was not where it needed to be.

*I was frustrated in the first and second semester, for example, the Buddy program. I blamed myself. "Why is my English ability not good? Why is my speaking ability low?"* (Interview 4)



As such, her goal of becoming an exchange student set in chain a series of events that allowed her to become more aware of her needs in the language, to the extent that her initial goal became the means of attaining another goal.

*... my speaking is not good, which is always my complex and also the most difficult thing in studying English. That is one of the reasons that I want to do an exchange program. I think speaking is the most important (Interview 8)*

As goals interacted with perception of needs, it was not surprising that they were also related to assessing progress.

#### **6.2.1.10 Goals and Assessing Progress**

How the participants assessed their progress in English often had a close relationship to the goals that they set themselves in the language. Vicky, for example, quite often mentioned TOEIC as one of her goals.

*At the moment, listening to TOEIC class well and raising my TOEIC score before summer vacation. That's all (Interview 5)*

At the same time, this was one of the major ways in which she evaluated her progress in the language.

... do you think your English has improved this semester?

[Vicky]

Little bit

[Researcher]

In what way? How has it improved?

[Vicky]

Actually, my TOEIC score ... *went up about 100 points* (Interview 4)

Lena was very similar in this regard, also being quite focused on TOEIC.

... this semester, what are your goals in English?

[Lena]

TOEIC score because ... *until now, I didn't study TOEIC formally* (Interview 7)

It was thus not a surprise to see that she, too, used her scores on this test as a measure of her progress in English.

... when you think about your English level, what kind of things do you look at?

[Lena]

*How do I know my English?*

[Joo translates question]

[Lena]

All about, yes. TOEIC score, or ... (Interview 7)

Unlike Vicky and Lena, Lisa's goals tended to be more focused on her skills in the language, particularly speaking and writing.

I want my writing skills become maybe equal or better to my speaking ability. I think my speaking is better than writing, so I make ... I want to make my writing as same as speaking (Interview 8)

In the same way, with these as her goals, her assessment of her progress focused on how she felt about those skills at the time.

... this semester, I saw my bottoms of English, like both sides, speaking and writing, both sides. Speaking, I think ... I didn't think I was not really ... I was bad in some points, but this semester, the speaking make me to feeled ... feel like that a little bit. And writing also (Interview 8)

Like Lisa, there was also a parallel between Mandy's goals and how she assessed her progress.

Her goals were often linked to improving her writing.

... I hope to got A+ in Professor K's class, composition, because I know I'm poor at grammar and writing skills, so, yes, my goal is writing well-organized (Interview 5)

This focus on improving her writing skills then stayed with her in future interviews when

asked about her improvements in English.

... do you think that you've made progress in English this semester?

[Mandy]

Yes, in writing essay. In terms of writing essay (Interview 6)

Such assessments of progress in the language were linked not only to the goals that the participants set themselves but also to their sense of self.

#### **6.2.1.11 *Assessing Progress and Sense of Self***

The participants' evaluations of their progress in English often had a reciprocal relationship with their sense of self. Gina exhibited an almost symbiotic relationship between her confidence in herself, the production of language, and how she viewed her progress in the language. The following reference suggests that when she uses the language, she gets more confidence and feels she is getting better. To put this another way, when she has the confidence to produce language, she feels she is getting better and does more.

*The important thing for me is I want to speak willingly at least one word in English and I want to memorize an English word voluntarily. When I want to do those, that means my English ability is going up, and that gives me more confidence, so I want to do more (Interview 7)*

Mandy, too, demonstrated a relationship between her perceived improvements in English and her sense of self, in her case in relation to writing. Her familiarity with and perceived improvements in writing produced in her a clear confidence in her writing skills.

*English structure ... I can understand it to some degree. I don't feel difficulty in writing. I didn't know how to write, so I used to struggle to write in English for over one hour. But back then my writing was nonsense. But now my writing is certainly*

*better. Maybe I am studying here more than three years or maybe I keep reading English books. Anyway I don't have difficult in writing* (Interview 9)

On the other hand, the relationship between perceived progress and sense of self could also have a negative side. Cathy, for example, was unable to identify any real points of improvement in English.

*I moved up a year, but ... my writing and conversation hasn't progressed. My GPA is just the same as before. I don't think anything has developed* (Interview 7)

As a result, she often spoke in less than glowing terms about how she felt about English, on one occasion referring to her “*lousy English ability*” (Interview 6). This lack of confidence also manifested itself in Lena. In her case, it was implicated in quite a serious fear of making mistakes.

*I am not fluent yet. I can't express everything I want to say in English. That makes me feel anxiety about making mistakes, so I hesitate* (Interview 2)

The same anxiety affected Mandy, who suggested her reticence to speak to foreigners in English was based on a lack of confidence in her language skills and the attendant loss of face using English could bring.

*When I speak to foreigners in English, they notice my wrong English* (Interview 4)

There were thus considerable interactions between the elements at this level of system organization. However, such interactions were by no means confined to this level. The following section will focus on the interactions taking place between the Internal and Immediate contexts.

## 6.2.2 The Immediate Context

As was described in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2, the Immediate Context contained the elements significant others, learning context, TOEIC and TOEFL, and influential experiences. This section will demonstrate how these elements interacted with the Internal Context and how this potentially affected the system.

### 6.2.2.1 *Significant Others and Reasons for Studying English*

The data showed that there could often be an interaction between the participants' reasons for studying English and the influence of significant others, specifically other students, parents, and teachers. These three groups had somewhat different relationships with the participants and will be dealt with in separate sections.

#### 6.2.2.1.1 Other Students

Other students were involved both directly and indirectly in some of the participants' reasons for studying English. One of the ways they did this was through direct advice. Mandy, for example, having decided to focus on becoming a teacher, was given a very direct reason for focusing on English which in turn enhanced her motivation.

*One of my close ... senior told me that if you didn't get TOEIC score ... over 900?*

*[Joo]*

*Over 900*

*[Mandy]*

*Over 900, you never study the Teacher's Certification Test. Because ... it is difficult. The senior said if I can't get a basic TOEIC score, which means I don't have English*

*ability, I can't study for the Teacher's Certification Test. The senior said lots of things which gave me motivation (Interview 9)*

In a similar way, other students often played a role in which classes the participants chose to take in university, thus in some ways directing their learning.

So, it was TOEIC focused class, OK. Why did you decide to take that class?

[Cathy]

Friends recommend ... so ... *I applied for it. We took the course together* (Interview 9)

In addition to direct advice such as this, other students often presented models of proficiency that made some of the participants aspire to be like them. Lena was one participant who several times expressed a desire to be like such students.

*Whenever I see anyone who has better English, so they talk with foreigners freely, I could come across them on the street or in the International Lounge, I think naturally I want to be like that person* (Interview 3)

In fact, there was a definite element of competition between students on occasion which often stimulated the participants to potentially greater efforts. An example of this came from Lisa, who seemed genuinely surprised and not all that pleased that someone at the school newspaper appeared to be better at English than her.

I heard that some reporter at our *Gazette* [English newspaper] who just correct the mistake at once. Then I want to do like that. It is really hard because so many times have to do. So, I want to be like her (Interview 7)

There were also instances where the participants were influenced by the actions of others, regardless of whether these actions had any direct bearing on them. Gina, for example, found it easier to focus on the task of studying if she was in the presence of people who were doing the same thing.

*... every time I study alone, I end up quitting studying and not finishing what I have to do because I always have the stupid thought that maybe other students are also not*

*studying right now when I study alone. When I see others studying, it makes me think I should do something, so I study more (Interview 8)*

In addition, hearing about the experiences of other students often reinforced the participants' motivation to study English, particularly when this related to experiences abroad.

*I want to go abroad when I listen to people who already did the program (Vicky, Interview 8)*

There was thus a variety of ways in which other students interacted with the participants' reasons for studying English. However, this was something with which parents were also involved.

#### **6.2.2.1.2 Parents**

Given their closeness to the participants, it is not surprising that there were considerable interactions between parents and the participants' reasons for studying English. This was particularly evident at the early stages of learning English. At this point, some parents were instrumental in the participants beginning to study the language. This was certainly the case with Lisa, who in answering a question about what or who pushed her to study English replied:

*I think there is nothing that what. Things are nothing, but who is my mom. Yeah, because she was ... I said she was really strict in my education, so she made me learn English when I was kid (Interview 3)*

Some parents had intervened even more directly, in Samantha's case actually sending her to the Philippines for 5 years.

Why did you decide to study abroad?  
[Samantha]  
My parents pushed me to go there (Interview 1)

... before you went to the Philippines, did you have an interest in English at that time?  
[Samantha]  
Not at all! (Interview 2)

Parents had also been involved in some of the participants deciding to study English at university. Among the participants, Samantha was one whose parents' input had been influential in helping her make this decision.

I told my mom and my dad, and they said, "Alright then. What course do you want?" I was thinking about like tourism or management or like teaching, English teaching course. Like I had ... like my head was so full of the ... all the courses that I can take, but my father asked me, "What about this? If you don't really like it, you can transfer to another school or course. You just need English to transfer." I also agree him, so that's why I applied for English Language (Interview 2)

As the participants made their way through university, their parents' influence still made itself felt, particularly in relation to their futures. This could have a bearing on whether or not and if so in what way they continued to focus on English. Cathy, for example, was considerably influenced by her parents' input in choosing her future career.

*Police officer.* My parents want.  
[Researcher]  
Why do your parents want you to be a police officer?  
[Cathy]  
It is comfortable and ... *safe* (Interview 5)

This decision then potentially impacted her reasons for studying English. The fact that her future was in some ways being decided for her by her parents made her unsure of what she would need English for. Although she was quite sure that she would need English to get a job, she had no certainty that the job itself would be in any way related to English (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.2, p. 133).

On the other hand, Gina was in some ways refocused on English at least in part through her



parents. She had for some time been considering a double major in a discipline such as international trade. However, she decided to abandon this idea and concentrate on becoming an English teacher, a decision her parents were quite involved in.

*I decided it's better to focus on one thing and do it perfectly than do two things clumsily. My parents want me to become a teacher, so they are concerned that I will consider other paths if I have a minor (Interview 5)*

This refocusing of her priorities gave her a definite reason for continuing her English studies. It was thus clear parents could play a role in the participants' reasons for studying English. A final group that had such an influence was teachers.

#### **6.2.2.1.3 Teachers**

With many students in Korea enjoying quite close relationships with their teachers, it was not surprising that such interactions could affect the participants' reasons for studying English. For some of them, this was especially noticeable in their decisions to choose a major related to English in university. This was particularly the case with Lena, who had been influenced by her old teacher.

*At first, I wanted to be a reporter or interpreter, so I wanted to major in the Department of Mass Communication, but my score was not enough to apply for it, so I had to choose different major. At that time he gave me a lot of help. He majored in English literature and he gave me much information. That's why I decided to come here. We have known each other since I was first grade in middle school (Lena, Interview 2)*

However, it was not just in high school that teachers were a significant presence. They continued to affect the participants in university. Penny, for example, was in some ways refocused on English through her interactions with one of her professors.

... one day, I asked ... *I visited the professor* [to ask advice] ... “My major is English literature and language, so I’m very worried about this class,” I said. So, he said to me, “Your major is English, so you studied more and more about your major, it is very important ... very useful to law,” he said. So, I studied English hard (Interview 7)

Her professor pointing out a definite relationship between her studies in law and English gave her a clear reason for focusing on the language. There was thus a definite interaction between significant others and the participants’ reasons for studying English. A similar interaction was evident between significant others and the participants’ goals in the language.

#### **6.2.2.2 *Significant Others and Goals***

Just as in the previous section, the data showed that the three aforementioned groups could interact with the goals the participants set themselves. These goals often fell into two linked but distinct categories, language goals and future goals, the latter often relating to employment. As such, the following section will deal with these two categories and how significant others interacted with them.

##### **6.2.2.2.1 Language Goals**

The goals that the participants set themselves in English were often formulated through getting the advice or following the example of other students. Not surprisingly, TOEIC was often on the minds of these students, which had a definite effect on Cathy.

I think ... I think I don’t need TOEIC, but many friends are talk me TOEIC, TOEIC, TOEIC important, so in vacation, many friends study TOEIC. So, I think I must do that, but ... not yet ... yet. I don’t want, but important (Interview 4)

However, other participants created much more specific language goals based on interaction

with their peers. This was illustrated by Gina.

*My professors always say to us, “After you become good at reading and writing, you can do well in speaking and listening.” My seniors say the same thing, so I think I am affected by them (Interview 4)*

In a similar way, the relationship with particular students could provide the necessary push for some of the participants to refocus on their goals. Mandy was one of these.

*I have a very close senior who is going to graduate this year. Recently, he and I drank and talked together. He said the thing he regretted most about his university life was not being an exchange student. He is a very close senior to me, and he said like that ... He said, “I will pass the teacher’s test, so you will be an exchange student.” So, we promised to do it ... He is ... he is very special to me, so because of that, it also ... it is motivation for me ... be my motivation to go the exchange program (Interview 7)*

However, at times, direct influence such as this was not necessary. There were occasions when even the example of other students and what they had done or were doing was influential, as demonstrated by Penny.

*In my class, senior and sophomore, they told me many experience ... they experience many things and they told me, so I’m very ... for example, study abroad and internship. It ... they’re very help to me (Interview 6)*

There was thus considerable scope for the participants’ interactions with their peers to have quite an influence on their English goals. This was much more so than their parents, who the data showed had a very limited influence on the language goals they chose. On the other hand, interactions with teachers also had the potential to affect the participants’ English goals.

One of the ways in which teachers affected the participants’ goals was through their overt recommendations of particular goals. Chief among these was getting a TOEIC score. Cathy talked about this on a number of occasions.

*... my professors advised us to raise the TOEIC score as soon as possible (Interview*

6)

Lena's professors also emphasized the importance of TOEIC.

... all of professor said before you were third grade, you have to make good TOEIC score (Interview 7)

In other cases, professors made specific recommendations to individual participants, which were then taken aboard as goals by the individual. Penny was one of these.

I study more vocabulary or grammar. In my class, my professor told me, "You must study more grammar like this and this." I study more that (Interview 6)

However, it was not always through overt recommendations that professors could affect the participants. The simple fact of having a relationship with a professor could affect a participant's focus. This was the case for Mandy.

... its class professor is K professor, and I got very low grade last semester, so I really sorry to see her every class but ... *because of that I got motivation to get an A this time at all costs. ... I am really sorry [about my grade]. She taught me really well.*

[Researcher]

What ... why ...?

[Mandy]

*I didn't meet her expectation. ... Because she is my main professor. She is my advising professor.*

[Researcher]

Yeah, advising professor.

[Mandy]

Yes, several times ... comes many times ... *she knows my personal stuff, but I got C, C+. The grade was terrible, so ... I am sorry for myself. I am really sorry to her* (Interview 7)

Apparently feeling that she in some way owed the professor something for previous poor performances, Mandy made getting an A in her next class a priority. However, it was not just language or class goals that were affected by significant others.

#### 6.2.2.2.2 Future Goals

The participants' future goals were most often related to the jobs they saw themselves doing after graduation. These were sometimes affected by the words and actions of fellow students, most often seniors, as was the case with Gina.

*When I decided to choose my major, I wanted to be a teacher without question. But now, it is changing ... People say a teacher is not a good occupation these days. I have heard many bad stories about teacher's job. My seniors also said to me, "Never become a teacher because it is too hard and highly competitive. It is difficult to become a teacher." So, my seniors advised me to prepare another option, getting a job. I realized my professors don't know information about becoming a teacher. Therefore, in case I fail to become a teacher, I am preparing for getting a job, for example, by volunteering, things for my resume (Interview 3)*

However, more commonly, it was interactions with their professors that resulted in at least a rethinking of the participants' ideas. This was the case with Lisa, who was quite affected by a conversation she had with a professor while doing some volunteer interpretation. This caused her to re-evaluate her ideas for the future.

*... I just have interest slightly more ... getting more interest in like interpreter or like that because I think the experience what I was there was a little bit affect to me. Coz talking with that professor and that professors said that having ... not many people can speak very well, but someone speak very well but having no profession knowledge is not really use ... useful. But if I have more professional knowledge in some areas, then I could be ... I could work some that ... for that area. So, I was ... I have like a little interest in there (Interview 7)*

Just as it was possible for teachers to give the participants new ideas, so too did they sometimes validate ideas that the participants already had. This was the case with Samantha, who had come to believe that her future path lay in graduate school and teaching.

*... no one told me to call Prof. P, but I did it on my own coz I was curious, I wanted to know about this more, so I called her and ask her for help. And she was like ... she*

gave me a lot of information.

[Researcher]

This is about the graduate school now you're talking about, is it?

[Samantha]

Yeah, about graduate school and teaching in foreign ...

[Researcher]

Countries?

[Samantha]

Countries. And even like to be a professor here in Korea. Yeah, everything. She answered all my questions (Interview 9)

They could also play a role in pushing the participants to develop a more definite concept of what they wanted to do in the future, particularly with participants who appeared to be wavering between various options. This was illustrated by Mandy's situation.

*I have meeting with my professor in English Education, K Professor. I was scolded. I was scolded a lot. Because ... I have many things going on, but nothing is determined yet. I am flustered. She said to me, "What happened to you with your doing a double major? If you want to take the Teacher's Certification Test, just focus on it. It is not an easy exam at all. If you want to get a job in a company, you will do a double major. If not, focus on the teacher exam" (Interview 6)*

However, the group most directly involved in the participants' decisions about the future was their parents. Lisa, for example, claimed that she often consulted her mother about her future.

... I think I'm keep talking about that things to my mom because I ... I think she's ... she knows what I want to be and in that field, so I keep just asking her and maybe some works, and she sometimes leading me when I'm not want to do those things, about like exhausted in there. Then she sometimes leading, so ...

[Researcher]

Giving you a push, you mean?

[Lisa]

Yeah. So, I think she ... I'm keep talking about my future or school life for her ... to her (Interview 6)

On other occasions, parents were more directive, in many ways pushing the participants in a particular direction. This was the case with Mandy.

*I don't want the Teacher's Certification Test and I also have almost no possibility of passing the Teacher's Certification Test, but my mother ... my mother push me that you ... I want you will be good English teacher, but I don't want. So, when we talk about this, we end up fighting. To be honest, my 30% for the Teacher's Certification Test consists of anxiety about my future and my mother's pressure. I don't want to do it. There is almost no desire (Interview 8)*

There were also occasions where parents' desires were the overriding factor in a participant choosing a particular path. Cathy's parents, for example, were clearly the ones who were responsible for her choices, regardless of her own feelings on the subject.

You want to be policeman, police officer?

[Cathy]

No, parents ... *my mother and father want me to take that test (Interview 6)*

There was thus considerable scope for significant others to interact with the participants' goals, both those related to their language studies and their futures. In a similar fashion, significant others could also be implicated in the importance the participants ascribed to English.

### **6.2.2.3 Significant Others and Importance of English**

The data revealed that significant others could affect how important the participants felt English was. One group that could have such an effect was other students. This was the case with Lena, who had an increased sense of the importance of the language through interactions with her exchange student buddy.

I think that English is more important because if I don't well to speak in English, I can ... I can't communicate with her and her friends. So, I think more important (Interview 7)

Teachers could also be influential in this regard. This was the case with Vicky, whose

professor's views had an effect on her thinking.

*Some time ago, a [business administration] professor said English will become more important, never less important (Interview 7)*

In addition to teachers, parents often had quite strong views on the importance of English.

This was certainly the case with Gina's father, whose ideas had an influence on her.

*English is something that all people find important, no matter what your major is. My father used to tell me that I can be poor in everything else, but I really need to be good at English. ... My father runs a private business. He isn't good at English, but emphasizes the importance of it. I think English has become as important as one's native language (Interview 1)*

Cathy's parents also considered English to be of considerable importance and had clearly imparted this to their children.

What do your parents think of English?

[Joo translates]

[Cathy]

Very, very important. My parents ... I have younger brother. My parents want he go abroad and Japanese ... go to Japanese and English school? I don't know exactly but English and Japanese ... *They wanted him to speak both languages well. But their plan was cancelled. Anyway, they think English is important and they made us study English from our early years (Interview 2)*

It was thus clear that those closest to the participants had the potential to influence their feelings about English. However, these people could influence not just how they felt about English but also how they felt about themselves.

#### **6.2.2.4 Significant Others and Sense of Self**

There was a definite tendency among the participants in the research to see themselves in



relation to others. In this, there was clearly an element of both competition and evaluation.

This was evident in how Vicky spoke about her group members in conversation class.

Our group was consist of four members, and ... *the ... group activity ... mainly about speaking, conversation ... other three were good at grammar but weak at conversation so ...*

[Joo]

*Your group members?*

[Vicky]

*Yes. I did the speaking part a lot ...*

... [Researcher]

OK. How did you feel about being kind of the group leader?

[Vicky]

*Of course, I enjoyed it ... [very long pause] ... I felt good when I could answer my group members' questions about English. I mean sometimes the others asked me about how to make English sentences they couldn't make in English (Interview 4)*

However, it was notable how often the participants viewed themselves negatively in relation to their peers. One example of this was Lisa, who even though she evaluated her speaking ability quite positively, nevertheless saw herself as weaker than some of her peers.

... some students were lives in America or some other countries that using English, so I know it the first semester when we meet each other. They're is really good at speaking like live in there, so there is really hard things because they are more better than me using in English, so that is a hard things.

[Researcher]

How does that make you feel?

[Lisa]

*I sometimes thought I'm good at speaking, but when I met them, I though I'm not really like that good at speaking because they are much, much better than me, more better, so I think I need to study speaking a lot more than before (Interview 2)*

Cathy also had a tendency to view herself negatively in relation to other students. However, unlike Lisa, who at least saw the possibility of catching up with these students through studying more, Cathy was very much demotivated by comparisons with them.

*... there are many higher year students in my class, in all my classes. So ... there is a big difference. They are really brilliant ... in speaking class. My friends and I can't talk in English in group activity, but they speak very fluently. I just think they are good rather than "Oh, I should try to speak well like them." I am more worried about ... my English won't be like theirs when I am their year. I don't think I am inspired to study hard (Interview 5)*

There was thus a clear potential for other students to interact with the participants' sense of self, both in terms of their concepts of their abilities in English and indeed their concepts of their own self-worth.

Although they were less frequently mentioned in the data, teachers could also be implicated in how the participants viewed themselves. One example of this was Gina, whose belief in her abilities was affected by encouragement from her professor.

*This semester, I have consulted my advisor professor, which made me think I should be a teacher. Now, I am sure that I want to become a teacher, so I am going to study for it. ... the professor gave me a lot of information about it and has encouraged me. The professor said to us, "The Teacher's Certification Test is not as difficult a test as you think. You can do it. You can pass the test." So, my doubt about being able to do it changed into a positive thought that is I can do it if I take the challenge (Interview 8)*

It could also be the case that family members, even indirectly, affected how the participants felt about themselves. This was the case for Gina and the effect having her mother and sister see her function in English had on her.

*There [Hong Kong], she didn't know my English was correct or wrong, but she saw the problems we had there solved. I guess she thought my English was correct. I got confidence when the problem was solved and my mom and sister depended on me there, confidence such as I will not die of hunger even though I have terrible English ability. When I came back ... although I was not that great there, I solved problems. To my mother and sister ... I don't know why but ... I felt proud. I decided to study harder so that next time I will use right English when I need to solve problems even though my mother and my sister don't know whether my English is wrong or right (Interview 7)*

The tendency of the participants to view themselves either in relation to others or through the eyes of others was a potentially important influence on their sense of self. However, influential experiences could also affect how the participants viewed themselves, both personally and in relation to English.

#### **6.2.2.5 *Sense of Self and Influential Experiences***

The data showed that particular experiences could be quite influential in terms of how the participants viewed themselves and English. Such effects could sometimes be apparently out of proportion to the experience, mirroring the so-called “butterfly effect,” which refers to the fact that “... there is a non-linear relation between the size of an initial perturbation of a system and the effects it may have in the long run” (de Bot *et al.*, 2007, p. 8). Gina’s trip to Hong Kong, for example, affected both how she looked at English and how she felt about herself.

*I travelled during the vacation. I had chances to use English at that time. Once I used English in real situations, I felt English is not a difficult thing. The travel also affected me ... the short travel changed me a lot, so I got to think a long travel like an exchange program will be a really good thing for me (Interview 7)*

Lena was another participant who felt that the experience of preparing for and going on a trip abroad was significant. In this case, she had planned a trip to Europe and looked after her younger brother as they traveled. Rising to this challenge gave her an enhanced sense of self-worth.

... having traveled around Europe, had that experience, do you think that experience had any effect on you?

[Lena]

Effect? Yes, because this travel ... I prepared all the this ... all travel, so I feel ... *what is "full of pride"?* (Interview 5)

Although going abroad independently would qualify as a challenging experience, less demanding experiences could also interact with the participants' sense of self. This was the case with Mandy, whose experience of taking part in a debate competition made her re-evaluate her abilities in English.

*We won two out of three free talking debates. The panels of judges for the debate competition were ... not professor, not school professor, and ... they were foreign instructors from outside K University. I realized my English is not that bad to them. So, I think my English would be good if I practiced free talking more. It was a good experience* (Interview 9)

These references show that a variety of experiences could and did interact with the participants' sense of self. However, just as such experiences could be significant, so too could interactions with their learning context affect their sense of self.

#### **6.2.2.6 Sense of Self and Learning Context**

The data revealed that the learning context in which the participants operated could affect the way they viewed English. This was particularly noticeable in cases where opportunities for communication were available to them. Lisa found such an opportunity in a program designed to bring Korean students and members of the U.S. military together in an informal environment. Her experiences in this program brought about a change in the way she thought about English.

I think this program make me to see the brighter side of the English because I didn't

have to use English like in formal way and not in strict way. And I just enjoying and playing and just ... just like to use it, just naturally use it then, so I think it makes me see more brighter.

[Researcher]

And so you ... by brighter way, you mean a positive way or just a different way?

[Lisa]

I think positive because like before, I was like ... I was tired to using English. So busy with my other works, so I don't want to use more. But in here, I am playing with them and just enjoying, so it makes me positive in English (Interview 6)

In a similar vein, opportunities to interact in English with students from other countries gave Penny some positive reinforcement.

In KELI House, variety of foreigners live in there, so I contact with them and ... they also talk me ... talk to me, and in this process I release afraid and my self-confidence is a little high (Interview 6)

However, the learning context could also interact negatively with the participants' sense of self. This was the case with Samantha, who found that what was expected of her in her new learning context did not correspond to the aspects of English that she saw herself as being good at. This in turn led to her feeling in some ways diminished in the eyes of others and to question the value of what she had done.

... it seems like the university, even the people around me, all they care about is the TOEIC score. But I've been to other countries for like 6 years, but I didn't get a top score. I'm having this kind of feeling like "What would they think of me? I've been to many countries for 6 years and I didn't even have a top score. What will they think of me? What did I do there?"

[Researcher]

Interesting

[Samantha]

Yeah, it's like those things makes me you know like ... makes me feel really bad. I worked really hard back there, but even if I say this, people won't know. They will never know (Interview 3)

Other aspects of the participants' lives could also intrude on their studies. Gina, for instance,

found herself quite affected by something occurring in her personal life.

*I feel my goals are distant [more difficult to achieve]. When I studied hard ... it seems my enthusiasm kind of dropped this semester .... When I had strong enthusiasm, my goals looked easy to achieve. Once my enthusiasm dropped, my goals look far away from me. My goals are still the same, but my psychological distance from my goals is different. ... I had my personal matter ... My study isn't going well. My enthusiasm went down in general (Interview 6)*

These examples show that the learning context was an important influence on how the participants' viewed English and their studies in general and how they felt about themselves. This influence of the learning context was also in evidence in the importance the participants ascribed to English.

#### **6.2.2.7 Learning Context and Importance of English**

There were several aspects of the learning context that could interact with how important the participants felt English was. One of these was the opportunity to interact with people from other countries in English. A common means through which this was achieved was the Buddy program, which half of the participants took part in. One of these was Mandy, in whose mind the standing of English rose considerably through her interactions with foreign students.

*I study English not only because my major is English Education but also because English is very useful in daily life. When I walked around downtown with them, people looked at me and my foreign friends in an amazed way. Their eyes said, "You are great." Naturally, now I think I have to study English because there are so many good things when I hang out with foreigners. Hanging out with them is helpful to me. Yes, sometimes I was tired and I feel pressure and responsibility, but I feel fun doing this. If I hated the idea of Buddy Program, I wouldn't have applied for that program. Compared to before and after the Buddy Program, now I definitely understand the necessity of English (Interview 2)*

This was also the case with Lena, whose experiences of communicating with her buddy made her realize what was necessary for effective communication.

I think that English is more important because if I don't well to speak in English, I can ... I can't communicate with her and her friends. So, I think more important (Interview 7)

However, despite the participants regularly proclaiming the importance English held for them, in practical terms, this could often be attenuated by their learning context. One of the main mitigating factors here was the demands placed on them by other elements in their learning context. For some participants, this related to class load. Gina, who was a student in English education, found that the emphasis on education detracted from her ability to concentrate on the language.

*I have to study for my classes. Apart from that studying ... making new foreign friends. I think I need those experiences in Korea, too, but I don't have time for them because of studying for my classes. So, I am worried about that* (Interview 5)

For other participants, it was the variety of programs that they were taking that made it difficult to make English a priority. This was exemplified by Vicky, who began to limit the activities she did in English in favor of participating in other programs.

... the International Lounge. Do you still go there?

[Vicky]

*I go there but ... this semester I want to do many different things, so I scheduled other activities such as tutoring and other programs in break times between classes. I have much less time to go there than last semester* (Interview 5)

Many of the participants also began a double major, which immediately limited the amount of time they could devote to English. Such was the case with Penny, even outside school.

... during the summer, were you doing any English study?

[Penny]

No. In the summer, I concentrate about law (Interview 7)

It was also the case with Lena, whose initial major was English language and literature but to which she later added a double in journalism and visual communication. She not only suffered from the pressures of having two majors but also discovered she found the second one more interesting.

It's too hard to study ... *I started my double major. It is interesting to me. It is much more interesting than my major* (Interview 5)

The participants' learning context was thus capable of either reinforcing their belief in the importance of English or, if not diminishing it, then at least distracting them from a concentrated focus on the language. The learning context was thus an important player in the participants' L2 motivational systems. However, another important element was the TOEIC and TOEFL tests, which interacted with a variety of elements.

#### **6.2.2.8 TOEIC/TOEFL and Reasons for Studying English**

TOEIC/TOEFL was an ever-present element in the learning context in which the participants operated, whether it was as a requirement for graduation, a measure of English proficiency, or a qualification. As such, it was not surprising that for some of the participants, it interacted closely with their reasons for studying English. One such participant was Lena.

... what would you say is your number one reason for studying English these days?  
Number one.

[Lena]

These days? To get score.

[Researcher]

And by score, are you talking specifically English scores, as in TOEFL and TOEIC,



or are you talking GPA as in *hakjeom* scores, or just all scores?

[Lena]

TOEFL and TOEIC is more important. And second one is *hakjeom* (Interview 9)

Cathy was similar in this regard, believing that TOEIC was a measure of English proficiency but even more so in the importance of the score.

English is ... English [ability] is expressed through scores such as TOEIC scores and my major class grades. Basically, I have to study for the scores. I think it is important to get good scores (Interview 9)

Vicky was very much focused on English as a means to employment, which for her meant studying to get a high score on TOEIC.

... what would you say is your number one, main reason for studying English?

[Vicky]

[long pause] To get a job. Yeah (Interview 4)

*TOEIC English is not for daily life. People say TOEIC is English for business ... I don't think it will be helpful, but ... TOEIC speaking is for "specs" [extra qualifications to put on a resume] (Interview 9)*

As such, the ubiquitous presence of TOEIC in their lives often influenced the actual reasons the participants were studying English. This influence could also be seen in the English goals that the participants set for themselves.

#### **6.2.2.9 TOEIC/TOEFL and Goals**

TOEIC/TOEFL interacted with the participants' goals on a number of levels. In the first place, with TOEIC being a qualification for a variety of programs that the participants wanted to take part in, it became something of a goal in itself, something illustrated by Vicky.

... now are you happy with your TOEIC score? Are you finished studying TOEIC?

[Vicky]

No, I am keep doing my TOEIC.

[Researcher]

OK. Why is that?

[Vicky]

I want my TOEIC score ... official TOEIC score more than 900 (Interview 9)

Although she had used her score to secure a place on a student exchange program, another of her goals, she was still focused on raising her TOEIC score.

In a similar vein, Lena was very much focused on TOEIC/TOEFL as something that was needed to send her abroad.

[Researcher]

... why do you want to study TOEFL?

[Lena]

*I want to be an exchange student. For that, I've got to have certain scores in TOEIC and TOEFL. I was told a TOEFL score is better than a TOEIC score for that.*

(Interview 4)

Cathy, on the other hand, was someone who struggled to create genuine goals for herself in English. In her case, TOEIC, as something most of her friends were focusing on and as something required by the school, became one of her only clear goals, one which she found somewhat difficult to explain.

Why do you need to raise your TOEIC score?

[Cathy]

*I should raise it ...*

[Joo]

*Why? For what?*

[Cathy]

*I started studying TOEIC. I should have a certain score on it. I have to have a stable score. If I fail to get a certain score, I will regret starting to study it (Interview 9)*

TOEIC/TOEFL thus often interacted in important ways with the English goals of the

participants. However, it was also implicated in the way that they assessed their progress in the language.

#### **6.2.2.10 TOEIC/TOEFL and Assessing Progress**

With quite a few of the participants having a dedicated focus on TOEIC/TOEFL, it was no surprise that some of them used it as a measure of their progress in English. This was particularly noticeable with Vicky, who often cited it as a measure.

... do you think your English has improved this semester?

[Vicky]

Little bit

[Researcher]

In what way? How has it improved?

[Vicky]

Actually, my TOEIC score ... *went up about 100 points* (Interview 4)

It was also the case with Lena, whose first thought when asked about improvement was her TOEIC score.

... what kind of things do you go “Ah! OK, I’m getting better”? What kind of things make you think that?

[Lena]

Just in class?

[Researcher]

No, no. Anything. Anything at all

[Lena]

At first, TOEIC score is grow (Interview 9)

There was thus a tendency among some of the participants to equate their progress in English with their progress in TOEIC/TOEFL, suggesting quite a significant interaction between the two within some of them.

This section has focused on illuminating some of the interactions taking place between the elements in the Immediate Context and the Internal Context of the participants' L2 motivational systems. The following section will deal with the final level of context, the Outer Context, and how this interacted with the rest of the system.

### **6.2.3 The Outer Context**

As detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3, the Outer Context contained the elements society and employment. These elements interacted with a variety of elements in the Internal and Immediate contexts. These interactions will be illustrated in the following sections.

#### **6.2.3.1 *Society and Reasons for Studying English***

It was clear from the data that the emphasis Korean society puts on English had interacted with the participants' reasons for studying it. There was a general sense that English was a genuine advantage in Korean society. This was well-illustrated by Samantha.

English is a big part in Korea. So, I think that's the reason why I chose to keep studying English (Interview 9)

These sentiments were echoed by Lisa, who spoke of the merits of attaining not just proficiency but also intercultural awareness.

I think in here there will be many advantages because there're many good speakers or good writers, but there're not many people who are really like them. So, in Koreans' view, they ... it's really big advantage. Because if someone is really like a foreigner

and they are Korean, they can do the both work, so it's big advantage in here  
(Interview 4)

Vicky put it in an even more straightforward manner, implying that English was a clear path to success.

*These days, people emphasize English, so I am affected by that. It is said people who can express themselves achieve success easily* (Interview 2)

Society's promotion of English thus gave the participants a clear reason for focusing on the language. This was also clearly linked to the importance they ascribed to the language.

#### **6.2.3.2 Society and Importance of English**

The prominence that society gave to English manifested itself in several ways which interacted with how important the participants felt the language was. For many of them, it was important as a means of achieving their goals. Lena put this quite succinctly.

English is not the goal. The way of ... the way of other my dream (Interview 8)

Mandy illustrated this in two ways, one of which related to securing qualifications for a particular career and the other, by extension, actually finding employment.

*Now I have to take the Teacher's Certification Test, so the second one [English being important to achieve her goals] is more correct ... I have to have a job, so I have to take the test* (Interview 9)

Society also interacted with the importance of English in terms of what aspects of the language were deemed important to focus on. In many cases, this suggested a very narrow focus, one that was primarily related to scores, as defined by Penny.

*TOEIC is more highly evaluated in Korea than communication (Interview 4)*

There was thus considerable scope for society's views on English to influence both the general importance ascribed to it and the specific focus of the participants in their language studies. However, just as society in general was prominent, so too was a more specific element on this level of context, that being employment.

### **6.2.3.3 *Employment and Reasons for Studying English***

One area in which English demonstrated the depth of its penetration into Korea was its use in employment. As such, for some of the participants, an important reason for studying the language was as a means of securing a job. Gina encapsulated this idea quite clearly.

*It's even said that you can make a living as long as you're good at English. English is just as important for me because in the end, the reason I study English is so that I can get a job. Being good at English increases your chances of getting hired, and because it can change my career, I think English is important for me (Interview 1)*

Samantha was even more specific when she spoke of how English would help her in relation to employment.

... I'm kind of sure that if I study English continually, I know that I'll ... I'll be able to be something. It's like teacher or ... or even teaching abroad, like teaching Korean in a foreign country (Interview 9)

There was thus a definite sense of English being an important component of a successful future. This in turn suggested a link between employment and the importance of English.

#### **6.2.3.4 *Employment and Importance of English***

Similar to society in general, employers in Korea also view English as being of some importance. For at least some of the participants, this interacted with the importance they attached to English.

*I have to get a job. To get a job, I have to study English. It can't be helped (Cathy, Interview 5)*

However, in the views of the participants, employers tended to have a narrow focus when it came to the language. This was outlined by Samantha.

*... in my point of view as a student, this school and the company, all they care about is the score. They say that like they will hire the university, like the line and you know, but that will still matter and the score (Interview 3)*

There was a definite sense that it was not demonstrated general proficiency in the language that was important, but rather how highly a candidate scored on official language tests. The most commonly used of these was TOEIC.

#### **6.2.3.5 *Employment and TOEIC***

With English being an important tool to secure employment, and with TOEIC being the most commonly used measure of language proficiency, there was a definite potential for interaction between these two elements. This focus on TOEIC, which was in many ways a gatekeeping mechanism, clearly affected many of the participants and was explained by Lena.

*In Korean, TOEIC score is very, very important to get a job. If I don't have the score, I can't get a job (Interview 8)*

There is a clear interaction here between the requirements of employers and the importance ascribed to TOEIC by those seeking work. This was perfectly illustrated by Cathy and how she saw her future in relation to English.

... if you become a police officer, what will you need English for?

[Cathy]

*English?*

[Joo translates question]

[Cathy]

*I don't think I will need English.* Don't use.

[Researcher]

But do you need English to become a police officer?

[Cathy]

TOEIC score (Interview 8)

For her, TOEIC had become in many ways her only priority in English, something clearly influenced by what employers were looking for. However, this focus on TOEIC was in many ways against what the participants actually believed or wanted.

Do you think it's a ... do you think it's a good measurement of English ability?

[Lena]

Actually, I don't think that because many TOEIC teachers teach ... teach to me the skill, so it's not real English ... *ability?*

[Joo]

Ability

[Lena]

Ability.

[Researcher]

So, just for you ... don't worry about your professors. What do you think you need TOEIC for?

[Lena]

Huh?

[Joo clarifies]

[Lena]

In Korea, TOEIC score is really important because I have to get a job after graduate (Interview 7)



This is a perfect example of someone who had no real belief in the test as a measure of English proficiency but who was still in many ways focused on it due to its necessity for employment. As this suggests, employment also had the potential to interact with the goals the participants set themselves in English.

#### **6.2.3.6 *Employment and Goals***

With future employment being an important consideration for all of the participants, there was a definite potential for interaction between employers' requirements and the participants' goals. As the previous section suggested, TOEIC was an important goal for many of the participants. In fact, for some of them, it became their only real focus.

... do you have any goals in English this semester?

[Vicky]

*Now, the only thing that occurs to me is TOEIC (Interview 7)*

This was especially the case for participants who had little real conception of English being useful for them beyond as a qualification.

Do you have any goals in English in this semester?

[Cathy]

Goal ... raise speaking sc ... TOEIC score (Interview 9)

However, even for participants who did have personally relevant conceptions of English, TOEIC forced itself into their considerations.

What's your target in English at the moment?

[Samantha]

At the moment? Of course, getting high score in TOEIC again ... (Interview 4)

Considerations of employment could also color other goals of the participants. Lena, for example, looked at going abroad as an exchange student, not so much as an experience, but rather as something that would give her an edge in securing employment.

... how are they related to your dream?

[Lena]

Related? Just my spec. That will be my spec (Interview 6)

The word “spec” is a common term in Korea for extra qualifications or experiences that could make an applicant more attractive to an employer. There was thus quite some scope for considerations of employment to intrude on the participants’ goals.

This section has outlined how the various elements within this three-level system interacted with and affected each other. Both within levels and between levels, there were multiple interactions in evidence, any or all of which could affect the system as a whole. The final section in this chapter will describe how this occurred in the participants. It will show to what extent and how their individual L2 motivational systems changed over the course of the nearly two years of research.

### **6.3 System Change**

One of the important aspects of any complex dynamic system is that there is always the possibility, if not the inevitability, of change within the system (de Bot *et al.*, 2007). Such changes can be caused by the interaction of the various elements within the system over time, or the change can appear to be sudden, produced by an interaction whose effect seems out of proportion with its size. This section will illustrate a variety of ways in which the participants’

L2 motivational systems were observed to change over the course of the research. To do this, a number of perceived changes will be identified and described in relation to particular participants, thus allowing for a fuller and more focused exposition of the changes. These changes will be discussed under the headings reasons for studying English, vision, goals, and sense of self.

### **6.3.1 Reasons for Studying English**

As detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1, one common reason why many of the participants were studying English was for communication. Mandy was a good example of this.

*I liked talking to foreigners and wanted to be good at it (Interview 1)*

In addition, she stated that she was interested in other cultures and wanted to know more about them.

*... there is a book American Ways ... Gary Althen? I got some of the book for studying comparison paragraphs. The book says a lot about comparison of Korean and American culture. I found it interesting but it made me think I should be careful. Because ... my major is about English, and when I become an exchange student, I don't want to have this situation like when I meet a foreigner and I say "Did you have lunch?" That's why I got more interested (Interview 6)*

In Korean, "Did you have lunch?" is simply an afternoon greeting with the same meaning as "Good afternoon." However, the literal English translation is often used by Korean speakers when they greet foreigners, something which sometimes causes some minor confusion.

Becoming aware of cultural and linguistic differences such as this clearly interested Mandy at the time. She also wanted to avoid misunderstandings when she communicated with people

from other countries.

*... now I have a reason to study. That is "I don't want to make mistakes." I think I should learn first and then with that understanding, I can approach foreigners. We are different race (Interview 6)*

However, as time went on and particularly as she moved into the second half of her sophomore year, Mandy's focus on communication began to change.

*Obviously, I have chances to talk in English but ... I don't think "I speak English" or "I have many opportunities to talk in English these days." Maybe it is because I am doing fewer activities than last year (Interview 6)*

This was a continuous trend, with her gradually reducing both the activities that she was doing and the opportunities available to her for communication.

You're not doing Buddy or anything like that, is that right? No other opportunities?  
[Mandy]  
There chance. *There were chances, but I didn't pick them (Interview 7)*

In fact, once the initial enthusiasm of her freshman year had passed, Mandy never again demonstrated the same proactive approach that had been evident in her first interviews. It was clear that real-world concerns had outweighed her desire to develop her communicative competence.

*I just prepare for the future ... for the future. I'm already 22 years old. I can't believe that. The time is so fast and ... I feel like yesterday I was a freshman. I am already junior and ... I feel like the next moment I will graduate. I think I should do something. I have to make money to live on (Interview 9)*

One can thus see how, although it cannot be said that a desire to improve her communication in English had disappeared, it had come to play second fiddle to the reality of having to get a job. This, as was discussed in Section 6.2.3.5, meant that communication was no longer a priority and focusing on aspects of English that would improve her standing in the job market

had become primary.

In fact, one of the common features of those participants who identified communication as a reason for studying English was that this belief was much more prevalent in their earlier interviews. As time went on, other considerations became more important, suggesting that their earlier enthusiasm for communication was somewhat idealistic. The older the participants became, the more their focus shifted to practical considerations such as grades and scores on official language tests. The reasons for this varied. One was simply to earn a scholarship.

*... when I want to get a scholarship, English score is the biggest factor for getting that* (Vicky, Interview 9)

In other cases, their reasons were directly related to future qualifications that they would require in their lives outside university.

*English is also important for the Teachers' Certification Test* (Gina, Interview 6)

One can thus see here that the participants' reasons for studying English interacted with a variety of elements at different levels of the system, among these being the learning context, society, and employment. Such interactions were implicated in changes within the system, the most common being a diversion of the participants away from a focus on communication and more toward prioritizing aspects of English that would help them achieve more instrumental goals. However, just as there were changes in the participants' reasons for studying English, so too were changes evident in how they visualized themselves as users of English and how they saw their futures.

### 6.3.2 Vision

When looked at longitudinally, it was possible to identify three general trends in relation to the participants' visions of themselves. In some cases, there were those whose visions were relatively consistent. In others, there were those whose visions, although changeable, became more focused in a particular direction the longer the research went on. There was then a final group who never seemed to achieve any real clarity of vision and whose ideas relating to English often seemed to be in a state of flux. Each of these groups will be illustrated separately.

#### 6.3.2.1 *Consistency of Vision*

Gina was a good representative of the group which maintained a general level of consistency of vision and the place of English within it. At the beginning of the interviews, she was quite definite about her future path.

*I want to improve my English skills in order to be capable of teaching others and freely communicate with foreigners (Interview 1)*

Although she suffered from a period of indecision later in her freshman year having been told by her seniors that teaching was not a good option (see Section 6.2.2.2.2, p. 189), she still retained the connection between her future and the need for English.

*... when I think about something else besides teaching, I want to work at an international trade company. I like to get around and meet people. It would be good. I can use English in that situation (Interview 3)*

However, although at this point, she was not clear about which path to follow, she retained a

definite preference for teaching.

*If I get a job in the business administration field, I will use English when my company has to work with a foreign company. It would be better to become an English teacher, though (Interview 4)*

Then, by the beginning of her sophomore year, her determination was rekindled, something which was in no small way affected by the urging of her parents (see Section 6.2.2.1.2, p. 185). This did not mean, however, that her vision was static. On the contrary, it continued to evolve within the confines of the teaching profession.

*My dream was to become a middle or high school teacher. Teaching someone is still my dream, but I wonder whether to teach someone, becoming a [school] teacher is the only way (Interview 7)*

Gina's questioning of the exact form her teaching would take came about through taking a class in English language teaching methodology, a subject she referred to as "*a really interesting part in education*." As a result of this class, she briefly considered becoming a specialist in teaching methodology and teaching that subject. This idea, though, was not long-lasting. Within a semester, her eyes were again firmly focused on becoming a school teacher.

*This semester, I have consulted my advisor professor, which made me think I should be a teacher. Now, I am sure that I want to become a teacher, so I am going to study for it (Interview 8)*

Her interactions with her professor were clearly influential in coming to this decision through giving her the confidence that she could pass the Teacher's Certification Test (see Section 6.2.2.4, p. 194).

Perhaps surprisingly, in her final interview, Gina's goal of becoming a teacher had once again begun to waver.

*Originally, my parents liked the idea of me becoming a teacher, but not anymore. In addition, I saw that all my seniors failed to pass the Teacher's Certification Test. That made me have a doubt, "Is there any chance of passing the test even if I try really hard?" I also questioned whether I can do the job of a teacher with interest (Interview 9)*

A lessening of support from her parents and the negative example of her seniors had clearly interacted with her vision in such a way as to weaken it. This being said, she continued to see teaching as a strong option for her.

*... still, I like the study for becoming a teacher. I'm still interested in it (Interview 9)*

There was thus within Gina a consistency of vision that was at times disturbed by other elements, among these significant others and her learning context. However, in general, these elements, although often giving her pause for reflection, did not over the course of the research completely deflect her from her original idea. This was not quite the case with another group of participants.

#### **6.3.2.2 *Changeability of Vision***

While Gina's vision stayed relatively constant, other participants displayed more variability. Samantha was one such individual who despite having genuine confidence in her capabilities to at least communicate in English (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.5.1, p. 146), varied in her vision of her uses of English in the future. At the beginning of the research, she identified two potential options, working in a foreign company or lecturing at university (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.2, p. 133). However, as the interviews progressed, she moved away from the idea of working in a company.



I just wanna be a university, not student, teacher. But I think teaching other subjects, aside from English, is nice coz I've always had this interest in psychology (Interview 4)

Although working for a foreign company had now retreated from her thinking, her vision of teaching at the university level still involved English, as she saw studying abroad as essential in achieving such a goal. She had still not completely discarded the company idea, however, as it reappeared in subsequent interviews and was also linked to her furthering her education.

Whether I work at a company or teach, I would definitely do masters, but I haven't decided what to do for my masters yet (Interview 6)

Indeed, in her following interview, she seemed to have come right back to the idea of working in a foreign company.

I also thinking about getting a secretary certificate. Like generally, I want to work in a like company where ... what's *personnel team* in English?

[Researcher]

Ah, the personnel team

[Samantha]

Yeah, personnel team. Like I like the ... I like training someone ...

[Researcher]

Human resources

[Samantha]

Yes (Interview 7)

At this point, one of her greatest worries was "...what if I can't get a job because I ... I'm not really enough for that position?" Having spoken to her brother, who told her about a student from one of the top universities in Seoul who had passed only 4 of 70 document screenings, and her parents, who were pressing her to get additional qualifications, Samantha's anxiety appeared to focus her on more short-term considerations rather than long-term vision. However, shortly thereafter, her ideas changed again.

... nowadays, I'm kind of interested in being a kindergarten teacher, an English

kindergarten teacher. ... I'm not sure, but I certainly have interested ... have interest in like English kindergarten teacher (Interview 8)

Once again, teaching had come to the forefront in her thinking, replacing the idea of working in a company, which was not mentioned again. An important element in this change was her interactions with middle school students she was tutoring.

... teaching them was like really like ... I think it's odd to put this way, but it was really like refreshing. Like it's really different from like my normal life ... And seeing them getting like better grades and scores, some kind of like it thrilled me. And I think that's the main reason or cause that I begun to think of the kindergarten thing (Interview 8)

Her experiences tutoring these students were clearly influential in her thinking about teaching. It was apparent that an image of herself had begun to take shape within her and was still very much to the forefront in her final interview.

So, you're definitely thinking about the ... taking the teaching road. Is that right?  
[Samantha]

Yeah, and I like ... I'm not sure if I'm good at teaching or not, but I don't hate it. I actually like it. So ... so that's the reason why I made up my mind (Interview 9)

This vision of herself as a teacher in turn brought into focus the path she would take in her education.

... I'm also thinking of like taking a graduate school in Korea. But I heard that in like America or other countries, they don't consider like this *graduate school of education* as a graduate school. They just consider that as a course to get a teacher's certificate. So, maybe I can take TESOL after the education college ... graduate school (Interview 9)

From these references, one can see that although Samantha's vision of her future and English underwent considerable changes, by the end of the interview process, she professed to having a relatively clear perception of her future. This final vision had been the product of interactions between significant others, influential experiences, and to a certain extent society

and employment, and had produced a vision that although related to her initial one, was quite changed. Another participant who exhibited a similar path was Mandy.

From her first interview, Mandy had several competing visions of herself, becoming a teacher or a translator/interpreter (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.3.3, p. 137). However, by the middle of her second semester in her major, her ideas had undergone something of a change.

*... I realized I am not a teacher type of person since I have been studying English education. I question whether I can put up with the path of a teacher. Now I have more interest in becoming an interpreter (Interview 3)*

The implication here was that through studying her major, she had come to a better understanding of herself and as such saw being an interpreter as more suitable for her. However, teaching had not yet disappeared. It was still a possibility, although in a different form, teaching in a private language institute rather than a public school.

*Now I want to become a translator rather than a teacher. When it comes to a teacher, I want to become an instructor rather than a school teacher. I want to become an instructor, not because I like teaching students but because I can be a freelancer. It turned out what I have done is not focused on becoming a teacher but on a translator ... interpreter, so I want to be an instructor (Interview 4)*

In fact, the possibility of becoming a teacher strengthened as Mandy entered her sophomore year.

Now, my thinking is change a little bit because I actually don't want to be a teacher. I want to be a simultaneous interpreter. But now, half and half. I'm thinking changing because more ... *I became realistic (Interview 5)*

Although her first choice was still quite definitely interpreter, the practicalities of her situation had begun to affect her. Rather than being something that she could definitely picture herself doing in the future, interpretation was more an idealized view of herself, not something grounded in the reality of her situation. This movement away from the ideal was evident in

her next interview.

*I never want to be a school teacher. ... But also I don't want interpreter as my main career. Because it is a freelancer job. ... It is not a secure job ... so I kind of want to be a teacher, but not school teacher. Anyway, if I had to choose between an interpreter and a teacher, I would choose to become an interpreter (Interview 6)*

This conception of the impracticality of becoming an interpreter grew stronger in her next interview as she began to see that the preparation that she had done throughout her school years was more related to teaching than to becoming an interpreter.

*Both becoming an interpreter and becoming an English teacher are difficult. Studying for becoming an English teacher is difficult and getting specification for becoming an interpreter also is difficult. ... I can be an interpreter as maybe my second job after I become an English teacher. I think I have wanted to be an English teacher for a long time, so it is natural to become a teacher first (Interview 7)*

However, even by the end of her sophomore year, she was still not ready to commit to teaching.

*... I don't know what I want to do and I don't know exactly what jobs suit me. And I don't know my goal, and so ... I am struggling. ... I am learning English education, so it will be good for me if I use that. Because I can use what I know ... Translation and interpretation are also options (Interview 8)*

Though evidently not wanting to waste the knowledge that she was acquiring through her major, Mandy continued to search for alternatives to teaching, suggesting that she found it difficult to reconcile the idea of being in the classroom with her self-concept. However, this changed over the vacation between her sophomore and junior years.

*I have done a tutoring job since I was a sophomore ... the more and more I get teaching children and get class ... teaching is ... very important to me and I naturally end up thinking that I will do a teaching job whether I pass the Teacher's Certification Test or not (Interview 9)*

It is clear that her actual experiences of teaching were crucial in allowing her to formulate a

sense of herself as a teacher. With this conceptualization in place, she not only seemed more at ease with herself, but also more focused on the path she would follow in the future. For Mandy, then, there was quite a bit more back and forth than with Samantha. In addition, the elements interacting with her vision of her future were somewhat different. Although society and employment were undoubtedly influential in Mandy's formulation of this, influential experiences interacted with her self-concept to allow her to see herself as a teacher of English in the future. Unlike these two, however, there were several participants who were never quite able to develop a stable vision of themselves as future users of English.

#### **6.3.2.3 *Lack of Clarity of Vision***

While quite a few of the participants exhibited a degree of changeability in their visions of themselves and their uses of English, these had often stabilized by the end of the interviews. However, for a number of them, such stabilization was never achieved. Their systems were more characterized by a constant state of flux. This was illustrated by Penny. At the beginning of the interviews, she had a picture of herself studying abroad to become an oriental medicine doctor.

... you want to be oriental doctor?

[Penny]

*Yes.*

[Researcher]

How important is English for your dream job?

[Penny]

*I heard oriental medicine graduate schools are in America and Australia, so if I want to go there, I have to have good English.*

[Joo]

*Ah, you want to study oriental medicine not in Korea but foreign countries.*

[Penny]

*I am thinking about that. Not definite yet (Interview 2)*

The lack of certainty implied by her last comment was repeated and if anything magnified in her next interview, where other possibilities were clearly entering her considerations.

*There are many thoughts on my mind these days. I am still considering it [oriental medicine] as my future, but I am considering many things, too. Not clear (Interview 3)*

One of these was a potential focus on law. Nevertheless, by the end of her freshman year, she was still quite unclear about what she wanted to do.

*I can't find my goals yet. I want to find something to ... I want became (Interview 4)*

She was also unsure how English would fit into her future, although she did have a vague concept that it would be related to her work.

... what situations do you think you'll need English in?

[Penny]

Talking and ... *paperwork. I will use it for them (Interview 4)*

However, by the beginning of her sophomore year, she claimed to have a somewhat more definite idea of what she saw herself doing in the future.

... do you have a kind of a dream job or something that you want to do?

[Penny]

Now I'm ... not really, but I will. I think attorney, prosecutor, like relate law, I think (Interview 5)

Although there was still a degree of uncertainty in her vision, this appeared to be solidifying in her next interview.

... what am I become and what do I ... what should I do and something very complicated, like that. But former mention law. It is clear ... clearly I will study law (Interview 6)

Despite having apparently focused more on law, there was still a lack of definiteness to her ideas which was apparent in her difficulty in pinpointing specific uses of English in relation to her job.

For that job, which do you think is more important, basic speaking, basic writing, or TOEIC score?

[Penny]

I think all of them (Interview 7)

It later became clear that there were several influences on her choice of law as a potential career. One of these was the job prospects it offered.

Next year, big volume of recruitment about police office, so I apply that (Interview 8)

In addition, she had consulted her family about the path she was considering.

Father talks me what about this part and what about study about administration (Interview 9)

However, by the end of the interviews, she was no closer to having a clear vision of her future.

In fact, the apparently growing conviction that she would do something related to law had completely dissipated to be replaced by great uncertainty about what she would do and what her attributes were.

Now, I am a junior and next year I'm a senior and in Korean society ... when graduate the university, most of them ... have a job. So, recently I am very ... I am thinking about my job every moment, so it is very confusing.

[Researcher]

OK. But I mean you said that you want to work for the prosecution.

[Penny]

Yeah, but it is ... I am not sure that it is fit to me. So, what is my interesting and my skills. So ... *I don't know what I am good at* (Interview 9)

This uncertainty extended itself to an inability to foresee a clear use of English in her future (see Section 6.2.1.7, p. 174)

In Penny, it is possible to identify a number of elements interacting in relation to her vision of herself and her uses of English. Not least of these is her sense of self. Her lament of “*I don’t know what I am good at*” is a severe impediment to the formulation of a clear vision. In addition, there is the definite sense of feeling considerable social pressure to have secured a job before she graduates. There is also clearly input from her parents, while the positive employment prospects offered by the law field certainly interact with the pressure she feels to identify a clear future path. Penny’s sense of indecision is thus not surprising given that the direction she appears to be heading in is one which she is in no way certain is the right one and to which she has not personally committed. As such, it is not surprising that she also has considerable difficulty visualizing a clear use of English in the future.

There was thus considerable variability among the participants in terms of their visions of their future selves. This variation was not just in how they imagined themselves but even more so in the definiteness of these visions and how they interacted with a variety of elements within their L2 motivational systems. As might be imagined, just as these visions were amenable to change, so too were the goals that the participants held. Such changes will be illustrated in the following section.

### **6.3.3 Goals**

As with vision, it was possible to identify three trends in relation to the participants’ goals. In some cases, their goals remained quite constant throughout the interview process. In others, there was a process of change and reformulation in evidence, while for a number of students, there was a seeming inability to elucidate any clear, personally relevant goals in English.



These three groupings will be illustrated individually with reference to particular participants.

### 6.3.3.1 *Constant*

As a goal that was common to all of the participants, it is appropriate to focus on authorized language tests to illustrate the relative constancy of this goal among some of them. Gina was one participant who right at the beginning of the interviews identified TOEIC as one of her goals (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.3.2, p. 136). She also had clear reasons for pursuing this goal.

*I want to get a TOEIC score as quickly as possible which will be demanded when I graduate. When I finish studying TOEIC, I want to start to study TOEFL. That is one reason, and the other reason is when I apply for programs in K University which also demand TOEIC score, such as exchange student (Interview 2)*

This goal remained constant in her next interview, although it was clear that interactions with her seniors had made her consider amending her goals slightly.

*Some seniors advised me that I should start TOEFL quickly because they believe studying TOEFL can cover TOEIC studying. So, I didn't make up my mind yet about starting TOEFL in winter vacation or studying TOEIC more (Interview 3)*

By Interview 4, it was clear that her TOEIC goal had almost been attained.

... in TOEIC, have you got the score you want?

[Gina]

*Almost there. My TOEIC score has improved a lot, though*

This made her turn her attention more toward TOEFL.

*I want to take the TOEFL test this semester (Interview 5)*

By the end of the semester, it occupied a position at least as important as TOEIC and her class grades in her thinking, and it was clear that the importance of achieving good scores was uppermost in her mind.

*TOEIC and TOEFL ... my classes' scores ... all score-based goals (Interview 6)*

Toward the end of the interviews, as Gina came to the end of her sophomore year, it was clear that TOEFL had come to occupy a dominant position in terms of her study of English.

*In the short term, I want to get a good TOEFL score so that I can be an exchange student. TOEFL has four sections of English, so not only for TOEFL test itself, but also it will help improve my English ability (Interview 8)*

There was thus a considerable level of consistency in Gina's goals in terms of her focus on standardized language tests. However, this consistency should not obscure the fact that a variety of elements still interacted with this process of goal formation. Her specific learning context with its graduation requirement and scores as qualifications for exchange programs, her fellow students' recommendations, the intersection of this goal with her goals of studying abroad and improving her English, and the potential benefits for employment of both a high score and taking part in an exchange program all contributed to the maintenance of this goal throughout the period of the research. However, there were quite a few participants who were more variable in their goals than Gina.

#### **6.3.3.2 *Changeable***

Just as with standardized language tests, a goal that a considerable number of the participants shared was studying abroad. Lena was one of these, identifying it as one of her main goals

right from the beginning.

*My short term goal is an exchange student (Interview 2)*

Her reasoning at the time was that she would have more opportunities to use English, thus providing a more effective learning environment than Korea. Becoming an exchange student continued as one of her goals but quickly became less definite.

Of course, I want to go. If I fail to go, I will do a working holiday. After finishing my sophomore year, I will absolutely take a semester off. At that time, I have to go on an exchange program or working holiday (Interview 3)

These two possible methods of going abroad continued as options, with the exchange program being the preference. However, Lena's ideas about an exchange program were somewhat unclear.

*I want to do a one semester exchange student program, but I also consider a whole year exchange student program, too, if possible. The other option is I study for one semester in one country and the other semester in another country, if possible. If possible, I want to ... I can spend one year there. If possible I want to spend one semester in a different country and then the other semester also another country. So, two different countries (Interview 4)*

At this point, she had multiple possibilities in mind ranging from one- or two-semester exchange programs to a working holiday. Then, in her fifth interview, another option entered the picture.

*I couldn't choose between doing an exchange student program and a working holiday, but now I've kind of decided to do an exchange student program first and then a working holiday. However, I am not sure yet ... because I heard usually students who returned as a junior or senior do an exchange student program, so the chance of a sophomore getting a not good grade there is high ... So, I am not sure, but I really want to do an exchange student program first. I want to do a government internship program, but now I am just searching for the information about it, so I can't say whether I will do it or not*

At this point, Lena appeared to have no clear idea of what her purpose was in going abroad and was changing her mind on a regular basis. The influence of other students was also having an effect on her deliberations. However, her major reasons for holding this goal were “English skill and I just want to go foreign country and live in there” (Interview 5). This refrain continued into her next interview, where she seemed no closer to making a decision.

No, I’m not yet decide, but anyway, I want to go abroad (Interview 6)

However, she provided a hint into why this was when she revealed that for her, going abroad “will be my spec” (Interview 6). This suggested that her consideration of these programs was not directly related to any special interest she had in living abroad but more so to the belief that such experiences would be beneficial for her in looking for a job.

By her next interview, she had finally started to narrow down her options, dropping the working holiday idea totally and retaining a preference for an exchange program, something that had clearly been affected by her interactions with others.

Because lots of people who go to working holiday, they are just play and not using English or like that. Lots of people are like that, so most of people said if you want to go abroad, using exchanging program (Interview 7)

Even after this, her ideas continued to change, with the ideas of others again being part of her considerations.

... are you still thinking about an exchange student program these days?

[Lena]

Yeah, sure. But if I can’t go to U.S. exchanging program, I want ... *transfer*? ...

Transfer. Because I also wanted that, and I wanted that but my parents also want it (Interview 8)

The idea of transferring to a foreign university made an appearance here for the first time and provided an interesting insight into her whole motivation for going abroad.

*The first reason is that I am a student from a local university and it is no merit. The second reason is I really want to study in a foreign university. I want to study abroad ... I envy ... put it in one word, yearning. I want to learn foreign cultures. When I look at foreign students, they can focus on studying only (Interview 8)*

Lena here betrays a belief that as a student from a university not ranked near the top in Korea, her degree was in many ways worthless and that graduating from a foreign university would be more advantageous, a belief apparently shared by her parents. In addition, there is the suggestion that the learning environment in Korea was not attractive to her.

*I have been studying here for two years now. I am exhausted with the pattern here in which I have to do the same tests and the same assignments quickly (Interview 8)*

There was thus a definite sense of the learning context interacting with Lena's desire to study abroad. Although this desire remained in her final interview, she was still no closer to finalizing her ideas, being unclear about what she would study ("I think media or study more about English"), where she would study ("I want to go USA. If not possible, Europe or UK"), and indeed how this studying was going to be achieved.

*Exchange program and then when I go the ... that university, if I can transfer, I want to transfer in that university. If not possible, I will find other ways (Interview 9)*

Despite the goal of studying abroad remaining relatively constant throughout Lena's interviews, the means through which she intended to do this fluctuated considerably. It was clear that this goal interacted with elements such as the goal of increasing her English ability, significant others, employment, learning context, and society itself. An overriding impression was that her clear indecision over what path to follow was bound up with her sense of self and a lack of genuine personal investment in the goal of studying abroad. However, despite this, Lena had at least an element of consistency to her goals, something which was lacking in some of the other participants.

### 6.3.3.3 Indeterminate

Over the course of the research, the data revealed that a number of the participants had great difficulty in formulating goals in English. Among these was Cathy. Right at the beginning of the interviews, in common with many of the others, she focused on communication.

*I want to communicate with foreigners and I want to feel at ease when I talk with foreigners and professors. I want to feel at ease when I am with foreigners, and I can answer them well (Interview 1)*

This continued into the following interview.

... *someday* I want to speak very well. I want, very very want (Interview 2)

However, when it came to identifying a particular use to which she might put English in the future, Cathy was unable to outline anything specific. In fact, her picture of someone speaking English was not even of her.

... can you see a picture of you using English in the future?

[Cathy]

Yes. *Fluently. I really want to speak English fluently.*

[Joo clarifies]

[Cathy]

*When I see people speaking English fluently on TV, I imagine. Ah ... part-time job, two foreigners, one Korean come. Korean very speaking English, so I envy her. Someday I want to be like her (Interview 2)*

In her following interviews, this initial enthusiasm for communication diminished, and by the end of her freshman year, she claimed to have no goals in English at all (see Section 6.2.1.8, p. 175-176). To explain this, she claimed, “*I have lots of things on my mind,*” the major one being her future job. At the same time, she found it impossible to visualize any real use of English in her future (see Section 6.2.1.8, p. 175). By the next interview, she was able to

present just one English goal, TOEIC, a goal that was directly related to securing employment. However, outside this, she had no other real goals in the language, something which was reinforced in her sixth interview.

... these days, what are you focusing on in studying English?

[Cathy]

*Tests. I focus on tests. I study for them. I don't study except for them*

This focus on scores and tests continued in her next interview.

... getting a good TOEIC score and good GPA and I want to win scholarship  
(Interview 7)

At the same time, she was unable to visualize any future use of English, and her focus was very much centered on Korea, where, of course, these test scores would be most useful (see Section 6.2.1.1, p. 166). By the time of her final interview, she continued to pay lip service to the goal of improving her speaking, but it was clear that her only real focus was TOEIC.

*First of all, raising TOEIC score ... The other thing is speaking ... I don't know how to study speaking ... I can't decide how to study it ... I don't know any method to do well at it* (Interview 9)

In addition, her focus on TOEIC could be related to the fact that she was taking a class in the subject.

[Cathy]

*Apart from TOEIC class in Dongyoung Hall, I don't do anything else.*

[Researcher]

So, for example, when you go home, you don't study English?

[Cathy]

Yes. Just TOEIC (Interview 9)

This class, in turn, was not something that she had chosen of her own volition in pursuit of her goal. On the contrary, it had been recommended to her by friends.

Why did you decide to take that class?

[Cathy]

Friends recommend ... so ... *I applied for it. We took the course together* (Interview 9)

It was thus clear that Cathy had few English goals of her own making. Her focus on particular aspects of English, most notably scores, interacted with other elements in her system such as her vision of her future self, employment, learning context, and significant others. In addition, there was more than a hint of a negative sense of self in relation to English, as illustrated by statements such as the following, which were not uncommon in her interviews.

Words and ... *making sentences ... I can't think of words and sentences. I am not sure if sentences I made are right or wrong. So, I can't speak well* (Interview 7)

There was thus a sense of a lack of investment in the language that made it difficult for Cathy to formulate any personally relevant goals in the language. As such, her focus in her learning was to a large extent determined by elements outside the Inner Context.

The previous sections have suggested the potential significance of a definite sense of self in the behavior of an individual. Not surprisingly, this was another element within the participants' L2 motivational systems that was amenable to change and which will be illustrated in the following section.

#### **6.3.4 Sense of Self**

As detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.5, sense of self referred to the participants' appraisal of themselves in relation to English and the place of English within their lives. It was clear over the course of the research that for several participants, their sense of self had changed. One of



these was Gina. At the beginning of the research, she had a somewhat negative evaluation of her English abilities.

*I am bad at speaking English (Interview 2)*

She was also quite negative about other aspects of her English proficiency, specifically her grammar, and explained that this feeling negatively affected her confidence in the language, making her fear that she would both misunderstand and be misunderstood in communication (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.5.2, p. 149). She continued to suffer from these kinds of anxieties throughout the first half of the interviews, culminating in what was perhaps her lowest point.

*When I only thought of English as “I like English,” I was OK without a lot of confidence. But once I felt English is difficult and all results related to English are also bad ... I think my confidence dropped a little (Interview 6)*

Once she found that she was struggling in English and particularly as she was faced with worsening grades, she lost her confidence. This diminishing of belief in her English ability reflected a sense of self in relation to English that was distinctly negative.

The interview just mentioned took place half-way through her sophomore year, just before summer vacation. However, when Gina returned from her vacation, she had undergone what can only be termed a profound change.

*I changed a lot compared to last semester. I cared about my grades a lot. If I got a bad grade, I decided to study harder. If I got a good grade, I felt I could relax. However, this semester I care about my own standard. I got my own stuff [to make me study English]. Whatever people say ... I myself ... I am starting not to care about outside stuff.*

[Joo]

*What is your own stuff you care about?*

[Gina]

*My own stuff is ... inside ... a simple thought that is I want to do better in English ... That desire is getting bigger ... I don't care about outside stuff like grades (Interview 7)*

She then identified a number of influences on this newfound feeling. In the first place, her family had made a difference.

*I feel relaxed now. I felt depressed when I didn't meet my parents for a long time. Since I spent enough time with my parents, I am able to concentrate on what I am doing (Interview 7)*

However, even more significant in terms of English was the trip that she had taken to Hong Kong with her mother and sister (see Section 6.2.2.4, p. 194). The experience of looking after her two family members and having them see her functioning effectively in English had given her a sense of pride in herself and more confidence in her abilities in English. The experience itself (see Section 6.2.2.5, p. 195) had made her feel that English was not as difficult as she had perhaps thought, in many ways wiping out the negativity that she had felt at the end of the previous semester.

This positivity continued for the remaining interviews, even when she didn't feel any major "visible" improvements in her English.

*I don't think my English ability improved dramatically, but now I don't hesitate anymore in speaking English when I have a chance to speak. I used to feel shy, so I didn't say a word even though I had opportunities to speak English. I am trying to speak more (Interview 8)*

In her own mind, her trip was responsible for the changes she had undergone.

*... the trip during the vacation is the big thing. And I realized there is no one to scold me when I make a mistake in English. I realized everyone makes a mistake and feels shy but just speaks English. After that realization, I think it is OK if I make a mistake, and I try to say more (Interview 8)*

Gina thus underwent a considerable change in her sense of self in relation to English throughout the course of the interviews. At the beginning, her negativity stemmed from an interaction of a negative evaluation of her proficiency, scores, and a negative assessment of her progress. On the other hand, the elements that were most implicated in effecting a change were significant others, influential experiences, and self-awareness. These brought about, for example, a change in the way she assessed her progress, changes which allowed for the development of a more positive sense of self.

Samantha was another participant who found her sense of self undergoing a process of change. However, hers was in some ways the reverse of Gina's as she found herself reintegrating into Korean society after 6 years of studying overseas. This was at first not easy for her as her ideas about what university education should be like contrasted markedly with the reality in Korea, giving her a somewhat negative perspective on her studies.

... the university system, I think it's better in outside coz ... Yeah, it's like studying hard is really important, but studying hard, just studying hard, won't get you to, you know, like Samsung or LG. You need to do other activities like ... what could it be? For me, I think you need to enjoy yourself, like enjoy your life. Coz I think Korean students have this kind of like ideological thought. If they just do nothing, they're just wasting their time. Studying is the best thing that you can do as a student. Yeah, of course, like our job is to study, but in Korea, it's too much (Interview 3)

These were not the only negative feelings she had about the university system she found herself in.

... we usually complain about the ... you know, like focusing too much on score, not the ability that someone has. And also the scholarship thing coz they only give like full scholarship to like top four students in our course. And we know that the school is like getting high tuition from us (Interview 4)

However, at the same time as she was complaining about this, she was also making efforts to

adjust to the system and to fit in better.

I realize that I'm ... maybe I should fit in to this like whole society. So, I try to change my behavior a little bit. I try not to criticize the Korean educational system all the time, but I still make some complains. Maybe all students have complains about the system. And I try to make little ... and I'm trying to adjust (Interview 4)

As the interviews progressed, she was then able to identify the manner in which she was changing to become more a part of the system.

I think I'm becoming more like Korean students right now. Like I'm definitely adjusting. I do care a lot about the score coz Korea ... like Korean employer does not see the process or the ... yeah, process. They just see the result. So, because of that, I'm also focusing more on the result. But the process is still important to me. But what I think is ... if I don't study regularly, I start to feel nervous and anxious and thinking that if I keep doing this, my score will ... just because I don't study like a day, I would think that (Interview 5)

By the time she had got half way through her sophomore year, it was clear that, at least in some ways, this adjustment had been completed.

Yeah, I would say like almost 100% because now I'm worrying about being employed (Interview 6)

However, it was not just in her worries that these changes manifested themselves; they were also apparent in her behavior.

... nowadays, I don't act like I stayed abroad. I try to you know mingle with them and just be like not the same, but similar? (Interview 6)

By the end of the interviews, she believed that it was the Korean side of her that had come to the fore.

... after two and a half years basically back in Korea, are you feeling 100% Korean again?

[Samantha]

Mm. I think ... yes, I think so coz maybe from ... maybe since last year or something

I started worried about employment. And like I think about and worry about things that Korean students are thinking and worrying about. So, I think I can say that I'm like 100% Korean now (Interview 9)

These examples illustrate Samantha's reintegration into Korea. Starting out from quite a Western perspective as a result of her years abroad, a gradual process led to her feeling that she was once again 100% Korean. A number of elements interacted with this process over the course of the research, among them the learning context, significant others, society, and employment. These all interacted to change Samantha's sense of self from someone who was very much located in an English context to begin with to someone who, although still heavily invested in English, saw herself much more as a Korean first.

This section has shown that there were a variety of observable changes in the L2 motivational systems of the participants in the research. Such changes were observable in the reasons they had for studying English, the visions they had of themselves as users of English, the goals that they had in the language, and their sense of selves in relation to English. These changes were influenced by a variety of different elements interacting across all levels of context within the system. Even in cases where individuals underwent similar system changes, these changes were rarely if ever influenced by interactions between the same set of elements, thus highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of each participant's L2 motivational system.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated how the different elements making up the participants' L2 motivational systems interacted with each other across all three levels of context. In addition,

it has shown how over time, these interactions influenced perceptible change within the systems of individual participants. This has served to highlight the uniqueness of each individual's motivational system. Although their systems were generally made up of similar elements, how these elements interacted within each individual and the changes these interactions wrought varied considerably.

This fact also brings into focus the need for a CDS approach in the study of L2 motivation. With each individual differing in unique and highly complex ways, it is practically impossible to identify traditional linear cause-effect relationships in their motivation. For any valid investigation of the concept of L2 motivation to take place, it is clearly necessary to look at the interplay of the different elements within a learner's motivational system and how these produce a change in that system over time. This chapter has also pointed out the necessity of including context as a fundamental part of this system. Although much recent research has focused on the importance of the self in L2 motivation, this cannot be understood in isolation. It is clear that in addition to the elements that can be conceived of as being internal to the learner, those elements that might traditionally have been seen as lying outside the learner are equally as important in terms of the development of an L2 self-concept. In this regard, the importance of considering elements such as significant others, learning context, and societal influences in the formation of the participants' motivational systems has been highlighted. On the basis of these findings, the next chapter will discuss their significance both for our understanding of L2 motivation and language pedagogy.

# CHAPTER 7

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 7.1 Introduction

The foregoing analysis has revealed a wealth of observations about the participants in this study and their motivations for learning English. However, although it is vital to stay true to the individuals involved and the complexity of their L2 motivational profiles, it is appropriate at this point to step back from the data in order to evaluate the broader significance of the research reported in this thesis for the field of motivation research, as well as for L2 pedagogy. In so doing, this chapter will engage with previous research, drawing parallels where appropriate and questioning previous conceptions where necessary. Through such a dialog, it will seek to contribute to theory building in the field of L2 motivation and to make clear that such theory can be operationalized within the language classroom. In order to do this, the chapter will explore a number of important themes and sub-themes that have emerged through the research. These can be boiled down to the following set of propositions:

- Motivation is complex
- Motivation is dynamic
- Motivation is contextual
- Autonomy is complex: Implications for conceptions of autonomy
- Motivation may not be “ideal” or “global”: Implications for theories of L2 motivation
- L2 motivation research needs a complexity perspective

Taking these propositions as the starting point, the chapter will evaluate the significance of the statements for our understanding of L2 motivation and how it is studied.

## **7.2 Motivation is complex**

Given recent advances in our understanding of L2 motivation, it may seem unnecessary to propose that motivation is complex. However, the use of the word “complex” has come to have quite a different meaning with the increasing adoption of CDS approaches in the field of SLA (Dörnyei *et al.*, 2015b; Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a, 2008b), particularly when combined with self-perspectives (Mercer, 2011b; Mercer & Williams, 2014). The following sections will discuss the particular forms of complexity revealed by this research in two main areas, the uniqueness of individuals and the core elements of their L2 motivational systems.

### **7.2.1 Individuals are unique**

The present study is one of the first to utilize a CDS approach in the Korean context. In utilizing such an approach, it sought to avoid broad cultural stereotypes which have all too frequently tarnished previous studies. Many of these have been influenced by studies such as Markus and Kitayama (1991), which has often been taken as portraying East Asians as interdependent and focused on other people, something which has been strongly denied by the original authors (Markus & Kitayama, 2003). As Murray (2011, p. 256) has noted, “[t]he



search for cultural variations on this level [macro level] can lead to sweeping generalizations that can unduly influence educators' interpretations of learners' experiences in particular contexts." To avoid this, the researcher sought to identify the specific elements comprising the L2 motivational systems of individual participants. In so doing, he uncovered a picture of the complexity of these systems and the interactions taking place within them. On the one hand, this highlighted the uniqueness of each individual and the interactions taking place within his or her L2 self. Even those participants whose motivational profiles might have appeared similar through the use of traditional analyses, such as Samantha and Mandy in terms of their vision (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2.2), were revealed to have been influenced by the interaction of different elements. In these cases, while both were impacted by considerations of society and employment and influential experiences, significant others affected Samantha whereas sense of self was more relevant for Mandy. This held true for every element of the participants' L2 motivational systems. Not one element was seen to be unaffected by or not to affect any other element, though these interactions varied depending on the participant. Such variation reinforces the view that "the construction of motivational meanings reflects individuals' motivational beliefs, prior experiences and subjective appraisals of the affordances and constraints of the current situation ..." (de Bot *et al.*, 2007, p. 14). This, as Ushioda (2013a, p. 9) has pointed out, "places a premium on understanding students' personal perceptions of what English and learning English mean for them, how they relate to this language, and to what extent they take ownership of English as an integral part of their desired social identity." The implications of this for motivation research are far-reaching. It is now necessary to go beyond what has been until very recently the consensus view of individual differences, "stable and monolithic learner characteristics that act as modifying filters in the SLA process" (Dörnyei, 2009c, p. 229), and to look at more than just the

“abstract notion of the L2 learner” (Ushioda, 2012, p. 64). If each learner is a unique individual who interacts with the language and the surrounding world in unique and unpredictable ways, the utility of searching for grand, generally applicable theories of L2 motivation now appears tenuous at best. Viewing the learner as “a person” (Ushioda, 2012) and attempting to understand the interaction of elements that produces said person’s motivation (or lack of it) has the potential to provide far richer descriptions of the motivational process and far greater explanatory power.

### **7.2.2 Control parameters**

Although this thesis has highlighted the individuality of the participants, it has also been able to identify core elements that were common to all the participants and that played a significant role in the nature of their L2 motivational systems. These core elements correspond to what Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008a, p. 53) call “control parameters”: elements which “‘control’ the possible states that the system can occupy.” The current research identified three such parameters, which can be termed “vision,” “sense of self,” and “reasons for studying English/importance of English.” Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

#### **7.2.2.1 *Vision***

The first of these control parameters was the participants’ visions of themselves as future users of English. The data showed that the ability to visualize a future possible self of which English is an important component does indeed have a clear relationship to the motivation to

learn the language and to persist in that learning beyond the achievement of purely instrumental goals. This is in line with Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014, p. 2), who refer to vision as “one of the single most important factors within the domain of language learning: where there is a vision, there is a way.” Participants who were able to see English as having genuine relevance to them (for example, Samantha) were able to create definite links between the language and their future possible selves. On the other hand, those participants who could establish no genuine need for the language, except perhaps as a qualification, were often unable to form a definite image of themselves using/needing English in the future. Such an inability made it almost impossible to establish a clear context of use for the language.

This suggests the potential difficulty learners may have in “igniting the vision” (Dörnyei, 2009b, p. 33) in settings where a genuine context of use is not immediately accessible. Although this would seem to imply the necessity of dedicated efforts to assist learners in discovering a personal relevance to their English studies, as Jeon (2010) has noted, such guidance or feedback is often absent in Korea, particularly in the high school system. If learners are emerging from this system lacking any real vision of themselves as users of English, or indeed of their futures, it is difficult to see how they can be expected to sustain their motivation to study the language in a post-secondary context. The suggestion here is that changes need to be made to the secondary system to help learners develop more investment in the language and to discover a more individual path in their studies. In addition, “language learners need to believe in the localised use of English ... to express their personal meanings and experiences” (Gao, 2013, p. 189) in order to develop a genuine vision of themselves as users of the language.

#### 7.2.2.2 *Sense of Self*

Another of these core elements was the participants' sense of self. As was described in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.5, sense of self as used in this study implies learners' conscious appraisals of themselves in relation to their abilities in English. Those with a positive sense of self often exhibited behaviors that had the potential to enhance both their belief in their abilities and the abilities themselves. Bandura (2001) has drawn attention to the key influence that a learner's sense of self can have on the course of his or her learning.

It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing. ... Efficacy beliefs also play a key role in shaping the courses lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments people choose to get into (Bandura, 2001, p. 10)

Those participants with a healthy sense of self, for example, Samantha and Lisa, not only sought out opportunities to use English, but were also able to persevere in situations where the activities involved a level of potential difficulty or threat. As a result of this, both their sense of self and indeed their actual competencies were further enhanced in a type of virtuous circle. Conversely, participants with a weak sense of self, for example, Cathy, often demonstrated what Higgins (1998, p. 35) refers to as a "prevention focus," which he defines as "an avoid mismatches strategic inclination to avoid all unnecessary risks by striving to meet only responsibilities that are clearly necessary ... *or* safely attainable." Such learners may consciously avoid situations that could threaten their already weak sense of self, thus depriving themselves of potentially valuable opportunities to use the language, as a result of which neither their perceived nor actual abilities in the language are likely to be enhanced. This very much suggests the importance of helping learners foster their belief in their ability

to learn and produce a second language (see Mills, 2014, for a discussion of self-efficacy in SLA). It also points out the clear relationship between a learner's sense of self and the motivation to adopt effective learning strategies.

### ***7.2.2.3 Reasons for Studying English/Importance of English***

A third control parameter observable in the participants was their reasons for studying English and the importance they attached to the language. Although these two elements were treated separately in Chapter 5, such a separation was in many ways an analytical convenience only. The two elements are, in fact, so closely related and often overlapping that for the purposes of this discussion, they can be looked at together. Although a considerable number of the participants cited communication as a main reason for learning English, in most cases, this did not stand the test of time. This suggests that for many of the participants, their desire for fluency and communicative competence lay more in the realms of fantasy (Ryan & Irie, 2014) or as part of an “idyllic self” (Lyons, 2014) rather than being part of a genuine future possible self. In this regard, “... fantasies fail to be a valid signpost for action” (Oettingen & Hagenah, 2005, p. 649). That is, they are a pleasant distraction to the learner in the present moment, but they lack the motivational impetus to impel the learner to realize such a view of themselves in the future. This was certainly the case with many of the participants in this study. Despite their initial enthusiasm for communication in English, few of them demonstrated any real investment in attaining such a proficiency in spoken English, particularly when more immediate concerns (e.g., TOEIC scores, major studies, specs) made their presence felt.

Of major importance here is the finding that by far the most common reason for studying

English was as a means of securing future employment. This gives a clear insight into the way English was often perceived by the participants, what Kim (2009a, p. 59) calls the “English is the key to employment” discourse. For many, its importance was as a means of getting a job rather than a requirement for doing a job, something which will be explored in more detail in Section 7.4.3. As a result, for many of the participants, there was a lack of a conception of themselves as actual users of the language. Their focus in studying the language was very much instrumental, that is, for example, raising their TOEIC score. This overwhelming emphasis on one measure of language proficiency, one with a heavy emphasis on listening and reading comprehension skills, had the potential to severely constrain language learning behaviors. Despite many of the participants professing a desire to communicate more effectively in English, the reality was that most of them spent far more time preparing to get a high TOEIC score than they did in improving their communicative competence. As a result of this kind of emphasis, work on other aspects of English proficiency was undoubtedly neglected or at the very least curtailed. As such, the language formed less a part of their conceptions of themselves and more a part of what they conceived to be the requirements of the environment in which they were operating.

This has clear implications in the language classroom. If learners do not have a clearly defined personal relevance for the language beyond as a score, it is unlikely that they will place as much value on a typical “communicative classroom” as they will on a dedicated TOEIC preparation classroom. For such learners to engage with the language in any meaningful sense, approaches such as Ushioda’s (2009, 2011b) “person-in-context relational view” of motivation will be necessary such that the learner is treated as a unique individual with an attendant personality, desires, environment, and relationships. Such an approach rests

on enhancing the autonomy of learners, allowing them “to ‘speak as themselves’ in the target language with their preferred ‘transportable identities’” (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 22). This idea of “transportable identities” is key in that they relate directly to the learner’s self-concept, for example, as rock fan, football player, or fashionista (or, indeed, all of these identities, and many more besides). Engaging these identities in communication has been shown to increase involvement, interaction, and negotiation in the classroom (Richards, 2006). For learners such as many of the participants in this study, with limited access to the language in their daily lives, the language classroom may play a key role in enhancing their autonomy and helping them to forge their own English identities.

### **7.3 Motivation is dynamic**

Henry (2015) has suggested that there has been a tendency in L2 motivation research to conceive of the L2 self as something of a unified, immutable entity, “as photographic stills rather than moving pictures” (p. 93). This study has shown that such a perception is inherently untenable. The self is anything but a static object. It is constantly changing as a result of the interactions between the elements comprising it. One of the strengths of this study is in identifying not just the elements comprising the L2 motivational system but also in tracking how the interaction of these elements affected the entire system. In this respect, it has empirically demonstrated Larsen-Freeman and Cameron’s (2008a) theoretical claim that the development of a learner’s motivational system is a constant process of change and adaptation. Furthermore, it was possible to identify among the participants systems which were characterized by periods of dynamic stability as well as marked phase shifts. For others, there

were those that appeared to be in constant flux, while for still others, a gradual ordering of the system towards preferred attractor states was observable.

The case of Gina is illustrative of such dynamic stability. Throughout the research, she was relatively stable in her vision of herself as a future teacher of English, that is, at least if looked at from the perspective of retaining this vision from the start of the research to the finish.

However, when looked at from a more moment-to-moment perspective, it was clear that this vision was subject to pushes and pulls from a variety of sources. On occasion, Gina doubted that she had what it took to become a teacher and considered other avenues. She was also affected by both the advice and example of her peers and immediate seniors. However, throughout, her vision of herself as an English teacher remained her “preferred attractor state” (Mercer, 2011a, p. 343), allowing her to retain a certain consistency in her motivation. At the same time, Gina also exhibited a marked phase shift, with her sense of self at one point changing almost overnight from one that was quite negative to a state where she became far more positive about herself in relation to English. Although this was entirely unpredictable, it can again be explained by viewing the system as dynamic and realizing that “[a]t any point in the evolving trajectory of a system, even a minor influence can lead the system in a different direction” (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 15). In addition, using a complexity perspective allows for the consideration of multiple elements in influencing this phase shift, among them the experience of having a trip in Hong Kong, the (almost immediate) self-realization that she was able to communicate in English, and the presence of her mother and sister to see this.

There was also evidence of systems which were in a general state of flux among the participants. Both Penny and Cathy in particular never seemed to develop any preferred attractor states within their systems. Over the course of the interviews, there was a general



lack of stability in how they related to English, whether this was in their visions of themselves as English users, their professed reasons for studying the language, or their learning behaviors. It can thus be said that they never developed “self-structure coherence” to the extent that “action tends to be governed by external influence, momentary impulse, and opportunity rather than by purpose, commitment and other criteria of self-regulation” (Nowak *et al.*, 2005, pp. 373-374). Such insights as this, which can only be gained over time, show these participants as learners for whom English has developed little personal relevance. As a result, change is the only constant within their L2 motivational systems with these systems bouncing from one potential attractor to another.

Perhaps the most important finding here, however, is of a general ordering of systems toward stable or fixed-point attractors. As was seen with Gina, despite periodic segues into other attractor states, her path eventually focused itself on becoming a teacher. A similar trajectory was visible with many of the other participants, including Samantha and Mandy. However, the remarkable finding here is that the majority of the participants came to share a common attractor. By the end of the period of the research, with all of the participants having entered their junior year, a common primary focus had become the utility of English for securing employment. This highlights “the importance of contingent factors, of considering the specific conditions in a specific context at a specific time” (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 63). Having spoken of the individuality of the learners in the previous section, it might now seem inconsistent to speak of them as being quite similar in this regard. However, once again, a complexity perspective offers a resolution to this apparent contradiction through the realization that “[a]ny system behavior or group outcome can be influenced by internal and external forces and events” (Hiver, 2015, p. 20). Apparent inconsistencies as the one just

described can thus be rationalized through a consideration of the role and place of context in relation to the learners L2 motivational systems.

## **7.4 Motivation is contextual**

The data presented in this study have shown that it is impossible to view the self in isolation; it is inextricably bound up with context, constantly interacting with elements that would traditionally have been labeled “outside” it. As Dörnyei (2009a, p. 230) says, “from the point of view of language acquisition and behavior, the interaction between the language learner/user and the environment matters.” This is in many ways at odds with what Ushioda (2010, p. 11) calls “the traditional SLA focus on decontextualized interior processes of language as distinct from social processes of language use,” and the conception of context as “located externally, as something pre-existing, a stable and independent background variable, outside the individual” (Ushioda, 2009, p. 218). With this new conception of the nature of context, several approaches to viewing it as an integral part of the language system have recently been proposed, among them Ushioda’s (2015, p. 53) focus on “learner-internal and learner-external contextual processes” and Mercer’s (2015) use of social network analysis. However, the three-level model of context proposed in this study provides potential solutions to a number of issues that have been raised in relation to dealing with context.

On the one hand, there is the issue of trying to define and delimit context (Ushioda, 2015). As Larsen-Freeman (2011, p. 60) makes clear, “[b]ecause everything is always interacting and interfacing in human and non-human environments organically, notions of what are ‘inside’

and ‘outside’ a system are never simple or uncontested.” Any boundaries that one draws are arguably somewhat blurred and potentially shifting. This is one question in relation to binary models: they imply that we can clearly delineate those things that are internal to the learner from those that are not. This is simply not the case. However, by seeing system as context and context as system, as the model proposed in this study does, we can avoid discrete categorizations and crude overgeneralizations altogether.

Another consideration is the immediate relevance of different contextual elements to the learner. Again, binary models have limited explanatory power as they may have difficulty distinguishing between elements that interact across levels of context in a very direct fashion and those that have a less direct but perhaps just as important influence. However, by adding a third level of context, that is, the Internal, Immediate, and Outer contexts, these elements can be differentiated for the process of analysis. This was illustrated in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.2 and 6.3), where it was made clear that significant others (an element in the Immediate Context) influenced the participants in a considerably more direct and personal way than did society (an element in the Outer Context), particularly in regard to the participants’ sense of self. It is important here to point out that these levels are not to be considered hierarchical. Neither should these categorizations be seen as absolute with no capacity for migration of elements across “boundaries.” What they do provide us with is a more powerful instrument of analysis capable of providing greater insights into the motivations of individual learners. This was certainly the case in this study, where the importance of a variety of elements outside the Inner Context was made abundantly clear.

#### 7.4.1 Significant Others

The data in this study revealed the pivotal role that significant others can play in the motivation of a learner to study English. The role of such people has been recognized in the literature for some time (Brophy, 2009), with researchers emphasizing the importance of parents and teachers for healthy identity formation (La Guardia, 2009) and the interplay of social, cultural, and personal elements in deciding “what I am and am not willing to do or become” (McCaslin, 2009, p. 139). In this study, the role of parents in the initial stages of language learning was a feature of many of the participants’ decisions to begin studying English. Thereafter, their influence was also evident in the choices they made about what to study in university. Although parents tended to be less involved with the participants’ day-to-day studies once they reached university, they remained an important presence in their lives, particularly in relation to decisions about future career paths. As such, parents often had a crucial influence on the participants. On the one hand, they had the potential to both enable the participants and validate the choices they were making, as was often the case with Lisa, who commonly discussed her ideas about the future with her mother and claimed to get generally affirmative feedback. On the other hand, they could be an overtly controlling presence, as was the case with Cathy, in many ways negating her ability to create a clear conception of herself.

Teachers were also revealed to play an important part in how the participants’ viewed both themselves and their studies of English, something which is receiving more attention in the literature (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda, 2012, 2013b). This influence was made manifest in a number of ways. Lena, for example, relied quite heavily on one of her old

teachers for advice about her studies and held his views in more esteem than those of her parents. She was also inclined to make decisions about the worth of her classes based on her initial impression of the teacher. Mandy was also quite affected by her teachers, particularly her advising professor. Not only was this professor's criticism and advice important in focusing Mandy on a particular path, but also she felt what can only be termed an obligation to her professor. In at least one instance, her desire to perform well in a class was based more on her desire to make amends for poor performance in a previous class than it was on her own personal motives. Such influences as these were particularly noticeable in situations where the participants had more individual contact with their teachers or where they were part of smaller departments, thus allowing for more familiarity between students and professors.

It is thus clear that both parents and teachers had the potential to be an important guiding presence in the participants' lives. This is important in that, as La Guardia (2009, p. 93) points out, "parents' and teachers' engagement and encouragement of personally salient intrinsic pursuits may be critical to the differentiation of these intrinsic pursuits into commitments to goals and structures that comprise identity." In Korea, the oft-mentioned fervor for education results in parents having a very direct involvement in their children's education (Park, 2009), something which has also been observed in other East Asian countries (Jiang & Dewaele, 2015; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). However, this may come at the cost of learners becoming personally invested in the language (Norton, 2000). If parents are taking responsibility not only for determining the course of a learner's studies but also his or her future path, they may be retarding that learner's ability to make that learning part of his or her conception of self and to perceive a personally relevant future use for the language. In such a situation, one might expect to see a learner who exhibited little genuine attachment to the

language, few clear goals in language learning, and no real conception of the use of language outside his or her immediate studies. Such was the case with Cathy in this study, the participant whose parents had by far the most direct influence.

In a similar vein, although the data revealed that teachers could have a predictable influence on student motivation in the classroom, their influence extended far beyond this. In fact, it was their role outside the class that had the potential to most influence the long-term motivational trajectories of their students. Several of the participants in this study, for example, Gina and Mandy, were affected by the feedback they received from their professors, not feedback on the work they were doing in class, but on how they saw their futures after university. In both cases, this feedback was implicated in the participants' motivation to follow a particular path, at least in the short-term. In addition, learning behaviors were affected by such influence. Generally, teachers' emphasis on TOEIC scores affected all the participants, while in at least one case, a participant (Mandy) behaved differently in class with a specific teacher based on a perceived obligation to do better for that teacher. This highlights the variety of potential roles teachers can play, among them "as principal orchestrators of the learning context, as key interactants in the complex dynamics integrating self-and-context, and as significant socializers of students' future possible selves" (Ushioda, 2012, p. 70). Such responsibility implies that teachers need to think not just in terms of their instructional design with regard to their classes but also recognize the effect their feedback and advice can have on their students. If the goal is to enhance learner autonomy and investment in language studies, teachers will need to tread a fine line between pointing their students in particular directions and guiding these students toward a personally relevant conception of themselves as users of the language.

In addition to parents and teachers, other students and friends were significant influences on the participants in their language studies. As the findings showed, they were implicated in the participants' reasons for studying English, the importance in which they held the language, their goals and behaviors, and their future visions of themselves. However, perhaps their most important potential influence was in their involvement in the participants' developing sense of self. Mercer (2011c) has shown that this influence can take several forms. One of these is in learners' perceptions of how others view them, information which can be both explicit and inferred. In this study, a particularly negative manifestation of this was in how Cathy believed other people viewed her. Her expectation was generally that were she to speak in front of her peers in English, they would know her "lousy" English and she would go down in their estimation. As a result, she routinely avoided communication with all but her closest friends (who also had "lousy" English), perpetuating a negative image of herself as an English user, or as Mruk (2006) puts it, lowering her sense of competence and worthiness. This in turn "prevents students from developing positive attitudes towards learning and showing their full potential" (Rubio, 2014, p. 45).

Other students were also implicated in the participants' sense of self through their use of direct comparisons as a means of evaluating their abilities. The striking feature here was how often the participants portrayed these comparisons negatively. Lena, for example, often referred to other students being better at English than she was. Lisa, too, was unpleasantly surprised to discover that there were other students who she felt were better both at writing and particularly speaking than her. Although both of these participants claimed to be motivated to do better by these negative comparisons, they betrayed a relatively weak sense of self in relation to other students. Surprisingly, this was also the case with Samantha, the

participant with the most experience of living in an English-speaking context. In her case, her negative evaluations stemmed from comparisons with other students who had also been abroad for a considerable period of time and focused on their perceived proficiency relative to the amount of time spent abroad.

On one level, such apparent negative evaluations of themselves can be explained by the move from high school to university. Jackson (2003, pp. 341-342) has described it as such:

The transition to university, like many transitions, represents a period of disequilibrium as students move from a familiar environment into an unfamiliar one. Whilst different students will experience the transition into higher education in different ways, for almost all students it will entail significant life changes. Such changes and discontinuity can pose threats to their sense of who they are

Having come from a situation where they were most likely at least on a par with their classmates, the participants mentioned above suddenly found themselves with a new peer group, all of whom had made the decision to specialize in English and some of whom had benefitted from better opportunities to use the language, such as living abroad. In addition, coming from an educational context in which they were in constant competition with their peers, they may have been more prone to “competitive or even conflict relationships with specific others” (Kashima et al., 2001, p. 281). Such “upward” comparisons can be positive if, as Lena and Lisa claimed, they stimulate a learner to greater efforts. However, such comparisons will only be effective if the learner believes that it is within his or her capacity to narrow the perceived gap to the other learner. In the absence of such a belief, such comparisons may serve only “to confirm a possibly already weak self-concept” (Mercer, 2011c, p. 88). This implies that how learners see themselves in relation to other learners can have a considerable effect on how they view themselves in relation to the language. As such, it is important for learners to have realistic appraisals of themselves and to choose suitable



individuals against which to base their evaluations. Failure to do so and the attendant damage to the L2 self may result in a lack of effective learning behaviors and retard the learner's potential to progress in the language.

#### **7.4.2 Learning Context**

The discussion in the previous section focused on how significant others can interact in important ways with a learner's motivation to learn a language. However, these were not the only contextual elements that demonstrated an important influence on the participants. The importance of the learning environment has long been recognized in studies of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2009a; Ushioda, 2001). As Järelvä and Salovaara (2004, pp. 232-233) assert, "[t]he construction of motivational meanings reflects individuals' motivational beliefs, prior experience, and subjective appraisals of the possibilities and constraints of the current learning context." This was certainly the case in this study. On the one hand, the availability of opportunities to communicate in the language had a generally positive effect on how the participants perceived the language and their sense of self, a finding that echoes research by Busse and Walter (2013). Those participants that were able to both create and take advantage of communicative opportunities, for example, Lisa, Samantha, and Lena, found themselves not only enhancing both their language skills and knowledge of communicative norms but also developing a greater appreciation of the language as a means of communication. As Gao (2013, p. 189) puts it, they came "to believe in the localized use of English, the global language, to express their personal meanings and experiences." To put it another way, once the learner can see the personal relevance of the language in his or her daily existence and can

visualize real uses of the language in real contexts, in many ways, “the learner’s L2-self has become a natural self” (Yashima & Arano, 2015, p. 311). This highlights the potential importance of opportunities for communication in the language as “individual motivation and the pursuit of particular identities are processes that are dynamically co-constructed (or constrained) through interaction” (Ushioda, 2006, p. 154).

Unfortunately, the learning context often restricted the participants’ ability to focus on English and to make using the language a part of their conception of self (Ushioda, 2006). As their studies at university progressed, the majority were faced with decisions about what to prioritize in their learning. This often meant a choice between attending to their language development or focusing on the increasing demands of their major studies. In most cases, the deciding factor here was scores, with most of the participants being extremely focused on their GPAs. This was exemplified by Mandy and Gina, who, despite a professed willingness to do so, never again took part in the Buddy program. Lena was also symptomatic of this, admitting to rarely seeing her buddy during the program as she was always so “busy.” Even when they were not focused on their GPAs, many of the participants were occupied with building up their “specs,” or employment-related qualifications. Chief among these was TOEIC.

The one thing that all the participants had in common was the pursuit of a high score on TOEIC. Booth (2012) has studied the influence of TOEIC in Korea and has reported substantial washback effects on the nature of learners’ study of English. The participants in this study were no exception. Many spent a great deal of time studying for the test to the extent that at one stage it occupied approximately 75% of Gina’s daily study of the language. In addition, due to its heavy emphasis on listening and reading comprehension, the

participants were more likely to focus on these skills than on seeking out or utilizing opportunities for communication in English. TOEIC also became something of a default goal for the participants, in some cases, such as Cathy, working against the formation of personally relevant goals in the language. Finally, as by far the most common “official” measure of language proficiency, it was used as a measure of progress in English by quite a few of the participants. Taken together, this preoccupation with one test of English, one which does not measure practical communicative ability and requires no real investment on the part of the learner, would appear to work against the development of a genuine L2 self. Focusing learners primarily on a score as a measure of language ability and downplaying the use of language for real communicative purposes deprives them of the opportunity to “engage and express their own preferred meanings, interests and identities through the medium of the target language” (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 17). Without such opportunities, it is difficult to see how they can come to view the language as having genuine personal relevance and engage with it on anything but a superficial level. This appears to be a particular issue in the Korean context, where the perception of English in many ways works against the formation of a genuine L2 self-concept.

### **7.4.3 Society and Employment**

There is little doubt that Korean society places a high value on English as a means of social mobility (T.-Y. Kim, 2010; Park, 2009). In fact, Kang (2012, p. 29) identifies a common perception in Korea that it is “the single most important tool that they need to have in order to get ahead at school and in society in general.” This idea permeates all levels of society, from the government to the family. Successive governments’ promotion of English skills has led to

English being a required subject from elementary school and English being one of the required subjects on the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), until recently the most important determiner of which university a student could attend. This in turn has led to a booming private education industry catering to what many parents see as inadequate instruction in schools. In addition, recent years have seen the introduction of English-medium instruction in many universities, and a TOEIC score remains an entry-level requirement for many jobs.

Despite the apparently heavy investment in English in Korea, the participants in this study showed that for many learners, the language is seen a tool for advancement in society rather than an actual language for use (see also Section 7.2.2.3, this chapter). Vicky, for example, was quite clear in her goal of achieving a high TOEIC score, but was almost equally certain that her future job would not entail the use of English. She saw English as useful for entering a company and potentially for future promotion but not as something that she would use on the job. This equates to what Yang and Kim (2011, p. 147) have identified as “a widespread utilitarian belief among Korean L2 learners that English is important for career development.” However, as Ushioda (2013a, p. 11) points out, this “orientation to studying English may disconnect students from any sense of the personal communicative value of learning English.” As such, for learners such as Vicky, her conception of English may be shaped not so much from an L2-self perspective as it is predicated on the requirements of the society around her.

In this respect, important elements of society are not looking for a demonstrated ability to use the language but rather a qualification or “spec.” As Choi (2008, p. 41) points out, “Korean companies require their applicants to submit an EFL test (e.g. TOEIC) score report and consider it an essential prerequisite for employment.” Although this is now changing, with

many of the largest conglomerates producing their own in-house measures or requiring other forms of certification, a huge majority of Korean employers still insist on a TOEIC score with any job application, regardless of whether English proficiency is actually part of the job description. As a result, improving their test-taking skills becomes a far higher priority for many English learners than working on their communicative proficiency.

In a similar vein, the education system is heavily results-oriented in regard to English. The CSAT, which includes English as one of the core subjects for examination, is still regarded as the key to entering a good university. As such, most teachers teach to the test, and there is very little if any opportunity for communicative use of English in the high school classroom (Choi, 2008). This affects students even after they have left high school. In this study, for example, Gina, whose set goal was to be an English teacher in middle or high school, did not view English communication skills as the most important quality of a teacher. For her, the most important thing was a thorough knowledge of the grammar of the language and the ability to impart this to her students. Even at university, most schools have as a graduation requirement scores on official language tests, the most common of which is TOEIC. As such, it is not just for securing employment that students focus on test taking skills; it is for the simple act of graduating. This points to the gatekeeping role that English often plays in Korean society. In fact, Song (2011) has recently gone so far as to say that English has been usurped as a mechanism designed to maintain the status quo and the position of those in the upper levels of society who have access to better educational resources. Hu and McKay (2012) have also criticized this use of English in Korea, highlighting its negative sociocultural consequences:

English should not be part of high-stakes educational assessments in general and university entrance exams in particular. ... English tests should not be used in the workplace to make hiring and promotion decisions for jobs that require no substantial use of English (p. 359)

It is thus clear that despite the desires and actions of successive governments to focus on practical English communication skills, the situation on the ground is somewhat different. With schools, universities, and employers all focused on “objective” standardized measures of English proficiency, most notably TOEIC, it is not difficult to see how learners could be impacted in terms of their ability to create a genuine L2 self. This was clearly evident in the participants in this study. The vast majority bemoaned their lack of opportunity to actually use English in their school years, and in the initial stages of their university careers, many were full of enthusiasm for finding and using opportunities to communicate in the language. However, as time went on and in particular as they entered their junior years, the vast majority became far more focused on the practical concerns of getting a job. For most, this entailed a reorganization of their priorities and a focus on aspects of English that would provide them with vocational benefits. In this respect, even plans to study abroad could be seen (and were explicitly explained by some of the participants) as the building up of qualifications to secure employment. This implies the considerable difficulty that learners in such contexts as this may have in developing and maintaining a tangible L2 self. Given the lack of opportunities to use English in their everyday lives and the demands of society and employers, it is perhaps not surprising that a considerable number of the participants in this study appear to view English not as a language for communication but as a qualification necessary for future success.

## 7.5 Autonomy is complex: Implications for conceptions of autonomy

The recognition of context and self as being inextricably bound together has significant repercussions for our conception of autonomy. Traditionally, this has been viewed as a learner's capacity to act in a self-regulated manner. As Ushioda (2014, p. 135) defines it, "*Autonomy* is the sense that actions and behaviors are self-determined as an authentic expression of the self and the self's internal values, even when these actions, behaviors and values may be influenced by external sources." However, the recognition of the interplay of elements between the Inner, Immediate, and Outer contexts suggests that this definition of autonomy may not be applicable in all contexts. In fact, it may be more accurate to say that autonomy is the learner's capacity to withstand or overcome pressures external to him or her or to mold these influences to his or her purposes. As Ushioda (2006, p. 155) has pointed out, "the autonomy of the individual as language learner is socially constructed, and potentially socially constrained, shaped by particular sociocultural environments and co-constructed through interaction with representatives of the surrounding culture." Pavlenko (2002, p. 293) has also highlighted the constraints on learners, demonstrating that "individuals may act upon their wishes only if their present environments allow for such agency." Block (2007), too, has emphasized the influence of social structures on the individual and identity formation and how identities are formed in interaction with the surrounding environment.

In the present study, the social structures identified by Block (2007, p. 865), namely state governments, educational systems, or peer groups, were all seen to play significant roles in the participants' ability to act in a self-regulated fashion. In the Korean context, the primacy afforded English by governments through successive generations of educational policy has

affected the teaching and learning of the language at all levels, from elementary through to high school. However, these effects have not necessarily been positive. Although stated policy espouses the merits of a communicative curriculum, in actual practice, the application of such a policy has in many respects been trumped by the primacy of the College Scholastic Ability Test. As such, teachers tend to teach to the test, and there is little or no scope for learners to formulate their own paths in their learning or to develop a genuine self-concept in relation to the language. Although university technically affords these learners more freedom to direct their own learning, this freedom is often constrained both by institutional requirements and the demands of future employers. With such constraints operating on the majority of students, it can also be quite difficult for learners to find or establish supportive social networks (Gao, 2013) among their peers, thus potentially denying them an opportunity to create a genuine sense of a localized use of English. Despite such opportunities existing, this study found that many of the participants were either unable or unwilling to take advantage of them, particularly when they became upperclassmen and the specter of leaving university and looking for work loomed ever larger, something also noted by Yashima and Arano (2015). In such situations, it was often consideration of elements in the Immediate and Outer contexts that informed the choices and behaviors of the participants, for example, the ubiquitous pursuit of TOEIC scores, rather than any sense of personal agency.

Although Al-Hoorie (2015) posits a genuinely intriguing avenue of enquiry with his novel conception of repellent processes as opposed to attractor processes in a complex system, that is, the potential for an individual to resist gravitating towards particular attractors, this is still an area which has not been extensively researched within the field of L2 motivation. In addition, it is likely that in situations where a learner's self is not directly implicated in his or



her learning of the language, the ability of that learner to follow a self-regulated path is severely curtailed and the influence of contextual elements becomes the primary determinant of motivation. This seems particularly likely in situations where English is seen by important institutions or significant others in the learner's environment as a tool for advancement rather than as a means of communication, thus potentially hindering the learner's ability to develop a personal investment in the language. Such a situation has been observed in the Korean context with both Turingan and Yang (2009) and Kim (2014) highlighting the excessive dependence on private education as a negative factor in the development of self-regulated learning. Reinders and Lázaro (2011), in research across five countries, also found a lack of autonomous learning skills among many learners, and explained this through a lack of experience of taking responsibility for their own learning. It is thus impossible to disregard the fact that "[t]he 'here-and-now' of context shapes the system, orders the system, and adapts the system" (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008a, pp. 35-36). As such, in attempting to relate the concept of autonomy to the motivation to study a language, it is essential that attention is paid to the specific context in which that learning is taking place.

## **7.6 Motivation not "Ideal" or "global": Implications for theories of L2 motivation**

The recognition of the key role of context in the motivation to learn a second language and a reconsideration of the definition of autonomy have potential implications for recent theories of L2 motivation. The most influential of these has been Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009b) with its three central constructs of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2

Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. Although Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System has been validated by numerous studies (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), there are still aspects of the system that remain somewhat under-theorized, particularly in relation to the L2 Learning Experience (Ushioda, 2011a). This has been defined as "situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success)" (Dörnyei, 2009b, p. 29). A number of studies have found that this is a particularly important aspect of the L2 motivational system, with Csizér and Kormos (2009) finding that in determining motivated behavior, it enjoyed at least as important a position as the Ideal L2 Self among university students in Hungary. This study supports this finding but has also shown that a greater consideration of context is required, i.e., that this dimension of the L2 Motivational Self System needs to be broadened. On one level, it has been shown that the Immediate Context, in many ways corresponding to the L2 Learning Experience as defined, is indeed an important part of a learner's L2 motivational system. On another level, however, the clear influence of the Outer Context in this situation is not adequately reflected by the L2 Learning Experience. Hence, a definite strength of this study has been in drawing attention to the influence of elements outside the day-to-day experiences of learners in their language studies and in showing how these can come to shape the learning opportunities and foci of those learners.

Another issue brought up by this study is the applicability of labels such as Ideal L2 Self in all contexts. Ushioda (2013a, p. 11) has drawn attention to the potential problems associated with this in situations where "the external pressures to learn English are strong because of the critical role that English plays in gatekeeping tests at significant transitional stages of education and of entry into the world of work." In such situations, as previously discussed,

learners may have great difficulty developing any personal investment in the language. For many of the participants in this research, studying English differed little from studying other subjects at university and was at times deemed to be of lesser importance. In addition, many of their perspectives remained rooted in the Korean context in terms of their future “uses” of English and their actual futures. It can thus be said that for quite a few of the participants, the self was little involved in their English studies, these being driven primarily by the requirements of the social structures (Block, 2007) around them. This recognition, allied to the fact that “the agent cannot be meaningfully separated from the social environment within which he/she operates” (Dörnyei, 2009a, p. 244), suggests that attempting to apply labels such as Ideal L2 Self may be neither applicable in all contexts nor the best way of gaining a deeper understanding of learners’ L2 motivation. This may be particularly true in settings where the predominant use of English is less as a language for communication and more so as a means of providing access to educational and social advancement.

The findings of this study also have repercussions for Lamb’s (2007) idea of achieving a global identity through English and Yashima’s “international posture” (2002, 2009), the idea of learners identifying with a global community of English speakers. Such ideas as these were generally absent from the participants in this research. With the possible exception of Samantha, who continued to see herself studying abroad in the future, all of the participants were very much grounded in the Korean context and did not appear to develop any genuine global identity in relation to English. In this respect, English was seen very much as a means of access to success on a local level rather than providing access to a global community or opportunities outside Korea. In addition, the means of achieving this success was not through the development of proficiency in the language, but rather the mastery of test-taking skills and

the production of a high TOEC score. In this sense, the participants were more akin to the less motivated learners in Lamb's study (2011) who, while acknowledging the importance of the language, lacked any real personal agency and had only a vague concept of their future uses of English. This highlights both the potential role of teachers in "authenticat[ing] their possible English-speaking selves through in-class and out-of-class communication" and the attendant difficulties of "generating the very possibility of being a competent, active user of English" (Lamb, 2011, p. 192). It also again highlights the importance of taking the local context and the specific circumstances of individual learners into account when dealing with their motivation to learn English, something which is now increasingly recognized (Ushioda, 2013c).

## **7.7 L2 motivation research needs a complexity perspective**

The preceding discussions have highlighted the complexity of L2 motivation among a small group of participants in one university in one city in Korea. They have shown that although it is possible to identify the elements at play within these participants' motivational systems and even to identify the interactions between these elements, no two individuals were the same in terms of the ways these elements interacted and the changes that these interactions produced over time. In addition, the deliberate incorporation of context as part of these systems has introduced even more complexity into the equation, highlighting new questions with regard to the ability of learners to behave in an autonomous manner and the applicability of well-regarded concepts in L2 motivation. None of these insights would have been possible without the adoption of a complex dynamic systems perspective. Taking this approach has shown that

“what has been considered as ‘noise’ in quantitative studies does matter and should not be eliminated through the quantitative focus on the central tendency at the group level” (Dörnyei, 2009c, p. 107).

This highlights one of the main issues with quantitative research into L2 motivation. The so-called “noise” that is disregarded as it interferes with the production of neat coefficients and measures of validity is actually some of the most important information that a researcher can gather. It is through this noise that the researcher can, in a CDS approach, make sense of apparently random changes in learners’ attitude and behavior. An example in this study was Gina’s almost 180 degree change in her sense of self in relation to English, one which was completely unpredictable but which can be explained by looking at the interaction of a number of elements within her L2 motivational system. In addition, it is this noise that highlights the genuine individuality of each learner. As de Bot *et al.* (2007, p. 14) put it, “variation is not seen as NOISE but as an inherent property of a changing system.” Despite on occasion sharing common tendencies or apparent motivations in their learning, the participants in this study varied in important ways, something which might not have been as apparent with the use of traditional research methods and the inevitable averaging tendency of statistical analysis.

Another issue with the traditional use of quantitative measures in L2 motivation research is that their generalizations are often made based on the administration of one-off data collection instruments such as questionnaires. This research has suggested a number of issues with the use of such questionnaires, not the least of which is whether they accurately measure what they are supposed to. This study showed that labeling subjects as having conceptions such as an ideal or ought-to L2 self may be quite problematic. An example of this is Lena’s response

to a question about her imagined future uses of English: “*Speaking fluently* ... When I meet a foreign buyer” (Interview 9). This is in many ways similar to an item (or variations of said) often used as a measure of ideal self in learners: “Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English” (Taguchi *et al.*, 2009, p. 91). One can infer from her response that Lena would have given a positive answer to this item and would thus be potentially classified as someone characteristic of having an ideal self in relation to English. However, the picture is somewhat different if looked at over the course of months and years and Lena’s changing conceptions of herself. From this perspective, she exhibited much more of an “idyllic self” (Lyons, 2014) or a fantasy (Ryan & Irie, 2014) in relation to English and did not exhibit either the behavior or the vision of someone with an ideal self. She was in fact far more concerned with scores and the building up of her specs than she was with her future uses of the language. However, an instrument focused only on a narrow range of options with the purpose of validating a particular construct would most likely not have been able to identify this. On the other hand, conducting a longitudinal qualitative study using a CDS approach allows the researcher to “make our learners ‘visible’ in our understandings and theories of learning processes ..., not as an average prototypical learner ..., but as ‘real’ individuals leading unique and complex lives” (Mercer, 2014, p. 52).

Observations such as this are only possible by mapping the different interacting elements of a system at the points where they are immediately salient to learners, something which was facilitated by the longitudinal nature of this study and eliciting the participants’ thoughts and experiences at regular intervals. From this, it is clear that recognizing the complexity of a learner’s L2 self and being able to identify the particular interactions going on within it gives us a far sharper and more genuine insight into that learner’s motivation to learn the language.

Although this does not allow us to make any predictions about a learner's future behavior, this is not necessarily the main point. Understanding a learner and the processes driving his or her motivation in the here and now is at least as important in predicting his or her learning trajectory in the future, particularly in instructed learning settings. By coming to grips with what has influenced the learner in the past, what is salient to him or her in the present, and his or her visions of the future, a teacher can legitimately enact dedicated intervention strategies (Chan, 2014; Magid, 2014) and potentially enhance the entire course of learning the language. As such, one of the great contributions of a CDS perspective is in highlighting "the importance of contingent factors, of considering the specific context at a specific time. No general model can capture such singularities" (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 63).

A final point to be made in favor of adopting a CDS approach in motivation research is that the insights gained through such research make it possible for more valid comparisons to be made between research from different contexts. By identifying the elements at play in a particular context, a clear comparison can be made should such elements be found to be significant in other contexts. A recent example of this can be found in Yashima and Arano (2015), who like this study, identified elements such as significant others, employment, the learning context, and TOEIC as potentially playing a role in the L2 motivation of their subjects. Similarly, Gao (2013) has also pointed out the significant influence of social networks and opportunities for real communication in promoting a positive self-concept in relation to English. The possibility of such comparisons across different contexts to a great degree offsets one of the criticisms of the use of CDS approaches to research, that of it not being possible to generalize findings to other contexts. Although such comparisons may on the surface lack the "validity" of quantitative findings, "important qualitative findings will

resonate in readers in an informative and helpful manner even when applied to other situations” (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 89). It is through such comparisons in many different contexts that we are now starting to formulate theories of L2 motivation that are grounded in research on real “persons” (Ushioda, 2011b), as opposed to the archetypal “learner,” and through which we may discover that an all-encompassing theory of L2 motivation is unsuited to the complexity of the human condition and our infinite capacity for variability.



## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to conduct one of the first longitudinal, qualitative studies of L2 motivation in Korea from a CDS perspective. In doing this, it has added significantly to our knowledge of the learning of English in this context. It has once again highlighted the complexity of language-learning motivation by identifying the variety of elements at play within the research participants' L2 motivational systems. In addition, through analyzing the interactions between elements, it has shown how changes were produced within these systems and emphasized the dangers of looking for simple, linear cause-effect relationships in learners' motivational trajectories. The reinforcement of the concept of the uniqueness of individual learners has further underlined the necessity of moving away from the traditional "individual differences" paradigm and its focus "not on differences between individuals, but on averages and aggregates that group people together who share certain characteristics" (Ushioda, 2009, p. 215). This study has shown such an approach to be untenable.

At the same time, the research did identify certain key elements of the participants' L2 motivational systems. The ability of a learner to formulate a clear conception of himself or herself as a future user of English was seen to be an important component of L2 motivation and the ability to pursue a self-regulated path in learning. However, for this to become a genuine future possible self, a healthy sense of self in relation to the language was also necessary to produce within the learner the confidence that said vision was achievable. In

addition, the reasons the participants held for learning English and the importance that they attached to the language played key roles in their ability to become genuinely invested in the language and to create a genuine conception of themselves as users of English.

The study also highlighted the dynamic nature of motivation and the importance of not seeing elements such as those just mentioned as static or resistant to change. On the contrary, the L2 motivational system showed itself to be capable of continuous change in response to the interactions of the elements within it. The participants in this study illustrated a variety of different patterns of change from dynamic stability to sudden phase shifts to constant flux, again illustrating the dynamic complexity and uniqueness of the individual learner. However, an important finding of the research was a general movement toward particular attractors on the part of the learners. The general orienting of the vast majority of the participants toward employment is significant in terms of our understanding of L2 motivation not as something wholly within the individual but as a dynamic entity in constant interaction with a wide variety of contextual elements.

Through insights such as this, the present study thus made clear the vital importance of considering context as part of the L2 motivational system. It also offered a means of doing this through the proposal of a three-level model of context through which to investigate the system. This incorporation of context as part of the system under investigation overcomes the problem of defining and delineating context. In addition, the use of a three-level framework allows for a differentiation of contextual elements for analysis. Such a differentiation enhances the explanatory power of the model by enabling the researcher to identify the nature of an element's influence on the system, for example, direct or more subtle but yet significant, and at what levels such influences occur.

Through the use of this model, it was possible to identify key elements in the Immediate Context and how they interacted with the participants' L2 motivational system. This highlighted the crucial influence (in this study, at least) of significant others. It was shown that parents and teachers had an important role to play in promoting learner investment in the language and in helping them develop a conception of themselves as users of the L2. In addition, teachers roles often extended beyond the classroom to influencing the choices the participants made about their future careers and the learning behaviors they demonstrated. Other students were also seen to be influential in how the participants viewed English, their goals and behaviors, and how they viewed their futures. However, perhaps even more important was their potential impact on the participants' sense of self through comparisons (often negative and inappropriate) and the sense of competition rather than cooperation that often accompanied these.

Just as individuals within the Immediate Context played a significant role in the participants' L2 motivational systems, so too did the learning context. On one level the availability and utilization of opportunities to communicate in English had positive effects on how the participants viewed the language and on their sense of self. On another level, however, the learning context often imposed restrictions on their ability to focus on English in the form of the demands of the participants' majors, the importance of scores (GPA, TOEIC), and the perceived necessity of securing "specs." In particular, the washback effects of TOEIC were noticeable in the aspects of English the participants chose to focus on, their goals in English, and how they assessed their progress in the language. Again, such considerations as these often worked against the participants developing a genuine L2 self-concept.

The difficulty of the participants developing a genuine conception of themselves as users of

English was exacerbated by elements in the Outer Context, that is, society and employment. These elements were seen to have influenced a view of English as very much a tool for advancement rather than as a means of communication. Symptomatic of this is a heavily results-oriented educational system where the development of test-taking skills is most often given priority over communication skills and teachers are forced to teach to the test. These tests, whether they be the CSAT for entering a university or TOEIC for graduation or employment, act as genuine gatekeeping mechanisms and clearly influenced many of the choices the participants made regarding their language learning. In fact, it is difficult to see how in the face of the use of English in such high-stakes testing, learners can be expected to follow an independent path in their studies.

On the strength of these observations, this thesis has called for a reconsideration of our conception of autonomy. Given the marked influence context was shown to have on the participants' ability to act in a self-regulated manner, it would seem prudent to redefine autonomy as a learner's capacity to withstand or overcome external pressures or to mold these influences to his or her purposes. This may be especially difficult in situations where important contextual elements and institutions mandate a particular path to success or focus on specific uses of a language. In such cases, there may be little self-involvement in language learning and the behavior of a learner becomes far more externally regulated. Attempting to apply traditional conceptions of autonomy in such situations may lack not just explanatory power but any real validity.

In a similar vein, this study has pointed out the potential pitfalls of attempting to apply general labels to all contexts. It has called into question the applicability of labels such as the Ideal L2 Self in contexts where studying English differs little from studying other school

subjects and where learners' perspectives are deeply rooted in the local context. This again points out the vital importance of dealing with the specific context of L2 motivation and highlights the need to broaden concepts such as Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Learning Experience. One of the strengths of the present study was in showing how elements in the Outer Context can shape learning opportunities and foci and the development of an L2 self, something which the Learning Experience as presently defined cannot.

On the basis of the findings in this research, it is possible to make a number of pedagogical recommendations. In the first place, there seems little doubt that "teachers can have a pivotal role to play in utilizing language learners' visions" (Gao, 2013, p. 189). Particularly in contexts such as the one investigated here, it is very often only in the classroom that a learner has any opportunity to interact with English on a meaningful level. As such, it is through the teacher's support and guidance that learners can develop more investment in the language or find their own paths in their learning. A number of studies (Chan, 2014; Magid, 2014) have recently begun to investigate means of enhancing learners' visions of themselves as users of English, and it may well be that such intervention programs need to form a part of the curriculum in contexts where the classroom is the main contact point for the learner and English.

This study also suggests that dedicated efforts need to be made in the classroom to enhance learners' sense of self. This emphasizes the importance of classroom practices designed to produce a sense of security and a non-threatening learning environment. In addition, learners need opportunities to experience themselves using the language successfully in communication. This can be accomplished through the development of tasks designed to help learners succeed, regardless of their level. It is also necessary for teachers to focus students on

definite standards in their learning rather than on comparing themselves with their peers, something which was shown to have an often negative influence on sense of self in this study. It is important that learners have a realistic notion of what they are capable of and that they choose appropriate models with whom to compare themselves. By helping learners understand where they stand in their language learning and develop realistic targets to aim for, teachers can create the most likely conditions for success, thereby increasing learners' sense of self and engagement with the language.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for language teachers, however, is in promoting authentic English-speaking possible selves and convincing learners of not just the advantages but also the possibility of becoming competent users of the language. This would seem to be particularly the case in contexts where the perceived utility of the language is not as a means of communication and learners may struggle to see it as having any genuine personal relevance. Nonetheless, an answer may lie in classroom practices that seek to engage the learner's real identities, "enabling students to 'speak as themselves' in the target language with their preferred 'transportable identities'" (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 22). In other words, teachers need to engage the learner as a person, not as a preconceived "learner," and tailor classroom practices and activities to said learner's needs and interests. This again emphasizes the importance of understanding learners as unique individuals and taking into account the specific features of the local context.

A final recommendation for teachers is that they recognize the potentially significant role they can play in learners' lives beyond the classroom. The advice, feedback, and guidance that they provide to learners can, as was shown in this study, be important determinants of both the choices perceived as being available to these learners and the choices that they actually make.

If the goal is to bolster the autonomy of learners, teachers may have to tread a fine line between being available to help them make informed and appropriate choices about their lives and proscribing the options they see as being available to them.

Going beyond the classroom and into the realm of research, this thesis has shown that a CDS approach to the study of L2 motivation is both viable and necessary. It has allowed for deeper insights into the nature of motivation within one group of learners and raised important questions with regard to our understanding and theories of L2 motivation. In addition, it has raised context to the forefront of the discussion rather than seeing it as an interfering background factor. In doing this, it has achieved something that quantitative methods of enquiry have struggled to do, that is, to give full voice to the complex, dynamic nature of motivation. As Ushioda (2012, p. 68) puts it, “the extent to which this individuality can be meaningfully captured through a quantitative measurement instrument that pre-defines respondent options seems questionable.” In addition, the longitudinal perspective inherent in CDS approaches offers opportunities to validate insights gained from the data and to document changes to learners’ L2 motivational systems on a variety of timescales ranging from day-to-day changes to changes over months and years. Furthermore, by identifying the elements at work within the system and how the interaction of these elements induces change in the system, CDS perspectives provide the researcher with an instrument of far greater explanatory power and move the discussion away from a consideration of simple cause-effect relations. Such a perspective seems a much more appropriate methodology to adopt should our goal be the understanding of something as complex and capricious as the language learning “person.”

Of course, this study is not without its limitations. Admittedly, it could not capture the

moment-to-moment shifts in motivation within, for example, a classroom setting, as Dörnyei and his colleagues have recently begun to do through retrodictive qualitative modelling (Chan *et al.*, 2015; Dörnyei, 2014). As the participants in the study were only interviewed every two months or so, such insights may have been lost through the inability of the participants to recall or recognize such shifts or through looking at such changes differently with the benefit of hindsight. In this respect, there was a general reliance on the participants' subjective narratives of their classroom experiences, which may in some instances have colored other aspects of their interviews on particular occasions. For example, a particularly demotivating week in class at the same time as an interview may have affected certain participants' views of the general course of their English studies. However, the longitudinal nature of this study combined with a consideration of the influence of multiple elements of the participants' L2 motivational systems worked to offset such potential losses and to create a more complete picture of each of the participants through two years of their language studies.

It must also be admitted that given the length of involvement with the participants, totaling nine interviews over two years, and the nature of context outlined in this study, the researcher himself may have become an element in at least some of the participants' L2 motivational systems. In this respect, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that in subtle ways, he may have influenced the development of some of the participants' L2 selves. Given his prolonged engagement with the participants, it would seem specious to claim that he could have had no influence whatsoever. However, while not denying this, the insights gained from this study and the application of a CDS approach have clearly shown that one element does not make a system. Any influence the researcher may have had will have been balanced by influences from other elements within the system. This, combined with care being taken to as much as



possible retain the researcher-research subject relationship, served to lessen any potential impact on the development of the participants' L2 selves and preserved the integrity of the study's findings.

It is hoped that future studies will take cognizance of the findings presented in this thesis and investigate their applicability in other contexts. This is not to say that one would expect to find exactly the same elements operating in different contexts or that these findings will be replicated in other contexts. As Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008a, p. 236) point out, "what generalizes are the mechanisms and dynamics of complex systems." It is hoped that this study has provided an example of one approach to the study of L2 motivation using a CDS perspective and that this approach will prove useful to researchers in other contexts. It is only through the trial and testing of such approaches in a wide variety of contexts that we can hope to enhance our understanding of the L2 self and motivation. The potential for comparisons among such research will facilitate the development of further theory in the field of L2 motivation, theory that is solidly grounded in perspectives from local contexts and in observations of real people as opposed to prototypical learners.

## APPENDIX I – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<b>Name</b>	<b>Grade at Beginning of Research</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Years Studying English</b>	<b>No. of Interviews</b>
Anna	Junior	Accounting	15	4
Binny	Junior	English Language & Literature	12	4
Blaire	Junior	English Language & Literature	14	4
Cathy	Freshman	American Studies	6	9
Dana	Sophomore	European Studies	10	4
Dani	Senior	Visual Design	12	4
Davida	Freshman	English Education	12	1
Dorothy	Freshman	English Language & Literature	10	4
Elizabeth	Sophomore	English Education	13	4
Emily	Sophomore	English Education	13	4
Eunice	Sophomore	European Studies	12	4
Gina	Freshman	English Education	8	9
Hanna	Freshman	European Studies	11	7
Hilary	Freshman	English Education	11	4
Jane	Junior	American Studies	17	2
Jina	Senior	English Language & Literature	11	4
Josette	Freshman	English Language & Literature	12	1

Judith	Sophomore	English Education	11	4
Julia	Sophomore	English Education	13	4
Justine	Sophomore	English Education	13	4
Kate	Junior	Sports Marketing	8	4
Lena	Freshman	English Language & Literature	12	9
Lily	Freshman	English Language & Literature	10	4
Lisa	Freshman	English Language & Literature	11	9
Mandy	Freshman	English Education	8	9
Michael	Sophomore	English Education	12	4
Michelle	Junior	European Studies	10	1
Mindy	Freshman	English Language & Literature	10	4
Nicola	Freshman	European Studies	7	4
Nina	Freshman	English Language & Literature	9	1
Penny	Freshman	English Language & Literature	10	9
Robert	Sophomore	American Studies	7	4
Samantha	Freshman	English Language & Literature	7	9
Sarah	Freshman	American Studies	12	6
Sharon	Sophomore	English Education	11	4
Sophia	Junior	Spanish Studies	13	1

Sue	Freshman	English Language & Literature	10	4
Una	Sophomore	English Education	14	4
Vicky	Freshman	English Language & Literature	11	9

## **APPENDIX II**

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## Participant Information Sheet (April 2012)

**Project Name:** The role of the L2 self in second language learning motivation  
Phase 1 – May-December 2012

**Investigator:** David Lyons      **Tel.** 053-XXX-XXX      **Email:** xxxxlyonsxxx@xxx.xxx

### Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study. The study aims to investigate the role played by learners' self-concepts in their motivation to learn a second language. This form gives information on the study and your rights should you choose to participate. This decision is completely up to you. Once you have read the information, if you would like to participate, please sign the consent form stating that you understand the research fully and have agreed to participate.

### Explanation of the Study

We will be looking at how EFL learners' images of themselves affect their motivation to learn a second language. We are interested in how vivid these images are and what factors influence their formation. We are also interested in how learners' motivation varies over time and what causes these variations in motivational intensity. To investigate this, we are recruiting at least 30 Keimyung students (10 freshman, 10 sophomores, and 10 juniors) to take part in a series of interviews. These will be conducted in both English and Korean, according to the interviewees' preference. You will be asked to participate in four regular interviews with the researcher and a translator throughout the period of the study. The first interview will be in a group setting with a number of your peers, while the remaining interviews will be individual. An audio recording device and a video camera will be used to record interviews. Participants will also be asked to keep a regular semi-structured journal.

### Confidentiality

All the information collected during the study will be completely confidential. At no time will your real name or identifying information be revealed to anyone outside the study. Although some bibliographic details (e.g., age, sex) and extracts from the interviews may be used in the researcher's dissertation and in academic publications, your identity will be confidential. Only the researcher and translator will know your name, and you will be referred to only by a code name. The data collected will be stored in a computer in a password protected file to which only the researcher will have access. However, participating students will have the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the data collected from them. At the end of the project, all data will be erased.

### Participation

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part. This will not affect you in terms of your grades in any class or in any other aspect of your university life. If at any stage you wish to stop participating in the study, you may do so without any explanation. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact the investigator directly, or contact Joo by telephone (010-XXXX-XXX) or email (nxxxx@xxxx.xxx) for a Korean explanation.

### Participant's Statement

I have read and understood (or had explained to my satisfaction) the above information.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Consent to Participate in Research (April 2012)

**Project Name:** The role of the L2 self in second language learning motivation  
Phase 1 – May-December 2012

**Investigator:** David Lyons      **Tel.** 053-XXX-XXX      **Email:** xxxxlyonsxxx@xxx.xxx  
**Cell:** 010-XXXX-XXXX

### Check to agree

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet  
dated \_\_\_\_\_ , phase \_\_\_\_\_ , and have had an opportunity to ask questions  
which have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any  
time for no reason. ☐
3. I understand that extracts from interviews with me may be used in published  
work. I give my permission for this on the understanding I will not be personally  
identified. ☐
4. I agree to participate in this research ☐

<b>Name of Participant</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Participant's year of birth</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Grade</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____	_____

## 참가자 안내문 (2012년 4월)

**프로젝트 명:** 제2외국어 학습동기부여에 있어서 제2외국어 학습자의 자아개념의 역할  
단계 1 - 2012년 5월~12월

**연구자 :** David Lyons

**Tel.** 053-XXX-XXXX

**Email:** xxxxlyonsxxx@xxxx.xxx

영암관 501 호

**Cell:** 010-XXXX-XXXX

### 서론

여러분을 리서치 조사에 초대합니다. 이 연구는 제2외국어를 학습하는 동기부여에 있어서 학습자의 자아개념의 역할을 조사하는 것을 목적으로 합니다. 이 안내문은 연구에 대한 정보와 연구에 참가하기로 한 경우 참가자의 권리를 알려드립니다. 참가여부에 관한 결정권은 완전히 여러분에게 있습니다. 이 안내서를 다 읽으신 후 참가를 희망하신다면, 이 리서치 참가에 동의하였으며 이 리서치를 충분히 이해하였음을 명시한 동의서에 서명해주시길 부탁드립니다.

### 연구에 대한 설명

우리는 외국어로써 영어를 학습하는 사람들의 자아 이미지가 제2외국어를 학습하는 동기부여에 어떻게 영향을 미치는지를 연구하려 합니다. 우리는 이 이미지가 얼마나 선명한지 그리고 어떤 요소가 그 이미지 형성에 영향을 미치는지에 관심이 있습니다. 또한 학습자의 동기부여가 시간의 흐름에 따라 어떻게 달라지는지, 무엇이 동기부여 강도에 그러한 변화를 일으키는지도 관심이 있습니다. 이를 조사하기 위해, 우리는 일련의 인터뷰에 참가할 최소 30명의 계명대학교 학생을 모집하고 있습니다(신입생 10명, 2학년10명, 3학년10명). 인터뷰는 참가자의 선호에 따라 한국어 혹은 영어로 진행됩니다. 조사기간 동안 네 번의 정기 인터뷰에 연구자와 통역자가 동석하게 됩니다. 첫번째 인터뷰는 다수의 동료 학생들과의 그룹 인터뷰인 반면, 나머지 인터뷰는 개인 면담이 될 것입니다. 인터뷰를 저장하기 위하여 녹음기와 비디오 카메라가 사용됩니다. 그리고 참가자들은 일주일에 한번 간단한 질문들과 소견란이 있는 일지를 기록합니다.

### 기밀 준수

연구 중에 수집된 모든 정보는 기밀사항이 됩니다. 참가자의 실명이나 개인정보는 이 연구이외 그 누구에게도 절대 누설되지 않을 것입니다. 연구자의 논문과 학술 출판물에 생물학적인 정보(예를 들어, 나이, 성별)나 인터뷰 발췌문이 사용될 수 있을지라도, 참가자의 신원은 기밀로 유지됩니다. 오로지 연구자와 통역자만이 참가자의 이름을 알지만, 참가자는 암호명으로만 지칭될 것입니다. 수집된 정보는 연구자만이 접근가능하고 비밀번호로 잠겨 보호되는 파일로 컴퓨터에 저장됩니다. 그러나 참가자는 자신의 데이터의 정확성을 확인할 수 있는 기회가 있습니다. 이 프로젝트가 끝나면, 녹화, 녹음된 모든 정보와 참가자의 정보는 삭제됩니다.

### 참가

이 연구에 참가하는 것은 전적으로 자유재량이며, 참가할 의무는 없습니다. 이 연구에 참가하는 것은 수업 성적이나 대학생활의 어떤 면에도 영향을 주지 않을 것입니다. 언제라도 이 연구 참가를 그만두고 싶으시면, 어떠한 설명 없이도 그렇게 하실 수 있습니다. 이 리서치에 대해 궁금한 점이 있으시면, 연구자에게 직접 연락하시거나 한국인 통역자(Joo)에게 연락하시면 됩니다: Telephone (010-XXXX-XXXX) or email (xxxxx@xxxx.xxx)

### Participant's Statement

나는 위 안내문을 읽었고 이해했습니다.(혹은 만족할만한 설명을 들었습니다.)

서명 \_\_\_\_\_

날짜 \_\_\_\_\_



## 리서치 참가 동의서 (2012년 5월)

**프로젝트 명:** 제2 외국어 학습동기부여에 있어서 제2외국어 학습자의 자아개념의 역할  
단계 1 - 2012년 5월~12월

**연구자:** David Lyons

**Tel.** 053-XXX-XXXX

**Email:** xxxxlyonsxxx@xxx.xxx

**Cell:** 010-XXXX-XXXX

### 동의 사항 체크

1. 나는 날짜 \_\_\_\_\_, 단계 \_\_\_\_\_ 로 명시된 참가자 안내문을

읽고 이해 하였음을, 그리고 질문할 수 있는 기회가 있었으며 그에 대해 만족하는

답변을 들을 수 있었음을 입증합니다.

☐

2. 나는 나의 참가가 자발적인 것이고 이유없이 언제든지 취소할 수 있다는 것을

이해 합니다.

☐

3. 나는 나의 인터뷰 발췌문이 출판물에 쓰일 수 있다는 것을 이해합니다. 나는 나의

신원이 기밀로 유지된다는 것을 이해하였기에 이를 허가합니다.

☐

4. 나는 이 연구 참가에 동의합니다.

☐

참가자의 이름

서명

날짜

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참가자가 태어난 해

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책임 연구원

서명

날짜

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