

Syed, Mohammad Nooruddine (2016) Motivation and the L2 self: a case study of English secondary learners in multilingual Mauritius. *Research Journal of the University of Mauritius*, 22 .

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## Motivation and the L2 Self: A Case Study of English Secondary Learners in Multilingual Mauritius

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*Paper accepted on 29 January 2016*

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### **Abstract**

Drawing on Dornyei's 'L2 Motivational Self System' (2009), this article explores English language learning motivation among adolescent students in a secondary school in Mauritius. A mixed-methods approach, with the qualitative method being dominant, was used to fill in the gap of research pertaining to English language teaching and learning in Mauritius. Analysis of the findings reveals that there appears to be no major differences with regard to motivational factors among Form 4, Form 5, Lower and Upper 6 students. The learners' robust ideal L2 selves mediate and reinforce the subtleties and complexities of English language learning motivation. Teasing out the linguistic and sociocultural particularities of Mauritius, I argue that motivation is characterised by a complex web of interrelated factors impacting on the students' learning experiences.

**Keywords:** English motivation secondary school Mauritius L2 Selves

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the field of second language acquisition, numerous individual differences such as personality, aptitude, learning styles and strategies, language anxiety and motivation play an important role in learner attainment (Ellis, 2004). While the extant literature foregrounds the salience of these individual differences, motivation seems to have a very powerful role in the process of learning a

second/foreign language (Dornyei et al., 2006; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009). Dornyei (2005, p.65) argues that ‘all the other factors involved in second language acquisition presuppose motivation to some extent.’ For the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in investigating the dynamics between second language learning and motivation. I understand motivation as a driving force that triggers willingness and perseverance to invest effort so as to achieve the set goals. Cohen and Dornyei (2002, p.172) assert that ‘without it [motivation], nothing much happens.’ Muir and Dornyei (2013) suggest that motivation has been assumed to be static, with the supposition that learners may be either ‘motivated’ or ‘demotivated.’ In the literature, motivation is a contested topic owing to its non-static nature and ‘an abundance of theoretical frameworks’ (Shahbaz and Liu, 2012, p.117). Dornyei’s review of theories of motivation (2005) reveals that instead of differences between the frameworks, similarities were posing more challenges to comprehend the dynamic nature of motivation. To this end, Dornyei (2009) has designed the ‘L2 Motivation Self System’ that stems from empirical studies and concepts of possible selves. The present study uses Dornyei’s (2009) conceptual framework to explore motivational factors in a sample of 14 to 18 year old Mauritian students. The primary aims of this paper are to investigate the relevance of Dornyei’s framework among adolescents in a secondary school in Mauritius and to explore some English language learning motivational factors. Subsequently, this study can be useful to language teachers to understand the motivations of secondary learners vis-à-vis English as well as the factors impacting on students’ motivation to learn English. Accordingly, they can accommodate their teaching practices.

Below is a contextual overview of Mauritius and its education system. It is important to mention that I drew from these particularities (contextual factors) to include other items in the survey and interviews for this study.

### **Overview of sociolinguistic situation and literacy practices in Mauritius**

Mauritius is an island situated in the Indian Ocean with a population of around 1.2 million people. It was a former British and French colony. Subsequently, English and French are emblems of prestige in the local context (Rajah Carrim, 2007). French is omnipresent in the public sphere and is assumed to be a second language. Conversely, though English is the official language of education and

government, it is barely employed socially in the Mauritian society, foregrounding its foreign status (Auleear Owodally, 2012). Besides, numerous oriental languages such as Hindi, Mandarin, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu are taught across the education system. They are strong signifiers of ethno-religious identity (Rajah Carrim, 2007). The home language of 84% of Mauritians (Central Statistics Office, 2011) is a French-lexified Creole (Kreol Morisien). Auleear Owodally (2012, p.52) uses the term 'linguistic and literacy paradox' to describe the linguistic situation of Mauritian learners. She explicates that though Kreol Morisien is the home language of the population, English and French are the most important languages of literacy and education as well as the most popular and visible print languages. As from the first year of primary schooling, English is the chief language of literacy and main written medium of instruction (Auleear Owodally, 2014). It is also a compulsory subject taught in secondary schools. Throughout the education system, without passing English, no one is promoted to another class. This suggests that English has very instrumental and crucial dimensions in the local landscape. In such a situation, it is interesting to explore teenagers' positions towards English as a foreign language and its place in their lives. Providing recommendation for future research, Kormos and Csizer (2008) suggest that motivation can be explored in contexts where learners have little chance to communicate with native speakers and are not so much exposed to cultural products. This study focuses on such research direction where other conclusions might be possibly drawn.

### **Theoretical premise of this study: Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System Theory**

Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009) is distinctive as it comprises the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. This section unpacks the components of L2 Motivational Self System. Dornyei (2009) reconceptualises L2 learning motivation by designing the L2 Motivational Self System. The latter is made up of three constructs, namely the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self is characterised by the way we perceive ourselves and aspire to be in future. Dornyei (2005) postulates that the learner's desire to become proficient in the target language will be an impetus for the latter to deal with the challenges relentlessly so as to reach to the ideal self. On the

other hand, the ought-to L2 self is influenced by other people's aspirations such as parents, teachers or/and the broader social context. This kind of motivation is extrinsic as the learner tries to avoid negative outcomes to meet expectations of others. The L2 learning experience concerns the learners' social contexts where they are likely to be affected by peer group, experience of achievement and the teacher. The underpinning assumption is that if expertise in the target language is embedded in an individual's ideal or ought-to L2 self, this will act as a driving motivational force to be competent in the target language. This entails a willingness to bridge the gap between the present and future potential selves. Interestingly, Lamb (2004) contends that for Indonesian learners, L2 motivation is tied in to their 'bicultural identity'. In other words, as local and global citizens, they put a lot of effort and time in the L2 to construct and reshape their identity. This idea is actually at the heart of the L2 motivational self system. Arguably, this theory is efficacious in second language learning motivation contexts.

In the coming sections, the research methodology of the present study is outlined. The salient findings are next presented, followed by some discussions. The paper ends with an overview of the findings and some recommendations for future research. It is important to note that the qualitative findings are prioritised for they form part of the dominant research methodology and are powerful and intimate, evoking the overlapping nature of L2 motivation. The quantitative findings are teased out only for comparative purposes.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In his seminal book *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, Dornyei (2007) argues that by combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, we fully comprehend the target phenomena. Thus, a mixed-methods research was conducted 'to achieve an elaborate and comprehensive understanding of a complex matter' as motivation (ibid, p.164). Methods of data collection were carried out independently.

Zenter and Renaud (2007) postulate that individuals start to develop their future selves from adolescence. Exploring the beliefs and attitudes of secondary

learners pertaining to English can give an insight into their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The fact that they have been studying English throughout primary school and still doing so puts them in a better position to articulate the factors impinging on their English language learning. For data collection, a coeducational secondary school was chosen owing to accessibility. The learner population (aged between 14-18) is homogenous in terms of high proficiency level. Normally, students with A+ (distinctions) in all subjects are admitted to this school. This is determined by standardized examinations known as the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) conducted by the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES) annually.

### **Quantitative data collection**

I opted for self-selection (Dornyei, 2007) wherein 30 students, 15 boys and 15 girls willingly participated in the survey from Form 4, Form 5, Lower 6 and Upper 6. The age range is from 15 (Form 4) to 19 (Upper 6) years old. Form 4 and Lower 6 are preparatory years for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate (examinations conducted by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate on behalf of the University of Cambridge International Examinations) respectively. In total, 120 students formed part of the quantitative survey. The latter consisted of three sections of 4-Likert scale statements and questions, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (4). Items in the questionnaire were replicated and adapted from five empirical studies: Dornyei et al. (2006), Ryan (2008), Taguchi et al. (2009), Yashima (2009) and Islam (2013). The items (explained in 'Results' section) were pertaining to the learners' attitudes towards L2 Community, their position towards integrating into the L2 culture and the extent to which they are interested in L2 cultural products. Other items incorporated English Language learning attitudes, the role of English in the international scenario, the function of parents and immediate surroundings in their English Language learning experience and how these mediate, reinforce or hinder their intended learning efforts. Nonetheless, some amendments with regard to the 'National Development' scale were made so as to make them contextually apt for Mauritius. For example, these items were formulated to gauge the salience of English to the Mauritian context according to the learners: 'I think the knowledge of English will help Mauritians to represent Mauritius in a

better way among other nations' and 'I think that English is more important than French for the development of Mauritius.' Hence, the modifications were related to the economic and sociolinguistic specificities of Mauritius.

The survey items were organised by categories (themes) so as to decide what responses would support a particular scale. SPSS was used to do statistical tests including correlation tests, standard deviation and backward regression analyses.

### **Qualitative data collection**

8 focus group interviews with two to six participants from a class were conducted to explore the kinds of motivation students had and the factors impacting on their motivation to learn English. The participants were allowed to choose their friends for the interview. In this manner, the data would likely be richer and the atmosphere would be less strenuous. The self-selected respondents were given an information sheet and explained orally the purpose of the focus group interviews again. I reinstated that each word they uttered would be confidential and no one but the researcher would get access to the recording and transcribe data. When asked about the most comfortable language for the interviews, all groups settled on their L1 (Kreol Morisien). The interviews took about 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the group dynamics. Drawing on the L2 Motivational Self system, the interview questions were set to explore possible motivational factors to learn English as a foreign language in Mauritius. They were based on their perceptions about the uses and functions of English, English language learning experience, attitudes towards L2 cultures, English-speaking people, integrativeness, future L2 selves (ideal and ought-to selves), international posture of English and its role in national development. Having set questions gave me a clear road map to follow so that I could monitor the process of co-constructing knowledge during the interviews (Holdstein and Gubrium, 2002).

After an interview was conducted, I started transcribing the recordings. Thematic analysis enabled me to manage the data and interpret the emerging and overlapping issues (Berg, 2009). Cohen et al. (2007) warn that the data should be reduced into understandable patterns so that there is no compromise on the quality in a qualitative research. This arduous process required reading and re-

reading the data so as to have sound grasp of conceptual issues. While presenting the findings, pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity and students' utterances have been translated from Kreol Morisien into English.

## RESULTS

Backward regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship of the criterion measure 'Intended Learning Efforts' with other motivational factors in the questionnaire. It was also used to understand which motivational factors contributed to the components of L2 Motivational Self system. The backwards regression result demonstrates that these four variables have the strongest relationship with intended learning effort:

**Table 1: Strongest predictors for intended learning effort**

Ideal L2 Self	.376
Instrumentality Prevention	.446
Attitudes to English Language Learning	.444
Cultural Interest	.391

To consider the group scores of the variables, mean scores and standard deviation tests were conducted. The results are presented below:

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Scales**

Names of Scales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Integrativeness	2.82	0.36
Cultural Interest	3.06	0.43
Attitudes towards L2 Community	3.19	0.29
Instrumentality Promotion	3.32	0.21
Instrumentality Prevention	3.14	0.43
International Appeal	3.11	0.28
English (Classroom) Anxiety	2.42	0.25
English Language Learning Attitudes	2.47	0.34
Milieu	2.87	0.39
Ideal L2 Self	3.32	0.08
Ought-to L2 Self	2.56	0.19
Intended Learning Efforts	2.92	0.23
National Development	2.90	0.43



While the mean scores indicate which of the motivational components are more dominant to the informants' English language learning experience, the standard deviation shows dissimilarities pertaining to scores of specific motivational components. Instrumentality Promotion, International Appeal, Ideal L2 Self, Instrumentality Prevention, Cultural Interest and Attitudes towards L2 Community have the highest mean values. This highlights that the students are highly motivated to learn English and there are numerous factors impinging on their willingness to attain the target language. They are aware of the salience of English in the contemporary era. Dornyei's construct of the ideal L2 self is therefore relevant to the student's perception of their L2 identities. English (classroom) anxiety has the lowest mean score. It implies that many learners feel tensed in classroom contexts when learning English.

The lower standard deviation scores signify that the statements/questions are agreed on by many participants. A higher standard deviation score suggests that there is a wide variety of opinions. It is striking to note that the ideal L2 Self and ought-to L2 Self have the lowest standard deviation, indicating that the respondents articulated the manifestation of their L2 selves. The students appear to have different opinions regarding instrumentality (prevention), cultural interest and national development. Actually, these scales had the least number of items (ranging from 2 to 4). It is also important to consider that the teenagers have different experiences of 'English' as a disciplinary and cultural apparatus. These constructs are connected to how English itself is harnessed in Mauritius' cultural politics. Thus, the statements in the questionnaire may possibly reiterate their encounter with English which is mediated by contradictory discourses. This might explain the variety of responses.

In what follows, the role of motivation in terms of the respondents' learning experiences and future L2 selves is described. Particular focus is on the ways the findings relate to Dornyei's notions of ideal self and ought-to L2 self in the second and third sections. The role of milieu, mediated by parents, in relation to language learning motivation is stated in section four. Next, the dynamics between instrumental motivation, the students' learning experiences and future selves are listed. In part six, the learners' attitudes vis-à-vis English and the L2

community are expounded. This is followed by describing the participants' positions vis-à-vis English as an international language and lingua franca. Finally, through the lens of the learners, the role of English for the national development of Mauritius is presented.

### **English Language Learning Experience and Attitudes**

This component of the L2 Motivational Self System postulates that the experience of learning English in the classroom impacts on the attitudes and motivation of learners. Thus, the teacher is also an important agent of motivation. An analysis of the quantitative data (backward regression) shows that integrativeness (.502) and instrumentality prevention (-.316) have the strongest relationship with English language learning attitudes. When asked about their English language learning experience, all students found it to be 'interesting', 'enjoyable' and 'enriching'. For Lower and Upper 6 students (aged 17 and 18), learning English has made them more aware of current local and global issues. The following attestations of Form 5 and Lower 6 students capture the salience and vis-à-vis English language learning that all focus groups seem to have internalised: positive attitudes

Fouad: There are many interesting stuffs. We've learnt how to decipher sentences which are quite difficult. We can understand when people converse in English with us. These days, English is spoken in many countries. English is becoming a worldwide language. We learn it to be able to communicate globally.

Senaaz: We've got a very enriching experience that would be useful for the rest of our lives..we have to use English in our everyday life, in every sphere..

Rachel: Before, I used to stammer. I didn't know how to articulate the 's' sounds properly but due to oral practice in class, I'm able to pronounce them well now.

### **Strong presence of the Ideal L2 self**

All students had robust visions of themselves using English in the future. Upper 6 girls said that English is part of their lives for they already communicate in English with some local and international friends. Upper 6 boys put forward the instrumental use of English in future interviews and working abroad. A Lower 6 boy opined that English would be crucial to integrate in the culture when he would be studying abroad. The other 3 boys could not imagine using English as they are not fluent and it would be time consuming. However, they imagined using it with their university teachers and colleagues. Form 4, Form 5 and Lower 6 girls had very clear pictures of using English in the long run such as studying and settling abroad, communicating with lecturers, to an audience on a stage as well as working in the UK. The ideal L2 self of a Form 4 girl was quite representative of the target participants' future selves:

My goal is to become a lawyer and I have to keep talking. I don't intend to stay in Mauritius, here we don't have enough opportunities to talk in English but if I go to England, Australia or Singapore I would speak English.

The ideal L2 self, instrumentality (prevention), English language learning attitudes and cultural interest are strong predictors of intended learning effort (Table 1) among the 120 students. As far as other components are concerned, intended learning effort (Pearson correlation=.176,  $p<0.01$ ), attitudes towards L2 community (Pearson correlation=.098,  $p<0.01$ ), instrumentality prevention (Pearson correlation=-.285,  $p<0.05$ ), instrumentality promotion (Pearson correlation=.246,  $p<0.05$ ), international appeal (Pearson correlation=.293,  $p<0.05$ ), and national development (Pearson correlation=.243,  $p<0.05$ ) had significant relationship with the ideal L2 self.

### **Instrumentality (Prevention): Embodiment of the Ought-to L2 Self**

Instrumentality (prevention) refers to the responsibilities and obligations a learner experiences when learning the target language. It is arguably intertwined and overlapping with the ought-to L2 self. When asked what would happen if

they were not learning English, the students reacted spontaneously to the potential drastic ramifications.

For Form 4 and Form 5 girls, they would not be able to communicate with tourists, secure a good job and would be lagging behind. Jameela of Form 4 stated:

If we don't learn English, we will face many problems in our studies because if we do finance management for example, it is obligatory to use English. If we think of it, when students sit for exams, the papers come from Cambridge, England.

Form 4 boys also talked about their inability to communicate in the future. Their ought-to L2 selves were more prominent in that they expressed their fear that their tertiary studies would be affected. They would not only face problem to adapt if they study abroad but also feel inferior. All subjects are English-medium. Also, they would not be able to adapt or move forward. Foregrounding the complexity and overlapping facets of motivation, Lower 6 boys' responses were interesting. When I asked about the consequences of not learning English, Jean opined

There are many. The most important thing is that we won't get a seat in any university abroad. We'll be compelled to stay in Mauritius. I think that all my friends present here think likewise. We no longer wish to stay in Mauritius. There is a lot of corruption at the level of government. It's difficult for us. We prefer to live in another country where we will get a much better salary at the same time. It'll be easier for us there.

The above quote not only highlights the instrumental use of English but also its international appeal. English is perceived to be a passport for employment and economic stability. Foreign countries represent site of potentialities whereby English would be useful for communication. Hence, the nature of motivation is intertwined with several factors while projecting a negative sense of being if the teenagers do not acquire proficiency in English. Lower 6 and Upper 6 girls used

a poignant term ‘illiterate’ to elaborate on the ways people would view them in society. They would have to depend on someone else to get their work done. Likewise, Rajiv from Upper 6 boys stated that ‘if we weren’t learning English, we would have failed Form 5, not get a job and you wouldn’t have interviewed us.’ Hence, the ought-to L2 selves are intrinsic to the students’ English language learning process.

### **Milieu**

This variable relates to the views of the students’ peers and parents with regard to the significance of English as a foreign language. The majority of the students said that their friends considered learning English as a normal process. As for their parents, many of the learners said that they are encouraged by them. For example, a Form 5 boy claimed that his father buys newspapers in English and encourages him to read on the net and books. Upper 6 boys affirmed that people will respect them and their friends would be impressed if they had a good proficiency level. The qualitative findings on milieu indicate that besides parents, the broader social context is significant in motivating the learners.

### **Instrumentality (Promotion)**

Instrumentality (promotion) denotes the salience of the language that acts as an encouragement to strive for future use in terms of financial and professional gains. All the informants from the different age groups were convinced of the instrumental role of English. The fact that it is compulsory throughout the education system makes English more crucial in their lives. Lower 6 boys said that they learn English to pass exams. An interviewee said that even if English were not compulsory, he would learn it as it is a universal language and is useful in social networking sites. This is reiterated by Upper 6 boys and girls who said that English is an international language and widely used and most spoken language in the world. Lower 6 girls talked about English medium subjects and a language as a way of enhancing one’s literacy skills such as writing letters. Interestingly, two Form 5 girls prioritised instrumentality (prevention) when the question was about instrumentality (promotion):

Neena: if we fail in English, we fail everywhere.

Caroline: If we get an interview for a job and all, everything is in English these days.

Neena: if we have to go abroad to represent Mauritius or even our school.

In a similar fashion, both instrumentality promotion (Pearson correlation=.228,  $p<0.05$ ) and instrumentality prevention (Pearson correlation=.439,  $p<0.05$ ) correlated significantly to the ought-to L2 self. The literature suggests that these constructs are distinct, but the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate an overlap between them. Given that the correlation values are significant but not strong enough, a large sample might profitably yield a more conclusive result.

When I prompted them about the reasons of studying English, a pattern of intrinsic motivation arose among certain focus groups. To exemplify this, Upper 6 girls, Form 4 boys and Form 5 boys said that there is self development when they learn English. Form 5 girls talked about their desire of writing poems. Form 4 girls said that it is a sense of achievement if they are able to master English. In the light of the findings, it can be seen that instrumental (promotion) motivation is at the 'core' of the perceptions of learning process. However, I would use the word 'core' as contingent and provisional as an analysis of the multiple motivational factors would indicate a complex and interrelated picture of English language learning motivation.

### **Integrativeness, Cultural Interest and Attitudes towards L2 Community**

This part of the paper reports on the students' positions vis-à-vis aspect of L2 cultures. To do so, integrativeness, cultural interest and attitudes towards English-speaking communities are merged in order to have a broad understanding of the learners' perceptions and how they relate to their motivation of studying English as a foreign language. Integrativeness is defined as a learner's wish to incorporate into the English-speaking community. Dornyei et al. (2006) state that this can even lead to an aspiration for learners to be like L2 interlocutors

In spite of having mixed opinions on L2 cultures, most of the learners talked about their desire to integrate to English cultures and some even expressed their intentions to immigrate to the UK or the US. Having positive insights about L2 cultures, Form 4 girls were fascinated by English gardens, polite people compared to Mauritians and their ‘sophisticated’ way of living. One shared her experience of already having an English friend and how easy it was for her to integrate in the culture. Another said that what she gathers from films is that English countries have an important role to play. Form 4 boys described England as a land of potential at the level of education, technological development, fascinating locations, prestigious universities, infrastructures and better jobs. Many students wanted to emulate all aspects of the L2 cultures. However, there were mixed views. For example, one Form 5 girl said that there is too much independence and indecency in Western countries. Form 5 boys showed their interest on the personality and fluency of English speaking people. Ajmal and Jhusveer laid stress on the technological advancement and open-mindedness in English-speaking communities:

Ajmal: Yes. There’s more development there [in those countries]. More beautiful places

Jhusveer: We would also be developed with them...language and all, we would also communicate with them.

For Lower 6 girls, English-speaking countries are emblematic of power as Britain has colonised Mauritius earlier. Two interviewees said that they would like to follow some aspects of the cultures. For example, they would like to emulate the fashion, their ‘style’ of living, their ‘way of working hard’, and their openness compared to Mauritians. One stated that ‘very often we think that Western cultures are degrading but it’s not really the case.’ They said that they were impressed by the lifestyles of English-speaking individuals. One respondent preferred multicultural Mauritius:

I like the way we are here..multicultural..the way Mauritian families live.. when you see it...everyone coming together in a marriage. This is something peculiar.

When asked about the views of people surrounding them on occasion when they converse in English among themselves, these were two of the responses from Lower 6 and Form 4 learners respectively:

Louis: Some will consider us to be educated whereas others will think that we're showing off.

Rahena: They assume that we're arrogant..we're trying to prove something..that we know how to talk in English for example.

All in all, despite having ambivalent attitudes to the target culture, all learners showed their keenness to integrate with the L2 community so as to communicate and for many other purposes mentioned earlier. This highlights integrative motivation to learn English.

### **International Posture and English as a lingua franca**

The concept of international posture (Yashima, 2009) signals a willingness to view oneself as part of an international set-up. Besides, it also implies showing keenness in international issues and wanting to communicate with not only native speakers but also people around the world (ibid), foregrounding English as lingua franca. The learners were highly aware of the pertinent issue of English as an international language. It was interesting to note that when the students expressed their views on English as an international language, they elaborated on English as a common language (not only limited to English-speaking countries) and the ways it helps to bridge gaps between various cultures and countries. The following statement from a Form 4 boy sufficiently advocates this:

...in many countries, people speak English and it is very practical in all countries.



For this reason, this section reviews the learners' attestations of English as an international language and lingua franca. During the course of the interviews, when I asked about the advantages and obligation of learning English (promotion and prevention), I was struck by the complex emerging patterns when the learners themselves evoked the salience of English as an international language in the contemporary era. Students evoked the use, recognition and dominance of English around the world. Upper 6 students and Lower 6 boys want to be fluent in English so that they can use it abroad:

The only language that can unite us is English because English is spoken in all countries. (Christelle, Upper 6)

While Lower 6 girls referred to the use of English in conferences by people from different countries, Form 5 girls mentioned Bollywood films being dubbed into English and English-Hindi code switching in Hindi songs. Besides, they feel encouraged to consume L2 products such as American films, books, BBC, and documentaries. The learners of the different age groups acknowledged that they want to improve their proficiency in English for it is an international language. Similarly, the international appeal score has a fairly strong relationship (Pearson correlation=.458,  $p < 0.05$ ) with effort.

### **National development**

National development signals a positive perception of English as a powerful language in the era of globalisation (Islam, 2013). It entails socioeconomic contribution that an individual can bring to the country with the mastery of the target language. Pan and Block (2011) refer to the common view that English is a site of potentialities in developing countries. Hence, it is likely to be intrinsic to the ideal L2 self. The participants' reactions (apart from Upper 6 boys) vis-à-vis this variable was very positive. They opined that if they have mastered English, they will be able to contribute to the national development of Mauritius.

When I asked about the importance of learning English for Mauritians, Upper 6 students said that it is a prerequisite for international transaction. Upper 6 boys laid stress on resolving issues together by communicating in English. However,

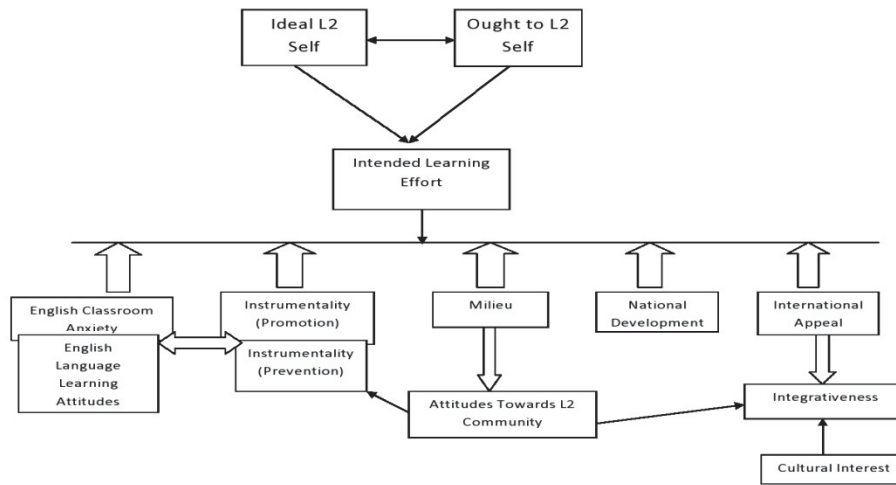
they said if English is socially used, people who do not know English can feel vulnerable. Also, English does not help them to contribute to national development of Mauritius. To them, English is ‘only a means of communication’. Similarly, three of the five Lower 6 boys and the Lower 6 girls foregrounded the communicative purpose, enabling them to contribute to the development of Mauritius through communication.

Form 5 girls opined that it can bring positive changes to Mauritius, especially in the tourism field. Mauritius can become a developed country. Similar opinions were voiced out by the boys. Bringing expertise with the mastery of English will help Mauritius to become an ‘international power.’ In turn, this will motivate students to study. Nonetheless, the downside of the empowerment through English is that value of Creole, cultures and identity can be lost. A Form 4 boy asserted that if Mauritians resist learning English, there will be a large gap between rich and poor people.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the light of the data presented above, it is apparent that Dornyei’s motivational framework is relevant and intriguing in the Mauritian context. Interestingly, there seems to be minor differences with regards to motivational factors in terms of age and gender. It is possible to argue that there is a ‘group culture’ prevailing in the secondary institution. The contention is that many constructs do not appear to be distinct. There are many overlaps. The qualitative findings, specifically, highlight the complexity of motivation and how the numerous factors impinge on the learners’ English Language learning experiences. In this vein, the following diagram stems from my reading of the qualitative data and attempts to represent the interplay between the different motivational factors.

Diagram 3-Overlapping nature of L2 Motivation



**Diagram 3 reflects the complexity of the students’ learning process.**

The ideal and ought-to L2 selves complement each other and form part of their L2 identities. It is at this stage that they ultimately aspire to reach. To this end, they make efforts owing to the international position of English. This may be mediated by attitudes towards English-speaking countries and their associated cultures. Hence, these positive attitudes may hinder their efforts as they know that English would be useful when they would settle in these countries and interact with the people. As a matter of fact, parents and friends also play a decisive role in promoting interest and shaping certain attitudes towards the L2 community and the importance of mastering English for the national prosperity of Mauritius.

Hence, learning English is perceived to be efficacious both in the local and international contexts. Instrumentality (prevention) is connected to these factors as the fear of not mastering the language will result in a low sense of self esteem.

The fear associated to failure in English makes the students instrumentally

motivated. This has an impact on their efforts to learn English. In light of the data, the learners' attitudes towards learning might be affected by English (classroom) anxiety. However, I argue that this does not have a 'pull back' effect on the students. Instrumental motivation is so dominant that classroom anxiety, which may be mediated by teachers, teaching methodologies and/or teaching materials, does not affect their motivation. These motivational factors foreground Muir and Dornyei's (2013) concept of a dynamic systems theory perspective. This technical term is used to describe a situation whereby numerous factors are intertwined, each influencing one another, resulting in numerous interferences. In what follows, I discuss the learners' ideal L2 selves, which are inextricably intertwined with the international appeal of English. This is followed by a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of some of Dornyei's motivational components in the Mauritian context. These are the roles of motivational factors including the ought-to L2 self mediated by instrumentality (prevention), milieu, English language learning attitudes, cultural interest and national development.

### **Robust Ideal L2 selves**

While the quantitative data validates the presence of an ideal L2 self among the secondary learners (mean=3.32, standard deviation=0.08) the qualitative data provide an elaborate vision of their future selves. Taking into account their proficiency level, the learners had clear and realisable idealised images of their L2 selves. During the focus group interviews, they showed confidence when expressing their future aspirations and the relevance of English. They talked about developing their intercultural communications skills that would not only be useful in international contexts (jobs, integrating in L2 culture, travelling) but also the local context (jobs). In order to diminish the discrepancy between the current and ideal selves, they evoked consistence of effort. At this stage, other motivational factors such as instrumentality (prevention) come into play. The students were critically aware of the negative repercussions of not mastering English. Arguably, the students are not only instrumentally but also resultatively motivated. In many instances, students talked about situations which further motivated them to learn English. For example, contests, debates and high marks encouraged them to persevere in their English studies. Thus, aiming to reach a higher benchmark foregrounds the potency of the ideal L2 self. In this context,

Oyserman et al. (2006) contend that besides a strong visualisation of the future L2 self, suitable action plans and techniques to achieve that self are necessary. Likewise, most students were keen to pursue tertiary education in Mauritius and abroad. Many interviewees recognised local and international platforms wherein their ideal L2 selves can thrive. Their future aspirations (of becoming a lawyer, teacher, entrepreneur, hotel manager) were incentives to improve their proficiency and were thus pragmatic and achievable. Interestingly, the choice of the careers reflects social and financial stability in the Mauritian society. But this is not necessarily part of the participants' intention as they expressed their wish to communicate with English-speaking people and a broader L2 community. However, English seemed to be a professional language and lingua franca, instead of a language they would use in their everyday lives. This is so as most of the respondents viewed Mauritians speaking English as a sign of showing off and arrogance. This reflects the students' linguistic positions vis-à-vis their first language and English.

Studies including Kormos and Csizer (2008), Yashima (2009) and Kormos et al. (2011) have identified the correlation between the ideal L2 self and international appeal of English. They revealed the participants' increasing awareness of English as a lingua franca and to interact. While the quantitative data of the current study do not reveal anything as such, the qualitative data suggest that the secondary learners are motivated to learn English for it is an international language that connects the world. Similar to Pan and Block's (2011) findings in China, the findings of the study foreground English as a site of potential, modernity, and connectivity. This also shows that the Mauritian learners' ideal L2 selves are grounded in socio-economic aspects.

### **Ought-to L2 self and Efforts to learn English**

Since instrumentality (prevention) refers to a learner's apprehension and broader social expectations, it is thus part of a learner's ought-to self. Similar to Islam's (2013) study on Pakistani university learners, the present findings also demonstrated strong overwhelming presence of the ought-to L2 self. However, the difference is that his study did not find any correlation with any aspects of the ought-to L2 whereas this study clearly revealed a correlation (Pearson

Correlation=.446, $p<0.05$ ) between efforts and instrumentality (prevention). The Mauritian secondary students showed a raised awareness of the negative repercussions that they would encounter if they failed to learn English. The fears were associated with inferiority, low self-esteem and confidence. There were also evidence of social pressures and respect in society and public sphere. For instance, one participant mentioned an incident where an elderly person was insulted for not understanding and speaking English.

The two former sections analysed the learner's ideal and ought-to L2 selves. However, these two components are complementary. Dornyei (2009) elucidates that the ideal and ought-to L2 selves should be in harmony so that motivation to learn the target language increases. Indeed, the data support this contention. The learners' idealised version of an L2 learner appeared to be mediated by social positions, acceptance and fears. The fact that the learners were affected by social pressures suggests that their ideal selves stem from and are reshaped by the ought-to L2 self. Moreover, being a professionally respected member of the society is actually their ideal L2 self as many learners said that they wanted to master English as it is a sign of being educated in the society. Oyserman et al. (2006) postulate that ideal and ought-to L2 selves do not essentially oppose each other. The interrelatedness between these two concepts might point to the fears and tensions Mauritian learners feel, thereby impacting on their ideal L2 selves. When family, immediate learning environment and social expectations have a crucial role in a context, these factors impinge on a student's effort to strive (Papi, 2010). The learners' ideal L2 selves are framed by internalisation of social values which are promoted by that environment.

### **English language learning and Milieu**

Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that milieu has a strong impact on the respondents' English language learning motivation. In Mauritius, parents and family members usually have a role to play in promoting the potential of English. The data suggest that many students were encouraged by their parents who regularly talk about the importance of English at home. For some, within their families, there is a sort of 'rivalry' going on between cousins when they score distinction in English. These suggest that milieu can be a strong motivational

factor that impact on effort. The parents may be aware of the socioeconomic advantages related to English. As a result, they encourage their wards to learn English by attending private tuitions. In a similar vein, Kormos et al. (2011, p. 70) attest that '[f]or the majority of language learners, and even for young adults, parents and the family are the mediators of the societal and cultural values and norms.'

### **Integrative Motivation: Cultural Interest and Attitudes to L2 community**

Despite being a foreign language in the local context, English seems to play a prominent role in the learners' lives. As suggested in the findings section, most of the students consume L2 products. They are fascinated by English-speaking people and their cultures. Actually, this is a way of familiarising oneself (Dornyei et al., 2006; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009) and establishing contact with the L2 community in an indirect manner. While the literature has often reported explicit attempts by the ex-colonised subjects to turn away from the coloniser's language (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985), the learners in postcolonial Mauritius show an active engagement with the L2 community and the target language. LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985, p.5) postulate that the choice and use of language are inextricably intertwined with one's sense of identity and 'search for social role'. In this vein, English has a role to play in the students' identity construction as they appear to have internalised the language through constant code switching during the interviews and its importance in their future lives. However, English does not necessarily act as a threat to their L1. In fact, the multilingual students seem to use both languages (Creole and English) without any conflict (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller *ibid*, p. 180-181). Hence, their identities are shaped and reconfigured by accommodating to the various social contexts

However, the qualitative findings point out that many learners had ambivalent attitudes vis-à-vis the L2 community and culture. The fact that they do not like certain aspects might suggest that they are critically engaging with them to reassert their national and socio cultural identities. Blunt (1994) and Kramsch and Von-Hoene (2001) hold the view that this is often the case in postcolonial contexts. Nonetheless, these ambivalent attitudes do not necessarily inhibit

language learning. Instead, it creates a space whereby the learners negotiate the use and appropriacy of the target language with regard to their sociocultural sensibilities. Likewise, the learners in this study espoused these views.

### **National Interest**

The quantitative data suggest that this construct has significant correlation with several variables such as intended learning effort, ideal L2 self as well as the ought-to L2 self. This salient finding highlights the significant role of English in the Mauritian society. The qualitative data also emphasise that majority of the students believed that English would enable them to contribute to the development of Mauritius. It is interesting to note that many participants considered English to be more important than French in relation to the development of the Mauritian economy. Though Upper 6 boys did not think so, they highlighted the communicative function of English in the public sphere. In this vein, as a foreign language, English becomes a means of conveying unity and shared societal purposes (Rivers, 2011).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Filling in the gap of the scarcity of research in second/foreign language learning motivation (Kormos and Csizer, 2008), this paper has investigated the factors that impact on English language learning motivation among adolescent learners in a secondary school in Mauritius. It has also dealt with the salience of Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System. The mixed methods findings show that there are no major motivational differences in terms of age and gender. Learners of the secondary institution are not only instrumentally motivated but also resultatively and integratively motivated to learn English. These reveal the salience of English in an era of globalisation. Hence, Mahadeo's (1999) claim that Mauritian students are only instrumentally motivated loses its *raison d'être*. Nonetheless, the size and nature of the sample need to be acknowledged. With large scale studies carried out in numerous secondary schools would enable us to make more concrete conclusions that could reveal intriguing patterns in an EFL context as Mauritius. Another essential limitation to take into account is that motivation is fluid and non-linear. So, each of those students would be probably



at a different point of the curve when they answered the questionnaire and when they did the interview. My presence as a researcher may also have had an impact on the participants' inclination towards giving 'right' and 'acceptable' answers.

Drawing from the mixed methods findings of this study, the following recommendations are provided for further research. Taking into account the social particularities of Mauritius, the scale of the ought-to L2 self needs to be explored further. Contextually sensitive issues including the status of English and its repercussions among people in Mauritian society can be incorporated in the survey items. For example, factors connected to mental and emotional fears, confidence, personality, and social expectations can be considered. Moreover, the construct of national interest demands a more rigorous approach. Islam (2013) stated that this construct might not be reliable since the latter might emblematises the learners' internalisation of discourses concerning English in Pakistan rather than their actual dedication to national principles. However, the present study found out that the ideal L2 self had a strong correlation with national interest. Additionally, it contributed to the intended learning effort. Hence, it would be interesting to probe further into the dynamics between the ideal L2 self and national interest in Mauritius and in other ESL or EFL contexts. Future research can look into the ways in which English is harnessed as a site of opportunities and academic prestige. Another pertinent issue emerging from the focus group interviews was the students' concerns and emotional attachment vis-à-vis Kreol Morisien. It is likely that they may also develop their future L1 selves. It is therefore suggested to explore the dynamics between both L1 and L2 selves and whether they complement or contradict each other or else there is a critical engagement or even an emergence of emotional tussles. In multilingual Mauritius, learners may be having future selves for more than two and three languages.

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