

**The L2 Motivational Self System of Low and High  
Achievers in a Cambodian context**

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**Abstract**

The present study explored the different levels of motivation, the relationship between the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System and language proficiency as well as the reasons behind the students' motivation in learning at two private English schools in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. One-hundred and twenty students with different levels of English, ages ranging from 9 to 21 years old, were divided into low and high achiever groups. They participated in the quantitative data collection phase. Data were collected through an English proficiency test and a questionnaire. The results revealed a significant difference regarding Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience between the two groups. A significant correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and language proficiency was found among high achievers, whereas a significant correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience was the case among low achievers. For the qualitative study, twenty out of one hundred and twenty participants (10 low achievers and 10 high achievers) were interviewed for reasons behind their learning motivation in

learning English. Different reasons were discovered: personal aspiration, the need for communication and environment.

**Key words:** Language proficiency, L2 Motivational Self System, the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, Cambodian students

## **Introduction**

Playing a major role as an international language, English is used by people from around 50 countries all over the world, especially by those who do not speak the same first language, including Cambodian people (Jenkins, 2003). With the existence of UNTAC (The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, 1993) and ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 1999), Cambodia, as well as other countries, has experienced tremendous changes both economically and socially. One consequence of the arrival of those organizations has been the free movement of labor across the ASEAN region, which has resulted in a competitive job market, with English playing an even more important role as the lingua franca in these parts of Asia (Clayton, 2006, 2017). Thus, the role of English is significant in both academic and social contexts as it is taught in both state and private schools (Clayton, 2008). In state schools, it takes 12 years for the completion of general education with six years (grades 1 to 6) for primary education and another six years (grades 7 to 12) for secondary education. The study of the English language or foreign language education is provided for at the secondary stage (Igawa, 2010). Cambodian parents who are more aware of the importance of English education send their children to private English schools before they start grade 7. Also, since the students focus only on general education in state school, English is more valued in private English schools. Run by the private sector, private English schools provide only English education before or after regular state school hours for children aged 3 and older. English class lasts 3 hours per day and is held five days per week. It takes three

to six months for students to complete each level i.e. beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced. They can choose between either the morning or afternoon session.

Despite the significant role of English in society, Cambodian students have a relatively very low proficiency, ranking 85 among 88 countries (EF English Proficiency Index, 2018). As English proficiency is still low in the county, it can be a barrier to Cambodian career prospects since more and more jobs demand workers to have a high command of English.

Motivation, as a key element of the learning process, is often regarded as a solution for all unfavorable outcomes and behaviors in education (Dörnyei, 2001). As Dörnyei (1998) said, even good teaching methods and appropriate curricula do not ensure success in learning without the presence of motivation. In the context in which the English language is used as the second language or a foreign language, a number of studies have confirmed that motivation as well as the L2 Motivational Self System can exert a positive impact on ESL/EFL learners' English learning both quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as their English proficiency (Papi, 2010; Lamb, 2012; Islam et al., 2013; Tort Calvo, 2015; Syed, 2016; Huang & Chen, 2017). Considering the importance of motivation in foreign language learning and the importance of English, this study sought to investigate the associations of the L2 Motivational Self System with learners' language proficiency that lead to a greater understanding of the motivation in English learning and the reasons behind it.

### **Literature Review**

Motivation is generally accepted as leading to the success or failure of the learner when learning a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2001). In addition, it strongly influences the degree to which learners take opportunities to use the language (Gardner, 1985, cited in Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Based on its crucial role in language learning, language researchers have been attracted to investigate the effects of different types of motivation on language learning and to find new ways to develop greater motivation

among learners (Gardner et. al, 1972; Gardner et. al, 1987; Spolsky, 1989; Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner et. al, 2004; Dörnyei & Ushida, 2011).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduced the notions of integrativeness and instrumentality. Integrative motivation refers to a learner's wish to learn more about the culture of the target language or to assimilate himself into the target language community, while instrumental motivation refers to a learner's wish to acquire a new language for practical reasons and to gain the benefits of learning a target language. It has been shown through a series of studies over decades (Brown, 2000; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Gardner, 1985; Gardner et al., 1983; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Noels et al., 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994) that L2 learners with positive attitudes toward the target culture seem to be motivated to learn the target language more effectively than those without such attitudes. However, the concept of integrative motivation is placed in the socio-educational model and does not exist in mainstream motivational psychology because it seems appropriate in a multicultural context such as in Canada which is an English speaking country. On the contrary, the theory of integrativeness, does not apply in non-English speaking countries where there is no language community for the learner to integrate into.

Later on, researchers' interests shifted to the cognitive aspect, with self-determination and attribution theories highlighting the concept of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975). Deci (1975) defined intrinsic motivation as a type for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself, meaning that people engage in the activities for their own sake, while extrinsic motivation focuses on external rewards. A number of studies regarding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ehrman, 1996; Ramage, 1990; Tachibana et al., 1996) have suggested that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be of service in predicting L2 learning outcomes. Currently, due to the growing significance of World Englishes, learner identity and social context, and a vision of the self has been considered as

links to L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2009).

This concept stimulated Dörnyei to conceive a theory called the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) to best reflect language use in foreign language contexts. With this theory, students' motivation is better understood in terms of self-identification processes, and how they predominantly relate language learning to their own imagined personal future, whether in their home country or overseas.

This theory conceptualized L2 motivational theory based on psychological theories of the self and is made up of three components: The Ideal L2 Self (IS), the Ought-to L2 Self (OS) and the L2 Learning Experience (LE).

The first self-guide, IS, is a clear and real image of what the learner would like to become (Dörnyei, 2009). For example, if they want to become a fluent English speaker, the image of a fluent speaker might motivate them to study English (Papi, 2010). IS can be used to describe the motivational set-up in various learning contexts, although there is little or no contact with L2 speakers (Dörnyei, 2009). The growing importance of World Englishes has created changes in the relationship between IS and native speakers i.e. IS constructed by, for example, Korean learners now are no longer dependent on native English speakers, but rather on fluent non-natives (Kim & Kim, 2014). It can be said that the clearer IS is, the higher the level of English proficiency is acquired. The Ideal L2 self type of motivation has also been considered as the most important factor in the studies of Ghapanchi et al. (2011), Islam et al. (2013) and Rajab et al. (2012). Ghapanchi et al. (2011) and Rajab et al. (2012) found that it was the most significant predictor of L2 language acquisition, while Islam et al. (2013) discovered a significant correlation between IS and attitudes to learning English and instrumentality.

Second, learners with OS believe that they are obliged to meet external expectations and to avoid possible undesirable outcomes. The cause of OS is outside of individuals, such as family, friends and teachers (Dörnyei, 2009). They study English to please their family with their language ability. Among the three

components of the L2MSS, this component produces the least effect on intended effort (Islam et al., 2013; Papi, 2010). Among Asian students, OS is shown to be more significant due to family and school pressure (Taguchi et al., 2009).

Last but not least, LE refers to the immediate learning environment and experience (Dörnyei, 2009). Curriculum, L2 teachers, peer groups, the enjoyment of the learning environment and the teaching materials might have a strong impact on learners' motivation (Papi, 2010). Dörnyei (2009) stated that this component is conceptualized at a different level from the two self-guides i.e. IS and OS. The two self-guides carry the sense of future orientation while the LE concerns aspects of learners' learning situations. Depending on the L2 experiences that learners make their life progresses, certain aspects of their personal selves can be created, strengthened, or removed. In Islam et al. (2013), attitudes towards learning English and IS are the strongest predictors of intended effort. Taguchi et al. (2009) also show that English learning experience has the highest impact on intended effort, becoming the first predictor of it.

Overall, L2MSS can also define diverse motivational learner types, and its definitions may contribute to L2 motivation research. Dörnyei's (2009) theory can function as a predictor of second language proficiency as well: students with different aims to learn English will have different language proficiency, as the three dimensions have proved in previous research. L2MSS can provide some clues for teaching strategies, along with some information regarding language learner motivational types (Dörnyei, 2009).

A number of studies (Papi, 2010; Lamb, 2012; Islam et al., 2013; Tort Calvo, 2015; Syed, 2016 ;and Huang and Chen, 2017) have centered upon the L2MSS. Most of them used questionnaire instruments to collect data from participants in various educational levels, i.e. secondary school, high school and university. The common findings were that IS was found to be the most dominant component of L2 learning and that LE could predict learners' IS. However, insignificant relationships between

the L2MSS and L2 proficiency were also found. Last but not least, OS increased L2 anxiety.

To sum up, several research gaps have been identified with regard to investigating the relationship between L2MSS and language proficiency. Little research has been conducted on Cambodian learners. In addition, high and low achievers (HA and LA) also have not been taken into account. Also, the use of semi-structured interviews to collect in-depth information about the source of learners' motivation in learning English is still limited. Finally, there have been a number of studies centered around Europe and East Asia but not Southeast Asia (Boo et al., 2015). Therefore, studies carried out in different geographical contexts such as Cambodia are worth investigating. Last but not least, this research also offers an overall validity study of Dörnyei's tripartite model of the L2 Motivational Self System in this context.

The purposes of the study were to examine the level of each component of L2MSS of HA and LA, the relationships between L2MSS and the language proficiency of HA and LA, and reasons behind their motivation to learn English. The findings of the study are expected to provide suggestions for more efficient ideas to motivate students, especially low achievers. It is hoped that some of the problems deriving from learning and teaching practices, family and society which hinder EFL students' motivation to master English can be understood and lessened to some degree by this study. To meet this aim, the study was designed to address the following questions:

1. What level of each component of L2MSS do HA and LA demonstrate? Are there any significant differences between the two types of students?
2. What are the relationships between L2MSS and the language proficiency of HA and LA of Cambodian students?
3. What are the reasons behind their motivation to learn English?

## **Research Methodology**

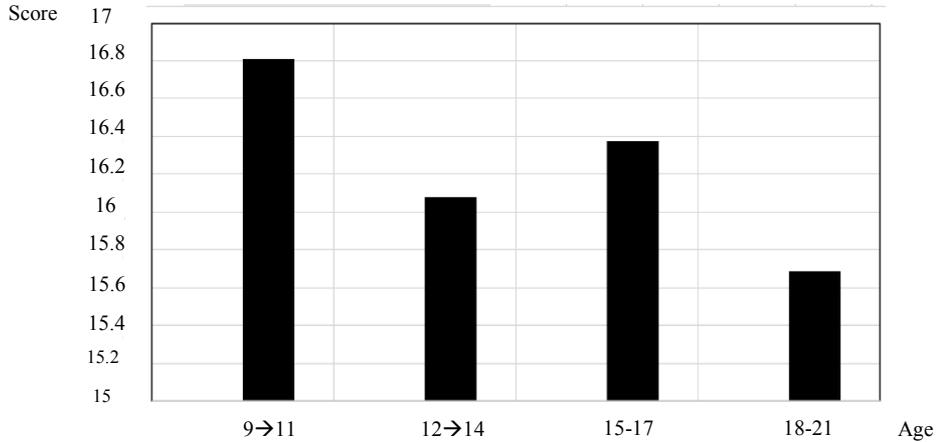
### **Research design**

The study employed a concurrent mixed method design. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered during the same time period, from the same group of participants. A proficiency test and questionnaire were used to collect data regarding students' language proficiency and motivation towards English language learning, while a semi-structured interview was used to collect data related to the reasons behind the motivation for learning English, according to the level of each component of L2MSS and the relationship between the L2MSS and language proficiency.

### **Participants**

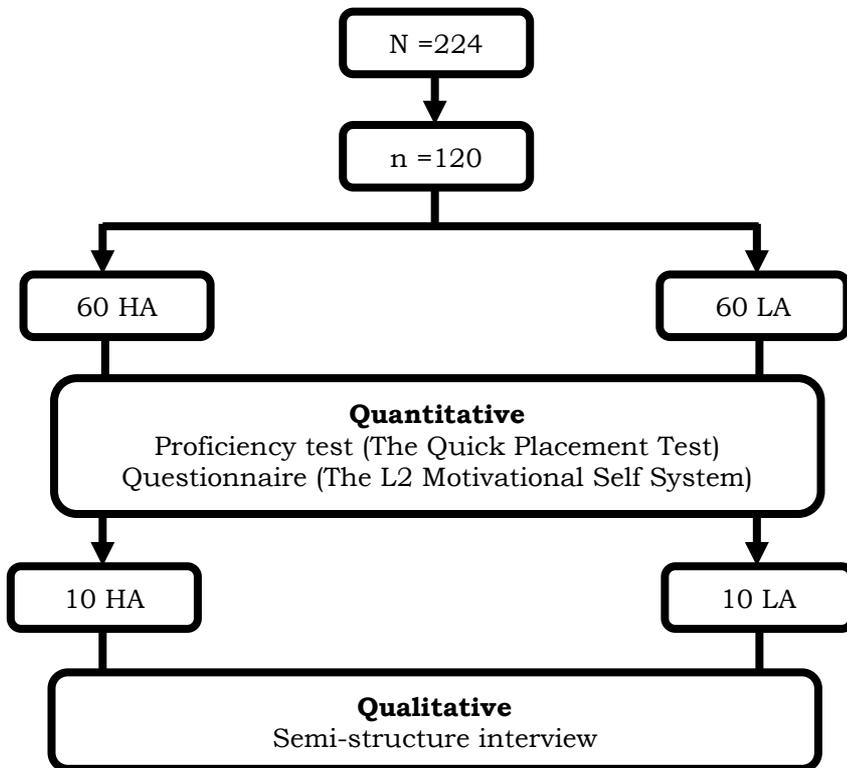
Two hundred and twenty-four students, with different levels of English, from two private English schools, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia took part in the main study. Their ages ranged from 9 to 21 years old. They all had been studying English for at least one year. They were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Their proficiency test scores were divided using a 27% technique (Hughes, 1989), namely the top and bottom 27% scores of English language proficiency. This result was that out of one hundred participants, the 60 participants who had the highest scores were assigned to the high achiever group (HA) (Mean=21.53, Min=19, Max=29) and the 60 participants with the lowest scores were assigned to the low achiever group (LA) (Mean=12.61, Min=10, Max=14). In addition, the groups were determined regardless of their age. Figure 1 shows that all of the younger students tended not to fall into LA while the older students tended not to fall into HA.



**Figure 1:** Age and average proficiency score of 224 students

In the second stage, 20 of the 120 participants were randomly selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. Figure 2 illustrates the group assignment and research design while Table 1 shows the details of the participants chosen for the semi-structured interviews.



**Figure 2:** Group assignment and research design

**Table 1:** Details of participants chosen for semi-structured interview

No	Pseudonym	Gender	No	Pseudonym	Gender
LA			HA		
1	Mary	Female	11	Ferry	Female
2	Andy	Male	12	Suzy	Female
3	Sam	Male	13	Kaly	Female
4	Soly	Female	14	Sony	Male
5	Luke	Male	15	Yale	Female
6	Helen	Female	16	Lily	Female
7	Jonny	Male	17	Tony	Male
8	Jessy	Female	18	Ka	Male
9	Kate	Male	19	Sue	Female
10	Tom	Male	20	Joe	Male

## Research Instruments

### Language proficiency test (see Appendix A)

The Quick Placement Test (QPT) version 2 (<https://www.international.rmit.edu.au/agent/document/forms/pdf/QPTPaper-and-pen.pdf>) was adopted to measure participants' English proficiency level. Designed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL to be applicable to foreign language learners of all levels and ages, the test is used for placement testing and examination screening. There are two versions offered to measure participants' English proficiency: the computer-based (CB) version and the paper and pen (P&P) version. This study adopted P&P due to some technical limitations. The test contained 60 multiple-choice items. It was divided into 2 parts. Part 1 (items 1-5) tested vocabulary knowledge, items 6-20 tested vocabulary and grammar knowledge through 3 cloze tests, while items 21-40 tested grammar knowledge in the form of gap-filling. In addition, with a higher level of difficulty, items 41-50 in part 2, tested vocabulary and grammar knowledge in a cloze test format, while items 51-60 tested grammar knowledge in the form of gap-filling. One point

was awarded for each correct answer. It was piloted for reliability with 50 students in one private English school in Phnom Penh. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .801.

### **Questionnaire (see Appendix B)**

The five-point Likert scales questionnaire (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) was used. It consisted of three parts with 30 items, which were adopted and adapted from Dörnyei et al. (2006); Taguchi et al. (2009) and some were newly designed by the researchers. The questionnaire aimed at determining the levels of motivation of the three components of L2MSS. Items 1, 5, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 27, 29 were for IS, 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 20, 21, 24, 26, 30 for OS and items 3, 6, 8, 11, 15, 18, 23, 25, 28 for LE. The second part contained demographic questions such as age, time spent learning at English school and attitude towards learning English. The last part contained an open-ended question to explore their overall views on learning English. The questionnaire was translated from English into Khmer to ensure the complete understanding of the items. The Khmer version was approved by two Cambodian teachers of English. It was piloted for reliability with 50 students in one private English school in Phnom Penh. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .829.

### **Interview form (see Appendix C)**

The semi-structured interview, carried out in Khmer, was conducted to gather in-depth information related to students' source of motivation according to the level of each component of L2MSS and the relationship between the L2MSS and language proficiency, as well as the reasons why some students achieve higher outcomes than others. Some examples of the questions include, "Why do you choose to study English?" "What do you want to be in the future? Why?" "How do you feel when you are learning English? Why?" These questions can reveal and uncover the students' ideas or reasons for studying English. The semi-structured interview was validated by a panel of three in English

language instruction to ensure content validity, clarity, and language appropriateness.

### Data Collection and Analysis

With the assistance of a classroom teacher, the test and questionnaire were distributed together to the participants in regular class time. Prior to data collection, the researcher asked for their verbal consent and ensured that their answers were used only for research purposes and that their names would remain anonymous. The whole session was completed within 2 hours. SPSS Statistics Bass 17.0 was used to analyze the data for descriptive statistics, t-test, and a two-tailed Pearson correlation.

The interview with 5 groups of 4 students took place one day after the quantitative data were collected. With permission from all participants, voice recorders were used to record the 30-minute interview. Salient themes were identified and manually color-coded by the researcher. They had been cross-checked and revised by both researchers. The identified issues were then categorized based on the themes.

### Results

**Research question 1:** What level of each component of L2MSS do HA and LA demonstrate? Are there any significant differences between the two types of students?

To determine the level of each component of L2MSS and whether components in L2MSS were significantly different between HA and LA groups, the mean scores of their responses to the questionnaire were calculated and compared using an independent sample t-test. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The levels of the 3 components of L2 Motivation Self System of HA and LA

	HA (n =60)		Scale	LA (n =60)		Scale	t	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD			
<b>IS</b>	4.0212	0.5692	High	3.9212	0.53596	High	.991	.324
<b>OS</b>	3.5883	0.61568	High	3.8441	0.61039	High	-2.275	.025
<b>LE</b>	3.6259	0.45966	High	3.8074	0.46513	High	-2.150	.034

\*\**. Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

\**. Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

*Note: 1.0-1.80 = very low; 1.81-2.60 = low, 2.61-3.40 = moderate, 3.41-4.20 = high, 4.21-5.00 = very high*

*IS= The Ideal L2 Self, OS=The Ought-to L2 Self, IE= The L2 Learning Experience*

It can be seen from Table 2 that the level of all 3 components of the L2MSS was high in both HA and LA groups. A closer look at each component revealed that the level of IS was the highest in both groups. However, the level of IS of the HA was higher than that of the LA ( $\bar{x}$ =4.0212,  $\bar{x}$ =3.9212, respectively). In addition, the level of LE and OS of the high achievers was also high in motivating students to learn English ( $\bar{x}$  =3.6259,  $\bar{x}$ =3.5883, respectively). On the other hand, for LA, OS ranked as the second highest motivation ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.8441) and LE was the least effective motivation among the 3 components ( $\bar{x}$ =3.8074). This showed that HA had a significantly lower OS and LE than those of LA. Significant differences in both OS and LE between the two groups of students were found ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Research question 2:** What are the relationships between L2MSS and the language proficiency of HA and LA?

To answer the research question about the relationships between L2MSS and the language proficiency score of HA (Mean=12.61, Min=10, Max=14) and LA (Mean=21.53, Min=19, Max=29), the data were analyzed using Pearson's Correlation in SPSS Statistics Bass 17.0. The results are summarized in Tables 3-4.

**Table 3:** Correlations between each component of L2MSS of the high achievers

	<b>Score</b>	<b>IS</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>LE</b>
<b>Score</b>	1	.281*	-0.025	0.07
<b>IS</b>	.281*	1	.570**	.588**
<b>OS</b>	-0.025	.570**	1	.587**
<b>LE</b>	0.07	.588**	.587**	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note: IS= The Ideal L2 Self, OS=The Ought-to L2 Self, IE= The L2 Learning Experience

Table 3 demonstrates a significant relationship between the IS and the HA's language proficiency ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that the higher the degree of IS students had, the higher language proficiency scores they acquired. A negative correlation, although not significant, between the OS and the language proficiency ( $r = -.025$ ), was found while the LE also showed insignificant relationship with the language proficiency ( $r = 0.07$ ). In addition, it was found that the IS and the OS and the LE were significantly correlated ( $r = .570, .588$  respectively,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that the higher level the IS, the higher level of the OS and LE.

**Table 4:** Correlations between each component of L2MSS and the language

	Score	IS	OS	LE
Score	1	-0.151	-.356**	-.295*
IS	-0.151	1	.399**	.456**
OS	-.356**	.399**	1	.541**
LE	-.295*	.456**	.541**	1

proficiency of the LA

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: IS= The Ideal L2 Self, OS=The Ought-to L2 Self, IE= The L2 Learning Experience

Table 4 shows that the LA's proficiency score was significantly but negatively correlated with OS and LE ( $r = -.356, p < .01, r = -.295, p < .05$ , respectively). This indicates that the higher OS the students demonstrated, the lower language proficiency score they obtained. A negative correlation, although not significant, between the IS and language proficiency ( $r = -.151$ ) was also found. A positive relationship between the IS and the OS

( $r = .399$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was revealed. This means that the HA with high IS also had a high level of OS. Also, the relationship between the IS and LE was found to be significantly correlated ( $r = .456$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Research question 3:** What are the reasons behind their motivation to learn English?

As for the reasons behind the participants' English learning motivation, the interview results revealed three dominant themes, namely, personal aspiration, need for communication and environment. To be specific, a high number of HA possessed the personal aspiration to learn more English than their counterparts. In addition, both groups were also motivated due to the need for communication. However, they had more or less the same level of motivation caused by the environment.

For personal aspiration, the participants from both groups were highly motivated as they saw themselves in the future based on their strong desire or goal. However, the reasons behind their motivations differed. For example, Suzy, HA was motivated because she wanted to represent the country as a basketball team leader to compete with teams from other countries around the world while Helen, LA wanted to follow her mother's footsteps to become an English teacher. The following are their own words:

*Now I am a basketball player. I imagine myself becoming the captain of the national team, leading the group to compete with other players from other countries both inside and outside of Cambodia. To be able to do so, besides being strong, I have to be able to use English effectively (Suzy, HA, August 5, 2018).*

*English is important. My dreams are connected to English. My mother used to teach English, and I want to be like her (Helen, LA, August 5, 2018).*

The need for communication, going abroad, having a good career, and the ability to communicate with foreigners, influenced the participants from both groups. They were attracted by the

opportunity to study and travel abroad, have access to a large amount of new information and resources on the internet, and become familiar with the cultural products of western countries. Some of them thought that trips to other countries would be easier and more enjoyable if they could communicate in English. One of them said:

*I study English because I want to travel to other countries. English can make my trips more convenient* (Lily, HA, August 6, 2018).

Next, the need for communication for students was for careers. Although the motivation of the two groups of students fell into the same theme, the reasons were completely different. For instance, more HA students imagined themselves using English as a professional or as international staff, for example:

*What I want to do in the future is work in an international company or in any company where English is used.* (Sony, HA, August 5, 2018).

By comparison, students from the LA group were more practical, fearing that a low level of English proficiency would obstruct their future careers, as in the following example:

*The national economy is highly dependent on foreign investment and multi-national enterprises so I have to be aware that career prospects are dependent on L2 competence. That's why I have to try to learn English.* (Mary, LA, August 5, 2018).

Finally, since Cambodia is a place that attracts a large number of foreign visitors, many participants in both groups shared the sentiments of Kaly. They believed people from different countries used English as a lingua franca, so if they knew English, it would be useful for their communication. That was why they

have always dreamt of speaking English fluently, as shown in the following:

*There are many foreigners coming here for vacation and business. So in order to be able to communicate with them, I have to know English. It would be better if I could speak English fluently.* (Kaly, HA, August 4, 2018)

The last theme was related to students' environment such as family, friends, teachers, school and also the people around them. Family influence played a prominent role in students' motivation. Joe, HA, and Jonny, LA, shared similar ideas that people around them, especially their family members, could use English very well. They thought they were obliged to learn English to avoid any negative outcome for their future, as mentioned in the following:

*I saw my siblings speaking English so I want to learn too in order to have a good future like them* (Joe, HA, August 6, 2018).

*My brother is very good at English. I think I have to learn it too* (Jonny, LA, August 6, 2018).

Besides siblings, parental influence was also important. Traditionally, Cambodian children, of whatever age, are under their parents' control from the beginning of their lives. They have to be obedient, to study to obtain high social status as well as to gain the ability to find a future well-paid job, as in Jessy's case. Parents even choose the school subjects for them to study, as in Yale's case:

*My parents often say to me that studying English is important because educated people are supposed to be able to speak English. I took their advice* (Jessy, LA, August 4, 2018).

*It is my parents who enrolled me in a private school because they wanted to see me get good grades and I have to be obedient* (Yale, HA, August 4, 2018).

Some participants also felt that they had to be grateful and were afraid to go against their parents or family's desires. Participants like Tom felt that he would upset his parents if he failed English:

*If I don't study, my parents may be disappointed with me.*  
(Tom, LA, August 6, 2018)

Other factors affected students' motivation negatively. Consequently, they were demotivated. For example, traditional teaching methods were still being applied in their language classes. Some teachers only asked for translation of English words. Sam, LA, complained that he studied with books only and had almost no chance to practice in class. This made students passive and not want to study:

*I don't like the teacher's way of teaching because I sometimes cannot understand what he says. Also, the same techniques are used every day, so I feel very bored*  
(Sam, LA, 6 August 2018).

A combination of Khmer and English in class was not always supported by the participants who wanted to practice in class, especially by those who wished to become fluent speakers of English.

*All my classmates and sometimes teachers use Khmer in class. I don't get enough opportunities to practice English*  
(Luke, LA, 6 August 2018).

The lack of discipline in class was another negative factor. Students were allowed to go in and out of class during class time and sometimes they made noise in class.

*They don't really listen to the teachers. They always go to the toilet. When they are in class, they talk with one another while the teacher is teaching. It is very hard for me*

*to listen to the teacher and do the exercises* (Ka, HA, 6 August 2018).

Classroom temperature and technology support played a major role in helping students to study, but in this study we could see that participants did not get as much support as they expected.

*The classroom is a bit hot. Sometimes I cannot concentrate on my studies. I think all the classrooms should be equipped with some technology, such as LCDs or TVs to make the learning process more convenient.* (Soly, LA group, 5 August 2018)

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

To conclude, the study has discovered the different level of each component of L2MSS between HA and LA groups. IS had greater influences on HA. In other words, those motivated by IS acquired English better than their counterparts. A significant correlation between the IS and the HA's language proficiency was also found, while the LA's proficiency score was significantly but negatively correlated with OS and LE. Different reasons behind their motivation were raised by both groups.

The fact that LA were more affected by OS and the LE than their counterparts can be explained by the studies of Islam et al. (2013) and Papi (2010) who found that OS had the least effect on learning intended effort which, in turn, led to unsatisfied learning outcomes. On the contrary, HA had higher levels of IS than LA did. This demonstrates a higher role of IS for the HA in acquiring English. In the light of the studies on the psychology of education, IS was shown to be a powerful predictor of how much effort students put into language learning (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

IS among HA and their language proficiency were significantly and positively correlated, indicating that the higher the IS, the higher the English test scores the students could obtain. This is consistent with Kim and Kim' study (2014) which

found that the students who had the clearer IS performed better in acquiring language proficiency than their counterparts. Moreover, this study found no significant correlation between IS and language proficiency of LA. It might be because of the lack of the image for students to see and imagine themselves, and they do not have enough exposure to the use of English around the world or even within the country or somehow because of ineffective teaching techniques.

Among HA, the correlation between OS and LE as well as language proficiency was insignificant. However, among LA, there was a significant and negatively correlation, meaning that the higher the influence from OS, the lower the English test scores they obtained. The explanation for external factors such as parents (having gratitude, being afraid of going against parents' wishes and being obedient), anxiety, or negative learning experiences can hinder students' learning outcomes, as demonstrated in this study and the study of Taguchi et al. (2009). Papi (2010) discovered that OS increased anxiety and created negative outcomes. Moreover, LE such as teaching techniques, peers and inconvenient classroom atmosphere affected students negatively, thus leading the students' personal selves to be created, strengthened or removed (Dörnyei, 2009).

The participants in the study raised different reasons behind their motivations on English learning. HA were able to show their clear future image as fluent English speakers. Their L2 learning motivation might have been more internalized (such as representing the country or being a professional at work) than that of LA whose motivation was more as a result of parental influence. Both groups studied English also because of their need to communicate, for example, if they wished to travel abroad. According to Taguchi et al. (2009), one of the factors motivating Chinese and Japanese students is an interest in travelling and making friends with people from other language communities. This might indicate that the reasons for language learning nowadays are more practical, unlike participants in developing countries in the study conducted by Schmidt et al. (1996) who had

a fantasy motive to study English. Moreover, HA wanted to work in international companies or in any company where English is used. Their motivation was mostly from their own image, dream or satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with Lamb's (2012) who found that a positive vision of the experience of English acquisition was the strongest predictor of both motivated learning behavior and language proficiency. On the other hand, LA seemed to be more concerned about potential unemployment due to the lack of English proficiency, and their desire to avoid possible negative outcomes, an important characteristic of OS (Dörnyei, 2005).

### **Pedagogical Implications**

In light of the findings of the current study, teachers should try to encourage students, especially low achievers, to be able to view their own future self-image through activities that can stimulate them to construct their future self, for example, by teachers and students working together on how to set personal goals. Inviting role models to English class is one effective way to help activate their future vision (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). At the school or administrative level, the importance of motivation (L2MSS) for learning English should be instructive for teachers, who should take these factors into consideration when designing English language instructions or training courses. Finally, regular teacher training should be offered so that teachers can keep abreast with new teaching methodology, such as how to use L1 and technology effectively in EFL class. Motivational strategies can also be included in the training, for example, creating a comfortable and safe atmosphere in the classroom and formulating group rules as well as giving positive feedback and awards to learners.

### **Limitations and further studies**

There were some limitations in the study. First, the respondents were from only two private English schools in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, so it would be more generalizable if participants

were drawn from a larger number of private schools or public schools, with different levels of education. Second, future studies should take other factors such as age and gender into account to examine if they would also influence students' motivation in learning English. Also, a comparative study between private and public schools with the same level of education is suggested.

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**Appendix A: Quick Placement Test (QPT), version 2**

**Part 1**

**Questions 1-5**

Where can you see these notices?

For questions 1 to 5, circle one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet

**1. YOU CAN LOOK, BUT DON'T TOUCH THE PICTURE**

- A. in an office                      B. in a cinema                      C. in a museum

**2. PLEASE GIVE THE RIGHT MONEY TO THE DRIVER**

- A. in a bank                      B. on a bus                      C. in a cinema

**3. NO PARKING PLEASE**

- A. in a street                      B. on a book                      C. on a table

**4. CROSS BRIDGE FOR TRAINS TO EDINBURGH**

- A. in a bank                      B. in a garage                      C. in a station

**5. KEEP IN A COLD PLACE**

- A. on clothes                      B. on furniture                      C. on food

**Questions 6-10**

In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text below.

For questions 6 to 10, circle **one** letter **A**, **B**, or **C** on your Answer Sheet

**THE STARS**

There are millions of stars in the sky. If you look **(6)** .....the sky on a clear night, it is possible to see about 3000 stars. They look small, but they are really **(7)** .....big hot balls of burning gas. Some of them are huge, but others are much smaller, like our planet Earth. The biggest stars are very bright, but they only live for a short time. Every day new stars **(8)** .....born and old stars die. All the stars are very far away. The light from the nearest star takes more **(9)** .....four years to reach Earth. Hundreds of years ago, people **(10)** .....stars, like the North Star, to know which direction to travel in. Today you can still see that star.

- |            |         |          |
|------------|---------|----------|
| 6. A. at   | B. up   | C. on    |
| 7. A. very | B. too  | C. much  |
| 8. A. is   | B. be   | C. are   |
| 9. A. that | B. of   | C. than  |
| 10. A. use | B. used | C. using |

**Questions 11-15**

In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text  
 For questions 11 to 15, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

**Good smiles ahead for young teeth**

Older Britons are the worst in Europe when it comes to keeping their teeth. But British youngsters **(11)** .....more to smile about because **(12)** .....teeth are among the best. Almost 80% of Britons over 65 have lost all or some **(13)** .....their teeth according to a World Health Organization survey. Eating too **(14)** .....sugar is part of the problem. Among **(15)** ....., 12-year-olds have on average only three missing, decayed or filled teeth.

- |             |         |          |
|-------------|---------|----------|
| 11. A. at   | B. up   | C. on    |
| 12. A. very | B. too  | C. much  |
| 13. A. is   | B. be   | C. are   |
| 14. A. that | B. of   | C. than  |
| 15. A. use  | B. used | C. using |

**Questions 16-20**

**Christopher Columbus and the New World**

On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain to find a new route to India, China and Japan. At this time most people thought you would fall off the edge of the world if you sailed too far. Yet sailors such as Columbus had seen how a ship appeared to get lower and lower on the horizon as it sailed away. For Columbus this **(16)** .....that the world was round. He **(17)** .....to his men about the distance travelled each day. He did not want them to think that he did not **(18)** .....exactly where they were going. **(19)** ....., on October 12, 1492, Columbus and his men landed on a small island he named San Salvador. Columbus believed he was in Asia, **(20)** .....he was actually in the Caribbean.

- |             |             |            |           |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| 16. A. made | B. pointed  | C. was     | D. proved |
| 17. A. lied | B. told     | C. cheated | D. asked  |
| 18. A. find | B. know     | C. think   | D. expect |
| 19. A. Next | B. Secondly | C. Finally | D. Once   |
| 20. A. as   | B. but      | C. because | D. if     |

**Questions 21-30**

In this section, you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

For questions 21 to 40, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

21. The children won't go to sleep.....we leave a light on outside their bedroom

- A. except      B. otherwise      C. unless      D. but

22. I'll give you my spare keys in case you.....home before me.

- A. won't get      B. got      C. will get      D. get

23. My holiday in Paris gave me a great.....to improve my French accent.

- A. occasion      B. chance      C. hope      D. possibly

24. The singer ended the concert.....her most popular song.

- A. by      B. with      C. in      D. as

25. Because it had not rained for several months, there was a.....of water.

- A. shortage      B. drop      C. scare      D. waste

26. I've always.....you as my best friend.

- A. regarded      B. thought      C. meant      D. supposed

27. She came to live her.....a month ago.

- A. quite      B. beyond      C. already      D. almost

28. Don't make such a.....! The dentist is only going to look at your teeth.

- A. fuss      B. trouble      C. worry      D. reaction

29. He spent a long time looking for a tie which.....with his new shirt.

- A. fixed      B. made      C. went      D. wore

30. Fortunately, .....from a bump on the head, she suffered no serious injuries from her fall.

- A. other      B. except      C. besides      D. apart

**Questions 31-40**

31. She had changed so much that .....anyone recognized her.

- A. almost      B. hardly      C. not      D. nearly

32. ....teaching English, she also writes children's books.

- A. Moreover      B. As well as      C. In addition      D. Apart

33. It was clear that the young couple were.....of taking charge of the restaurant.

- A. responsible      B. reliable      C. capable      D. able

34. The book.....of ten chapters, each one covering a different topic.

- A. comprises      B. includes      C. consists      D. contains

35. Mary was disappointed with her new shirt as the color.....very quickly.  
A. bleached    B. died    C. vanished    D. faded
36. National leaders from all over the world are expected to attend the.....meeting.  
A. peak    B. summit    C. top    D. apex
37. Jane remained calm when she won the lottery and.....about her business as if nothing had happened.  
A. came    B. brought    C. went    D. moved
38. I suggest we.....outside the stadium tomorrow at 8.30.  
A. meeting    B. meet    C. met    D. will meet
39. My remarks were.....as a joke, but she was offended by them.  
A. pretended    B. thought    C. meant    D. supposed
40. You ought to take up swimming for the.....of your health.  
A. concern    B. relief    C. sake    D. cause

## Part 2

### Questions 41-45

In this section, you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text.  
For questions 41 to 45, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

#### CLOCKS

The clock was the first complex mechanical machinery to enter the home, **(41)** ..... it was too expensive for the **(42)**.....person until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when **(43)**.....production techniques lowered the price. Watches were also developed, but they **(44)** ..... luxury items until 1868, when the first cheap pocket watch was designed in Switzerland. Watches later became **(45)** .....available, and Switzerland became the world's leading watch manufacturing centre for the next 100 years.

41. A. despite    B. although    C. otherwise    D. average
42. A. average    B. medium    C. general    D. common
43. A. vast    B. large    C. wide    D. mass
44. A. lasted    B. endured    C. kept    D. remained
45. A. mostly    B. chiefly    C. greatly    D. widely

**Questions 46- 50**

In this section, you must choose the word which best fits each space in the texts.  
For questions 46 to 50, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

**Dublin City Walks**

What better way of getting to know a new city than by walking around it? Whether you choose the Medieval Walk, which will **(46)** ..... you to 1000 years ago, find out about the more **(47)** ..... history of the city on the Eighteenth Century Walk, or meet the ghosts of Dublin’s many writers on The Literary Walk, we know you will enjoy the experience.

Dublin City Walks **(48)** .....twice daily. Meet your guide at 10.30 a.m. or 2.30 p.m. at the Tourist Information Office. No advance **(49)** .....is necessary. Special **(50)** .....are available for families, children and parties of more than ten people.

- |                   |              |            |             |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| 46. A. introduce  | B. present   | C. move    | D. show     |
| 47. A. near       | B. late      | C. recent  | D. close    |
| 48. A. take place | B. occur     | C. work    | D. function |
| 49. A. playing    | B. reserving | C. warning | D. booking  |
| 50. A. funds      | B. costs     | C. fees    | D. rates    |

**Questions 51-60**

In this section, you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

For questions 51 to 60, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

51. If you’re not too tired we could have a.....of tennis after lunch.  
A. match                      B. play                      C. game                      D. party
52. Don’t you get tired.....watching TV every night?  
A. with                      B. by                      C. of                      D. at
53. Go on, finish the dessert. It needs.....up because it won’t stay fresh until tomorrow.  
A. eat                      B. eating                      C. to eat                      D. eaten
54. We’re not used to..... invited to very formal occasions.  
A. be                      B. have                      C. being                      D. having
55. I’d rather we..... meet this evening, because I’m very tired.  
A. wouldn’t                      B. shouldn’t                      C. hadn’t                      D. didn’t

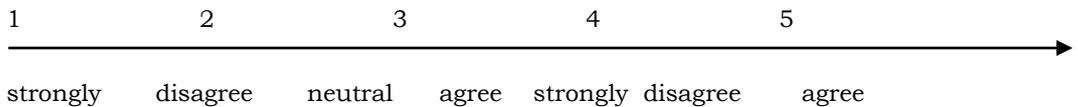
56. She obviously didn't want to discuss the matter so I didn't.....the point.  
 A. maintain                      B. chase                      C. follow                      D. pursue
57. Anyone.....after the start of the play is not allowed in until the interval.  
 A. arrives                      B. has arrived                      C. arriving                      D. arrive
58. This new magazine is .....with interesting stories and useful information.  
 A. full                      B. packed                      C. thick                      D. compiled
59. The restaurant was far too noisy to be.....to relaxed conversation.  
 A. conductive                      B. suitable                      C. practical                      D. fruitful
60. In this branch of medicine, it is vital to .....open to new ideas.  
 A. stand                      B. continue                      C. hold                      D. remain

**Appendix B: Questionnaire**

We would like to ask you to help us by participating in this survey to better understand the motivation of learners of English in Cambodia. This questionnaire is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your opinion. The results of this survey will be used only for research purposes so please give your answers sincerely to ensure the success of this project. Thank you very much for your help!

**PART 1: MOTIVATION**

In this part, we would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by simply circling a number from 1 to 5. Please do not leave out any items.



1. I imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would like to have more alternative activities in my English classes. (e.g. group speaking activities, oral presentations).	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I would like to have more English lessons at school.	1	2	3	4	5

7. I imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think time passes faster while studying English.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I imagine myself speaking English with international friends	1	2	3	4	5
10. Learning English is essential because people surrounding me expect me to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I find the topics covered in my English course book interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I think that English is an important school subject.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I find learning English really interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I volunteer answers in my English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The things I want to do in the future require me to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my family and teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
21. It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn English.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I consider that my teacher motivates me to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I love how I am taught in class.	1	2	3	4	5
26. If I fail to learn English, I'll be letting other people down.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I imagine myself speaking English fluently.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I like the atmosphere of my English class.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.	1	2	3	4	5

**PART 2: STUDENT PROFILE**

Please put “√” in the circle and write your answer in the space provide.

1. Gender:

- male                       female

2. Age: .....

3. School name:

- Universal English School (UES)                       Singapore International School (SIS)

4. Level in English school: .....

5. Grade in state school: .....

6. The year I started learning English: .....

7. Name in Facebook: .....

8. To me, learning English is .....

- boring                       interesting                       exciting                       useful  
 useless                       other (please specify) .....

9. Activities I do outside class:

- watch TV in English                       play games in English                       talk to tourists  
 Chat online with friends in English                       Other (please specify) .....

10. Materials I use to help to learn English:

- dictionary                       book                       computer software                       audio-tape  
 internet                       other (please specify) .....

**PART 3: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION**

Why do you choose to study English?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### **Appendix C: Interview Form**

#### Background Information

1. What is your level of English?
2. When did you start learning English?

#### Relevance of English studies and motivation

1. Why do you choose to study English?
2. What do you want to be in the future? Why?
3. How do you feel when you are learning English? Why?
4. To what degree are you committed to learn English? Please give example.
5. What is your goal of learning English? Why?
6. Is there anyone who motivates you to study English? How?
7. Who has been the most influential person in your English learning?  
Why?
8. What is your most pleasant memory as a language learner? Why?
9. What is your most unpleasant memory as a language learner? Why?
10. How do you feel about your EFL teacher(s)?
11. How do you feel about your EFL classmates?
12. How do you feel about the way English is taught?
13. What is your expected English level at the school? Why?
14. What tools do you use to help you learn English? (e.g., materials such as dictionaries, books, computer software, audio-tapes) How and Why?
15. What do you usually do outside class? Do you have opportunities to communicate in English? Why?