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Measuring Motivation in English Schools: The Appeal of Self-Determination Theory

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ABSTRACT

Much SDT research in the language learning domain focuses on the learning of English as a second or foreign language, in many cases by undergraduate students. By contrast, our work focuses on adolescent learners (aged between 11 and 16) of what are termed Modern Foreign Languages—languages other than English—in schools in England. In this context, school-level policy means that language learning is often optional for students beyond the age of 14, and this optionality makes motivation critical. In this article, we suggest that Self-Determination Theory provides a suitable framework for measuring the motivation of such students and compare it with the well-known Second Language Motivation Self-System (L2MSS) developed by Dörnyei. We draw on data from two large-scale studies of school students in England (N_1 = 666; N_2 = 1797), the first to use the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Academic) in this context, and a smaller pilot study (N = 338), similarly the first to use the L2MSS in this context, and argue that SDT provides a more useful lens for studying motivation in English schools. As the L2MSS relies heavily on the learner's Ideal Self, a version of themselves who can communicate competently in the target language, we argue that it is not suitable for use with learners in this context, although there is scope to incorporate some elements of it. SDT's lack of focus on the target language community, which is not always within reach for students, allows it to better access students' motivation for study. We consider the implications for future studies of student motivation in an English context, as well as other Anglophone settings.

Keywords: secondary education, modern foreign languages, motivation, self-determination theory, young learners

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the power of self-determination theory (SDT) to measure motivation in compulsory settings, specifically schools. We focus particularly on schools in England, but suggest that conclusions may extend to other Anglophone nations. We consider these settings to be of particular importance and interest for a number of reasons.

Firstly, school learners are under-researched. Much, but by no means all, of the language learning literature focuses on undergraduate or adult learners, who have often chosen to undertake language study. Where young or adolescent learners are the focus, they are almost exclusively learners of English (exceptions include Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Henry, 2010). Conversely, the research that has focused on school-age learners in England has tended to be atheoretical in nature (Chambers, 1999; Coleman et al., 2007; Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Williams et al., 2002).

Secondly, school learners in England are a distinct group and findings from other groups of participants cannot automatically be generalized to them. For example, participants taking an elective course are unlikely to be motivated in the same way as participants taking a compulsory course; learners of English are unlikely to be motivated in the same way as native speakers of English learning another language. Where learners are not surrounded by speakers of the target language, and may only be exposed to it in the classroom, as in our context, motivation may be very different when compared with second-language learners living in the target language community (Dörnyei, 1990; McEown, Noels, & Chaffee, 2014; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

Thirdly, we feel that schools form their own distinct environments, where languages, particularly in the lower years, or grades, are considered as subjects of study in the same way as, for example, science or history. Learners of history as a school subject do not necessarily plan to become historians, or to use historical knowledge or skills in their future lives or careers; neither do learners of French necessarily envisage themselves using the language after finishing the course (see Stables & Wikeley, 1999). This notion has been explored most recently by Al-Hoorie & Hiver (2020), who found that high school students' motivation to learn maths could be measured using the same instrument as motivation to learn a second or third language.

With this in mind, we report here on three studies using two different motivational frameworks to consider how research in this area can progress effectively and contribute to our understanding of this distinct group of learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our Context

We focus our attention on schools in England. It is not appropriate to refer to schools in the UK as a whole, as England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all have their own curriculum policies and treat foreign language learning differently. In English schools, language learning is set against both a complicated policy background and the complexities of the phenomenon of global English.

The policy context is both critical to motivation, and extremely complex. The national curriculum in England outlines what should be taught in local authority-maintained state schools, but is not compulsory in academies, which are funded by the state in a different way. Nevertheless, the twin demands of the school accountability and exam systems mean that the national curriculum is followed by the overwhelming majority of schools of all kinds. The document sets out that schools must teach a foreign language at Key Stage two, which covers the 7-11 age group, and more specifically a *modern* foreign language in Key Stage three; that is, from ages 11-14 (Long et al., 2020, p. 4). In 2004 modern foreign languages were deemed to no longer be core subjects for Key Stage four students (aged 14-16) at the level of national policy, resulting in these languages becoming non-compulsory for this age group in many schools, although individual schools remain able to determine their own curriculum policy. Where the subject is optional, students have been found to perceive low value in the subject (Chambers, 1999; Coleman et al., 2007; Fisher, 2011). Predictably, in the wake of this decision, take-up of languages at exam level has declined (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018). Slightly stemming this decline has been the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measure, introduced in 2011, which measures school performance based on the proportion of pupils sitting exams at age 16 in a core of five academic subjects including a foreign language, but despite this possible incentive, around half of pupils do not sit a GCSE in the subject (Tinsley & Doležal, 2018).

Global English

English is generally considered a global lingua franca (Graddol, 2006), increasingly not only associated with Anglophone nations, but also learned around the world for its trans-national communicative value (Cha & Ham, 2010). Although the rise of English as a lingua franca does not automatically mean that native speakers of English will revert to monolingualism as a default (Lanvers, 2017), the view that there is "no point" learning other languages is widely expressed (Lanvers, 2012; McPake et al., 1999); English is seen as "enough" (East, 2009; Group of Eight, 2007; Lanvers, 2017; Lo Bianco, 2014). As instrumental language learning often involves learning the language of those who have more power than the learner (Wright, 2016), given the global communicative value of English, for English speakers, the status of the language can encourage a notion of linguistic superiority and the idea that the learning of other languages is redundant (Anderson, 2000).

Given that in international communication terms being a native speaker of English can mean that the utilitarian value of learning other languages is low (Bartram, 2006; Lo Bianco, 2014; Taylor & Marsden, 2014), more importance is transferred to the classroom experience (Chambers, 1999) and curriculum (Fisher, 2001). Across the Anglophone nations, language learning is arguably at crisis point (Berman, 2011; Group of Eight, 2007; Lanvers & Coleman 2013; Tinsley & Board, 2017a; 2017b). All these factors combine to emphasize the importance of language learning motivation in Anglophone contexts.

Language Learning Motivation in English Schools

In light of this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that previous studies in England have found motivation to be problematic at secondary level (Bartram, 2006; Chambers, 1999; Coleman et al., 2007; Fisher, 2001; McPake et al.,1999; Williams et al., 2002). Although Graham et al. (2016; see also Courtney, 2017) found that motivation, conceptualized as self-efficacy and attitudes towards the language learned, generally increased on the transition between primary and secondary school, typical features of secondary-level language learning such as writing, repetition and testing proved unpopular and students were least confident in their abilities to converse with "a real French person". This seemed to undermine their perceptions of the main purpose in language learning, which was found to be to travel abroad.

To date two studies have been conducted in an English context using SDT (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019; Parrish et al., in preparation). The first found that motivation was strongly linked to choice (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019) and the second investigated links between motivation and need satisfaction in different secondary year groups, finding that autonomy satisfaction mediated motivation, and finding variations across the year groups (Parrish et al., in preparation).

This paper reports what we believe to be the first study using Dörnyei's second language (L2) Motivational Self-System to study motivation in this context and draws on this alongside data from studies using Self-Determination Theory to consider the characteristics of an effective framework to measure motivation in an Anglophone school context. Certain characteristics of Self-Determination Theory are described below, but readers unfamiliar with the theory are referred to the editorial of this special issue for a more detailed overview.

Conceptualizing Motivation

It is generally recognized that motivation in language learning results from both a learner's internal psychological motives and the external influence of the learning environment (Davis, 2020). Different theories of motivation conceptualize this in different ways; for example, whilst in their socio-educational model Gardner & Lambert (1959) conceptualized language learning as being either instrumental, that is oriented towards the practical and utilitarian benefits, or integrative, that is oriented towards integrating with the target language community, Dörnyei (2005) conceptualizes it within the L2 motivational self-system as being focused on possible future selves, specifically the ideal and ought-to selves. These possible selves were drawn from Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory. Higgins proposed that the ideal self is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you to ideally possess, such as hopes and aspirations (Higgins, 1987, p. 320). The ought-to L2 self "concerns attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 29).

The L2MSS has become prominent in the field of L2 motivation, as evident in its use with learners of English in various countries around the world including China (You & Dörnyei, 2016), Japan (Saito et al., 2018), Hungary (Csizér & Tankó, 2017), and Spain (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). Its popularity is said to be due to its simplicity and adaptability to different contexts (e.g., Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2021), and it has also been used with undergraduate learners of German in England (Busse & Williams, 2010), adult learners of Japanese in Ireland (Kam Kwok & Carson, 2018), school age learners of LOTEs in Sweden (Henry, 2010), high school learners of English and German in Hungary (Csizér & Lukács, 2010) and high school and undergraduate learners of German in Poland (Okuniewski, 2014). Nevertheless, "the undisputed hegemony of Global English has overshadowed the study of languages other than English" (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017, p. 455; see also Boo et al., 2015).

The L2MSS was designed to take into consideration the role of English as a global language in light of the notion that learners do not always have the intention to connect with and integrate into a host community (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; McEown, Noels, & Chaffee, 2014; Taie & Afshari, 2015), something which also applies in other contexts, such as classical language learners (Katz et al., 2020). Measuring the motivation of some modern foreign language learners may also be benefitted by an analytic framework that considers that interacting with a target language community might not carry strong motivational forces in all societal contexts (McEown, Noels, & Chaffee, 2014), taking into account "identification with a projected future image within the person's self-concept, rather than identification with an external reference group such as the L2 community" (Dörnyei, 2019a, p. xx).

The motivations of foreign and second language learners are heterogeneous, in that integrative motivation is far less relevant for foreign language learners. Second language learners live in the target language country and generally have more opportunities to integrate with the target language community (whether these are taken up or not) than do foreign language learners, who often lack such opportunities, limiting the motivating effects of integrating with the target language group. For foreign language learners, instrumental goals are said to contribute significantly more to motivation than integrative ones, and intellectual motives may hold a special importance

(Dörnyei, 1990), particularly at the lower levels. Matsumoto and Obana (2001) found that integrative motivation amongst Australian learners of Japanese was generated when students reach higher levels of proficiency, when students have more opportunities to have meaningful interactions with speakers of the language.

Previous research indicates that to be successful in language learning, a strong ideal L2 self is necessary for motivation (Thompson & Vásquez, 2015). Due to this, when using the L2MSS, researchers tend to assesses the participants' initial ideal L2 self and then implement interventions designed to strengthen this dimension of the L2MSS, providing insights for language pedagogy (e.g., Mackay, 2014; Magid & Chan, 2012). The ought-to self is not investigated as often, as studies show it does not seem to have much of an effect on language learning motivation (Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) suggest considering the Vygotskyian perspective on the nature of self as an argument for strengthening the ought-to self for young learners, as future selves may not be fully developed in young learners (Dörnyei, 2009; McEown, Noels, & Saumure, 2014), raising the question of to what extent the L2MSS can access young learners' motivation. Vygotsky (1991) explains that a child's cultural development and formation of concepts appears twice, or in two planes. First it appears externally between people as a social inter-psychological plane where the child is exposed to cultures and concepts. Then the individual may take on board the social interaction through a process of internalization in which the social experience may become psychological (p. 43). The ought-to L2 self reflects an external social plane (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), and thus if a student's ought-to self prevails, the attributes the individual believes one ought to possess to meet expectations may gradually become internalized and become a psychological plane, integrated into their ideal L2 self. For example, a student's desire to keep a positive relationship with, and avoid disappointing, the language teacher who has taught them over a period of years may, over time, result in them viewing their teacher as a role model for their language learning, someone whose proficiency in the L2 they would like to emulate, and towards whom they create an integrative disposition (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2006). Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) explain how a supportive relationship with a teacher is a key feature distinguishing adolescents who are successful in

school. Adolescents with higher levels of teacher support have higher levels of peer acceptance and classroom engagement than those in less supportive classrooms (Pianta et al., 2012).

In contrast to the L2MSS (and indeed Gardner & Lambert's socio-educational model), as a broad theory of motivation, self-determination theory does not draw on feelings specifically relating to the target language or the target language community, or even the subject of study, but considers motivation to depend on orientations towards the specific activity undertaken. Indeed, the framework is used in a wide range of domains not limited to education, including sport, medicine and business (see https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/). Within the framework, motivation can be either autonomous (originating within the self) or controlled (arising from extrinsic factors). Autonomous motivation is considered the more sustainable, and consists of both identified and intrinsic regulation (see Table 1). Controlled motivation is made up of constructs less aligned with one's internal values, namely external and introjected regulation, and these constructs form a continuum from less to more self-determined (autonomous).

Although not a focus of this paper, also a factor in motivation within self-determination theory is the satisfaction of what are known as basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). There are three such needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness, and studies have shown a link between the satisfaction of these needs and autonomous

motivation (Carreira et al., 2013; McEown, Noels, & Saumure, 2014; Noels, 2013) as well as positive outcomes such as engagement (Jang et al., 2009; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017) and continuation behavior (Davis, 2020).

Despite their different approaches, there are areas of crossover between the two theories; indeed, as noted by Noels et al. (2020), "SDT offers important insights into LL [language learning] motivation, but existing LL motivation scholarship could also inform and extend SDT" (p. 108). The ought-to self, as conceptualized within the L2MSS, is to some extent aligned with controlled motivation within Self-Determination theory, which is characterized by acting due to external pressures, although the latter theory does not consider possible selves. More specifically it is congruent with introjected regulation (McEown, Noels, & Chaffee, 2014) which is "a controlling motivational regulation in which people act due to internal pressures that are regulated by contingent self-esteem" (Gillison et al., 2009, p. 309). By contrast, although the ideal self within the L2MSS relates specifically to language learning, it aligns to some extent with autonomous motivation as posited by SDT, in that it is a motivation coming from values held and internalized by the learner (Nishida, 2013). To illustrate this point, Table 1 gives sample items from the L2MSS (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; You et al., 2015) and SDT, taken from the Self-Regulation Questionnaire–Academic (SRQ-A; Ryan & Connell, 1989), used in both the SDT studies drawn on in this paper.

Table 1. *Links between L2MSS and SDT Constructs*

L2MSS Construct	Item	SRQ-A Construct	Item
Ought-to self	I have to study [language], because, otherwise, I think my parents will be disappointed with me	External regulation	That's what I'm supposed to do
	Studying [language] is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of [language]	Introjected regulation	I'll feel proud of myself if I do well
Ideal-self	I can imagine myself speaking [language] like a native speaker	Identified regulation	I want to understand the subject
	I can imagine myself understanding [language] movies/songs/news very well	Intrinsic motivation	I enjoy it

We can see, then, that there are similarities between the two frameworks. We can also see differences, which are key when considering the motivation of language students in schools who are learning in a compulsory setting. The L2MSS items focus on the language being learned, and through that the skills developed and the language itself. By contrast, the SDT items focus on the learning and how it feels to engage with particular tasks, which we argue makes it ideal for learners who have not chosen the subject. There is little research which considers the ways that interaction with a target language community supports motivation (Noels et al., 2020); exceptions include Noels et al. (2019) and Csizér and Kormos (2008).

Contextual Factors

As well as a student's own internal motivation, both the L2MSS and SDT take into account the context in which the learning takes place. In the L2MSS, this is conceptualized as the L2 learning experience; in SDT the supporting or thwarting of basic psychological needs is key. The creation of a need-supporting classroom environment is linked to students' self-determined motivation (Noels, 2013).

Link between Motivation and Engagement

Whilst motivation is a "private, unobservable psychological, neural, and biological process" (Reeve, 2012, p. 151), engagement is the "publicly observable behavior" (Reeve, 2012, p. 151) which arises from it; a crucial element of language learning which teachers can directly observe in their classrooms (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017). Oga-Baldwin & Nakata describe engagement as "a state and process involving alert focus, positive orientation toward the language, and willingness to initiate social language use" (2017, p. 152); it is the outcome of the "potential energy" held in a student's motivation (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017, p. 142). A student's learning behavior is dependent on the context in which the learning takes place, supported or thwarted by the environment and the teacher as well as a student's own motivation (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017; Reeve, 2012). Motivation at the end of the school year has been found to depend on both motivation at the start of the year and the learning experience (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017; Reeve, 2012).

Developing this idea further, self-determined motivation to learn a language has been linked to continuation behavior (Noels et al., 2000). Davis (2020) notes that "beyond engagement, performance and achievement, persistence is another substantial positive outcome of basic psychological need fulfilment and autonomous motivation" (p. 4). Where the subject is optional, in our case beyond the age of 14, it is important to consider the conditions which are likely to encourage continuation behavior beyond this "critical point" (Vallerand et al., 1997, p. 1163), which include the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Davis, 2020; Evans & Liu, 2018) as well as autonomously regulated motivation (Davis, 2020; Noels et al., 1999). An interest in the target language culture and a recognition of the instrumental value of language learning have also been identified as important drivers of continuation behavior (Ramage, 1990, cited in Davis, 2020).

Within the L2MSS, the L2 Learning Experience is less well theorized than the two possible selves. Dörnyei notes that it was originally used as an umbrella term created with the intention of fine tuning it in the future, but that this fine-tuning has not taken place (Dörnyei, 2019b). Recently, Dörnyei has proposed that adopting an engagement-specific perspective offers direction for understanding the broad concept of the L2 Experience. Specifically, he suggests this may include learner engagement with school context, syllabus, learning tasks, one's peers, and the teacher (Dörnyei, 2019b).

THE CURRENT STUDY

This paper draws on findings from three studies; two grounded in SDT and one using the L2MSS. We use the findings to address the research question "how suitable are the L2MSS and SDT in measuring student motivation in a compulsory school language learning setting?". The students across all studies span the secondary age range, from 11-16, and are used here as illustrative (if not representative) of secondary school language learners in England. The comparatively wide age range and heterogeneity of sample sizes means that the findings should be taken as in initial illustration of the utility of the two approaches to student motivation and starting point for further work.

Study 1

Students learning Spanish in two secondary schools (see Table 2) took part in an online language learning motivation questionnaire which involved completing a series of Likert scales consisting of items measuring the ideal self *own* and ideal self *others* (6 items), and the ought-to self *own* and *others* (6 items). The L2 learning experience was not measured.

Items in this study were adapted from instruments used in a range of previous studies (Taguchi et al., 2009; Teimouri, 2017, Tseng et al., 2020, You et al., 2016) and edited to refer specifically to Spanish and Spanish-speaking countries (see Table 3 for sample items).

Studies 2 and 3

Data from two studies (see Parrish & Lanvers, 2019; Parrish, Zhang, & Noels, forthcoming for full details) have been combined for analysis here. Study 2 ($N = 666$) used a condensed 10-item version of the SRQ-A (Ryan & Connell, 1989) consisting of two or three items for each of the four types of regulation to measure students' motivation towards their language lessons, and Study 3 ($N = 1772$) used the full form of the SRQ-A (32 items), alongside the Amotivation subscale of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1989). Both questionnaires were completed online. Table 2 gives details of the participants.

Table 2. *Participants in the Three Studies*

Age	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	Total *N*
Study 1	98	115	77	48		338
Study 2				666		666
Study 3	576	552	407	107	130	1772

Table 3. *Sample Response Items of the L2MSS*

	The Ideal self		Ought-to self	
	Ideal self *own*	Ideal self *others*	Ought-to self *own*	Ought-to self *others*
Representing	The attributes one hopes or aspires to possess	The attributes one believes others would like him or her, ideally, to possess	The attributes one feels one should or ought to possess	The attributes one should or ought to possess because others expect it.
Sample responses	I can imagine myself speaking Spanish with international friends or colleagues.	I can imagine a day that people around me admire my high Spanish proficiency.	I must learn Spanish, otherwise I will have difficulties finding a job in the future.	Learning Spanish is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
	I can imagine myself understanding Spanish movies/songs/news very well.	I can imagine a day that people around me will be impressed with my ability to understand the news/songs in Spanish and to be able to watch movies without Spanish subtitles.	I think that I should be able to easily converse with others in Spanish.	Studying Spanish is important to me in order to make my family proud.

Table 4. *The Self-Determination Continuum and Sample Response Items*

Type of motivation	Amotivation	Controlled		Autonomous	
Type of regulation	Non-regulation	External	Introjected	Identified	Intrinsic
Characterized by	Lack of intent, lack of value placed on outcome	Compliance, seeking external rewards, avoiding external punishments	Self-control, allocation of internal rewards & punishments	Personal importance, conscious valuing of outcome	Interest, enjoyment, inherent satisfaction
Items	I try to avoid it, it's a waste of time.	That's what I'm supposed to do.	I'll feel bad about myself if I don't do well.	I want to understand the subject.	It's fun.
	I don't know, I don't see the point.	I might get a reward if I do well.	I will feel proud of myself if I do well.	It's important to me.	I enjoy it.

Note. Adapted from Parrish & Lanvers (2019)

Table 4 shows sample items from the instruments used in Studies 2 and 3 and their relationship with the self-determination continuum.

RESULTS

In order to explore the utility of the two approaches in a secondary school setting, we first considered the spread of responses across the three studies. In study 1, the mean scores for the ideal L2 self and the ought-to self were calculated and ranged between 2.05 and 2.58 (see Table 5). As the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree) with a mid-point of 3 (neither agree nor disagree), these scores indicate that overall the responses for both constructs tended towards disagree, with participants being the most motivated by the ought-to self *own* items, and least by items relating to the ought to self *others*.

In studies 2 and 3, mean scores ranged from 1.56 to 2.90 on a four-point scale (*not at all true* to *very true*; see Table 6). This wider spread suggests that the scale was able to differentiate between more and less motivating constructs in a way which the scale in study 1 was not.

Table 5. *Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Study 1 Responses*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Ideal self *own*	1009	1	5	2.50	1.05
Ideal self *other*	1008	1	5	2.50	1.07
Ought-to self *own*	1011	1	5	2.58	1.04
Ought-to self *other*	1007	1	5	2.05	.99

Table 6. *Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Combined Study 2 and 3 Responses*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Amotivation[a]	1544	1	4	1.56	.69
External regulation	1986	1	4	2.70	.64
Introjected regulation	1991	1	4	2.59	.69
Identified regulation	1979	1	4	2.90	.74
Intrinsic motivation	1987	1	4	2.31	.86

[a] Study 3 only

Figure 1. *Responses to the Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self Items in Study 1*
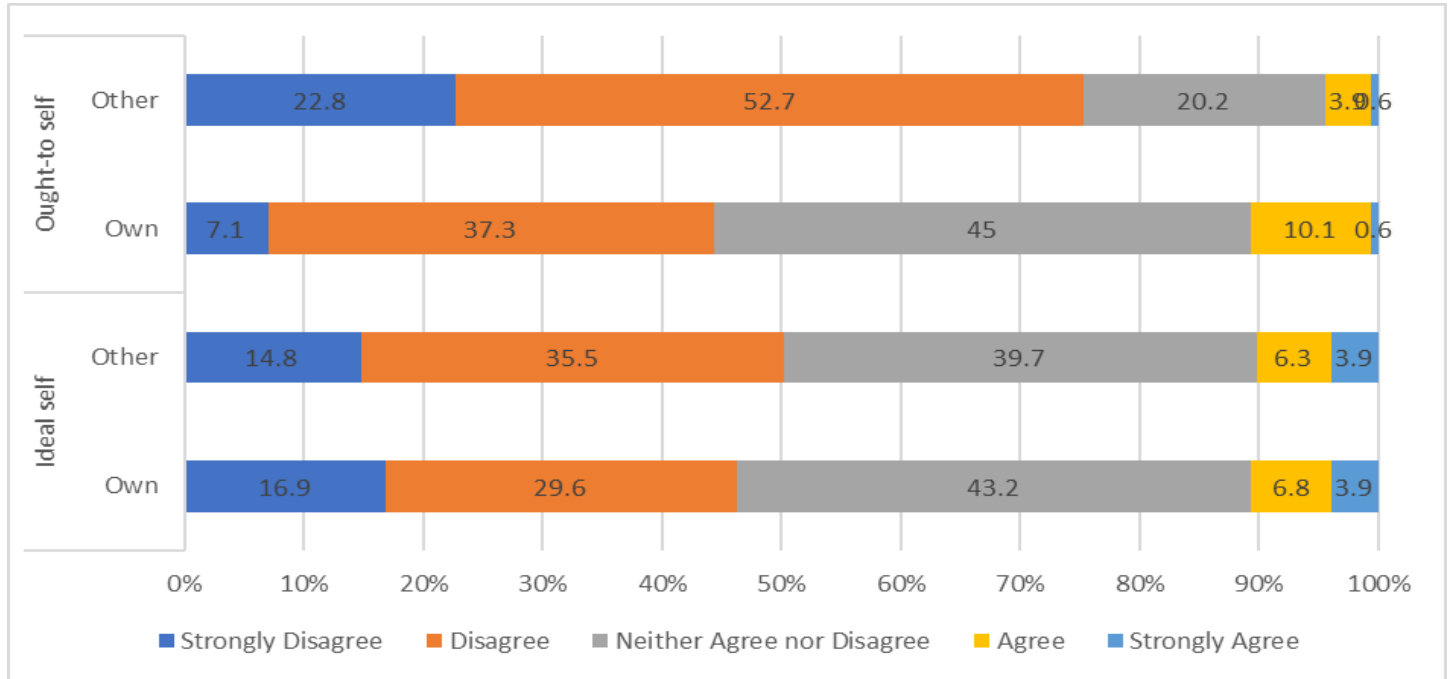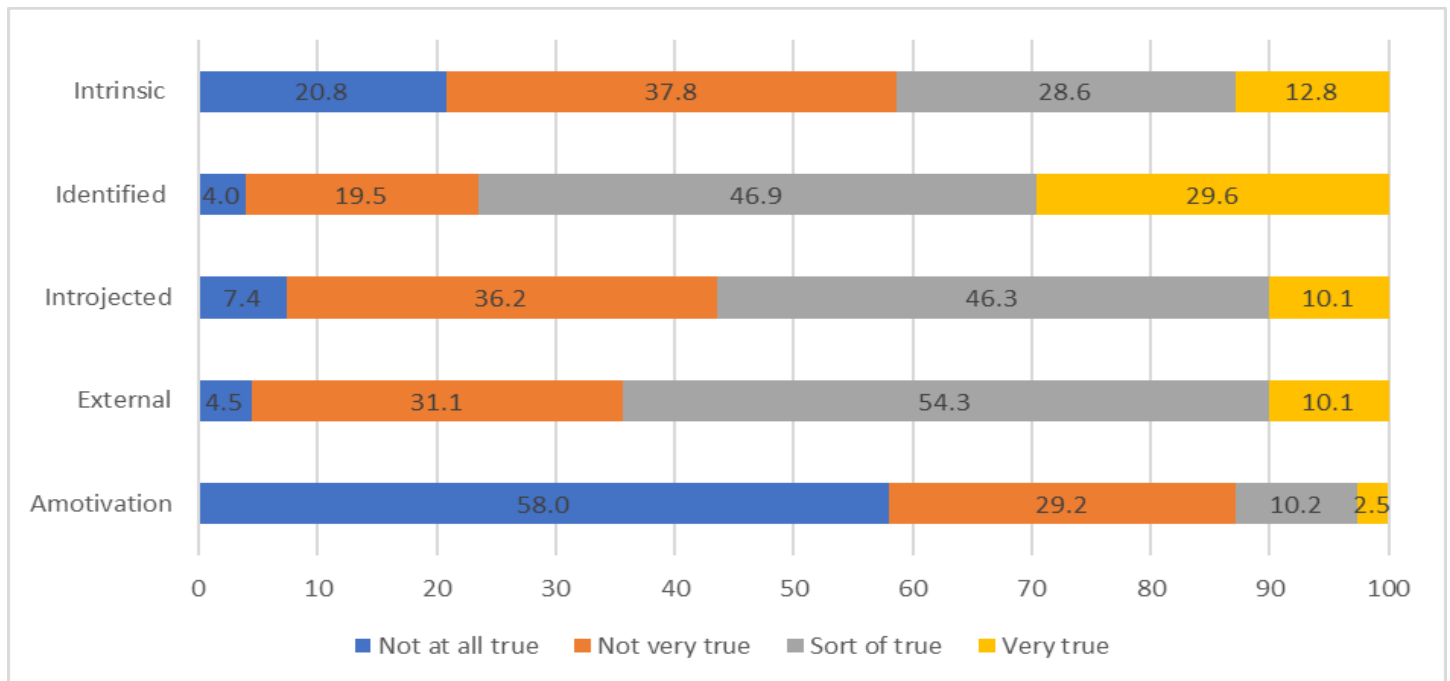

**Figure 2.** *Responses to the SRQ-A and AMS Items*

We subsequently calculated the percentage of responses for each point on the scale, presented graphically in Figures 1 and 2. It is clear from the Figures that *strongly agree* was little-used in Study 1, with responses clustered around points 2 and 3 on the scale (*disagree* and *neither agree nor disagree*); by contrast in studies 2 and 3 the distribution of responses was wider and used more all four points on the scales, particularly for autonomous forms of regulation and amotivation.

Given the clustering of scores around what could be termed the ambivalent midpoint of the scale in study 1, it may be that these students were not terribly motivated in their language lessons. The amotivation subscale of the AMS used in Study 3 is used to measure this, but as can be seen in Figure 3, scores suggest that students in these studies did not tend to be amotivated towards their language learning, with only 12.7% of students indicating that these reasons were very true or sort of true for them. Students across studies 2 and 3 were most likely to be motivated by identified reasons (such as wanting to understand the subject or feeling it was of personal importance to them); 76.5% of students indicated that this was very true or sort of true for them.

The nature of the SRQ-A and AMS measures means that students can indicate that controlled and autonomous motivators are equally true, should they choose to do so. Indeed, students in studies 2 and 3 were motivated by both autonomous and controlled reasons. This is further illustrated in Figure 3, which shows a remarkably even split between the two types of regulation. We attribute this to the nature of language learning in the English school context. Because the subject is one of many in the curriculum, it is natural, we argue, that students be motivated by both autonomous and controlled reasons, as school is a "controlled" environment where many things are done "because that's what you are supposed to do" or "to avoid getting in trouble," even when they may also be things which are enjoyed.

Figure 3. *Responses by Type of Motivation*
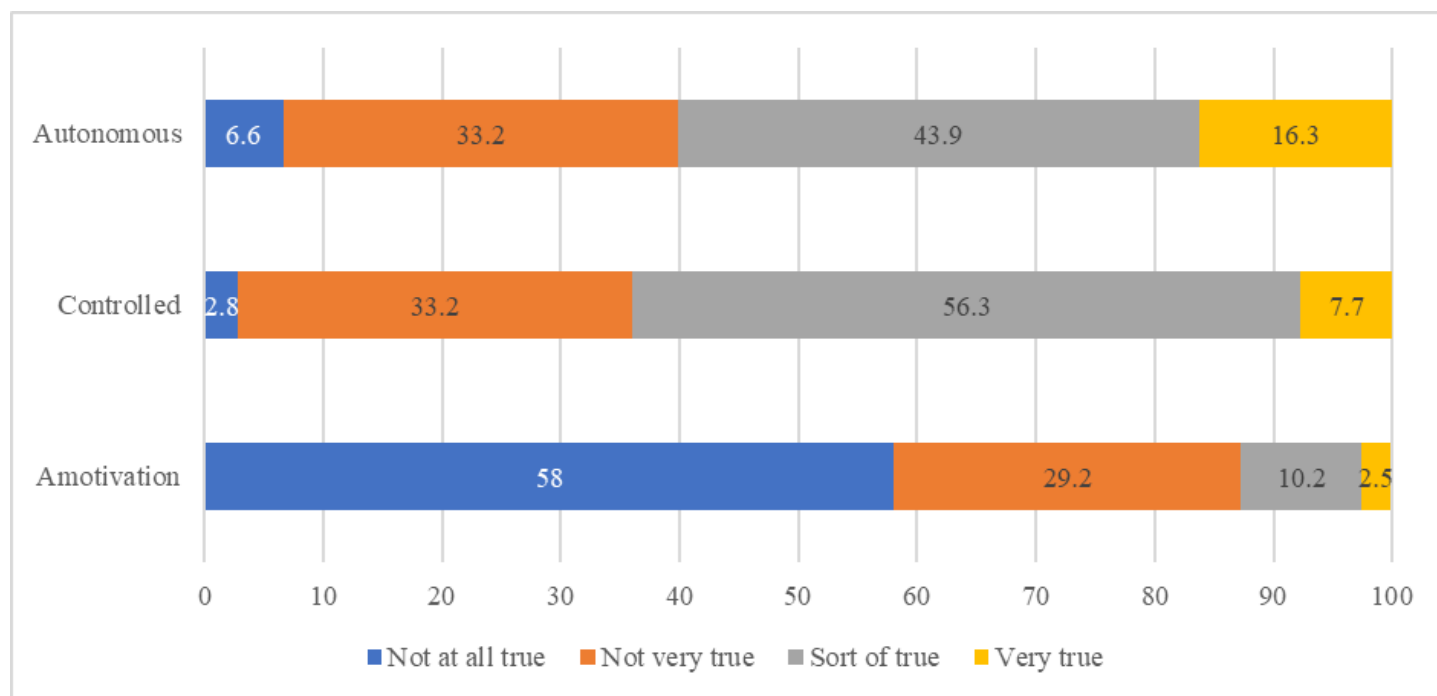
DISCUSSION

This paper set out to establish the comparative utility of two different motivational frameworks, the L2MSS and SDT, to measure student motivation in language lessons in English secondary schools. While the L2MSS accesses language-related motivations (for example relating to engagement with target language communities or future plans) and as such is widely-used within the language learning motivation literature, its use tends to be focused

on the learning of (global) English. By contrast, the SDT instruments used here do not access language-related motivations but rather focus on the here-and-now aspect of school-level learning, and when used in language learning have been used with a wide range of languages. We argue that its generality makes it a particularly conceptually useful framework for studying adolescent learners' motivation, particularly where learners have not been able to choose whether or not to engage in the study,

and where they consequently may not have language-related motivations.

Our data show that secondary school students in England learning modern foreign languages may not be able to accurately describe their motivation using the L2MSS, as evidenced by the clustering of scores around the ambivalent mid-point on all items, suggesting general low levels of motivation overall. In effect, the L2MSS did not reveal much about what is actually motivating the students, who are engaged in language learning and as such must be motivated by something to undertake the work, even though they may not have chosen to undertake the study in the first place. By contrast, the SRQ-A and AMS items used here seem to better capture student motivation, as seen in the spread of responses in Figures 2 and 3.

We argue that this is due to the nature of language learning in this context, which is more akin to the learning of any other school subject for many learners, rather than something that they are pursuing for integrative or even instrumental goals. The low level of amotivation identified in Study 3 further suggests that the ambivalent scores seen in Study 1 may not represent the low levels of motivation that they first appear to, but rather a low level of *language-related* motivation, adding support to the notion that the L2MSS is not a suitable framework for this context where young learners' self-concepts may not be fully formed.

The fact that students do not report being amotivated is, to some extent a surprising finding in light of the low take-up of the subject at examination level (see for example Tinsley & Doležal, 2020) and perceptions of disaffection in the subject (Coleman et al., 2007; Coleman, 2009). Findings from other studies suggest that rather than a lack of motivation, it may be a lack of basic psychological need support which is causing this disaffection (Davis, 2020), although this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Items in Study 1 referred to the participants' attitudes towards the target language community which resulted in low scores that may suggest it is too soon to ask these secondary school students to conceptualize their integrative motivation. The students may not yet have developed this complex idea within the ideal self, and so when analyzing adolescents' language motivation, items

may more usefully focus on the day-to-day motivation which they can easily express.

The motivation literature suggests that younger learners are less likely to have internalized views regarding the importance of studying particular topics or that the ought-to self is not sufficiently motivating in childhood (Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Our study found a lack of strong opinions in the responses overall, which may similarly suggest the participants have not previously discussed or considered their views on language motivation in depth and have not had adequate time to develop their beliefs. Research shows that explicit advocacy can improve students' perceived personal relevance of modern foreign languages (Taylor & Marsden, 2014). This can be seen in language motivation interventions such as that reported by Lanvers (2020), where the participants' pre-intervention arguments for studying a MFL were intrinsic and instrumental reasons of travel, education and professional career plans (p. 589). Following the intervention the participants began providing much deeper reflections on possible uses for languages beyond the functional (Lanvers, 2020). Feasibly, more explicit advocacy early on may support students in becoming more self-aware, and their perceptions of language learning may strengthen.

CONCLUSION

Our findings begin to suggest that the L2MSS may not be the best-suited framework for measuring student motivation in their language lessons in a school setting, and that SDT appears to do a better job of capturing this. Nevertheless, although we have suggested that many school-level learners in an English context are not motivated by language-related reasons, this of course is not a universal truth; Parrish & Lanvers (2019) and Taylor and Marsden (2014) both showed that students in these settings can be motivated by specific language-related reasons. Established motivation instruments within Self-Determination Theory do not allow us to capture language learning-related reasons for engaging with study, and as such we suggest that rather than considering SDT as an optimum framework, there is scope for including language-related constructs in instruments used in these settings, focusing on integration and intercultural

elements particularly (McEown, Noels, & Saumure, 2014). These may come from the L2MSS, from other instruments or be developed for the purpose, and will help in developing a suitable instrument to accurately and fully tap into student motivation in a compulsory Anglophone school setting.

Authors' contributions

Both authors contributed to all stages of the design, data collection, analysis, drafting and approval of this paper.

Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate

The studies reported here were approved by the appropriate university research ethics committees. All participants provide written informed consent prior to data collection.

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