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Relevance of goal theories to language learning research

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ABSTRACT

As the need to acquire a second/foreign language has increased steadily, a growing body of research has investigated the role of motivation in language education. In this review, we focus on the goal construct, which plays a critical regulatory function in motivational processes. We provide an overview of the two most widely accepted goal theories in motivation literature, the goal-setting and achievement goal theories, and then introduce relevant empirical findings that demonstrate the applicability of these theories to language learning research. We also introduce general motivation theories with a significant bearing on the goal construct, including self-determination theory, future time perspective, and mindset theory. We end this review with the theoretical and practical implications of goal theories in language education and research.

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1. Introduction

In the field of language education, there has been increasing interest in the role of motivation as a key driver of success because its effects often override that of aptitude or external learning conditions (for a review, see [Cotterall, 1999](#); [Dörnyei, 1998](#); [Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995](#)). Motivation in second/foreign language (L2) learning promotes L2 acquisition and mastery by building a positive overall attitude toward the language itself and fostering the investment of persistent effort when learning it.

Of the numerous motivation constructs, exploring the applicability of goal constructs to language learning research has recently been called for by a number of researchers. These researchers point out that goals can initiate and monitor the self-regulatory processes involved in L2 learning ([Rose, Briggs, Sergio, & Ivanova-Slavianskaia, 2018](#); [Zheng, Liang, Li, & Tsai, 2018](#)). Acquisition of L2 proficiency is typically a multi-year project and requires painstaking persistence and effort on the part of learners. Beyond this common and well-recognized characteristic, processes and outcomes of L2 learning can vary widely across learners with regard to their interest and enjoyment, engagement and willingness to communicate, as well as breadth and speed of language acquisition. What would happen if L2 teachers and learners do not have clear representations of desired end-states of L2 instruction and learning? What can be ultimate goals of L2 learning? What underlying purposes do learners adopt in specific L2 learning contexts? Why are these goals important in instructed L2 learning? We will attempt to provide some answers to these questions by introducing goal theories and reviewing relevant literature on L2 learning.

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It should be noted that ‘second language (SL)’ learning, which occurs in settings where the language is spoken, can be distinguished from ‘foreign language (FL)’ learning, which takes place in settings where the language is not the native or the dominant language (Bely-Vroman, 1990). In the first half of this article, we will use SL and FL interchangeably under the umbrella term ‘L2,’ due to the limited number of studies distinguishing these two types of language learning in relation to motivational factors. In the latter half where we discuss implications of goal theories for language education and research, we will focus specifically on FL learning.

2. Overview of the goal-setting and achievement goal theories

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines a goal as “the end toward which effort is directed” (“Goal, n.d.”). In this article, we define a goal as the cognitive embodiment of a desired future state that individuals are committed to attaining, which subsequently guides their behavior. At any given time, people simultaneously pursue multiple goals, which come with a different status in the goal hierarchy. In the language learning context, for instance, a learner can experience a conflict between their goal to master a foreign language and their goal to appear intelligent by hiding their lack of proficiency in speaking that language in front of other people, which will impede their mastery of that language. As this example illustrates, learners have to constantly deal with and coordinate conflicts between multiple goals that come with different priorities and levels of salience. This phenomenon is attributed to the multifaceted nature of the construct that goals are structured in a hierarchical fashion and come with multiple layers of subordinate goals (Boekaerts, de Koning, & Vedder, 2006; Carver & Scheier, 1998).

Given the complexity associated with the goal construct, we will first present an overview of the two goal theories that are widely accepted in contemporary motivation research: the goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) and the achievement goal theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). We also briefly introduce other theories of motivation that discuss various types of goals as key elements in their theoretical descriptions. Table 1 summarizes arguments advanced in these theories that are relevant to L2 research. Because the function of a goal is closely intertwined with competence beliefs, relevant literature on the relationship between goals and competence beliefs will also be reviewed. We will then attempt to offer theoretical and practical implications of the goal theories for language education and research.

2.1. Goals as aims: goal-setting theory

Goal-setting theory is rooted in industrial-organizational psychological research, in which a major focus is the relationship between goals and performance outcomes. Goals present task-specific standards for evaluating performance outcomes, while the quality of performance outcomes is judged by their efficiency and effectiveness (Locke & Bryan, 1969). According to the goal-setting researchers, “a goal is the object or aim of an action to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit” (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705). Therefore, goals are defined narrowly as the desired end-states that are precise and proximal in nature, excluding underlying intentions or reasons for specific actions.

This simple yet powerful definition of a goal has contributed to our understanding of goal processes. Goal-setting research has consistently found that setting a difficult yet specific goal leads to better performance than pursuing a general goal such as “to do one's best” (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 706). Specific goals direct attention to the concrete and challenging outcome to be attained and these outcome-relevant thoughts guide behavior in a more focused manner. Goals also motivate people physically and psychologically by keeping them engaged in goal-directed behaviors and goal-relevant strategies until the goal is attained (Locke, 2000).

2.2. Goals as purposes: achievement goal theory

While a goal refers to the concrete target of an action or a specific objective to be met in the goal-setting tradition, the achievement goal construct represents a relatively broader concept. An achievement goal refers to the purpose or the reason underlying achievement behaviors, functioning as a cognitive schema used to understand, interpret, and react to achievement-related information within a specific achievement context (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Achievement goal theory was developed from empirical findings illustrating the different response patterns of children when they experienced failure: some displayed learned helplessness, while others demonstrated coping behaviors (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Dweck, 1975). These contrasting reactions to failure were attributed to different theories of intelligence that the children ascribed to, which subsequently led them to adopt different achievement goals.

The first generation of achievement goal theorists (e.g., Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1978, 1984) proposed a dichotomous model that specified mastery and performance goals. Students who pursue mastery goals strive to develop and improve their competence by acquiring new skills. These students believe that ability is malleable and improves when mastering novel tasks by investing effort (i.e., the incremental theory of intelligence). They are not easily deterred by occasional failures because they view these failures as a natural part of learning new things. In contrast, students who pursue performance goals strive to demonstrate and validate their competence. These students believe in the fixed nature of ability (i.e., the entity theory of intelligence) and are prone to learned helplessness upon failure because, for them, failure is clear evidence that they lack ability. Early achievement goal research demonstrated the positive effect of mastery-goal adoption

Table 1
Summary of goal theories relevant to L2 language education.

	Goal-setting theory	Achievement goal theory	Self-determination theory	Future time perspective	Instrumental goal framework	Mindset theory
How a goal is defined	An object or aim of an action to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit	A purpose or the reason underlying achievement behaviors within a specific achievement context	A desired end-state that makes individuals initiate and persist at particular behaviors to achieve it	A representation of temporal proximity of a desired end-state	A cognitive representation determined by the degree of instrumentality and proximity of desired end-states	A cognitive schema formulated by more general conceptualization of implicit theories of intelligence
Dimensions or types of goals distinguished	Goal difficulty, goal specificity	Mastery (approach-avoidance) and performance (approach-avoidance) goals; or mastery, normative, and ability goals	Intrinsic and extrinsic goals	Immediate-proximal-present-oriented and distal-abstract-future oriented goals	Proximal-internal, proximal-external, distal-internal, and distal-external goals	Growth and fixed mindsets
L2 learning outcomes studied	Standardized L2 test scores; motivated behaviors (e.g., persistence)	Engagement; achievement emotions (interest, anxiety); resilience	Cognitive engagement; test performance persistence; psychological wellbeing	Persistence; effort expenditure	Interest; engagement	Perceived competence; behavioral patterns
Possible applications to L2 classrooms	Use of a self-checklist with daily/monthly goal-setting; use of portfolios on L2 acquisition progress	Helping both students and teachers to pursue mastery-oriented goals; building mastery-oriented classroom goal structures	Creation of intrinsic goal-oriented classrooms with provision of choice and autonomy	Helping students set both distal (e.g., securing an interesting career) and proximal (e.g., receiving good grades) goals	Making students focus on distal-internal goals in L2 (e.g., study L2 to increase one's life opportunities)	Helping students believe language ability can improve by investing effort

and the negative effect of performance-goal adoption on learning and performance among young children (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988).

As evidence continued to accumulate, however, the effect of performance goals became increasingly inconsistent. To the frustration of many achievement goal researchers, students with performance goals often demonstrated better intrinsic motivation and performance than those with mastery goals (e.g., Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994), making it uncertain whether the performance-goal effect was as detrimental as originally thought. The paradox of performance goals was partly resolved when the approach-avoidance distinction was incorporated into the performance-goal conceptualization (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Skaalvik, 1997). According to this achievement goal trichotomy, students with performance-approach goals engage in achievement behaviors to outperform other students and demonstrate their superior competence, whereas those with performance-avoidance goals do so to avoid performing worse than others and hide their relative incompetence.

Elliot and his colleagues (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Elliot & Murayama, 2008) further proposed a 2×2 achievement goal framework where mastery goals are divided into mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance goals. According to this model, achievement goals can be categorized into mastery and performance goals, which are based on the definition of competence that is applied (i.e., whether competence is defined in an intra-individual manner by applying absolute standards or an inter-individual manner by applying normative standards), and approach and avoidance goals, which are determined by the valence of competence (i.e., whether competence represents the positive possibility of approaching success or the negative possibility of avoiding failure). In this framework, an achievement goal is redefined as an aim or an objective as in goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), abandoning the earlier focus on the underlying purpose and reason for achievement behaviors (Dweck, 1986).

Simply stated, a mastery-approach goal refers to the aim of learning and mastering the content as thoroughly as possible; a performance-approach goal to performing better than others; and a performance-avoidance goal to avoiding performing worse than others. The new addition to the 2×2 framework, the mastery-avoidance goal, refers to the aim of avoiding the possibility of not learning as much or not understanding as thoroughly as possible. Students with mastery-avoidance goals thus try to avoid incomplete task mastery, imperfect skill acquisition, and losing the competence that they have already attained.

More recently, the theory has evolved in three separate directions. Some suggest that the definition of competence be further distinguished into absolute (task), intrapersonal (self), and interpersonal (other), thereby expanding the 2×2 model into a 3×2 framework (Elliot, Murayama, & Pekrun, 2011). Others note that the effects of performance-approach goals on achievement are still less than unequivocal, thus they apply finer distinctions between various types of performance-approach goal, such as ability goals, normative goals, and outcome goals, and compare their effects (Bong, Chung, Lee, & Lee, 2016; Bong, Woo, & Shin, 2013; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Hulleman, Schrage, Bodmann, & Harackiewicz, 2010; Senko & Dawson, 2017; Urdan & Mestas, 2006). Still others propose a new higher-order construct called an achievement goal complex that incorporates a self-determination perspective into the conceptualization of achievement goals, arguing that the same achievement goal may be pursued for autonomous or controlled reasons with different consequences (Vansteenkiste, Lens, Elliot, Soenens, & Mouratidis, 2014).

2.3. Other motivation theories relevant to the goal construct

In addition, there are other theories of motivation that have important bearings on the goal construct: self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), future time perspective (De Volder & Lens, 1982), and mindset theory (Dweck, 2006), to name just a few. These are general theories of motivation that recognize goals as one of the key constructs that determine the quality and quantity of future behaviors such as effort, persistence, depth of engagement, and eventual performance. We present a brief introduction of each of them below.

Self-determination theory. According to self-determination theory (SDT), pursuing intrinsic goals enhances life satisfaction, whereas pursuing extrinsic goals reduces it. Striving for the goal of achieving psychological growth, being affiliated, feeling healthy, and contributing to the community, for example, improves one's satisfaction with one's own life in many aspects. Striving for the goal of becoming wealthy, famous, and popular, in contrast, results in less self-actualization and reduces vitality in life (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, and Deci (2004) demonstrated positive consequences of pursuing an intrinsic goal in an autonomous context in a series of experiments with high school and college students. The researchers manipulated the goal content to be either intrinsic (e.g., "carefully reading the text about communication styles can contribute to your personal development") or extrinsic (e.g., "carefully reading the text can help your chances of getting a well-paid job in the future"). They also manipulated the learning context to be either autonomy-supportive (e.g., "you might decide to try to learn more about communication styles") or controlling (e.g., "you should learn more about communication styles"). All three experiments demonstrated the benefit of pursuing an intrinsic rather than an extrinsic goal in the form of deeper engagement, better performance, and greater persistence in the task. Furthermore, there was an interaction between the goal and the context such that the advantages associated with an intrinsic goal were even greater in the autonomy-supportive than the controlling context.

Future time perspective. This theory proposes that the present anticipation of future goals, called a future time perspective (FTP), determines temporal proximity of the goals that people pursue (Simons, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Lacante,

2004). Individuals with a short FTP tend to pursue immediate, proximal, and present-oriented goals, while those with a long (or deep) FTP endeavor to attain distal, abstract, and future-oriented goals. Enhanced motivation results from a longer FTP or individuals' tendency to ascribe higher value to distant goals.

According to FTP, the degree with which people engage in instrumental behavior is a function of both the valence attached to the aspired goal and the instrumental value of the behavior for reaching that goal (De Volder & Lens, 1982; Simons, Dewitte, & Lens, 2004). For instance, how hard students would study and how long they would persist in their studying will be determined by how much they value a goal in the near future (e.g., getting good grades) and that in the distant future (e.g., obtaining an interesting career) as well as by how much they believe the act of 'studying hard for a long period' is instrumental to reaching their respective goal. Individuals who value a proximal goal of 'receiving good grades' would perceive limited utility in the act of 'studying hard for a long period' because it does not help much beyond the courses they are currently taking, especially once the grades are determined. In comparison, those who value a distal goal would perceive greater utility in the same act because the behavior is helpful for attaining not only their immediate goal but also their longer-term goal of 'securing an interesting career.' It is likely that individuals with a long FTP will study harder and persist longer than those with a short FTP.

Simons, Dewitte, and Lens (2003, 2004) recently proposed an instrumental goal framework by combining future time perspective with self-determination theory. In this framework, goals are differentiated into proximal or distal future-oriented goals and also internally or externally regulated goals, thus resulting in a 2 (proximal vs. distal) \times 2 (internal vs. external regulation) dimensional framework.

Mindset theory. A theory that has originated and developed out of implicit theories of intelligence, which were regarded as major antecedents of achievement goal orientations (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), mindset theory has since become an independent theory of motivation that accounts for the resilient and destitute patterns of responses to challenges and setbacks (Dweck, 2006). Entity theory of intelligence, or an implicit belief in the unchanging nature of competence, creates a fixed mindset among individuals, making them pursue competitive, maladaptive, and demonstration-focused goals and become quickly vulnerable in the face of obstacles. Incremental theory of intelligence, or an implicit belief in the malleable nature of competence, creates a growth mindset, which encourages individuals to focus on their own and others' potential to change and to pursue resilient, adaptive, and development-focused goals. For these individuals with a growth mindset, challenges represent a genuine opportunity to learn and improve their competence and a natural part of growth and development (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007), in both a longitudinal survey and an experimental research, demonstrated that students' mindset creates a critical difference in their motivation, adjustment, and performance after their transition to junior high school. Mathematics grades of the students who held an incremental theory of intelligence in the fall of the 7th grade increased steadily, while those of the students with an entity theory remained unchanging, during the next two years. The incremental theory of the students correlated positively with their learning goals, positive effort beliefs, low helpless attributions, and positive strategies. A following experiment replicated the benefits associated with a growth mindset by showing that students exposed to the incremental-theory-training indeed expressed a heightened belief in the malleable nature of ability that was significantly higher than that of the control-group students after the intervention. The students in the experimental condition also exhibited a significant improvement in mathematics achievement after the intervention, while those in the control condition demonstrated a significant decline during the same period. Moreover, many of the experimental-group students were judged by their teachers as demonstrating positive changes in their classroom motivation and performance after the intervention.

None of the three general motivation theories discussed so far—SDT, FPT, and mindset theory—is necessarily considered a goal theory per se. Nevertheless, the goal construct occupies an important place in all of them. McEown and Oga-Baldwin (2019, this issue) present a systematic introduction on how self-determination theory can be applied to language teaching and learning, while Lou and Noels (2019, this issue) introduce empirical findings that demonstrate the importance of mindsets in language learning. We encourage interested readers refer to these articles for a better overview of these motivation theories.

3. Role of competence beliefs in goal processes

As indicated in its definition, a goal is an inherently future-oriented construct. Espousing a goal requires a subjective judgment regarding which of the potential outcomes is more probable and attainable (Moskowitz & Grant, 2009). Further, this subjective assessment of future consequences depends, in large part, on an individual's subjective evaluation of their own competence (Schunk, 1990). As individuals move toward their goals, they engage in a constant reappraisal of the likely outcome and their expectancy of success. On the one hand, individuals may lower their goals to make them easier and more achievable when their perceived competence and the expected probability of reaching the desired end-state is low, or they can raise their goals to make them more challenging if their competence beliefs are strong and their expectancy of success is high. On the other hand, individuals may adjust their own perceptions of competence instead of their goals. People feel more competent when their goals appear easily attainable; they feel less so when they judge their goals to be difficult.

This interaction between goals and competence beliefs contributes to higher-order self-regulatory processes, as the discrepancy between the current and desired end-states fuels or frustrates goal pursuits. Competence beliefs, therefore, play a

key role in goal-related processes. In the present section, we introduce how the relationship between goals and competence beliefs have been explored for each of the goal-theory traditions.

3.1. Goal-setting and self-efficacy

Goal-setting theorists argue that a goal cannot lead to successful performance outcomes unless individuals commit to their goal with the conviction that they can successfully achieve it (Seijts & Latham, 2000). After people set a goal, their judgment of the extent to which the goal can be attainable facilitates or hinders the implementation of goal-directed behaviors. Goal commitment can be promoted by strong self-efficacy in an individual, which is their subjective appraisal of their ability to carry out the course of action required to obtain the desired outcome in a given context (Bandura, 1997). Strong self-efficacy also helps individuals to set more challenging goals from the outset and perform at a higher level (Latham & Locke, 1991; Wood & Locke, 1987).

In academic contexts, students' convictions that they can perform well in a given academic domain lead them to set specific, challenging, yet achievable grade goals, which results in better academic achievement (Lee, Lee, & Bong, 2014). Just as self-efficacy helps an individual to pursue a more difficult goal, a specific and moderately challenging goal can help improve their self-efficacy (Schunk, 1990). The efficacy-enhancing effect of a specific goal has been repeatedly demonstrated in a series of classroom experiments with elementary school students struggling with mathematics. In one experiment (Schunk, 1983a), children participated in remedial classes under three different conditions: the first group of children was given only comparative information on how many problems other children had solved; the second group was given the goal of solving a specific number of problems in each session; the third group was provided with both comparative information and the specific goal; and the last group received neither. The group with both comparative information and a specific goal displayed the best mathematics performance in the posttest, followed by the group with only a specific goal. The two groups of children who were provided with a specific goal also exhibited significantly stronger self-efficacy than the children provided with comparative information only. In another experiment (Schunk, 1983b), children who received difficult yet attainable goals exhibited stronger self-efficacy compared to those who received easier goals.

3.2. Achievement goals and competence beliefs

In achievement goal theory, approach goals are assumed to demonstrate positive relationships, and avoidance goals negative relationships, with competence beliefs. Still, while some believe that perceived competence is a moderator of the achievement goal effect (e.g., Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Kaplan & Midgley, 1997), others argue that it is simply an antecedent of achievement goal adoption (e.g., Elliot, 2005; Elliot & Church, 1997).

The moderator perspective arises from the original dichotomous model of achievement goals (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988). According to this perspective, students who pursue performance goals are expected to demonstrate adaptive behaviors similar to those demonstrated by mastery goal-oriented students and achieve at high levels, as long as they feel competent. Even when students pursue the same performance goals, however, they are presumed to engage in maladaptive behaviors and perform poorly when they lack competence. Except for a few experimental studies in which young children's levels of competence were manipulated (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988), this argument has not received support, especially in survey studies with older students (Kaplan & Midgley, 1997).

The antecedent perspective, in contrast, argues that individuals consider their perceived competence primarily when they are deciding which achievement goal to pursue, particularly between approach and avoidance goals (Elliot, 2005). For students with strong competence beliefs, the possibility of success is more salient than that of failure and this perception results in the adoption of approach goals. For those with weak competence beliefs, the probability of failure looms large, which leads them to adopt avoidance goals (Elliot & Church, 1997).

Recent findings from longitudinal investigations support reciprocal relationships between achievement goals and self-efficacy (Bong, 2005; Noh, Hwang, Song, & Bong, 2011). These studies have consistently reported that mastery-approach and performance-approach goals assessed during the previous semester or the previous academic year positively predicted self-efficacy assessed during the subsequent semester or the subsequent academic year. Earlier performance-avoidance goals predicted later self-efficacy negatively. Predictive paths from previous self-efficacy to following achievement goals were also consistently witnessed, demonstrating that achievement goals and competence beliefs interact with each other.

4. Relevance of goal theories to language education research

Dörnyei (1998) proposed that language involves three primary features: "(a) a communication coding system as a subject that can be taught as a school subject; (b) an integral part of the individual's identity; and (c) the most important channel of social organization embedded in the culture of the community where it is used" (p. 118). This perspective makes it clear that L2 learning is affected by the competence beliefs held by an individual in language learning as well as the social and environmental factors. We argue that considering the role of the goal construct in the language learning process will generate useful knowledge and insights into how learners' motivation helps or hinders L2 acquisition and performance. For researchers

who may be interested in assessing goal constructs in their L2 research, we present different achievement goal instruments available in the literature in [Appendix](#).

4.1. Goal-setting and L2 mastery

Goal setting theory has not been frequently applied to language learning research. The few investigations that are available expose several features of goal-setting that are useful for better L2 achievement. In an exploratory survey study, [Tremblay and Gardner \(1995\)](#) incorporated the goal specificity and frequency dimensions into L2 research to examine the effect of goals on L2 learning outcomes, in this case the students' final grades in a French course. To more accurately evaluate the effect of goals, the researchers controlled for students' attitude toward French, dominance of French usage, and previous French achievement. Goal specificity referred to the degree of clarity evidenced in the students' goals for the French course, while goal frequency referred to the frequency with which the students made a list of goals with respect to the French course. These two goal-related dimensions were treated as two indicators of a single latent variable, called goal salience. Goal salience positively predicted students' final French grades by increasing motivational behaviors such as effort expenditure, persistence, and attention during the French course.

[Yang and Kim's \(2011\)](#) qualitative case study with two L2 learners studying abroad also revealed that their goals had a significant influence on their choice of specific L2 learning actions and the quality of their language acquisition. It also demonstrated the importance of the alignment between the goals and the learning atmosphere of L2 learners. One learner originally had a goal of improving his communicative skills in English during his stay in the States for better employment opportunities later in international companies in Korea. He thus opted to have a roommate who was a native speaker. When his roommate did not provide any corrective feedback on his L2 speaking and showed no interest in helping him develop his L2 fluency, he started to lose interest in his original goal and pursued a different goal of improving his TOEIC score. This mismatch between his L2 goal and the L2 environment caused his L2 motivation to decline even further. The other learner had the same goal of improving her communicative skills in English during her stay in the Philippines. Her goal remained steadfast throughout as she sought out many opportunities to interact with native speakers during her study-abroad period. Both learners took a standardized test of English-as-a-foreign-language when they returned home. While both received a higher score on the test compared to what they had received before studying abroad, the second learner improved her score significantly more than the first learner.

Goal-setting is a powerful strategy to improve L2 acquisition. [Moeller, Theiler, and Wu \(2012\)](#) developed an intervention program called "LinguaFolio" to help high school students' goal-setting in Spanish language classrooms. This portfolio-based program required students to set challenging goals (thus establishing goal difficulty), break them down into specific action plans (thus reflecting goal specificity), and reflect upon the collected outcomes in their Spanish classrooms for five years. The more challenging the goals were and the clearer the action plans were, the greater the students' achievement was in writing, speaking, and reading in Spanish, as determined by their scores on a standardized Spanish language test.

Goal-setting is the most critical forethought phase of the self-regulatory process, which triggers goal-directed motivational behaviors ([Locke & Latham, 1990](#); [Pintrich, 2000](#); [Zimmerman, 2000](#)). It is encouraging that language learning researchers have started to pay attention to the importance of goal-setting in L2 acquisition and mastery. For future research in this area, we recommend that the effects of goal-setting on L2 learning and progress be compared between multiple groups of students with and without the presence of goals. The effects of L2 goals that differ in immediacy, specificity, and difficulty can be compared in terms of a diverse range of outcomes, such as persistence in L2 learning and the demonstration of L2 skills.

4.2. Achievement goals and L2 learning and persistence

If the goal-setting theory can be readily applied at the level of individual learners, achievement goal theory can offer instructional implications at both the individual and the classroom level. The study by [Lou and Noels \(2016\)](#) indirectly demonstrates the advantage of pursuing mastery goals in L2 classrooms. The investigators manipulated the mindset of the participating students by making them believe either that language ability can be improved by investing effort in L2 learning (i.e., the incremental language theory) or that language ability is innate, and individuals cannot change it significantly (i.e., the fixed language theory). The students in the incremental theory group were more likely to adopt mastery goals, which led to greater mastery, fewer helpless responses to L2 failure, and a stronger intention to continue L2 studies. Those in the fixed theory group were more likely to adopt performance-approach goals when they perceived high competence in their L2 ability, but these performance-approach goals predicted a greater number of helpless responses and a stronger fear of failure in L2 learning. Students who lacked competence beliefs in L2 learning pursued performance-avoidance goals, which resulted in less mastery, a stronger helpless response, greater anxiety, a stronger fear of failure, and a weaker intention to continue L2 studies. These results were largely replicated in a subsequent study ([Lou & Noels, 2017](#)).

While [Lou and Noels \(2016, 2017\)](#) manipulated mindsets as a precursor of achievement goal adoption, [He \(2005\)](#) manipulated achievement goals directly to investigate their effects on the use of writing composition strategies among adult FL learners of English. He first measured participants' mastery and performance goals on a 1–5 scale and created two groups by selecting students with (a) a mastery goal score of 3.75 or above and a performance goal score of 1.75 or below and (b) a performance goal score of 3.75 or above and a mastery goal score of 1.75 or below. The first or the high-mastery goal group was subsequently exposed to a mastery goal manipulation about a writing task, whereas the second or the high-

performance goal group was exposed to a performance goal manipulation. Therefore, students' existing achievement goals were accentuated by experimental manipulations. When asked to perform an identical English writing task, students in the high-mastery goal group demonstrated more frequent use of monitoring, revising, and compensating writing strategies compared to those in the high-performance goal group. Furthermore, a regression analysis revealed that the quality of students' writing was predicted only by students' mastery goal scores and use of a revising strategy and not by students' performance goal scores.

Other researchers also measured FL learners' achievement goals along with their metacognitive reading strategy use (Ghavam, Rastegar, & Razmi, 2011), anxiety (Koul, Roy, Kaewkuekool, & Ploisawaschai, 2009), and achievement scores (Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2016; Tercanlioglu, 2004). Across these studies, pursuit of mastery-approach goals related positively to adaptive learning outcomes such as greater use of metacognitive reading strategies and higher achievement scores. In contrast, pursuit of either performance-approach or performance-avoidance goals related negatively to strategy use (Ghavam et al., 2011) and positively to maladaptive outcomes such as fear of failing English class, fear of negative evaluation, and speech anxiety (Koul et al., 2009). The clear advantage of adopting mastery goals in L2 learning contexts consistently demonstrated by these studies is particularly noteworthy because achievement goals were assessed with different instruments. Ghavam et al. (2011) adopted the Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R; Elliot & Murayama, 2008), Jahedizadeh et al. (2016) used the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS; Midgley et al., 1998), Tercanlioglu (2004) adopted the Goal Orientation Scale used in Skaalvik's study (1997), and Koul et al. (2009) adapted Niemivirta's (1998) achievement goal scale. Items of the AGQ-R and the PALS can be found in Appendix.

As explained earlier, some of the performance goal measures (e.g., PALS) emphasize ability validation, while others focus on normative competence (e.g., AGQ-R). Although the operational definitions of achievement goals adopted in these studies, especially those of performance goals, are vastly different from each other, all of the studies that assessed achievement goals in one way or another have reached the same conclusion that points to the benefit of pursuing mastery goals. The long-standing dispute about the positive potential of performance-approach goals thus seem to evade L2 research, as the results unanimously suggest that L2 learners should be encouraged to adopt mastery goals.

4.3. Instrumental goals and L2 interest

L2 proficiency requires prolonged engagement, which typically lasts over multiple years. It is a difficult feat to accomplish without sustained interest in L2 learning. We will not go into the details of interest development in L2 contexts in this article, as Fryer (2019, this issue) presents a thorough review of theoretical foundations and practical implications of interest research in L2 learning. Here, we simply focus on the instrumentality of goals as one of the antecedents of L2 interest. Specifically, the 2 (proximal vs. distal future-oriented goals) \times 2 (internally vs. externally regulated goals) instrumental goal framework (Simons et al., 2003, 2004) is introduced a little further as a potentially useful model to understand the dynamic relationship between L2 instrumental goals, L2 interest, and engagement in L2 learning (Fryer, 2015; Fryer, Ginns, & Walker, 2014; Fryer, Ozono, Carter, Nakao, & Anderson, 2014).

When Fryer, Ozono, et al. (2014) performed exploratory factor analysis with items measuring the four types of instrumental goals from the 2 \times 2 framework (proximal-internal, proximal-external, distal-internal, and distal-external) for taking compulsory English courses, responses of college students did not clearly form the hypothesized four factors. Students did not distinguish between distal-internal and distal-external goals. Items with social connotations (i.e., having a reference to teachers, parents, and other people) also loaded on the same factor regardless of whether they described goals that were internally regulated or those that were externally regulated. The researchers subsequently tailored the instrumental goal items in language learning contexts to exemplify the distal-internal (e.g., "I study to increase my life opportunities"), distal-external (e.g., "I study to make a higher salary in my future professional life"), and proximal-external (e.g., "I study to complete as many credits this year as possible") goal dimensions (Fryer, 2015; Fryer, Ginns, et al., 2014).

Longitudinal structural equation models with the three instrumental goals consistently demonstrated that internally regulated distal goals predict indicators of individual interest in L2, which is the most-developed and longest-lasting form of the interest construct (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Specifically, students' pursuit of distal-internal goals in L2 positively predicted their future interest (Fryer, 2015) and deeper levels of engagement in L2 studying (Fryer, Ginns, et al., 2014). The role of proximal-internal goals (e.g., "I would feel more confident with stronger English skills," "It is cool to be able to speak English") in the promotion of L2 interest and learning has not been addressed in these investigations. However, such goals are important in their own right and we recommend researchers pay attention to their measurement and unique predictive outcomes in future investigations.

4.4. Implications of goal theories for language education and research

The literature reviewed up to this point clearly indicates that studying the effects of goals and associated processes in the context of L2 learning will prove fruitful for understanding the motivation of L2 learners and helping them gain successful L2 learning experiences. To help make the relevance of goal theories to language education clearer, we offer some suggestions and guidelines for L2 researchers and practitioners who are interested in the role of goal constructs in instructed language education settings.

In this section, we focus on FL learning rather than SL learning. Concrete acquisition processes and pedagogical guidelines for FL and SL learning can differ considerably. SL learners function in an SL-dominant or -prevalent environment, while FL learners are surrounded by their native language environment. From a motivational point of view, FL learning, compared to SL learning, requires more active initiation by its learners to approach and expose themselves to FL-dominant settings. Thus, we concentrate on the empirical and practical implications of the goal-setting theory and the achievement goal theory in FL education situations.

4.5. How goal-setting theory can contribute to language education and research

FL learners need to invest continuous effort into repetitive drill and practice to acquire the target language. The duration for reaching a functional level of FL proficiency easily spans multiple years or even a lifetime for some individuals. For this reason, FL learners are often frustrated and give up FL learning prematurely. Goal-setting can help individuals overcome interim obstacles and keep investing focused effort in FL learning.

Provision of specific and challenging FL goals. For FL teachers, it will be helpful to know whether having students set a broad goal in FL learning as a whole or having them set a separate goal in each of the skill areas is more effective for students' FL mastery. Goals are most effective when they are specific and sufficiently challenging (Locke & Latham, 2002). As the FL acquisition takes place in a cumulative and gradual fashion, simply encouraging learners to do their best and keep trying will lose its motivating power over time.

Locke and his colleagues have repeatedly demonstrated this point (e.g., Bryan & Locke, 1967; Locke & Latham, 2002). For example, in an early goal-setting study by Bryan and Locke (1967), college students solved a series of addition problems, each involving three two-digit numbers. All of them were told to "do their best" while solving these problems. After the first session, low-performing students were identified and given specific performance goals in the form of a number of problems to solve by the end of each session. High-performing students were given the same instructions as before. The students who remained in the high-performance group and were asked to do their best demonstrated declines in the succeeding sessions in the number of problems attempted, the number of problems correctly solved, as well as interest, effort, and concentration on the task. Students who started out with poor initial performance but were given specific goals to reach in the following sessions demonstrated an opposite pattern, with their performance and attitudes improving in each subsequent session than before.

The goals in FL learning can and should likewise be translated into specific goals, which help FL learners regulate their motivation and performance to an extended period of time. If only the eventual mastery and utility of FL is emphasized by teachers, students might perceive such a goal to be unattainable. When a gap between the current FL skills and the ideal FL mastery is too large, it may pose a threat to students' self-worth, especially when they lack FL competence (Lee, Bong, & Kim, 2014). When this happens, students show maladaptive learning patterns such as self-handicapping and help-avoidance and can fall into learned helplessness (Lee, Lee, & Bong, 2013). Researchers can test validity of this proposition by assigning distal and proximal goals of varying temporal distance and specificity to language learners and observe the short-term and long-term effect of these goals on the speed and accuracy of FL acquisition as well as on the effort and persistence in FL mastery.

Acquisition of FL subskills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking occurs in a conscious and more or less consecutive manner. Students' competence beliefs in FL learning are also known to differ across the four skill areas (Lau, Yeung, Jin, & Low, 1999). Even when a student feels competent in her FL reading skills, it does not guarantee that she would feel equally competent in FL speaking. Rather than pursuing the general goal of becoming proficient in FL, setting and striving for more specific goals in each skill area can effectively maintain students' FL motivation and effort and speed up their attainment of FL fluency. Again, the relative effect of general and skill-specific FL goals on broader and more specific language learning outcomes can be compared systematically. It may be the case that different goal-setting strategies work better for each subskill. For example, the speed of vocabulary acquisition could accelerate by setting specific daily goals (e.g., mastering 25 words) and adhering to them for an extended period of time; setting such specific daily goals for improving one's listening comprehension is neither feasible nor recommended. We need more scientific evidence on the degree of goal specificity that is most conducive to the acquisition of each FL subskill, to help FL learners and instructors develop strategies and interventions that work.

Provision of proximal FL subgoals. An issue that is closely related to goal specificity is goal proximity. Specific goals are often proximal, although this is not always the case as some goals may be specific and distal (e.g., a goal of obtaining a score of 22 or above on the Reading section of TOEFL iBT in the next 2 years). According to the goal-setting theory, setting concrete and visible goals that are also proximal in nature can present to FL learners solid evidence of their skill development (Locke & Latham, 2002).

In FL learning, progress toward a desired level of communicative proficiency is not easy to discern for FL learners. The strategy of setting specific and proximal goals often initiates desirable self-regulatory processes in language learning contexts (Rose, Briggs, Boggs, Sergio, & Ivanova-Slavianskaia, 2018; Zheng et al., 2018), proving learners with immediate feedback and protecting them from unnecessary frustration. For example, a goal to write at least one sentence in FL everyday helps one to monitor her improvement from previous sentences she wrote and narrows the gap between the desired end-state and actual FL attainment for her. Daily sentence-writing also results in accumulation of mastery experiences over time, which function as the most powerful source of self-efficacy information (Bandura, 1997).

Evidence attesting to the positive effect of proximal goal-setting for improving learners' confidence and subsequent performance comes from studies conducted by Schunk (1983a, 1983b, 1990). Across several classroom experiments, he consistently observed that having low-performing students set a proximal goal (e.g., "completing at least 6 pages of instructional materials in this session") or a challenging yet attainable specific goal (e.g., "finishing at least 25 problems among the 50 problems given") enhanced their math self-efficacy and performance compared to having them set no-goal or only a distal goal (e.g., "completing the entire 42 pages of instructional materials during the next 7 sessions"). This simple intervention can be easily applied to FL education by helping students set a goal of, for instance, memorizing 6 words or 6 idioms every day. Goal-setting research in FL education will be able to tell us which degrees of specificity and scope associated with these goals are most appropriate to different age groups or FL learners at particular skill levels.

Although we have emphasized the importance of proximal goals, it does not mean that long-term goals are unimportant. Mindless pursuit of only proximal goals (e.g., memorizing 6 words every day) without keeping a distal goal (e.g., becoming a fluent reader in FL) in sight can make the drill and practice meaningless and result in the loss of intrinsic motivation. In this sense, FL teachers are advised to encourage students to imagine their ideal future FL self, in which they use FL flawlessly in their career, are living abroad in a FL-speaking country, or communicating fluently with native FL speakers. In fact, a recent survey research (Saito, Dewaele, Abe, & In'nami, 2018) has discovered that the ideal FL selves of high school learners relate positively with improved comprehensibility of their speech. More research is needed to substantiate this initial finding on the effect of a long-term goal on FL fluency and the role of interim subgoals as potential mediators of this effect.

A distal goal focusing on the social utility of FL proficiency may also be effective in sustaining FL motivation. Teachers can point to students how learning FL will help them understand people from different cultural backgrounds (Kormos, Kiddle, & Cizé, 2011). FL education researchers can help practitioners by conducting short-term experiments that compare the effectiveness of different goal-setting strategies for multiple FL outcomes and provide the necessary scientific evidence for designing more effective FL instruction.

4.6. How achievement goal theory can contribute to language education and research

The fundamental purpose of FL education is to help learners become able to communicate with other people and deliver their ideas accurately and adequately in the language (Dörnyei, 1990). Despite this ultimate aim of FL teaching, relative FL proficiency compared to others is easily perceptible by learners, as FL instruction often requires learners to display their FL skills publicly. Borrowing the language of achievement goal theory, the purpose of FL education is inherently mastery goal-oriented, while the FL instructional context is frequently performance goal-oriented.

Understanding students' achievement goals in FL learning. As we have seen earlier, existing studies have made it clear that FL learning greatly profits when students pursue mastery goals (Ghavam et al., 2011; Jahedizadeh et al., 2016; Koul et al., 2009; Tercanlioglu, 2004). This is not surprising when considering the close alignment between mastery goals of individual FL learners and the goal of FL education (Ford, 1992). Stated differently, it also suggests that students pursuing mastery goals may not thrive in FL learning environments that are performance goal-oriented.

Exploring which type of achievement goals FL learners primarily pursue can be a good starting point to better understand and predict diverse patterns of achievement strivings in FL education. When Lee and Bong (2016) asked approximately 1000 Korean adolescent students to report their achievement goals at school in their own words, they generated 3399 independent responses. Of relevance to the present article, students distinguished between various types of performance goals including normative and ability validation goals. Furthermore, which goals students pursued depended heavily on the salient characteristics of their learning environment. At a school where students were relatively free of social comparison and fear of negative evaluation, a substantially larger proportion of students spontaneously mentioned mastery goals; at a school where fierce competition and between-class ability tracking were the norm, a substantially larger proportion of students wrote down ability validation goals compared to the proportion observed at other schools.

Students' achievement goals are consequences of active interaction between their internal psychological state and external environment. Once performance goals are adopted, unhealthy cognitive, emotional, and behavioral tendencies ensue. FL learning is no exception to this trend. To be able to intervene in the achievement goal adoptions of FL learners, one needs to identify existing achievement goals first. Because how performance goals are defined can make a critical difference in the effects obtained (Grant & Dweck, 2003; Hulleman et al., 2010), teachers and investigators are advised to select a scale that best illustrates the construct they have in mind. Again, three achievement goal scales with different conceptualizations of performance goals can be found in Appendix.

Researchers who believe that ability validation concern is an integral part of performance goals and are interested in the motivation and learning of K-12 students in classroom settings usually adopt the PALS (Midgley et al., 2000). Those who consider normative competence to be the key element in performance goals and are interested in the FL motivation of college population may use the AGQ-R (Elliot & Murayama, 2008). Both the ability-normative and approach-avoidance distinctions in performance goals are incorporated in the 5-factor achievement goal scale, developed as part of the Student Motivation in the Learning Environment Scales (SMILES; Bong et al., 2012). This scale has been validated for use with diverse age groups, ranging from middle school to college students in Korea.

Common features associated with L2 acquisition make both ability validation and normative comparison concerns salient among FL learners. Mastering FL requires learners repeatedly practice the unfamiliar language in front of others such as speaking out loud, making presentations, and talking to each other or with native speakers in FL. Learners naturally become

aware of others' reception and evaluation of their L2 skills as well as compare each other's FL proficiency. In addition, students may find FL tasks per se to be novel, challenging, and embarrassing at times due to the unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar, and culture embedded in FL. We believe it will be important to examine (a) whether the unique FL instruction atmosphere makes learners pursue ability validation goals more in FL learning compared to learning other subjects and (b) how the effects of different types of achievement goals play out in FL education contexts.

Once students' dominant achievement goals in FL instructional settings are identified, it becomes possible for teachers and researchers to intervene if students indeed turn out to pursue performance goals heavily in FL learning. Achievement goals are context-specific constructs and which goals to adopt in given achievement situations depend on both individual learners' belief system and prevalent classroom culture (Dweck, 1986, 2006). This sensitivity renders the construct malleable to classroom interventions, a topic to which we now turn.

Promotion of mastery goal structures in FL classrooms. The achievement goals adopted by parents and teachers as well as the goal structures in the classroom perceived by students formulate students' personal achievement goal adoption and create differences in their ensuing motivation, strategy use, and performance (e.g., Bong, 2005, 2008; Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Jiang, Song, Lee, & Bong, 2014). In classrooms with a mastery-oriented goal structure, students are more likely to adopt mastery goals themselves. As a result, they feel self-efficacious, are not afraid of trying challenging tasks, persist in the face of failures and obstacles, use deep learning strategies, and are intrinsically motivated in the tasks at hand. In contrast, students personally adopt either performance-approach or performance-avoidance goals in classrooms where they perceive a performance-oriented goal structure. These students are prone to express negative affect, are unwilling to seek help even when it is needed, are susceptible to cheating and procrastination, do not enjoy the tasks at hand, and give up and resort to self-handicapping strategies easily when the tasks become difficult. The detrimental consequences of performance goals are especially pronounced when students adopt ability validation goals (Bong et al., 2016).

According to Ames (1992), students perceive a mastery-oriented goal structure in the classroom when teachers emphasize effort, individual progress, and learning for understanding, provide informative feedback and opportunities to collaborate with peers, and communicate the message that failure is a natural part of learning and it is OK to make mistakes as long as one tries. In contrast, students perceive a performance-oriented classroom goal structure when teachers stress relative ability, errorless performance, and grades and test scores, make the competition and social comparison between students highly visible, and convey the message that it is important to perform better than others. Given the attributes of FL instruction that can accentuate social comparative and ability-related information, it seems all the more crucial that FL teachers stay mindful of creating a mastery-oriented learning environment, where students focus on their own progress and feel safe to attempt challenging tasks even if they fail or make mistakes, while avoiding practices that make students perceive their FL classrooms to be performance-oriented.

We recommend that interested researchers should first determine the nature of the learning climate in FL classrooms by assessing the achievement goals of FL teachers. Investigators should also assess student perceptions of the climate in the same FL classrooms because what matters is not the teachers' intentions but their students' subjective construal of the teachers' instructional practices (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006). Linking the achievement goals of students to the teachers' instructional goals and the students' own perceptions of classroom goal structures, along with their subsequent FL strategy use and achievement, will be able to demonstrate whether the well-documented significance of classroom goal structures prevails in FL learning contexts.

4.7. Other directions for future language learning research using goal theories

Language learning researchers have been calling for more research that investigates the effects of motivation on various stages and outcomes involved in FL learning (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). Despite this call, the number of empirical studies on motivation within the context of FL learning is still quite limited. This number reduces even further when we search the database for FL investigations dedicated specifically on goal theories. Perhaps the particular challenge for goal researchers studying FL acquisition is the fact that goals constantly interact with other motivation constructs. Unlike learning to master other tasks or subjects, FL learning requires a certain degree of cultural assimilation, which accompanies corresponding changes in how one understands the self and the society around them (Gan, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; You & Dörnyei, 2014).

As individuals become increasingly more proficient in any given language, their goals in FL mastery may gradually transform into qualitatively different ones, such as from controlled reasons (e.g., because it is important for one's career) to autonomous reasons (e.g., to enjoy local culture and make friends while travelling). The goals students pursue in the FL learning context actively interact with other self-system including their expectancy belief or achievement history, producing changes in their identity and their schema about external worlds (Ushioda, 2011). In order for the goal research to flourish in the field of FL learning, therefore, it will be imperative to study the role and effect of various goal constructs within the triarchic interaction between person, behavior, and environment (Bandura, 1997).

5. Conclusion

The acquisition and mastery of a second/foreign language typically require a multi-year effort. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that unwavering motivation is often what determines success in this long-term endeavor. The specific yet challenging goals that L2 learners set for their L2 studies provide the necessary focus and direction for their effort and push them

to engage in concrete actions that move them closer to achieving these goals. Further, the mastery goals of L2 learners to improve their L2 skills and master the new language flourish in a learning environment that maintains a mastery-oriented goal structure. We encourage both language education researchers and practitioners to pay closer attention to the function of these important goal constructs in L2 acquisition, which will guide them to effective ways of enhancing L2 learning and performance.

Appendix. Achievement Goal Scales

Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS; Midgley et al., 2000)

Mastery-approach goal

1. It's important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts (in L2) this year.
2. One of my goals in (my L2) class is to learn as much as I can.
3. One of my goals (in L2) is to master a lot of new skills this year.
4. It's important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work (in L2).
5. It's important to me that I improve my (L2) skills this year.

Performance-approach goal

1. It's important to me that other students in my (L2) class think I am good at my class work.
2. One of my goals (in L2) is to show others that I'm good at my class work.
3. One of my goals (in L2) is to show others that class work is easy for me.
4. One of my goals (in L2) is to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class.
5. It's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my (L2) class.

Performance-avoidance goal

1. It's important to me that I don't look stupid in (my L2) class.
2. One of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart in (my L2) class.
3. It's important to me that my teacher doesn't think that I know less than others in (my L2) class.
4. One of my goals in (my L2) class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work.

Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R; Elliot & Murayama, 2008)

Mastery-approach goal

1. My aim is to completely master the material presented in this (L2) class.
2. I am striving to understand the content of this (L2) course as thoroughly as possible.
3. My goal is to learn as much as possible.

Mastery-avoidance goal

1. My aim is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.
2. I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the (L2) course material.
3. My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn.

Performance-approach goal

1. My aim is to perform well relative to other students
2. I am striving to do well compared to other students.
3. My goal is to perform better than the other students.

Performance-avoidance goal

1. My aim is to avoid doing worse than other students.
2. I am striving to avoid performing worse than others.
3. My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others.

5-Factor Achievement Goal Scale (SMILES; Bong et al., 2016)

Mastery-approach goal

1. My goal (in L2) is to improve my skills.
2. The reason I study (L2) is to acquire new skills.
3. The reason I study (L2) is to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.

Normative performance-approach goal

1. The reason I study (L2) is to have superior skills relative to other students.
2. The reason I study (L2) is to outperform other students.
3. My goal (in L2) is to get higher grades than other students.

Ability performance-approach goal

1. My goal (in L2) is to be recognized for my ability.
2. The reason I study (L2) is to confirm my ability.
3. The reason I study (L2) is to get grades that I can boast about.

Normative performance-avoidance goal

1. The reason I study (L2) is to avoid having inferior skills relative to other students.
2. The reason I study (L2) is to not fall behind from other students.
3. My goal (in L2) is to avoid getting lower grades than other students.

Ability performance-avoidance goal

1. My goal (in L2) is to not reveal my lack of ability.
2. The reason I study (L2) is to hide my poor ability.
3. The reason I study (L2) is to avoid getting grades that I find embarrassing.

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