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The Effectiveness of Vision Intervention to Promote Learning Motivation: A Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

This study reports on a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of vision intervention in foreign language learning motivation, synthesizing the quantitative results of 11 empirical studies involving 744 language learners. These studies were coded for seven features to identify factors moderating the effectiveness. The results revealed that vision intervention had a significant positive effect on students' learning motivation (g = .43, 95% CI: .23–.64). Moderator analysis indicated that educational level is a statistically significant variable moderating the effectiveness of vision interventions. Potential explanations for these findings were explored, and implications for instruction and directions for future research were discussed.

Key words: meta-analysis, vision intervention, motivation, foreign language learning.

1. Introduction

Second language (L2) learning is widely recognized as a motivational process (Papi & Hiver, 2022). Learners' success often depends on their enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Recent research has therefore focused on ways to enhance motivation in language classrooms. One approach is the use of vision, defined as a personalized image of a desired future self enriched by the imagined experience of achieving that goal (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Such vision can motivate learners by highlighting the gap between their present efforts and future aspirations (Dörnyei, 2009). Accordingly, teachers and language programs have begun to incorporate vision-building activities, such as the six-step visionary motivational programme proposed by Dörnyei and Hadfield (2013).

As research on vision-based practices increases, a systematic synthesis is needed to evaluate their overall effectiveness. Meta-analysis, which aggregates effect sizes across studies, provides a useful method for this purpose. However, existing meta-analyses have generally examined interventions based on multiple motivation theories rather than focusing specifically on vision intervention. To address this gap, the present meta-analysis

investigates the overall effects of vision intervention and explores factors that may moderate its effectiveness.

2. Literature review

2.1 Motivation in L2 learning

Second language learning is inherently a motivational process shaped by learners' perceptions of the value and experience of learning an additional language (Papi & Hiver, 2022). Motivation, which explains the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning behavior, has long been a central topic in L2 research. One influential early framework is Gardner's (1985) distinction between instrumental and integrative orientations. Instrumental motivation refers to learning a language for practical benefits such as employment or academic advancement, whereas integrative motivation reflects learners' desire to identify with the target language community. However, the concept of integrativeness has been increasingly questioned in the context of English as a global language.

To address these limitations, Dörnyei et al. (2006) proposed the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which conceptualizes motivation through learners' self-related images. Drawing on possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), the model highlights how future self-guides shape motivation. The L2MSS consists of three components: the Ideal L2 Self, representing the learner's desired future identity as a competent L2 user; the Ought-to L2 Self, reflecting attributes one believes they should possess to meet expectations or avoid negative outcomes; and the L2 Learning Experience, which refers to situation-specific motives derived from the immediate learning environment (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Empirical studies have consistently supported the model, demonstrating strong links between the Ideal L2 Self, attitudes toward L2 learning, and motivated behavior (e.g., Taguchi et al., 2009; Csizér & Kormos, 2011; You et al., 2016).

2.2 Vision and Vision Intervention

An effective way to enhance language learning motivation is to help learners develop a vivid vision of their future L2 self (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Vision refers to a sensory and emotionally rich representation of a desired future state in which learners imagine themselves successfully achieving their language learning goals (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Research has shown that such imagery can strengthen learners' motivational self-guides and sustain long-term engagement in language learning. For instance, You et al. (2016) incorporated imagery-related variables into the L2 motivation framework and proposed a model of visionary motivation.

Beyond correlational research, vision-based interventions have been implemented to deliberately enhance learners' motivation. Educational interventions are intentional instructional manipulations designed to influence learners' cognition, emotion, or behavior (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2015). Several studies have examined the effects of vision interventions on L2 motivation. Magid and Chan (2012) reported that vision-building programmes implemented in the UK and Hong Kong strengthened learners' Ideal L2 Self, although the study lacked a control group. Using an experimental design, Mackay (2014) similarly found that vision-based activities enhanced learners' motivational self-concept. Despite these findings, systematic syntheses of vision intervention research remain limited. Existing meta-analyses of motivational interventions have rarely focused specifically on vision-based approaches (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2015), highlighting the need to integrate empirical evidence on the effectiveness of vision interventions..

3. Method

To deepen our understanding of the relationship between vision and motivation in foreign language learning, and to offer FL instructors insights into implementing vision

interventions to enhance students' learning motivation, this meta-analysis seeks to examine the effect of vision intervention and analyze the variables moderating the effectiveness of vision in promoting learning motivation. The study is guided by the following research questions:

(1) To what extent does vision intervention affect students' learning motivation?

(2) What are the variables moderating the effectiveness of vision in promoting students' learning motivation?

3.1 Literature search

The literature search was conducted via Web of Science, ERIC and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. The key words and combination of key words included vision, vision intervention, vision enhancement, vision program, motivation, self-concept, second language acquisition/ learning and foreign language education/learning. Second, electronic and manual searches were also conducted in the issues of some widely cited journals in SLA and applied linguistics, including, but not limited to, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *Applied Linguistics*, *The Modern Language Journal*, *System*, *Language Learning*, *Language Teaching Research*, *TESOL Quarterly* and *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. Third, edited books and book chapters related to vision and self-concept (e.g., Csizér & Magid, 2014) were scanned for primary research. Fourth, the reference sections of the included literature were carefully examined.

3.2 Inclusion criteria

To be included in this meta-analysis, a study needed to possess the following characteristics:

1. It was empirical quantitative or mixed-method study and had a control group so that motivation effects after treatment could be observed by comparing the gains of experiment groups and those of the control group.
2. It included an adequately defined vision treatment and examined its effect on students' learning motivation, maybe in different types.
3. The effect of the vision intervention had to be distinguishable from the effects of other treatments.
4. It provided data from which to extract the effect sizes.
5. It was published in English.

Eventually, 11 reports (10 published studies and one Ph.D. dissertation) involving 744 language learners met all inclusion criteria.

3.3 Data coding

Lipsey and Wilson (2001) classified study descriptors in meta-analysis into three categories: substantive aspects (typically independent variables), methodological aspects (potential moderators explaining effect size variation), and bibliographic aspects (e.g., publication year and type). However, the boundaries among these categories are not always clear, as some features may shift across categories (Li, 2010). Following this framework, the full texts of the primary studies were reviewed and a coding protocol was developed to categorize their characteristics. The protocol included three categories: sample features, treatment features, and class features (see Sections 3.3.1–3.3.3). In addition, to better understand how learning motivation was operationalized in the 11 studies, the types of motivation measured were coded and treated as different outcomes in the meta-analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1 Types of motivation measured in the selected studies.

No.	Publication	Types of learning motivation
1	Mackay (2014)	ideal self; attitude toward language learning; WTC

2	Sato & Lara (2019)	ideal self; ought-to self; learning experience; intended learning effort
3	Yang (2019)	ideal self; ought-to self; learning experience; intended learning effort
4	Gertenbach (2019)	ideal self
5	Rocher Hahlin & Granfeldt (2021)	ideal self; intended learning effort
6	Safdari (2021)	ideal self; ought-to self; intended learning effort; attitude toward language learning
7	Sato (2021)	ideal self; intended learning effort; international posture
8	Carcamo & Carmona (2023)	ideal self; ought-to self; intended learning effort; Attitude toward language learning; WTC
9	Al-Murtadha (2023)	ideal self; learning experience; intended learning effort
10	Shafiee Rad & Alipour(2023)	ideal self; learning experience
11	Sharifi et al. (2023)	WTC

3.3.1 Sample feature

Sample features were coded as educational level, major, sample size and age. Learners' educational level was coded as "secondary", "university and "language institute". Learners' major was coded as "English major", "other major" "unreported", and "NA" (for students in secondary school or language institute who may not have a major).

3.3.2 Treatment feature

Treatment feature was coded as treatment length. The length of vision intervention varies with different studies. If the duration of a treatment was less than 8 weeks, it was coded as a "short treatment"; if it was 8 weeks or over, it was considered "long".

3.3.3 Class feature

Class feature was coded class type. Class type refers to whether courses were taken on an optional or mandatory basis. It was coded as "Mandatory course", "Optional course" and "Unreported".

3.4 Data analysis

All the analyses were performed by using professional meta-analysis software called Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA).

3.4.1 Effect sizes calculation

In social sciences and mental health research, the most used standardized effect sizes are Cohen's *d* and Hedges's *g* (Cuijpers, 2016). Due to the small number of primary studies, the present meta-analysis calculated Hedges' effect size *g*, using the pre-test and post-test comparisons of control and experimental groups.

3.4.2 Outliers

Because the sample size of this meta-analysis is relatively small, the presence of extreme values may have a substantial impact on the results. Extreme values were identified through the examination of *z*-scores. The effect sizes contributed by the primary studies under an independent variable or moderator variable were transformed into *z*-scores. Any absolute

value (regardless of whether it was positive or negative) larger than 2.0 was eliminated from the analysis (Li, 2010). The detected outliers included Sato (2021; the effect size associated with ought-to self) and Shafiee Rad & Alipour (2023; the effect size associated with ought-to self).

3.4.3 Fixed-Effects Versus Random-Effects Models

There are two models of meta-analysis that are based on different assumptions: fixed-effects (FE) models and random-effects (RE) models. As suggested by Borenstein et al. (2009) and Cuijpers (2016), a random-effect model should be assumed when the effect sizes of the included studies vary. Therefore, heterogeneity of the effect sizes was tested ($I^2 = 62.7\%$, $p < .001$) and a random-effect model was applied in the present meta-analysis.

3.4.4 Publication bias

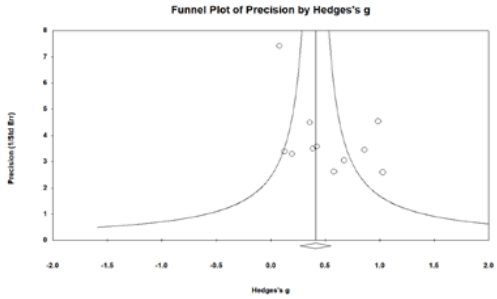

Figure 1 Availability bias: Funnel plot of precision by effect sizes.

In order to ascertain whether publication bias was present, a funnel plot was created (Figure 1). In general, studies were evenly distributed around the mean and appeared toward the medium part of the funnel. Then the fail-safe N test was carried out to further examine the possibility of publication bias. Fail-safe N suggests that an additional 92 studies (greater than the critical value of 65 (5k + 10) with a mean effect size of zero would be needed to change the mean effect size non-significant, indicating a low possibility of publication bias. A trim-and-fill analysis was conducted to identify the missing values that, if imputed, would alter the mean effect size. It was found that under the RE model, one value should be added to the left side to make the plot symmetrical, and imputing the value would change the mean effect size from 0.48 (95% CI = 0.26, 0.70) to 0.44 (95% CI = 0.23, 0.67).

4 Results

4.1 Effects of Vision Intervention

To address the first research question, the effect of vision intervention on students' learning motivation was calculated. In general, vision intervention had a small but near-medium effect on learning motivation (RE: g= 0.48, $p < .001$) and the 95% confidence intervals (0.26, 0.70) are above zero, indicating that vision intervention leads to improvements in language learners' motivation.

4.2 Analysis of moderating variables

To address the second research question, which explores the potential causes of variation between effect sizes, moderator analysis was conducted. The variance of true effects (I^2) indicated that 62.7% of heterogeneity could be attributed to systematic differences between studies rather than random error, justifying investigation of moderator variables. The analyzed moderator variables include, outcome measure, treatment length, class type, educational level, major and country. Table 3 presents detailed results of Q-tests of between-group differences within each categorical moderator variable including effect sizes (Hedges's g), standard errors, confidence intervals for each variable level, Q-value and P-value. Two separate meta-regression analyses were performed to determine whether age and sample size were significant predictors of the efficacy of vision intervention. The following results were obtained.

4.2.1 Analysis of outcome measure

To examine whether the outcome measure would influence the effectiveness of vision intervention, the studies were classified into 7 groups based on types of motivation measured: ideal self, ought-to self, learning

experience, intended learning effort, attitude toward language learning, and WTC. If a single study included multiple types of motivation, each type of motivation was coded separately, yielding an effect size average for each type. Because of this manner of coding the effect sizes for this moderator, there were 32 effect sizes, compared with 11 for the other moderator analyses.

The results showed that international posture (g =1.19) yielded a large effect. Ideal self (g = 0.55) and learning experience (g = 0.54) yielded a medium effect, WTC (g = 0.48) yielded a near-medium effect, while attitude toward language learning (g = 0.39), intended learning effort (g = 0.33) yielded a small effect. It should be noted that ought-to self (g = -0.17) yielded a near- small but negative effect. However, outcome measure did not moderate the effectiveness of vision intervention (Q = 12.27, p = .06).

4.2.2 Analysis of treatment length

To investigate whether the length of vision intervention had any statistically significant impact on vision effectiveness, the primary studies were coded into two groups: short and long. The results showed that long (g = 0.48) vision treatment and short (g = 0.49) vision treatment both had a near-medium effect on students' learning motivation. However, there might not be a causal relationship between the treatment length and vision effectiveness (Q = 0.01, p = .98).

4.2.3 Analysis of class type

Concerning class type, the primary studies were coded as mandatory (g = 0.46), optional (g = 0.38) or unreported (g = 0.64). The result revealed that the class type did not moderate the effectiveness of vision (Q = 0.62, p = .73).

4.2.4 Analysis of sample features

Regarding the sample features, the educational level, major, sample size and age of the participants in the included studies were analyzed. In terms of educational level, six studies conducted in university (g = 0.55) and three studies conducted in language institute (g = 0.72) yielded a medium effect, while two studies conducted in secondary school (g = 0.09) only yield a very small effect. Under the RE model, the difference was significance (Q = 10.90, p = < .01). In terms of major, vision intervention had a small effect on English majors (g = 0.37) and a small but near-medium effect on students in other major (g = 0.46) and students without a major (g = 0.44), and a large effect on students in unreported major (g = 0.99). The between-group differences were not significant under the RE model (Q = 5.50, p = .14).

The separate meta-regression analyses conducted on the two continuous moderator variables: sample size (p = .08) and learners' age (p = .83), showed that neither was a predictor of effect size variation.

Table 2 Categorical Moderator Variables, Effect Sizes, Standard Errors, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Each Moderator Variable Level

Moderator	*k*	Effect size (*g*)	Standard error	95% CI		*Q*-value	*P*-value
				Lower limit	Upper limit		
Outcome measure						12.27	0.06
Ideal self	10	0.55	0.11	0.33	0.76		
Ought-to self	4	-0.17	0.25	-0.66	0.33		
Learning experience	4	0.54	0.29	-0.02	1.10		
Intended learning effort	7	0.33	0.15	0.04	0.63		

Attitude toward language learning	3	0.39	0.16	0.08	0.70	
International posture	1	1.19	0.34	0.52	1.85	
WTC	3	0.48	0.25	-0.04	0.96	
Treatment length					0.01	0.98
Long	6	0.48	0.14	0.21	0.75	
Short	5	0.49	0.19	0.11	0.86	
Class type					0.62	0.73
Mandatory	6	0.46	0.17	0.12	0.80	
Optional	2	0.38	0.17	0.04	0.73	
Unreported	3	0.64	0.28	0.09	1.20	
Educational level					10.90	0.00*
Language institute	3	0.72	0.18	0.37	1.07	
Secondary	2	0.09	0.12	-0.15	0.33	
University	6	0.55	0.13	0.29	0.80	
Major					5.50	0.14
English	2	0.37	0.18	0.03	0.71	
Other major	3	0.46	0.19	0.08	0.83	
Unreported	1	0.99	0.22	0.55	1.42	
NA	5	0.44	0.19	0.07	0.81	

5 Discussion

5.1 The effect of vision intervention on FL learning motivation

This meta-analysis sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of vision intervention in FL learning motivation and to identify the moderator variables for its effectiveness. It was found that vision intervention had a small but near-medium positive effect on students' motivation to learn a foreign language (g = 0.48, p < .001). This suggests that implementing vision-related strategies can indeed enhance students' motivation, although the magnitude of this effect varies across different educational levels. The promoting effect of vision intervention in this meta-analysis is consistent with previously established empirical studies (Safdari, 2021; Sato, 2021; Al-Murtadha, 2023). Given the small number of studies included in our sample, these findings are suggestive rather than conclusive and should be interpreted cautiously (Vuogan & Li, 2023). More experimental research is needed to evaluate the value of vision intervention in FL learning motivation.

5.2 Factors moderating the effectiveness of vision intervention

Regarding the second research question about the factors moderating the effectiveness of vision, the moderator analysis was conducted. The analysis yielded one statistically significant moderator: educational level, suggesting that the effectiveness of feedback varied across different educational levels. Studies conducted in university (g = 0.55) and language institute (g = 0.72) yielded a medium effect, while studies conducted in secondary school (g = 0.09) only yield a very small effect. The results showed that vision intervention tended to be more effective for university and language institute students than for secondary school students. One explanation might be that learners at university or language institute have clearer goals and recognize the necessity of foreign languages for achieving these goals, such as pursuing higher education or careers where FL proficiency is critical. This awareness aligns with Dörnyei's

(2009) concept of considering failure which involved regular reminders of the limitations of not knowing the language. Students' recognition of the importance of English is one of the factors that might lead to the success of the intervention itself (Al-Murtadha, 2023). Another speculation is that university and language institute students often have immediate, practical needs for foreign language in their academic and professional lives, making the intervention more relevant and impactful. Macky (2014) concluded from her study that the more mature students in the intervention group demonstrated in their responses that they were more open to experimenting with new techniques (vision intervention) in the classroom. This suggests that a certain level of emotional maturity is necessary to derive the maximum benefit from these classroom techniques (Macky, 2014), which might also explain the different effects of vision interventions across various educational levels.

Although no significant differences were found among the mean effect sizes associated with different outcome measures (Q = 12.27, p = .06), it should be noted that ought-to self (g = -0.17) yielded a near-small but negative effect. It was the only type of motivation among all the 13 measurements that yielded a negative effect. This might be due to the fact that participants were most often required to creating the vison of their personally cherished and desired future states which more likely correspond to their ideal selves, with relatively little said about ought-to selves. Kormos et al. (2011) found that disassociation existed between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self. Theoretically, the ought-to self centers around the attributes that individuals believe they ought to possess to meet expectations and to prevent possible negative outcomes (Dörnyei, 2009). This dimension involves the more extrinsic (i.e., less internalized) types of instrumental motives. So, the negative effect of vision intervention on ought-to self also reflected, from another perspective, the development of intrinsic motivation as a result of the intervention. It might also confirm that in certain situations, the extrinsic motivation may undergo an internalization process that will become an intrinsic one (Noel et al., 2000).

6 Conclusion and implications

The present meta-analysis synthesized 11 quantitative studies on vision and learning motivation to assess the effectiveness of vision intervention on foreign language (FL) learning motivation and to explore the moderator variables influencing this effectiveness. The comprehensive examination yielded two major findings with practical implications. First, the findings demonstrated the effectiveness of vision intervention in enhancing learning motivation, except for the motivation type of ought-to self. In light of this, teachers could consider integrating vision intervention in a well-designed way into FL learning classrooms to boost students' motivation in foreign language learning. Since each step of the intervention involves various activities and techniques incorporated as classroom exercises and projects, the teacher's ability to implement these activities and techniques plays a crucial role in the success of the intervention. Second, moderator analysis revealed significant advantages for employing vision intervention at universities and language institutes rather than secondary schools. This suggests that factors such as student maturity, academic environment, and institutional support may influence the effectiveness of vision intervention. Thus, teachers should consider contextual factors when designing and implementing intervention programs to maximize their impact.

It is acknowledged that the present study still has some limitations. In terms of sample size, only 11 studies were included in this meta-analysis, necessitating more quantitative research on the effect of vision intervention on FL learning motivation to draw firmer conclusions. Therefore, this meta-

analysis should be regarded as a work in progress, requiring updates as additional studies become available. Since only one statistically significant variable emerged from the moderator analysis, further research is needed that involves learners of different educational levels, investigates learners of more foreign languages and involves language learners in various types of classes, such as those focused on developing specific skills (reading, writing, etc.). Consequently, additional research is necessary to elucidate the correlation between vision intervention and learning motivation under different conditions.

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