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Tae-Young Kim
Yoon-Kyoung Kim, Chung-Ang University
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The impact of resilience on L2 learners’ motivated behaviour and proficiency in L2 learning

Tae-Young Kim and Yoon-Kyoung Kim
Department of English Education, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea

ABSTRACT
This exploratory study focused on the factors that constitute second language (L2) learners’ resilience, and how these factors are related to L2 learning by investigating what relation resilience may have to motivated behaviour and proficiency in English learning. A total of 1620 secondary school learners of English participated in a questionnaire survey. By analysing the quantitative data, five resilience factors were extracted: perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation. Confirmative factor analysis using AMOS proved that these five factors are distinctive constructs. Among the factors, persistence was identified to play the most influential role in L2 learning. Persistence showed the highest correlations with, and the strongest explanatory power for, motivated behaviour and English proficiency. It is suggested that resilience can be further explored as an individual differences factor in L2 learning, which is involved in L2 learning process and outcomes.

Introduction
In the field of second language (L2) learning, learners’ individual differences have attracted the attention of researchers and practitioners in that successful learning can be attributed to some of the individual differences factors or interactions of the factors. In their review of individual differences research, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) stated that individual differences have consistently been found to be stable predictors for success in L2 learning. Relatively dominant research agendas relevant to L2 learning include language aptitude, learning styles and strategies, attitudes and motivation, and anxiety (see Dewaele 2012; Dewaele and MacIntyre 2014; Dörnyei 2006; Dörnyei and Ryan 2015; Ellis 2008). For example, various cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies were explored to identify which strategies can be more effective for more successful L2 learning (e.g. Park 1997; Phakiti 2003; Zhang and Seepho 2013). Also, as for L2 learning motivation, the concept of the ideal L2 self was proposed in the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei 2005, 2009), suggesting that L2 learners can achieve desirable levels of L2 proficiency when they create vivid ideal L2 images.

As such, research on individual differences in the field of L2 learning has highlighted that psychology of L2 learners can take an important part in L2 learning process and outcomes.
As a psychological aspect of learners, resilience has been dealt with in diverse areas such as developmental and educational psychology. Resilience refers to “the capacity to bounce back, to withstand hardship, and to repair yourself” (Wolin and Wolin 1993, 5). The language learning process can often be painstaking and time-consuming, and learners may encounter various difficulties while learning an L2. Resilience is likely to serve as an individual difference factor that helps L2 learners not give up easily and overcome some critical difficulties in the long-term L2 learning process. However, with only a few exceptions (e.g. Kamali and Fahim 2011; Nguyen et al. 2015; Oxford et al. 2007), there has been little attention to this promising factor in the field of L2 learning. The present study aimed to explore features of L2 learners’ resilience and the relation between learners’ resilience, their motivated behavior, and L2 proficiency.

Resilience: concept and its application in academic research

Resilience is a relatively new concept that emerged in the academic field during the 1970s. To start with a simple explanation, in a plain term, the Oxford English Dictionary defines resilience as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.” According to Masten (2001), “a group of pioneering psychologists and psychiatrists began to draw the attention of scientists to the phenomenon of resilience in children at risk for psychopathology and problems in development due to genetic or experiential circumstances” (227). Thus, the research focus of previous resilience studies was on what makes differences in the lives of children at risk. The question involved was “why some children cope successfully with major adversities in their lives” (Werner 2005, 91). The resilience that those children exhibit has been regarded as one of individual differences that allows them to effectively deal with risks and stress in their lives.

In this regard, resilience can be defined as the sum of an individual’s abilities that allow him or her to bounce back from adversity and even thrive in the face of difficult times. In order to list more specific characteristics of resilient people, Reivich and Shatte (2002) suggested seven key skills that make a person resilient. The skills were emotional regulation, impulse control, causal analysis, empathy, realistic optimism, self-efficacy, and reaching out. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage one’s emotions under pressure in order to show an adequate level of emotional expression. Impulse control is related to emotion regulation; however, impulse control requires the ability to regulate not only emotions but also actions and behaviours in a realistic way despite adversity. Causal analysis indicates that one needs to have the ability to precisely identify the causes of problems in order to overcome the problems. Empathy shows that resilient people are those who can apprehend others’ feelings and emotions. Realistic optimism refers to resilient people’s more positive and productive perspectives on the possibility to overcome adversity. Self-efficacy and reaching out are associated with beliefs and reliability; the former is confidence in oneself, while the latter is one’s capacity to ask for support when needed based on the belief in others.

Reflecting on Reivich and Shatte’s (2002) work, Shin, Kim, and Kim (2009) centred on what constitutes resilience among secondary school and university students in the Korean context. They also consulted literature on communication competence (i.e. Duran 1983; Wiemann 1977) and life satisfaction (Diener et al. 1985; Seligman 2002). As a result of itemising and examining the components of resilience proposed in the literature, they suggested that resilience includes three categories: control, positivity, and sociality. Control involved causal
analysis, emotion regulation, and impulse control. Positivity was comprised of gratitude, life satisfaction, and optimism. Sociality included relatedness, communication competence, and empathy. Shin et al. contended that those categories and sub-components could be employed in assessing the types and degree of adolescents’ resilience and also in developing effective guidance recommendations for counselling adolescents facing adversity.

A further focus regarding resilience has been on whether resilience pertains to academic achievement at school (e.g. Abolmaali and Mahmudi 2013; Kwek et al. 2013; Putwain et al. 2013; Reis, Colbert, and Hebert 2005; Scales et al. 2006; Speight 2009; Waxman and Huang 1997). In those previous studies, school achievement has often been utilised as a measure of positive adjustment outcomes (Jew, Green, and Kroger 1999). Resilient learners were reported to adapt better to school and reach higher academic success. For example, Kwek et al. (2013) conducted resilience research for domestic and international students at an Australian university. By using path analysis, they found that the participants’ resilience had a positive influence on their academic performance, without any differences between domestic and international students. In the field of L2 learning, by using a mixed-methods design combining resilience and storytelling surveys and semi-structured interviews, Nguyen et al. (2015) proved the positive correlations between the students’ experience of storytelling and L2 learners’ resilience. International students studying either Chinese or English in mainland China reported five protective factors1 for resilience in L2 learning: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, sense of purpose, and use of storytelling.

Given the previous studies on resilience, it seems clear that resilience plays a role in individual differences that result in better opportunities to succeed in learning. However, except only a few previous studies (Kamali and Fahim 2011; Nguyen et al. 2015; Oxford et al. 2007), the potential role of resilience particularly in L2 learning has not been fully investigated to date. The present study investigated if and how resilience plays an influential role in L2 learning. We first explored the characteristics of L2 learners’ resilience by using exploratory factor analysis, and the extracted factors were validated through confirmatory factor analysis. Then, we delved into the relations between resilience and L2 learning by focusing on its impact on motivated L2 learning behaviour and L2 proficiency. Two research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What are the structural characteristics of L2 learners’ resilience?
2. To what extent does L2 learners’ resilience influence their motivated L2 learning behaviour and L2 proficiency?

Method

Participants

A total of 1620 secondary school learners of English participated in the present study. They were drawn from 11 different schools located in a metropolitan area in Korea. Among the participating secondary school students, 442 students were junior high school students (27.30%) and 1178 were high school students (72.70%). As for the participants’ gender, 659 students were male (40.70%) and 912 were female (56.30%). Forty-nine students did not report their gender (3%). The number of participants in each grade is shown in Table 1.
Data collection

A questionnaire survey was used in order to collect data for the present study (see Appendix for questionnaire items). The questionnaire consisted of three parts, each of which asked about (1) resilience, (2) motivated behaviour in English learning, and (3) the participants’ background information such as gender and grade. In order to obtain information about L2 learners’ resilience, 26 items were adapted from Shin, Kim, and Kim (2009). Five items asking about the students’ motivated behaviour in English learning were developed based on Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009). Motivated L2 learning behaviour, the second construct in the questionnaire, indicates how much effort students are willing to make to learn an L2. It has been used as an important criterion measure when examining potential functions of particular factors, especially motivational factors, in L2 learning (e.g. Kim and Kim 2014; Kormos and Csizér 2008; Mezei 2014; Papi 2010; Taguchi, Magid, and Papi 2009). The items for resilience and motivated L2 learning behaviour were measured by a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Additionally, included in the background information section, the participants’ English proficiency was measured by their self-reported proficiency. More specifically, the students were asked to write down their latest in-house English test scores in school, based on the 100-point system. Their English test exams were written ones including multiple-choice items and short-answer questions focusing mostly on reading comprehension and grammar/vocabulary knowledge based on the students’ English textbooks.

Data analysis

The quantitative data collected by means of the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 and the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 21.0. For the first research question related to structural characteristics of L2 learners’ resilience, three types of statistical measures were performed: Varimax exploratory factor analysis, internal consistency reliability, and confirmatory factor analysis. To be specific, all of the 26 items measuring resilience were factor analysed with exploratory factor analysis. Five factors were extracted, and the number of items for each factor ranged from three to nine. In order to obtain a concise and balanced model for confirmatory factor analysis, three items that best reflected each factor were selected. Guided by Kouritzin, Piquemal, and Renaud (2009), the criterion for selecting items was higher factor loadings. After Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated for each factor with three items, confirmatory factor analysis was implemented using AMOS.
For the second research question investigating the influence of resilience on motivated behaviour and L2 proficiency, we employed the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, standard regression analysis, and sequential regression analysis. The correlation analysis was adopted to look into the relation of resilience factors to motivated behaviour and English proficiency. The standard regression analysis was used to examine which of the resilience factors have statistically significant influences on motivated behaviour and English proficiency. Finally, based on the results from the correlation analysis and standard regression analysis, we selected the resilience factors that were supposed to have significant effects on motivated behaviour or English proficiency. Additionally, the order in which the variables were entered was determined. The alpha was set at .05.

**Findings**

The structural characteristics of L2 learners’ resilience

In order to delve into the features of the underlying structure of Korean secondary school students’ resilience, the 26 items were factor analysed. As shown in Table 2, five factors emerged, accounting for 52.93% of the variance. Table 2 displays Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, item numbers, factor loadings, and eigenvalues for each of the five factors.

As mentioned in the previous section, in order to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, three items best reflecting each factor were selected based on higher factor loadings (Kouritzin, Piquemal, and Renaud 2009). Table 3 displays three questionnaire items for each of the five factors.

The first factor is labelled as Perceived Happiness. The items for this factor indicate that L2 learners’ perceptions of their lives are positive and satisfactory. The second factor is Empathy, which exhibits learners’ ability to share other people’s feelings and emotions. The items loading on the third factor demonstrate that L2 learners’ resilience is related to their social relations with others, especially with friends. The items for this factor were reverse-coded, and therefore, higher scores on those items stand for students’ Sociability. The fourth factor is Persistence, which shows that resilient L2 learners are likely to continue their efforts to solve problems in the face of difficulties. The final factor, Self-Regulation, indicates that the
ability to regulate one’s own thoughts, feelings, and emotions is a component of L2 learners’ resilience.

As presented in Figure 1, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to validate a five-factor solution for L2 learners’ resilience. In Figure 1, PH indicates perceived happiness, Em is empathy, Soci means sociability, Per is persistence, and SR indicates self-regulation. Each latent variable was explained by three observed variables with the highest factor loadings (Kouritzin, Piquemal, and Renaud 2009).

The specific statistics in Table 4 show that the model in Figure 1 had a satisfactory goodness of fit. That is, the extracted five factors proved to be effective components for understanding the structure of L2 learners’ resilience.

**The influence of resilience on motivated behaviour and L2 proficiency**

In order to look into whether resilience plays an influential role in secondary school students’ EFL learning, three steps were taken. The first step was to examine whether there are significant correlations between resilience factors, motivated behaviour, and L2 proficiency.

As presented in Table 5, all of the relationships proved to be statistically significant and positive. With regard to the relationship between the five resilience factors and motivated behaviour, persistence showed the highest correlation coefficient with motivated behaviour ($r = .367$), followed by perceived happiness ($r = .332$). Sociability had the lowest level of relationship with motivated behaviour ($r = .168$). In terms of the relations between resilience and English proficiency, persistence was found to have the highest level of correlation ($r = .208$), followed by perceived happiness ($r = .202$). Sociability also showed the lowest coefficient with proficiency ($r = .105$).

Additionally, Table 5 shows that all of the correlation coefficients between resilience and motivated behaviour were higher than those between resilience and L2 proficiency. This suggests that resilience is more closely related to motivated behaviour than to English proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Happiness</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I am satisfied with my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The conditions of my life are satisfactory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>I have most of the things that I find important in my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>When people are sad, angry, or embarrassed, I can find out what they are thinking about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I can recognise how people feel by their facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>When my friends are angry, I readily find out the reason for that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I have few friends to talk to with an open mind. (reverse-coded).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>I have few friends to help each other out. (reverse-coded).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>I think most of the people that I regularly meet would come to dislike me. (reverse-coded).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>When I have a problem, I try to solve it after reflecting on the cause of the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I first contemplate diverse possible solutions to a problem in order to solve it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can break through any distractions when having important things to do immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I believe that I am able to control my emotions when having difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>I can regulate my feelings when having discussions with my family or friends regarding sensitive social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am aware of what I am thinking no matter how hard the situation is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that the correlation between motivated behaviour and L2 proficiency was the highest ($r = .346$) compared with the correlations between resilience factors and L2 proficiency.

In the second step, standard regression analyses were carried out to observe the role of resilience in L2 learning. The five resilience factors were entered as independent variables, and first, motivated behaviour, then English proficiency was entered as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 6, perceived happiness, empathy, and persistence proved to be significant predictors for EFL students’ motivated behaviour in their English learning. The influences of the three factors were positive, and among them, persistence exhibited the strongest effect, while empathy had the smallest impact.

**Figure 1.** Confirmatory factor analysis for the five factors of resilience.

**Table 4.** Estimates of model-to-data fit for the confirmatory factor analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>CMIN/DF</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current data</td>
<td>2.557</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: CMIN/DF = ratio of chi-square to model degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardised RMR (root mean square residual)
Table 5. Correlations of resilience with motivated behaviour and English proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PH</th>
<th>Em</th>
<th>Soci</th>
<th>Per</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PH</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Em</td>
<td>.272***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.260***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.251***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soci</td>
<td>.370***</td>
<td>.373***</td>
<td>.348***</td>
<td>.332***</td>
<td>.248***</td>
<td>.202***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per</td>
<td>.311***</td>
<td>.373***</td>
<td>.348***</td>
<td>.332***</td>
<td>.248***</td>
<td>.202***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>.348***</td>
<td>.419***</td>
<td>.250***</td>
<td>.484***</td>
<td>.251***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>.332***</td>
<td>.248***</td>
<td>.168***</td>
<td>.367***</td>
<td>.251***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2P</td>
<td>.202***</td>
<td>.146***</td>
<td>.105***</td>
<td>.208***</td>
<td>.127***</td>
<td>.346***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PH = perceived happiness, Em = empathy, Soci = sociability, Per = persistence, SR = self-regulation, MB = motivated behaviour, L2P = L2 proficiency

***p < .001

Table 6. Standard regression analysis for the effect of resilience on motivated L2 learning behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficients</th>
<th>Standardised coefficients</th>
<th>Collinearity statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived happiness</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001

Table 7. Standard regression analysis for the effect of resilience on English proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficients</th>
<th>Standardised coefficients</th>
<th>Collinearity statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>28.259</td>
<td>4.894</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived happiness</td>
<td>4.368</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>2.113</td>
<td>1.093</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>5.555</td>
<td>1.179</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>−.515</td>
<td>1.140</td>
<td>−.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001

Table 8. Sequential regression analysis for the effect of resilience on motivated behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
<th>R² Change</th>
<th>Collinearity statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perceived Happiness</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001
Table 7 shows the results of standard regression with English proficiency as the dependent variable. Perceived happiness and persistence were found to have a significant positive impact on English proficiency. The effect of persistence was greater than that of perceived happiness.

In the sequential regression analysis shown in Table 8, persistence, perceived happiness, and empathy were entered in order as independent variables. The order in which the variables were entered was determined based on the results from the correlation analysis and standard regression analysis. As presented in Table 8, the three variables explained 19.2% of the variance. Persistence was the strongest predictor, accounting for 13.4% of the learners’ motivated behaviour in L2 learning, followed by perceived happiness (5%) and empathy (0.7%).

Table 9 shows that 6.3% of English proficiency was explained by persistence and perceived happiness. Persistence was also the strongest predictor, accounting for 4.3% of the variance, and perceived happiness predicted 2% of English proficiency.

**Discussion**

In the present study, the factors extracted from the questionnaire items on resilience were perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation (see Tables 2 and 3). In this section, we elaborate on the features of resilience found among the L2 learners based on the five factors. As for perceived happiness, the majority of the items were those adopted from Diener et al.’s (1985) study, which had developed and verified a scale to measure life satisfaction. Based on the life satisfaction scale, the items for perceived happiness in the present study asked about the participants’ perceptions of their sense of satisfaction and happiness about their lives. As a result, the L2 learners’ positive and grateful attitudes and feelings were expressed by the factor of perceived happiness. Note that, in the exploratory factor analysis, perceived happiness emerged as the first factor with the largest eigenvalue (see Table 2). According to DeVellis (2012) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), eigenvalue exhibits how large an amount of information can be captured by a factor. That is, the largest value denotes that the largest amount of variance of resilience can be explained by perceived happiness. Given this, perceived happiness is a relatively dominant component of L2 learners’ resilience, suggesting that more positive perceptions of life contribute to stronger resilience.

Empathy and sociability have been reported as a component of resilience in several studies (e.g. Gizir and Aydin 2009; Lee and Jo 2005; Luthar 1991; Masten and Reed 2002; Reivich, Seligman, and McBride 2011; Reivich and Shatte 2002; Shin, Kim, and Kim 2009). Empathy refers to one’s attitude of deeply understanding others’ thoughts and feelings. Sociability is a tendency to have a positive relationship with others. The two factors can be classified into...
social competence (Benard 2004). According to Luthar and Burack (2000), social competence is considered “a particularly useful indicator of children's overall positive adaptation or wellness” (30). Resilience is seen to result from “the operation of basic human adaptational systems” (Masten 2001, 227). Given this, social competence (including empathy and sociability) seems to enable learners to better adapt despite adversity by developing a supportive relationship with others.

As for another factor found in the present study, persistence, it has been revealed that the act of persistence in spite of adversity or discouragement was a component constituting resilience (Martin and Marsh 2006; Wagnild and Young 1990). Connor and Davidson (2003) also found a similar factor. Even though Connor and Davidson did not name the factor, the items for the factor in their study were associated with tenacity in making progress against challenging problems. Reflecting on the previous findings and the result in the present study, we suggest that persistence, or the willingness not to give up easily, can be a characteristic of stronger resilience. The final factor, self-regulation, is similar to emotion regulation suggested by Reivich and Shatte (2002). Reivich and Shatte argued that the use of a well-developed set of skills that help control emotions, attention, and behaviour is one of resilient people's characteristics. The items for self-regulation in the present study determined that the capacity to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and impulses reflects stronger resilience.

As for the relationship between the resilience factors and L2 learning, all of the factors were significantly correlated with motivated behaviour and proficiency in English learning (see Table 5). Additionally, persistence and perceived happiness had a positive influence on motivated behaviour (see Tables 6 and 8). The factors having a positive impact on English proficiency were persistence, perceived happiness, and empathy (see Tables 7 and 9). This shows that resilience is related to students’ L2 learning process and performance.

More importantly, resilience had a stronger impact on motivated behaviour ($R^2 = .192$) than on L2 proficiency ($R^2 = .063$). The influence of resilience on proficiency is relatively weak; its explanatory power is 6.3%. The explanatory power of resilience for motivated behaviour (19.2%) was approximately three times larger than that for proficiency. This implies that resilience has a direct impact on motivated behaviour while exerting an indirect effect on L2 proficiency.

Furthermore, the relationship between motivated behaviour and L2 proficiency was stronger than that between each of the resilience factors and L2 proficiency. The correlation coefficients of the factors with proficiency ranged from .105 to .208. The coefficient between motivated behaviour and proficiency was .346. Given this, in the indirect relationship between resilience and L2 proficiency, motivated behaviour is likely to function as an intervening variable. In order to explore the internal structure between resilience, motivated behaviour, and proficiency, a sophisticated structural equation modelling (SEM) would be required for future research.

Among the resilience factors that emerged in the present study, persistence proved to take the most influential role in the L2 learners’ English learning. Persistence was the most powerful predictor for both motivated L2 learning behaviour and L2 proficiency. However, its impact on motivated behaviour was even stronger than that on L2 proficiency. A relatively powerful causal relationship seems to exist between persistence in resilience and learners’ intended efforts in L2 learning.
This result is in agreement with Martin’s (2002, 2003) proposal that persistence is a factor contributing to academic resilience. In his model of academic resilience, it was supposed that students who possess persistence are “resilient to academic setbacks and deal with schoolwork pressures and stress effectively” (Martin 2002, 41). He finally suggested that students need to be encouraged to develop motivated behaviour in the form of persistence. From this suggestion and the findings in the present study, we can conclude that persistence is a dominant factor for encouraging L2 learners to continue their efforts despite pressure and stress from learning the target language. That is, L2 learners’ capacity to persist in doing what they think is important and solving problems that they face would lead them to engage more enthusiastically in L2 learning.

**Summary and implications**

In order to explore L2 learners’ resilience, 26 questionnaire items on resilience were factor analysed and five factors were found: perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation. This five-factor solution was validated by confirmatory factor analysis, suggesting that those factors represent resilience. The present study further focused on the factors’ relations with motivated L2 learning behaviour and L2 proficiency. In terms of correlations with the two criterion measures, all of the factors showed significant positive relations, with persistence possessing the highest correlation coefficients. In standard regression analyses, persistence, perceived happiness, and empathy exhibited a significant positive effect on motivated behaviour, and persistence and perceived happiness were significant predictors for English proficiency. Through sequential regression analyses, persistence proved to be the most influential factor for explaining motivated behaviour and proficiency.

However, the present study had a limitation in that the participants’ L2 proficiency was measured through their self-reported English test scores. In future research, information about participants’ proficiency may be obtained by means of other methods, such as administering an English proficiency test to participating L2 learners. One thing that could be beneficial in future studies is to use English proficiency tests that not only are administered to the participants especially for the purpose, but that also take a broader holistic approach than the one used in the present study. Such an approach will enable us to obtain information regarding learners’ ability to use the target language holistically in real-life situations (Richards and Renandya 2002). A more accurate picture of the relationship between students’ language profile and their psychological constructs such as resilience can be explored in the future.

In the present study, resilience was found to play a role in L2 learning. Particularly, it was closely related to motivated L2 learning behaviour. The present study is meaningful in revealing a psychological mechanism that can help L2 learners stay motivated to make efforts in L2 learning. We suggest that resilience can be further explored as an individual differences factor in L2 learning. Specifically, there seems to be a structural relationship between resilience, motivated behaviour, and L2 proficiency, with motivated behaviour playing a mediating function between the other two. This internal structure needs to be investigated by using SEM.

Furthermore, according to Kim’s (2012) quasi-longitudinal study, L2 learning motivation was found to gradually decrease from Grade 3 to Grade 12. Additionally, the phenomenon
of L2 learners’ demotivation has been a major concern in the field of L2 learning motivation. The findings of the present study point to the possibility that resilience is associated with L2 learning motivation and demotivation. For example, particular learners may be more highly resilient to demotivating factors. Further research needs to be conducted in order to validate relationships between resilience, motivation, and demotivation. In this way, it would be possible to find out more effective ways to prevent L2 learners’ motivation from decreasing in the face of demotivating situations.

**Note**

1. Protective factors indicate the factors helpful for people to protect themselves from challenges or adversities in times of crisis.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Notes on contributors**

**Tae-Young Kim** (PhD OISE/University of Toronto) is an associate professor in the Department of English Education at Chung-Ang University, where he teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in applied linguistics. His research interests include ESL/EFL learning/teaching motivation, demotivation, sociocultural theory and qualitative methodology. He has published over 90 papers on various topics in L2 motivation and L2 learning. His recent studies have been published in the Canadian Modern Language Review, System, the Asia-Pacific Education Researcher and Asia Pacific Education Review.

**Yoon-Kyoung Kim** is a PhD candidate at Chung-Ang University. Her current research interests involve changes in L2 learning motivation/demotivation and teacher motivation/demotivation. Her recent studies have been published in System, the Asia-Pacific Education Researcher and Porta Linguarum.

**References**


Appendix

Questionnaire items for resilience and motivated behaviour

I. Resilience

1. Perceived happiness

Item 13. I am satisfied with my life.

Item 5. The conditions of my life are satisfactory.
Item 22. I have most of the things that I find important in my life.
Item 12. If I write down all of the things that I feel grateful for, there will be a long list.
Item 23. I am sure that everything will be fine even in difficult situations.
Item 6. I think my hard work always pays off.
Item 21. When I look around me, there are few things that I feel grateful for. (reverse-coded)
Item 14. I find it a good attitude to believe that “I can solve any difficult problems.” (reverse-coded)

Item 4. I have few things to feel grateful for. (reverse-coded)

2. Empathy
Item 17. When people are sad, angry, or embarrassed, I can find out what they are thinking about.
Item 8. I can recognise how people feel by their facial expressions.
Item 26. When my friends are angry, I readily find out the reason for that.
Item 18. I am aware of what is wrong in most circumstances.
Item 25. I can lead conversations well in accordance with a specific atmosphere or interlocutor.
Item 10. When I think of something, I know how it affects my feelings.
Item 16. I am good at finding the right words for what I would like to express.

3. Sociability
Item 15. I have few friends to talk to with an open mind. (reverse-coded)
Item 24. I have few friends to help each other out. (reverse-coded)
Item 7. I think most of the people that I regularly meet would come to dislike me. (reverse-coded)

4. Persistence
Item 9. When I have a problem, I try to solve it after reflecting on the cause of the problem.
Item 1. I first contemplate diverse possible solutions to a problem in order to solve it.
Item 3. I can break through any distractions when having important things to do immediately.
Item 20. I easily give up when things go wrong. (reverse-coded)

5. Self-regulation
Item 2. I believe that I am able to control my emotions when having difficulties.
Item 19. I can regulate my feelings when having discussions with my family or friends regarding sensitive social issues.
Item 11. I am aware of what I am thinking no matter how hard the situation is.

II. Motivated L2 learning behaviour

Item 1. If English teachers assign more homework, I willingly do it.
Item 2. If another English class is offered, I would like to take it.
Item 3. I often reflect on what I have learned in English classes.
Item 4. I am determined to push myself to learn English.
Item 5. If English were not taught in school, I would try to obtain lessons in English somewhere else.