College Students' Possible L2 Self Development in an EFL Context during the Transition Year

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Abstract

In the field of second language learning motivation, the studies on process-oriented nature of possible L2 selves are scarce. In order to address this research gap, this study explored how a group of five Chinese non-English-major undergraduates developed their possible L2 selves during the transition year from high school to university. The content analysis of 4 focus group interviews, 202 journal entries, and 50 post-diary interviews show that in the first academic year, the five participants experienced a four-stage cyclical process of developing their possible L2 selves, namely, (a) generating multiple possible L2 selves, (b) selecting a possible L2 self to pursue, (c) realizing the selected possible L2 self, and (d) incorporating the realized possible L2 self into the present self scheme. More specifically, the selected possible L2 self was realized through elaboration of relevant imagination and alignment with a larger community. The study has enriched our understanding of the mechanism of possible L2 self development and shed light on motivating undergraduates to learn English in an EFL context.

Keywords: possible L2 selves, developing process, college students, EFL context

1. Introduction

English, as a lingua franca, has become instrumental in the process of economic growth, modernization, and globalization. The classical concept of "integrativeness" (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959) is losing its effectiveness in explaining the motivations of English language learners in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where no salient English-spoken community is present for integration (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Ryan, 2006). Given the critiques on the appropriateness of "integrativeness" in EFL contexts, Dörnyei (2005a, 2009) proposes the L2 (i.e., second language) Motivational Self System based on his understanding of possible self theories in social psychology. The model consists of three components, namely, "ideal L2 self", "ought-to L2 self", and "L2 learning experience" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 27). This motivational system has provided an alternative and reasonable explanation of L2 learning motivation in EFL contexts.

Nevertheless, as argued by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009, p.354), the tripartite construct of possible L2 self has the risk of "ending up with a rather static category system that does not take into account sufficiently the process-oriented nature of motivation". In literature, the studies on process-oriented nature of possible L2 selves are scarce. This concern might be addressed through a longitudinal study on the development of possible L2 selves (Magid, 2012; McEown et al., 2014; Takahashi, 2013).

The growing dissatisfaction with the concept of integrativeness in the field of L2 learning motivation has manifested itself in China. For instance, Gao et al. (2004) conducted a bottom-up categorization of Chinese undergraduates' English learning motivations, and found that the classical instrumental-integrative division could not precisely identify the diverse motivations of Chinese learners. In recent years, self perspectives have enlightened some scholars when they examined Chinese English learners' motivations. Taguchi et al. (2009) validated the L2 Motivational Self System in China, Japan, and Iran, and found that the ideal L2 self could replace "integrativeness" in all three contexts. Although the tripartite construct of the possible L2 selves has been demonstrated in China to some extent, the international concern about the dynamics of possible L2 selves still exists in this special EFL context.

This study attempted to address the international concern about possible L2 self development through a longitudinal case study in Mainland China. It emerged from a large qualitative project that explored non-English-major Chinese freshmen's learning experience under a high-stakes college English exam by gaining insights from possible self theories (Zhan, 2009). The relationship between the examination influences on learning and the imagination of possible exam-related self has been reported in another paper (Zhan & Andrews, 2014). This study focused on identifying the pattern of possible L2 self development. How EFL learners develop their possible L2 selves in their English learning during the transition year from high school to university was explored in a systematic way.

2. The L2 Motivational Self System and Its Dynamic Nature

Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that possible selves are a lifelike representation of one's future self, which involves ideas, portrait, and senses, and are self-relevant goals and aspirations or fears, as is often the case. In addition, they suggest that a person can generate multiple possible selves. Higgins (1987) proposes a dichotomous division of the possible self, namely, ideal self and ought-to self. The ideal self outlines the traits that one would like to possess, while the ought-to self refers to the traits that an individual thinks one should possess. Higgins' classification and definition of ideal and ought-to selves constituted the basis of conceptualization of the possible selves identified in this study. Higgins (1996) suggests the self-discrepancy theory to explain why one's possible self could guide his/her actions. He speculates that a person always aspires to fill in the gaps between his/her present self and possible self, thereby triggering corresponding actions.

Based on psychological research on possible selves, Dörnyei (2005a, 2009) developed a L2 Motivational Self System, as a direct consequence of the growing dissatisfaction with the concept of "integrativeness" in L2 learning motivation field. The L2 Motivation Self System has indicated three primary sources of L2 learning motivation:

a) The learners' internal desire to become an effective L2 user;

b) Social pressures coming from the learners' environment to master the L2; and

c) The actual experience of being engaged in the L2 learning process. (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013, p. 439)

The L2 Motivation Self System has been the basis of several studies in Iran, China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Pakistan. Some of the studies aimed to validate the L2 Motivational Self System (e.g., T. Kim & Y. Kim, 2014; Magid, 2014; Papi, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). Other studies examined the role of the ideal L2 self in predicting motivated behavior and English learning achievement, and identified its relationship with learning anxiety, gender, and L3 self (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Henry, 2009; Papi, 2010). Generally, the ideal L2 self has a positive role in English learning, particularly for girls.

Dörnyei attempts to link his L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005a, 2009) with his process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2005b; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998) and finds that specifying how possible selves correspond with the motivational process happening during the actional stage can be difficult. However, Dörnyei provides tentative solutions to the aforementioned problem, as informed by the works of Ushioda (2001) and Norton (2001). Ushioda (2001) proposes that the ongoing elaboration of personal goals is unavoidable under motivational change. Norton (2001) believes that "imagination" and "alignment," in Wenger's (1998) proposal of the three modes of belonging to a community, are central to understanding the participants' non-participation in reality.

Dörnyei's assumption on the positive role of imagination during the actional stage of motivational processing has been supported by some studies. Dörnyei and Chan (2013) investigated 178 senior secondary Chinese students' future L2 self images and their relation with the intended efforts and learning achievement. They found the positive influence of mental imagery on future self-guides. Sampson (2012) conducted an action research on the relationship between individual possible self-images, self-enhancement activities and language learning motivation in a Japanese university. Self-enhancement activities which were developed to enhance students' visions of possible L2 selves were found to affect their motivation of language learning and strengthen their self-regulated learning. Magid and Chan (2012) also found the activities which were developed to enhance the learners' visualization of their ideal L2 selves could motivate them to learn and make them more confident in language learning.

Despite of the efforts that some researchers have made on the role of imagination in motivation processing, the entire possible L2 self developing process has not been explored in an empirical way to the authors' best knowledge. Thus, it is worth conducting such a study to enhance our understanding of the dynamic nature of possible L2 selves.

3. The Study

3.1 Context of the Study

A university in Jiangsu Province where the first author once worked, labeled as X University, was chosen as the research site. The first author enjoyed ease of access considering that she was closely acquainted both with the institution and with the College English staff.

The first academic year, which is the transition year from high school to university, was the period chosen for investigation, given that changing self often happens "in response to critical challenges and transitions" (Frazier & Hooker, 2006, p. 48). The schedule of the College English course in the first academic year is summarized in Table 1 for readers to better understand the participants' choice of possible L2 self in different periods. The University English Test (UET) is arranged twice every term, and its results decide students' credits for the College English course. Some undergraduates take the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) near the end of their first academic year because of their good performance in the first final-term UET. The CET-4 results partly determine the student's attainment of a bachelor's degree. Therefore, both of these are high-stakes examinations for the students in X University.

Table 1. Learning schedule of College English course for freshmen in the academic year of 2007-2008 in X University

The middle of Oct.2007	Beginning of the first semester
Late Nov. 2007	Mid-term University English Test (UET)
The middle of Jan.2008	Final-term UET and the close of the first semester
Late Feb.2008	Beginning of the second semester
Early May 2008	Mid-term UET
21st June 2008	The College English Test Band 4 (for test candidates)
Late June 2008	Final-term UET and the close of the second semester

3.2 Participants

All participants participated in the study of their own volition, which encouraged them to supply rich data over a long period. In addition, when they were being chosen, their English learning motives were considered as a particularly important factor. At the beginning of the project, the first author invited two teachers who taught liberal arts and science majors to recommend 24 students with different levels of English proficiency to take part in four focus group interviews, which were primarily adopted to understand the freshmen's English learning motivations and their previous learning experience. Based on the content analysis of focus group interviews, five participants with obvious English learning motives that could be put on a continuum from "examination direction" and "non-examination direction" were selected. All of them attended the CET-4 near the end of first academic year. All participants expressed their informed consent to participate and were labeled by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

3.3 Data Collection

The data were obtained mainly through two qualitative methods, namely diary study and post-diary interviews, due to their semi-structure nature, which is " kept open and fluid so that it can respond in a flexible way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37).

Diaries are an appropriate instrument for collecting data about the participants' thoughts of their possible selves in EFL learning "that are not available to an outside observer" (Curtis & Bailey, 2009, p. 70). The participants were required to write at least one diary entry per week in Chinese about their English learning behavior, their motives of English learning, and other reasons underlying their learning behavior. The diary entries were collected once every fortnight. After the five participants took the CET-4, they were invited to contemplate on their learning experience during the first year and describe their future learning objectives and plans in the final diary entry. In total, 202 diary entries were collected across the diary-keeping period. The distribution of diary entries was far from even. Lee and Karen contributed 53 and 43 diary entries, respectively, whereas the number of entries was comparable across Yan, Alma, and Jasmine (between 35 and 36). Similarly, the length of the entries varied. The longest diary entry (Jasmine's) had 1,660 Chinese characters, whereas the shortest (Yan's)

had only 22 Chinese characters.

The five participants were individually interviewed in Chinese after each time the diary entries were collected. The purpose of the post-diary interviews was twofold: first, to confirm what the participants wrote in their diary entries; and second, to explore their in-depth thoughts such as their English learning motives and other influential factors, which were not expressed explicitly or clearly in their diary entries. A total of 10 post-diary interviews were conducted with each participant. All interviews were audio-recorded. The length of each interview varied. The longest interview lasted for about one hour, whereas the shortest lasted for about 15 minutes.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in an inductive manner comprising three steps, namely initial coding, axial coding, and focus coding. In the first step, the first author literally read the transcription of the interview data and printed diary entries for times, and generated lots of initial codes, such as a fluent English speaker, an English user, a CET-4 passer, study plan, parents' expectation, and peers' pressure. After initial coding, the first author developed a category system through axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The initial categories created in open coding were integrated into broader categories. For example, the first author combined fluent English speaker, English user, proficient English learner, and a popular good English leaner into a large group of ideal L2 self. The first two steps were only the basic stage of data analysis, in which the raw data were condensed to some extent, and thus, the relationship embedded in the data was relatively easier to identify than those in the raw data. Determining the focus coding (i.e., the pattern of possible L2 self development) was not easy. It was necessary for the first author to reread the raw data, refine the existing codes, and further modify the original categories drawing the clues found in literature for several rounds. Finally, the four phases of the possible L2 self development were conceptualized, namely generating multiple possible L2 selves, selecting a possible L2 self to pursue, realizing the selected possible L2 self, and incorporating the realized possible L2 self into the present self scheme.

To ensure the trustworthiness of data interpretation, the first author consulted experts in language motivation areas about the classification of possible L2 selves and conceptualization of the developing process. All extracts in the part of findings were translated from Chinese to English by the first author, with a member, who is proficient in both English and Chinese, checking the translations.

4. Findings

4.1 Generating Multiple Possible L2 Selves

The five participants appeared to have generated multiple possible L2 selves during the transitional year. These multiple possible L2 selves could be further classified into two categories, namely ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, according to Higgins' (1987) classification.

Alma talked about one of her possible L2 selves at the beginning of her college study:

I have been interested in English since I learned English. I especially admire people who can talk fluently with foreigners (native English speaker, authors' addition)… I want to improve my English in college. I strive to speak English fluently… I want to understand what foreigners say and also express what I'd like to say. (Alma, focus group interview, 4 Nov. 2007)

The above extract shows that Alma admired persons who can fluently communicate with native English speakers and aspired to become such a person. Therefore, her possible L2 self falls into the category of ideal L2 self.

Karan recalled her possible exam-related self after she took the exam.

I learned English in order to pass the CET-4, as well as the exams organized by the university. If I failed those examinations, I would not graduate smoothly. This would make my parents disappointed with me. (Karan, post-diary interview, 20 Sept. 2008)

The above extract indicates that Karan was not very interested in English. Her purposes of learning the language were only to avoid possible negative outcomes, such as failure to obtain a graduation certificate and parents' disappointment with her. Therefore, her possible L2 self can be regarded as an ought-to L2 self.

Learning for a specific exam is normally regarded as instrumentality, which is an extrinsic motive for learners (Williams & Burden, 1997). However, from a self perspective, instrumentality can be associated with either an ideal L2 self or an ought-to L2 self, depending on the extent of the internalization of the extrinsic motives (Dörnyei, 2005a). In this study, Yan's possible L2 self related to the CET-4 could be seen as an ideal L2 self, as shown below:

If I gain high marks in the CET-4, I will be qualified to take the spoken test. Not everyone could take it. In that case, I will be more competitive and more likely to succeed in my future career. (Yan's diary, 13 Nov. 2007)

The above excerpt indicates that Yan seemed to relate the CET-4 with her professional success, internalizing such potential as a strong motive in preparation for the CET-4.

Table 2 summarizes the multiple possible L2 selves held by each participant during their first year of College English learning. Except for Karen, all the participants had ideal L2 selves. These ideal L2 selves reflected their expectations of becoming a proficient English speaker or user or a popular good English learner in class. Except for Yan, all the participants had ought-to L2 selves. These ought-to L2 selves were related to their obligations to pass or obtain good marks in various English examinations or becoming a good student in teachers' eyes. The distinguishing finding is that all five participants had a possible L2 self related to the CET-4. However, this possible L2 self slightly differed for each participant. As previously mentioned, Karan regarded a CET-4 self as her obligation, whereas Yan saw it as her inspiration.

Table 2. Multiple possible L2 selves constructed by each participant in their first-year English learning at college

Name	Ideal L2 selves	Ought-to L2 selves
Alma	• A fluent English speaker	• A good student • A successful examination taker (including the CET-4)
Yan	• A popular good English learner in class • A successful certificate holder (including the CET-4 certificate)	• No ought-to L2 self
Jasmine	• A proficient English learner	• A CET-4 passer
Lee	• An English user	• A successful CET-4 taker
Karen	• No ideal L2 self	• A CET-4 passer • A UET passer

4.2 Selecting a Possible L2 Self to Pursue

All the participants had to select only one possible L2 self to pursue in a specific period of time. The confliction between participants' multiple possible L2 selves forced some participants to discard one when deciding to pursue the other. For example, Jasmine recalled the confliction between her ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self in her diary entry:

Passing CET-4 was a short-term objective for me. ... it might force me to recite words and do past papers. However, I took it as an obligation. Such passive learning did not help me become proficient in English. (Jasmine's diary, 30 June 2008)

According to Jasmine's narrative, she thought her ideal L2 self as a proficient English learner radically contradicted her ought-to L2 self as a CET-4 passer. Therefore, in her case, Jasmine discarded her ideal L2 self as a proficient English learner the moment she pursued her CET-4 self.

Nevertheless, other possible L2 selves were not necessarily discarded in a haphazard manner. Some participants experienced competition between multiple possible L2 selves in their English learning. For example, Lee mentioned he always fought between his "long-term goal" and "short-term goal" as the CET-4 approached, as follows:

Sometimes, I get frustrated with doing past papers. Then I chose to read English magazines, which I am interested in. But I always felt guilty when I indulged in reading such extracurricular materials. So I would go on preparing for the CET-4 again. This is like my long-term goal combating my short-term goal. (Lee's post-diary interview, 1 April 2008)

4.3 Realizing the Selected Possible L2 Self

The realization of the selected possible L2 self was achieved in two manners, namely alignment with a large community and elaboration of relevant imagination. The study revealed that the five participants continuously aligned their possible L2 selves with a larger community, which includes their family, peers, college, and even

future employers. "Alignment" can either magnify or destroy their sense of the possibility by assorting their energy and practices with a large community (Wenger, 1998). The following excerpts show this point of view:

Maybe my classmates did not work hard before, but during this period (a period when the CET-4 approached, authors' addition), they allocate much time in preparation for the CET-4. I need to invest more time and more energy into my CET-4 preparations. Otherwise, I would lag behind. (Alma, post-diary interview, 12 March 2008)

They (Alma's parents, authors' addition) don't know what I exactly learn at college. They just judge my progress based on my exam results. You know, the CET-4 is a nationwide exam. My parents think it is authoritative. At least I should pass the CET-4 in the first year. This is like an honor to my family. (Alma, post-diary interview, 20 Sept. 2008)

The above excerpts illustrates that Alma amplified her sense of being an examination-oriented learner under the influence and pressure of her peers and parents.

Wenger (1998, p. 187) argues that alignment entails such processes as "negotiating perspectives, finding common ground". Yan was the best example, having two ideal selves, namely a popular good English learner in class and a successful certificate holder. At first, she thought that a popular student in class should speak fluent English rather than obtain high marks in the CET-4. Gradually, as her knowledge of the CET-4 increased, she came to think that her ideal CET-4 self could be integrated with her other ideal L2 self.

I regarded the CET-4 not only as an important English exam, but also as an opportunity to improve my English integrated ability. Therefore, gaining high marks means much to me. I think taking the CET-4 is a way to improve my English proficiency. (Yan's diary, 1 July 2008)

Once the participants pursued a selected possible L2 self, they seemed to maintain it by elaborating their imagination. Lee had a vivid and detailed future image of an English user in the first semester. He described such image in a post-diary interview.

Outside class, I would use English in my daily life just as if I lived and studied in a foreign country. I would read English newspapers, as well as watch English TV programs to learn the latest news in the world. I would watch English films and English magazines to entertain myself. I would read professional articles in English to understand the technology I should master. (Lee, post-diary interview, 20 Nov. 2007)

Lee's imagination of an English user appeared to project on his learning behavior during the first semester.

Karan talked and wrote about her idea of how and what a CET-4 taker would do for several times after she decided to pursue her ought-to L2 self as a CET-4 passer.

My high school teacher once told us that there would be a lot of new words in the reading comprehension exercises in the CET-4. So I will spend time on reciting words. This is my first though. (Karan, Focus Group Interview, 31 Oct. 2007)

In today's class, my teacher emphasized the importance of the exercises in the workbook. For example, most of the reading exercises are chosen from the CET-4 past papers. If I want to pass the CET-4, I have to practice reading comprehension exercises very often. (Karan's diary, 28 Dec. 2007)

I plan to choose one or two complete sets from the past papers ranging from 1995 to 2007 to do every week. After answering these papers, I will correct my answers… Besides, I will allot certain time to recite the words and phrases in Xinhuo (the name of a CET-4 vocabulary book, authors' addition) every day. I feel that the exercises following the vocabulary are very good. … Therefore, I also plan to do these exercises after reciting the words…(Karan's diary, 29 Feb., 2008)

The above excerpts show that Karan's possible CET-4 self which guided her examination preparation became clearer and more concrete as time went by.

4.4 Incorporating the Realized Possible L2 Self into the Present Self Scheme

Interestingly, all participants chose to pursue their possible CET-4 self as the CET-4 approached. Fortunately, all participants passed the CET-4. The participants, except for Yan, seemed to realize their possible CET-4 self and incorporate it into the scheme of their present L2 selves and proceeded to think of other possibilities. For example, after taking the CET-4, Alma reflected on her studies and wanted to be a fluent English speaker again. Her ideal L2 self was activated by an incident in a supermarket where she was working during the summer vacation. Alma met a foreigner who needed help, but she could not communicate with the foreigner very well. Because of this incident, she was laughed at by her co-worker, a middle-aged, uneducated woman. This incident stimulated her to think about how to realize her ideal L2 self again.

Yan did not realize her ideal L2 self as a successful CET-4 taker. She expressed her disappointment and hopes for the near future.

I am very upset about the results of the CET-4. I missed the opportunity of taking the spoken test of the CET-4. I don't know if I have a second chance to take the CET-4 this semester. If I had a second chance, I would take the CET-4 again. (Yan, post-diary interview, 19 Sept. 2008)

The above excerpt indicates that Yan would continue to pursue her possible CET-4 self if permitted.

5. Discussion

This study explored how a group of non-English-major undergraduates developed their possible L2 selves during the transition year from high school to university. Quite logically, possible selves should exist first, and then guide and control behavior. Therefore, the generation of a possible L2 self is the prerequisite for a possible self-guide. In this study, the participants generated multiple possible L2 selves, which could be categorized as either ideal or ought-to. This finding verifies Markus and Nurius' (1986) assumption on multiple possible selves. All participants had CET-4 self as the CET-4 approached. Such instrumentality was linked to both ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, which echoes Magid's (2012) findings. Regardless of the ideal L2 self or ought-to L2 self held by the participants in their minds, it exerted a motivational influence on their learning behavior once it was selected to be pursued.

However, determining which possible L2 self to pursue is not a one-off process, considering that the selection of one possible self seemed not to automatically exclude other possibilities. Some participants were reported to experience the competition of multiple possible L2 selves in their English learning from time to time. Interestingly, all five participants chose to pursue their possible CET-4 self as the CET-4 approached for immediate achievement, which has been identified as the most striking motivation shared by Chinese undergraduates (Gao et al., 2004).

The five participants maintained their chosen possible L2 selves through continuous alignment with a large community. Norton (2001, p. 164) suggests, "the notion of alignment becomes central because it is through alignment that learners do what they have to do to take part in a larger community". Norton (2010) further suggested that families, schools, communities, and the larger society might decide community practices. Similarly, Magid (2012) found the role of Chinese family on L2 learning motivations. In this study, all of the participants experienced alignment of their possible L2 selves with larger communities in which they lived and studied. Most participants believed that the outside world, including peers, family, college, and society, placed expectations on them to obtain a CET-4 certificate. Their alignment with the larger community amplified their sense of possible CET-4 self, and thus, decreased or even rejected their sense of non-CET-4 possible L2 selves as the CET-4 approached. Likewise, the alignment with a large community entails a negotiation process, which enabled Yan, one of the participants, to find the common grounds between her two ideal L2 selves.

Likewise, the role of elaborated imagination was highlighted in realizing the selected possible L2 self, which echoes the findings of some recent studies on vision and motivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Magid & Chan, 2012; Sampson, 2012). Furthermore, the elaboration of imagination is a process (Dörnyei, 2005a). For example, the participants' imagination of a CET-4 possible self became more vivid and concrete as the CET-4 approached.

Finally, all participants, except for Yan, discarded their possible CET-4 self and continued to ponder other possibilities in the following academic year. Their possible CET-4 self was incorporated into their present self scheme and became part of their achieved L2 selves.

Figure 1 figuratively demonstrates four cyclical stages of possible L2 self development. An English learner first constructs his/her multiple possible selves, and then selects one of them to pursue, which is not a one-off decision. Through continuous alignment with a large community and elaborated imagination of the selected possible L2 self, the person maintains his/her selected possible self as a guide for his/her learning behavior. Once the selected possible self is realized, this self might be incorporated into the scheme of present selves held by the person, and the motivational cycle resumes. It is worth mentioning that the process of possible L2 self development is not linear. An individual may experience struggle with his/her multiple possible L2 selves when he/she decides which possible L2 self to pursue, which would make he/she continuously revisit the stage of selection of a possible L2 self.
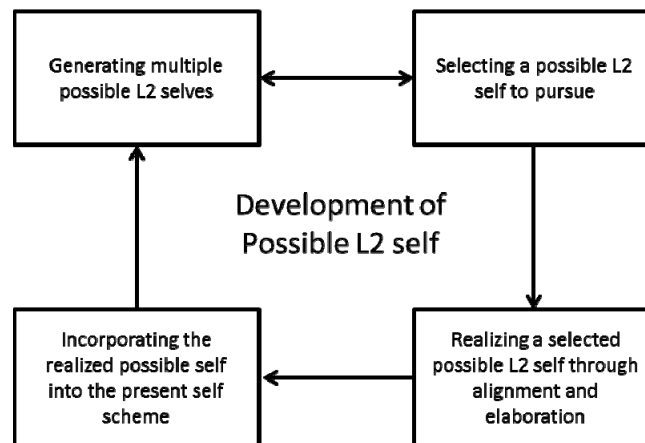
Figure 1. Deveopment of possible L2 self in an EFL context

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study has addressed the international audience about the dynamic and temporal characteristics of possible L2 selves by establishing a tentative model of possible L2 self development, which is supported by the evidence collected from the longitudinal study of cases. The results shed light on how college teachers can motivate non-English majors to learn English in EFL contexts in the era of globalization in at least two ways.

First, teachers should make full use of imagery to help undergraduates establish their possible L2 selves, and then impel them to make a scheme to proximate their possible L2 selves. Teachers can use "script imagery" (Magid, 2014) to describe various situations where undergraduates might use English in the future. More importantly, teachers need to motivate undergraduates to make a specific plan to achieve their goals. Such guideposts may include guidance on learning strategies, access to English learning materials, analysis of individual's strengths and weaknesses in English learning, and feedback on the feasibility of the plan. Furthermore, teachers need to encourage their students to work on their plans from time to time.

Second, teachers should help establish a large community that promotes the construction of ideal L2 selves. The ideal L2 self substantially predicts motivated behavior (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; T. Kim & Y. Kim, 2014). Dörnyei (2009) suggests that the role models that the students see on TV, in films, or in real life play a crucial role in the construction of possible L2 selves. Teachers can thus invite graduates to share their successful experiences of using English with their students, or they themselves can act as "powerful motivational socializers" who "serve as a model or a reference/standard" (Dörnyei, 2005b, p. 35) to tell their own stories as English users.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, which should be refined in future studies. First, the development of L2 learning experience, the third component of L2 Motivation Self System, has not been explored in this study. Hence, future studies can explore this issue by investigating the interactions between learning experience and the immediate learning environment. Second, this study only focused on a group of five non-English-major undergraduates whose English proficiency were above average in an ordinary university in the examination-oriented education system. Therefore, to generalize the results of this study, further studies should be implemented in other types of universities in different countries with different educational systems, where English is studied as a foreign language.

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