

L2 Narrative Identity as Drama: Exploring Links Between L2 Learning Experience and the Ideal L2 Self

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Abstract

Recent studies elaborating on the L2 learning experience component of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), especially through a narrative identity perspective, mark a new direction in L2 motivation research. This paper extends this work by exploring the connection between the L2 learning experience and ideal L2 self components. Emerging from different theoretical origins, these components have proved difficult to reconcile. Especially in an EFL environment such as Japan, where learners may lack well-defined goals for their English learning beyond university entrance, investigations into the role of L2 learning experience in developing ideal L2 selves can offer practical value to both learners and teachers alike. Adopting an L2 narrative identity perspective (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), this study portrays the case of a Japanese pre-service elementary school teacher. Qualitative data was collected from her participation in an undergraduate English-through-drama course. Dramaturgical coding analysis revealed two interconnected L2 narrative dynamics related to her overarching ideal L2 self: one professional and one personal. Evidence is discussed for the tracing of these ideal L2 self-conceptualizations back to key episodes in her L2 learning experience. An important functional interrelation is suggested between L2 learning experience and the development of ideal L2 self-guides.

Keywords: L2 learning experience; ideal L2 self; L2 narrative identity; L2 autobiographical memory; dramaturgical coding analysis; language teacher identity

Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) framework for explaining motivation for foreign/second language (L2) learning, namely the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), has been the model of choice in studies investigating this area (Boo et al., 2015). Despite this continued dominance, a growing number of researchers have identified the need for further investigation and elaboration of its theoretical underpinnings as well as its application in context (Csizér, 2019). First and foremost

is the L2MSS' predominant focus on possible selves, namely the ideal L2 Self and the ought-to L2 self (e.g., Taguchi et al., 2009), at the expense of a more holistic self-based perspective. Meanwhile, the L2 learning experience component is not easily related to its possible L2 self counterparts (Csizér & Kálmán, 2019a). Finally, the L2MSS does not overtly consider the influence of autobiographical memory in terms of past L2 learning experiences despite evidence of its influence on the existing components of system (Falout, 2015).

In a bid to address these conceptual issues, a range of recent studies have explored them in isolation, for example Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) investigation of the L2 learning experience, and Falout's (2015) exploration of the role of past L2 selves. Meanwhile, several studies have adopted innovative approaches to exploring the L2 learning experience component in particular, namely a *complex dynamic systems theory* approach (Hiver et al., 2019), and a *narrative identity* approach (Hiver et al., 2019; Hiver et al., 2020) or a related *narrative incorporation* approach (Pigott, 2019).

The current study seeks to contribute to this exciting new direction by taking an L2 narrative identity perspective (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Specifically the study investigates the possible interrelation of the future self and L2 learning experience components of the L2MSS in terms of the development of an L2 narrative identity. In doing so, it recognizes the superordinate nature of narrative identity in terms of incorporating a person's life narrative across all temporal aspects – past, present, and future (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Furthermore, this study employs Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b, p. 227) notion of the L2 learning experience: "The learners' concurrent and... retrospective perception about situated classroom experiences as well as experiences beyond the classroom comprising cognitive and emotional processes." *Retrospective perception* about L2 learning experiences is, however, further clarified here to represent the notion of *L2 autobiographical memory*. Autobiographical memory, a person's store of memories relating to their sense of self, has been recognized as a key component of narrative identity (McAdams & Adler, 2010). Perceiving the L2 learning experience as L2 autobiographical memory, in other words a person's store of memories relating to their sense of language learner self, thus helps to integrate the L2MSS within a broader narrative identity framework.

Adopting a *dramaturgical coding* framework to analyse and interpret textual data from an English-through-drama undergraduate course, I explore the case of a Japanese pre-service elementary school teacher and trace her professional and personal ideal L2 self-guides back to their roots in her experiences of learning and using English. Set in the EFL environment of Japan, where learners can often lack clear goals for their English learning beyond university entrance, especially academic and vocational goals (Taguchi, 2013), this study into the possible role of L2 learning experience in generating and substantiating ideal L2 selves seeks to offer practical value to both learners and teachers alike in terms of highlighting pathways from L2 learning experience to ideal L2 self. While L2MSS-based case studies of Japanese undergraduate learners of English already exist (e.g., Irie & Brewster, 2013, 2014; Miyahara, 2015), a distinctive feature of this investigation is not only its L2 narrative identity perspective but also its focus on a language learner whose L2 narrative identity incorporates a developing language teacher identity. The current paper represents the first report from a larger qualitative research project, the latter endeavour not only exploring L2 identity but also trialling a

classroom-based intervention for L2 identity and motivation awareness-raising and enhancement.

Literature Review

Identity and agency in second language learning and teaching

In the past two decades especially, identity has garnered increasing attention in the field of second language learning and teaching (Norton & De Costa, 2018), featuring both studies with a more traditional psychometric approach, and those adopting a poststructuralist, narrative view of L2 learner identity (Mercer, 2011). While the psychometric strand has attempted to more directly use identity to provide a more integrated theory of language learning motivation (a prime example being Dörnyei's, 2005, L2MSS), the poststructuralist research has explored L2 learner identity as a broader and more socially negotiated notion, noting the role of language itself in the establishment and maintenance of inequitable power relations between L2 learners and the L2 native speaker community (Norton, 2000, as a pioneering example). The related field of language teacher identity, meanwhile, with its more recent establishment as a research area, has been dominated by narrative studies, and these have adopted a broad range of defining aspects of identity: "cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical...contested, resisted...accepted, acknowledged and valued...personal and professional...dynamic, multiple, and hybrid" (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 4).

The notion of personal agency plays an important role in both these strands, due to key interrelationships between agency and identity. First, achievement of possible L2 selves requires agency: The more one is able to manipulate both one's internal resources and the affordances of one's environment, the more likely one will achieve a desired self (Bandura, 1997). Second, the existence of an ideal L2 self can enhance agency by providing a guiding trajectory. Third, one's current L2 self influences one's sense of agency: Who you perceive yourself to be as a learner constrains the range of options available to you, what you perceive yourself capable of. Moreover, both agency and identity are in "reciprocal interplay" with the social environment (Bandura, 1997, p. 8; Norton, 2013). While the social environment constrains choice-making through the provision and regulation of resources (including societal roles), people, as agents, are "at least partial architects of their own destinies" inasmuch as they exercise self-reflection (Bandura, 1997, p. 8). They are capable of not only engaging in conventional role-taking but also challenging, negotiating, or resisting it (Norton, 2013), and at the same time have a responsibility to engage in identity development (Schwartz et al., 2005). It is here at least where identity, agency, and social environment intersect: The L2 learner is presented with a range of possible L2 selves by virtue of the social environment in which they are embedded (cf. Bruner's, 1979, essay on myth and identity); it is personal agency that then enables and directs the learner to assess these options, based on their experience, self-appraisal, and foresight, and choose a path forward.

This line of research itself commandeered a specific notion of narrative identity from mainstream psychology. The term narrative identity was first pioneered by McAdams (1985), and founded on the ideas of Bruner and Erikson. While McAdams and his colleagues do not overtly claim to be poststructuralist in their approach to identity, they necessarily take on certain poststructuralist assumptions inasmuch as they explore identity through a narrative, subjective lens, taking a constructivist view of identity in reaction to the erstwhile essentialist view of the

self. In other words, the individual constructs their own life story, and this story, regardless of the objective veracity of all of its components, has real-world effects in terms of their own ongoing choices and actions.

The current study draws upon these interconnected conceptions of identity, agency, and the social environment. In adopting a narrative identity view of language learner identity to investigate the L2MSS, it takes advantage of the potential first recognized by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) and then later applied by Hiver et al. (2019). In essence it seeks to understand L2 motivation as a function of learner identity and agency. By focusing on the case of a student-teacher, in this case an undergraduate student training to become an elementary school teacher also responsible for teaching English to her class, the study also responds to Barkhuizen's (2017) call for further research into "teacher aspirations, imagined future identities, and ideal selves" (p. 10).

Reframing the L2MSS from a narrative identity perspective

Narrative identity, then, refers to a person's subjective construction of their own life story, past, present, and future, using it to define themselves as an individual and in relation to others (McAdams & McLean, 2013). McAdams (2018) provided this detailed but equally succinct definition of the concept:

A model of identity as a life story, complete with setting, scenes, characters, plots, and themes... A big story, an integrative autobiographical project, a personal myth... that situates a person in the world, integrates a life in time, and provides meaning and purpose. (p. 361)

Applying this concept to the domain of language learning, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) viewed L2 narrative identity as subsumed within the individual's overall life narrative, and "responsible for processing past L2-related experiences and constructing future goals" (p. 202). Crucially, they highlighted certain salient features of L2 narrative identity: dynamic rather than static; and having a cohesive prerogative, serving to continuously create a coherent narrative thread representing the L2 learning journey across the lifespan, from past to future.

Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) highlighted potential in applying an L2 Narrative Identity perspective to better understand language learning motivation. Specifically, they called for further research to identify "typical language learner narrative trajectories" (p. 204). And while they did not attempt to relate the L2MSS to L2 narrative identity, they intriguingly called for further research into how "learner narratives inform imagery and visions that lead to directed learning effort" (p. 207). These two questions are inherently interconnected, since it is the imagery and visions of the ideal and/or ought-to L2 self that guide language learner narrative trajectories.

As for how the L2 learning experience component might translate across to the L2 narrative identity paradigm, there appears to be a dearth of research on this question. As stated above, the current paper has adopted Csizér and Kalman's (2019b) broad definition of the L2 learning experience, acknowledging the role of concurrent experience but also emphasizing that of previous experience as committed to memory. While the latter element has been variously referred to as "learners' perceptions of their own previous language learning successes and failures" (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 92), and *experiential capital* (Irie & Brewster, 2013, 2014), the current study translates it into L2 autobiographical memory, the construct of

autobiographical memory already recognized as a formative element in narrative identity (Fivush & Haden, 2013; McAdams & Adler, 2010). This is important since experiences in the day-to-day process of L2 learning arguably only obtain lasting influence on the learner's motivation if they are perceived as meaningful in terms of the individual's L2 narrative identity.

Researching the L2MSS from a narrative identity perspective

Despite the huge interest in the L2 self and identity in language learning research in the past 15 years since Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS first appeared, few studies have adopted a narrative identity perspective (Dörnyei, 2019). A notable recent exception is Hiver et al.'s (2019) use of a specifically narrative identity perspective to explore and elaborate upon the notion of the L2 learning experience. Taking McAdams' (2007) life story interview, they adapted it for the specific features of the language learning context, resulting in the creation of the *Language Learning Story Interview* (LLSI) instrument. They then used this comprehensive interview protocol to elicit their participants' narrative of their language learning experience to identify important key self-defining scenes contributing to their participants' narrative identities, as well as emotional, motivational, and narrative complexity features therein. However, as Hiver et al. (2019) focused purely on the L2 learning experience, they did not touch upon relationships it may have with possible L2 selves. This is despite including items in their LLSI interview protocol which aim to elicit future learning goals, for example, "Can you describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future as a language learner. What do you hope to accomplish in the future in your language learning story?" (pp. 111–112). For proponents of Dörnyei's L2MSS, this is unfortunate, given the need for further research into the relationship between the L2 learning experience and the possible L2 self components, in particular the "self aspects of this bottom-up process" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29).

In contrast to Hiver et al. (2019) then, the current study sees potential in applying a narrative identity approach to not only explore L2 learning experience but also discern any connections between that component and the *self* elements of the L2MSS. In doing so, I build upon Irie and Brewster's (2014) case study which represents a rare example of research into such a link. Employing the concept of *experiential capital* in place of the L2 learning experience, they asserted a causal connection between a language learner's past experiences and their future L2 self-guides, through the specific mechanisms of self-efficacy and imagination stimulation. In contrast to Irie and Brewster, however, the current study uses a more explicit narrative identity perspective operationalised by a dramaturgical coding approach, the rationale for which is laid out in the Methodology section.

Research Questions

Based on the above discussion, the current case study, therefore, attempted to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How does the participant conceptualise her L2 narrative trajectory in terms of her ideal L2 self?

RQ2: How is this trajectory shaped by her L2 learning experience?

RQ3: What does this shaping suggest about the relationship between her L2 learning experience and ideal L2 self within the broader context of her L2 narrative identity?

Methodology

Overview

The current exploration adopted a case study format. It seeks to provide a thick and contextualized description of the mechanisms connecting the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience components of the L2MSS in the case of a single L2 learner, as “an instance of a class of events...that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory (or “generic knowledge”)” (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 17–18). Following good practice, I justify my choice of participant as a worthwhile case to focus on. I also provide a detailed description of the context of this case study, the multiple data sources gathered from that context, and the steps taken in analysing that data using dramaturgical coding. It is hoped that this level of detail will “show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’” (Merriam, 1998, p. 199).

Participant: The case of Satsuki

The current case study is based on the data of a single student, Satsuki (pseudonym applied). While the individual is the default focus of a case study (Yin, 2018), the choice of individual must be justified. According to Yin (2018), single-case studies can be highly informative if the case is “unusual” (p. 24), and this was the primary factor here. From the outset, Satsuki seemed to stand out in some way from the other six first-year members of the English-through-drama course. Perhaps it was that her major was the least related to English. In a classroom full of English Department and Global Education Department students, she was the sole representative of the School Education Department that trains students to become elementary school teachers. With the introduction of English to the elementary school curriculum, initially in Grades 5 and 6 but later extended to Grades 3 and 4, these teachers are now responsible for teaching English but assisted by English native-speaker assistant language teachers (ALTs). The overall objective of this four-year curriculum is to “develop pupils’ competencies that form the base of communication” (MEXT, 2020a, p. 1) beginning with listening and speaking skills and then incorporating reading and writing skills from Grade 5 (MEXT, 2020b).

While Satsuki and her pre-service teacher peers would be aware that their future role was more likely now to involve English because of this curricular reform, they would not necessarily be expected to have a degree of motivation to learn the language on a par with the English-major students. Satsuki’s initial shyness in class had also struck me, more prominent I thought than that displayed by her new classmates. My curiosity only deepened then when I reviewed the results of the initial student background survey: Her TOEIC IP score of 530 was exceeded by only two of her peers. This being a group of only seven students, the value of such comparisons was limited, and yet Satsuki clearly possessed a strong interest in English learning.

Research context

One of the defining features of this case study was its embedding within an actual L2 learning context. While the interventional nature of this course is beyond the scope of the current paper and will be explored in more detail in a subsequent report (especially of benefit for teachers wishing to recreate the course or parts thereof), a brief account of the details relevant to the aims of the current paper is provided here. The English-through-drama course was primarily designed to promote English communication skills through engagement in drama-based task sequences. However, the researcher-as-teacher also saw the opportunity to use the drama-based

approach to highlight more fundamental aspects of second language learning, namely L2 identity and motivation. Hence the main course objectives were stated as follows:

1. Improve your English (speaking, listening, reading, & writing).
2. Raise self-awareness of your L2 identity.
3. Enhance your motivation for learning English.

A single semester offering, the 15-week program began with an introduction class and was then divided into a series of task sequences (see Table 1). In order to realise the multiple course aims, the curriculum adopted a drama-based approach to language teaching and learning. Drama provides a natural setting for working with narratives, and, within a safe and non-threatening environment, this can include the students' own life stories. Therefore, while the syllabus began with general drama skill development and confidence building, it was soon followed by a series of different task sequences through which the students would use English to explore their own and each other's L2 narratives across time: *Playback Theatre* (Salas, 2013), exploring and re-enacting the students' turning points in their language learning histories, with students taking it turns in small groups to adopt the roles of Conductor, Teller, and Actors; *Playforward Theatre*, my own adaptation of Playback Theatre, but portraying instead the students' ideal L2 selves and their steps towards them; and *Story of Bilingual Me* (adapted from Ishii's, 2017, *Jigazou* [self-portrait] device), a monologue performance devised by students individually in consultation with the teacher, and focusing on the students' own L2 narrative trajectories.

Table 1. Component classes of the English-through-drama course

Activity	Number of 90min classes
Introduction to the course	1
Drama orientation activities	2
Playback Theatre	3
Scripted scene work	2
End-of-course solo and group performance planning	1
Playforward Theatre	4
Story of Bilingual Me	1
Group drama performances	(plus 4 out-of-class one-to-one meetings)
	1

Data collection

The first-person narratives generated in this study consisted of the stories and reflections produced by Satsuki during her participation in the researcher-as-teacher's English-through-

drama course. Journal writing assignments were an integral part of the task sequences already outlined. Eight in total and each inviting a response to one or more prompts, these assignments were either pre-task, for priming the participants and providing content for the ensuing drama activities, or post-task, for allowing the participants to reflect on their experience of each task sequence. Completed online, students were guided to write at least 200 words, predominantly in English but with the option of switching to Japanese if they felt it necessary in terms of adequately expressing themselves. Meanwhile, the Story of Bilingual Me task sequence involved a series of four one-to-one interviews with the researcher, as teacher, in which each student was assisted in developing a live monologue performance expressing their L2 narrative identity. Again, the default language of the interviews was English, but the option of switching to, or glossing in, Japanese (by both teacher and student) was made clear at the start of the process. Both the interviews and the live monologue performances were recorded and transcribed. By the end of the course, then, a range of text-based data had been assembled, both written and oral, from Satsuki (see Table 2 for examples). This set consisted of 6,923 words either written or spoken by Satsuki. To ethically make use of this course-related data, consent was obtained from Satsuki via a research participation consent form outlining the nature of the study and how her data might be used.

Table 2. Examples from the data sources

Data source	Prompts and extracts (original linguistic features intact)
Reflective journal 1, prompt	<i>'How does English (learning/using) fit into your life? How does English fit into your sense of YOU? How important is English to you? (In other words, how would your life be different if you had never learned English? How would YOU be different?)'</i>
Satsuki's journal 1, extract	<i>'Using English is too difficult. I want to speak English, but I can't find the words. English always make me so puzzled. At home, I study English everyday. English is a part of my daily life. The time of studying English is the hardest time during the day.'</i>
Story of Bilingual Me live monologue task: Preparation interview 1, prompt	<i>'If you had to express your bilingual identity in three words, what would they be?'</i> [The first one-to-one meeting began with the teacher reviewing the purpose of the Story of Bilingual Me solo performance. The students were then asked to represent their sense of 'Bilingual Me' in three keywords, with a view to establishing possible themes and episodes for their performance.]
Satsuki's interview 1, extract	<i>'Confused...joyful... <kurushii> [tough]... Umm speaking English is... cannot choose right word. Compared speaking Japanese I don't have clear contents... I want to speak English really but I can't speak English and start talking so this is... <tairitsu> [conflict]- conflict.'</i>
Story of Bilingual Me live monologue task: Performance	[Students were invited to perform their monologue; the length of performance was guided at around 10 minutes; the audience consisted of their classmates and teacher.]
Satsuki's performance, extract	<i>'Until I entered this university I had escaped from English because I didn't want to make mistakes. If I met ALT I exchanged Japanese greetings and in her classes I kept away from her because I didn't want her to speak to me in English..'</i>

Data analysis

The progression of this process is outlined in Table 3 below, along with the reasoning behind each step. It is important to stress though that these steps were iterative rather than purely linear, especially Step 3: Analytic memo taking, which occurred after each ‘foray’ into the data.

Table 3. The analytical process

Step	Rationale
1 Reading Satsuki’s texts aloud	Bringing the text ‘to life’; enhancing empathy; as if taking the actor role and rehearsing my character’s lines, and thus in keeping with both the dramatic and narrative themes of the research project.
2 Re-reading & note-taking	Laying the foundation for the subsequent coding process by identifying and annotating sections of particular interest; training my ‘antennae’ in advance of the coding cycle proper.
3 Analytic memo taking	Noting nascent ideas, hunches and propositions, as well as new questions or those yet unanswered—in relation to both content and method.
4 First-cycle coding	Applying the dramaturgical coding framework and developing it to meet the needs of my data.
5 Second-cycle coding: identifying L2 self narrative dynamics	Further reducing the data by first looking for patterns among Satsuki’s OBJ (Objective) head-code set, and then tracing the evolution of these Ideal L2 self patterns by exploring related patterns in her L2 learning experience, as represented by salient combinations of the other dramaturgical head-codes.
6 Creating L2 self narrative dynamic networks	Integrating the ideal L2 selves and L2 experience in the form of cognitive networks representing the dynamic and interrelated elements and processes that make up Satsuki’s L2 narrative trajectory.

The main approach to making sense of Satsuki’s data was the application of the dramaturgical coding framework. Dramaturgical coding is an approach originally found in literary research (Saldaña, 2016). First explicitly proposed by Saldaña as a useful tool in the social sciences, it is “an interpretative approach to analyzing life as performance” (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 222), and treats people as “characters in social dramas” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 145). Based on this premise, a similar approach can then be applied to making sense of language learning narratives as would normally be applied to the scripts, plots and characters of dramatic works. The researcher is made to focus primarily on the following key phenomena amidst the interactions of ‘participant-actors’, either in real-time or reported: their *objectives*, *conflicts*, and *tactics*. While there may be different interpretations of these notions, Saldaña (2011) equated objectives with motivations, conflicts with obstacles and tensions, and tactics with strategies. Added to these main constructs are the participant’s *attitudes* (including values and beliefs), *emotions*, and *subtexts*. These *behind-the-scenes* components are included in the coding

framework because of their role in revealing the “internal perspectives of the participant-actor” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 148), and thus helping to make sense of the objectives, conflicts, and tactics of the participant.

As the first-cycle coding proceeded, I expanded Saldaña’s (2016) original framework to meet the needs of my data analysis (see Table 4 for a full description of each code as well as an example of its application to the data). In terms of investigating connections between the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience, while the Objective (OBJ) and Super-objective (SOBJ) codes served to represent the ideal L2 self, the coding framework was expanded to more accurately capture the L2 learning experience. Three codes were borrowed from Honeyford and Serebrin’s (2015) own adaptation of the dramaturgical coding framework: Influential People (INP), Setting (SET), and Identity (ID). While I left the INP and SET codes unchanged, I adapted the ID code to create an INTER-ID code, focusing specifically on how Satsuki’s identity was mediated by her interaction with significant others, for example in the form of negative self-comparison with peers. Finally, I added the brand-new code of Character Arc (CHARC). In the field of drama writing the concept of character arc refers generally to how characters “grow or change over the course of a story” (Duncan, 2008, pp. 5–6). From the start of the project, I had viewed personal identity as a work-in-progress, developing over time and across one’s languages, and was specifically interested in discerning connections or contrasts between different temporal aspects of the L2 narrative trajectory. While Saldaña’s original dramaturgical framework can capture the dynamism of expressions of identity, I wanted a code that would identify larger spans of identity development. In other words, a code that would capture Satsuki’s journey from monolingual to multilingual.

In order to explore any causal connections between Satsuki’s ideal L2 self and her L2 learning experience, the second-cycle coding focused on tracing her L2 narrative trajectory *retrodictively* (Byrne, 2002, p. 25) from Satsuki’s Objective (OBJ) codes according to the following three-step process: (A) Identifying overarching themes (SOBJs) in the OBJ codes by sorting them into thematically related clusters (see Figures 1 & 3 below), and then (B) tracing their emergence from Satsuki’s L2 learning experience by exploring related themes among the L2 learning experience related dramaturgical codes (CON, TAC, ATT, EMO, INTER-ID, INP, SET). Finally, (C) CHARC codes were employed to connect the ideal L2 self themes with the L2 learning experience themes, and thus represent character development in the dramatic sense, and Satsuki’s L2 narrative trajectory in the narrative identity sense. This analysis was then represented visually in the form of two parallel but interrelated *L2 Narrative Dynamic Networks* (see Figures 2 & 4 below) based on the two ideal L2 selves that emerged from her narrative. Note that *in vivo* codes in all four figures are indicated by lack of initial capitalization, and also, in the case of Figures 2 and 4, by italics.

Table 4. Dramaturgical Code Set (with examples from the data)

Code	Full Title	Meaning	Example from the Data (original linguistic features intact)
CHARC	Character Arcs	Larger spans of the participant's character development and transformation, whether experienced or projected. Connections and contrasts between past/current/future selves.	<i>'I could not understand her English, so I was sulking. During her class I was studying other subject secretly because her class was boring for me. But one day, her lecture changed my mind.'</i>
INTER-ID	Interpersonal Identity	Connections and contrasts with others: positive/negative social comparison.	<i>'Other people can communicate fluently but I can.. talking one phrase'</i>
OBJ	Objectives	The participant's desires, aims & goals.	<i>'While I am a college student, I want to understand English conversations and chatting with foreign people using easy English.'</i>
SOBJ	Super-objectives	More encompassing, underlying objectives.	Satsuki's desire to inspire her future pupils
CON	Conflicts	Circumstances in the life experience which hinder the participant's progress towards the achievement of their objectives.	<i>'Using English is too difficult. I want to speak English, but I can't find the words. English always make me so puzzled.'</i>
TAC	Tactics	Approaches taken by the participant in the pursuit of their objectives, as well as the negotiation of conflicts.	<i>'The time of studying English is the hardest time during the day. But to endure it, I get patience. I say to myself give it now.'</i>
SUB	Subtexts	Comments by the participant that reveal hidden perspectives or mindsets.	<i>'Many children have difficulties studying. especially, studying foreign language is so hard. I feel them because I am not good at English.'</i>
ATT	Attitudes	Attitudes, values, and beliefs expressed by the participant, which align with or run counter to their objectives.	<i>'If I didn't study English, I would be a lazy student. because there's nothing exciting without English. I would not study after school and do homework task.'</i>
EMO	Emotions	Emotions expressed by the participant, which align with or run counter to their objectives.	<i>'Using English is- using English make me very excited.'</i>
INP	Influential People	Pivotal characters that assist or hinder the protagonist.	<i>'When I was in 7th grade, my teacher let us sing "I was born to love you" to teach us the rule of infinitive. That lecture was so interesting and I remind that we sang it merrily. I want to teach like that.'</i>
SET	Settings	Settings or contexts mentioned or alluded to by the participant.	<i>'I had just studying at desk, so it is a bit boring.'</i>

In the following section, relevant extracts from Satsuki’s data are interweaved within the discussion to illustrate the points being made. Where these include Japanese utterances, the latter are placed in angle brackets, and are followed by an English translation within square brackets. For example: <eigo> [English]. Linguistic errors have been left intact to preserve participant authenticity.

Findings

The forward momentum of Satsuki’s L2 narrative trajectory was found to be powered by two interrelated L2 narrative dynamics: an *emergent L2 teacher self*, and an *emergent L2 intercultural self*. Purposefully prefixed with the term emergent to emphasise evolution from roots to realisation, these dynamics not only represent how Satsuki imagines herself as a user of English (i.e., her ideal L2 self), but also stress the relation of these images to her L2 learning experience, specifically her recollection and representation of past experiences of learning and using English.

Tracing Satsuki’s emergent L2 teacher self

While the ideal L2 teacher self may be one of the few career-based accessible L2 narrative identity pathways in the Japanese socio-cultural context, Satsuki’s conceptualisation of the endpoint of this trajectory (see Figure 1 below) is marked less by stereotype and more by her desire to inspire her future pupils (SOBJ – Inspire Young Learners).

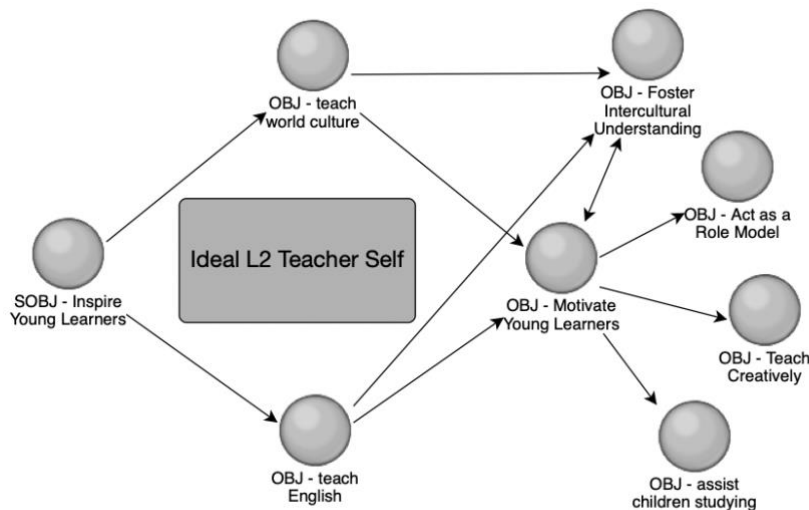


Figure 1. Satsuki’s ideal L2 teacher self as an Objective cluster

Satsuki’s words imply more than just a strong interest in teaching English, but a mission-like desire for her future pupils’ experience of learning English to be as smooth and motivating as possible:

During the class, we sometimes enjoy singing English songs, playing some games, reading poems, and watching movies. Students become to love English. I teach English lively and entertain students. (Satsuki, Journal 5)

Furthermore, her vision of inspiring her future charges extends beyond merely creating a fun English classroom environment, to include fostering their intercultural understanding through teaching world culture: “I want children to understand mutual understanding” (Satsuki, Journal 1).

Finally, her vision characterizes her not just as a teacher but as a role-model, actively and confidently demonstrating the communicative use of English through conversation with her assigned ALT, and thereby building a sense of agency in her pupils.

I walk to my homeroom class chatting with ALT. I can understand what he or she is getting at, and convey what I am thinking. Seeing us, some students talk to us and try to talk to ALT. I help them. (Satsuki, Journal 5)

As illustrated in Figure 2 below, two dynamic interrelations between Satsuki’s L2 learning experience and her ideal L2 teacher self are discussed here: *The ideal L2 teacher self role-modeled*; and *Redeeming negative L2 learning experience*.

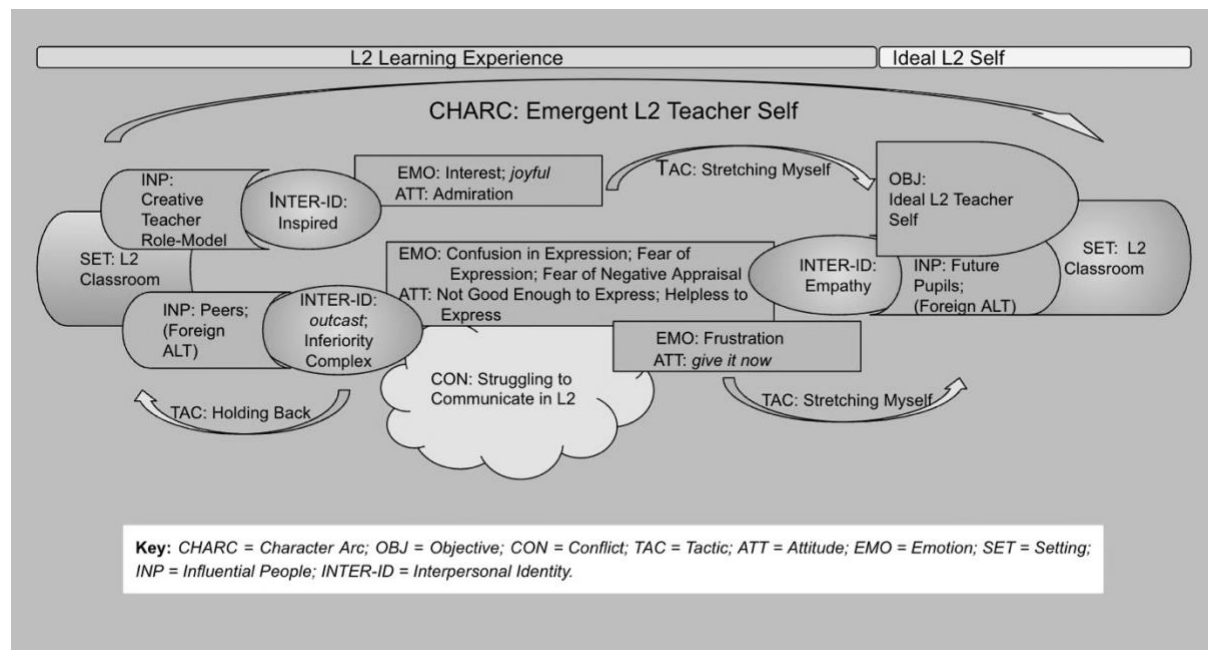


Figure 2. Satsuki’s emergent L2 teacher self narrative dynamic network

The ideal L2 teacher self role-modeled. In her autobiographical narrative, Satsuki’s desire to become an inspirational teacher has clearly evolved out of her own mix of experiences of learning English at school.

When I was in 7th grade, my teacher let us sing “I was born to love you” to teach us the rule of infinitive. That lecture was so interesting and I remind that we sang it merrily. I want to teach like that. (Satsuki, Journal 5)

On the one hand, Satsuki has very vivid, emotionally charged memories of her 7th Grade teacher, as the above vignette illustrates. Dramaturgical coding analysis shows how the different components, both character-internal and situational, combine to inspire and shape her

image of her future-self as an L2 teacher. Her positive emotional and attitudinal responses mediate perhaps an even more significant factor, represented by the INTER-ID code: in this case, the sense of being inspired by her 7th Grade teacher. This inspiration has congealed, as it were, into her adoption of her teacher as a career-related role model, thereby adding important substantiating details to her ideal L2 teacher self, in terms of defining her own approach to teaching English (OBJ – Teach Creatively; OBJ – assist children in studying; OBJ – Motivate Young Learners), and thus increasing the motivating capacity of that future self-guide (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).

Redeeming negative L2 learning experience. Satsuki's ideal L2 teacher self is not solely driven and guided by *positive* classroom-based L2 learning experience, but also by memories of her own hardships suffered in that context.

Many children have difficulties studying, especially, studying foreign language is so hard. I feel them because I am not good at English. (Satsuki, Journal 1)

Her SOBJ of inspiring young learners, as noted earlier, seems to arise at least in part from a sense of empathy based on her own struggles of engaging in the L2 classroom context and the attitudes that those experiences engendered, and indeed continue to reinforce through her L2 autobiographical memory. Just as the presence of her 7th Grade teacher has both past and future dimensions, as a memory and as a guide, so too do her future pupils: as a role she has already played herself and as a focal point giving meaning and purpose to the future endeavours of her ideal L2 teacher self. In this sense then, her ideal L2 teacher self can be seen as *redeeming* her negative L2 learning experience – in other words, by ensuring that her own pupils are not subject to that kind of experience.

An exploration of this negative L2 learning experience reveals its specific influence on Satsuki's ideal L2 teacher self imagery. The *plot* of that experience centres on the conflict between her desire to communicate in English and the internal/external factors which hinder that objective. Indeed, she herself foregrounds this conflict by choosing to begin her L2 narrative recount, in other words her first course journal entry, thus:

Using English is too difficult .Iwant to speak English, but I can't find the words. English always make me so puzzled. (Satsuki, Journal 1)

Real though they are, there is however more to this tension than the cognitive challenges of language acquisition and use. As Satsuki's story unfolds, the social elements of her L2 learning experience emerge, specifically social comparison, as the following extract illustrates (S = Satsuki; I = Interviewer):

S: Umm I try to listen to the conversation but- <ingurish de> [in English]? to concentrate and umm, I don't know what to say but, umm.... <chigau hito> [different person].

I: Like <dou iu fuu ni chigau>[different in what way]?

S: <nanka, jibun dake ga- ah, jibun dake ga chigau tokoro ni iru> [Just me- ah, like it's just me who's in a different place].

I: Right.

S:<ah, nakama hazure> [Ah, like I'm an outcast].

I: Ah right, right. So <naze sou iu fuu ni kanjiru to omou>[why do you think you feel that way]?

S: Mmm, other people can communicate fluently but I can.. talking one phrase so..

(Satsuki, Interview 2)

Despite her conscious attempts to engage in L2 communication, Satsuki's cognitive difficulties are thus compounded by an acute and real-time tendency to compare herself negatively with her peers, which makes her feel inadequate, isolated and out of place in the L2 classroom. This negative INTER-ID extends beyond social comparison to include fear of negative appraisal from her peers, and this further undermines her sense of L2 agency, as the following extract illustrates:

Until I entered this university I had escaped from English because I didn't want to make mistakes. If I met ALT I exchanged Japanese greetings and in her classes I kept away from her because I didn't want her to speak to me in English. I was so shy that I couldn't try something new like try to speak in English and I was aware of being laughed or being looked at by other students. (Sastuki, Live Monologue)

If we then relate Satsuki's negative L2 learning experience, as represented by the above extracts, to her idea of her ideal L2 teacher self, we find important contrasts marked by the ideal L2 teacher self's efforts to not only establish a fun and relaxed learning environment, but also one in which the pupils are encouraged to communicate confidently in English, especially with the foreign ALT—something which Satsuki's past L2 self had felt so reluctant to do. In other words, the fear of expression which epitomised Satsuki's negative L2 learning experience is redeemed by the fostering of a confidence and enjoyment in expression.

Tracing Satsuki's emergent L2 intercultural self

A view of English proficiency as affording cross-cultural communication is both widely promoted in the Japanese socio-cultural context (Chapple, 2015), and widely adopted by young Japanese adults (Saito, 2014).

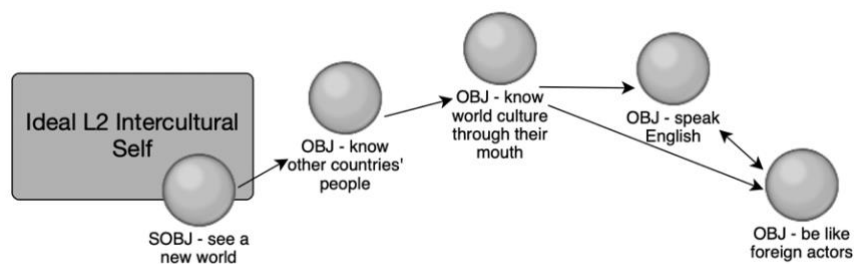


Figure 3. Satsuki's ideal L2 intercultural self as an Objective cluster

Looking at Figure 3 above, as well as her own recognition of the global currency of English as a lingua franca ("If I can use English, I can communicate with very many people," Satsuki, Journal 5), the characteristic features of Satsuki's adoption of this vision are her strong interest in broadening her knowledge of other cultures (SOBJ - *see a new world*) not just through

movies, books, and other secondary sources, but through direct contact with people from those cultures (OBJ - *know their culture through their mouth*). However, as we will see below, this cross-cultural interest is not confined to English native-speaker communities, and likewise when Satsuki expresses a desire to “be like foreign actors” (Satsuki, Interview 4) in terms of communicative fluency, she is including non-native speaker role-models.

As illustrated in Figure 4 below, three dynamic interrelations between Satsuki’s L2 learning experience and her ideal L2 intercultural self are discussed here: *Accessing the ideal L2 self in moving pictures*; *Turning points as catalysing ideal L2 self vision development*; and *Starting to actualise the ideal L2 self*.

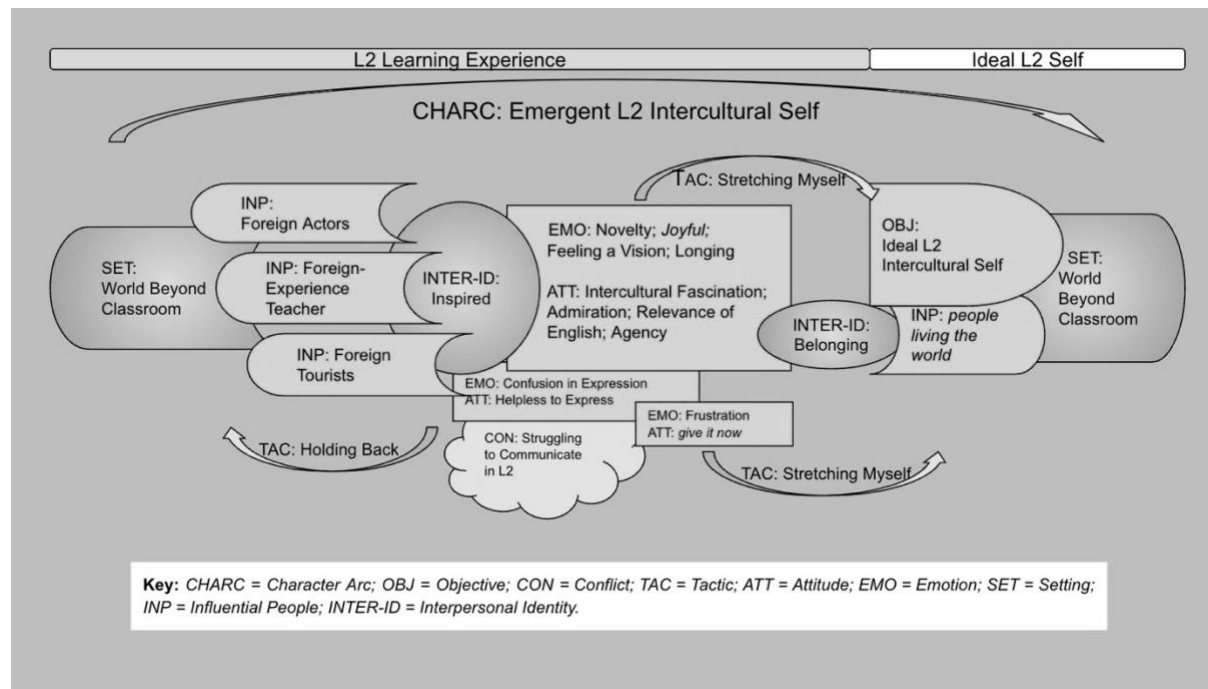


Figure 4. Satsuki’s emergent L2 intercultural self narrative dynamic network

Accessing the ideal L2 self in moving pictures. What struck me most about Satsuki’s emergent L2 intercultural self narrative dynamic, was its evolution from the English-language movies she started watching in her childhood:

I had dreamed of speaking fluently in English because I loved foreign movies. I came love them because in movies everything is different from my daily life. Why I watch them? I’m always relieved from my daily life and I feel so relaxed. (Satsuki, Live Monologue)

And I think movie actors very cool, that’s why... they speak fluently and express their feeling and I can’t understand whole of their saying but I can.. <kanjiru> [feel]. (Satsuki, Interview 2)

This out-of-school habit seems to contrast starkly with her negative in-school experience, which as we have seen can be summed up succinctly by her general attitude of “escap[ing] from English” (Satsuki, Live Monologue). Indeed, watching foreign movies provides Satsuki

with a place to escape *to*, and feel “released from daily life” (Interview 4); an oasis where she can interact with English safely and independently, avoiding the risks of displaying her L2 identity ‘on-stage’ in the classroom; a window through which she can feel part of an imagined community of English users (Kanno & Norton, 2003). But even this focus on the use of English misses an arguably more salient aspect of Satsuki’s love of watching movies: kaleidoscopic access, as it were, to the various cultural contexts being thus presented through English. This cinematic experience not only helps to cultivate a drive to engage directly with foreign people and cultures, wanting to “know their culture through their mouth” (Satsuki, Live Monologue), but also provide Satsuki with an aspirational role-model to help shape her ideal L2 intercultural self: “I want to be like foreign movies’ actors” (Satsuki, Interview 4). This of course echoes her adoption of a role-model for her ideal L2 teacher self, especially as these actors include non-native speakers of English.

Turning points as catalysing ideal L2 self vision development. Notwithstanding her lingering fear of expression, Satsuki’s attitude towards studying English is transformed positively by an incident not during an English class but in her World History class. Speaking of her 12th Grade World History teacher:

One day, her lecture changed my mind. I was studying world history that day. It was my favorite subject... Unusually I listened her story carefully. Her story was very easy to understand because it was based on her real experiences. She has traveled U.K. many times, so she could told us things that she had seen reality. Her story was super exciting and fired my imagination. She told us the shape of the breads, foods, music and so on. I often felt like I was walking in the United Kingdom... From this experience, I was interested in English. (Satsuki, Journal 2)

Satsuki’s turning point episode not only provided her imagination with a vivid portrayal of an L2 cultural setting, but also presented her with a very palpable and accessible role-model in the form of her World History teacher. This teacher also happened to be her English teacher at the time, and hence the same episode transformed Satsuki’s attitude towards English study, thus serving also to subsequently facilitate the emergence of her ideal L2 intercultural self through sustained English learning.

Starting to actualise the ideal L2 self. Up to this point in her narrative, Satsuki’s ideal L2 intercultural self, however powerful in its imagery, has been very romanticised, lacking any direct experience of intercultural interaction. However, Satsuki eventually manages to engage directly with foreigners when she works part-time as a guide at a local temple, thus demonstrating agency in the sense of increasing her access to her ideal L2 intercultural self:

I had talked with three people who travelled around Japan and I taught them my Japanese culture and in exchange- <kawarini> [in exchange] they taught me some of their culture and lifestyles. I like world history so their story is very exciting. I felt I could listen to their story forever. (Satsuki, Live Monologue)

This episode thus further substantiates her ideal L2 intercultural self vision, amplifying its plausibility, as well as the positive emotions associated with that vision. Crucially, the experience also demonstrates gaps in her ability to communicate in English (CON – Struggling to Communicate in L2), and therefore the power of self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) is retained (TAC – Stretching Myself), as she says of the same experience: “Still I can’t speak English

well so... if I can speak English more... more I can communicate with people who can't speak Japanese" (Satsuki, Interview 4). Both the increased plausibility of the vision and the self-evaluation that accompanies it suggest an increased sense of personal agency on Satsuki's part brought about by this episode in her L2 autobiographical memory.

Discussion

The Findings section responded to RQ1 by identifying Satsuki's emergent L2 teacher self and her emergent L2 intercultural self, and responded to RQ2 by illustrating how those two trajectories were shaped by her L2 learning experience. The question remains, however, as to what this shaping suggests about the relationship between her L2 learning experience and ideal L2 self within the broader context of her L2 narrative identity, especially as a pre-service teacher.

Narrative co-authoring through L2 learning experience and the ideal L2 self

Representing the past and future dimensions of the L2 narrative trajectory respectively, the L2 learning experience and the ideal L2 self components have been found to play crucial, interrelated roles in the ongoing evolution of the L2 narrative trajectory, beyond simply anchoring the sense of L2 self. While the ideal L2 self provides the L2 narrative trajectory with a sense of purpose, L2 learning experience has been seen to play an agentic role by predicating the ideal L2 self. These findings thus align with Falout's (2016) assertion of the influential role of autobiographical memory (embodied as past L2 selves) in determining learners' "lifetime trajectories related to language use" (p. 126), and also Irie and Brewster's (2014) finding that past experiences accumulate to provide "a seedbed for the development of ideal [L2] self" (p. 185). Meanwhile turning point experiences played a particularly formative part as sources of potent blends of situated affect and new perspective. Importantly, these memories are not simply factual information but edited packages of meaningful episodes, infused with both cognitive and emotional signatures, or "affective-cognitive structures" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955). This finding thus adds further support to more recent suppositions of cognition and emotion intertwining functionally to ignite and sustain L2 motivation (Al-Hoorie, 2017). Investigating such turning points in the L2 learning context, and drawing on Ahmed's (2004, 2010) notion of "stickiness" in relation to affect, Hiver et al. (2019) identified scenes which "sparked [the participant's] interest in the L2 learning process" (p. 95). Satsuki's experience would to a great extent seem to exemplify that kind of prototypical scene. Indeed, her words recount not only the sequence of events but also their emotional flavour ("Her story was super *exciting* and *fired* my imagination... I often *felt* like I was walking in the UK").

The L2 learning experience in pre-service teacher development

On a more practical level, the agentic nature of Satsuki's L2 learning experience has also expressed itself by lending greater detail to her ideal L2 self visions, acting as a memory-bank of images relevant to those selves. In the case of her ideal L2 teacher self, a notable example of this feature is her 7th grade English teacher role-model. The role-model element represents an intriguing situational motivating factor, in the sense that it emanates from the realm of L2 learning experience but functions in the realm of the ideal L2 self by providing a ready-made 'possible-self blueprint' to guide the learner. While research into the motivating nature of language learner role-models has long been neglected, Muir et al.'s (2021) recent large-scale investigation found such role-models to be prevalent among their language learner sample.

Indeed, as reflected in Satsuki's case, teachers made up the largest subset of role-model type. This may not be entirely surprising since for most learners of English as a foreign language their teacher is likely to be the most prominent 'user' of the L2 in their immediate social context. However, Muir et al. noted that a substantial proportion of their participants were themselves English teachers, and this led them to pose the very relevant question of how trainee teachers may be motivated by their own former teachers.

In Satsuki's case, it was found that on the one hand she felt inspired and guided by positive teacher role models, and this aligns with Csizér & Kálman's (2019b) identification of *the teachers' personality and teaching practices* as one of four key dimensions "shaping" the L2 learning experience of their study's participants. This was especially common among the *practicing teacher* participants within their sample, a proportion of whom had adopted such former teachers as professional role models for their own subsequent practice (e.g., "I really liked [their teaching style] and went with it in my own career," p. 236). On the other hand, however, Satsuki was also motivated by a desire to redeem negative learning experience, providing an inverted blueprint for her ideal L2 teacher self. This finding echoes Moodie's (2016) construct of *the anti-apprenticeship of observation*, whereby the teaching philosophies of pre-service English teachers are guided inversely by their experiences of their own former English teachers' non-communicative approaches, creating "intentions to be different" (p. 36), especially in the form of making learning more communicative and enjoyable. In Satsuki's case, the inclusion of the latter teaching style as a motif within her ideal L2 teacher self vision is especially telling given how it differs from a reality in which almost half of elementary school ALTs in a recent survey reported that their Japanese teacher partners "rarely talk" to them, in any language (Kano et al., 2015).

However, this "intention...to be different" (Moodie, 2016, p. 36), reminiscent of the idealism displayed by the Finnish pre-service language teachers in Kalaja's (2015) study, is not enough to realise one's ideal L2 teacher self; thus Satsuki will also need to build communicative language teaching competence relevant to the elementary education English curriculum as well as learn how to negotiate the use of that skillset within the practical "constraints and enablement" (Gao, 2017, p. 194) of her future professional setting.

Conclusion

With the underlying aim of highlighting concrete motivational pathways for EFL learners lacking accessible ideal L2 self visions, this paper has argued for the reframing of the L2MSS from a narrative identity perspective, specifically by elaborating on the role of the L2 learning experience element and its functional link with the ideal L2 self. We have followed the story of a Japanese pre-service elementary school teacher, illustrating how her ideal L2 self-guides are not created from a vacuum but can be clearly traced back to the 'crucible' of her L2 learning experience. In effect, her L2 learning experience has been a source of personal agency in terms of providing her with plausible future L2 self-guides (and the confidence to pursue them) which in turn guide her actions going forward.

L2 pedagogical implications

Taken together, all the above findings suggest that an ideal L2 self rooted in L2 learning experience is likely to have greater motivational capacity, especially in terms of maximizing personal agency. At the same time, they also emphasize the need for direct experience with the

L2 in order to move beyond romanticized visions of L2 use towards a more realistic vision of L2 engagement and the greater motivational potential that comes with that. This may be problematic in the Japanese context, especially given the mainly ‘exotic’ nature of English outside of the classroom (Seargeant, 2009) and the continuing dominance of native-speakerist language learning paradigms which can create unrealistic targets for learners and thus maintain a state of helplessness (Yano, 2021). The challenge for language teachers who wish to balance the immediate needs of the learner’s *ideal academic self*, as it were, with those of the potentially longer term ideal L2 self, is to feed the learner with *real* and authentic experience of L2 use, in concert with helping them develop their mastery of the language. As Irie and Brewster (2014) point out, “the richer the experience, the more resources and chances people have to become aware of their agency” (p. 182).

While a detailed raft of practical recommendations is beyond the scope of the immediate paper, three points can be made: First, the recent surge in the use of video conferencing software such as Zoom has made it substantially easier for both teachers and learners in EFL environments to engage in real-time L2 communication, especially with non-native speakers of English – in other words, the type of interlocutor with whom they are most likely to communicate in English in the future. Second, even within the confines of the L2 classroom, the incorporation of a drama-based language teaching approach can add greater realism to L2 use by fully contextualizing it and framing the learners as actors, in every sense, communicating with purpose. Finally, as Satsuki’s case has shown, the non-native speaker language teacher can be a positive role-model of an actual L2 user (and learner), by sharing their own experience with their students and by the way they represent the language in the classroom. This can aid development of realistic and authentic ideal L2 selves by providing a sample trajectory not only grounded in reality but also more accessible than that of a native-speaker role-model.

L2 teacher development implications

Based on the findings relating to Satsuki’s emergent L2 teacher self in particular, we have noted the importance of positive teacher role-models in ideal L2 teacher self-formation, but at the same time we have seen how *negative* learning experience can also perform a similar role by generating the desire to *do things differently*. What is key however is for idealistic student-teachers such as Satsuki to be provided with the necessary training to be able to realise those ideals, including learning how to integrate their identity, and its inherent teaching approach, in a new institution, a new community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Such training must also aim to build pre-service teachers’ confidence in teaching English which, due to low L2 self-confidence as well as limited language teacher training, has unsurprisingly been found to be lacking (Machida, 2016).

Finally, as this paper reports on only one case from a larger and ongoing research project, the limitations herein are readily acknowledged, but at the same time they provide a clear and promising pathway for ongoing research, especially in terms of further exploring the L2MSS through a L2 narrative identity perspective.

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