

**TRACING ENGLISH ADULT LEARNERS' L2
MOTIVATIONAL SELF-SYSTEM IN
A GLOBAL-SPEAKING ONLINE COMMUNITY**

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ABSTRACT

The massive shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak has opened wider possibilities of telecollaboration among English learners through global online communities. Responding to the limited empirical evidence on what drives these learners to learn beyond their geographical boundaries, this phenomenological case study intends to delve into the English learners' motivational self-system in a global-speaking online community (GSOC). Recruiting six learners from different countries, the empirical data were gathered from participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Concepts of the L2 motivational self-system and international posture were employed to inspire the thematic analysis. The findings elucidate that the participants tended to disclose their stronger L2 ideal selves compared to their L2 ought-to selves. Further, they experienced multifaceted discrepancies in their English learning trajectories and saw GSOC as one of their motivating endeavors to decrease these discrepancies. They reflected that the outbreak had provided them with a broader opportunity to virtually learn from others mediated by technology. The international posture and instrumental motivation appeared to be a motivational construct in their L2 ideal projected selves. In contrast, the integrative construct was likely unable to exert its explanatory power in this context. To this end, some implications are also discussed accordingly.

Key words: global-speaking online community, international posture, motivational self-system, possible selves.

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has brought immense changes in almost all aspects of life, such as social, economic, political, and educational fora. The education landscape has dramatically impacted students' learning across ages and nations (Ullah & Ali, 2021). Along with the myriad of scholarly works reporting the challenges or detrimental effects of COVID-19 (Al-Marouf et al., 2020; Day et al., 2021), empirical evidence also elucidates some silver linings and opportunities a COVID-19 pandemic might produce. For instance, literature on educational practices during the pandemic has provided valuable know-how and the flexibility of online learning practices (Tarrayo et al., 2021; Yang & Huang, 2021).

In addition, a new interesting phenomenon has been emerging. The new normal of online learning opens a wider possibility of telecollaboration among learners worldwide. Technological tools allow people from different countries to gather and learn together in online communities (Batunan et al., 2023; Batunan et al., 2024; Eren, 2021; Freiermuth & Huang, 2021). Connecting learners across cultural and geographical boundaries mediated with technological tools, telecollaboration is usually conducted in formal settings facilitated by teachers to engage students in language learning and expose them to cultural diversity. In this context, some studies have been conducted to zoom students' reflections on the program's effectiveness and benefits (e.g., Duraisingh et al., 2021; Eren, 2021; Freiermuth & Huang, 2021; Okumura, 2020). Concomitantly, within the burgeoning of this relatively new phenomenon, only little do we know from the literature about the fundamental motives driving these people to gather and learn beyond geographical, cultural, and time zone boundaries (Amorati, 2020). Thus, this present study aimed at filling this lacuna by delving into the English learners' motivation in a global-speaking online community (henceforth, GSOC).

Related to this, the scrutiny of motivation in language learning has been seen as a never-ending discourse for decades, yet worth discussing for its fluidness, multifacetedness, and complexities (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). The fundamental theories of motivation as the basis of learning English as an additional language are also

evolving. The traditional Gardner and Lambert's (1972) construct of integrative (the impetus to integrate the target language community in learning the language) and instrumental motivation (a practical reason for learning the language) appears to have lost some of its relevance in today's developing status of English, from one particular nation's language to the ownerless language, the language of the world. This new status of English as a global language has endorsed the necessity to re-examine the aforementioned motivational constructs (Botes et al., 2020; Sung, 2013). In this fashion, the theory of the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009) along with international posture (Yashima, 2002; 2009) has gained momentum to explain the current dynamic of English language learning.

The L2 motivational construct is deemed more appropriate to engage in this present study since it entails the variety of motivational drivers that appear to have a close connection with the language-associated facets of learners' self-identity (Macintyre et al., 2009). It comprises the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experiences. Practically, the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self are methodologically helpful in delving into learners' motivation (Chen, 2012), allowing the discussion on the dynamic of learners' selves in relation to their learning experiences in the GSOC. Correspondingly, the current scholarly discussion on the L2 motivational self-system has been much associated with the concept of international posture rather than integrative motivation (Kong et al., 2018). Yashima (2009) sees that in this more global world, learning English should be directed to a more global context rather than being geared to a particular nation, parallel to the new phenomenon of a worldwide online community.

Studies on L2 selves have been widely conducted, focusing on English in a foreign language setting (Kim, 2020; Neff & Apple, 2020; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Yung & Ho, 2019; Zheng, 2013). These studies share things in common in terms of the research context whereby the researchers involved subjects who hail from the same socio-cultural and political backgrounds, conducted the studies not in a virtual learning community and before the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar scrutiny involving learners from different socio-cultural and political backgrounds, in a virtual learning community, carried out

during the COVID-19 pandemic is scantily documented, limiting us from understanding what might result differently. This void, therefore, has highlighted the strong point of this study dealing with participants from multicultural backgrounds in the GSOC during the pandemic. Understanding the L2 motivational self-system of English learners from different socio-cultural and political backgrounds, in a virtual learning community, during the restricted learning milieu of the pandemic would bring a broader perspective and insight into the dynamics of motivation in language learning which might be useful for projecting English learning in a post-pandemic era.

Against this backdrop, this study tries to address the following research questions:

1. What L2 motivational self-system drives English learners to participate in the GSOC?
2. What other motivational constructs (international posture, instrumental, and integrative) are reflected in the learners' involvement in the GSOC?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Operationalizing motivational self-system in L2 learning

Anchored in the theory of possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987), the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009) postulates theoretically L2 motivation as a focused behaviour stemming from the individual's desire to become a speaker or user of the target language. In so doing, the possible selves of Markus and Nurius (1986) serve as the self-guide for the L2 learners directing the present motivational self-system. In other words, possible selves afford a conceptual link between self-concept and motivation (Sakeda & Kurata, 2016; Ushioda, 2011). By projecting their current selves to their future imagined selves, L2 learners are left with a wider room for self-improvement, malleability, and personal growth by experimenting with and exploring myriad possible potential futures (Lee & Oyserman, 2012). In this manner, the theory of self-discrepancy by Higgins (1987) exerts its explanatory role to

elaborate on the learners' will to narrow down the discrepancy between their current or past and their future self-projection. Along with the fluidness, contextuality, and complexity of motivational attributes, the students' L2 selves were also evidenced to be multifaceted and often changeable (e.g., Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Henry, 2011; Wang & Fisher, 2021; Waninge et al., 2014) even in a short time (Sakeda & Kurata, 2016).

Further, Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system covers three motivational dimensions: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience that are operationally workable as the theoretical parameter for data analysis of this present study, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

L2 Motivational Self-System Parameters

Ideal L2 self	Promotion focus: it is a future orientation dimension representing the L2 user's "we wish to become". Ideal L2 self usually promotes motivation to learn L2 due to the desire to reduce the gap between actual and ideal self (learners' aspiration).
Ought-to L2 self	Prevention focus: it is a future orientation dimension representing the L2 user's "we believe we should become". Motivation to learn L2 is seen as an obligation to meet others' expectations.
L2 learning experience	Situation-specific motive related to the immediate environment and experience (the experiential aspect of language selves).

The literature has documented that the ideal L2 self appears to have a more substantial role on the behavioral L2 motivation compared to the ought-to L2 self (Kim & Kim, 2018; Lee & Lee, 2020; Neff & Apple, 2020). For decades, learners' future selves have been seen as dynamic in nature, inasmuch as they are prone to some changes that are closely related to learners' experiences in a particular context (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). Further, learners' motivation to learn L2 is influenced by the interplay between their L2 future selves

and their ongoing language learning experiences (Henry, 2011; 2023; Mackay, 2019; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Wang & Fisher, 2021; Zheng, 2013). These language learning experiences embody a number of motivating forces as the result of interaction between learners' individualities and their situated context (Wang & Fisher, 2021). In this fashion, Dörnyei (2019) asserts the motivating forces as the perceived quality of learners' engagement with their immediate situated milieu, such as school context, teaching materials and learning tasks, and the influences from teachers and counterparts. This is in congruence with Tseng's (2021) finding that learning experiences played a fundamental role in mediating learner's learning efforts. Correspondingly, Csizér and Kálmán (2019) conceptualize learning experiences as wide-ranging and multifaceted factors comprising either coexisting experiences or retrospective contemplation (past reflection). Further, Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) argue the motivating forces of ones' self-construction encompass past experiences, developmental context, and social context. To sum up, the factors contributing to one's L2 learning motivation involve multidimensional aspects within diverse temporal and contextual settings.

The connection among the three motivational system constructs is in a two-way influential direction. On the one hand, the language learning experience construction is induced by the interaction between learners' future language selves, current situated context, and their personal profiles (Erikson, 2007; Taguchi et al., 2009). In this regard, learners' future selves may function as influential antecedents of current situated context construction and their occurrence of existing experiences. On the other hand, learners' future selves are temporarily revised and reconstructed by the constant changes in ongoing language learning experiences (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Kim, 2013; Sakeda & Kurata, 2016). The aforementioned explanation of L2 motivational self-system elements and the interaction among them are beneficial to help us in understanding the participants L2 motivational self-system in participating in the GSOC.

Global English community and international posture

Learners' communication with each other across geographical boundaries has undergone dramatic changes. Years back, students needed to pay for expensive exchange programs or partake in letter exchanges which took days or months, yet, with the rapid advancement of technology, this global interaction is affordable and efficient, much faster and cheaper (O'Dowd, 2018). Utilizing technology-mediated tools for learning English has been applied for years, and studies have shown that these tools can better enhance students' English skills (Ebadi & Ebadijalal, 2020; Hosseini et al., 2020;), communication skills (Tai & Chen, 2020), and cultural awareness (Duraisingh et al., 2021). With the advancement of technology, people can use these technological tools, from text-based communication to audio, video, and conference discourse. These virtual exchanges connect people from diverse cultures across the globe who share similar interests or belong to the same community of professionals. In a similar vein, Jones and Preece (2006) argue that the global online community is a crowd of people who share things in common and are led by commonly shared guidelines through technology-mediated tools. In the context of English learning, Tajeddin et al. (2021) reveal that a global online community, including the GSOC, could provide valuable chances for English users to negotiate their identity, engage in global communication, preserve a sense of community among English users, escalate selves' agency, and practice collaboration among their community members. Further, Duraisingh et al. (2021) found that such a virtual global community has shown its gain toward students' identity construction by dismantling prejudices and biases and promoting global citizenship.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, this online learning community mushroomed, functioning as online language classrooms to help learners expand their English proficiency. This is clearly observed from numerous digital meetings, video lives, or shows. This phenomenon is in line with Zoom's report that it has had a giant leap during the pandemic, 30-fold use and 300 million daily users (Sherman, 2020). With the physical constraints, most human interactions have been shifted from face-to-face to virtual meetings

using LSM and apps like Zoom, Skype, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Due to this dramatic shift, it is interesting to note that the opportunities to communicate and learn with the aid of technology-mediated tools are massively accessible. The virtual online exchange meetings tend to be formally organized by teachers or cultural experts. The collaboration mainly involved students from two cultures either from inner with outer-circle countries or from inner with expanding-circle countries (Chia & Pritchard, 2014; Eren, 2021; Helm, 2009). In contrast, this study situated in a GSOC involved learners from multicultural contexts (inner, outer, and expanding-circles countries). Understanding their motivation in participating in the GSOC would enrich the existing related body of literature on how the past-current-and future self and the immediate learning experiences correlate to the learners' English learning within a global online learning community. Even though the study was situated beyond the formal schooling system, the result might bring practical contributions for the classroom to better introduce global online learning communities in EFL teaching-learning.

The motivation construct of getting connected as what happens in the GSOC goes beyond the shared interests, professions, and English learning. The drive to become a global citizen and have firsthand experiences in a multilingual and multicultural world seems to play a salient role (Yashima, 2009). This new paradigm of a strong will to become a global citizen emerges as a new construct of L2 motivation, the so-called international posture. The postulation of international posture in L2 motivation has challenged the construct of integrative motivation. The impetus to learn the L2 language, in this case, English, to integrate or immerse learners' selves in an English native country, termed as an integrative motivational construct, is deemed irrelevant in this growing world where English is positioned as a global language (ownerless language). From this point of view, an international posture offering a more global motivational construct has gained a better reception. Operationally, Yashima (2002) postulates the concept of international posture as "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures,

among others” (p.7). From this perspective, the learners’ willingness to interact with intercultural partners or stay and work in particular country(ies) is not limited to the connection with English native-speaking country(ies) (Anglophone) as postulated in the integrative motivational construct.

Informed by the abovementioned scholarly conversations on the L2 motivational self-system and its connection with the other related L2 motivational constructs and the new phenomenon of the online global English community during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aimed at enriching the body of literature by scrutinizing what motivates English adult learners coming from different socio-cultural and political backgrounds to participate in the GSOC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and context

The relatively new phenomenon of the GSOC urged us, the researchers, to view this study from the perspective of a phenomenological case study. This design allows us to look deeper into individuals' experiences with a new phenomenon (GSOC in a pandemic) and how they make meaning of their L2 selves system within the phenomenon (Conklin, 2014).

The research context took place in a GSOC (global-speaking online community), founded in 2020 and managed by an education entrepreneur, a native speaker of English from the USA, with 5,400 members hailing from almost all continents in the globe: Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, as of 15 December 2022. The purpose of this group was to organize global virtual English conversation practices in a supportive learning community. The offered activities were sessions led by the founder and other conversationalist leaders every week under varied topics. The conversations were run through Zoom. The topics discussed were self-improvement, intercultural communication, entertainment, positive psychology, time management, book clubs, and IELTS speaking practice, to name a few. The conversations were guided by a list of guiding questions that needed to be discussed in

the small breakout rooms. The discussed questions in the breakout rooms were mostly about how the participants define one specific concept, how this notion is linked to their daily life, how they make meaning about the concepts in their day-to-day living experiences, and how this particular concept is connected to other relevant ideas. In other words, the questions dealt with postulation, practicality, and reflection of the participants about one particular topic. These are the examples of the questions: “Are you a perfectionist? What is the root cause of perfectionism? Is perfectionism a good or bad thing? To what extent and how can we transform an unhealthy perfectionism? How can we shift our mindset and get comfortable with imperfection?” Besides these meetings, there were regular weekly projects (challenges) like writing and making videos on particular prompts.

Participants and ethical consideration

Six English learners from different countries participating in the GSOC were recruited for this study. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Active engagement and accessibility were the primary consideration in selecting the research participants. We observed those participants regularly attended the weekly discussion and actively responded to every activity. In addition, the second author made friends with them through a series of informal conversations and some collaborations during the program. This relationship might contribute to the data gathered since it enables us, as researchers, to gain more relevant and prolonged access to their insider viewpoints about their thinking experiences and to reduce the social distance between participants and researchers to preserve dialogical interactions that are significant for quality data gathering (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). Table 2 displays the participants’ demographics, wherein their names were purposefully written as pseudonyms to protect them from certain potential risks.

Table 2*Participants' Demographics*

Participants	Age	Sex	Country	Education	Occupation	Years of studying english
Hanz	23	M	Morocco	Master's in Tourism and Hospitality	Student	5 years
Lana	35	F	Russia	Master's in Education	Teacher	10 years
Michelle	38	F	Ukraine	Undergraduate	Housewife	12 years
Nick	25	M	India	Undergraduate	Digital marketer	More than 21 years
Tim	45	M	Poland	Master's in Political Sciences	Electronic technician	7 years
Zima	24	F	Thailand	Undergraduate	Master student	7 years

Data collection and analysis

To address the research questions, questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation were employed. These three data collection techniques complemented each other in gaining richer data. They did not serve as the method of triangulation. The questionnaire was aimed primarily at gathering participants' demographics, past English learning experiences, and their reasons or motives for partaking in the series of the GSOC activities. This questionnaire was assisted by Google Forms and sent to the participants' Facebook messenger that participants, within a week, completed. A week later, we invited participants to the interview. After some negotiation, each participant was invited to a Zoom-mediated interview that lasted for 30 to 40 minutes for each using English. With the participants' consent, the interview session was recorded. This Zoom-mediated interview aimed at gathering further data from the questionnaire and raising some new questions that had not been addressed in the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview covered 10 questions that can be further seen in

the appendix. Firstly, we inquired about participants' perspectives on the importance of English and the reasons they are learning English (Question 1). This question aimed at gathering participants' underlying motivation to learn English. The following nine questions were raised to understand participants' motivational self-system and other motivational constructs driving them to participate in the GSOC during the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 were raised to explore participants' past and current English learning experiences including the books, teachers, teachers' teaching methods, and motivating or demotivating learning experiences, and participants' ideal future self and their related English learning investment. In questions 6, 7, 8, and 9, we asked them to narrate how COVID-19 affects participants' English learning in general, their motives or reasons for joining the GSOC, their experiences in the GSOC, and their perceived benefits from participating in the GSOC. Lastly, we raised question 10 to include other relevant data that might have not been conveyed in the initial responses.

In addition to the questionnaire and interview, we had the privilege to access the insider point of view as the second author fully immersed herself and participated in the GSOC for a year of observation from July 2020 to August 2021. Being one of the participants in the GSOC, she had the opportunity to picture and interpret the nature of the GSOC in practice that could help to gain a deeper and better understanding from the perspective of a participant observer's retrospective experiences (Labaree, 2002).

After data gathering, a series of transcription procedures guided by Widodo (2014) were carefully applied to the corpus data from the questionnaires and interviews. The data from questionnaire and interview were integrated and put as a collection of participants' stories in the coding process. The selected and transcribed dataset supported with some relevant participant observer's retrospective experiences were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. Rather than constructively grounded to find the themes of the dataset, this study took the view from theoretical thematic analysis in generating the themes where the possible emerging themes were sourced from the existing theoretical framework. Operationally, the parameters of the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009)

and international posture (Yashima, 2002) were enacted to inspire thematic analysis. However, in the coding system, we were also open to any possible relevant themes emerging beyond the predetermined references, such as integrative and experimental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Table 3 illustrates how we coded the data and labeled the generated themes

Table 3

Sample of Coding Process

Hanz's (Marocco)

Transcription	Code theme	Induced theme
In the future, I want to be a professional in International corporation (IS) where I can speak fluently with my colleagues from other countries (IP , Ins). It is mainly for job applications. Now, here in Morocco, sadly it is not demanded. But for me English is a language that permits me to read a lot; know about other people and other cultures, countries, and economies (IP). English allows me to have an impartial view about a lot of people (IP), helps me to eliminate stereotypes (IP), and all those thoughts that English brings to me by reading multiple articles from multiple countries (IP). You know now we have a Russian channel but they have an English version. You get the news from Russia and you can from the US as well (IP). You know what to choose and what is right and wrong. I think that is proof that English grants us. And for jobs, if you want to really portfolio your resume and CV, want to be well-perceived by the recruiter (Ins), English is highly appreciated even though it is not that demanded here.	(+) Getting established job in international level (IS) (+) willingness to communicate with people from different countries (IP) with English (Ins) (+) English permits him to read more (Ins) from multiple countries (IP), (+) know about other people, cultures, countries, economies (IP) (+) English allows me to have an impartial view about a lot of people (IP) (+) respect other people, eliminate stereotype (IP) (+) the news from Russia and you can from the US as well (IP) (+) E for job applications in global, English qualification (Ins)	IS Ins IP

Note. IS= Ideal Self; IP=International Posture; Ins= Instrumental.

After the coding process, we did a repeated reading of the coded data and carefully examined the patterns and connections among the data either from each participant or across the participants. In this phase, we finally came up with the salient emerging themes to answer the research questions. We also checked the intensity of the emerging themes within the transcribed data to see which motivational construct is strongly visible among the participants. Correspondingly, we provided intensifiers like “strong” or “stronger” in the data interpretation. Finally, to maintain the contextuality of the data, the findings are presented narratively, wherein the data transcription from the interview and questionnaire were mostly indirectly reported. Some participants’ direct speeches were presented to highlight the relevant points.

In ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of this study, repeated coding, meticulous analysis across authors, and some member-checking were conducted after the data transcription. These steps were taken in addition to the thick description in the data gathering. In the member-checking process, the participants were asked to read the transcription and confirm the validity of the information. They were given space to add relevant data or delete the irrelevant ones. Of the six participants, five agreed with the data transcription and one participant was no longer in contact.

FINDINGS

What L2 motivational self-system drives English learners to participate in the GSOC?

This study has uncovered that, in general, the participants seemed to disclose stronger ideal L2 selves as the central driving force to participate in the GSOC as the emerging phenomenon of the global learning community during the COVID-19 outbreak. The types of ideal selves, to some extent, varied among participants. This study has also revealed that the participants experienced multifaceted discrepancies among their past, current, and their ideal projected selves. They found the GSOC to be one of their motivating endeavors to decrease disparities orienting toward their L2 ideal selves.

Strong ideal self

In this study, the participants tended to construct their stronger ideal L2 selves compared to their L2 ought-to selves. They successfully projected themselves as someone who is keen to exploit English for their more global work, study, and other personal purposes in the future. In this respect, the descriptions of their L2 ideal selves were fundamentally personalized and deeply ingrained in their surrounding context. Of the six participants, Hanz and Tim showed their strong interest in seeing themselves in the future as professionals in an international corporation where they are able to speak fluently in English with their counterparts coming from around the globe. They directed themselves to be part of a more global community. To some degree, they had invested considerable time and energy to intensively learn English. Hanz, from Morocco, who spoke five different languages and naturally liked learning languages, spent his years immersing himself in an English-speaking environment virtually mediated by the Internet. As a master's student in tourism and hospitality, he hoped his English mastery could better support his profile of qualifications to get a better job in a global context. Akin to Hanz, Tim also devoted himself to addressing his strong will to restart learning English in 2018 after long years of a perceived ineffective and meaningless English learning process. His experiences in Ireland out of his home country of Poland, wherein he unexpectedly was surrounded by people speaking English, had made him realize the importance of English for a better future career. Having returned to his own country, Tim made exponential progress in relearning English by engaging in a series of British Council language programs and then finding an English learning community like the GSOC.

Likewise, Lana and Nick also similarly projected their L2 ideal selves that were more to be the expansion of their current situational factors. Lana, a teacher, demonstrated her imagined self to be a more professional teacher. She believed that her pedagogical practices would benefit her students with a sense of global citizenship by mastering English and meeting people from around the world. Similarly, Nick, who worked for a particular digital company, projected himself to be a fluent and influential speaker in the global

milieu as the future expansion of his current profession as a digital marketer.

Concomitantly, a notable finding was articulated by Michelle, a housewife from Ukraine who used to be a teacher. In contrast to the other participants, she emphasized the reasons for joining the GSOC as her motivation to help her son in his education and to maintain her English. Even though she appeared not to be able to explicitly state her L2 ideal self, her utterances slightly signify that she had an ideal self to obtain that she believed will be mediated by the use of English. This L2 ideal self might be in relation to her motivation to be a facilitating mother for her son's future or perhaps her own possible ideal self to re-engage herself in an educational career as a teacher in the future as she formerly was. However, it is also possible to interpret Michelle's L2 self as slightly correlated to the L2 ought-to self since she needed to maintain her English within the more sophisticated growth of current English teaching where her son belonged. In this respect, she joined the GSOC due to external forces like the need to stay updated with her English and the feeling of being obliged to help with her son's education.

The last data show the unique English learning trajectory of Zima, a master's student in America from Thailand. Her L2 motivational self-system in joining the GSOC had shifted from her L2 ought-to self to finally her L2 ideal self. Before she moved to America, she found herself unaware of the importance and benefit of English for her future life. She narrated that nobody informed her about it.

“... it was just like doing your best to pass the class but not really like they don't teach you the importance of English. To be honest, I don't even know why I am learning English. No one taught me that I was going to use it for work and go abroad. When I grew up and went to big cities, I started to see more people talking to professors and some professionals and I started to interact with foreign people and I just realized that I learn(ed) English for a long time and I don't know how to say hello.” (Zima's story 2)

Zima's feeling of dissatisfaction got strengthened when she started her study far beyond her home country. She felt depressed seeing her

classmates could effortlessly speak in English with their professors and other professionals while she tended to remain silent. She acknowledged that she was an extrovert. In this respect, talking to other people served as a basic need for her. To release herself from being left behind and not part of the conversation, she took measures to improve her English, including joining the GSOC. The impetus to learn English then was firstly not due to her personal intentions but rather due to her current problematic situation forcing her to learn (the L2 ought-to self). She wanted her command of English to help her in her study such as to present ideas or to get connected with her professors and classmates. Notwithstanding, amidst her learning in the GSOC, she began to enjoy and need to learn English for a more future purpose to effectively live and work in another country where English is the lingua franca.

Multifaceted discrepancies: The interplay of past-current-and future

The data also show a salient pattern emerging in all participants' L2 self-construction by which the participants experienced multifaceted discrepancies. Participants' motivation to learn English in the GSOC during the pandemic reflected in their L2 motivational self-system tended to strongly correlate with their awareness of the discrepancies and to endeavor to decrease them. In this fashion, the discrepancies are multifaceted showing the interplay of their past, current, and future projections. There were three major patterns of discrepancies unveiled in the participants' English learning trajectories; past-imagined learning experiences discrepancy, past-current-ideal self-discrepancy, and current-imagined social environment discrepancy.

The first discrepancy, the most noticeable one, is the participants' past and imagined learning experiential gap. In general, to a different extent, the participants chronicled their attitudes of dissatisfaction towards their past learning experiences in comparison to their imagined effective learning. Their past learning experiences were judged to be inadequate, unsuitable, and ineffective. In Hanz's case in Morocco, English was taught differently in private and public schools. Students enrolling in the former learned English from their

first day of schooling, at seven years old. In contrast, in the latter, where Hanz was enrolled, English was just introduced in high school, starting with the very basic constructs, such as learning the alphabet and memorizing some grammatical structures delivered in a way that did not appeal to Hanz.

“... but the first year was really just like studying the alphabet. So for the method of instruction, it was super classic, you know, the typical teacher, the typical student, the typical pedagogy. It was so classic. I don’t know what to say. So boring, to be honest, because you only get to know the rules, the grammar, and the structure of the phrases.” Hanz’s story 3)

In his previous formal English learning, Hanz acknowledged one and the only positive aspect; the learning textbook in his third year of high school. The textbook interestingly endorsed the virtues of globalization from various universal topics and cultures. This mainly negative impression from Hanz’s past learning experiences was also similarly disclosed by Lana, Tim, and Zima’s. Lana, Tim, and Zima also assessed their past English learning as dominated by grammatical structure, vocabulary drills, receptive skills exposure, and the content ingrained in a more native speakerism model and culture. They realized the strong need for speaking practice that their past learning experiences could not provide. Respectively, even though Michelle and Nick saw that learning the English language was highly valued and got considerable attention in their countries (Ukraine and India), they still experienced unsatisfactory learning experiences that differed from their imagined learning experiences. They saw that the English instruction in the classroom did not really facilitate their speaking skills.

The second discrepancy is between their past-current-ideal selves. They remembered that they had different sorts of selves in the three different phases. For instance, Tim recalled himself as a student who was really shy and unable to talk.

“...but, I didn't speak English, you know..., because it was difficult to convince us to speak. ... I have a big problem to say

something. When I was try (trying) to speak English, it was very weak and funny and in my study, I have (had) a good English teacher but she emphasized vocabulary and grammar rules. I had a lot of homework, but, I didn't speak as well." (Tim's Story 2)

In the past, Tim's shyness, coupled with his teacher's pedagogical practices that he perceived did not adequately support his speaking skills, had restricted him from speaking up in English. By the time of the interview (current phase), even with some progress, Tim felt that he was still in need of improving his speaking ability. He determined that his speaking was still inadequate to maintain effective communication. These two unsatisfactory selves of his past and current have shaped a distinct gap with his L2 ideal projected self, to be able to use effective English in an international corporation. This kind of discrepancy was also evident in Hanz, Nick, and Zima's stories, whereas Lana and Michele did not explicitly disclose their different selves in the three different phases.

The last uncovered discrepancy is their current-imagined social environment discrepancy. All six participants chronicled that their current social environment did not support them in gaining their ideal L2 selves in their imagined social environment. Hanz and Lana found their immediate social environment showed a negative attitude toward the use of English on a daily basis, hindering them from gaining adequate speaking practice.

"Unfortunately, I cannot do that with my friends because how can I say so. It sounds a bit patronizing speaking another language, the foreign language with your friends especially these friends who are not into the language. You will be a bit perceived badly, ... I had to find an alternative." (Hanz's story 6)

"Among my friends, nobody knows English and nobody wants to know it. That is why I have to find some friends online." (Lana's story 4)

Similarly, Michelle, Nick, and Tim also found their social environment did not support their speaking practice inasmuch as

having an inadequate use of English in their social environment (Michelle and Tim) and living in a remote area (Nick).

The participants' awareness of those discrepancies has functioned as a fundamental contributing factor to extending their English learning experiences. At this juncture, they made considerable endeavors to go some steps nearer to their L2 ideal selves in their imagined future community. The participants' most salient measure was investing more time and energy to learn English virtually, such as immersing themselves in an English environment, particularly by joining the GSOC. Correspondingly, all participants reflected that the COVID-19 pandemic had granted them more opportunities to join a global-speaking online community. The social distancing policy, restricting them from having physical contact and meetings has changed their daily activities in which Hanz, Lana, Michelle, Nick, Tim, and Zima found themselves spending more time before the screen to do their hobbies or maintain their personal and professional development. This condition has encouraged them to explore online communities that might help them with their English speaking until they finally decided to join this GSOC that is the focus of this study.

What other motivational constructs (international posture, instrumental, and integrative) are reflected in the learners' involvement in GSOC?

International posture and instrumental construct as combined forces in the GSOC

From the data, there were two dominant and reciprocal motivational constructs presented by the participants in their involvement in the GSOC: international posture and instrumental motivation. The drive of international posture to connect and interact with other non-native speakers of English (non-ethnocentric attitude) interplays with the instrumental drive to pursue a better career globally and to be a professional worker by utilizing English. Tim, before joining the GSOC, had displayed his strong international posture by showing his willingness to understand different accents and cultures, making friends with people from different geographical spaces, and envisioning working in a multinational corporation. His strong international posture could be explained by his experience of

working abroad in Ireland when he mingled with his colleagues from around the world and his friendly nature of loving to talk and exchange ideas with other people. Having been taught by teachers from different countries in the British council, he still felt the urgency of communicating with people from abroad. Tim acknowledged that the GSOC was a suitable place to learn English with people from different parts of the globe and the GSOC helped him to better understand different accents. At the GSOC, Tim served as one of the moderators who organized meetings to give people opportunities to talk in English. Tim demonstrated his ability to carry on the conversation and actively involved people in meetings regardless of their heavy accents influenced by their mother tongues. His sessions were one of the most favored, and the attendees gave positive feedback about how he moderated the sessions.

Nick was fully aware that English is a lingua franca and a tool for achieving his personal goals: to help him survive in the workplace and project himself to be an intelligible and impactful English speaker. Akin to Tim, joining the GSOC, Nick served as one of the meeting organizers who actively and closely collaborated with other group members from different parts of the world and heavily engaged in the proposed activities in the GSOC. In addition, he started a YouTube channel and posted videos presenting his favorite self-development book analyses in an effort to be understood by his international interlocutors and in keeping with his ideal self to be a fluent and influential speaker. Having built a beautiful bond of friendship with these global people from the GSOC, Nick demonstrated the expansion of his international posture by gaining a more comprehensive insight and worldview about being a global citizen. Nick admitted that joining the GSOC helped him to get rid of assumptions about particular nationalities. He better understood that despite all the existing differences, the GSOC members and he shared a thing in common. He narrated as follows:

“...I think it is really important ...when you don’t know about people you might be thinking... they are different and this and that...you start talking to them you realize ... have a lot in common like our struggles and difficulty like mastering this language...all

on the same journey. So that is the most beautiful thing about this community...belong to different parts of the world, our journey..., our goal is the same...We are not alone, there are people with us on this journey and it makes us feel better.” (Nick’s story 6.1).

The other four participants, Hanz, Lana, Michelle, and Zima shared a similar point of view about the importance of English and an international posture orientation. Hanz viewed that learning English was helpful in job applications, helped his adventure into a global world, and assisted him with extensive reading materials to keep up with the most worldwide updates. Lana, Michelle, and Zima furthermore narrated that joining the GSOC was a way to expose themselves to varied cultures and to exchange ideas.

Additionally, the design of the GSOC and the positive interactions between and among fellow members were likely to be among the major reasons why these participants participated in the GSOC as the venue to improve their English for their personal and professional futures. The observational data disclose that the six participants as the founding members of the GSOC were actively participating in the overall GSOC activities. Four of them (Hanz, Nick, Tim, and Zima) volunteered to be leaders of a group (moderators), facilitating the group discussions under diverse topics. They had led more than 15 meetings independently and in collaboration with other GSOC members. The other two participants (Lana and Michelle) served as active members who keenly contributed to the discussions. In congruence with GSOC philosophy, the GSOC discussions provided a safe haven for participants to express their ideas without judgement and afforded an equal opportunity for speaking time. The GSOC members seemed to respect diversity by trying to adapt and adjust with diverse accents and perspectives. The moderators always reminded the participants to be respectful, kind, and encouraging. The members were very supportive by which they encouraged each other. During the discussion, despite the fact that some of them had acquired a good English proficiency and had more experience, they did not dominate the conversation but encouraged discussion. They brought up ideas to enrich the discussion from their very own contexts and experience. They actively participated in speaking challenges, for

example, mimicking particular artists from certain movies in pairs, practicing tongue twisters, idioms and vocabulary challenges, and many more. They built a good rapport among and between members and eagerly provided constructive feedback.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, three motivational constructs appeared to display their explanatory power in the participants' driving forces to participate in the GSOC amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: L2 motivational self-system, international posture, and instrumental motivation. Contextually, the COVID-19 pandemic was likely to serve as a supportive context that mediated the participants to access a learning community beyond their geographical and time zone boundaries (Tarrayo et al., 2021; Yang & Huang, 2021) mediated by technology (Eren, 2021; Freiermuth & Huang, 2021).

From the L2 motivational self-system perspective, participants' ideal selves in this study have contributed to their current motivation to learn English. Specifically, the participants' L2 ideal selves tended to play a role in fueling motivation in participants' current English learning. For example, Hanz and Tim's L2 ideal selves in an international corporation, Lana and Nick's projection of ideal selves as better and more global digital marketers and teachers, Michelle's wish to be a facilitating mother and a better teacher in the future, and Zima's ideal self to live and work in another country have impacted their current endeavor and their personal profile to pursue their ideal selves (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2018; Lee & Lee, 2020; Neff & Apple, 2020). On the one hand, the dataset from Hanz, Lana, Michelle, Nick, and Tim signifies that the ideal self has a role in inducing the current situated context and personal profile. In this account, the participants seemed to realize that to achieve their future goals (future selves), they need to find some English learning opportunities to better prepare them for the future. This finding echoes the previous empirical evidence (e.g., Erikson, 2017; Taguchi et al., 2009). On the other hand, Zima's dataset showing her ideal self after joining the series of GSOC activities indicates the direction by which her ideal self was

constructed due to the ongoing language learning experiences (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Kim, 2013; Sakeda & Kurata 2016). Zima's learning experiences in the GSOC have emboldened her imagined self to pursue a future career in other countries. Overall, the participants' narratives indicate that their current motivation to participate in GSOC activities, to some extent, has influenced the construction of their future selves or, conversely, has been influenced by their future selves. In this case, participants' motivation to learn an L2 in the GSOC appeared to be affected by the interplay between their L2 future selves and their ongoing language learning experiences (Henry, 2011; 2023; Mackay, 2019; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Wang & Fisher, 2021; Zheng, 2013). The data from the six participants suggest that the emerging motivation is likely due to the interaction between learners' individualities and their situated context either from the past, current, or imagined context (Wang & Fisher, 2021). It reiterates the previous empirical findings arguing that the contextual motivational drivers might have a close relationship with the language-associated facets of learners' self-identity (MacIntyre et al., 2009).

Likewise, participants recounted their multifaceted discrepancies in English learning, showing the interplay of their past, current, and future projections of their learning experiences, selves, and social environment. The present study has demonstrated how past and current unsupportive social environments drove them to make a sizeable effort to reduce the gap between their present selves and their projected future selves and their imagined social environment by participating in the GSOC, as revealed by most of the participants: Hanz, Lana, Michelle, Nick, and Tim. In addition, the drive to take part in the GSOC is closely connected with how they have experienced perceived unsatisfactory former and current language learning and the way they project their ideal selves. This notion is in alignment with some previous studies (e.g., Henry, 2011, 2023; Mackay, 2019; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Wang & Fisher, 2021; Zheng, 2013). For instance, Hanz, Nick, Tim, and Zima's past unsatisfactory English learning experiences of rote learning and their expected future selves requiring them to have adequate English proficiency have encouraged them to find better English learning opportunities to pursue their ideal projected selves.

These multifaceted discrepancies are congruent with the two fundamental theories of possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancies (Higgins, 1987) as the catalyst of the postulation of the learners' L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei 2005; 2009). In this facet, the participants' coexisting discrepancies and retrospective contemplation have inspired them to partake in the GSOC as a promising language learning experience (Csizér & Kálmán, 2019). Further, their perceived positive engagement in the GSOC's activities with their perceived supportive fellow learners from different socio-cultural backgrounds signifies that their immediate learning environment has motivated them in the learning process. This postulation has validated what has been found by Dörnyei (2019) and Tseng (2021) in other contexts, whereby learners' learning experiences played a significant role in motivating them to make more effort during the day-to-day learning process. In this manner, the GSOC activities and their supportive fellow learners might offer beneficial opportunities for the participants to negotiate their identities, engage in international communication, maintain a feeling of community among English speakers, increase their agency, and engage in collaborative activities with other community members (Tajeddin et al., 2021).

In addition to the learners' strong L2 ideal selves and the interplay of learners' multifaceted discrepancies in the dimension of the L2 motivational self-system, the findings also confirm that the participants have exhibited more international posture and instrumental orientation in using English as an instrument to engage effectively in a global context. These two constructs saliently emerged as combined motivations to participate in the GSOC that these six participants vividly evidenced. In contrast, the integrative motivation that usually emerged along with instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) was not observed in this context. This conclusion is in congruence with what Botes et al., (2020) and Sung (2013) argue in their studies. Findings show that these participants performed the four orientations in international posture (Yashima, 2002, p.7): "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different

cultures". Strong international posture performed by the participants was likely to be hugely influenced by their immersion, connection, and exposure to their ongoing intercultural experience with other fellow English learners in the GSOC and also by past experiences of interacting with people from around the world as has been postulated in previous studies (e.g., Aubrey & Nowlan, 2013; Aubrey, 2015; Nishida & Yashima, 2017; Ockert, 2015; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008).

Other than participants' L2 motivational self-system, international posture, and instrumental motivation, the external factors like the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the design of the GSOC, and the positive interactions between and among fellow members also might have strengthened their motivation. The burgeoning phenomenon of wider opportunity to join global communities during the physical distancing amidst the pandemic, the programs offered by GSOC supporting more global matters, and positive interaction with supportive fellow learners appeared to have co-constructed their stronger motivation to go beyond their past and current selves, learning experiences, and socio-experiences, to narrow the discrepancies, and finally to go closer to their ideal selves.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shed light on the L2 motivational self-system of six learners from different countries and socio-cultural backgrounds learning English together in an online speaking community, the GSOC during the COVID-19 outbreak. Understanding their L2 motivational self-system and other related motivational constructs in joining the GSOC would bring valuable contributions in a wider context, particularly in learning English as a foreign, second, or additional language. From this study, the L2 motivational self-system, international posture, and instrumental construct had a tendency to exert their explanatory power. It was found that the participants appeared to have stronger L2 ideal selves as the driving forces to extensively learn English and narrow their multifaceted discrepancies of their past, current, and future projections. Different from previous

studies, the participants disclosed their learning English motivational orientation gearing more to a global orientation (international posture) rather than integrating themselves in a particular English-speaking country (integrative motivation). In this regard, English is considered as a valuable instrument facilitating them (instrumental motivation) to be effective professionals in international contexts and affairs.

Additionally, the contextual background of the COVID-19 pandemic with some restriction of physical contact, engaging activities of the GSOC, and positive interactions between and among fellow members of the GSOC have encouraged the participants to be more engaged in the GSOC to narrow their multifaceted discrepancies in English language learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped them to search for learning opportunities beyond their geographical and time zone boundaries that they hardly experienced in normal situations before the pandemic.

Due to the design of this study, which is more of a case study in nature, the generalizability of this study is a limitation. The dataset lacks the hallmark of heterogeneity since even though it involved participants from different countries with different socio-cultural backgrounds, it was only sourced from one global online community. It also had limitations in capturing how their projected motivational self-system influences their language performance. Future research is suggested to search for a similar project with more online communities using similar or different methodological perspectives or to be directed to a more correlational approach to investigate how the motivational self-system and language achievement are interlinked in the context of a global online community.

Despite these limitations, this study offers some valuable implications in the area of English teaching-learning. Even though this study was situated beyond the four walls of the classroom, in adult learners, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the praxeological implications are relevant in a broader context in formal or informal education across ages and for the contexts beyond the pandemic. English teachers, tutors, or facilitators as central agents possessing the power to infuse particular educational values are advised to stimulate and facilitate learners to engage in internally and externally driven activities. The former could be started by nurturing the virtues of

future dreams (enabling students to have clearer ideal selves and stronger motivation) and a sense of global citizenship (affording them to be more open and broad-minded) during the instruction to encourage learners to independently search for learning opportunities outside of classroom learning hours. The latter could be initiated by organizing in or out- of-class structured learning activities where learners are, by certain procedures, exposed to the world beyond their own countries. In this fashion, alternative learning activities such as international telecollaboration, virtual international guest talks, or simply cultural virtual tours could be systematically designed. To some extent, after the COVID-19 outbreak, inviting or visiting other cultures from other parts of the globe virtually is likely to be more accessible and efficient since many teachers and learners have experienced online learning during the restriction of physical interaction.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guidelines

(the questions may be raised not in order considering the flow of discussion)

No	Questions to address RQ1 and RQ2
1	How important is English for you? Why are you learning English?
2	Tell me more about your previous learning English experiences: the books, teachers, teaching methods, etc.
3	What sort of experiences might motivate or demotivate you in your learning of English?
4	With the help of English, what do you really want to be or to do in the future?
5	As you have expectations or dreams for your future, what do you invest in to achieve it?
6	How does COVID-19 affect your learning of English?
7	Why did you finally decide to join the GSOC?
8	What do you like or dislike from the GSOC?
9	How do you feel differently about yourself after joining the GSOC?
10	Do you have more stories to tell? about your past English learning experiences, experiences in GSOC, your dreamed future? or anything related to your English learning trajectory?

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