

**Student Motivation for Studying English  
for Academic Purposes Courses in an  
Offshore Program in China**

**A thesis submitted by**

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**In accordance with the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

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# Certificate of Original Authorship

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I, Xuqi Ouyang, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program

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Date: 28/02/2020

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# Abstract

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Recent years have seen an increase in the number of English language programs which Chinese universities offer in partnership with overseas universities. Examples of these programs are English for academic purposes (EAP) courses run in China which aim to prepare students for study at English medium universities overseas. The aim of this study is to investigate students' motivation for studying these courses. The setting in which the study is undertaken is an EAP course offered at a university in China in a language centre that has been established and is overseen by an Australian university.

The theoretical bases for this study are Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System, Ushioda's (2009) person-in-context view of motivation, and Larsen-Freeman and Cameron's (2008) work on complex dynamic systems. The study used a mixed methods approach that entailed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data; in particular a questionnaire was used, and interviews undertaken with a set of focal students. One hundred and nine students completed the questionnaire. Four students were chosen as focal cases on the basis of their being reflective of the larger study group in terms of gender, program of study, demographic background, and learner archetypes. The data were collected over a period of three months at the university in China. The questionnaire data were examined by looking at responses to questions regarding the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience in relation to gender, academic study program, and demographic origin of the students. The qualitative component of the study aimed to explore the focal students' questionnaire responses in depth.

The quantitative findings showed that the students, overall, had a positive attitude towards their ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves, and L2 learning experiences. A closer look at the responses to the questionnaire items, however, revealed that the students' responses regarding their ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves were varied and multifaceted. Students' ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves, and L2 learning experiences, further, based on correlational analysis were found to be related. The quantitative findings provided the starting point for the qualitative analysis in which the motivations of individual students

were explored in more detail. Based on the analysis of the focal student data, their ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves were found to be changeable, dynamic and responsive to their individual learning environments. In addition, their motivation fluctuated over time. These findings contrast with previous research into the L2 Motivational Self System which has portrayed motivation as being stable and uniform across settings. The findings of this study show the students' motivations to be non-linear in that having a certain ideal L2 self and/or ought-to L2 self did not guarantee that a student would be motivated to learn. The qualitative analysis also showed that the L2 learning experiences were extremely powerful in that, on occasion, they could override students' views of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. From a practical point of view, the study provides insights into students' motivations for studying English that are beneficial for teachers. Beyond this, however, the theoretical implications of this study are that students' motivations need to be considered from both contextual and complex dynamic perspectives, alongside the L2 Motivational Self System. L2 motivation studies, thus, need to move from a view of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and L2 motivation as stable and predictive to one that takes into account their sometimes fluctuating and unpredictable nature.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction to the Topic

It is no exaggeration to say that anyone who has been engaged in learning has encountered discussions of the importance of motivation. Questions regarding what motivates people to learn, to make choices, to engage in action, to spend time and effort in action, and to persist in action, have guided researchers to produce a wealth of studies which have aimed to understand motivation for learning. In terms of language learning, motivation is also important as success in mastering a foreign/second (L2) language does not rely solely on a learner's language aptitude, but also on the learner's enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence during the lengthy, and often tedious, process of language learning (Dörnyei 2018; Dörnyei & Ryan 2015; Hadfield & Dörnyei 2013; Hiver & Larsen-Freeman 2020; Lamb 2016, 2017, 2018).

Since the important role of motivation has been recognised in language learning, questions have been raised such as: "What is L2 motivation?", "Is it different from mainstream motivation?", and if so, "How is it different", and "How does it work?". The answers to these questions have helped to generate various L2 motivational theories and models which have aimed at understanding L2 motivation; these include Gardner's (2010) Socio-Educational Model, Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory and Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System. These theories and models have advanced our understanding of L2 motivation at different times in the development of L2 motivation research. Recently, it is the L2 Motivational Self System that has dominated the field of L2 motivation research. This theory emphasises utilising a learner's self-concept to understand L2 motivation. Applying and extending this theoretical model, this study examines Chinese students' motivation for studying on EAP courses on a university program in China. What is notable about this program is that it is designed and run by a university with a 'Western' EAP curriculum, a Western view of education, and which employs many Western teachers. The underlying educational philosophy of the program and the expectations of the students, then, are different from those found at Chinese universities, and in Chinese education more broadly.

Sharing a similar cultural and linguistic background to the study's participants, my personal experiences of the L2 self and L2 motivation are used as a starting point for the study. Thus, in this introductory chapter, after introducing the research topic, I share my own motivational experiences as an English language learner. After sharing my experiences, I provide the rationale for my research interest in the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and L2 motivation. This chapter ends with a summary of the organisation of the thesis.

## **1.2 The L2 Self and L2 Motivation: My Experiences**

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that personal stories about a researcher's experiences are essential in academic inquiry, since the researcher's experiences and intimate connection to a phenomenon very often lead to the researcher's interest in and puzzlement about that phenomenon. In line with this view, I would like to share my own motivational experiences as an English language learner.

I started my English language learning when I was in Year 6 at school in China. At that time, I did not have a clear idea about English. I just knew it was a subject I had to study. As my English teacher was not very interesting, and English was not used outside the classroom, I did not pay much attention to it. This attitude I had towards English changed when I went to junior high school, as English there was one of three compulsory subjects, along with Chinese and mathematics. Due to this elevated status of English, I consciously devoted myself more to learning English, as I realised that it would help me get good grades, go to a reputable senior high school and university, meet my parents' expectations, and eventually find a good job and achieve a better future for myself. Also, with the advance of my English knowledge, my personal interest in English unconsciously grew. Not satisfied with the limited knowledge of English I gained through my English teachers in class, I started exploring opportunities to have more contact with the language. In particular, I watched English language programs from Hong Kong television. Although I did not understand it at that time, these programs provided me with rare chances to see a world that was very different to that in mainland China. In this "outside world", I dared to dream that one day I would perhaps be able to communicate with these people, understand their customs and cultures, and even live in their societies.

Although I myself developed my personal goals and self interest in English, they did not always, however, directly motivate me to learn English. Rather, my English self and my English learning motivation fluctuated a lot during my study in response to my learning experiences. For example, once I was called 卖国贼 (a traitor) by one of my classmates because I excelled in English. This created a crisis in me which shook my self-esteem as an English learner, leading to my hesitation to learn English for a while, even though I knew I needed English to pass my exams, and that English could bring me a bright future. On another occasion, I was accused of doing something wrong by my English teacher. As a result, my attitude towards her became hostile, and this resentment towards her had a great impact on my motivation to learn English. Suddenly, I was like a deflated balloon because my self-confidence had been damaged. Interestingly, these resentments later became my motivation to prove she was wrong. These experiences illustrate the changeable and sometimes unpredictable nature of my English self and my English learning motivation; these are topics I explore in this study.

### **1.3 Theoretical Background to the Study**

This study draws on Dörnyei's (2009b) notion of the L2 Motivational Self System as its point of departure. This System includes three constructs, the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to Self and the L2 Learning Experience (a detailed discussion of this theoretical model is contained in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Background to the Study). In this System, these three constructs are portrayed as stable components that have clear-cut boundaries, and which are independent. Further, the relationships between these constructs and L2 motivation are portrayed as linear. These orientations are in part due to Dörnyei's earlier quantitative leanings. As he stated in 2007:

My attraction to well-structured systems, clear-cut boundaries, standardized procedures, and statistical analyses make me more naturally a quantitative researcher. (Dörnyei 2007, p. 174)

Consequently, many studies which have applied this theoretical model have taken these leanings for granted, and used statistical analysis of groups' mean scores from large samples to understand L2 motivation in multiple research contexts to claim the validity of this model.

This is notwithstanding the fact that Dörnyei has since revised his position on quantitative research (Dewaele 2019), saying that statistical measures do not capture “the intricate dynamics of a complex system” (Dörnyei 2012, p. 4).

The statistical view, indeed, does not effectively explain my L2 motivation experiences as an English language learner, because statistics are static, and simply cannot capture the dynamics of experiences such as mine from a self-concept perspective, which is a perspective that develops and changes over time (Mercer & Williams 2014). This view is supported by Dörnyei, MacIntyre and Henry (2015), and by Ushioda (2015, 2020a). This inability of statistics to explain L2 motivation, however, has received little attention in L2 motivation research. It is this research gap that motivated me to carry out the study that is reported on in this thesis, by the collection of both quantitative and, importantly, qualitative data, to give an empirical account of the students’ L2 selves and their motivation.

#### **1.4 Organisation of the Thesis**

After this introduction, which has provided information on the impetus for the investigation, the next chapter, Chapter 2, introduces and explains the key concepts in relation to L2 motivation and, more broadly, the theoretical background to the study. In addition, previous studies which have applied the L2 Motivational Self System are reviewed with a focus on Chinese students. Then, the research questions which guide the study and the significance of the study are presented. Chapter 3 discusses the research setting, which is a joint venture program between an Australian and a Chinese university, at which the EAP program is located. This program is a pathways study program that prepares students for academic studies either in China (the In-plan program) or in Australia (the Out-plan program). Justification for the research design and methodology employed in the study is also presented. In this study, a mixed methods research approach is employed. The use of mixed methods research represents a move away from the trend of typical L2 Motivational Self System studies, in which measurement and statistics are the prime focus, and qualitative data, if used at all, are drawn on only to support the findings of the quantitative data. This study, by contrast, makes the qualitative data its key focus in order to explore participants’ voices, and their views of their L2 selves and L2 motivation. Thus, in-depth

interviews with four focal study participants were conducted. Quantitative data drawn from a questionnaire conducted with one hundred and nine students, and which preceded the interviews, were collected in order to provide a backdrop to the study.

Chapter 4 focuses on the findings from the questionnaire data, which found that students had a positive attitude towards their ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves and their L2 learning experiences, and that these three constructs were found to be interrelated. The ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves, further, were found to be multifaceted in nature, with some facets having various levels of visibility and vividness in terms of their proximity and relatedness to the students. The chapter then transitions towards a presentation of the students' interviews, which are described in detail in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 then presents the four focal cases. Each case commences with a review of the participants' responses to the questionnaire, which is then followed by a detailed examination of each student's vision of his/her L2 self and his/her motivational profile, as revealed by the qualitative data. Chapter 6 then discusses the qualitative findings in relation to previous research on the topic. The key findings are that the L2 self is a product of a reflective integrative process, and that L2 motivation is a developmental ensemble of features. Chapter 7 concludes the study, highlights the contributions of the study to L2 motivation research, and outlines the theoretical and pedagogic implications of the research. It then describes the limitations of the study, and makes proposals for further research based on the findings of the study.

# Chapter 2: Background to the Study

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## 2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides the background to the study. First, the concept of L2 motivation is introduced, with a focus on the controversy of the definition of L2 motivation. Then, the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei 2009b), the key theoretical framework for the study, is discussed. This discussion presents the development of the L2 Motivational Self System, from its historical background, theoretical basis, and validation, through to the latest modifications of the System. In addition, relevant theories, including those of directed motivational currents and person-in-context, and the notion of demotivation are covered. This is followed by a review of studies which have investigated Chinese students' L2 motivation. Based on these discussions, which highlight the necessity for further exploration of the L2 Motivational Self System and further understanding of L2 motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, the research questions for the study are presented.

## 2.2 The Concept of Second Language Motivation

Motivation is believed to be one of the key success factors in L2 study. Researchers (e.g. Dörnyei (2010); Hadfield & Dörnyei (2013); Liu (2014); Ross (2015)) have argued that intellectual abilities are only part of what leads to L2 learners' success or failure in language learning, and that learners' motivation plays a crucial role that should not be underestimated. Although the importance of motivation in L2 learning has been emphasised, the concept of L2 motivation is not easy to define. The most contested definition is the notion of integrative orientation, which was first introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972) as "reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented (by a target community)" (p. 132), as opposed to instrumental motivation, such as learning a language in order to gain pragmatic benefits. Integrative orientation originated from the process of social identification that underpins first language acquisition. Gardner and



Lambert (1972) believed that such a process of social identification could also be applied to learning a second language, which motivates learners to master it. That is, L2 learners “must be willing to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and take on very subtle aspects of their behaviour” (Gardner & Lambert 1972, p. 135). The use of this social identification perspective to define L2 motivation, however, is not without controversy. In the 1980s, there was much discussion on the differences between strong (social identification and integration) and weak (affiliation and interest) versions of the integrative orientation (Ushioda & Dörnyei 2009). For example, McDonough (1981) speculated that the strong form would be unrealistic for many language learners. This speculation was later confirmed by Clément and Kruidenier (1983), who concluded that such a strong form was uncommon among language learners.

The controversy regarding the integrative orientation has become intensified in recent years, complicated by the spread of English globally, as it is at odds with the current situation in terms of the ownership of English (Ushioda & Dörnyei 2009). Due to the global spread of English, there is often now no single reference group for students to become part of as a result of their learning. As a result of this changing status of English, researchers in L2 motivation have come up with new interpretations of the integrative concept. For example, the international posture proposed by Yashima (2002, 2009) captured Japanese students’ intention to relate themselves to the international community, rather than to any specific L2 group. Ushioda (2006) highlighted that the contribution of the international posture was that it expanded the “external reference group for integrative attitudes from a specific geographic, linguistic and cultural community to a nonspecific global community of English language users” (p. 150).

The representative of this retheorising of the integrative concept is Dörnyei’s (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System which draws on self-concepts, as opposed to the interest of students in becoming part of a particular language community. This model is discussed in detail in the next section, as it is the key theoretical framework employed in this study. While Dörnyei’s (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System is based on self-concepts, other scholars reframe L2 motivation, drawing on contemporary discussions of identity in the globalising and postmodern world (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova 2014; Ushioda & Dörnyei 2009). For example, based on both quantitative and qualitative data

from junior high school students in a provincial area in Indonesia, Lamb (2004) speculated that students were motivated to learn English because they aspired to acquire a bicultural identity; that was, “an English-speaking globally-involved version of themselves, in addition to their local L1 speaking self” (p. 3). Lamb (2004) further speculated that students’ motivation to learn English might be partly explained by reference to ongoing processes of identification, especially during the formative years of adolescence. The concept of investment by Norton (2000, 2016) is another example of an idea that links L2 motivation with identity to understand the “socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practise it” (Norton 2000, p. 10), reflecting the sociocultural turn within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research (Block 2007; Darvin & Norton 2015). Grounded in this sociocultural turn, investment is conceptualised as a sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009). That is, rather than seeing language learner identity as fixed dichotomies (e.g. good/bad, motivated/unmotivated, introvert/extrovert), investment recognises the impacts of social power in different learning contexts which can position learners in multiple and often unequal ways, leading to varying learning outcomes (Darvin & Norton 2015). In relation to L2 motivation, while the psychological construct of motivation often views a language learner as having a unitary and coherent identity with specific character traits, investment considers the language learner as a social being with a complex identity which changes across time and space and is reproduced in social interaction (Darvin & Norton 2015). This perspective is of great significance as it offers a unique way to understanding the relationship between a learner’s identity and their motivation to invest in language learning; that is, “one’s individual identity exists within a changing context that may provide or limit access to the target language, its speakers, and community” (Midby et al. 2020, p. 2). For example, a student may be temporarily highly unmotivated, but may be invested in the language practices of a given classroom if the practices are non-racist, non-sexist or non-homophobic (Darvin & Norton 2015). Although the construct of investment sheds new light on L2 motivation research, its subsequent focus is on identity and language learning and teaching in the field of applied linguistics, rather on L2 motivation.

## **2.3 The L2 Motivational Self System**

Using self-concepts as motivational drivers for learners to learn languages, Dörnyei (2005, 2009b) formulated a new conceptualisation of L2 motivation, the L2 Motivational Self System. Currently, this System is the dominant model employed to understand L2 motivation. In this section, the historical background, theoretical basis, validation process, and recent development of this model are reviewed.

### **2.3.1 Historical Background to the Formation of L2 Motivational Self System**

There are three interrelated contributing factors which prompted the formation of the L2 Motivational Self System: namely changing global realities, a growing dissatisfaction with integrative motivation, and an increased understanding of the role of the self in second language acquisition research.

Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world has witnessed major changes, and globalisation has gained momentum, leading to more advanced and sophisticated interconnections between people from different linguistic, cultural, social-economic and political backgrounds from different part of the world (Ushioda & Dörnyei 2009). Due to these changing global realities, the motivation to learn a second or foreign language can no longer be viewed as a wish to integrate into a particular target community. The goal, rather, for languages such as English, at least, has for some people become the acquisition of a global identity, and to become a legitimate member of the globalised world. At the same time, due to the increased attention given to self-concepts in second language acquisition, and the production of a range of theoretical conceptualisations of the self, these concepts have taken on a new vibrancy in language learning research (Williams & Merer 2014). Furthermore, many L2 motivation researchers view a foreign language as not only a communication code that can be learned in a similar way to other academic subjects, but also as a tool that helps learners to form their identity (Dörnyei 2005, 2009b; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011).

### 2.3.2 Theoretical Basis of the L2 Motivational Self System

The L2 Motivational Self System draws on two theories from social psychology: the concept of possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986), and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987).

Possible selves, introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986), is a concept that represents individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. Markus and Nurius (1986) provided a definition of possible selves (p. 954):

Possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self.

This definition can be understood in three aspects: multi-facets, dynamics, and dialectical unity. With regard to multi-facets, the above description represents possible selves as one's specific facet in a future state, involving thoughts, images, senses, goals, aspirations, and fears. In many ways, multi-facets are similar to various visions about oneself in the future. Indeed, Markus and Nurius (1987) supported this statement as they confirm that "possible selves encompass within their scope visions of desired and undesired end states" (p. 59).

More recently, the concept of visions has begun to find its way into motivational practices in the classroom through practitioner-oriented publications (Al-Murtadha 2019; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova 2014; Gregersen & MacIntyre 2014; Hadfield & Dörnyei 2013; Mackay 2019). As Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) pointed out, "vision is one of the single most important factors within the domain of language learning: where there is a vision, there is a way" (p. 2) to highlight the attraction of using vision to explain long-term efforts to master a second language. This aspect of possible selves is not restricted to L2 learning; vision is also applied in a variety of contexts and areas, leading to humanistic, religious, political, business, community, public policy, and personal visions (Van der Helm 2009). As Van der Helm (2009) argued, although visions have multiple facets, they all share three defining characteristics: the future, the ideal, and the desire for deliberate change. This argument leads to the second aspect of possible selves – dynamics.

For dynamics, Markus and Nurius explained (1986, p. 956) “because possible selves are not well-anchored in social experience, they comprise the self-knowledge that is most vulnerable and responsive to changes in the environment. They are the first elements of the self-concept to absorb and reveal such change. As representations of potential, possible selves will thus be particularly sensitive to those situations that communicate new or inconsistent information about the self”. This aspect is further supported by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), who argued that during a period of learning, learners’ visions about themselves are likely to change. This dynamism, however, has not received enough attention from current L2 motivation research. This concern has been raised by Henry (2015), who pointed out that the problematic conceptualisation of viewing possible selves as static constructs that individuals strive to achieve or live up to in current L2 motivation practice contradicts this aspect of possible selves. This issue will be further discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

In comparison with the first two aspects of possible selves, dialectical unity is less discussed in the literature. However, this does not mean this aspect of possible selves is less important. According to the definition of possible selves given above, it can be divided into two distinct parts: the positive self and the feared self (Carver, Reynolds & Scheier 1994). Research has shown that the impact of the self will be stronger if a positive self is supplemented by a feared self in the same domain (Carroll, Shepperd & Arkin 2009; Carver, Reynolds & Scheier 1994; Oyserman et al. 2004). Thus, Markus and Ruvolo (1989) concluded that dynamic balanced selves in the same domain would create a more powerful motivational state than either an expected possible self or a feared self alone. The dialectical unity shows that various facets of possible selves can exist concurrently (MacIntyre, MacKinnon & Clément 2009). These three aspects of possible selves: multi-facets, dynamics, and dialectical unity, are used as reference points in Chapters 4 and Chapter 6, in which the quantitative and qualitative data are discussed.

From the above review, possible selves can be defined as a motivational concept, either to hope for or avoid some state, from the self perspective. It is self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) that links this concept with the motivational function (Dörnyei 2009b, 2014a; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). Self-discrepancy theory was introduced to examine how different types of discrepancy between self-state representations are related to different kinds of emotional

vulnerabilities. Within this theory, the analysis of self begins with three basic domains of the self: the actual self, which is the current attributes that someone possesses; the ideal self, referring to the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess; the ought-to self, referring to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess. From these descriptions, it seems that ideal selves and ought-to selves are similar to one another in that they represent a person's desired future self state. Higgins (1998) emphasised that while the ideal self has a promotion focus, which is related to positive emotional-motivational predispositions, such as hopes, aspirations, advancement, growth, and accomplishment, the ought-to self has a prevention focus, concerned with protection, safety, responsibilities, and obligations. Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) suggests that these selves are motivating because discrepancies between one's current self and these future selves lead to discomfort. In turn, this discomfort motivates a person to increase harmony between the two selves in order to reduce the feeling of discomfort. As with possible selves, self-discrepancy theory is also used as a reference point in Chapters 4 and Chapter 6, in which the quantitative and qualitative data are discussed.

Drawing on the concept of possible selves and self-discrepancy theory, the L2 Motivational Self System was formulated. The L2 Motivational Self System is a model which comprises of three constructs (Dörnyei 2009b, p. 29):

- *The Ideal L2 self*, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the '*ideal L2 self*' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.
- *The Ought-to L2 self*, which concerns the attributes that one believes one have to meet expectations, and to avoid possible negative outcomes.

The first two constructs are partly an application of possible selves theory to L2 learning contexts, representing L2 equivalents of the ideal and ought-to selves (Dörnyei 2014a). Nonetheless, these two sources of L2 motivation, that is, a learner's internal desire to become a proficient L2 user, and external pressure coming from the learner's learning environment to master the L2, do not provide a complete picture of L2 motivation. Thus

the L2 Motivational Self System also includes a third construct, which emphasises the motivational importance of the immediate situation where the L2 learning occurs (Dörnyei 2009b, p. 29):

- *L2 learning experience*, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success).

### **2.3.3 Validation of the L2 Motivational Self System**

When first introduced in 2005, the L2 Motivational Self System was only a proposal for reconceptualising L2 learner motivation. However, since 2009, a number of studies, drawing on large-scale surveys and questionnaires, have been carried out to test its validity, which has enabled it to gain broad acceptance.

One of the pioneer studies which tested and validated the L2 Motivational Self System was carried out by Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009). They surveyed nearly 5000 participants from three Asian countries: China, Japan, and Iran. The participants were mainly from universities, although some participants in China were middle school students and professionals. There were three objectives in this study: to replicate Dörnyei's Hungarian study (2005) in these three Asian countries; to test whether or not a relationship exists between the ideal L2 self and integrative orientation; and to determine whether there are two distinct types of instrumental motivation, and if so, how they are related to the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. The correlational results confirmed that the ideal L2 self was positively correlated with integrative orientation, and integrative orientation could be relabeled and reinterpreted in the ideal L2 self, because the ideal L2 self provided better explanatory power in relation to learners' intended efforts than integrative orientation did. The correlational results also confirmed instrumental motivation could be divided into two distinct constructs from a self perspective. While instrumental promotion was highly associated with the ideal L2 self, instrumental prevention was highly correlated with the ought-to L2 self. Finally, and more generally, a structural equation modelling (Kline 2015) analysis supported the validity of the tripartite construct of the L2 Motivational Self System.

While Taguchi et al.'s (2009) study examined the L2 Motivational Self System among students and professionals in three Asian contexts, Ryan's (2009) study aimed at testing the concept of ideal L2 self among Japanese students. There were two research focal points in his study. First, he wanted to validate the concept of the ideal L2 self as being equivalent to integrative orientation through a replication of key elements in Dörnyei's (2005) Hungarian study. Second, he aimed to explore whether the ideal L2 self had a greater explanatory power than integrative orientation. The results of his study further validated the findings of the Hungarian study, and found out that indeed the concept of the ideal L2 self is a more powerful construct than integrative orientation. Thus, his study provides strong empirical support for the call to reinterpret L2 motivation from a self perspective.

Also focusing on the ideal L2 self, Al-Shehri (2009) studied the relationship between the ideal L2 self, imagination, and visual style. Al-Shehri postulated that if learners possessed a marked visual learning style, they would have a strong capacity for imagination and visual imagery. Therefore, they would be more likely to develop a strong ideal L2 self. Based on survey results from 200 Arab university students, his study confirmed that the ideal L2 self is a major motivational factor, and it also supported his hypothesis that visual learners would be more able to develop well-defined ideal L2 selves.

Up to this point, the L2 learning experience construct had not been tested. Csizér and Kormos's (2009) study, however, closed this gap. They carried out a study in order to examine the role of the L2 learning experience as well as the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self among middle school, college and university students in Hungary. The main purpose of their study was to provide empirical support for the L2 Motivational Self System by applying structural equation modelling to survey data. Their results showed that both the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience were major contributors to students' motivated learning behaviour. In addition, the results revealed that the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, in their study, were either not related to one another, or showed a weak correlation, which indicated that in their context, these three constructs were independent motivational variables, and distinct from each other.

Adopting a different research perspective from the above four studies to validate the L2 Motivational Self System, Lamb (2009a) conducted a longitudinal study, by using mixed-methods (surveys, classroom observation and interviews), to examine Indonesian high



school students' motivation to study English as a foreign language. As Lamb (2009a) commented, "the study supports the view that ideal and ought-to L2 selves could be useful explanatory constructs in language learning motivation especially when combined with more sociologically-oriented theories" (p. 243), something which is often not taken account of in L2 motivation research.

Answering Lamb's (2009a) call, Kim (2009b) investigated the nature of and the interrelationship between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self from the perspective of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978) and activity theory (Engeström 2001) based on qualitative inquiry methods (interviews, classroom observations, picture-cued recall tasks, and language learning autobiographies). This study focused on two study abroad Korean English as second language (ESL) students in Canada. The cases reported on in the study enrich the understanding of the nature of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self in two important ways. First, instrumental motivation in L2 learning can be merged into either the ideal L2 self or the ought-to L2 self, depending on the degree of internalization. Second, a learner's ideal L2 self needs to be aligned to the learner's life experiences in a variety of communities. Without the support from these communities, it would be hard for the learner to imagine a positive, competent and promotion-focused future L2 self-image. This future L2 self-image may, rather, end up as part of the prevention-focused ought-to L2 self. These conclusions, however, are in contradiction with Csizér and Kormos's (2009) findings, which claimed that the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience were independent motivational variables, and distinct from each other.

Taken together, the six studies reviewed above cover two continents (Asia and Europe), and involve two learning contexts (English as a foreign language (EFL), including China, Japan, Iran, Hungary, Indonesia; and English as a second language (ESL), including Canada). In general, these validation studies have argued that the L2 Motivational Self System is a more suitable theoretical tool to explain L2 motivation, with the ideal L2 self being consistently seen as a more reliable predictor of motivated learning behaviour than integrative orientation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). It also needs to be pointed out that while the first four studies are dominated by large scale questionnaires or structural equation modeling, presenting the L2 selves as single and stable concepts, the last two studies employ qualitative-oriented methods to examine the nature of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2

self within specific contexts, and their relationships with the L2 learning experience in these contexts. This split view continues in the further modification of the L2 Motivational Self System.

#### **2.3.4 Further Modification of the L2 Motivational Self System**

The latest modifications of the L2 Motivational Self System have witnessed two different approaches: revisions of the L2 Motivational Self System, and the L2 Motivational Self System seen from a complex dynamic systems perspective. In revisions to the existing L2 Motivational Self System, drawing on quantitative research in the area, a number of new terms have been suggested, such as the current L2 self (Thorsen, Henry & Cliffordson 2017), and L2 selves from own and other standpoints (Blair & Azaz 2019; Liu & Thompson 2018; Papi et al. 2019). Although these new terms have been claimed to increase the validity of the L2 Motivational Self System, they are, as with the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, often portrayed as monolithic and static concepts (Henry 2015), which do not consider the inherently evolutionary nature of possible selves, which has been described as multi-faceted and dynamic, nor interactions with L2 learning experiences (Dörnyei 2019b). This view is in line with Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), who argue (p. 93):

With the acceptance of the L2 Motivational Self System, the field of L2 motivation research had reached an intriguing juncture – either to keep moving forward in new directions that aim to capture the motivational highs and lows that are an inevitable part of learning a language, or to settle at a deceptive stand-still, that is, a new orthodoxy in which new terminology is merely superimposed onto what are essentially existing static concepts.

It is against this backdrop that the current study sets out to investigate the dynamic nature of the L2 self and students' motivation to learn English, applying a complex dynamic systems perspective. This approach will be further discussed below.

#### **2.3.4.1 The L2 Motivational Self System from a Complex Dynamic Systems Approach**

As discussed earlier (see section 2.3.2), the theory of possible selves possesses the characteristics of being multifaceted and dynamic. As the theoretical basis for the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, it is inevitable that these two constructs inherit this nature from possible selves. However, either from early validation studies or most current research into the L2 selves and L2 motivation, notions of immutable categories, highly specified endpoints, single causes, and linear relationships (Schumann 2015) are often seen as being synonymous with the L2 Motivational Self System. The mismatch between theory and practice, and dynamics and fixity, has been acknowledged by L2 motivation researchers (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009; Lamb 2018; Ushioda 2020a). This mismatch is also pointed out in Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) as an uncharted area for future research directions. The question is raised “How stable are the ideal and ought-to selves?” (p. 351). If the ideal and ought-to selves are not stable how, then, will they affect L2 motivation? A related question, which has also not received attention, is the concept of demotivation and “How is it conceived based on self-concept?” (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009, p. 352). The complex dynamic systems perspective might offer some insights into these questions.

The complex dynamic systems approach was first introduced to second language acquisition (SLA) by Larsen-Freeman (1997). A dynamic systems perspective considers language acquisition in a holistic and systematic way by acknowledging interrelationships among various components during the learning process and the nonlinear relationships of self-organisation and emergence by which the learning process develops and responds to both internal and external stimuli (Waninge, Dörnyei & De Bot 2014). The value of this approach to L2 motivation research lies in its potential to provide explanations for the highs and lows of L2 motivation, and the mismatch between the inherent dynamic nature of possible selves and the statistics-based quantitative research practice which currently dominates the L2 motivation field (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015). In order to understand the potential benefits of the complex dynamic systems approach, some key notions are worth discussing: relationships, dynamism, stability and context.

The concepts of relationships and dynamism indicate that in a system with at least two or more elements, these elements interact with one another, but also change over time

(Larsen-Freeman 2015). This temporal and evolutionary nature is the defining element of a complex dynamic systems approach. It highlights the fact that changes in the system can be nonlinear, meaning they are disproportionate to causal factors (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008). That is, sometimes a lot of effort is made, but without a result; on other occasions, the slightest input can have a dramatic effect on the whole system, a phenomenon called the butterfly effect (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008; Waninge, Dörnyei & De Bot 2014). The implication of this nonlinearity is that accurate predictions are harder to make, as changes in the system cannot be easily linked to any specific single cause.

Despite the emphasis on dynamic interactions and nonlinear changes, a complex dynamic systems approach also recognises stable states – positions referred to as attractor states (Hiver 2015) – during its development. The concept of attractor state is important because it links to the system's capacity for self-organisation. Due to this self-organisation, a complex dynamic systems can be regarded as having two basic behavioural tendencies, which take place either in relatively stable periods, in which attractors are strong, or in periods of instability, which are characterised by weak or changing attractors (Dörnyei 2009c). Every dynamic system, according to Howe and Lewis (2005), can be viewed as a series of shifts between periods of stabilisation and periods of destabilisation.

A complex dynamic systems approach views relationships between learning environments and learners as being simultaneously and mutually influenced (Larsen-Freeman 2015). Learners are not simply located in particular learning contexts, but become an integral part of these contexts. Learners shape and are shaped by contexts (Ushioda 2015). For example, in the context of a language learning classroom, learners' performances will affect and be affected by various layers of contextual factors, such as the behaviour of their classmates, the physical space of the classroom, the teaching styles of the teachers, or even the social environment in which the learning is located. The mutual influence of learner and context defies the traditional way of viewing context as an independent background variable, or a static backdrop, over which the learner has no control (Ushioda 2009). Also this view bridges the gap between the inner mental world of the individual and the surrounding social environment (Dörnyei 2009a), or engagement (Dörnyei 2019b), which is the latest term to be added to this discussion.

The complex dynamic systems approach opens up new directions for L2 motivation research. There are a number of reasons why a complex dynamic systems approach is compatible with the L2 Motivational Self System. First, as discussed earlier (in section 2.3.2), possible selves is a multifaceted and dynamic concept. It is experientially grounded, contextually-constructed, and environmentally sensitive (Bui & Teng 2019; Markus & Nurius 1986). The ideal and ought-to L2 selves are by nature inherently dynamic, and therefore well suited targets for investigations using dynamic approaches (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015). Second, one of the validation studies described above (Kim 2009b) has revealed that there are interrelationships between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. These interactions are likely to change as a result of the involvement of the L2 learning experience. From a complex dynamic systems approach, the L2 Motivational Self System can be considered as a complex dynamic system in which all its three constructs interact, but which also evolve over time. Third, by adopting the concept of attractor states, Dörnyei (2009c) describes the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System as three attractor basins. The ideal L2 self is centred around the internal desires of the learner, the ought-to L2 self around the motivational regulations of social pressures executed by significant others in the learner's environment, and the L2 learning experience around the actual experience of being engaged in the learning process. Dörnyei (2009c) speculates that the existence of any one of these attractor basins alone is sufficient to motivate the learner to learn, but if the three systems are in harmony, this will have an increased, cumulative effect. Thus, this study sets out to explore these beliefs.

A number of attempts have been made to examine the self-concept from the complex dynamic perspective. For example, Henry (2015) has proposed a tentative model of possible selves dynamics which includes the following dynamic processes: changes triggered by interaction with other self-concepts (e.g., changes in vividness and elaboration of image); and up and downward revisions of the ideal L2 self. Later, Henry (2017) explains how a learner's ideal multilingual self is mentally described by using construal-level theory (Trope & Liberman 2010). Construal-level theory suggests that the more distant an object is from the individual, the more abstract it will be, while the closer the object is, the more concrete it will be. Henry (2017) claims that in comparison with a learner's ideal L2 self, although the

image of a learner's multilingual self is further than the learner's current self and may also lack a degree of detail, it is rich in terms of motivational power.

These attempts have increased our understanding of the complex dynamic systems nature of the L2 self-concept and L2 motivation, and some researchers are beginning to realise the limitations of linear models in representing the dynamic complexity of motivational processes. This realisation acts as a further catalyst for a wave of methodological diversification. Meaningful qualitative research designs have appeared alongside the dominant quantitative paradigm. Thus, L2 motivation research has witnessed an explosion in methodological innovation (Dörnyei & Ryan 2015; Ryan 2019), such as retrodictive qualitative modelling (Chan, Dörnyei & Henry 2015; Hiver 2017), trajectory equifinality (Mercer 2015), Q methodology (Irie & Ryan 2015), idiodynamics (Boudreau, MacIntyre & Dewaele 2018), and comparative case analysis (Chan, Dörnyei & Henry 2015). Among these approaches, case studies are believed to have the most potential, because in a dynamic perspective "the individual is the entity of concern, and case studies become recognized as the appropriate level of granularity for understanding motivation trajectories" (Schumann 2015, p. XVI).

Another way to illustrate the extent of the recent changes in the research paradigm is through the nature of the research questions being asked by researchers (Dörnyei & Ryan 2015). A typical research question in an early validation study of the L2 Motivational Self System would have asked: "What is the correlation between the components of this system and selected criterion measures?". However, in the current research climate, which eschews linear predictability, researchers are now more interested in motivational processes, changes and fluctuations, and interactions in specific contexts, as demonstrated for example by the research question that was driving Wang and Liu's (2017, p. 3) recent study: "How did learners' ideal and ought-to L3 selves fluctuate during the L3 learning process?". Changes in paradigms for researching L2 motivation and correspondent research questions have provided a justification and direction for the design and research questions asked in the current study, so that it not only stays in pace with the current research climate, but also extends understandings of the dynamic nature of L2 self and L2 motivation among Chinese students in a Chinese learning context.

Despite the emerging importance of views on complex dynamic systems approach, only a limited number of empirical L2 Motivational Self System studies have so far applied this approach. This scarcity has been recognised by Dörnyei, MacIntyre and Henry (2015), as they acknowledge that although “most of the cutting-edge theorizing took it for granted that the future lay along the dynamic path, most of the actual empirical research followed traditional, non-dynamic research approaches” (p. 5). So far, only few studies (Fryer & Roger 2018; Nitta & Baba 2015; You & Chan 2015) have used the dynamic approach to investigate the L2 Motivational Self System; these will be discussed below.

Most studies on the L2 Motivational Self System have examined the linear relationships between the three constructs and certain criterion measures, and little attention has been paid to the interaction between the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience. In particular, the L2 learning experience has been conceptualised in rather abstract and generalised terms (Brady 2019; Nitta & Baba 2015). Aiming to bridge these gaps, Nitta and Baba (2015) used a case-based method, taking a complex dynamic systems perspective, to investigate how Japanese students’ ideal L2 selves evolved over one year in interaction with language learning tasks. Based on two case studies, Nitta and Baba (2015) discovered that the relationship between the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience co-adapted within the context of the EFL classroom, displaying interrelated changes.

Also focusing on the Japanese context, Fryer and Roger (2018) investigated how a short term study abroad program (four weeks) impacted on eight Japanese students’ L2 future selves and their L2 motivation as their future selves are “often have not been verified or confirmed by social experience” (Markus & Nurius 1986, p. 955) in most L2 Motivational Self System studies. Through their L2 social learning experiences, the students reported that their L2 self images changed and evolved over time in the following ways. First, their positive L2 experiences showed clear discrepancies between their current self and their desired self, creating an empowering sense of moving closer to their ideal L2 self. Second, the students’ self images became characterised by both an ideal self and a complementary ought-to self. Third, a feared self emerged through students’ perceived inability to engage with the target language community in ways that they had hoped for.

While Nitta and Baba’s (2015) and Fryer and Roger’s (2018) studies focus on Japanese students, You and Chan’s (2015) study investigates how changes in Chinese students’ L2-

relevant self-imagery, including both the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, might affect their L2 learning behaviours. Two important findings were shown in this study: first, both the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are not static and are likely to change during the process of L2 learning. The changes in these two selves relate to content and changes in elaborateness, as well as changes in the frequency with which such images are cognitively invoked; second, dynamic interactions are noticed among the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System.

In all, the studies referred to above are illustrative of the shifting climate in researching the L2 Motivational Self System towards a complex dynamic systems approach. Two trends, research methods and research questions, deserve further attention. First, these studies employ qualitative dominant methods, including a limited number of case studies and in-depth interviews. An important dimension of the perspective on complex dynamic systems approach is its emphasis on depth of understanding rather than generalisations (Fryer & Roger 2018; Nitta & Baba 2014). This emphasis is further confirmed by Fryer and Roger (2018) who argue in their study that a case study focus and a qualitative analysis enabled them to gain insights into individual participant's unique experiences in an attempt to identify and discover key factors related to their learning experiences and motivational dynamics. Past research on the L2 Motivational Self System has typically focused on averages, with very little focus on differences between individuals (Nitta & Baba 2015; Ryan 2019). This focus on averages has foregrounded a group's central tendency that may not be true of any particular person in the particular sample (Dörnyei 2009a; Larsen-Freeman 2006; Ushioda 2009). When the focus is on an individual person as an organised whole, it enables us to explain the complex multiplicity of internal, situational and temporal factors that may have an effect on individual motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). This suggests that a detailed analysis of individual learners' motivations is a promising direction for research into the L2 Motivational Self System. Second, in terms of the construction of research questions, these studies use notions such as change, transformation, and interaction which suggest the dynamic nature of the L2 Motivational Self System. These two trends are reflective of research movements in the examination of students' motivations for learning English, both of which are taken up in the current study.



#### **2.3.4.2 Parallel Views – Directed Motivational Currents and Person-in-Context**

Along with the dynamic turn of the L2 Motivational Self System, directed motivational currents and person-in-context are also relevant. Directed motivational currents (Dörnyei 2019a; Dörnyei, Henry & Muir 2016) emerged in recent years as a direct extension of the vision concept with a dynamic twist. Vision, as mentioned earlier (section 2.3.2) is an elaborated concept that has roots in future self-images, with an extended dimension of senses. Vision can be conceptualised as a clear mental image of one's experience to successfully accomplish a future goal (Dörnyei, Henry & Muir 2016). In other words, vision not only has images, but also involves other senses. Through vision, an individual not only can see, but also feel this exciting moment (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova 2014; Dörnyei & Ryan 2015). Combining the power of vision with a complex dynamic systems approach, directed motivational currents describe surges in behaviour motivation during specific periods in pursuit of highly valued goals or visions. These motivational currents represent an intense flow of energy, propelling an individual to work hard to reach an unimaginable goal, even in the midst of surrounding chaos.

Another parallel view which is compatible with complex dynamic systems approach is the person-in-context relational view of motivation (Henry 2019; Ushioda 2009). In this view, motivation is considered as “emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity” (Ushioda 2009, p. 215). From this perspective, L2 motivation is distinct in three ways in comparison with psychometric measurements and positivist paradigms. First, this concept places its focus on people rather than on learners or individual differences in an abstract theoretical sense. In order to relate L2 motivation to learner's self and identity, Ushioda (2009) argues not to position research participants simply as language learners, as this is just one aspect of their identity. Instead, they need to be understood as people, and as people who are necessarily located in particular cultural and historical contexts. Second, context has always been described as an important part in the study of language motivation. Often context is defined as an independent background variable, which has influences on motivation, but over which learners have no control. Thus, the person as a self-reflective intentional agent has no role in such research. The concept of person-in-context moves the view of context as independent variable to “mutually constructive relationship between persons and the

contexts in which they act – a relationship that is dynamic, complex and non-linear” (Ushioda 2009, p. 218). Building on these arguments, the dominant linear approach to L2 motivation cannot do justice to the uniqueness of personal meaning-making in a social context. A relational approach, that is a person’s motivation is affected by his/her responses to particular events and experiences, seems more appropriate, and it is reflective of current thinking about L2 motivation from a complex dynamic systems perspective.

Both directed motivational currents and person-in-context can be incorporated in the L2 Motivational Self System in order to understand the L2 self and L2 motivation. This incorporation is supported by Ushioda (2009, p. 225), when she discusses compatibility between person-in-context and the L2 Motivational Self System:

A person-in-context relational view of motivation may, through the analysis of relevant discourse data, help to illuminate how language learners’ current experiences and self-states (characterised broadly as ‘L2 learning experience’ in Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System), may facilitate or constrain their engagement with future possible selves.

The practice of integrating a range of relevant theoretical frameworks in understanding motivation has been discussed in the literature. For example, McGroarty (1998) argued for a strategy of inquiry that examines motivation “as it is constructed and expressed in and through interaction” (p. 600). This argument is supported by Turner (2001), who advocates a multi-method analysis of motivation in context from multiple angles and participants’ perspectives. In doing so, “we may enrich and diversify our understanding of how motivation shapes and is shaped through engagement in L2-related activity and the engagement of identities and engagement with possible selves” (Ushioda 2009, p. 225). These suggestions will be taken up in the current study, both in the analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings.

### **2.3.5 Demotivation**

In relation to the L2 Motivational Self System, so far, there is a missing link in the literature which also deserves attention. That is demotivation. Although demotivation is a recognised

experience in L2 learning, it remains a rather under-researched area from the self-concept perspective (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). This lack of research may be due to ethical concerns in locating the causes of student demotivation internally; that is laying the blame to some extent on students themselves (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). A few studies, however, have examined the extent to which internal factors play a role in students' demotivation. For example, in a study comparing low and high proficiency university learners of English, Falout and Maruyama (2004) noticed that low proficiency students reported experiencing demotivation earlier in their schooling and were more likely to attribute this to internal factors such as disappointment in performance or reduced self-confidence. For high proficiency students, they tended to relate their demotivation to external factors such as teachers. Thus, low proficiency students may become trapped in a self-perpetuating negative cycle of reduced self-confidence, demotivation, and poor performance. These issues were further explored in a later study by Falout and his colleagues (Falout, Elwood & Hood 2009). They concluded their findings by highlighting the main responsibilities of teachers and educational policymakers in optimising the external conditions and factors which influence the internal conditions and reactive behaviour of students in order to protect students from loss of self-confidence, and enable them to develop adaptive self-regulatory skills. Later, a focus on social and cultural dimensions was used to investigate students' demotivation (Lamb 2009b). These studies, thus, demonstrate the complex interactions among internal factors, external factors, and L2 learning experience in the research of demotivation. Indeed, Khany and Amiri's study (2018) confirms that L2 learning experiences can either sustain or undermine L2 motivation. So far, however, it seems that no existing studies have attempted to use the L2 Motivational Self System to investigate L2 demotivation. In consideration of the dynamic turn of the System, it is reasonable to examine L2 demotivation from the interactions among students' internal factors, external factors, and their L2 learning experiences. The current study intends to include an investigation into demotivation in order to provide a deeper understanding of the L2 Motivational Self System from the complex dynamic systems perspective.

## **2.4 The L2 Motivational Self System with Chinese Students**

This section of the chapter reviews studies which investigate Chinese students' motivation to learn English. First, it looks at research carried out before the theory of the L2 Motivational Self System was introduced, and then reviews studies which have applied the L2 Motivational Self System. It also discusses new terms that are based on the L2 Motivational Self System.

### **2.4.1 The Pre-L2 Motivational Self System Period**

In the pre-L2 Motivational Self System period, studies which examined Chinese students' motivation to learn English were mostly influenced by Gardner's (1972) Socio-Educational Model, mainly considering whether Chinese learners were instrumentally and/or integratively motivated. As an illustration of this, Liu (2007) examined the motivation of university students in China towards learning English based on aspects of integrative and instrumental motivation. The study found that most students were much more instrumentally motivated than integratively motivated to learn English, because they believed that while English would be crucial for their future, they had little connection with English in their daily life, nor with social mobility coming through success in examinations (Woodside & Elman 1994). However, other research in China has shown that "individual success in the examinations reflected positively not on individuals, but [also] on families and clans" (Chen, Warden & Chang 2005, p. 613). Encouraged to investigate whether this kind of expectancy was a potential motivator for Chinese students, Chen, Warden and Chang (2005) carried out a large scale study with English learners in Taiwan. Based on their findings, they proposed a motivator they labelled the Chinese Imperative, "reflecting the emphasis on requirements that are internalised within the culturally specific context" (p. 623), as the main motivator for Chinese students. The Chinese Imperative motivator emphasises that motivation to learn English is motivation to do well in examinations and to meet parental, societal, and educational expectations (Gao, Wang & Zhou 2014; Jackson 2016). This motivator underlines aspects of Chinese culture such as face, responsibility, family, and pressure, which is important for our understanding of the operation of the L2 Motivational Self System in Chinese settings.

#### **2.4.2 The L2 Motivational Self System Period**

The first wave of L2 Motivational Self System studies with Chinese learners tried to find compatibility between the aspects mentioned above and the three constructs of the System. One of these studies was conducted by Taguchi and his colleagues (2009). They observed that motivation coming from the ought-to L2 self is more salient than that coming from the ideal L2 self. This finding does not imply that Chinese students do not have their own ideal L2 self which can motivate them to learn English, but that expectations from the family are probably the most important driver for personal achievement and advancement in learning English. The Chinese students not only viewed themselves as individuals, as in many Western societies, but also as direct extensions of their families. Their success, thus, is due to a combination of personal effort and support from the family. Therefore, for these students, external expectations to do well play a major role in their English learning as they, for example, study to pass exams and, in turn, bring honour to their families. The motivational role of the family, thus, plays an important role in the ought-to L2 self in the Chinese context.

A related study by Magid (2009) further explored the motivational role of the Chinese family for high school and university students in the following four culture-specific respects: face, responsibility, family, and pressure. Based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, he found out that the concept of face has a prominent status at all levels of Chinese society, and exerts considerable influence on people's behaviour. As a result, face is not only associated with the ideal L2 self, such as gaining face by getting a better job, or going overseas due to a high proficiency in English, but also related to the ought-to L2 self, by the desire not to lose face by doing one's duty, meeting obligations and fulfilling responsibilities, by reaching a high level of English. Further, Magid pointed out that the key to understanding how the L2 Motivational Self System works within the Chinese context is determined by the Chinese concept of the family. Very often, Chinese students' ideal L2 selves is linked with their family's dreams and expectations. These dreams and expectations of their children's success in English learning become, he argues, internalised in the students' ideal L2 self. Due to the prominent status of face and family in Chinese society, Chinese students are under a great deal of pressure from family, friends, and society to succeed. This pressure is the motivational source that propels students to move forward in order not to disappoint those

they are closely related to. Magid's (2009) study thus confirms Taguchi et al's (2009) view that in Chinese society, motivation coming from the ought-to L2 selves can be more powerful than that coming from the ideal L2 self.

Another main finding in Magid's (2009) study is the existence of age-related differences in terms of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. For the ideal L2 self, his study showed that students at university level were more concerned about the 'promotional instrumentality' (Dörnyei 2009b) aspect of the ideal L2 self than the high school students were, as the university students were preoccupied with finding a job, getting a promotion, or furthering their studies. Thus, Magid (2009) concluded that the university students were able to develop a well-rounded, full-fledged ideal L2 self, which was both "personally agreeable" (Magid 2009, p. 83) and professionally successful. For the high school students, however, their ideal L2 selves were mainly about being personally agreeable speakers of English. They did not pay much attention to the prospect of using English in their future careers. In regard to the ought-to L2 self, the university students were more aware of face-losing issues than the high school students were, such as disappointing their parents by not finding a suitable job. The university students tried more to avoid negative results in their studies than high school students. Also, the university students were aware of the changing contribution from the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self to their motivation to learn English over their studies from high school to university.

Age-related differences are not the only factor which could have an impact on Chinese students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves. Other factors, such as learning contexts, geographical locations, gender, urban versus rural location, status/prestige of the student's university, and whether the study is undertaken by English majors versus non-English majors, may all have an influence on Chinese students' motivation, as explored by You and Dörnyei (2014). This study found that the Chinese students in their study had positive attitudes towards studying English as a foreign language, and that the L2 Motivational Self System can also be applied in the Chinese context, as in other cultural contexts. However, their study did not find any specific factors that affected motivation which are unique to Chinese society. For example, their study demonstrated that the commonly held view that Chinese students are less individualistic and more societally determined may be faulty, as their data showed considerably higher ideal L2 self scores than ought-to L2 self ones. This finding goes against

earlier mentioned studies (e.g. Magid (2009); Taguchi, Magid & Papi (2009)) which discussed the importance of parental expectations and pressure on Chinese students to succeed. In You and Dörnyei's (2014) study, these expectations and pressure were much less significant than aspirations for academic achievement for gaining face and the fear of academic failure or losing face.

Further to these general findings, You and Dörnyei's (2014) study showed that Chinese students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves varied in terms of gender, geographical region, and learning contexts. For gender, it seemed that Chinese female students were more motivated to learn English by the ideal L2 self than their male counterparts were. This gender disparity is not exclusive to Chinese students, as students of other nationalities have shown similar patterns (e.g. Henry (2011); Henry & Cliffordson (2013)). However, this gender division becomes less important for the ought-to L2 self in the case of students who have shown a high level of dedication and commitment to their studies. In cases such as this, expectations relating to the ought-to L2 self are generally less subject to gender. You and Dörnyei (2014) argue, further, that once students have chosen English as their real life commitment, gender becomes less influential.

With regard to geographical region, students from the comparatively affluent eastern part of China scored higher than their counterparts from the western part of China in terms of their ideal L2 selves. You and Dörnyei (2014) argue that this east-west disparity is the result of uneven economic development, which supports the widely held view that the higher the participation in the globalised international world whose lingua franca is English, the higher the motivation is to learn the language. This east-west difference, however, became less significant among university English major students. Again, as with gender, the commitment to pursue English studies overrode other influences.

Learning contexts, one of the core foci of the current study, examined by You and Dörnyei (2014) illustrated how educational setting can influence students' images of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. You and Dörnyei (2014) compared motivational differences between students in four different study contexts: secondary schools, key universities and other universities; English and non-English degree courses; and rural and urban secondary schools. Regarding the ideal L2 self, students with more advanced or specialised education, possessed the strongest ideal language images. That is, for secondary school students,

pupils in urban schools surpassed their counterparts in rural areas, and as a group, they were exceeded by university students in their ideal L2 selves. Among university students, English major students in key universities had an advantage over other universities and non-English major students in this regard. This observation can also be connected to the previously discussed findings in regard to regional differences. The advance in students' education opens up their opportunities and visions into a global world beyond China, which, in turn, motivates students to learn English.

Variation in the ought-to L2 self among these four groups of English learners, however, was less obvious. Only one factor stood out: the parental expectations of the university English major students. This finding is in contradiction with the more general finding that claimed that the ought-to L2 self does not play as significant a role in Chinese students' motivation to learn English as the ideal L2 self does, and is more aligned with Taguchi et al.'s (2009) and Magid's (2009) findings. You and Dörnyei (2014) explained that within this specific educational group, in the case when English is strongly related to a future career, parental expectancy is a major force to study English well. This phenomenon is called 'reciprocal duty' by Magid (2009, p. 82). As Magid (2009) explains, Chinese parents feel obliged to provide the best possible education for their children, and in return, the children are responsible to look after their parents when they become old. Accordingly in Chinese society, when English is strongly associated with students' future career success, pressure from parents is inevitably stronger than in the case when English is just a background subject.

Although the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self get the most attention in You and Dörnyei's (2014) study, the third construct, the L2 learning experience, is also discussed. According to their study, the time and the energy invested in English learning depends on students' in-class learning experiences. Also, this in-class learning experience plays a more decisive role for younger learners than for university students. This finding further confirms that ideal L2 self differences are age related. As students become more mature, they develop more rounded images of their future lives.

Also looking at the learning context from a different perspective, Li (2014) investigated motivational differences among Chinese learners by comparing an English as a foreign language (EFL) context (China), and an English as a second language (ESL) context (New Zealand). The design of this study is unique in that it was conducted with adult Chinese



English learners who shared similar educational backgrounds, but who had learned English in different educational environments. The recognition of the influences of immediate learning situations on L2 motivation is incorporated in the L2 motivational self system, as it views L2 motivation as a situated phenomenon. Results from 254 student questionnaires showed notable differences in motivation between the Chinese ESL and EFL students, as the ESL students were more willing to spend time and effort in learning English, had stronger idealised self-images as competent users of English, and possessed more favourable attitudes towards learning English than the EFL learners. When explaining these findings, Li (2014) highlights the salience of the ESL context for Chinese students in their fostering their ideal L2 self visions to increase their motivation to learn English. These learners had more opportunities to interact with native and expert speakers of English, and to see, listen to and use English, which might have helped them develop visions of themselves as competent users of English. This explanation supports the argument put forward by Dörnyei (2009b) that one way to create a self-vision is to relate the impact of role models seen by learners in films, on TV, or in real life. Further, Li found that the strength of ideal L2 self visions increases along the length of residing in an ESL context. Consequently, with a stronger ideal L2 self, Chinese learners in an ESL setting had, in Li's (2014) study, more positive attitudes towards the English speaking community and culture, motivating them to move closer to their imagined English selves, which originated from their daily engagement with their surrounding community.

These positive attitudes from ESL students are not only limited to the L2 community and culture, but also extend to the experience of learning English in an ESL classroom. As Li (2014) argued, very often in ESL settings, English classes are small, with student-centred instruction. In this learning environment, students have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with other students and their teachers, and to participate in classroom activities which aim to help them acquire communicative skills. These skills are necessary for students to prepare them for authentic situations in their lives outside the classroom. As a result, these classroom experiences may have enhanced the ESL students' interest and motivation in learning English, and helped them to enjoy the process of learning English. This finding supports the view that the immediate learning experience is also important for motivating students to learn, no less than the ideal L2 self and the ought-

to L2 self are. In the current literature, however, the research on the L2 learning experience is still underexplored, which provides a rationale for its inclusion in the design of the current study.

Compared with ESL students, the EFL learners in Li's (2014) study developed a higher level of ought-to L2 self image. Li attributes this result to fulfilling duties and obligations among the EFL students in China's educational system, in which English is a compulsory subject. In order to finish school, enter a university, or get a degree, Chinese students must take English exams, and it is very important for them to pass the exams, and preferably achieve high grades. It appeared, in Li's (2014) study, that meeting expectations from institutions, parents and society was a contributory factor for EFL students to learn English. These expectations, however, did not always have a positive effect. Li's (2014) study, which was the first in this respect, showed that social expectations can also have detrimental effects on learners' motivation. This finding suggests that the ought-to L2 self may also play a negative role in demotivating learners to study English in the Chinese learning environment, even though Chinese society places a high value on English language competence. This newly discovered aspect of the ought-to L2 self deserves further exploration; again, this is something that will be taken up in the current study.

Also in Li's (2014) study, the questioning of the static state of both the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self requires further exploration. Li (2014) noticed that although ESL students were able to create their idealised self-image as a competent user of English, this image appeared to be somewhat vague and did not have a sufficient degree of elaborateness and vividness to be effective in motivating them to study English. Li (2014) suggested that in order for students to make good use of the ideal L2 self in motivating them to learn English, the ideal L2 self could be a self-evolving image, which includes different forms of the L2 self. Li's (2014) study did not, however, explore the evolutionary nature of the L2 self further.

The mention of the importance of contexts, demotivation, and the evolution of the L2 self in Li's (2014) study signals a dynamic turn of the L2 Motivational Self System research.

However, few studies have focused on this turn with Chinese learners. Among these few studies, Jiang and Dewaele's (2015) study is a pioneer work in this regard. They looked at how the ideal and ought-to L2 selves evolved over a one-year period among 88 university students of English in China. In terms of methodology, their study is unique in two aspects.

First, it might be the first study to employ a longitudinal perspective to look at variation in Chinese students' motivations in relation to the L2 Motivational Self System. As Dörnyei (2009a) argued, a longitudinal approach is necessary in order to examine changes in dynamic processes and to reflect on connections across levels at certain times in the process of L2 learning. Second, their study combined quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews. Among the quantitative data collection, the same questionnaires were administered three times over the year. Follow-up interviews were used to provide subsidiary and supportive data to the quantitative findings.

For the ideal L2 self, the findings from Jiang and Dewaele's (2015) study are in accordance with Henry's (2015) argument that possible selves are not photographic stills but, rather, moving pictures. Their findings showed that the images of these university students' ideal L2 selves fluctuated over time, and they were influenced by immediate learning experiences, career choices, and the sociocultural implications of knowing English. Compared with the ideal L2 self, changes in the ought-to L2 self among these students fluctuated even more strongly; and these images were closely related to students' current learning situations, especially before exams. This finding gives further support to those from previous studies that illustrate the effect of external pressure of exams on students' motivation to learn English. Also evident in the data was students' determination not to fail the exams in order to meet/fulfil parental expectations.

Another finding worth mentioning from Jiang and Dewaele's (2015) study is that engagement in society outside the classroom or the institution also contributes to instabilities in students' L2 selves. From participating in social events which involve English, such as being a volunteer tourist guide for foreigners, or working in foreign/joint venture companies, students experienced a transition from L2 learner to being a L2 user. However, such learning experiences were temporary, and when students finished their internships and came back to university, their role as L2 users reverted to that of L2 learners. Thus, once the immediate learning experience and learning purpose changed, so did the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. In sum, Jiang and Dewaele's (2015) study revealed a different picture of the ideal and ought-to L2 self, showing them as not static concepts, but influenced by contextual factors. It also heralds the transition from a validation-led tradition to a more exploratory focus on the ideal and ought-to L2 selves.

### 2.4.3 Expanded Terms in the L2 Motivational Self System with Chinese Students

Following this transition, new terms, such as the feared L2 self (You & Chan 2015), the dreaded L2 self (Yu, Brown & Stephens 2018), the anti ought-to L2 self (Liu & Thompson 2018; Thompson & Vásquez 2015), and the actual L2 self (Yung 2019) emerge along with the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self for Chinese students.

Although fears are recognised as one aspect of possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986), they have not gained much attention in the L2 Motivational Self System. In the Chinese context, owing to tremendous pressures from English examinations and expectations to find a good job, students generated pronounced feared L2 self visions, even though these visions were not intended initially (You & Chan 2015). You and Chan (2015), however, did not provide answers to the question of whether the feared L2 self should be added to the L2 Motivational Self System or whether the System should be left intact. The tendency within the L2 Motivational Self System to overlook negative emotions, such as fears and demotivation, may be linked to individualistic cultures which consider positive emotions as desirable (Eid & Diener 2001), while in Chinese culture, the negative emotions that learners experience can lead to self-improvement (Wong & Tsai 2007). Thus, Yu, Brown and Stephens (2018) argue that among Chinese L2 learners, it is probable that the dreaded L2 self would also be a motivating force, considering the high-pressure examination-oriented education system in China, which gives English learning an important place (Huang & Pan 2011), as well as the general significance of English for overseas education and future career success (Bolton & Botha 2015). In this sense, the dreaded L2 self is similar to the feared L2 self. Yu, Brown and Stephens's (2018) study revealed that the dreaded L2 self is a more suitable motivator than the ought-to L2 self for personal future development among Chinese students. They suggest that the L2 Motivational Self System would do well to extend its scope to allow for the dreaded L2 self as a separate entity, no matter how distasteful it might be as a form of motivation. Indeed, for Chinese students, the dreaded L2 self is not a completely negative identity. Chinese students will typically be able to control their negative attitudes for the sake of achieving their ultimate goal, even if learning English is a painstaking task (Taguchi, Magid & Papi 2009). This psychological response, later defined as anti-ought-to L2 self (Liu & Thompson 2018; Thompson & Vásquez 2015), is part of Chinese culture. For example, Gao (2010) discusses the successful story of Haidi Zhang in

learning English in the face of great difficulty, using a concept similar to that of the anti-ought-to L2 self. Gao (2010) postulates that due to the China's vast distances and extreme socioeconomical disparity, many Chinese students need an anti-ought-to L2 self to succeed in language learning. In a recent study, Liu and Thompson (2018) confirm that the anti-ought-to L2 self does indeed exist among Chinese students.

While the feared L2 self, the dreaded L2 self, and the anti-ought-to L2 self can be incorporated into the L2 Motivational Self System to better understand students' L2 motivation, they can be broadly considered subsets of the ought-to L2 self. Since all these recent developments have been incorporated into the L2 Motivational Self System, Yung (2019) argues that there is a missing link in this system; namely, the actual L2 self. The actual L2 self is a renewed concept, and there are different ways the actual L2 self can be introduced. Taylor (2013) proposed that the actual L2 self should be present in order to reveal the discrepancy between current and future L2 selves. To answer this point, Lanvers (2016) included the actual L2 self in her Self Discrepancy Model for language learners, when she modified the L2 Motivational Self System. Thorsen, Henry and Cliffordson (2017) describe the actual L2 self as a missing person in the L2 Motivational Self System and that emphasising discrepancies using the actual L2 self is crucial to understanding the sources of language learning motivation. In this regard, Yung (2019) operationalises the actual L2 self in lieu of the L2 learning experience component in the L2 Motivational Self System as the attributes the L2 learners believe they currently possess. By doing so, the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System are compatible with each other, and can be understood from a self knowledge perspective, as the L2 learning experience is originally conceptualised as being at a different level from the ideal and ought-to L2 selves (Dörnyei 2009b; Dörnyei 2019b).

#### **2.4.4 Summary**

In sum, the review of L2 Motivational Self System studies with a focus on Chinese students demonstrates that these studies used similar research patterns to those used in the mainstream L2 motivation domain. First, a great amount of effort has been put into the compatibility of the L2 Motivational Self System with specific Chinese characteristics in this

research context, such as face, responsibility, and examination pressure, to seek internal and external validity of the L2 Motivational Self System in the Chinese context. In order to meet this research goal, many large-scale studies have been carried out, relying on statistical data, implying that the L2 Motivational Self System is universal and suitable for a variety of language teaching and learning situations (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009). Some researchers, however, taking a more critical view of such a position, have suggested some modified terms, such as the dreaded L2 self and the anti-ought-to L2 self, to better reflect specific cultural and contextual aspects of Chinese society. Regardless of the focus of these studies, Chinese students' L2 selves are often viewed as a static, isolated variables, acting as an ultimate cause for students' L2 motivation. As mentioned earlier, although this view of learners' L2 selves and linear relationships have been challenged from the complex dynamic systems perspective, only a few studies (Jiang & Dewaele 2015; Li 2014; You & Chan 2015) examine Chinese students' L2 selves and their motivation to learn English from this dynamic perspective. These studies still rely heavily, however, on statistical data with interview data largely being used to support statistical findings, rather than taking on an exploratory role. These existing issues in current research into the L2 Motivational Self System, including the nature of the three constructs of the System, interactions among these constructs, the importance of learning experiences, influence from socio- and cultural aspects, and demotivation from the self-concept, are less explored in the statistical studies (see Csizér (2019) for a critique of the L2 Motivational Self System and statistical measures employed in relation to this model). These gaps provide the rationale for the current study, and lead to the next section of this chapter, the research questions and significance of the study.

## **2.5 Research Questions and Significance of the Study**

Based on the reviews in sections 2.3 and 2.4 above, there are a number of areas in L2 Motivational Self System research that still need further exploration and empirical illustration from a complex dynamic systems perspective. These are addressed in the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience when studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China?

2. How do the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience relate to one another in this particular context?
3. What are the students' individual motivations for studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System?

Questions 1 and 2 are examined through analysis of survey data and interview data, whereas question 3 is investigated by further analysis of the interview data (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the methodology employed in the study).

The study is significant for a number of reasons. First, given the development of EAP programs in China, it is important to understand students' motivations for undertaking these programs, which are new to China and have not been researched before from an L2 motivation perspective. This is especially the case with the program which is the site of investigation for the study which has a specific difference from most other EAP programs in China, in that it is designed and overseen by an Australian university that has different views of education and learning from those of Chinese universities. For example, the students in the program are from a very traditional learning environment with teacher-led instruction, and in which the teacher is seen as an authority. Students are expected to do what the teacher tells them and, as a result, have very little agency. The students, further, do not question the teacher's authority and expectations, but rather follow them. All of this is different from the underlying philosophy and expectations of the EAP program in which they are studying, which may, in turn, impact on the students' learning experiences and their motivation.

Second, the results of the study will be useful for teachers of Chinese students studying in EAP programs, in that they will help them better understand their students' motivations and so enable them to respond to them. Teachers, thus, will have the basis for providing practical advice and support when students seem to be dealing with motivational matters in their studies. The project, then, can benefit teachers, program developers, and Chinese students wishing to proceed to study in English medium academic institutions, by providing insights into students' motivational goals and experiences.

Third, the study is significant because it adds a qualitative orientation through interview data to a matter (Chinese students' motivation) that has largely been explored through quantitative means. As explained earlier, the L2 Motivational Self System draws on the theory of possible selves, and possible selves that are created through personal experience and perception, focusing on how one sees oneself now and how one imagines oneself to be in the future, shaped by socio-contextual influences. In this sense, the L2 Motivational Self System embodies a unique, deeply personal, and subjective perspective. Qualitative methods are especially suited to capture this perspective (Dewaele 2019; Lamb 2018; Ushioda 2020b). Qualitative data, moreover, will provide triangulation to the quantitative data obtained in the study, as well as provide the opportunity to explore social aspects of students' motivations. A mixed method approach to researching students' L2 motivation, further, is an increasing trend in this kind of research that also requires further attention.

Beyond this, very few studies have examined motivation in EAP settings. Among this scarcity, Kantaridou's (2004) and Woodrow and Chapman's (2002) work stands out. In comparison to Kantaridou's (2004) study which examined changes in student motivation related to the syllabus taught in a semester long EAP course in a university in Greece, Woodrow and Chapman's (2002) investigation into the motivational goal orientations of international students studying EAP in Australia is of particular relevance to the current study as it showed that students from Confucian heritage cultures, such as Chinese speaking countries, had different motivational profiles from their European and South American counterparts. For example, family pressure was highlighted by Woodrow and Chapman as an extremely significant factor in Chinese culture that motivates students to have higher IELTS scores and succeed in their studies. This finding is in line with other studies that have been carried out into students' motivation for language learning in China with General English rather than Academic English students. It is important to explore, then, whether this factor, along with Chinese characteristics such as face and responsibility, which are reviewed as major motivations in Chinese students' learning of English, are still applicable in the particular learning setting of the current study. The study, thus, will contribute to our understanding of Chinese students' motivations to study EAP courses in off-shore settings, and provide research-informed directions for further research and developments in this area.



## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the research literature relevant to the study. Developments of the theoretical underpinnings of the study have also been discussed. The chapter has then reviewed research which draws on the L2 Motivational Self System, with a particular focus on research carried out with Chinese students. Finally, the chapter has presented the research questions for the study as well as argued for its significance. The next chapter will describe the methodology employed in the study.

# Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

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## 3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the research design and research instruments employed to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. First, it provides the rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach, specifying the particular strategies used. The chapter then provides a detailed description of the research setting, participants, and data collection instruments. The description of the setting and the participants includes information on the nature of the institution where the data were collected, the programs that students are enrolled on at that institution, an overview of the survey participants, and profiles of the interview participants. With regard to the data collection instruments used, the following are discussed: the process of writing, piloting, and modifying the questionnaire items, and the construction of the interview questions. Furthermore, the rationale for the choice of interviewees, the interview techniques used, and the benefits of using interviews in motivation research are described. The relationships among questionnaire items, interview questions, and the research questions are also presented. In the final sections, the procedures for the data collection and data analysis are described. There is also a discussion on the ethical considerations regarding the study.

## 3.2 Research Design

The study applies a mixed methods approach to research by employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Specifically, a questionnaire based on discrete categories, which could be numerically counted and statistically analysed, and a semi-structured interview protocol were used for the data collection. One hundred and nine students answered the questionnaire. From these students, four focal participants were also

interviewed by the researcher. The rationale that underpins such a mixed methods design is explained below.

### **3.2.1 Mixed Methods Approaches and their Strengths**

The concept of a mixed methods approach first appeared in social science research in the late 1970s and 1980s, as researchers turned to integrating two single-strategy approaches – quantitative and qualitative methods – into single studies to answer their research questions (Ivankova & Greer 2015). However, this mixed methods thinking is not unique to modern times, as human beings' history of engagement with combining quantitative and qualitative methods in daily life can be traced back to ancient Greece, with Aristotle, being viewed as a 'proto-mixed methodologist' (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 47), as he argued for the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches for the purpose of uncovering new knowledge. Further, as Creswell (2009) has pointed out, elements of mixed methods thinking can be found in everyday life; in particular, when the media reports on events by drawing on quantitative data and qualitative scripts. For example, the effect of bushfires on people's lives can be documented both by numbers (e.g. numbers of people who have died, figures of houses that have been damaged), and through individual victims' stories. Through such an approach, the effects of bushfires on people's lives can be understood at a wide level and with a deep understanding. Although, as noted, this integrated approach has a long-standing role in human history, it only gained legitimacy in the area of research methods around the end of the twentieth century (Creswell 2014). This delayed recognition, however, does not undermine the value or vigour of mixed methods approach.

In relation to the area of L2 motivation, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) have argued that L2 motivation research has been characterised by a "schizophrenic" (p. 405) situation, in which research approaches have been framed through a polarising dichotomy between, on the one hand, positivist or quantitative social psychology views, presuming motivational universals aggregated from large sample groups, and, on the other, interpretive or qualitative approaches, viewing motivation as part of the individual learner's thought processes, with no claim for generalities (Wesely 2010). Since L2 motivation is viewed as part of a learner's self, this view has been proved as a workable approach in L2 motivation

research, as can be seen in the studies reviewed in Chapter 2. This is especially the case with work that reflects the complex dynamic system approach. A mixed methods approach that investigates and explores the motivation of a particular group of learners both quantitatively and qualitatively has been recommended for L2 motivation research.

This recommendation has been taken up by a number of motivation studies. For example, Lamb (2007) adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative designs to investigate the impact of school on learning motivation in Indonesia, in order to bring out the best of both approaches “while neutralizing the shortcomings and biases inherent in each paradigm” (Dörnyei 2001, p. 242). In his study, Lamb (2007) used questionnaires to test the relevance of the L2 Motivational Self System in the Indonesian context, and interviews to identify and follow up issues and concepts that did not appear in the surveys, but were clearly salient in the Indonesian learning context. More recently, a mixed methods approach has been employed in examining students’ L2 motivation through the lens of complex dynamic systems. For example, You and Chan (2015) used a questionnaire to establish whether the use of L2 imagery is a recognisable phenomenon among their research participants, and interviews to explore the nature of any changes in the participants’ uses of L2 imagery. Both of these studies demonstrate how mixed methods is an efficient and effective approach to examining students’ L2 motivation.

### **3.2.2 Definition of Mixed Methods Designs**

As mixed methods approaches have brought researchers from different research paradigms together, many definitions of the mixed methods approach have emerged based on the different criteria that researchers apply to explain the nature of this approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007). The common characteristics of these criteria involve mixing different types of data or analytical strategies within the same study. For example, questionnaire and numerical measures in quantitative research can co-exist or supplement in-depth interviews and analysis of observation notes in qualitative research (Ivankova & Greer 2015). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) provide a broad definition of mixed methods approach as:

Research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a study or a program of inquiry. (p. 4)

A key concept of this definition is integration. Indeed, a mixed methods approach does not simply involve analysis of a mix of data sets from different research paradigms. Rather, as Ivankova and Greer (2015) argue, it emphasises the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, and a meaningful integration of quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study, to seek more credible and persuasive answers to research questions, which is the fundamental rationale for its use in this study.

### **3.2.3 Purposes and Benefits of Mixed Methods to the Study**

The concept of integration is an essential characteristic of the mixed methods approach. Through this integration, there are five major purposes that a mixed methods approach can achieve: triangulation – to seek corroboration of results obtained using different methods; complementarity – to seek clarification of the results from one method using the results from another method; development – to use the results from one method to help develop or inform research using another method; expansion – to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components; and initiation – to seek the discovery of new perspectives using one method with questions or results from another (Greene, Caracelli & Graham 1989).

In subsequent decades, other mixed methods researchers have elaborated on these purposes. For example, Ivankova and Greer (2015) have identified the benefits of such applications in research designs. First, mixing multiple methods such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observations can help provide comprehensive and extensive answers to research questions. Second, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods enables the researcher to draw on the strengths on each method. Third, quantitative methods can measure the size, degree and frequency of constructs, while qualitative methods are able to reveal the meanings and understanding of these constructs.

With regard to the present study, there are additional benefits of employing a mixed methods approach. First, using a mixed methods approach allows the accommodation of a variety of inquiry methods. While quantitative methods can represent a macro-perspective on general students' motivational dispositions, qualitative methods are able to provide situated, micro-perspectives on individual differences (Ushioda & Dörnyei 2012), and the integration of both approaches can produce a more comprehensive understanding of students' motivational disposition (Riazi 2017). This integration has been advocated by Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) in their discussion of future directions in L2 motivation research.

Also, this study aims to provide further insights into the L2 Motivational Self System theory, by adding new perspectives on it. A mixed methods design enables this purpose. First, by asking 'what' and 'how', this study does not only rely on a predetermined scale to discover students' perceptions of their ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves, and their immediate L2 learning experiences; it also seeks to provide a better understanding of the nature of the three constructs, how they are conceptualised, and relationships between them, as well as their effects on students' motivation, as seen through the qualitative data. Second, by using questionnaires and statistical analysis, the findings of this study can be compared with those from the largely quantitative studies that constitute the relevant literature to date. The answers from the questionnaires from individual participants, further, will be explored by examining the same participants' interviews, to extend insights gained from the quantitative component of the study. Third, individual interviews make it possible for the study to explore individual differences in terms of students' motivation for learning a second language, and their individual learning experiences in their situated learning environment, something that is still underrepresented in the literature. In their discussion about future directions of L2 motivation research, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) stress the importance of ongoing multiple influences, including both environmental and learner factors, on the development of students' motivation, and that students' identity changes may both reflect and feed back into motivational changes. Only by qualitative means can these subtleties be captured, adding new perspectives to L2 Motivational Self System theory. Another way in which mixed methods is applied in this study is through the use of a theoretical perspective that has, thus far, been underexplored in the area of L2 motivation research. As mentioned above and in Chapter 2, this study investigates the L2 Motivational Self System from a

complex dynamic systems perspective, drawing on this at both macro and micro levels of examination (Larsen-Freeman 2006). At the macro level, quantitative measures provide a general summary of the relevance of the L2 Motivational Self System to the specific research participants and research context; at the micro level, from a qualitative standpoint, the details of individual students' L2 selves and L2 motivation are explored.

### **3.2.4 The Specific Mixed Methods Approach Employed in the Study**

In mixed methods research, there are two commonly used types of design related to time order: sequential and concurrent (Mackey & Bryfonski 2018). In sequentially designed mixed methods studies, either quantitative or qualitative data are collected first, and then followed by the other method of data collection. The relationship between these two data sets is mutually dependent. The concurrent type, on the other hand, involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and independently (Riazi & Candlin 2014). As suggested from these definitions, the main difference that separates these two designs is whether the quantitative data or qualitative data informs the other (as is the case with sequential design), or not (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006). In the current study, a sequential design is adopted. The study started with a questionnaire, with which participants' motivations in relation to the L2 Motivational Self System were examined. This was then followed by interviews involving a detailed exploration of students' motivations with four individual participants.

Researchers using the L2 Motivational Self System in mixed methods studies often prioritise the quantitative component of their study, and use the qualitative component to validate the quantitative findings. By contrast, this study uses the quantitative component to provide a backdrop to the study, and prioritises the qualitative component in order to gain deep insights into the nature of the L2 selves and associated motivations. The decision to adopt this design is guided by Ushioda's (2016, p. 564) recommendation to investigate students' motivation 'through a small lens'. With regard to employing such a focused and contextualised angle of inquiry, Ushioda (2016) argues:

In my view, L2 motivation research is an area that would benefit greatly from a richer and sharper focus on the local rather than the general. At the same time, these locally

situated understandings of how motivation works in particular social learning environments can clearly have much wider resonance and contribute to informing theory and practice at a broader level. (p. 574)

Ushioda's (2016) argument, thus, provides support for the design of this current study. The following sections describe the setting, participants, instruments and data selection for the study.

### **3.3 Research Setting**

The research setting of the study is unique in that the program in which it is located has not been examined before in a Chinese context; that is, a combination of EAP and English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning. The study was carried out at a university which is located in a large metropolitan city in a highly developed part of China. This university has a collaboration with a university in Australia which offers EAP courses developed in Australia for Chinese students in China. The Australian university, further, has oversight of the courses that are run in China. Under this collaboration, the EAP courses can be seen as "independent" from the traditional, Chinese learning model. In these Western academic oriented EAP courses, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking, become independent learners, and develop learner autonomy. There are two parallel parts running in this program: the In-plan and the Out-plan. In order to study in the In-plan program, or the degree program, students have to pass the required National Entrance Examination to the University (高考). Once they are successful, they will study in the program for four years. During this time, the students have some choices that they can make as they progress through their study period. One option, for example, is that in the third year, the students can choose either to go to the university in Australia, or to continue their studies in China. If they choose to stay in China, they will undertake the same courses that they would have undertaken in Australia. As all the subjects and academic content are taught in English, regardless of where the students choose to study in their third and fourth year, they have to study academic English courses in their first and second year. In addition, if the students want degrees from both the Chinese university and the Australian university, they need to achieve 6.5 in the IELTS test, with a 6.0 in writing by the end of the second year.



An alternative pathway is called the Out-plan program, which is designed for students who do not meet the requirements of the National Entrance Examination to the University (高考). Due to the lower level of required academic performance, the university provides extra programs to help students to improve their academic English competency. For example, in comparison with the In-plan students, the Out-plan students start academic English courses from a lower level, work in a more intensive mode, and spend more time on academic English subjects. If they fail, they have to repeat the same level the next term. Another difference is that the Out-plan students are not in the degree program, but on a pathway to the degree program. Thus, there are different course structures. The Out-plan students spend the first two years in the EAP courses before they can continue their degrees in Australia. As with the In-plan students, the Out-plan students need to achieve 6.5 in IELTS with a 6.0 in writing before they go to Australia, which is a major hurdle for these students. Therefore, in addition to the academic English courses, they are offered an IELTS course to help them to prepare to reach this level of achievement.

Although there are differences in terms of course structures and entry requirements between the In-plan and Out-plan programs, the students study the same course books and learning content, have similar involvement with local Chinese and foreign English teachers, and have similar learning obligations.

### **3.4 Participants**

The purpose of sampling is to select a group of participants which represents the whole population. There are two types of sampling techniques: probability and nonprobability. For probability sampling, the most common type is random sampling, in which the researchers seeks to include a truly representative sample of the population in the study to assure that every member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Wagner 2015). Random sampling is an ideal form of sample, but very often, it is difficult to obtain such a truly random sample. Along with random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster sampling are the other commonly used probability sampling types. Much of the survey research in applied linguistics, however, uses nonprobability-convenience samples (Wagner 2015). In line with this tradition, the

recruitment of the participants in this study uses convenience sampling, which involves surveying students who are readily available and who the researcher has access to (Wagner 2015). The use of convenience samples can be informative and produce interesting and useful results (Wagner 2015). Two documents are used for participant recruitment, an information letter and a consent form, both of which are approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

Participants in the current study were undergraduate Chinese university students who were studying EAP courses in their first and second year as part of the study requirements. The age range of the participants was 18 to 20. The whole cohort was made up of students from the School of Business in different streams, including accounting, economics, and international trade. Apart from the EAP courses, the students study other subjects which were related to their majors. In total, 109 students participated in this study. Among these students there were 51 male students and 58 female students. In terms of demographic background, 52 students were from metropolitan areas, while 57 were from regional areas. In terms of study program, 65 students were studying in the In-plan program, and 44 students in the Out-plan program.

Also, in terms of degree of involvement, students were put into two categories: survey and focal. Survey students (n=109) participated in questionnaires in Chinese, which provided preliminary interpretations of students' motivation, while focal students (n=4) not only finished the questionnaire, but also took part in interviews that focused on gaining a deeper understandings of students' L2 selves and their motivation.

The main selection criteria for choosing the participants for the qualitative component of the study was to have a mixture of students which represented the whole cohort. An identification of learner archetypes technique as recommended by Chan, Dörnyei and Henry (2015) was used for this component of the study. This technique is part of retrodictive qualitative modelling, a novel approach to second language acquisition (SLA) from a complex dynamic systems perspective proposed by Dörnyei (2014b). In order to identify the main learner types to focus on in the study, Dörnyei (2014b) recommends a range of possible sources of information: classroom observation, interviews with teachers and students, focus group discussions with teachers and students, and questionnaires processed by means of a cluster analysis. For illustration, in his research design, Gillies (2014) invited

six language teachers to participate in a focus group discussion. In the discussion, he encouraged teachers to build up a set of learner types. Following the overall purpose of his research, he guided the teachers to create a list of characteristics of each potential learner type which would contain cognitive, emotional, and motivational components (e.g. motivated+low-proficiency+unconfident). Employing a similar process, a number of teachers were invited to an initial meeting at the beginning of data collection in this study. At the meeting, information about the study, including the aims, methods, and schedule of the study was provided to the teachers. In order to maximise the results of the identification of learner archetypes, a list of descriptions was provided as illustrations of student classroom behaviours and academic performance. Four learner archetypes created by the teachers' discussions were: a quiet learner in the classroom with average academic performance; a quiet but focused learner in the classroom with good academic performance; an active learner in the classroom with average academic performance; and a quiet learner with low academic performance. Bearing these archetypes in mind, the researcher attended classes and interacted with the potential students (recommended by the teachers) in and out of class, not only to develop a more trusting relationship with the students, but also ultimately to develop richer and more complex portraits of the individuals (Bempechat & Boulay 2001) to have purposeful samples, that is, in Patton's (2015) terms, "information-rich cases ... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 46). Four students were eventually selected as cases for this study. They are referred to in the thesis as Amanda, Crystal, William, and Zack (all pseudonyms). The choice of the four focal students also took into account their diversity in terms of background such as gender, demographics, and study program. Details of each focal student are presented in Chapter 5. Table 3.1 is a summary of the four cases.

**Table 3.1 Information on the focal students**

Name	Archetypes	Gender	Demographics	Study Program
Amanda	A quiet learner in the classroom with average academic performance	Female	From a regional area	In-Plan
Crystal	A quiet but focused learner in the classroom with good academic performance	Female	From a regional area	Out-Plan
William	An active learner in the classroom with average academic performance	Male	From a metropolitan area	In-Plan
Zack	A quiet learner in the classroom with low academic performance	Male	From a metropolitan area	Out-Plan

### 3.5 Instruments

Questionnaires (see Appendix 1) and interviews (see Appendix 2) were used to collect data in order to “focus on the need to use a variety of methods from various research paradigms to advance [research] knowledge about the research problem under investigation” (Phakiti & Paltridge 2015, p. 18). Questionnaires are renowned for their efficiency (Dörnyei & Csizér 2012; Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010). They are easy to administer to a large number of participants, to score objectively, and to analyse quantitatively (Wagner 2015). Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, since almost all the other studies which have examined the validity of the L2 Motivational Self System are survey or questionnaire studies, using a questionnaire in similar style enables the comparison of results of the current study with those of the previous studies.

The development of the questionnaire in the study followed the proposal for “a rigorous process” made by Dörnyei and Csizér (2012, p. 75) in second language acquisition research

which yields reliable and valid data. Accordingly, the design of the questionnaire went through a stepwise process (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010) with the quality of each step contributing to the quality of the final version of the questionnaire. The sequence of this process is discussed in the paragraphs below.

The first step in constructing a questionnaire is to incorporate the main concepts that are under investigation in the study into the questionnaire. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, the underpinning theory in this study is Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System, which comprises three constructs: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. One of the objectives of using a questionnaire in the study was to obtain an initial understanding of the nature of the students' L2 selves, and the relationship among these three constructs, rather than investigating cause-effect linearity in a range of variables such as in the studies that were discussed in Chapter 2. In consideration of these two factors, it was decided that the questionnaire would only cover three conceptual variables; that is, the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience. The importance of this theory-driven and research purpose-driven step not only safeguards the quality of the subsequent steps in the research, but also supports Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2010) position on the initial stage of developing a questionnaire for motivation research, as they argue, "if we do not include a particular content area in the questionnaire at this stage, it has no chance of emerging later on during the survey even if the specific variable is salient in the population" (p. 112).

Once the specific content areas were decided on, the next step was to devise items which focused on these theoretical concepts in the questionnaire, thereby forming items for each variable. This step involved two stages: the format and the number of items for each variable, and the content of the items. In terms of format, in order to be consistent with previous studies using the L2 Motivational Self System so as to be able to make comparisons, it was decided to use statements that were suitable for Likert scales. For the number of items in each variable, it was decided to have a maximum of six to eight items per variable because, as discussed earlier (Section 3.2.4), the purpose of using the questionnaire was to provide brief information on students' L2 motivational profiles. A long and detailed questionnaire thus would not have suited this purpose.

At the stage of deciding on the content areas, a number of issues arose. First, the items in this study, while adapted from studies that had investigated Asian students' motivations (e.g. Magid (2009); Ryan (2009); You, Dörnyei & Csizér (2016); You & Dörnyei (2014)), in particular two PhD theses that had used the L2 Motivational Self System (Liu 2014; Magid 2011), they needed to be adapted to fit the particular context and focus of the study. Although the items used in the previous studies had been piloted and validated, it was still however important to modify them to make them suitable for the purpose of the current study (Dörnyei & Csizér 2012). One of the main objectives of the current study, as previously mentioned, was to explore the nature of L2 selves and L2 motivation from a group of students who were enrolled in an English for academic purposes (EAP) course which was designed and overseen by an Australian university but was physically run in a university in China. In consideration of this unique research setting, key words in relation to this specific program (see a detailed discussion of this in Section 3.3) and Chinese students' motivational characteristics from the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4), such as academic English, examinations, The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), further study, native speakers of English, face, responsibility, family and pressure, were integrated into the three theoretical constructs, the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience in the L2 Motivational Self System. Table 3.2 provides examples of some of the modified items that were used in the current study.

**Table 3.2 Examples of modified items**

Content Area	Original Item	Modified Item
Ideal L2 Self	I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.	I can imagine myself using academic English as if I were a native speaker of English.
Ought-to L2 Self	I have to learn English because I don't want to fail the English course.	I have to study academic English because I want to get a good IELTS score.
L2 Learning Experience	Do you find learning English really interesting?	I find learning academic English interesting.

The second issue that was considered was whether the L2 self items could reflect the complex, dynamic and multifaceted nature of L2 selves rather than a static view that has a

clear-cut boundary as this issue was one of the research interests of the study. For example, when items were constructed for the Ideal L2 Self, these items were worded to show the inter-related and developmental nature among them, representing the Ideal L2 Self at different time periods. Table 3.3 demonstrates these relationships.

**Table 3.3 Demonstration of relationships among items in the Ideal L2 Self**

Ideal L2 Self		
Item	Inter-related	Developmental
1. Learning academic English is important to me because I need it for my current study.	Academic English	Immediate future ↓
2. Learning academic English is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English.		Near future ↓
3. I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an academic English community in the future.		Further future

While these items were related by the key words ‘academic English’, they also represented the development of Ideal L2 Self images at different periods, such as short, medium and long term. In order to reflect the immediate and near future, items 1 and 2 were constructed to contain ought-to L2 self traits, such as “important to me”, “I need it”, “I would like to” to account for the relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self. Further, item 3 was worded differently from items 1 and 2 in order to avoid fatigue effects when completing a questionnaire (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010).

After consideration of the format, number and content of the items in the questionnaire, the next step was the type of rating scales to employ. It was decided to adopt rating scales which were consistent with previous L2 Motivational Self System studies, in particular those used by Magid (2011) because his scales were developed specifically for Chinese learners of English and were fine-tuned through extensive piloting. Statement items were measured by six-point Likert scales with options being from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, following the work of Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) who have employed similar scales in motivation research. Table 3.4 shows an extract from the questionnaire as an illustration of this.

**Table 3.4 Illustration of the “Numerical Likert Scale” used in the questionnaire**

In this part, I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any items.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Example: If you strongly agree with the following statement, do as follows:

I like swimming very much.	1			4		
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1. Learning academic English is important to me because I need it for my current study.			3			6

After all these stages had been completed, the questionnaire came into form. It contained only two main parts: the first part comprised twelve questions about participants’ backgrounds, focussing on the most important attributes in their personal information in relation to the study, and the second part consisted of twenty items about the L2 Motivational Self System (see Appendix 1: Questionnaire, also Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the quantitative data). Further, in consideration of the students’ English levels, and the belief that “the quality of the obtained data improves if the questionnaire is presented in the respondents’ own mother tongue” (Dörnyei & Csizér 2012, p. 79), the questionnaire was translated into Chinese by the researcher, and then reviewed by two professional translators (English to Chinese) to confirm the accuracy of the translation. After the translation had been completed, the questionnaire went through two rounds of piloting, and the final version was based on the results from the piloting.

Even though the development of the questionnaire employed in the study went through the above process, there are of course limitations. The most salient of these is the questionnaire’s simplicity and superficiality (Dörnyei 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér 2012; Dörnyei &



Taguchi 2010) as questionnaires “often provide only a superficial assessment of sometimes very complex constructs” (Wagner 2015, p. 87), in this case motivation. This shortcoming is inevitable given the requirements of constructing questionnaires to be sufficiently straightforward to be understood by everyone, and to be answered in a relatively short time. Closely related to this point is the limitation of using relatively few items to explore the concepts of the L2 selves and L2 learning experiences as the goal of the quantitative/questionnaire component of the study was, as stated earlier, to provide an overview of the students’ motivations which would provide the starting point for the qualitative/interview component of the study, rather than being the key focus of this study in its own right. Another limitation in this study is the rating scales. As an example, a score of “6” on an item may or may not indicate “strongly agree” of an image of the Ideal L2 Self because it is possible that there may be other future self-images that students might identify with that were not represented in the questionnaire items. In such a case, scores on the Ideal L2 Self might be misleadingly low. The qualitative component of the study, thus, aimed to address these limitations by encouraging students to talk beyond the survey items in order to explore further motivations that were not covered in the survey instrument.

The use of in-depth interviews in the study, however, not only aimed to compensate for the shortcomings of the questionnaires. They aimed to provide a better, more in-depth understanding of the students’ personal experiences of motivation during the process of their English learning. As Prior (2018) points out, given the person-centred, experiential focus of this kind of research, interviews are the ideal investigative activity, because the interpretive qualitative exploration can effectively document how language learners’ notions of self impact their involvement, persistence and learning of English (Syed 2001).

In this research, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with the four focal students. One of the advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it allows flexibility and interactivity. Although having these advantages, semi-structured interviews still need to be fully planned and prepared (Wengraf 2001). Therefore, a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix 2: Interview Questions) was used for guiding the interviews in the study. While some of the interview questions were framed based on the

three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, they were also extended to ask about specific matters, such as the role of academic English, students' future study plans, their EAP learning experiences (inside and outside the classroom), and the evaluation of their teachers' performance. There was also room for the inclusion of questions that emerged in the process of the interviews as well.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

In the first semester of 2015 (from mid-February to late May), the researcher administered the paper-based questionnaire to the 109 survey participants in different classrooms at different times. After explaining the purpose, nature, and the design of the study based on the consent form, the researcher handed out the questionnaires to the participants. The participants spent 10-15 minutes on the questionnaires, and then returned the completed questionnaires to the researcher.

For the interviews, the researcher interviewed the four focal participants at a later stage as it took some time to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with them. The researcher used WeChat to keep in touch and set up interview appointments with them. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face. The consent process was carried out by using the consent form immediately before the interview commenced. The researcher audio recorded the interviews, using a high-quality recorder and an iPhone recorder, with the knowledge and consent of the research participants. The range of interview time lasted from one hour to one and a half hours.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

All the quantitative data were imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 25, and were analysed with this program. Each participant was assigned a unique identification number. Gender, academic program and demographics were treated as categorical variables. For the 20 Likert-scale items in the questionnaire, each pre-determined response option has been given a number. "Strongly disagree" =1, "Disagree"=2, "Slightly disagree" =3, "Slightly agree"=4, "Agree"=5, "Strongly agree"=6.

Descriptive statistics (to answer research question 1, the nature of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System), and correlations (to answer research question 2, the relationship between the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System) were applied to analyse the questionnaire data. Before proceeding to the data analysis, data screening and cleaning, and analysis of the reliability and normality of the data was performed (Phakiti 2015) (this is further discussed in Chapter 4).

As for the analysis of the interview data, with the assistance of NVivo version 11, the study used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2019; Bryman 2016); that is, the analysis focused on identifying, analysing and reporting themes or patterns within the interview data. The interview data were collected to provide further insights into answers to research questions 1 and 2, the nature of students' L2 selves, and the relationships between students' L2 selves and L2 learning experiences, and also to answer research question 3, the students' individual motivations for studying the EAP courses in China from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System. The analysis of the interview data was based on two epistemological paradigms, the essentialist or realist paradigm which focuses on the role of reporting to describe experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, and the constructionist paradigm which examines experiences, meanings and realities that are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inherited within individuals (Braun & Clarke 2006). In line with the mixed methods orientation employed in the current study, the combination of these two epistemological paradigms in the thematic analysis was to provide greater insights into the students' L2 selves and L2 motivation as well as to provide different yet complementary perspectives on the matters under investigation. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it is important to make this epistemological position explicit at the beginning of a thematic analysis as it provides essential guidelines for decision making to answer questions such as what to do with interview data, why to do in one way and not another, and how to do it in the process of the analysis, as is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The process of thematic analysis of the interview data was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis. Following these guidelines, there are six phrases to the analysis: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for

themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report on the analysis. One thing which needs to be pointed out however is that although the analysis process follows this guide, in practice, it is not unidirectional, or simply moving from one phrase to the next. Rather, the analysis of the data takes on a more flexible approach, including constant moving back and forward between these phrases as needed, and adjusting these phrases to fit the research questions and interview data (Patton 2015). Details of each phrase is further elaborated below, along with the discussions of related concepts.

Because the interview data was spoken, all the interviews were transcribed into written form by the researcher in order to conduct the thematic analysis. Although the process of transcribing was time consuming, it was a good way to start familiarising myself with the data as Bird (2005) views the process of transcription as “a key phrase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (p. 227). This interpretative act (Braun & Clarke 2006), further, is recognised as a place where meanings are generated, instead of simply a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on to paper (Lapadat & Lindsay 1999). Another important procedure which was carried out in this phrase was member checking (Creswell & Miller 2000). This involved a number of consultations between the researcher and the four focal students who helped check the accuracy of the transcriptions and confirm the credibility of the interview data. In this way, through the lens of the participants, the validity and the trustworthiness of the interview data were increased. The time spent on transcription and member checking was extremely valuable as it informed the early stages of the analysis, and the researcher developed a far more thorough understanding of the data through having transcribed it and checked it with the focal students (Braun & Clarke 2006). In addition, the intensive attention needed to transcribe the data and check it with the participants further facilitated the close reading and interpretative skills needed to analyse the interview data (Lapadat & Lindsay 1999).

As mentioned above, through the self transcription, the researcher gained an initial understanding of what was in the data and what was interesting about them in relation to the research questions of the study. The next phrase which involved generating initial codes and searching for themes began. In Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines, these are two

separate phrases. This current study, however, did not follow this guideline strictly as the two phases operated interactively. Although there are “no absolute hard-and-fast rules” (Faherty 2010, p. 59) to coding and creating themes, the epistemological positioning of the researcher had an influence on the coding methods applied in this study. As discussed earlier, guided by the exploratory nature of the research questions, the essentialist or realist paradigm and the constructionist paradigm are the two epistemological assumptions that prevailed during the process of the analysis of the interview data. Correspondingly, a combination of theoretical thematic analysis and inductive analysis methods (Blair 2015; Braun & Clarke 2006) was used. The theoretical thematic analysis method, or deductive or “top-down” approach (Boyatzis 1998) reflects the essentialist or realist assumption which was driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest in L2 motivation in the current study; that is, the L2 Motivational Self System and the interview questions that were developed based on this theory. Thus, a number of potential codes were created for the analysis, such as the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, the L2 Learning Experience, future plans, and evaluation of teachers’ performance. During the process of the theoretical thematic analysis, the researcher looked for examples in the interview data which were illustrative of these categories and classified them into these codes, as well as expanding on these initial codes to identify further potential codes. Some examples are illustrated here. When Crystal, one of the focal students, said “I imagine I could use academic English skilfully, and I use this level of English to complete my tasks at work, to earn respect from my colleagues and to gain praises from my boss” this was taken as a reference to her ideal L2 self. When Amanda said “I care very much about how other people think about me, in particular my classmates and my parents” this was classified as making reference to her ought-to L2 self. When William said “Always, my schools (his high school and current university) have great influence on me and my motivation, particularly the study requirements, my classmates and my teachers” this was taken as reference to his L2 Learning Experience. Although this method of thematic analysis can provide detailed examples from the data, it presents a less rich description of the data overall (Braun & Clarke 2006). This shortcoming is compensated for by the other method of analysis employed in this study, the inductive analysis method.

The inductive analysis method, or “bottom-up” approach (Frith & Gleeson 2004) helps unpack face value understandings of the students’ L2 selves and L2 motivation in the

interview data as a data-driven approach to create codes which do not necessarily neatly fit into the L2 Motivational Self System, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun & Clarke 2006). This emergent approach (Blair 2015), however, does not imply that codes are generated in an epistemological vacuum (Braun & Clarke 2006). Instead, it embraces the constructionist paradigm to enable the researcher to construct the "hidden" value of students' L2 selves and L2 motivation through active participation between the researcher and the interview data. Through this approach, the researcher was not only coding isolated transcripts but also, by reading the transcripts, was hearing the participants' "voices" aiming to understand what the participants were "getting at" in the data. For example, when Crystal said "When I finish my study here, I think I will study my Masters degree overseas. I may go to Australia, or maybe USA. I am only in my first year, there will be many changes later. But at the moment, based on my current situation, I will choose XXX University and XXX University as my study goals. These goals will also be subject to change. Although these small goals will change, my big goal, that is, studying overseas, is still the same", at the surface level, Crystal was commenting on her future study goals, but it could also be classified as Crystal's future ideal L2 selves. Through this analysis, some interesting codes emerged, such as complex, developmental and dynamic, which are not defined in the L2 Motivational Self System - but corresponded to the researcher's own L2 learning experiences as was foreshadowed in Chapter 1, the Introduction to the thesis.

The next phase, reviewing themes, began when the researcher had finished coding all the interview data and developed a list of candidate themes. During this phase, the researcher first started refining these candidate themes, including merging together similar themes to form a more comprehensive theme, or the opposite, breaking some themes down into separate themes. Parallel to this refining process, the researcher also considered the validity of these candidate themes to see whether they reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole and how they fit together, and re-coded any additional data within themes that was missed in earlier coding stages as the coding was "an ongoing organic process" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 91). Through this refining process, a final thematic map was ready for the study (this is further discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

This systematic process of data analysis in this study, guided by the researcher's epistemological assumptions, brings to the researcher's attention that the analysis is likely to be subjective and interpretive and that the validity of the analysis of the results would become a question of hermeneutics (Bhattacharya 2008; Braun & Clarke 2006) or internal assumptive bias (Braun & Clarke 2006) as the researcher interpreted the findings in relation to the overall goal and aims of the study. This interpretive position, however, means that the researcher is aware that the procedures and outcomes of this study are not the product of the description of the students' L2 selves and L2 motivation but are an exploration of the situated, socially constructed individual's L2 selves and L2 motivation. In this regard, the researcher hopes to make his subjectivity as transparent as possible, share his assumptions, and allow the readers to assess the credibility of his research. This position, is supported by Blair (Blair 2015) who argues that "being methodologically self-conscious means that the qualitative data analyst should be aware that their particular perspective is likely to influence their choice of coding method - but, in qualitative data analysis, this is not generally thought to be a bias that needs to be "corrected" rather it is seen to be beneficial that the analyst is able to use their own unique skills, talents and expertise" (p. 15).

### **3.8 Ethics**

Ethical issues were considered at every stage during the process of this study. In applied linguistics, the principle of ethical consideration is to avert harming research participants in any way (De Costa 2015), which was at the forefront of the researcher's mind as the researcher planned the study. Ethical issues were taken account of at each stage of the study: planning the study, during data collection, in the data analysis, and the reporting of the data. At the planning stage, informed consent forms were prepared for each of the participants the researcher engaged with in the study, including the Associate Dean of the faculty, the teachers, and the students. All these consent forms were approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. At the beginning of the study, after gaining their consent, the researcher asked the student participants to add the researcher on WeChat, an online communication platform which is popular in China. The researcher used WeChat to communicate and sustain the relationships with the student participants. The researcher also removed drop-out participants immediately from WeChat so that they would not feel obliged to keep in touch with the researcher as a WeChat friend.

The participants for the case studies were not selected before joining the WeChat group but, rather, after. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to all the research participants during the process of the study. Participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed at any stage of the study. Assigned numbers and pseudonyms were used instead of names.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described the methods drawn on for the study. It has described the research setting, participants, data collection instruments and procedures. The next chapter, Chapter 4, provides the results of the quantitative component of the study, the questionnaire.



# Chapter 4: Quantitative Findings and Discussion

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## 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the quantitative component of the study. First, the research questions are re-stated before the results are presented. The quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire data are then reported, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to previous research.

The questions this chapter addresses are:

1. What is the nature of the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience when studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China?
2. How do the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience relate to one another in this particular context?

As explained in Chapter 2, the study is based on Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System. The purpose of questions 1 and 2 is to provide an overall picture of students' L2 Motivational Self System and the relationships between the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System.

## 4.2 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Before providing details of the questionnaire findings, it is necessary to report the overall reliability of the questionnaire and its subscales (Phakiti 2014; Woodrow 2014). Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure (Phakiti 2014). In the current study, reliability is conceptualised as all of the questionnaire items which are supposed to measure a construct

being responded to in a similar way by all participants (Urdan 2010). In other words, reliability helps to check if all the questionnaire items measure the same construct. By doing so, the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha is used to indicate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A reading of alpha level at .70 or higher is considered acceptably reliable (Urdan 2010). In order to examine the reliability of the overall questionnaire and its three scales (the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience) (see Table 4.1), a reliability analysis was run.

**Table 4.1 Reliability of the questionnaire, the Ideal L2 Self scale, the Ought-to L2 Self scale, and the L2 Learning Experience scale**

Tested Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
The questionnaire	.90	20
The Ideal L2 Self scale	.72	6
The Ought-to L2 Self scale	.88	6
The L2 Learning Experience scale	.87	8

The reliability analysis of the whole questionnaire showed that its Cronbach's alpha value was .90, which is higher than the recommended value of .70 (Urdan 2010). Apart from this value, another figure that needs to be taken into consideration when reporting reliability analysis is the number of items, as the calculation of Cronbach's alpha depends on this number; a higher number of items leads to a larger value of Cronbach's alpha (Field 2014). As such, it is possible to get a large value of alpha due to a large number of items on the scale, and not because of the high reliability of the scale or questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study contains 20 individual items, which is considered a relatively small figure. Based on the high alpha value and small item number, it can be concluded that the questionnaire has good reliability. It is important to note, however, that Cronbach's alpha is an estimate of participants' consistency in their rating of questionnaire items. This does not necessarily suggest that students' responses represent the true values or states of their motivational aspects. They only suggest that participants' ratings were consistent for each motivational scale under examination. What researchers need to look for in this kind of research is to examine the meaning of their responses, which I have done in the current study.

Individually, for the Ideal L2 Self subscale, the 6 items formed an alpha value of .72. Compared to the items in the Ideal L2 Self subscale, the Ought-to L2 Self items produced a higher level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .88). Finally, similar to the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, the L2 Learning Experience subscale also achieved a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .87).

### 4.3 Assessing Normality

After checking the reliability of the questionnaire, an assessment of the normality of the data was conducted. There were two purposes for this: checking the normal distribution of the data and removing any outliers was done to ensure the data met one of the important assumptions in parametric statistical tests: normality (Larson-Hall 2016). Normality, in statistics, means the distribution of the data should be in a symmetrical, bell-shaped curve, with the greatest frequency of scores in the middle, and smaller frequencies towards the extremes (Pallant 2016). The concept of normality is an essential element of statistics as a large number of probabilities which are used in inferential statistics rely on the assumption of a normal distribution (Urdan 2010).

The assessment of the normal distribution of the data set was performed in two sequential steps. First, a z-scores test was run to remove outliers which were above and below two standard deviations, as the presence of these outliers could affect the normality of the distribution. Accordingly, a total of eight univariate outliers (outliers in the variables of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 and L2 Learning Experience) were deleted. After this preliminary data cleansing, an Explore option of Descriptive Statistics was employed for further assessment of normality.

**Table 4.2 Assessment of normality of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience scales (N=109)**

Item	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Sig.)
Ideal L2 Self	-.45	-.11	.00
Ought-to L2 Self	-.23	-.44	.20
L2 Learning Experience	-.12	-.45	.20

Based on the figures shown in Table 4.2, it can be seen that the Ideal L2 Self subscale does not have a normal distribution as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov value is .00, suggesting that it violates the assumption of normality, something that is quite common in social sciences research with large samples ( $n > 100$ ) (Pallant 2016). In contrast, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales are normally distributed, as their Kolmogorov-Smirnov values are both .20; that is, they fit with the assumption of a normal distribution. The violation of normal distribution for the Ideal L2 Self subscale is supported by the skewness value for this item which, with a value of  $-.45$ , shows that the Ideal L2 Self subscale is less symmetrically distributed than the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, which have skewness values of  $-.23$  and  $-.12$  respectively. However, according to the kurtosis, the scores are distributed more evenly in both the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales than in the Ideal L2 Self subscale.

After analysing the reliability and the normality of the data set, it can be concluded, then, that the data is sufficiently reliable and robust in order to provide a foundation for the quantitative results and their adequacy for answering the research questions. That is, the data are consistent in what they are measuring, and approximately within a normal range of distribution for this kind of data (Pallant 2016), rather than being randomly dispersed, making it suitable for the statistical analyses that were carried out on it. In the following paragraphs, the results of the current study are presented.

#### **4.4 Research Question 1: What is the Nature of the Students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience when studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses in China?**

This section presents descriptive statistics for the Ideal L2 Self subscale. This is followed by descriptive statistics for the other two subscales, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales.

##### **4.4.1 The Ideal L2 Self**

Students' responses to the six Ideal L2 Self items are presented in Table 4.3, with data illustrated as percentages of the whole.

**Table 4.3 Students' perception of their Ideal L2 Self (N=109)**

Item (AE=Academic English)	Mean	low (1) to high (6) agreement, expressed as percentages					
		1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 agree	6 strongly agree
Ideal L2 Self	<b>4.91</b>	0.00%	0.00%	7.30%	35.80%	50.50%	6.40%
1 Learning AE is important to me because I need it for my current study	<b>5.24</b>	0.00	0.00	6.40	16.50	23.90	53.20
2 Learning AE is important to me because I need it to pass my future exams	<b>5.28</b>	0.00	0.00	5.50	16.50	22.00	56.00
3 Learning AE is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English	<b>5.35</b>	0.00	0.90	4.60	15.60	16.50	62.40
4 I can imagine myself being able to use AE skillfully in the future	<b>5.11</b>	0.00	0.90	0.90	22.00	38.50	37.60
5 I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an AE community in the future	<b>3.94</b>	3.70	9.20	17.40	39.40	20.20	10.10
6 I can imagine myself using AE as if I were a native speaker of English	<b>4.53</b>	3.70	0.90	11.00	32.10	27.50	24.80

Students responded with a mean score of 4.91 in relation to questions about the Ideal L2 Self subscale, with nearly 93% of the students choosing categories in the positive range, from 4 to 6, and no students rating *strongly disagree* (category 1) and *disagree* (category 2). This high agreement demonstrates that students were attracted to the idea of the ideal L2 self which motivates students to learn academic English.

The individual items in this table each represent one image of students' ideal selves related to academic English, and they have mean scores of 5.35 to 3.94. Of these items, item 3, *learning academic English is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English*, recorded the highest mean score of 5.35, with more than 62% of the students circling 6 (*strongly agree*). The lowest mean score of 3.94 for item 5, *I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an academic English community in the future*, asked students to evaluate their imagined academic English usage, which is much further from students' current situation than the other images. The results showed that only 10.1% of the students *strongly agreed* with this statement and 30.3% of the total surveyed cohort rating a negative score, which indicates that this image becomes the least important for the students among the six imagined images.

From the above findings, students' perceptions of their ideal L2 selves display the following two characteristics: first, the ideal L2 self seems to have the ability to incorporate a cluster of facets under one broad concept (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009; Higgins 1987). Second, as a further extension of the first characteristic, although these facets can co-exist under the broad notion of the ideal L2 self, they are different in strength in terms of how relevant they are to the students, which is evident in the various mean scores attached to each statement. Students' most positive responses were to items 1, 2, 3, and 4, all of which can be regarded as relating to students' core selves (Markus & Nurius 1986), the less positive responses to item 6 as medium selves, and the slightly negative responses to item 5 as remote selves; that is, in relation to the strength of each of these selves. The strength of these core, medium and remote selves can be drawn on to explore how these aspects of the students' selves motivated students to study academic English. It assumes that students were motivated strongly by their core selves, as students believed that facets of the core self are very important to identify in their future academic English studies. However, the motivational function of the facets in the medium and remote self became weaker as students considered these facets either less important in relation to their academic English studies or less relevant for the future. These two characteristics of the ideal L2 self will be further explored when the interview data are examined.

#### 4.4.2 The Ought-to L2 Self

Students' responses to the six Ought-to L2 Self subscale items are presented in Table 4.4, with data illustrated as percentages of the whole.

**Table 4.4 Students' perception of their Ought-to L2 Self (N=109)**

Item (AE=Academic English)	Mean	low (1) to high (6) agreement, expressed as percentages					
		1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 agree	6 strongly agree
Ought-to L2 Self	<b>4.22</b>	0.00%	10.10%	24.80%	38.60%	22.10%	4.60%
1 I have to study AE because I don't want to get bad marks in it	<b>5.17</b>	0.00	0.00	7.30	16.50	28.40	47.70
2 I have to study AE because I want to get a good IELTS score	<b>5.20</b>	0.90	0.90	2.80	13.80	35.80	45.90
3 Studying AE is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of AE, I'll be considered a weak learner	<b>3.60</b>	8.30	8.30	30.30	28.40	17.40	7.30
4 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives	<b>3.75</b>	11.00	4.60	25.70	28.40	17.40	12.80
5 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my teacher	<b>3.83</b>	10.10	5.50	22.00	28.40	22.00	11.90
6 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers	<b>3.80</b>	10.10	5.50	23.90	26.60	22.90	11.00

Students rated a slightly positive mean score of 4.22 in relation to the Ought-to L2 Self subscale. However, nearly 35% of the students chose categories in the negative range, from 1 to 3. These figures demonstrate that students were generally less attracted to the idea of the ought-to L2 self than to that of the ideal L2 self.

The individual items in Table 4.4 each represent one image of students' L2 ought-to selves related to academic English, and they have mean scores of 5.20 to 3.60. The highest score was for item 2, *I have to study academic English because I want to get a good IELTS score*, with 95.5% of the students responding positively when categories 4, 5 and 6 are combined. They therefore believed that the IELTS exam is closely related to their academic English study. Students also perceived that performing well and getting good scores in their academic English studies were important, so they responded with high scores for item 1 as well, *I have to study academic English because I don't want to get bad marks in it*, this time a mean of 5.17, with 92.7% of the students giving positive scores (positive categories 4, 5 and 6 combined).

Four items had scores in the negative domain. Ranked in descending order, they were item 5 (3.83), item 6 (3.80), item 4 (3.75) and item 3 (3.60). Of these four items, three represented significant others who were closely related to students for their academic English studies: teachers (item 5), classmates (item 6), and parents and relatives (item 4), respectively. Surprisingly, students' perception of pressure coming from their parents and relatives (item 4, 3.75) to do well in the academic English studies was lower than that of their teachers (item 5, 3.83) and classmates (item 6, 3.80). This finding is interesting in relation to Chinese culture where it is believed that parents and relatives play important roles in students' education, and in turn, students need to study hard to return their parents' and relatives' favours (You & Dörnyei 2014).

From the above findings, it can be seen that students were less attracted to the idea of the ought-to L2 self than to that of the ideal L2 self. This can be seen when comparing individual scores: only two items among six in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale win agreement from the students, while in the Ideal L2 Self subscale, five out of six win agreement from the students. This comparison shows that, as a concept, the ought-to L2 self is weaker than the ideal L2 self in terms of attraction for these students. In particular, pressure from significant others to do well in academic English studies, such as parents and relatives, is not considered as



one of the main motivations among the surveyed cohort. Instead, pressure to pass English exams and to get good scores are viewed as more crucial.

Although, in terms of attraction, the concept of the ought-to L2 self is usually regarded as secondary to that of the ideal L2 self, the results show that the ought-to L2 self presents some similar characteristics to those of the ideal L2 self. First, the ought-to L2 self can also be regarded as a collection of facets, thus, it is multifaceted in nature (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009; Higgins 1987). Second, these facets do not have the same effects in terms of motivational function. While in regard to the ideal L2 self, the effects of the different facets' motivational functions depend on students' perceptions of the importance and accessibility of these facets. In the ought-to L2 self category, the effects rely on external pressure, with higher pressure coming from study-related matters than from significant others. As with the findings for the ideal L2 self, these two characteristics of the ought-to L2 self will also be further explored when the interview data are examined.

### 4.4.3 The L2 Learning Experience

Students' responses to the eight items for the L2 Learning Experience subscale are presented in Table 4.5, with data illustrated as percentages of the whole.

**Table 4.5 Students' perception of their L2 Learning Experience (N=109)**

Item (AE=Academic English)	Mean	low (1) to high (6) agreement, expressed as percentages					
		1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 agree	6 strongly agree
L2 Learning Experience	<b>4.49</b>	0.00%	1.80%	21.90%	47.60%	25.60%	2.8%
1 I like the atmosphere of my AE class	<b>4.74</b>	0.00	3.70	9.20	26.60	30.30	30.30
2 I think time passes quickly while studying AE	<b>4.08</b>	0.00	10.10	14.70	40.40	26.60	8.30
3 I find learning AE interesting	<b>4.13</b>	0.90	7.30	22.00	33.00	21.10	15.60
4 I have good teacher(s) to help me with my AE	<b>4.95</b>	0.00	2.80	2.80	26.60	33.00	34.90
5 I have support from my classmates for my AE	<b>4.58</b>	2.80	1.80	8.30	34.90	26.60	25.70
6 I expend a lot of effort in learning AE	<b>4.23</b>	2.80	2.80	16.50	37.60	27.50	12.80
7 I find ways to practice my English outside class	<b>4.29</b>	0.90	2.80	19.30	36.70	23.90	16.50
8 Overall, I think I am an active AE learner	<b>4.88</b>	0.00	1.80	3.70	31.20	31.20	32.10

Students reported a positive mean score of 4.49 in relation to statements about the L2 Learning Experience subscale. This positive mean result shows that students experienced enjoyment while they studied academic English, and they agreed that a friendly and cooperative learning environment helped motivate them to learn academic English.

A brief glance at the mean scores for the individual items demonstrates one distinct feature; that is, all the scores for the individual items belong to the mean score 4 -5 range, with the highest score being for item 4 (4.95), *I have good teacher(s) to help me with my academic English*, and the lowest score for item 2 (4.08), *I think time passes quickly while studying academic English*. Students, then, tended to have more consistent opinions about their L2 learning experiences than their ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves. This tendency may be the result of the nature of the L2 Learning Experience subscale, in which individual items asked students to evaluate their first-hand learning experiences in the academic English learning environment. The consistency in these scores may also be because the L2 learning experience, the third component of the L2 Motivational Self System, has a different source of orientation from those of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves: it asks about experiences rather than about more abstract psychological states (Dörnyei 2009b).

Students' responses to statements about the L2 Learning Experience subscale, then, are generally positive and consistent, showing the motivational function of the L2 learning experience and how it impacted on the students' learning of academic English. We can also see that the L2 learning experience is somewhat different from the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self in that it deals with direct learning experiences, and situations which are more concrete for students than the more abstract notions of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. These findings confirm that the L2 learning experience in Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivation Self System is constructed differently from the first two components: the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. The L2 learning experience, as mentioned earlier, focuses on the learners' direct learning experiences, rather than their imagined selves. These learning experiences include a range of immediate factors, such as teachers, classmates, and the learning environment. The analysis of the interview data will provide further exploration of the L2 learning experience in terms of the influence of significant others, enjoyment and effort to learn, and how these three matters impact on students' motivation.

#### **4.5 Research Question 2: How do Students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience Relate to One Another in this Particular Context?**

In order to answer research question 2, a correlation analysis was carried out. Before presenting the results of the correlation analysis, however, it is necessary to address the assumptions of correlation, as a correlation analysis is only worth discussing if the variables are reliable and valid (Woodrow 2014). Three main assumptions are addressed before the correlation analysis proceeds: normality, linearity and independence of means. For normality, as has been discussed in Assessing Normality, the data can be regarded as normally distributed. Linearity in correlation means scores between two variables are in a linear relationship with each other (Woodrow 2014). The linearity in this analysis was tested by using scatterplots (Pallant 2016; Woodrow 2014). Based on the observations of the scatterplots between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, roughly straight lines were noticed. Thus, it can be said that these three variables: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience, are related linearly. The third issue is concerned with independence of means. Independence of means in correlation refers to the answers to the questionnaire items from one person not influencing the answers of another (Pallant 2016; Woodrow 2014). As the questionnaires were completed independently by students, there was no influence of scores from one student on any other. Having considered these three issues, the data meets the assumptions for a Pearson correlation analysis, the results of which are presented below.

Table 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 illustrate correlations between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales in relation to students as a whole, gender, academic program and demographic background.

#### 4.5.1 Correlation between the Three Constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System for all Students

**Table 4.6 Correlations between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience for all students**

	Ideal L2 Self +	Ideal L2 Self +	Ought-to L2 Self +
	Ought-to L2 Self	L2 Learning Experience	L2 Learning Experience
Students (N=109)	.373**	.541**	.371**

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

A brief glance at the correlations in Table 4.6 demonstrates two distinct features; that is, all the figures are positive and significant. In a correlation analysis, being positive suggests that the relationship between two variables in one pair is associated with the same direction. For example, in this study, high agreement on the Ideal L2 Self subscale can predict high agreement on the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, and the same principal applies to the other two pairs. The second feature is that, statistically, the figures in Table 4.6 are significant. Significance is an essential concept in statistics, and the degree of significance can be measured by a  $p$  value, which refers to the probability that the result is due to chance rather than being true.

Although the subscales were shown to be pairwise positively correlated, the strengths of the correlations are different, which is evident in the different  $r$  values in Table 4.6. In statistics,  $r$  values are used to determine the size of correlations between two variables, which can range from 0 to 1. An  $r$  value from .10 to .29 indicates a small correlation, from .30 to .49 a medium correlation, and from .50 to 1.0 a large correlation (Cohen 1988). Following these guidelines, we can say that there is a large correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales ( $r=.541$ ), suggesting quite a strong relationship between the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience. By comparison, the size of correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales is smaller, this time  $r=.371$ , which is a weaker relationship than between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales. For the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the

Ought-to L2 Self subscales, the  $r$  value was .373, indicating a medium relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales.

#### 4.5.2 Correlation between the Three Constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System based on Gender

**Table 4.7 Correlations between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience on the basis of gender**

	Ideal L2 Self +	Ideal L2 Self +	Ought-to L2 Self +
	Ought-to L2 Self	L2 Learning Experience	L2 Learning Experience
Gender			
Male (n=51)	.400**	.552**	.169
Female (n=58)	.320**	.549**	.535**

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

From Table 4.7, we can see that for both male and female students correlated relationships existed between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, and between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales. Both genders also showed a correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales which was stronger than the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales. Although the correlation scores for male students in these two relationships seemed stronger than those for the female students, online calculations for significance of the difference between  $r$  values (Pallant 2016) showed that there were no significant differences in the strength of the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, and the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales for males and females. The only difference that divided the male and the female students was in the correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales. While the male students' correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales at  $r = .169$  did not reach a significant level, for the female students there was a

relationship between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and also this relationship was found to be strong ( $r=.535$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

#### 4.5.3 Correlation between the Three Constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System based on Academic Program

**Table 4.8 Correlations between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience on the basis of academic program**

	Ideal L2 Self +	Ideal L2 Self +	Ought-to L2 Self +
	Ought-to L2 Self	L2 Learning Experience	L2 Learning Experience
Academic Program			
Out-plan (n=44)	.468**	.512**	.546**
In-plan (n=65)	.292**	.628**	.258*

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

Students' differences in correlations between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales in relation to the students' academic program are shown in Table 4.8. A brief glance at the data shows that all the correlations were significant, indicating that correlations existed for both Out-plan and In-plan students between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales. The strengths of these correlations, however, were different between the Out-plan students and the In-plan students. From Table 4.8, we can see that, for both Out-plan and In-plan students, there was a strong relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and for the In-plan students this was even stronger than for the Out-plan students on this aspect. The In-plan students, however, showed lower relationships both for the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, and for the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales than the Out-plan students. In order to examine if these differences were big enough to be considered significant between these two groups, online calculations for significance of the difference between  $r$  values were used (Pallant 2016). The results showed two different conclusions: on one hand, there were no statistically significant

differences in the strength of the correlations between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales for Out-plan and In-plan students; however, there was a statistically significant difference in the strength of the correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales for the Out-plan and In-plan students, indicating that, for the Out-plan students, there was a greater relationship between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales than for the In-plan students.

#### 4.5.4 Correlation between the Three Constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System based on Demographic Background

**Table 4.9 Correlations between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience on the basis of demographic background**

	Ideal L2 Self +	Ideal L2 Self +	Ought-to L2 Self +
	Ought-to L2 Self	L2 Learning Experience	L2 Learning Experience
Demographic Background			
Metropolitan (n=52)	.285*	.467**	.423**
Regional (n=57)	.419**	.584**	.245

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

In the last category, demographic background, differences were compared (see Table 4.9). As shown in Table 4.9, for students from metropolitan areas, correlations existed between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales as all the figures reached the significant level. In terms of the strength of these relationships, the metropolitan students showed medium correlations both for the relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales ( $r=.467$ ), and between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales ( $r=.423$ ). There was a small correlation for the relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, which was  $r=.285$ . For the students from the regional areas, relationships between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales varied. There was a large



significant correlation ( $r=.584, p<.01$ ) between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, a medium significant correlation ( $r=.419, p<.01$ ) between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, and no correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales as, in this latter case, the  $r$  value did not reach the significant level. In order to find out if the differences in strength of correlations were big enough to be considered significant for the metropolitan and the regional students both in the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and in the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, online calculations for significance of the difference between  $r$  values were run (Pallant 2016). The results showed there were no statistically significant differences in the strength of the correlations between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales for the metropolitan and regional students.

#### **4.6 A Brief Summary of the Quantitative Findings**

The examination of the nature of students' ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves and L2 learning experience, based on analysis of the results for their corresponding subscales, demonstrated three features: first, students held positive attitudes towards the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System as supported by the positive mean scores in the students' responses. This positiveness, however, did not hide the fact that students were most attracted by the ideal L2 self, less by the L2 learning experience, and least by the ought-to L2 self. Second, it showed that both the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self are multifaceted in nature, being able to represent a cluster of images under one broad concept. These images, however, are not equal in motivational attraction. While the ideal L2 self depends on the proximity and relatedness of these images to the students' current learning situation, with the ought-to L2 self, pressure coming from study-related matters is higher than pressure from significant others. The third feature is that students' more consistent responses to the items in the L2 Learning Experience subscales illustrated that this focuses on students' immediate learning environment rather than the more abstract concepts asked about in the Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self subscales.

The correlational analysis of the relationship between the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales presented two main findings. First, the results showed that positive pairwise correlations were seen between these three components in the current study. There was a strong correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, and the correlations between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, and between the Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience subscales were medium. Second, in terms of differences based on gender, demographic background, and academic program, there were no differences apart from the relationship between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales. In this relationship, no correlation was seen for the male students. However, there was a strong significant correlation for the female students. Also, no correlation was found for the regional students between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, but a medium correlation was shown for metropolitan students. For the academic program, the relationship between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales was found to be stronger for the Out-plan students than for the In-plan students.

The above brief summary serves as a linking section between the quantitative findings and the discussion of the findings in that it summarises the key results from the questionnaire data and leads to the next section of the chapter, Discussion of the Quantitative Findings.

#### **4.7 Discussion of the Quantitative Findings**

This section provides a discussion of the quantitative findings of the study in relation to previous research on the topic. The discussion of the findings is in the same sequence as the research questions. The first of the questions relates to the nature of the students' ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves and the L2 learning experience. This is followed by a discussion of interrelationships between the constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System.

#### **4.7.1 The Nature of the Students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience**

In general, the Chinese students in this study demonstrated favourable dispositions towards learning English, which is in line with the findings from a large-scale stratified survey by You and Dörnyei (2014), which examined the motivation for learning English of over 10,000 students in Chinese secondary schools and universities. It needs to be remembered, however, that You and Dörnyei's (2014) study examined the motivation of both secondary school students (who have fewer study choices than university students) and university students, whereas the current study only examines university students. Notwithstanding, this result confirms, in broad terms, the validity of the L2 Motivational Self System in the Chinese EAP context, generating disposition patterns that are generally compatible with those found in studies carried out in other countries employing similar research methods and the same theoretical framework, such as Japan and Iran (Taguchi, Magid & Papi 2009), Hungary (Csizér & Kormos 2009), Indonesia (Lamb 2012), Pakistan (Islam, Lamb & Chambers 2013), Germany (Busse 2013), Sweden (Henry 2009), and Spain (Brady 2019; Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018). The general dispositions found in the current study, however, do not support the view of Yu, Brown and Stephens (2018) that the L2 Motivational Self System is not suitable for the Chinese educational context. Indeed, the findings of this study support You and Dörnyei's (2014) argument that the L2 Motivational Self System "appear[s] to offer a framework that seem[s] no less relevant and useable in China than in the other learning environments in which it has been successfully applied in the past" (p. 22).

To be more specific, in terms of the three constructs of the system, the study showed the Chinese students were most attracted to the ideal L2 self, followed by the L2 learning experience, with the ought-to L2 self only occupying third place. This finding is not exclusive to this study. Other studies (e.g. Al-Hoorie (2018); Li (2014); You, Dörnyei & Csizér (2016); You & Dörnyei (2014)) also show this trend. The fundamental difference between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self lies in the source of the imagination: while the ideal L2 self is constructed within the learner, the ought-to L2 self is imported from significant others in the learner's environment. Thus, the ought-to L2 self is less internalised than its ideal counterpart (Al-Hoorie 2018; Dörnyei 2009b; You, Dörnyei & Csizér 2016). In an analysis of this difference, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) conclude:

There is, thus, a tentative conclusion emerging from the existing body of research that, while externally sourced self-images (i.e., the images that are usually categorized under the rubric of the ought-to self) do play a role in shaping the learners' motivational mindset, in many language contexts they lack the energizing force to make a difference in actual motivated learner behaviours by themselves. (p. 454)

Related to this conclusion, existing empirical studies show a disproportional favour towards the ideal L2 self over the ought-to L2 self, although one might argue that some ideal L2 self images will also be externally sourced. Most of these previous studies have revealed links between the ideal L2 self and students' motivated behaviour reached a significant level statistically, while the ought-to L2 self did not. For example, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) reported that the vision of one's idealised person is a valid and potent motivator for Chinese learners of English. It is not the intention of this study to look for a cause-effect relationship between the L2 Motivational Self System and Chinese students' motivation. The overall mean scores from the quantitative analysis, however, demonstrate that the concept of the ideal L2 self is, indeed, more appealing than that of the ought-to L2 self to the Chinese students in this study. The benefit of generating an overall mean score from a number of items to compare students' attitudes towards these two selves is that it provides an overarching statement for showing students' dispositions. This commonly employed practice in L2 motivation research, however, pays little attention to the details of each item. As revealed in this study, images of the ideal L2 self can be divided into core, medium and remote in terms of motivational attraction, and some of the images from the concept of the ought-to L2 self are rated more highly than that of the ideal L2 self. Based on this finding, it is assumed that both the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self have a multifaceted and temporal nature, something which is also suggested by You and Dörnyei (2014). Due to this multifaceted and temporal nature, it cannot be ascertained whether the ideal L2 self has a greater motivational attraction than that of the ought-to L2 self; something that has been supported by a few recent studies. For example, in the Spanish learning context where there is currently high youth unemployment, and where knowledge of English is regarded as a gatekeeper to

potential employment and progress, the combination of students' feared and ought-to L2 selves appears to dominate their future L2 visions (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Mackay 2019). This is something that will be further explored in the next chapter, in which the qualitative findings of the study will be discussed.

With regard to the ought-to L2 self, as mentioned above, although it has attracted less attention than the ideal L2 self in the research literature and received the lowest overall mean score in the current study, some aspects of it are worth mentioning. The findings show that while the scores for the instrument-prevention statements (i.e. the desire to avoid failure in academic performance) are high, the level of significant others' expectations (i.e. parents and relatives) moves into the negative domain. This contrast is not in line with the common stereotype that Chinese students are less individualistic and more societally determined (You & Dörnyei 2014). Building on this argument, the Chinese Imperative (Chen, Warden & Chang 2005) mentioned earlier is relevant. This motive represents a specific Chinese factor which originates from the traditional Chinese striving for personal advancement and family welfare through success in exams. In this sense, the motive of the Chinese Imperative not only concerns the fear of educational failure, but is also seen as "a highly internalized aspect of the Chinese achievement related mindset, equating value with exam success, further enforced by societal, educational, and family expectations" (You & Dörnyei 2014, p. 20). In You and Dörnyei's (2014) view, the Chinese Imperative consists of two components: instrumentality prevention and expectations from significant others. This view echoes Teimouri's (2017) argument that the Ought-to L2 Self in the L2 Motivational Self System could be better understood from the perspectives of "own" and "others", representing personal and social aspects of learners' future L2 self respectively. The inclusion of the "own" and "others" perspectives, according to Teimouri (2017), would better represent a continuum of learners' motives whose motivational effects could be investigated based on the level of internalization, through this theoretical reasoning, investigating the dynamic relationships between learners' ideal and ought-to L2 selves. To examine the own and others perspectives, or the personal and social aspects of the Chinese Imperative, the results from this study have demonstrated that the desire to avoid academic failure is indeed a powerful attraction. This result is also related to the Chinese concept of losing face discussed by Magid (2009) as one of the motivational factors for Chinese

students. The other component, pressure and expectations from parents and the society, however, does not support such a claim. This twofold nature of the ought-to L2 self is similar to the findings of You and Dörnyei (2014). They concluded:

We did not find a unique 'Chinese Imperative' factor that was conceptually different from Western notions of extrinsic motivation linked to the fear of academic failure: in our study, the only powerful aspect of this dimension was Instrumental-Prevention, with societal and peer expectations only playing a small to moderate part. (p. 22)

Thus, the findings from this study confirm the importance of fears of failing in academic performance as a powerful motivational factor, but there is little endorsement for the second component of the Chinese Imperative assumption. Although the findings from this study and You and Dörnyei (2014) do not support the argument that the second component of the Chinese Imperative assumption - parental and societal pressures and expectations – is a powerful motivator, interestingly enough, Doiz and Lasagabaster's (2018) study shows that much of the students' interactions with English is based on their parents' proactive decisions and actions, and the current Spanish social situation and learning setting. This contrast raises the question of whether parental and societal pressures and expectations are culturally specific, as in the stereotyped view of Chinese learners, or if they are learning-context specific. This disparity will also be further examined in the discussion of the qualitative data where examples of Chinese moral imperatives which urge people to strive to succeed are provided.

In comparison with the Ideal and Ought-to L2 Self subscales, the results from the L2 Learning Experience subscale showed less variation among the scores. This finding suggests that this component is more tangible than the abstract images, based on the future self-guides because it is associated with the direct impact of the students' learning environment, in particular, the students' classroom learning situation (Dörnyei 2009b). Although the L2 learning experience is concerned with tangible learning environments and experiences, and some language learners' initial motivation to learn a language comes from successful engagement with the actual language learning process rather than internally or externally generated self images, the L2 learning experience is the least researched component of the L2 Motivational Self System (Brady 2019; Dörnyei 2019b; Henry & Thorsen 2018a), which

makes more difficult to make a comparison between the findings of the study and those of previous research in this aspect of the study. There are few studies that have examined this component; however, researchers have now tried to set up a cause-effect relationship between the L2 learning experience and learning achievement (Al-Hoorie 2018). This examination of this relationship has been called into question, however, as little theoretical analysis is available to explain why this association should be causal (Ushioda 2011). Recently this weakness has been realised and studies such as Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018), and Henry and Thorsen (2018a, 2018b) have started applying a qualitative orientation to look at the relationship between students' L2 learning experience and their motivation. Responding to this, the interview data from this study will explore this relationship in more detail.

#### **4.7.2 Interrelationships among the Constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System**

The results from the correlation analysis show that relationships existed between each of the constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System. Among these three pairs of relationships, the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales had a statistically significant strong positive correlation regardless of gender, academic program, or demographic background. That is, both the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales moved in the same direction. However, the directional movement between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales was not clear. Some studies (e.g. Papi (2010); Taguchi (2013)) suggest a directional link from the Ideal L2 Self to the L2 Learning Experience subscales, while in others (e.g. Csizér & Kormos (2009); Kormos, Kiddle & Csizér (2011)), this direction was reversed. According to You, Dörnyei and Csizér (2016), the reason for these mixed interpretations lies in the dual nature of the underlying relationship. On the one hand, a time sequence development logic suggests a L2 learning experience → ideal L2 self direction because the L2 learning experience concerns immediate current learning experiences, which then will have impacts on the future self-image. On the other hand, Dörnyei, Ibrahim and Muir (2015) argue that within vision-governed behavioural chains, the positive emotionality related to the future self-image is projected backward onto the constituent learning tasks and processes which are involved in the chain. In their words:

As a consequence of this radiated positive disposition, activities that a person previously considered boring or tedious can suddenly become pleasant and enjoyable ... because they are perceived as being conducive to the accomplishment of the higher purpose. (p. 101)

Therefore, the positive emotionality generated by the ideal L2 self can direct students' attitudes towards the L2 learning experience. Following this logic, an ideal L2 self → L2 learning experience direction is proposed by Dörnyei, Ibrahim and Muir (2015). A two-way directional view, however, is assumed from the current study due to the dual nature of the underlying relationship of these constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System. This assumption will be further investigated in the discussion of the qualitative analysis in the next chapter of this thesis.

Another pair of relationships, that of the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales, also warrants attention as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) raise an issue with regard to this relationship. At the heart of this issue is the question of the internalisation of external influences, which is a key concern of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. Relating this theory with the nature of the self-concept, Noels (2009) assumes that "as language learning and use become increasingly integrated within a person's sense of self, one might increasingly feel a sense of belonging to that ethnolinguistic community" (p. 304). Building on this assumption, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) argue that because, inherently, human beings are social products, all their self-images are initially socially grounded. Given this significant role of the social involvement, they highlight a future research question to examine: at what point in the internalisation process can a learner claim ownership of the desired possible self as their L2 ideal self rather than the L2 ought-to self. Although the correlational result of this pair of relationships was not able to provide a direct answer to this question, it showed a medium link between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales regardless of gender, academic program, or demographic background. This result confirms that, indeed, there is a relationship between these two selves, but that this relationship is not very strong. This situation can find its explanation in Kim's (2009b) study. In Kim's (2009b) view, L2 development originates from intermental functioning between the L2 learner and other L2 users, and through L2 interactions the external social dimension is gradually and creatively internalised, or taken up, by the learner. The degree of



internalisation between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self depends on how far the learners internalise the external social dimension. If an L2 learner genuinely has high wishes to use the L2 for job or academic advancement, this instrumental disposition becomes closely related to the learner's vocational or academic identity, leading to an ideal future image of him/herself. In this case, based on Dörnyei's (2009b) model of the ideal L2 self, the instrumentality is internalised into the L2 learner and reflects a promotion-focused self-image. Since the instrumentality is internalised, it is reasonable for the learner to have personalised and contextualised reasons to learn the L2. These reasons, often, are described in detail as learning goals which can be specific and solid. If the internalisation happens partially, however, it would say that the instrumentality is more associated with the prevention side of external obligation. In this case, the L2 learner attributes less of a personal rationale and meaning to the L2 learning. They may want to learn the L2 because parents, teachers, friends, the education system, and the media emphasise the importance of the L2. Viewed in these ways, the less internalised instrumentality is prevention-focused, which is correlated to Dörnyei's (2009b) model of the ought-to L2 self. This explanation of the relationship between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self is supported by the results of this study. As with the other assumptions which have been discussed, however, this relationship needs further exploration in the qualitative data.

The last relationship, between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales, received a medium correlation, which is similar to that between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self subscales. Although there was this similarity, this pair of relationships attracts the least attention in the literature. The reasons behind that might relate to the findings obtained from this study, as it was the only pair of relationships which saw differences in terms of gender, demographic background, and academic program. For gender, the results showed that while there is a strong correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales for the female students, this correlation did not exist for the male students. Along with this significant vs. not significant division, the results also demonstrate that a medium correlation existed for the metropolitan students but not for the regional students. With regard to academic programs, the difference between the Out-plan and In-plan students did not fall into a strong division. While there was a strong correlation for the Out-plan students, the correlation was small for the In-plan

students. The inconsistency of these results may be one of the reasons why there are no studies so far which examine this pair of relationships.

The correlation analysis and discussion presented above demonstrate that interrelationships exist between the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System. This analysis and discussion foreshadow at least three issues which need to be further addressed in the qualitative analysis and discussion. As mentioned above, they are: (a) the directional movement between the ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience; (b) internalisation of the ought-to L2 self into the ideal L2 self and (c) evidence of the relationship between the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience. These interrelationships have been viewed in more recent research (e.g. You, Dörnyei & Csizér (2016)) as being reflective of the dynamic nature of these constructs. As questionnaires are usually ill-suited to explore a dynamic nature of this kind, this will be further explored in the discussion of the qualitative data in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 which follow.

#### **4.8 From the Quantitative to the Qualitative Data**

Apart from the above mentioned assumptions and issues which deserve further exploration in the qualitative data, other findings from Li (2014) and Zhang (2016) were not covered in the statistical analysis in this study, but point to directions to be explored in the discussion of the qualitative analysis. First, since motivational differences were seen to exist between ESL and EFL settings, this suggests that learning contexts have an influence on motivation, and that motivation is a situated phenomenon. Second, both Li's (2014) and Zhang's (2016) studies reported that, among the three constructs of the L2 Self Motivational Self System, the L2 learning experience was the most important element in determining students' English learning effort, indicating that immediate learning experiences play an important role in motivating students. Therefore, in the EFL setting in particular, relationships in the classroom needs special attention, including teacher-student and student-student relationships. Further to this, both Li's (2014) and Zhang's (2016) studies pointed out the interrelationship between the L2 learning experience and the ideal L2 self, which corresponds to the previous discussion of the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience subscales revealed in this study. Li (2014) and Zhang (2016) argued

that the ideal L2 self is mainly mediated by the L2 learning experience. That is, instead of viewing the motivational power of the ideal L2 self automatically, it needs to be activated in a suitable learning situation and maintained by constant learning engagement, assumed in the current study to be bi-directional. Thus, if the ideal L2 self were visualised as merely a static desired end-state with no actional strategies, it would evoke no significant behavioural outcomes. Last but not least, another perspective to examine is the non-static and temporal nature of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, including the ideas that they may have several subcomponents, or different forms, and the negative self-perception of the ideal L2 self.

#### **4.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the quantitative data in relation to previous research on motivation. In particular, it has discussed findings on the nature of the students' ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience, and relationships between these constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System. The chapter has also pointed to matters discussed in the research literature that the quantitative data did not reveal. These matters will be taken up in the following chapters, which discuss the findings of the qualitative component of the study in relation to previous research into second language learners' motivation to learn English.

# Chapter 5: Qualitative Findings

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## 5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews with the four focal students: Amanda, William, Zack, and Crystal. Each focal student is reported as a separate case. The reporting order of each case is organised in the following sequence: First, background information for each case is provided. Then, the nature of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience is focussed on for each case, followed by the students' motivation for studying the EAP courses. The presentation in this order reflects the sequential nature of the mixed methods design employed in the study, in that focal students' answers to the questionnaire are used as the starting point for the interviews, so as to provide more in-depth insights into their motivations. A summary of each case is provided at the end of each section. This chapter ends with a conclusion which leads to Chapter 6, Discussion of the Qualitative Findings.

## Case 1: Amanda

### C.1.1 Background Information on Amanda

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Amanda was a quiet learner in the classroom, and achieved an average academic performance. More detailed information on her is provided below.

Amanda is a 20-year-old female student studying in the In-plan program. Her major is International Economy and Trading. At the time we had the interview, she was a first year student, and had been studying in her program for six months. Amanda was from a regional area in North China. Both of her parents held professional jobs, which paid well enough for her to have gained overseas travelling experience before I met her. During the interview, Amanda was very talkative. By contrast, however, she was very quiet in class, sitting by herself, having little interaction with other students.

In her questionnaire, Amanda responded with a mean score of 5.5 in the statements related to the Ideal L2 Self subscale, 5.83 in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, and 5.5 in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. The differences between these scores were small; it can be said that Amanda was similarly motivated to study academic English based on her scores in relation to the three subscales. These scores are not in line with the results from the whole surveyed cohort, however, for whom the ideal L2 self was the most important motivation to study academic English, followed by the L2 learning experience, and then the ought-to L2 self. According to this comparison, in this sense, Amanda can be seen as something of an outlier within the whole student cohort. Her interview helped me to understand the way she responded, and revealed more about the nature of her ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience, and their motivational roles in her studying academic English.

## C.1.2 Amanda's Ideal L2 Self

### C.1.2.1 The Nature of Amanda's Ideal L2 Self

Table 5.1 shows Amanda's responses in relation to the Ideal L2 Self subscale. Her scores were all in positive territory, but the degree of agreement was not consistent across the six items. For example, while she rated *strongly agree* (6) for items 1 to 4, she responded *agree* (4) for item 5, and *slightly agree* (5) for item 6, leading to an average score of 5.5 in her Ideal L2 Self subscale. This score was between *agree* (5) and *strongly agree* (6), suggesting that the concept of ideal L2 self was relevant to Amanda. Her words from her interview illustrate this point:

虽然我是一个很安静的女孩，但我很有梦想。我经常 would 想“以后如果我是她，我会怎样”这样的问题。这种感觉很强烈，一直在鼓励我自己去学习。

[Although I am a girl who is very quiet, I like dreaming, and have many dreams. I always dream about myself in the future, such as a future scenario “in the future, if I was her, I could ...”. I am heavily drawn to these feelings and such feelings always motivate me to learn.]

Apart from supporting her view that the ideal L2 self was relevant to her, more importantly, this quote reveals that Amanda linked her ideal L2 self to her personal characteristics, which would not be noticed by looking at her scores alone. Also, this quote shows the way Amanda's ideal L2 self motivated her to learn which, equally, would not be discovered by only looking at her participation in classroom activities. The details of the nature of her ideal L2 self and its role in her motivation are further discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Table 5.1 Amanda's scores in the Ideal L2 Self subscale**

Item	Amanda
(AE=Academic English)	
Ideal L2 Self	5.5
1 Learning AE is important to me because I need it for my current study	6
2 Learning AE is important to me because I need it to pass my exams	6
3 Learning AE is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English	6
4 I can imagine myself being able to use AE skillfully in the future	6
5 I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an AE community in the future	4
6 I can imagine myself using AE as if I were a native speaker of English	5

At the time of the interview, during the second semester of her first year, Amanda created her ideal L2 self based on her current perceived English proficiency, and her past experience of using English when she travelled overseas. In relation to her current perceived English proficiency, Amanda realised that there was a gap between her English and that of the students from more developed parts of China. She understood that her disadvantages in listening and speaking would be barriers for her current and future study success. Thus, Amanda imagined she would be able to speak fluent English, understand lectures and broadcasts, engage in meaningful discussion, and deliver good presentations. All these aspects of her imagined ideal L2 self are closely related to the current deficits in her

academic English. Her past experiences of using English when she travelled overseas (to Korea and Thailand) were viewed as critical incidents by her, and provided Amanda with an opportunity to have a taste of the importance of English for international communication. In the interview, Amanda told me how embarrassed she felt when she had communication breakdowns with local people when using English to communicate due to her poor listening and speaking skills. This experience provided a starting point for Amanda to imagine herself becoming a fluent English speaker. These two examples demonstrate that the construction of Amanda's ideal L2 self is based on her personal needs in English, and her personal experience with English rather than, using her words, 天马行空 [a fabrication].

Amanda's personal needs and experiences changed as she grew older and gained knowledge of English. So did her ideal L2 self. This means that her ideal L2 self was not a static concept. Rather it was developmental in nature, reflecting changes in both time and situation. This characteristic of Amanda's ideal L2 self was expressed in her interview:

随着你年龄增长，你想要的也不一样，你认识到的不一样，所以也是期望值越来越高。

[Along with the increase in your age, what you would like to get and what you realise will change. Therefore, your expectation is getting higher and higher.]

This view demonstrates that Amanda understood that her ideal L2 self developed in a continuous accumulating process over time. The further from her current situation, the higher the goals for her ideal L2 self became. In this aspect, the images of Amanda's ideal L2 self were constructed as responses to a series of potential, sequential events in her future. These events are English examinations, employment, and her hope to live overseas as an escape from living in China, with the success of each image as the foundation for the next. For English examinations, as an academic English learner, her upcoming and future examinations were extremely important for Amanda, and preparing for these examinations had become a priority for her daily study routine. For her, an ideal L2 self in academic English would be successfully passing the College English Test 4 (CET 4) and College English Test 6 (CET 6), and gaining a score of 6.5 in the IELTS test. Being a successful examination candidate had become an aspect of her ideal L2 self that she would like to pursue. Amanda's ideal L2 self also includes images related to future employment, and a way to escape from



China. Amanda agreed that her ideal L2 self was not only related to English study, but also to her perspective on future employment as she strongly believed having excellent academic English skills would help her to find jobs more easily in the future. She said that this job-related aspect of her ideal L2 self was very desirable, and she could easily imagine herself wearing a work uniform, using English to make presentations in her specific field, or writing beautifully in English. She also commented that this job-related aspect of her ideal L2 self could make her more competitive, putting her ahead of other applicants if she were given a job interview. Amanda also developed images of her escaping from China, as she was concerned the job-related environment and personal development opportunities in China could not match what she was learning at university, and what she was expecting from her studies, which would in turn limit these opportunities. In relation to where she was from (an underdeveloped part of China), she said she would not work in Chinese state-owned companies, because there was little space there for personal development for her. In Amanda's view, going overseas was both her hope and solution to this problem. Thus, it was not hard for Amanda to construct her ideal L2 self with perfect academic English while living overseas to survive and adapt to her target future community.

So far, Amanda's ideal L2 self represents optimistic images of herself in the future. This positive dimension of her ideal L2 self, however, was complemented by a negative one. This included images which contained fears. As with their positive counterparts, these negative images were also related to three aspects for her, English examinations, future employment, and escaping from China, and they were closely related to one another. For example, Amanda feared that she could fail the College English Tests, and IELTS. These failures, she said, meant she would lose out in job applications, become a loser in seeking employment in the future, and even worse, she could not escape from China.

Based on the above findings, it can be seen that Amanda's ideal L2 self includes both positive and negative images of her future states. These states are related to her immediate and more distant future. They were all important to her, regardless of whether they were positive or negative, or distant from or close to her current situation. The following quote from her interview demonstrates this:

我是一个想得比较多的人。我经常想我的将来，我知道有些想法虽然现在达不到，但是心里总是有一种，就是看电影一样会触及的场景，然后我就把自己想象成场景里面的人。这种感觉很好奇！

[I am a person who thinks a lot. I think about my future all the time. Although I know some of this thinking is too far to reach, I cannot stop myself thinking. In my mind, I always have a feeling which is similar to watching a movie. I feel I am part of the movie. This feeling is fantastic!]

This view towards her future supports the argument that the concept of the ideal L2 self is relevant to Amanda. Further, this quote reveals that Amanda's ideal L2 self is related to her personal characteristics. Therefore, it was easy for Amanda to imagine her ideal L2 self as she used these images to motivate her to learn all the time.

In sum, Amanda's responses provide insights into the nature of her ideal L2 self. First, the interview shows that the ideal L2 self is a multifaceted concept which can incorporate a cluster of images. Second, these images not only have positive dimensions, they also include negative aspects. Third, Amanda's ideal L2 self is not a static concept. Rather, it is developmental in nature, reflecting developments over time and changes in her situation. For example, at the time of the interview, Amanda provided three different types of ideal L2 self: the ideal L2 self at university, the ideal L2 self in employment, and the ideal L2 self living overseas. Also, these three types of ideal L2 self were related to one another, in an accumulating process of development. Fourth, Amanda's ideal L2 self is strongly influenced by her personal characteristics. Although her ideal L2 self was developmental in nature, all her images had a similar strength in visibility, regardless of the distance from her current situation. As she said:

我对这些幻想的东西的感觉很强烈，不论他们离我多远，因为他们是我的梦想。我是一个追梦的人。我渴望自己在学业有成以后，职业方面也一样优秀，到国外后也要成功。因为我想实现这些梦想，我脑海里经常出现这样的景象。这些景象给我指引的方向，让我努力去实现。

[I am very attracted to imagination. It does not matter how far they are from me because they are my dreams. I am always chasing these dreams. I dream of being

successful in my study, in my job and living overseas. Because I want to make these dreams become realities, they always appear in my mind. They point out the direction for me to work hard to make them become realities.]

This quote clearly illustrates the relationship between Amanda's ideal L2 self and her motivation to learn English, which is the focus in the following paragraphs.

### **C.1.2.2 Motivation and Amanda's Ideal L2 Self**

For Amanda, the relationship between her ideal L2 self and motivation is linear. That is, as she said, where there was a dream, there was a motive to work hard. The conversion from her ideal L2 self into motivation to learn academic English is illustrated in her explanation:

梦想的东西可以鼓励自己去努力学习，因为每个人都想要好的生活！如果想到自己努力学习后能拥有你想要的那种生活，那你就会动力十足，促进自己去实现自己想像的那样子。

[Dreams can motivate you to learn because everyone wants a better life for themselves in the future! When you think about if I work harder, I can have the life I dream about, you will become highly motivated, propelling you to make these dreams become realities.]

The motivational role of Amanda's ideal L2 self, then, can be described in three ways: 距离 [gaps], 目标 [goals], and 希望 [hopes]. First, the ideal L2 self creates gaps between her imagined end states and her current self, which Amanda worked hard to fill. Imagining promising selves in the future, such as having improved her listening, and having become a fluent English speaker, Amanda spent a lot of time practising listening and speaking. For example, she listened to BBC radio, and watched English films when she had time to do this. When watching English films, she turned off the subtitles on purpose, and tried hard to understand and write down each individual word. Also she used applications on her mobile phone to practise her listening. For speaking, she said, she took all the opportunities that were available to her, such as talking to her foreign teachers, and going to the English Corner on her university campus. Even after a long day studying and being exhausted, once

she thought about being a fluent English speaker, Amanda felt motivated to continue to participate in the English Corner, which provided a chance for her to interact with others in English, and a chance for her to use English. Second, the ideal L2 self provides goals for her English study. As Amanda stressed, studying without any goals was the worst possible scenario, but the ideal L2 self set up goals for her, so she was able to know her study destinations, and work out a strategic plan to reach her goals. An example used by Amanda in the interview was passing the College English 6 (CET6) exam. Hoping to pass CET 6 successfully, Amanda had a plan to reach this goal, such as using past exam papers for practise every day, memorising vocabulary, and doing grammar exercises required by CET 6. This goal and plan regulated Amanda's English study routine, and reminded her to work hard to reach her daily target. Third, the ideal L2 self represents hopes. For Amanda, escaping from China was her greatest motivation to study English. When living overseas, Amanda said, English would be her communication tool, and if she did not study hard to master it, this hope would be terminated, and her future would be destroyed.

The negative aspect of Amanda's ideal L2 self, the fear of not achieving something in the future, acted as a further prompt to motivate her to study academic English. This motivational role is evident in Amanda's interview:

每一次想到自己失败的情景，胆颤心惊，突然你就会觉得信心动力倍增，觉得今天要好好学英文。

[Each time I imagine the failure scenarios, I am frightened. Suddenly, I feel fully confident and my motivation gets boosted. I feel I must study English hard today.]

This extract from Amanda's interview demonstrates that the motivation to learn from the imagined consequences of failing is as powerful as the motivation generated from the positive images of Amanda's ideal L2 self. Also, this motivation comes abruptly, without any prediction. To Amanda, 生于忧患 [living in fears] was not a bad idea at all because these fears were transformed into pressure for her to study harder.

### C.1.3 Amanda's Ought-to L2 Self

#### C.1.3.1 The Nature of Amanda's Ought-to L2 Self

Table 5.2 presents Amanda's responses in her Ought-to L2 Self subscale, which were relatively consistent across the six items. She rated *strongly agree* (6) for all the items apart from item 3 in which she responded *agree* (5), leading to a mean score of 5.83 for her Ought-to L2 Self. This mean suggested that the concept of ought-to L2 self was very relevant to Amanda. Her words from her interview illustrate this:

我是一个很敏感的人，我很在乎别人怎样看我，特别是同学和爸爸妈妈。

[I am very sensitive. I care very much about how other people think about me, in particular my classmates and my parents.]

This extract from Amanda's interview provides a snapshot of the importance of her ought-to L2 self to her. Particularly, she linked her personal characteristics and feelings with two aspects of her ought-to L2 self in relation to her motivation. These two aspects are her classmates and her parents, which are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Table 5.2 Amanda’s scores in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale**

Item	Amanda
(AE=Academic English)	
Ought-to L2 Self	5.83
1 I have to study AE because I don’t want to get bad marks in it	6
2 I have to study AE because I want to get a good IELTS score	6
3 Studying AE is important to me because if I don’t have knowledge of AE, I’ll be considered a weak learner	5
4 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives	6
5 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my teacher	6
6 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers	6

### **C.1.3.2 Motivation and Amanda’s Ought-to L2 Self**

For Amanda, the effect of her classmates on her was both negative and positive. From a negative point of view, her classmates became the source of a sense of inferiority due to the gaps between herself and the classmates in terms of proficiency in academic English. This sense of inferiority, however, did not demotivate Amanda to learn. Rather, it became transformed into positive pressure for Amanda to close this gap. During this transformation, Amanda’s personal characteristics played an important role as she cared about how others thought about her, and did not want to be labelled ‘a loser’. This transformation and its motivation on Amanda are illustrated in her own words:

刚来的时候，我感觉不如其他同学，自己会产生一种自卑感。但是我没有失去信心，反而是一种积极的压力。我觉得每一份压力就是一份动力，因为你要跟他们看齐。我没有觉得不如别人就感觉不舒服，反而我要改变自己落后的情况。

[When I first started my study here, I felt my English was far behind, which created a sense of inferiority. However, I did not lose my confidence and believed that this sense of inferiority could be transformed into positive pressure. Each pressure had its own motivation because I wanted to live up to that level. I never felt ashamed when I had a sense of inferiority. Rather I urged myself to change my situation.]

The motivation coming from this sense of inferiority was massive as Amanda studied very hard to prove she could do as well as the other students. The above quote shows that coming from a disadvantaged background was not necessarily a hurdle in terms of her motivation. For Amanda, holding a positive attitude towards her future was the key to changing this negative aspect into a positive motivation to study. This example also demonstrates the relationship between Amanda's ought-to L2 self and her ideal L2 self. That is, the boundary between these two concepts was not a clear one for her. In turn, in Amanda's case, the motivation to learn was the combined effect of both her ought-to L2 self and ideal L2 self.

The next aspect from the concept of the ought-to L2 self for Amanda is her parents. The pressure from her parents motivated her all the time. In her interview, Amanda used the expression 内心的折磨 [internal torture] to describe the degree of pressure from her parents if she failed her study. She explained that this was because she was the only child and her parents invested a lot in her education. Therefore, she felt responsible to live up to her parents' expectations. An example which illustrates this type of pressure from an investment-responsibility relationship is that by the time of the interview, Amanda's parents had already started the financial preparations for her to go overseas. Therefore, Amanda concluded, images of consequences of failures reminded her to work hard, and the consequences of being unsuccessful were, by using Amanda's words, 不可想象的 [unimaginable].

To sum up, Amanda's ought-to L2 self was an important concept to motivate her to learn. In terms of the nature of her ought-to L2 self, the interview data shows that although the

ought-to L2 self is not a monolithic notion, when compared to her ideal L2 self, Amanda's ought-to L2 self is less diverse and related to two separate aspects, her classmates and her parents. The motivational effects from these two aspects are less linear than those of her ideal L2 self. That is, in Amanda's case, negative factors, such as a sense of inferiority or intense pressure from her parents did not lead to demotivation. They were, instead, transformed into positive motivation. The elements which are responsible for these factors not creating negative motivation derive from Amanda's personal characteristics and her sense of responsibility. Also, the motivation for Amanda to learn was a combination of her ought-to L2 self and her ideal L2 self, which demonstrates the interrelationship between these two notions in the L2 Motivational Self System.

#### **C.1.4 Amanda's L2 Learning Experience**

##### **C.1.4.1 The Nature of Amanda's L2 Learning Experience**

Table 5.3 shows Amanda's responses in her L2 Learning Experience subscale. She rated positively, either *strongly agree* (6) or *agree* (5), on all the items, leading to an average score of 5.5 for her L2 Learning Experience subscale. This average score suggested that Amanda had positive learning experiences in her English study. Amanda's interview helps to provide more insights into these positive learning experiences and their influence on her motivation to learn English.



**Table 5.3 Amanda's scores in the L2 Learning Experience subscale**

Item	Amanda
(AE=Academic English)	
L2 Learning Experience	5.5
1 I like the atmosphere of my AE class	6
2 I think time passes quickly while studying AE	5
3 I find learning AE interesting	5
4 I have good teacher(s) to help me with my AE	6
5 I have support from my classmates for my AE	6
6 I expend a lot of effort in learning AE	5
7 I find ways to practice my English outside class	5
8 Overall, I think I am an active AE learner	6

#### **C.1.4.2 Motivation and Amanda's L2 Learning Experience**

In her interview, Amanda talked actively about her views on her English learning experiences and their influences on her motivation. The first thing she mentioned is her attitudes towards English. Amanda said she had liked English since she was young because she understood English would be useful for her future success. Soon after she commenced her study at university, her personal interest in English increased, which helped to create a positive environment for her English learning. As she said:

从小到大我就不讨厌英语。在还没有上小学的时候，妈妈已经送我到英语兴趣班学习英语，来到大学以后，我对学习英语的兴趣再一步提高，这对我的学习有很大的帮助。

[I have liked English since I was young. Before I went to my primary school, my mother had sent me to an English Interest Class to study English. Soon after I started here (university), my interest in English increased, which helps me to learn.]

This quote demonstrates that the affective factor of Amanda's positive attitude towards English plays a key role in her English learning. When further asked why her interest in English increased, Amanda listed three main attributors: the learning environment, her English teachers, and successful learning moments.

First, the change in the learning environment from high school to university provided more learning support and opportunities for English learning. In the interview, Amanda said the most effective way to learn English was to immerse herself in a pure English learning environment. The transition from high school to university was able to create this environment for Amanda. Since she started her study at university, she had access to different kinds of English learning environments. For example, she attended English lectures, participated in the English Corner, read books, news and magazines in English, and for the first time in her life, had native speaker English teachers. She said all these learning experiences were new to her and helped to open her eyes to the world. Thus, she became more attracted to English which, in turn, motivated her to learn more.

The second attributor was her current English teachers. In two aspects, Amanda's current teachers helped boost her interest and motivation in learning English. The first was their teaching methods, and the second, the teachers' work ethics. With regard to teaching methods, Amanda said, compared with her English teachers at high school, her current English teachers put a lot of effort into motivating students to engage in classroom activities. For example, the teachers used creative learning activities in the classroom, such as learning English with games, cooperative learning between classmates, integrating audio and video into English learning, introducing competition in learning, and encouraging students to think creatively. Amanda concluded that she benefited a lot from these learning methods and really enjoyed the classroom learning atmosphere with her teachers. Therefore, she never

skipped a single English lesson, and always came early and sat in the front row, even though she didn't interact with other students. In terms of the teachers' work ethics, Amanda mentioned that her current teachers cared about their students a lot. They always worked overtime to mark students' assignments and willingly sacrificed their personal time to offer extra help to students. Also, her teachers set up one-on-one consultation times regularly with students after class to talk about the progress of their study and the difficulties they were faced with it. As a result, Amanda felt extremely touched by the work her teachers did for students, and this motivated her to study hard to return the favour.

Based on the favourable learning environment and dedication of her teachers, Amanda had experienced many successful learning moments. In turn, these moments further increased her interest in English and motivated her to learn. Amanda used these words to illustrate the motivational feeling she gained from these successful moments:

学习上每次的成功，都给我一种无形的兴奋和动力，我觉得自己今天没有白过。然后自己非常享受这种喜悦。

[Each successful learning moment gives me an unspeakable excitement and motivation. I feel I do not waste my time today. And then I enjoy this pleasure moment very much.]

Amanda mentioned, however, her learning journey did not always sail smoothly. Sometimes, it hit rocks, she said. An example of this is her experience of using difficult reading materials that were required by her teachers as extended reading homework. In her opinion, some of the reading materials were too abstract to digest, despite spending an entire day on learning something she could not understand. Amanda said this learning experience discouraged her to continue because she started to question her own ability and her confidence hit a low point. Due to this demotivating experience, Amanda switched off for two days until she turned to her teachers for advice to regain confidence in her study. This example demonstrates how Amanda's learning experiences fluctuate during her learning journey, as does her motivation to learn, reflecting this fluctuation. Her words illustrate the fluctuating nature of her motivation:

学习经历是一个跌宕起伏的过程，有高有低。当你成功的时候你冲劲十足，但你遇到困难的时候你有挫折感。所以学习的动力很难预测。有时候老师的一个小小的表扬就会让我兴高采烈，一个困难就会让我沮丧气馁。很难控制。

[Learning experience is an up and down process. Sometimes you stay in the highs and sometimes in the lows. When you are successful you are full of momentum, but when you have difficulties you feel frustrated. So, the motivation of learning is difficult to predict. Sometimes the teacher's little praise will make me cheerful, but a small difficulty will make me discouraged. (motivation) is hard to control.]

Apart from showing the fluctuating nature of Amanda's motivation from her learning experiences, this quote also reveals that Amanda's motivation is unpredictable, reactive to particular situations, and uncontrollable. She described the movement of her motivation to learn English as 矛盾中前进 [moving forward in a motivation-demotivation pattern]. That is:

我的学习动力是在一个有动力-没有动力-有动力这样的循环中不断变化，根据周围的情况变化。但总的来说，我的学习的信心和动力是不断的提升的，除了学习的经历外，我有学习的压力和看到我的将来。

[My learning motivation changes and moves in a motivated-demotivated-motivated circle, responsive to the immediate learning environment. Overall, my learning confidence and motivation increase over time. This increase is the result of my learning experiences, pressure to study, and my future with English.]

This extract not only shows that Amanda's motivation develops in a fluctuating trajectory in a motivated-demotivated-motivated circle over time, but also demonstrates the combined effect of her ought-to L2 self and her ideal L2 self on her motivation. That is, along the learning journey, her motivation fluctuates as a response to her learning experiences. It is her ought-to L2 self and her ideal L2 self that keep her afloat, and keep her in a motivated state most of the time. That is why she described her motivational movement as 矛盾中前进 [moving forward in a motivation-demotivation pattern].

The position of Amanda's motivation in relation to her L2 learning experiences is not always one of being influenced by elements external to her. In the interview, Amanda revealed that

she took it upon herself to change her motivation so that she became the factor that influences her change rather than outside influences. The resources she drew on for this change are the increase in her interest and confidence in English over the course of her studies. Since Amanda became more confident in herself and motivated in learning English, she was taking more adventurous steps to seek new elements in her learning environment to motivate her to study English. For example, Amanda moved beyond the university campus and participated in social events in order to experience English. Amanda commented that some of these social events, such as travelling overseas or being a volunteer in helping foreigners in a trade Expo, provided good learning experiences for her to taste how English was used and its importance in society. Amanda also mentioned that in these social events, her role changed from being an English learner to an English user, which had a profound impact on her motivation, as she realised that English enabled her to become a legitimate member of a small part of the globalised world through these social events. Amanda used these words to illustrate the importance of these events on her motivation to learn English:

这些社会实践能鼓励我去学习英语。首先，这些社会实践让我大开眼界，我找到自己更大的目标，这些目标能推动自己去学习。第二，在这些社会实践中，自己能用英语帮助外国人把事情办好，我感觉很兴奋，这种兴奋感能极大鼓励自己去学英语。第三，这种主动学习的经历是给自己英语学习的一个考察，虽然有时候很尴尬看到自己英语的实际水平，但自我检验，亡羊补牢。

[These social events can motivate me to learn English. First, they broaden my horizon to see the world. From this world, I can find my bigger goals, and these goals motivate me to learn. Second, in these social events, I use English to help others to get things done. I feel excited. This excitement motivates me to learn greatly. Third, these active learning experiences provide good opportunities to assess English. Although I feel embarrassed to find out my actual English proficiency, I reflect on that and work hard on my weaknesses.]

These words clearly demonstrate the complex scenario of Amanda's motivation to learn English through these social events. First, this extract reveals the relationship between Amanda's L2 learning experience and her ideal L2 self, and their effect on her motivation.

The social learning experiences present a bigger context, richer content and direct experiences for Amanda to construct facets of her future L2 self. These facets, in turn, become plausible goals to motivate her to pursue, as they are based on real experiences. Second, emotional factors have a direct impact on Amanda's motivation. Through these social events, Amanda experienced both positive (for example, excitement) and negative (for example, embarrassment) emotional moments. While positive emotion generated positive motivation, negative emotion was not equal to demotivation. In Amanda's case, this negative emotion was used as an evaluative tool to reflect on her weaknesses to work on in the future. Thus, positive and negative emotions co-existed to produce motivation for Amanda to learn English.

In sum, Amanda's interview reveals the motivation from her L2 learning experience is far more complex than her questionnaire suggests. Her positive attitude towards English sets an optimistic tone for her motivation to learn English. Amanda's interest and motivation increased since she started her study at university due to three factors: the favourable learning environment, the teachers, and successful learning experiences. The increase in interest in English, however, does not suggest Amanda's motivation is static, or always in a positive state. Instead, her motivation fluctuates over time, being responsive to particular events. Therefore, the trajectory of her motivational movement moves forward through patterns of both motivation and demotivation. Amanda's interview also shows that differing types of emotion, such as excitement and embarrassment, can have positive impacts on her motivation. Last, the interrelationship between Amanda's ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience and their combined effects on her motivation are evident in Amanda's interview. In this interrelationship, it is not always assumed that Amanda is in a passive position. She is able to take an active role in creating motivational situations for herself within and beyond the university campus.

### **C.1.5 Summary: Amanda**

Amanda's interview, drawing on the qualitative data, both complements and expands on the findings of the quantitative analysis. Importantly, it presents further insights into the nature of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, and their motivational

roles in relation to her learning of academic English in this particular learning setting. These findings are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

With regard to her ideal L2 self, Amanda's interview shows how this construct of the L2 Motivational Self System is a multifaceted concept which was strongly influenced by a combination of the learning program she was undertaking and her personal characteristics. Apart from the generally accepted instrumental role of English among Chinese students (such as getting a job), this learning program provides other opportunities for Amanda to connect herself with the English world, and allow her to imagine multiple ideal L2 selves, such as learning goals (academic advancement), and future hopes (escaping China, personal development, and fulfilment). These facets, further, not only include positive imagined future selves, but also negative ones, both of which contribute to a broader concept of her ideal L2 self. For Amanda, all these imagined future selves have similar strengths, regardless of their distance from her current situation. The similar strengths of these images, however, do not hide the fact that they are developmental in nature. They change and reflect Amanda's needs along her English learning journey. In terms of the relationship between her ideal L2 self and motivation, it can be said that this relationship is linear. In other words, each facet of her ideal L2 self directly motivated Amanda to learn. The relationship is less linear between the negative facets and Amanda's motivation. That is, the feared facets did not lead to demotivation, however. Instead, they were transformed into self-generated internal pressures which motivated Amanda to study harder. Sometimes, this kind of motivation occurred abruptly and unexpectedly.

For Amanda's ought-to L2 self, the interview reveals that although it is also a multifaceted concept compared to her ideal L2 self, her ought-to L2 self is less diverse and is closely associated with her parents, which is in line with commonly held beliefs about Chinese students, who are often thought to be motivated to learn due to pressures and expectations from their parents and their classmates, which is an example of internalisation whereby the ought-to L2 self becomes part of the ideal L2 self.

The motivational function from Amanda's L2 learning experience presents a complex picture. In this particular learning setting, Amanda experienced differences from Chinese traditional learning settings, such as having to meet different academic expectations, having more time and contact with English, having native speakers as her English teachers for the first time,

learning through more creative and student-centred methods, and frequently enjoying more learning success. These factors contribute to the increased positive affections and emotions that Amanda felt towards English, which had an influence on her motivation. Second, Amanda also realised that her motivation fluctuated a lot over time, sometimes in a motivation-demotivation pattern, as a response to her immediate learning experiences. In this program which focused on nurturing students as autonomous and independent learners, Amanda took an active role in her study, creating favourable situations to motivate herself to learn academic English within and beyond the university campus. Last, many examples of interrelationships between Amanda's ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience were revealed in her interview. These examples are evidence that Amanda's motivation to learn English was the combined effect of these three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System.



## Case 2: William

### C.2.1 Background Information on William

As mentioned in Chapter 3, William is an active learner in the classroom with average academic performance. More detailed information is provided below.

William is a 20-year-old male student studying in the In-plan program. His major is International Economy and Trading. At the time we had the interview, he was a year one student and had been studying in his program for six months. William was from a metropolitan area in China. He did not have any overseas travel experience before I met him. William was an outgoing student and had a range of interests, including drawing, singing, and learning English. During the interview, he spoke extensively about his motivation to study academic English, which contributed to his performance in the classroom, where he actively participated in learning activities.

In his questionnaire, William responded with a mean score of 4.67 in the statements related to the Idea L2 Self subscale, 6 in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, and 4.63 in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. Based on these scores, William can be seen to be highly motivated to study academic English based on his scores in relation to the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, followed by the Ideal L2 Self subscale, then the L2 Learning Experience subscale. These scores are not in line with the results from the whole surveyed cohort, however, for whom the ideal L2 self was the most important motivation to study academic English, followed by the L2 learning experience, and then the ought-to L2 self. In particular, William's mean score in the Ideal L2 Self subscale (4.67) was lower than that of the surveyed participants taken as a whole (4.91), while he responded with a full score (6) for the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, a score which was much higher than that of the whole population (4.22). According to these comparisons, as with the case of Amanda, William can be seen as something of an outlier from the whole student cohort. His interview helped to understand the way he responded, and revealed more about the nature of his ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience, and their motivational roles in his studying academic English.

## C.2.2 William's Ideal L2 Self

### C.2.2.1 The Nature of William's Ideal L2 Self

Table 5.4 shows William's responses in regard to the Ideal L2 Self subscale. His scores were inconsistent across the six items. For example, while he rated *strongly agree* (6) for items 2, 3, 4 and 6, he responded *slightly disagree* (3) for item 1, and *strongly disagree* (1) for item 5, leading to an average score of 4.67 in this subscale. This score was between *slightly agree* (4) and *agree* (5), suggesting that the concept of ideal L2 self was not greatly relevant to William. His words from his interview illustrate this point:

我不是一个理想主义者。我比较现实，我比较注重当下应该要做什么。以后的事情我暂时不去想那么多，因为有很多事情是不能预测的。

[I am not an idealist. I am rather pragmatic. I focus more on the current situation rather than consider too much about the future as the future is so hard to predict.]

Apart from supporting his view that the ideal L2 self is less relevant for him, more importantly, this quote reveals that William's ideal L2 self is bounded by his personal characteristics, the learning situation he is in, and time, which would not be noticed by only looking at his scores. Due to these influences, it can be said that William's ideal L2 self is situated and may remain fixed for only a limited period of time.

**Table 5.4 William's scores in the Ideal L2 Self subscale**

Item	William
(AE=Academic English)	
Ideal L2 Self	4.67
1 Learning AE is important to me because I need it for my current study	3
2 Learning AE is important to me because I need it to pass my exams	6
3 Learning AE is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English	6
4 I can imagine myself being able to use AE skillfully in the future	6
5 I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an AE community in the future	1
6 I can imagine myself using AE as if I were a native speaker of English	6

At this specific time, during the second semester of his first year, William created his ideal L2 self based on two conditions: his current perceived English proficiency and his current interest in English. For his current perceived English level, William understood that his oral English was not good, and was limited by a lack of vocabulary. He imagined, however, becoming someone who could speak fluent English, and communicate with foreigners naturally in English. Hopefully one day, he said, he could speak English like someone for whom English was their 母语 [mother tongue]. If this happened, William added, he would be very proud of himself, as he could use English skilfully. These comments justify the scores he gave in items 4 and 6 in his questionnaire responses. The second condition, William's

current interest in English, provided a sustained internal drive for him to construct his ideal L2 self. It is the change of the learning program and learning situation that helped William change his attitudes towards English and English learning, which included encouragement from his teachers, his learning style, and the learning content. In the interview, William compared his current interest level with his past attitude towards learning English. He said that at high school he thought English was boring, so he made no effort to learn English, let alone imagine his ideal L2 self. But now he found English was very interesting and useful, so he could imagine many images about his ideal L2 self, such as someone who is 真正双语的人 [a true bilingual], or someone who 说英文时没有受到中文影响的人 [speaks English without interference from Chinese].

This situatedness of William's ideal L2 self, however, is not static, but it is developmental in response to changes in his learning situation and time. As he commented:

我想像的美好情景都是根据情况和时间改变的，他们不可能一成不变。

[The ideal scenarios that I imagine are subject to change along the development of situation and time. It is impossible that they remain the same.]

In this aspect, the images of William's ideal L2 self are developed as responses to a series of sequential events in his future. These events are English examinations, study overseas, and employment, with the success of each stage as the prerequisite for the next. For English examinations, to William, an ideal image of successfully passing all his English examinations was desirable as it was the key to opening doors for his future, which he hoped would include graduating from university, studying overseas, and getting a decent job. This view of his ideal L2 self is evident in his interview, as he said he wanted to pass College English Test 6 (CET 6) and gain a good score in the IELTS test, so he could guarantee a dual bachelor's degree from his university, continue on to a master's degree overseas, and eventually secure a good job. The second event, study overseas, is the subsequent ideal L2 self for William. In this stage, William said that he could imagine himself being a successful exchange student, using fluent academic English to communicate with lecturers and other students, writing mistake-free academic English in his essays, and speaking English naturally in his presentations. He pointed out that all these small ideal images were part of a bigger ideal L2 self; that is, 专家级的英文水平 [an expert user of English]. This image of his ideal

L2 self was important to William, as it was related to the next event – future employment, because he firmly believed that becoming an expert user of English could make him become very competitive in the job market. William's images of his ideal L2 self at this stage were associated with a future job, in which he may use his expert use of English to represent his company on the international stage, negotiate business contracts with potential foreign companies, and meet different customers while on overseas business trips.

So far, William's interview has presented his positive images of his ideal L2 self. He also talked about the negative images of his ideal L2 self. In William's words, these negative images were fears, and these sat alongside his positive images. The negative images, as with the positive images, were both situated and developmental. For example, he constantly had fears of not being able to pass his English examinations, and later not coping with his studies while studying overseas, or failing to get a decent job in the future. William said although these negative images were not ideal, they were an important part of his broader idea of his ideal L2 self.

Based on the above findings, it can be seen that William's ideal L2 self includes both positive and negative images of his future states. These images, however, were not equal in terms of visibility, due to William's view of his future. Therefore, some of the images were, for him, fantasies. William illustrated this view thus:

未来都是想不到的，我自己的未来我都不知道会怎么样，因为你不能预测，毕竟太远了嘛！美好的情景想是能联想的到，但是觉得离自己太遥远了，有点不切实际。我还是想自己当下的情况，只要知道自己现在在干什么。以后的事情，以后再去想，要看看那时候的情况是怎样。

[It is impossible to imagine your future state. I don't know what my future will look like because my future is too far away, and it is unpredictable and out of my reach. I am not saying I cannot imagine my ideal images of my future English self. But these images are far from my current situation, so it is very unrealistic to think about them at the moment. I think it is more useful to think about my current situation and think about what I need to do next based on my current situation. It is not necessary to think about my future now. I will leave it. I will

know what I will be when I get closer to my next stage, and also, I need to consider what the situation is that I might be in.]

This view of his future supports the argument that the concept of ideal L2 self is not very relevant to William. Further, this quote reveals that William's ideal L2 self has little power or influence over his motivation, unless it is directly related to his immediate learning needs.

In sum, William's comments provide some insights into the nature of the ideal L2 self. First, the interview shows that, as with Amanda, William's ideal L2 self seems to be related to his personal characteristics, as he described them to me. However, in a different way to Amanda, William does not always have very clear images of his ideal L2 self. This, nevertheless, does not mean William does not have the ability to imagine. Once the learning situation changed, in his case, from high school to the current learning program that helped increase his interest in English, he could imagine a cluster of images related to his future English selves. This multifaceted concept is also expanded to include images not only with positive dimensions, but also with images embedded with fears, which complement his ideal ones. Further, these images are not stable. They are subject to change along with the development of William's immediate learning needs over time. Due to this developmental characteristic, these images developed from the concept of the ideal L2 self, for him, have various levels of visibility which impacted on William's motivation to learn academic English. These impacts will be discussed in the section which follows.

#### **C.2.2.2 Motivation and William's Ideal L2 Self**

The insights into the nature of William's ideal L2 self help us to understand how the idea of the ideal L2 self motivates William to learn academic English in the following dimensions. First, the motivational strength of these images varies as the visibility of these images are not equal. They were influenced by the relevance to his immediate learning needs. That is, the motivational function of the ideal L2 self is a temporal phenomenon, and only becomes effective within a limited time. For example, in his interview, William mentioned that an image of him getting a high score a few months before his English examinations motivated him a lot. In order to make this target a reality, he made a study plan for daily learning activities that lead up to the examinations. He worked hard to meet these daily learning

activities, and focused on his weaknesses, by doing things such as grammar exercises, memorising vocabulary, listening to English news, and practising his speaking with other students and his foreign teachers. William also pointed out that sometimes he had difficulties in meeting these daily targets and would like to give up, but once he thought about this image, he strengthened his beliefs and continued to work. By contrast, images with less relevance to William's current situation or further in the future for the time being had less motivational function for him to learn academic English; these included as the image of him studying overseas. William thought that the likelihood of these images becoming a reality was:

不清楚，只是偶尔会想想，因为远的事情不好预测。所以暂时这些美好的情景没有给我带来学习的动力

[not clear. I just think about these images occasionally because things far away are hard to predict and control. At the moment, these ideal images do not bring any motivation for me to learn English].

However, William commented that when getting closer to the distant future and the situation was becoming clearer, these images had the potential to become his motivational drive, because they were very attractive to him. Second, other images that motivate him to learn are those which contain fears. William mentioned that the fear of not being able to get help for his examinations pushed him to find more resources and channels to learn to solve his problems. He said learning prompted by fear was not a bad thing, as it made him become very vigilant to the consequences of failure and work hard to avoid this.

### **C.2.3 William's Ought-to L2 Self**

#### **C.2.3.1 The Nature of William's Ought-to L2 Self**

Table 5.5 presents William's responses in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, which were consistent across the six items. He rated *strongly agree* (6) across the six items, leading to a mean score of 6 for this subscale. This mean suggested that the concept of the ought-to L2 self was very relevant to William. His words from his interview illustrate this:

一直以来，学校的影响对我很大，特别是学习任务，同学和老师。

[Always, my schools (his high school and current university) have great influence on me and my motivation, particularly the study requirements, my classmates and my teachers.]

This extract from William’s interview provides a snapshot of the importance of the learning context to him. It also points to three recurring dimensions of the learning context related to the concept of the ought-to L2 self, that influenced his motivation. These are study requirements, his classmates, and his teachers, which will be further discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Table 5.5 William’s scores in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale**

Item (AE=Academic English)	William
Ought-to L2 Self	6
1 I have to study AE because I don’t want to get bad marks in it	6
2 I have to study AE because I want to get a good IELTS score	6
3 Studying AE is important to me because if I don’t have knowledge of AE, I’ll be considered a weak learner	6
4 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives	6
5 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my teacher	6
6 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers	6



### C.2.3.2 Motivation and William's Ought-to L2 Self

First, as a student, William knew that his main responsibility in his study was to meet the requirements set by his Faculty to graduate. These requirements, including having acceptable scores in his subjects, and getting a score of 6.5 in the IELTS test, thus, became his main motivation to study academic English. William clearly understood that these requirements could not be negotiated, as he explained in his interview that the Faculty had already laid out all these requirements before he started. These requirements, thus, were not choices, and he had to work hard to meet all of them to avoid failure and so eventually get his bachelor's degree. In William's view, these imposed requirements also provided benchmarks for setting goals for his upcoming academic English study and checking his English competency. This example shows the relationship between William's ought-to L2 self and his ideal L2 self. External images were imposed on William as responses to the requirements from his study, and during his study period, William had the ability to internalise these images as his study goals.

The next two sources of motivation from the concept of the ought-to L2 self are classmates and teachers. The motivational function of classmates, for William, greatly influenced his motivation to learn academic English. This function can be categorised into three aspects: 竞争 [competition], 认同 [recognition] and 自卑 [a sense of inferiority]. For the first aspect, 竞争 [competition], William viewed his classmates as strong 竞争者 [competitors] for scholarships and a place in overseas exchange programmes. This aspect penetrated all perspectives of his study, and the wish to beat others greatly motivated him to study hard. For example, William used apps on his mobile phone to compete with other students to see how many new English words he could learn per day. When he saw a score higher than his, he was motivated to do better. He explained this action because he cared very much about how other people thought about him, including his classmates. He did not want to be considered weak in front of his fellow students, and he hoped he could become a great leader for them to follow. He pointed out that he enjoyed this fellowship, because he felt recognised. This 认同 [recognition] from others, the second aspect, deeply boosted his confidence and self-esteem, which further motivated him to do better in his academic study. As he commented:

这算是对自己的一种自我肯定。会让我有信心嘛！这种信心是来自别人的认可。我会觉得我比较优秀。如果我觉得我优秀的话，我会更加努力去学习，很想保持这样的状态。

[I think this is a self recognition. This self recognition will boost my self-confidence. And this self-confidence comes from the recognition from others. So I feel I am better than other students. This feeling will motivate me to study harder. I really want to keep this feeling].

However, competition from classmates did not always have a positive motivational function. Sometimes, it created 自卑 [a sense of inferiority], the third aspect, which had a demotivational effect on William. He used these words to illustrate this demotivational effect:

我高三的时候，我自卑过一段时间，因为大家都太优秀了，我觉得我比不上他们。我就会让自己自由落体，所以在高三的时候我出现厌学的感觉，不肯去学的感觉。

[When I was in the final year at my high school, there was a period of time that I developed a sense of inferiority because my classmates were much better than me, and I could not compete with them. Because of this sense of inferiority, I let myself fall freely. At that time, I had a feeling of being anti learning. I refused to learn.]

William identified this demotivational effect as being like a free fall in physics. Once he lost in the competition, he said he felt like he was falling from heaven to hell. This example shows that competition from classmates can be two-edged, because it had both motivational and demotivational effects on William's self-concept. His self-reflection on this demotivational experience, however, shows how he was able, in a new learning context, to regain his confidence:

现在回头看，那时候我真的很堕落，因为同学的压力和差距，还有老师的问题。因为我不知道自己在干什么，我恨迷茫。这样的经历其实不是一件

坏事情，要看自己怎样去处理，从中我学了很多。现在的我很有动力去学英文，因为现在有清晰的学习目标了。

[When I look back at that period, I was really in a demotivational stage because of the competition pressure from my classmates, and the gaps between me and my classmates. Teachers were another reason as well. I did not know what I should do. I was lost. However, I do not think this experience was a terrible thing. It depends on how you deal with it. I have learned a lot from it. Now I am very motivated to learn English because I have very clear study goals.]

This quote reveals that the self-concept did not always have a positive impact on William's motivation. It depended on how William positioned himself in relation to his classmates in the learning context. It also points out that William's self is a reflective concept.

The above quote also shows the importance of teachers in terms of their motivational role. In his interview, William said interactions with teachers had a profound impact on his motivation to learn. He gave two examples to demonstrate his point. In the current learning program, his teachers were willing to listen to students' voice, and had confidence in their students. Also, they spent time after class with students to talk about difficulties in their study. He said his current teachers motivated him to learn a lot because they understood the importance of their personal interactions with him. As a result, he did not want to let his teachers down, and tried his best to meet their expectations, such as by putting a lot of effort into his homework, coming to class on time, and getting a good score in exams in return for his teachers' hard work. By contrast, his teachers in high school did not possess these merits. They always complained about William's attitude towards English. This lack of positive engagement with him, William insisted, did not have a positive impact on his motivation to learn English. However, when these negative comments were accumulated, surprisingly, they motivated William to prove the teachers were wrong:

老师总是说我这个不行那个不行，我要证明给他看他的看法是错的。

[My teacher always complains about me, telling me I cannot do this, and I cannot do that. I will prove to him he is wrong]

This unexpected motivational function from his teachers' complaints provides an example of the unpredictability of the motivational role of the teachers, and may be considered part of William's anti ought-to L2 self.

Regarding the motivational role of his parents, William did not think that pressure from his parents had an effect on his motivation to study English, as he was very independent and proactive, which is not consistent with the score he gave in item 4 in the questionnaire. William said his parents always provided freedom and opportunities for him to take charge of his study. Also, the current learning program provided a learning environment which fostered his independent and proactive learning style. In this aspect, William viewed his motivation to study academic English as a result of his own learning style rather than pressure from his parents, which goes against the widely accepted view of parents' role and the lack of learner autonomy in Chinese educational settings.

To sum up, William's comments present a more complex and dynamic view of study requirements, classmates, and teachers that represent the concept of his ought-to L2 self. In terms of the nature of his ought-to L2 self, as with his ideal L2 self, his words show that his ought-to L2 self is a multifaceted, self-reflective, self-reactive, and self-developed notion. Due to this developing nature, the motivational function from this concept is hard to define. Sometimes, further, it is predictable and at other times, it is unexpected. For example, study requirements seem to have a direct relationship with motivation. That is, these study requirements serve as external forces to motivate William to learn and are, generally, predictable. However, the motivation from aspects in relation to his classmates and teachers is inclined to be less direct. In other words, the motivational effect on William related to his classmates and teachers is unexpected. Further, in a different way to Amanda's case, the widely accepted view of parental influence on Chinese students' motivation to learn English does not apply to William. Rather, it was the study program that provided opportunities for William to develop his preferred learning style which made a difference to his motivation.

## C.2.4 William's L2 Learning Experience

### C.2.4.1 The Nature of William's L2 Learning Experience

Table 5.6 shows William's responses in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. He rated positively on all the items except item 3, *I find learning academic English interesting*, in which he responded *disagree* (2), leading to an average score of 4.63 for this subscale.

Although this average score suggested that William had positive learning experiences in his English learning, he did not find learning academic English interesting. William's interview helps to provide further insights into how his learning experiences influenced his motivation to learn English.

**Table 5.6 William's scores in the L2 Learning Experience subscale**

Item	William
(AE=Academic English)	
L2 Learning Experience	4.63
1 I like the atmosphere of my AE class	6
2 I think time passes quickly while studying AE	4
3 I find learning AE interesting	2
4 I have good teacher(s) to help me with my AE	4
5 I have support from my classmates for my AE	5
6 I expend a lot of effort in learning AE	6
7 I find ways to practice my English outside class	6
8 Overall, I think I am an active AE learner	4

#### C.2.4.2 Motivation and William's L2 Learning Experience

In his interview, William talked extensively about his views on his L2 learning experiences and their influence on his motivation. His teachers, and immediate learning experiences were found to be particularly significant for William. His words from his interview illustrate this point:

根据我个人的经验，老师和瞬间的学习经历对我的学习动力影响很大。

[Based on my learning experiences, teachers and immediate learning experiences have great impacts on my learning motivation.]

In relation to his ought-to L2 self, William had mentioned the influential role of teachers on his motivation. He further elaborated on this role, saying a large part of his learning experiences were influenced by his teachers. William compared two types of teacher he had experienced, his high school English teacher, and his current English teachers. As mentioned earlier, William's high school English teacher demotivated William to learn English. These demotivation effects came from two aspects. The first is 没有启发性的老师 [teachers who are not inspiring]. His high school English teacher was very traditional, with a firm control on his students. William recalled that in a face-to-face interview with this teacher, after a disastrous score in an English exam, the teacher criticised William's academic performance, and complained about his attitude towards English learning. William was offended by this, and he developed an anti-English learning feeling. This negative L2 learning experience had a detrimental effect on William's motivation to study English. From then on, William paid little attention to his English study, although he clearly understood his future success depended on English and that he was under pressure to have good English exam scores to go on to university. The second demotivational effect was from the high school English teacher's boring teaching style. William said the way his high school English taught was largely based grammar, translation of texts, and rote learning of vocabulary. William commented that this teaching method was only good for preparing students for exams, but not for mastering the language. He pointed out that this teaching method did not fit with his personal learning style, whereby he wanted to interact with others, and learn by doing small projects. Thus, William did not see the value of what his teacher was doing. In return, there was little motivation for him to learn English.

The demotivational effects on William of these negative L2 learning experiences at that time were so devastating that it overpowered other positive motivations, such as imagining his future success with English (his ideal L2 self), and being pressured to get good scores to go to university (his ought-to L2 self), to dominate William's motivational state at that specific time. William said during that period that the demotivational feeling was highly pervasive and hard to escape. So, he totally gave up on English and did not care what score he got in his university entrance examination. His words provide an understanding of that difficult period for him:

那时候我很消极，因为老师的原因。我完全放弃英文了，把自己的精力都放在其它的科目上。

[At the period, I was very negative because of my English teacher. I had abandoned English. I put my energy into other subjects.]

This demotivational state did not change for a while until William moved to his current university and met his current English teachers. When asked why this happened, William said, in contrast to his high school English teachers, the current teachers motivated him to learn academic English in two ways. First, his current English teachers provided constructive feedback on his study. Each feedback meeting with his new teachers, acted like small positive stimulators at different stages along the process of his learning journey, and inspired him because they had a positive impact on his self-esteem, and made him believe it was possible to succeed. At these meetings, William commented, the teachers were very encouraging and used inductive ways of helping him understand his strengths and pointed out the areas that he still needed to work on. William said during these meetings, his motivation surged vigorously, and he really wanted to continue with this motivation and learn more. Second, the teachers' student-centred teaching style was compatible with William's preferred learning style. William pointed out that his current English teachers organised the class based on small groups, gave them learning tasks to finish within the groups, and changed his group members every week. William summarised three benefits from participating in this small group learning. First, he was given opportunities to solve problems in English. He said these opportunities helped him to think in English, so he could remember the language points well. Second, he found the discussion time with his

classmate was interesting, as he learned how to present and defend his own ideas in English. Third, he had more freedom to choose what he would talk about, rather than having this imposed on him by the teachers. William said that once he became responsible for his learning, he became highly motivated.

The change of William's motivation state from demotivated to motivated illustrates that his motivation to study academic English was subject to his teachers' influence. As he said in his interview:

老师一直对我的影响是很大的，这是我学习的经验告诉我的。一个好的老师会鼓舞我，让我的学习成绩突飞猛进，要是一个不好的老师，我就会很堕落，成绩很低迷。所以老师对我来说是很重要的。

[Teachers have a great influence on me. My learning experiences tell me that. A good teacher will motivate me and help me improve my study. A bad teacher will demotivate me and my study will get stuck. So, teachers play an important role in my study.]

This quote shows how the nature of William's motivation fluctuated in response to the different teachers he experienced. It can perhaps be anticipated that this fluctuation in William's motivation will continue as he meets other teachers who influence him in similar ways in his studies of English.

Another important factor that affected William's motivation to learn academic English in terms of his L2 learning experience was his immediate learning experiences. William's motivation from his immediate learning experiences showed two distinct characteristics: they were both momentary and condition responsive. The first characteristic, being momentary, was revealed in his successful learning experiences along his English learning journey. William said the moments when he experienced learning success, such as learning new phrases, mastering new writing skills in academic English, understanding lectures, or articulating his ideas clearly in his presentations, increased his confidence, and boosted his motivation. He pointed out, however, that the surge in his motivation based on these moments did not last very long, so he acted quickly to capitalise on the motivation to push himself forward and set higher goals for his study. As he said in his interview:



来自学习成功经验的动力很大。它就像洪水，来的时候很猛，但退得也快。我要在它退之前好好把握，利用这种动力来推动自己往上冲。

[The motivation that originated from successful learning experiences is massive. It acts like floods, emerging suddenly but also retreating quickly. I must grasp it, pushing myself forward, before it retreats]

This quote captures the momentary nature of William's motivation in his English learning. He added that these successful moments happened from time to time at different stages in his study. Also, this example shows the continuous relationship between the L2 learning experience and the ideal L2 self. Along his English learning journey, William reached his goals, and the motivation from these achievements propelled him to move forward to his next goals for his new ideal L2 self.

The second characteristic, being condition responsive, illustrates the relationship between his motivation and his immediate learning environment. As William described it, his motivation was not immune from his learning environment. Instead, it was the result of his reactions to the learning environment. These reactions could provide both motivation and demotivation in his English learning. He said, for example, that teachers' positive comments on his performance during lessons gave him a strong motivation to learn, while his classmates' negative behaviour in the classrooms had a contagious effect on him, and made him demotivated. Also, William pointed out that these two motivational situations could happen simultaneously as direct reactions to his immediate learning environment.

Being momentary and condition responsive, it can be said that William's motivation from his immediate learning experience was dynamic. This dynamic nature was illustrated in William's interview when he commented:

来自学习经验的动力很难说，也不好说，因为它是因人而异。同时动力这个东西不好衡量，它没有一个固定的公式去让你计算，它是变幻莫测的。有时候一个小小的事情或什么的，就会让你马上干劲十足，有时候让你就像一个泄气的皮球。所以我要在学习的过程中不断找刺激点来鼓励自己去学习。

[Motivation from the immediate learning experiences is difficult to describe because it varies from person to person. Also, it is hard to measure as there is no fixed way of calculating it. These two aspects attribute to its being unpredictable and dynamic. Sometimes, even a small thing will trigger your motivation. And sometimes you feel like a deflated ball. Thus, I need to find possible stimuli to motivate myself along my study journey.]

This quote reflects how William's motivation draws from his learning experiences. First, the notion of 因人而异 (it varies from person to person) suggests that motivation is full of personal meaning in individual contexts, as argued by Ushioda (2009), who takes a person-in-context view of L2 motivation. Second, the idea of motivation being 变幻莫测 (unpredictable and dynamic) demonstrates that a complex dynamic systems perspective (Larsen-Freeman 1997) is useful for understanding motivation. Third, 有时候...有时候 (sometimes...sometimes) illustrates the need to incorporate the concept of time when looking at motivation. And fourth, 我要在学习的过程中不断找刺激点来鼓励自己去学习 (I need to find possible stimuli to motivate myself) indicates potential issues with his motivational relationships. It is problematic to place William in a position in which he is always influenced by other people or factors. Rather, once the responsibility for learning was given back to him, William became a creative agent to construct a motivating learning environment that was suitable for him to learn. His words in interview demonstrate this ability:

来了大学以后英语学习都要靠自己。在口语练习活动中，我就觉得有些同学不喜欢说话，我觉得我自己比较例外，我喜欢讲话，我在学习上比较主动。所以我想办法跟一些有想法的人一起上课。然后这种互动的学习方式锻炼自己的口语，自己就更有动力用英语来交谈了。

[When you come to university, you are in charge of your own study. In speaking activities, I feel some classmates are not willing to speak. I am just the opposite. I like speaking, and I am very proactive. So, I always try to stay with someone who has many ideas and is willing to share. These interactions help me to practise my speaking. I am becoming more motivated to use English to speak.]

This extract shows that William's responsibility for his own learning enables him to select a favourable learning situation for himself, and this situation motivates him to learn more, which is in contrast with the perception of Chinese students being passive learners in terms of their motivation. This two-way action in motivation in William's L2 learning experience could not be revealed by just looking at his scores in the questionnaire data. These four elements will be further discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

In sum, William's motivation from his L2 learning experience is heavily influenced by his teachers and his immediately learning experiences. The motivation from the teachers, however, were very different, depending on the teachers' personal interactions with him and the teachers' teaching styles. The motivation from his immediate learning experiences was both momentary and condition responsive. Being momentary and condition responsive suggests that the motivation from William's L2 learning experience is dynamic and sometimes unpredictable. Also, it can be seen from William's L2 learning experience, that he was not always in a passive position in his motivational process. Rather he believed he was a creative agent who changed unfavourable learning situations to favourable ones to keep himself motivated. In William's case, the creation of this ability was related to his proactive and self-regulated learning style.

### **C.2.5 Summary: William**

William's interview presents further insights into the nature of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, in particular, the ideal L2 self, and their motivational roles in relation to William's learning of academic English in this particular learning setting. These findings are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

First, for the ideal L2 self, William's interview does not support the argument in Chapter 2 that female students have a better imagination than male students in terms of their ideal L2 selves. William was able to imagine his multiple ideal L2 selves when he felt positive about English. These multiple ideal L2 images, further, not only include positive imagined future selves, but also negative ones, both of which contribute to a broad concept of his ideal L2 self. However, these facets have different levels in their visibility. That is, the closer they are to William's current situation, the clearer they are. Therefore, these facets evolve through

time and context. Accordingly, it can be said that William's motivation associated with each facet of his ideal L2 self is in a linear relationship. In other words, once William was able to imagine a relevant facet of his ideal L2 self in a specific time and situation, this facet motivated him to learn. However, the motivation of this specific imagined ideal L2 self only became effective within a limited time period. Fears can also be imagined and be part of the broad concept of the ideal L2 self. Motivation associated with negative facets cannot be ignored, as it played an important part in William's motivation to learn academic English. They were the complementary elements of their positive counterparts in William's motivation system.

With regard to the ought-to L2 self, as with his ideal L2 self, William's view of his ought-to L2 self also contains various facets. These facets seem to have a direct connection to his immediate learning environment, which included requirements from his study, his classmates, and his teachers. In terms of motivation, the influences from these facets have presented a complicated phenomenon. First, William's interview showed that these facets not only produced positive motivation, but also negative motivation. Second, unlike the relationship between motivation and the facets of his ideal L2 self, the relationship between motivation and facets of his ought-to L2 self are of two types, linear and non-linear. Third, his personal learning style, including him being independent, proactive and self-regulated, played an important part in his motivation to learn English in the particular setting.

In terms of motivation from William's L2 learning experience, the interview data also reveals a complex picture. First, learning experiences with different types of teachers contributed to various motivational states for William. Second, the momentary and condition responsive nature of the L2 learning experience lead to motivational changes for him in an unpredictable way. Third, being an active agent in his learning environment made William's motivation both adaptable and accommodating to particular learning situations.

## Case 3: Zack

### C.3.1 Background Information on Zack

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Zack is a quiet learner in the classroom, with low academic performance. More detailed information is provided below.

Zack is a 20 year-old-male student studying in the Out-plan program. His major is Business Management. At the time we had the interview, he had just started his second year at the university. Zack was from a metropolitan area in China. He did not have any overseas travel experience. Zack was an active student, and had a range of interests, including travelling, and watching movies. He said he had an adventurous spirit, and wanted to try new things.

In his questionnaire, Zack responded with a mean score of 5 in the statements related to the Ideal L2 Self subscale, 4.17 in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, and 4.88 in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. All these scores are in the positive range between 4 (*slightly agree*) and 5 (*agree*). In particular, the difference between the scores of the Ideal L2 Self subscale and the L2 Learning Experience subscale is small. Based on these scores, Zack can be seen to be motivated to study academic English most strongly in relation to the ideal L2 self, followed by the L2 learning experience, then the ought-to L2 self. His scores are in line with the results from the whole surveyed cohort. According to these comparisons, Zack is representative of that cohort. His interview helped me understand the way he responded in the questionnaire, and revealed more about the nature of his ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience, and their motivational roles in his studying academic English.

### C.3.2 Zack's Ideal L2 Self

#### C.3.2.1 The Nature of Zack's Ideal L2 Self

Table 5.7 shows Zack's responses to the questions related to the Ideal L2 Self subscale. These scores were all in positive, but the degree of agreement varied. For example, while he rated *strongly agree* (6) for items 3 and 4, he only responded *slightly agree* (4) for items 2 and 5, and scored *agree* (5) for items 1 and 6, leading to an average score of 5 (*agree*). This

average score suggested that the concept of the ideal L2 self captured his ideas about his future with English, as he said in his interview:

我能够想象自己将来使用英语的情况

[I am able to imagine my future self with English].

Zack's score and what he said about his ideal L2 self do not support the view presented in Chapter 2 that Chinese female students are more motivated to study English than their male counterparts from the point of view of the ideal L2 self.

**Table 5.7 Zack's scores in the Ideal L2 Self subscale**

Item (AE=Academic English)	Zack
Ideal L2 Self	5
1 Learning AE is important to me because I need it for my current study	5
2 Learning AE is important to me because I need it to pass my exams	4
3 Learning AE is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English	6
4 I can imagine myself being able to use AE skillfully in the future	6
5 I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an AE community in the future	4
6 I can imagine myself using AE as if I were a native speaker of English	5

Although Zack had the ability to imagine his future self with English, this imagination was disproportionately based on his affection for English, rather than the instrumental function of English related to his future job opportunities. In the interview, Zack said that at this stage the idea of getting a good job or promotion at work was not applicable to him because, he said, these images did not have immediate feasibility in his current situation, as he was not certain what his future occupation would be. His words illustrate the disconnection between his ideal L2 self and future work:

我根本没有联想到英语跟工作的关系，因为我不知道我以后我要做什么。我想的是我现在喜欢英文，所以我就想学。

[I do not think about the relationship between my English and my future job at all because I do not know what I will do in the future. At the moment, what I am thinking is, I like English, so I want to learn it.]

This quote reinforces the fact that the construction of Zack's ideal L2 self is based on his affection for English. Further, it demonstrates that the pragmatic function of English did not apply to Zack at the time he was interviewed, which goes against one of the commonly held assumptions about Chinese students' motivation to study English.

Zack was more concerned about the development of his language skills and knowledge about English, in particular, his oral English and grammar, than about future employment. Zack mentioned that he could benefit from this improvement in two ways. First, better English skills meant he could understand the subject matter of his studies better. He could equally use this enhanced understanding in his future studies. Second, having better English skills would help Zack become a highly proficient, bilingual person, which is similar to William's idea of his ideal L2 self. Zack realised being bilingual is beneficial for his future as he pointed out in his interview:

如果我只懂得一种语言，我只能用这种语言的思考方式去思考。但是我懂得两种语言的话，我就会换位思考。这样会让我从不同的角度看问题，会让我学得更多。

[If I speak only one language, I can only use this language to think. When I speak two languages, I am able to swap my thinking positions so I can look at things from different perspectives, from which I will learn more.]

Zack often related English to more developed societies than his, and as a symbol of progress. Through English, Zack could imagine a progressive aspect of himself in the future. This progressive self was embedded in three aspects: thinking, learning and living. In Zack's view, English is a language with 逻辑 [logic] and 系统 [system], when compared to Chinese. He felt that he could become more logical and systematic when he used English to think and write, he said, which matched his personality. In terms of learning, Zack pointed out that English represents developments in educational concepts; that is, student-centred, personalised learning, rather than exam-oriented learning (and teaching). Also, the educational systems in English speaking countries, he said, encourage students to think critically and explore things freely, which is part of his preferred learning style. Apart from these two cognitive elements, Zack commented on the association of English with lifestyle. He said that English speaking countries have much higher living standards in matters such as food safety, social security, and air quality. He hoped he could become a member of this ideal society one day in the future.

A globalised self, another facet of Zack's ideal self, is also realised for him through English. Zack commented that English has become the international language. He was very fond of the image of himself being able to move around the world without having a language barrier. This ideal L2 self, Zack said, could help him communicate with other people, understand their perspectives, and respect differences between people. In turn, he could become more confident, tolerant, and adaptable, participating in this globalised world.

These dimensions of Zack's ideal L2 self: a progressive self, and a globalised self, as well as a knowledgeable self (see below), are not in line with most Chinese students' way of thinking about their future with regard to English, which usually includes getting a better score or job. Studying in this EAP courses enabled Zack to imagine himself as:



一个更有想法，更有品格，更自由，更国际化的我。

[possessing more knowledge and ideas, with a better quality of life, with more freedom, and with higher international posture.]

Apart from his strong affection for English, Zack's poor academic performance in the traditional Chinese education system also impacted on his ideal L2 self. Zack mentioned that in the Chinese education system, due to his poor academic performance, he was classified as a bad student, and not good at anything. This negative attitude from his Chinese educational experiences triggered him to seek help in the form of English. He felt that English could help him to change how people view him if he could go overseas and find other things that he is good at, and the EAP courses was a pathway for him to realise this hope. The following words from his interview illustrate this point:

在原来的学校，我的成绩不好，老师就会觉得我不是好学生。但是在这里，就不会。即使你有很多方面不好，你总有你突出的一方面，你就会发光。然后我就很想到国外去寻找我这个发光点。

[In my old school, my academic performance is not good. Teacher judged me as a bad student based on that. But this attitude is different here. Teachers do not judge me the same way as in my old school. Although I am not good at many things, I will find one aspect I am good at and then I will stand out. I want to go overseas to look for what I am good at.]

This quote highlights the contrast between how he sees himself as a student in a traditional Chinese learning setting, and how he might see himself, through English, in the EAP and, further, an overseas setting. This negative impetus is important for Zack in how he constructs his ideal L2 self, and shows how different educational settings play a role in how he sees himself as a student of English.

As with the negative impetus, Zack's internal fears also influence the construction of his ideal L2 self. For example, although the ideas of studying in the EAP program and going overseas provide many promising dimensions of his ideal L2 self, Zack mentioned that it included fears as well. He worried about struggling with his studies, having difficulties in

adapting to a new study environment, and understanding teachers. Zack said that these fears were an important part of his broader idea of his ideal L2 self.

Based on the above discussion, Zack's ideal L2 self represents both promising and feared dimensions of his future, and is constructed by both positive or negative impetuses. His ideal L2 self, however, is developmental. This developmental nature is borne out in his words:

我的想法会不断地变化，在我觉得更好的时候我会追求更好，因为人的想象都是向上的。

[My thinking will change constantly. I will chase a goal higher than my current one. This thinking is logical because people's imagination develops in an upward trend. They always imagine something better based on their current situation.]

Due to this developmental characteristic, it can be said that Zack's ideal L2 self is fluid and sometimes hard to pin down. That is, the further from his current situation, the less visible and plausible the images are. His words demonstrate this type of nature of his ideal L2 self:

虽然我不能预测离我很远的东西，但是我总是有比我现在远一点点的目标，但是太远的东西我又想不到。你现在让我想工作的事情，只能给我一个很笼统地概念。

[Although I cannot predict things far away, I always have a goal of being a little bit better than I am now. However, I cannot think too far ahead. For example, if you ask me now how I can imagine myself at work, I can only give you a very vague answer.]

When asked why he held this view of his ideal L2 self, Zack explained that for him there were two layers to his ideal L2 self. There is a general overarching ideal L2 self, which reflects the goal of looking for a better life, which is fluid and only points in a general direction for future development. An example of his overarching goal is the need to complete his current studies in order to become a knowledgeable self. Below this overarching self, there are more specific ideal L2 selves, which have particular

goals, or stages, related to his current learning situation. Examples of these are finishing his assignments, passing his exams, and improving his English proficiency.

In sum, Zack's interview provides important insights into the nature of his ideal L2 self. First, his affection for English plays an important role in the construction of his ideal L2 self.

Through this particular program, he imagines himself being able to become a knowledgeable self, a progressive self, and a globalised self. These different dimensions show how his ideal L2 self is a multifaceted concept, which has the ability to incorporate a cluster of images. Also, when Zack develops his ideal L2 self, he considers other aspects, including his disagreement with issues in Chinese society and its educational system, such as food safety, air pollution, and its favoured teaching and learning styles. These aspects are integrated into his ideal L2 self through English. Second, Zack's ideal L2 self is formed, based not only on positive grounds, but also on negative impetuses, such as the negative attitudes from teachers, and his fears as discussed above. Apart from these two insights, Zack's interview illustrates a developmental view of his ideal L2 self. Instead of viewing his idea L2 self as an easily defined concept, Zack believes it develops over time. Therefore, a two layer ideal L2 self definition is introduced. A general overarching ideal L2 self represents a wish for a better self, which is fluid and only points in a general direction towards his future development. Below this overarching self, there are more specific ideal L2 selves, which are associated with particular goals at different stages closer to his current learning situation. Due to this proximity to his current learning situation, these specific ideal L2 selves exert a greater motivation for Zack than the general overarching one to study English. The motivational function of these insights will be further discussed in the section which follows.

### **C.3.2.2 Motivation and Zack's Ideal L2 Self**

Insights into Zack's ideal L2 self obtained through the interview data help to understand how various aspects of this concept motivates Zack to learn academic English. First, the hope to become a knowledgeable self, a progressive self, and a globalised self greatly motivated Zack to learn English. Being attracted to becoming these ideal L2 selves, he had daily study plans, and spent much of his time on English. Also, he was motivated to find all the opportunities he could to improve his English, such as using apps to listen to English

radio, going to English Corner to practise his oral English, watching English TV programs, and immersing himself in the library to do grammar exercises and writing tasks. As Zack said, this affection for English was the main motivation for his English study.

Second, from the point of view of visibility, the images that were further from Zack's current situation were the least significant for him. Thus, the motivational function associated with these images of English learning became less powerful for him. For example, employment related to his ideal L2 self was vague for Zack, and has the least application to his current English learning situation. This ambiguity of a work-related image, indeed, did not exert a motivational function on Zack. As he said in the interview:

工作这方面暂时很模糊，因为太遥远，所以它不能鼓励我去学习英文。

[Work-related image is very blurred because it is far from my current situation. This image does not motivate me to study English.]

Zack, however, did not rule out the likelihood that one day this image could become important and create the main motivation for him to study English. He explained this in his words:

当我在大四最后的一个学期，工作的情景就会变得特别突出，因为你要找一份好工作。在中国，如果你要想找一份好工作，你必须有很好的英语，这样你的竞争力就会倍增，想到这样的情况，你就会努力学习英文。

[When I am in the final semester of my study, the work-related image will become prominent because I want to find a good job. In China, if I want to find a good job, I must have very good English. With good English, my competitiveness will increase. When I think about it, I am motivated to study English.]

Zack's explanation reinforces that his ideal L2 self is fluid, and develops based on his immediate needs over time. The change of the visibility of the work-related ideal L2 self is based on his situation, and has a temporal perspective. This contrast in motivational function from the same image at different points in time demonstrates how both his ideal L2 self and its motivational function are time-related concepts. A change in his situation at a specific point in time will have an impact on both Zack's

ideal L2 self, and thus on his motivation. It can be said, then, that Zack's motivation is both situational and responsive.

Further to being situational and time-responsive, the two-layered aspect of Zack's ideal L2 self reveals more about his motivation. As mentioned above, while the general overarching ideal L2 self represents hopes on a macro scale, more specific ideal L2 selves at the micro level are embedded within this. The specific ideal L2 selves appear as sequential learning goals along Zack's English learning journey, helping Zack to achieve his general overarching ideal L2 self. In terms of motivation, the general overarching ideal L2 self points in the general direction of Zack's motivation growth. The more specific ideal L2 selves are associated with situational goals, which motivate Zack to achieve these goals at certain points in time. Whether these images will have an effect on motivation depends on how strong Zack's willpower and decisiveness is. In Zack's words:

我觉得如果你一想到美好的前景马上有动机的人是意志十分坚定的人，一个非常果断的人。但是这些美好的情景给我学习的动机不强。我只能说我会更投入到学习上，但不能 100%去投入到学习上，因为生活上有很多影响的因素。我有美好的憧憬，我只能加倍努力去实现，但是不能 100%投入。

[Once you imagine a positive future image for yourself and become motivated to study English, I think you are a person with strong will and you are very decisive. However, these ideal images do not directly give me very strong motivation to study English. I can only say they let me spend more time on my studies but I can't 100% focus on my studies because there are many other things which can have effects on my motivation in my daily life. I have ideal goals and I will work hard towards it but I am not 100% committed to it.]

This quote confirms that the relationship between Zack's motivation and his ideal L2 self is less linear. In Zack's case, two factors also need to be considered: personal conditions, such as willpower and decisiveness, and social conditions, such as the living environment surrounding his daily life. Even a small change in either of these factors will have an impact on Zack's motivation to learn English, regardless of the existence of his ideal L2 self. As a result, together with the time-related concept

mentioned above, Zack's motivation from his ideal L2 self can also be described as being personal and environment-responsive. As he concludes:

美好的情景能不能给我带来动力要看三方面，那就是时间，当时所处的情况和我个人。

[Whether ideal images motivate me or not depends on three things. That is, time, the environment and myself.]

So far, positive aspects of Zack's ideal L2 self have shown that, to a certain extent, they motivated him to study English. Negative aspects of his ideal L2 self were also important sources of motivation for his study of English. For example, the negative attitudes of teachers towards his poor academic performance motivated Zack to challenge the assumption of him not being capable of achieving things. In order to make this happen, he studied very hard to improve his academic performance and prepare for the IELTS test, as he understood that if he failed, his hope to challenge this assumption would be shattered. By imagining being able to successfully change his situation through English, Zack said:

我要证明给那些看不起我的人看他们是错的。这种想法一直鼓励自己去学习英语。

[I will prove they are wrong. This thinking always motivates me to study English.]

The process involved in reaching these hopes, however, was not always exciting for Zack. He had fears as well, such as failing to get a good IELTS score, or not coping with his studies. These fears strengthened Zack's faith and motivation to study English. As he explained:

为了避免这些恐惧变成现实，我要更加努力学习英语。

[In order to avoid these fears becoming realities, I need to double my efforts to study English.]

These quotes reinforce how negative attitudes from teachers towards Zack and his fears of failing provided a complementary role of hope as a motivational source for

Zack to study academic English. Also, to some degree, this motivational role is similar to the concept of the ought-to L2 self, which is the focus of the following section.

### **C.3.3 Zack's Ought-to L2 Self**

#### **C.3.3.1 The Nature of Zack's Ought-to L2 Self**

Table 5.8 presents Zack's responses in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale. He rated *sightly agree* (4) for items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, and *agree* (5) for item 4, leading to an average score of 4.17 in this subscale. A comparison of this score with his Ideal L2 Self score (average score was 5), indicates that the ought-to L2 self is less relevant to Zack and his motivation. This is also reflected in Zack's interview, in which he did not talk a lot about aspects of his ought-to L2 self and their motivational function. Only two aspects of his ought-to L2 self were mentioned in his interview, namely his parents and relatives, and study duties. An in-depth analysis of these two aspects will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Table 5.8 Zack's scores in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale**

Item	Zack
(AE=Academic English)	
Ought-to L2 Self	4.17
1 I have to study AE because I don't want to get bad marks in it	4
2 I have to study AE because I want to get a good IELTS score	4
3 Studying AE is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of AE, I'll be considered a weak learner	4
4 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives	5
5 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my teacher	4
6 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers	4

### **C.3.3.2 Motivation and Zack's Ought-to L2 Self**

Zack rated a score of 5 (*agree*) for item 4, which is the highest among all the Ought-to L2 Self subscale items. This item aims to find out how important the role of parents and relatives is for Zack, and how this role motivates him to study. His interview provides a more detailed answer on this:

爸爸妈妈和亲戚对我的帮助很大，因为这些帮助我得到成功，他们是十分欣慰的，特别希望我能给他们带来开心快乐。

[My parents and relatives help me a lot. Due to this help, I can succeed. They are very pleased. Specially, I hope I can bring them happiness.]



This quote demonstrates that support instead of pressure from parents and relatives plays a significant role in Zack's study, which was quite different to the case of Amanda. He further elaborated on this by saying that two types of support were prominent for him: financial and emotional support. With regard to financial support, Zack said his parents were always willing to spend money on his education. For example, his parents had already started preparing money for him to study overseas in the near future. This financial support helps Zack focus on his study, as he did not feel pressured to find a part-time job to support himself while studying. Zack, however, did not mention whether the repayment of this financial support to his parents acted as a pressure for him to study because he viewed this financial support as an investment in his education.

The second type of help is emotional support, which is not very common in a traditional Chinese family. Zack pointed out that his parents' emotional support helped him stay strong. His parents always encouraged him to be positive. When he faced adversity and felt demotivated, his parents talked him through the difficult times, so he could regain confidence in his study. Apart from this emotional support, Zack also mentioned that his parents gave him freedom to decide what he would like to do and made him take responsibility for these decisions, so he could follow his study interests, such as learning academic English. His words demonstrate the benefits of this help:

爸爸妈妈一直都很支持我很鼓励我。在我觉得很低潮的时候，他们没有抱怨，没有给我压力。他们让我决定我自己的学业，从来不干预我的选择，尊重我的选择。我自己觉得很感恩，因为感恩，我会更愿意去学习，通过不同的渠道去促进自己去学习。

[My parents always support me and encourage me. When I feel down, they do not complain and do not put pressure on me. They let me decide what I like to study. They never intervene in my choices and show respect for my decisions. All these make me feel blessed. Because of feeling blessed, I am more willing to learn through different channels to motivate myself to learn.]

Based on the above discussion, it can be seen that parental attitudes and family support can have an impact on a student's motivation. In Zack's case, caring parents, financial support, and freedom to follow his interests helped boost his motivation to study academic English.

Another aspect which was related to Zack's ought-to L2 self is the role of study duties. Since studying in the EAP program was Zack's own choice, rather than a result of obedience to parental pressure, study duties serve as an external force to remind Zack of the consequences of failing. According to Zack, the motivation from this role to avoid failures is massive, especially one or two days before examinations, or before the due date for the submission of assignments. The following quote provides an example of this kind of motivation, and the surge of motivation he feels:

如果我挂科的话，它会导致一些很严重的后果，比如你要从修这一门，你在浪费你的时间和金钱，所以你要避免，这样会促进你去学习。这种学习的动力在考试前或者交作业之前的一两天来的最厉害。因为学习，睡觉和吃饭对我来说已经不重要了。

[If I fail, I will be in a disastrous situation. For example, I have to repeat this subject, which means I am wasting my time and money. So, I must study hard to avoid this happening. In particular, the motivation to study surges abruptly a day or two days before the examinations and the due day of the assignments. During this short period time, because of study, I can easily forget sleeping and eating.]

For Zack, this motivational effect can even extend over a period of time until he knows his results. He called this waiting for results period an 焦虑期 [anxiety period]. During this period, he said he struggled mentally. On the one hand, he would like to turn off, and stop studying after examinations. However, the fear of failing his examinations and in his studies still haunted him. These fears were so powerful as to override his wishes for relaxation, and dragged him back to his desk to continue with his studies until he knew his results.

When asked why the motivation from examinations and study duties could become so strong, and surge in the leading up to these events, extending even after the

examinations, Zack explained that because it was his own decision to study in the EAP program, and he did not want to regret that decision. Also, he had a fear of failing, because he could imagine the severe consequences of not getting good scores, which could destroy his future. As he said:

有些同学不在乎英语考试的分数，但是我很在乎，因为我很喜欢英语。英语分数对我来说很重要。如果我考不到好的分数，它会直接影响到我以后出国留学的计划。我不想这样的事情发生在我身上。

[Some of my classmates do not care what they can get from the English examinations, but I care very much because I have strong passion for it. English scores mean a lot to me. Without good scores, my plans for studying overseas will be in doubt. I do not want this to happen to me.]

In Zack's view, the strength of the motivational function from study duties is closely related to his passion and his future. In other words, he sees the relationship between his motivation and study duties affected by three main factors: his passion for English, his goals for the future, and his fears of failing. He further elaborated on the effects of these three factors on the motivational function of study duties:

如果根据你自己的爱好和兴趣去学习，那你就是主动学习类型。你不止希望自己能拿到很好的成绩，你更希望能学更多一点，希望自己能往更高的层次去发展。如果你是被动学习的话，通过考试或者学习任务给你的动力就很有限，因为其他的因素会影响你。

[If you follow your interests and passion to study, you will play an active role in your study. You hope not only to have good scores in your examinations and academic performance, but also you will think further. You hope you will study better, and have higher goals for your development. But if you play a passive role in your study, the motivation from your examinations and studies is limited, because your motivation will be easily affected by other factors].

This elaboration has some implications for understanding motivation from the concept of the ought-to L2 self. First, the degree of the direct cause-effect relationship between studies duties and motivation depends on the individual case. According to

Zack, for passive learners, the role of study duties only exerts limited motivation. For active learners, such as Zack, this motivation is strong, and it surges massively when close to examinations. This motivation can also last for a while even after the examinations are finished as it is sustained by both fears and hopes.

### **C.3.4 Zack's L2 Learning Experience**

#### **C.3.4.1 The Nature of Zack's L2 Learning Experience**

Table 5.9 shows Zack's responses to the questions in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. All his responses were positive, ranging from 4 to 6. Although Zack rated positively on these items, the degree of agreement across the items varies. Five items (1, 3, 5, 6, and 8) were responded to with a score of 5 (agree). For items 1 and 7, Zack answered *slightly agree* (a score of 4). However, he rated *strongly agree* (a score of 6) for item 4. Due to this variation, the average score for Zack's L2 Learning Experience is 4.88. A comparison of this score with his average Ideal L2 Self subscale score of 5 and his average Ought-to L2 Self score of 4.17, shows that the motivational effect of Zack's L2 Learning Experience is similar to that of his Ideal L2 Self, but is higher than that of his Ought-to L2 Self. This comparison suggests that, as with his ideal L2 self, the L2 learning experience is an important factor in Zack's motivation for learning English. His interview helped to provide further insights into how his learning experiences influenced his motivation to learn English.

**Table 5.9 Zack’s scores in the L2 Learning Experience subscale**

Item	Zack
(AE=Academic English)	
L2 Learning Experience	4.88
1 I like the atmosphere of my AE class	5
2 I think time passes quickly while studying AE	4
3 I find learning AE interesting	5
4 I have good teacher(s) to help me with my AE	6
5 I have support from my classmates for my AE	5
6. I expend a lot of effort in learning AE	5
7 I find ways to practice my English outside class	4
8 Overall, I think I am an active AE learner	5

### **C.3.4.2 Motivation and Zack’s L2 Learning Experience**

While the above questionnaire data demonstrates Zack’s attitudes towards teachers, his classmates, and the learning environment of his English learning experiences, his interview provides detailed information on how these three aspects impacted on his motivation during his English learning.

Zack’s foreign teachers played an essential role in motivating him to learn English. In particular, he enjoyed the flipped learning model used by his foreign teachers, which was

very different from the classroom-dominant method that was commonly practised in China. For example, his foreign teachers gave him study materials or tasks before the class, so he could gain initial exposure to the learning content outside of class by way of reading or watching videos. During class time, his foreign teachers focused on difficult language points through different learning tasks, such as problem solving and discussion with his classmates. Zack said he benefited from this student-centred learning strategy, as he became actively engaged in the learning. As a result, his motivation towards English increased. While this example shows the increase of Zack's motivation in general due to the teacher factor, his words below demonstrate the dramatic surge of his motivation over a very short period in a particular situation during his classroom time, contributing to higher English learning efficiency:

在小组活动时，我学习动力突然上升，大脑处于十分兴奋的状态，新的单词记得特别牢，马上能运用它。

[During group activities, my motivation surges abruptly. My brain is in an excited state so I can remember the new vocabulary effectively and use it immediately.]

Zack mentioned that this surge in his motivation happened from time to time during his learning experiences. Sometimes, even a nice comment, or an inspiring word from his foreign teachers could trigger this surge. This surge, according to Zack, could appear unexpectedly, just in the right place at the right time. Anything that happened in the class could become the trigger for this surge. Based on these examples, Zack's growth of motivation can be seen as a reaction to his foreign teachers' teaching methods and strategies. This reaction can sometimes surge unexpectedly in response to a particular event or experience at a specific time. It can be said, then, that Zack's motivation in the classroom learning is both responsive and of the moment.

Apart from their teaching methods and strategies, foreign teachers' personalities and commitment to their teaching could also be factors that influenced Zack's motivation to learn English through his daily contact with them. Zack said he was very attracted to his foreign teachers because, unlike his past local teachers, they cared about their students, provided extra help for slow students, and judged students based on their merits. Also, they were well prepared for their lessons, and gave students extra

resources and further reading to explore particular topics. Due to these positive attitudes towards his foreign teachers, Zack became further motivated to learn English. As he said:

外教人很好，对工作认真负责，我受到他们的感染。我就不敢上课迟到，不敢上课分神，我学习动力上来了。

[My foreign teachers are very nice. They treat the teaching seriously and take full responsibility for it. I am deeply influenced by them. I do not dare to come to the class late and be absent minded for a second in the class. My motivation has increased.]

This quote supplements Zack's initial comment on the role of his foreign teachers on his motivation to learn English. It shows that, on top of their teaching methodology, other factors, such as the teachers' personal characteristics, are also important features which stimulate Zack's motivation. Thus, his motivation responds to various stimuli from his teachers, and his learning experiences.

Different to the role the foreign teachers played in his motivation, Zack viewed his classmates as both learning models and competitors in his learning experiences. He commented that his current learning activities were mostly organised in the form of discussion with his classmates in the class, or outside the class. This learning style encouraged Zack to learn from his classmates because Zack noticed the knowledge gap between them and him, which pressured him to study harder to catch up with his them, and motivated him to learn. He said:

在学习讨论环境中，我的同学成为我的学习榜样和学习压力的来源。他们成为促使我学习的一种动机。

[During these discussions in the learning environment, my classmates become my learning models and a source of learning pressure. They motivate me to learn.]

This example demonstrates that learning with peers is a good motivational learning experience for Zack. It also shows the interrelationship among Zack's ideal L2 self, his

ought-to L2 self, and his L2 learning experience. This interrelationship is more pronounced in the following situation:

上课的时候，看到别人很勇敢地站起来发言，很自信地走到前面给大家做演讲，自己就觉得很有动力去学习，因为很羡慕这种人，希望自己有天也能够达到这样的英语水平。

[In the class, my classmates express their ideas bravely and do their presentations confidently in front of the whole class. In this immediate learning environment, I feel very motivated to learn because I admire them. Hopefully, one day, I will be able to speak the same level of English.]

Through these classroom learning experiences, Zack formed his ideal L2 self. Zack's motivation to learn English was the combination of his L2 learning experience and his ideal L2 self. The maintenance of this level of motivation, however, did not last long for Zack. Once he left the classroom, his motivation dropped immediately. Zack insisted that this decline in his motivation did not mean he did not have learning goals from his ideal L2 self, or pressure from his ought-to L2 self, but these goals and pressures needed the right learning environment to be activated to become motivational sources. Therefore, in Zack's view, the learning environment plays a decisive role in his motivation to learn, something which is not completely captured by his scores on the questionnaire. He further elaborated on this view in his words:

我觉得学习环境很决定动机。比方说上课的时候老师在授课，大家在讨论英语学习，我就很享受这样的学习气氛，我的学习动机就马上上来。当我一个人自己在家里学习的话，我会被很多东西吸引过去，例如忙着做饭，看看电视，喝喝茶。这些东西的存在让我忘记学习的动机。同样有想学习的想法，但是在不同的学习条件下它所带来的动力就差别很大。

[In my view, I believe that the learning environment plays a decisive role on motivation. For example, in the class, the teachers teach and students discuss English learning. I really enjoy this learning atmosphere and my motivation increases immediately. However, when I study at home by myself, I am distracted by other things, such as being busy with cooking, watching TV or



drinking tea. Because of the existence of these things, I easily forget my motivation to learn. Although I have the same thinking about my study, it has a different motivational force under different learning circumstances.]

This elaboration illustrates how Zack's motivation is an act of response to his learning environment. Also, his ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self do not guarantee Zack's motivation to study English. Rather, his motivation to study English is a combination of his ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and his L2 learning experience. In this relationship, however, it seems that the L2 learning experience is placed at a higher level of importance, which determines whether his ideal L2 self and/or ought-to L2 self can be activated to motivate Zack to study English. This understanding of his motivation is further supported by him:

我不学习的时候这些美好的想象不会给我动力。所以这些美好的想法都是要看在怎样的环境下它才有动力的效应。

[If I am not in a learning environment, my ideal images do not become my motivational force. It is subject to the learning environment whether my ideal images motivate me or not.]

Due to this decisive role of the learning environment, Zack said his motivation to learn English is very 微妙 [hard to describe and pin down] because:

我觉得我的学习动机不能拿准，它是捉摸不定的。我不知道它什么时候来，什么时候不来，要看情况和环境。

[I think my motivation is difficult to describe because it is so elusive. I do not know when it activates and when it does not. It totally depends on the learning situation and environment.]

Based on these comments, Zack believed that his motivation was very sensitive to the situation, and to the environment. He said even a little thing in his daily life could trigger a significant change in his motivation. This sensitivity led to fluctuations in his motivation, because his motivation changed frequently in response to internal and external factors, such as his personal situation, his teachers, his classmates, his

parents, and even the society in which he lived. Therefore, he described his motivation to learn English as 颠簸前进 [improving but with fluctuations], which has two aspects. First, it indicates that his motivation is continuously changing. Second, this continuous change is broken up into individual movements in response to different personal goals. Once these personal goals are set up, they represent a general upwards movement for Zack's motivation, which is supported by Zack's words:

美好的憧憬给我一个学习动机上升的趋势，我知道我在这个趋势中我要提升。我要努力学习达到这样的目标。

[Ideal images provide me with an upwards motivation for my study. I know I will improve because of this upwards trend. I need to study hard to reach these goals.]

However, this upwards trend in Zack's motivation did not move in a predictable, or smooth trajectory. Rather, it fluctuated unpredictably on a daily basis because:

我学习动机要看我所处的情况，比如我想我很累了，然后有同学叫我出去玩，然后我就很容易放弃我的学习动机了。但是如果加了一个 due day，即使有同学叫我出去玩，我就不会出去玩，我肯定要先把我的学习做好，所以我的动机是不断的颠簸的，取决于今天有什么事情。因为有很多不可预测的事情要发生，所以我的学习动机是不可预测的。可能因为个人的原因，天气的原因，其它的原因。或者那天有个好消息来，或者一个坏消息，都会影响我的学习的动机。我会暂时忘记我的学习的目标或者外部学习的压力，只是这些小小的因素都会影响到我的学习的动机。

[My study motivation depends on the situation I am in. For example, when I am very tired and some of my friends ask me out, I will give up my study easily. However, this situation will be totally different when it happens on the due day for one of my assignments. I will make sure my study is the priority. So, my study motivation fluctuates continuously, depending on what happens on that day. Because there are so many unpredictable things that will happen in a day, therefore, my motivation is not predictable. This fluctuation may be due to my personal issues, or the weather, or other issues. Or on one day I have good news,

or on another day, I have sad news. All these issues will have an impact on my motivation. I will temporarily put my study goals away or forget the external pressure on my study. An insignificant issue will also have a profound impact on my motivation.]

This quote shows how Zack sees his motivation as fluctuating in response to different predictable and unpredictable factors in his daily learning context. Therefore Zack, as mentioned earlier, described his motivation as both 微妙 [hard to describe and pin down], and 颠簸前进 [improving but with fluctuations]. These two characteristics illustrate the dynamic and complex nature of Zack's motivation. This aspect of his motivation is also reflected in other perspectives on his L2 learning experience, such as success and failure in reaching his study goals. In Zack's view, successful and unsuccessful learning experiences are other forces which can cause the fluctuating movement of his motivation. On these occasions, the fluctuation had a particular strength. As Zack said:

在学习英文过程中，当我尝到成功的时候，我的学习动力就像踏上油门，急速上升，这种兴奋的状态能持续一段时间，在这一段的时间内，我的学习动力很强。但是学习的过程都是崎岖不平，当我没有考到我想要的成绩，我学习动力就像自由落体，一下子就跌倒低谷。这种消极状态也会持续一段时间，但是我不是一直消极下来，因为我会总结失败的经验，调整自己的学习方式和计划，让自己重新振作起来。所以我学习动力都是这样反反复复的。

[During my English learning journey, when I have successful learning experiences, my motivation is like being on the accelerator and surges quickly. This highly motivated state can last for a period of time. At this time, my motivation to learn English is very strong. However, this journey is very bumpy. When I do not reach my study goals, my motivation is like being in free fall and dives sharply. My motivation then is at its lowest point. This demotivated state can also last for a period of time. But I am not in this demotivated state forever. I reflect on these failures and adjust my study methods and goals, which can reignite my

motivation again. Therefore, my motivation is moving in this repeated up-and-down cycle.]

This quote shows that although the movement of Zack's motivation still fluctuates, this fluctuation becomes less acute, and sometimes this fluctuation stops and motivation remains stable for a period of time, waiting for the next cycle of fluctuation to be re-activated. For this reactivation, as shown in the above quote, Zack's ideal L2 self and himself, as an active agent, play important roles for the realisation of this reactivation of fluctuation. This fluctuated-stable-reactivated process further illustrates the dynamic and complex nature of Zack's motivation. This nature is summarised below when Zack explains how he sees his motivation to learn English:

首先，个人的性格和喜好会导致你选择一个目标，所以我觉得每个人的动机都是不同的。但是有目标不等于就有学习的动力，要根据情况而定，因为在这一个时间段内，每天有不同的因素会影响到你学习的动机，所以动机是一个很不稳定的概念，它会随时变动。但它也不是一直在变动，有时候它具有抗震性，可以暂时稳定下来，比如一些开心的事情足以让你努力学习一段时间，或者一些严峻的事情会让你消极一段时间。有些人可能一蹶不振，但是我不会，所以动机是一个很个人的现象。

[First, your personality and your interests will lead you to choosing a goal, so I think motivation is different from person to person. Having a goal does not guarantee you will be motivated to study. It depends on your learning situation because during this period, daily issues will impact on your motivation. That is why motivation is a very elusive concept. It fluctuates a lot. But it also does not mean it will fluctuate forever. Sometimes, it will have an anti-fluctuation ability and remain stable for a certain time, such as positive things being able to motivate you to study hard or disastrous things will lead to you being demotivated during this time. Some people will be demotivated forever, but I will not. Therefore, motivation is an individualised scenario.]

### **C.3.5 Summary: Zack**

Zack's interview, drawing on the qualitative data, both complements and expands on the findings of the quantitative analysis. Importantly, it presents some insights into the nature of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, and their motivational roles in relation to his learning of academic English. These findings are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

In respect of the ideal L2 self, Zack's interview provides evidence that this construct is a multifaceted concept which is more closely related to his affection for English than the instrumental function of English, which may include future job opportunities. These facets, further, are created based not only on his affection for English, but also on negative attitudes from his teachers about him, and his internal fears, all of which contribute to a broad concept of his ideal L2 self. Zack's interview also illustrates how his ideal L2 self develops based on his immediate learning needs over time, which results in a two-layered ideal L2 self definition for him: a general overarching ideal L2 self, and more specific ideal L2 selves. On the basis of these findings, it can be seen that Zack's motivation due to his ideal L2 self is a complex dynamic phenomenon. On the one hand, Zack's affection for English becomes one of the main sources of motivation for him to study academic English. The relationship between his affection for English, and his motivation to study English, thus, seems linear. On the other hand, however, because of the developmental nature of his ideal L2 self, his motivation is both situational and time-responsive. Therefore, it can be said that his motivation is also time-related. In addition, two other factors, personal and social conditions, are also important. Quotes from his interview illustrate how even a slight change in either of these factors will have an impact on Zack's motivation to learn English, regardless of the existence of his ideal L2 self. Consideration of these three influences on Zack's motivational movement signals a transition from a view that the relationship between the ideal L2 self and his motivation is static and linear, to a complex dynamic systems perspective (Larsen-Freeman 1997) that accounts for Zack's motivation more accurately. Last but not least, along with the positive aspects of his ideal L2 self, motivation associated with negative aspects cannot be ignored, as they play an important part in Zack's motivation to learn academic English. They were, thus, complementary counterparts to positive aspects of Zack's motivational system.

The ought-to L2 self has two aspects for Zack in terms of his motivation. The first of these is his parents and relatives. In contrast with the traditional pressure exerted by Chinese parents on their children's study, the interview data shows that caring parents, financial support, and a democratic family environment helped boost Zack's motivation to study academic English. The second aspect that had a motivational function for Zack is study duties. For Zack, the motivation from examinations and his study commitments is not only strong, but it also surges before examinations, and extends over a period of time after examinations. This surge and extension of motivation from examinations and study commitments are related to Zack's passion for English. In this sense, as an active learner, Zack's ought-to L2 self has been internalised as his ideal L2 self.

Even as an active learner, Zack's motivation to learn academic English could not remain the same and stay at a continually high level. Instead, his motivation fluctuated frequently, sometimes even on a daily basis, which was revealed in his discussion of his L2 learning experience. This fluctuation is a result of his responses to his situated learning environment, which includes his teachers, classmates and daily learning experiences. Therefore, Zack felt that his motivation was hard to describe, viewing it as an individualised scenario, which moves in a fluctuated-stable-reactivated process along his English learning journey. This, then, is an illustration of the interactions of different factors on his motivation within his particular learning environment.

## Case 4: Crystal

### C.4.1 Background Information on Crystal

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Crystal is a quiet, but focused learner in the classroom, who enjoys reading, and has achieved good academic performance. More detailed information is provided below.

Crystal is a 19-year-old female student studying in the Out-plan program. Her major is International Economics and Trading. At the time of the interview, she was a year one student, and had just started her second semester at the university. Crystal was from a regional area in China. Both of her parents held professional jobs, which allowed them to fund overseas travel for her before I met her.

In her questionnaire, Crystal responded with a mean score of 6 in the statements related to the Ideal L2 Self subscale, 6 in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale, and 5.13 in the L2 Learning Experience subscale. Based on these scores, Crystal can be seen to be highly motivated to study academic English based on her ideal L2 ought-to L2 selves, and slightly less motivated due to her L2 learning experience. These scores are not in line with the results from the whole surveyed cohort, however, for whom the ideal L2 self was the most important motivation to study academic English, followed by L2 learning experience, and then the ought-to L2 self. In particular, Crystal responded with a full score (6) in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale (the highest score possible), which was much higher than that of the whole population (4.22). Crystal also had a full score of 6 in the Ideal L2 Self subscale, compared to 4.91 for the whole population. Her mean score in the L2 Learning Experience the same score as for the Ideal L2 Self subscale (5.13) was the lowest among all the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System for her, but still higher than that of the whole population (4.49). According to these comparisons, as with the case of Amanda and William, Crystal can be seen as somewhat of an outlier from the whole student cohort. Her interview helped to understand the way she responded in the questionnaire, and revealed more about the nature of her ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience and their motivational roles in her studying academic English.

## C.4.2 Crystal's Ideal L2 Self

### C.4.2.1 The Nature of Crystal's Ideal L2 Self

Table 5.10 shows Crystal's responses to the questions relating to the Ideal L2 Self subscale, which were consistent across the six items. She rated *strongly agree* (6) across the six items, leading to a mean score of 6. This mean score suggested that the concept of the ideal L2 self was very relevant to Crystal. Her words from her interview illustrate this:

我是一个喜欢想象的人。如果一个人失去了想象力的话，就会失去学习的动力。

[I am a person who likes imagining. If people lose their ability to imagine, they will lose their motivation to learn.]

**Table 5.10 Crystal's scores in the Ideal L2 Self subscale**

Item (AE=Academic English)	Crystal
Ideal L2 Self	6
1 Learning AE is important to me because I need it for my current study	6
2 Learning AE is important to me because I need it to pass my exams	6
3 Learning AE is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English	6
4 I can imagine myself being able to use AE skilfully in the future	6
5 I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an AE community in the future	6
6 I can imagine myself using AE as if I were a native speaker of English	6



This quote, first, confirms the result from the survey which shows that the concept of the ideal L2 self is very relevant to Crystal. Further to this, it provides a statement regarding the importance of imagination in Crystal's motivation to study English. This imagination, or Crystal's ideal L2 self, is closely related to three aspects: personal academic development, involvement in domestic and international societies, and financial investment through English.

For personal academic development, as with Zack, Crystal sees English as a symbol of advanced knowledge, with which she would like to be associated. Therefore, through this pathway program, she could imagine herself studying in a Western university in the near future, listening to lecturers, discussing with classmates in English, reading English academic articles, and writing her assignments without having difficulties in using English. With the help of this high proficiency of English, Crystal further created images of herself doing research for her studies. Crystal emphasised that English could enable her to achieve these imagined English selves. As she explained:

西方国家的教育系统发达，教育概念先进，给学生提供了一个很好的发展平台，而英文是它的载体。

[In Western countries, the educational system is well developed, and their educational concepts are advanced, which provides a good platform for students' academic development. And English is the carrier of this platform.]

The creation of this imagined advanced academic L2 self grew out of Crystal's dissatisfaction towards China's traditional model of education, which she described as 填鸭式[spoon-fed]. As a sufferer of this learning style, Crystal imagined using English to empower herself to study overseas, hoping to use what she could learn from the West to reform China's educational system. In this sense, Crystal's educational background, and her interest in becoming involved in Chinese educational reform helped her construct her ideal L2 self. Also related to China and her current learning, Crystal imagined herself being a successful businesswoman, helping Chinese companies do business with foreign organisations through English, and traveling around the world to explore overseas markets. Crystal's ideal L2 self involved as it is with her academic major and interest in China's affairs, demonstrates that the

formation of her ideal L2 self is influenced by her personal educational background and situated social environment.

The importance of English for Crystal also has a pragmatic perspective. She considers English as a means of investment, from which she can benefit in the future. This view is evident in her words:

在中国，英文是很重要的。如果你的英语水平达到专业水平的话，一些大企业就会看中你，那你的前途就会一片光明。

[In China, English is very important. If your English reaches a professional level, some big companies will hire you, and your future will be looked after.]

Therefore, through investing in English, Crystal imagined she could work in a big international company, earn a good salary, and have a better career in the future, as well as social status in China as returns on her investment.

These aspects represent a promising side of academic English for Crystal. Nevertheless, as with the other three cases, Crystal had fears about English as well. For example, although Crystal could imagine her English selves, she had fears that she could not understand her teachers and the study content, and thus, she could fall behind.

Another example is with her Chinese identity. Crystal said that she had fears of learning English because she was afraid of becoming Westernised. She illustrates this view thus:

现在学英文让很多中国人靠英文去吃饭，挣钱。像 XXX，靠英文成就了自己的企业。这些看起来都是好的。但是我担心随着自己的英语水平不断地提高，我会更愿意接收西方的思考方式，这样的话我害怕我的民族意识已经不强了。

[It is true that nowadays in China, many people have a better job and a better salary through English. Like XXX, he established his English training empire and became famous in China. They all look very inspiring. But I fear that with my advance in English, I will become more willing to use Western ways to think and do things. If this happened, it could weaken my Chinese national identity.]

The imagination of feeling lost in learning English, and facing an identity crisis is evidence that Crystal's internal fears could also have impacts on the construction of her future English selves. It seems that these self-provoked fears are an indispensable part of Crystal's broader ideal L2 self.

So far, Crystal' ideal L2 self is not only socially constructed, but also consists of both promising and feared dimensions of her future. These images, however, do not stay still, but develop and adjust based on Crystal's situation and English level. This developmental characteristic is evident in her words:

我自己的一个优点是知道我自己处在哪个水平，所以我会根据自己的现在的情况来发展和调整自己的想法。比如说我的短期目标是我在咱们的大學读书，我就要成为这个大学的佼佼者。然后我到外国留学，我会选择一个比较适合我那时实际水平的大学，而不是常春藤大学。再远一点一点的话，可能是成为那所大学的佼佼者，我就是觉得你要一步一步来，要结合你当时的实际情况调整。

[One of the good things about myself is that I know where my current position is. Thus, I will develop and adjust my thinking and goals based on my current situation accordingly. For example, my short term goal is to become one of the top achievers here. Later, when I consider studying overseas, I will choose a university which will be matched by my ability at that time, but not the Ivy League Universities. A little bit further, my goal will become one of the top performers at that chosen university. I think my goals is developing in a sequential way, and also it will be adjusting according to the actual situation at that time.]

This developmental characteristic is not exclusive to Crystal's positive dimension of her ideal L2 self, but also applies to her feared dimension, as her words demonstrate:

担心会不断出现并且每一个担心都不同，因为事情不断地出现，每一个事情都会不同。

[Fears will be created continuously and they differ, because things are produced in a developmental way.]

Crystal's understanding of the developmental nature of her future English selves, thus, draws from her past English learning experiences. As she explained:

其实我以前也有很多想法，但我发现我以前的想法过于遥远，不切合实际，没有按照事情发展的规律去想，这些想法都是空想。因为没有达到这样的空想而产生的失落感很让人颓废。

[In fact, I used to have many types of imaginations, but now I realise these imaginations were too far. Because of this far distance, they became unrealistic and also, they did not follow the principle of sequential development. So all these imaginations were empty thinkings. The failure of not reaching these empty thinkings created a sense of huge loss for me, which made me feel extremely demotivated.]

This understanding, however, does not imply that Crystal denies the importance of imagination in her motivation to study English. She becomes aware that an unrealistic imagination can create demotivation for her. So, when she creates her ideal L2 self, she also considers its developmental nature. The following example demonstrates this view:

完成在这里的学业后，我想出国读研究生，可能到澳洲，可能到美国。我现在才大一，以后有很多的变化，所以暂时我根据自己的实际情况把 XXX 和 XXX 大学当成我努力的目标，但是也会有改变。虽然我想去的学校有改变，但我出国留学的目标没有改变。

[When I finish my study here, I think I will study my Masters degree overseas. I may go to Australia, or maybe USA. I am only in my first year, there will be many changes later. But at the moment, based on my current situation, I will choose XXX University and XXX University as my study goals. These goals will also be subject to change. Although these small goals will change, my big goal, that is, studying overseas, is still the same.]

This view illustrates that, as with Zack, the two-layered ideal L2 self concept also applies to Crystal. That is, there is a general overarching ideal L2 self which points in a

general direction for future development. Below this overarching self, however, there are more specific ideal L2 selves related to her situational goals.

In sum, Crystal's interview provides important insights into the nature of her ideal L2 self. Through English, she imagines herself being able to become a self with good English knowledge, a self engaging in China's affairs, and a self having pragmatic benefits from English. These different dimensions show how her ideal L2 self is a multifaceted concept that has the ability to incorporate a cluster of images. Further, Crystal's ideal L2 self is formed, based not only on positive grounds, but also on self-provoked fears. These two perspectives construct a broad concept of her ideal L2 self. In addition, Crystal's interview illustrates the developmental nature of her ideal L2 self. Instead of viewing her ideal L2 Self as a fixed goal, Crystal believes it develops and adjusts based on her developing English proficiency, and her situated learning environment. Also, these developments and adjustments are understood by her through her English language learning, which shows the relationship between her ideal L2 self and her L2 learning experience. A two-layered ideal L2 self concept is also seen with Crystal, as with Zack (see case 3). Her overarching ideal L2 self represents a wish for a better self, which points in a general direction towards her future development. Below this overarching self, there are more specific ideal L2 selves, which are associated with particular goals at different stages. The motivational function of these insights will be further discussed in the section which follows.

#### **C.4.2.2 Motivation and Crystal's Ideal L2 Self**

Insights into Crystal's ideal L2 self help understand how various aspects of this concept have an influence on Crystal's motivation to learn academic English. At first sight, a positive direct impact on Crystal's motivation is noticed:

这当然会啦！我觉得这样的感觉很强烈。举个例子吧，就是你投入一个成本，但是你可以想象到这个成本以后赚了钱以后，你就会很有动机。所以我能够想象到我以后很熟练地使用学术英文，帮我完成我的工作任务，同时可以受到我同事的尊重，受到我上司的赏识，这样的话肯定可以很激励我去学习学术英语。

[Of course it can! This feeling is very strong. I give you an analogy. When you invest and imagine you could make a lot of money from it, you will have strong motivation to do it. Therefore, when I imagine I could use academic English skilfully, and I use this level of English to complete my tasks at work, to earn respect from my colleagues and to gain praises from my boss. This imagination can definitely motivate me to study academic English.]

This quote shows how imagined images, or her ideal L2 self, have an immediate positive influence on Crystal's motivation. This motivational effect has moved beyond the traditional pragmatic role of English for Chinese students, such as the role English has in making it easier to get a job, to a more professional, developmental role in gaining as respect from work colleagues, and praise from the boss.

This direct relationship, however, becomes less noticeable when the two-layered ideal L2 self concept is considered. The overarching ideal L2 self, as mentioned above, only points in the direction for future development, and is positioned further from Crystal's current situation. To achieve this general goal, Crystal realised that there were many steps on the way to getting there, and this general goal might change if one of these steps fell through. Therefore, due to this distance and uncertainty, Crystal viewed the overarching ideal L2 self as a fluid concept. Accordingly, the motivational effect of the general ideal L2 self becomes limited for her. As Crystal explained:

离我很远的景象对我学习动机的作用有限，因为它们很虚，摸不着，看不清，我自己也不知道能不能达到。

[The motivational effect of images that are far from my current situation is limited, because they are so vague. Due to this vagueness, it is hard to feel and it is not clear enough. I, myself, am not sure if I can reach it.]

The change of Crystal's motivation from her different interpretation of the ideal L2 self reveals that once this concept is influenced by factors such as distance and uncertainty, as shown above, its motivational strength is limited. This limitation is not only exclusive to the general ideal L2 self, but also to her more specific ideal L2 selves.

It seems that the more specific ideal L2 selves associated with particular goals, and that are closer to the current learning situation will have stronger motivational effects. According to Crystal, however, this depends on who you are, a view in line with that of Zack:

有近期的目标和计划不等于你就有学习的动力，是要看人的。我是一个很渴望成功的人，我要达到这些目标和计划，我就有动力去学习。

[When you have your short term goals and plans, it does not necessarily mean you are motivated to study. It depends on who you are. I am a person who is eager to succeed so I want to achieve these short term goals and plans.

Therefore I have the motivation to learn.]

The relationship between her more specific ideal L2 self and her motivation, thus, is not always straightforward. This is evident in Crystal's words:

因为我本人太希望成功了，但是自己的水平还没有达到，发现自己没有达到计划而造成的失落和落空感反而使人很颓废。在这一段时间里，我自己根本没有动力去学习。

[I am a person who is so ambitious. But when I fail to reach my goals due to my English level, it will cause a strong sense of loss and frustration. This sense of loss and frustration makes me feel devastated. During that period of time, I have no motivation to study at all.]

Crystal described this scenario as 希望越大，失望越大 [the more you hope the harder you fall]. Crystal realised that motivational influences from the ideal L2 self can be a 双刃剑 [double-edged sword].

These demotivational experiences can also be caused by Crystal's self-provoked fears towards her ideal L2 self. As stated earlier, Crystal mentioned her imagined fears of losing her Chinese identity with her advance in English. These fears created an internal resistance for Crystal to keep a certain distance from English. These fears, sometimes, surge and discourage Crystal to study English. As she commented:

有时害怕的情绪会上升，因为学了英文，头脑里跟西方人一样了。愿意接受他们反中国的渲染，最后给洗脑了。然后最后黄皮肤，黑头发，却讲英文，帮组外国人打中国人。我怕这种事情发生。这是我怕学英文的原因。

[Sometimes my fears will rise because when I learn English, my brain will function like Westerners'. I will be more willing to accept their anti-China propaganda, and eventually I will be brainwashed. Although my physical appearance is still Chinese, such as having yellow skin and dark hair, I speak English. I will help Westerners defeat Chinese. I am afraid this will happen. This is why I am afraid of learning English.]

This fear about becoming Westernised, as with the example given earlier, influences her motivation to learn English. Although the fears Crystal describes had negative impacts on her motivation to study English, she also understood the importance of English for her future. Therefore, she was in an 尴尬 [awkward] situation. This situation leads to fluctuations in Crystal's motivation from her ideal L2 self. Thus, when the feared L2 self is in control, Crystal feels demotivated. However, this demotivation does not last long. When Crystal sees her positive ideal L2 self at another time, she becomes motivated. Crystal said these fluctuations happened to her from time to time. As a result, she viewed her motivation as being in a movement which changes and fluctuates continuously. The following quote demonstrates this nature:

动机这个东西不稳定。它对外界环境的依赖度很高。环境每时每刻不断地变化，所以它也不断地变化。

[Motivation is not a stable term. It heavily relies on the surrounding environment. The environment changes constantly. So does the motivation.]



### C.4.3 Crystal's Ought-to L2 Self

#### C.4.3.1 The Nature of Crystal's Ought-to L2 Self

Table 5.11 presents Crystal's responses in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale. She rated *strongly agree* (6) across the six items, leading to a mean score of 6 in this subscale. This score is the same as her score in the Ideal L2 Self subscale, which indicates that her ought-to L2 self is as important for her as her ideal L2 self, a point reinforced by the interview data (see below). Her score in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale also suggests that she is well aware of her obligations and expectations from others of her English study. Her interview illustrates this:

我很清楚自己的学习任务，我也不想辜负他人对我的期望。

[I know my study responsibilities very well. Also, I do not want to let people, who have high expectations on me, feel disappointed.]

In terms of motivation, four aspects related to her ought-to L2 self were mentioned in Crystal's interview: her classmates, her parents, her study requirements, and social pressures. These aspects will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Table 5.11 Crystal's scores in the Ought-to L2 Self subscale**

Item	Zack
(AE=Academic English)	
Ought-to L2 Self	6
1 I have to study AE because I don't want to get bad marks in it	6
2 I have to study AE because I want to get a good IELTS score	6
3 Studying AE is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of AE, I'll be considered a weak learner	6
4 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives	6
5 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can please my teacher	6
6 Being successful in AE is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers	6

#### **C.4.3.2 Motivation and Crystal's Ought-to L2 Self**

The importance of influences from Crystal's classmates on her English studies can be seen in this quote:

在学习中，跟同学在一起的时间很多，所以他们对我的影响很大。

[For study, I spend most of my time with my classmates so they have great influences on me.]

These influences, according to Crystal, can create both negative and positive motivation, depending on the learning environment. For example, Crystal compared her high school with her current learning environment. At high school, Crystal recalled that her relationship with her classmates was very tense. From time to time, she was

even laughed at when she could not answer a question in class. As a result, Crystal became demotivated and described this period of learning as 很痛苦很心酸 [very sad and painful]. In her discussion of her L2 learning experience (see below), she elaborates on this further.

In contrast, however, with the change of the learning environment, the relationship between Crystal and her classmates changed. She explained that, in her current learning situation, which focuses on learner autonomy, rather than on competition, the relationships between classmates were less tense. Due to this, a relaxed learning atmosphere was created. As she said:

上了大学以后，在学习上，同学们没有苛求自己要到达一个怎样的目的，大家都学的比较轻松，所以你可以学得好，大家都很羡慕你。如果你学不好的话，大家是很包容的心态。

[After coming here, in terms of study, my classmates do not set rigid goals for themselves. We become more individual and have a more relaxed attitude towards study. Therefore, if you can study well, they congratulate you and praise you. If you cannot study well, they show sympathy and become understanding.]

In this new learning experience, Crystal did not take on negative attitudes from her classmates, nor feel pressured to compete with them. The changes in Crystal's motivation to learn English from being demotivated to motivated are a response to her classmates' attitudes towards her in the new learning environment.

Changes in her motivation also happened in response to Crystal's parents' attitudes towards her study. Crystal said her parents used to place a lot of pressure on her to study. Together with the hostile attitudes and competition from her classmates, this led to demotivated and unpleasant learning experiences for Crystal at high school. Her parents, however, changed their views on her study after a critical incident – her poor performance in the university entry examination. After she failed this examination, Crystal said that her parents realised that their high expectations and pressure were 适得其反 [counterproductive]. Therefore, they changed in the following way:

他们现在希望我能快乐的过，在学习上没有给我压力。假如说我自己学术英语上没有达到要求的话，他们也不会很失望。他们可能是更多地鼓励我，然后让我下一个阶段继续努力。而且我的父母都是有教育经历的人，包括他们自己接受的教育程度也很高。所以他们除了鼓励我，还会在实际的学习上给我指导和帮助，或者在心里上心态上给我辅导。假如遇到这些问题的话，我觉得我的父母会很正面很积极地去帮助我。

[Now, they hope I can be happy, and have not given me any pressure for my studies. For example, they will not be very disappointed if I do not do well in academic English. Rather, they will encourage me and let me go on working hard for the next stage. Also, both of my parents are highly educated. Therefore, in addition to encouraging me, they will give me guidance and help on my study and mentor me. If I encounter problems, I think my parents will be very positive and very willing to help.]

In similar cases like those of William and Zack, positive parental support and learning in a more friendly environment made Crystal feel more positive about herself. She understood that in order to avoid failing again, she needed to take advantage of this positive learning environment, and studied harder to meet the requirements set by the university and her teachers. Therefore, she made good use of her time, and put more effort into her study. She gave examples of this:

别人（同学）在玩的时候，我还要看一点东西或学点东西。比如说看视频，他们可能选一些比较轻松的节目，娱乐性的，我就会看一些 TED 的演讲，并且我会看两遍。第一遍是了解它的内容，第二遍是要了解里面的一些用语，生词，然后就学外国人说英语的语音和语调。我觉得你要抓住一切的学习机会。如果你没有输入的话，你是没有输出的。

[While others (classmates) are playing, I am still thinking about learning something. For example, when choosing TV programs to watch, they may choose some relaxing programs, such as entertainment. However, I will watch TED speeches, and I will watch them twice. The first time is to understand their content, and the second time to learn collocations, new vocabulary, and then try

to imitate native speakers' pronunciation and intonation. I think I need to make good use of all opportunities to learn. If you do not put effort into your studies, you will not see good results.]

This final expression, 如果你没有输入的话, 你是没有输出的 [If you do not put effort into your studies, you will not see good results], is a typical Chinese saying, which is widely cited by parents and students as a way of reminding students that they need to apply themselves in their studies.

Apart from Crystal's study requirements, which serve as an external force to motivate her to study, she also feels that social contexts influence her motivation. As she explained:

大时代推动我来学习英文。假如这个时代的领导者是中国, 那我们就没有理由学英文。我自己的动机不重要, 不得不学英文, 大时代逼着您去学。

[The current environment and situation push me to learn English. If China was now the leading country in the world, then we would have no reason to learn English. My own motivation to learn English is not important. I have to learn English because the current environment and situation are forcing you to do this.]

Motivation for Crystal, thus, is not always a personal matter, it is also related to social contexts, and wider political relations, all of which have an influence on her motivation. At times, indeed, it seems that these external influences can override her personal reasons for learning English.

#### **C.4.4 Crystal's L2 Learning Experience**

##### **C.4.4.1 The Nature of Crystal's L2 Learning Experience**

Table 5.12 shows Crystal's responses to the questions relating to the L2 Learning Experience subscale. Her responses show her different attitudes towards elements under the L2 Learning Experience umbrella. For example, while she highly valued help from her teachers (she scored a 6, *strongly agree*, for item 4), she did not receive

similar support from her classmates (she gave a 1, *strongly disagree*, for item 5). These two different answers may be related to the nature of the program of study, with its focus on learning independence. These two extremes, however, do not seem to affect Crystal's enjoyment of her learning, and the efforts she makes in her study, as she responded either a 5 (*agree*), or a 6 (*strongly agree*) to the relevant statements. As a result, the average score for the L2 Learning Experience subscale was positive, at 5.13, which indicates that the L2 Learning Experience subscale, along with the Ideal L2 Self subscale (for which the average was 6) and the Ought-to L2 Self subscale (for which the average was 6), is also an important factor in Crystal's motivation for learning English. Her interview helps to provide more insights into how her learning experiences influenced her motivation to learn English.

**Table 5.12 Crystal's scores in the L2 Learning Experience subscale**

Item	Crystal
(AE=Academic English)	
L2 Learning Experience	5.13
1 I like the atmosphere of my AE class	6
2 I think time passes quickly while studying AE	6
3 I find learning AE interesting	6
4 I have good teacher(s) to help me with my AE	6
5 I have support from my classmates for my AE	1
6 I expend a lot of effort in learning AE	5
7 I find ways to practice my English outside class	5
8 Overall, I think I am an active AE learner	6

#### **C.4.4.2 Motivation and Crystal's L2 Learning Experience**

While the above scores provide an overall view of Crystal's attitudes towards her L2 learning experience, her interview provides detailed information on how the L2 learning experience impacts on her motivation during her English learning. In particular, she discusses, at length, her personal characteristics, her foreign teachers, and the combination of her personal characteristics and the foreign teachers that motivate her to learn through her daily learning experiences.

In the questionnaire, Crystal indicated that she did not have support from her classmates to study English, giving this question a score of 1 (strongly disagree). In the interview, she further elaborated on this, attributing this to a change in the learning environment, and her personal goals and circumstances. Crystal said that since the change of the learning environment from high school to university, there had also been a change in her way of learning. For example, at university, she began to learn independently and autonomously, in contrast with when she was at high school, where she relied more on her teachers and fellow classmates for her learning. As Crystal said:

我虽然很会说很善于跟人家打交道，其实本质上我更喜欢一个人思考，更偏向于课外一个人安静学习的环境。所以我喜欢自主性地学习，我喜欢自己一个人学习，学习我自己喜欢的东西。

[Although I am a good talker and good at communication with other people, in fact, I am a person who likes to think individually, and prefers to study by myself in a quiet place. As a result, I like to study autonomously [now], I like to study alone and learn what I like.]

Sharing the same views as William and Zack, studying in a learning environment which matched her personal learning style, Crystal willingly spent extra time outside the class on the things that she was interested in and found enjoyment in it, such as watching online talk shows, through which she could practice her pronunciation and intonation, and learn new vocabulary. She also liked to spend time reading English novels and online English blogs.

Crystal, however, did not have the same level of motivation in her English study before university. She said at high school, her motivation to learn was very low because of her teachers. According to Crystal, her high school teachers did not have patience to teach and easily lost their tempers. Also they failed to realise that there were differences among students in terms of their needs and ways of learning. As a result, their teaching style did not match with Crystal's personal preferences, and she put in little effort to learn, even though she knew there were important exams ahead. Crystal referred to this period of time as a dark age in her academic life, until the learning environment changed and she had foreign teachers only for her classes, whose approach to teaching contrasted markedly with that of her high school teachers.



Crystal, thus, became positively motivated when she studied with her foreign teachers. She said that these teachers had a profound influence on her motivation. These influences had two aspects: learning models and creative teaching styles. In terms of learning models, Crystal admired her foreign teachers for being knowledgeable. The following quote is an example of how this motivated Crystal to learn:

我觉得 David 很了不起。他懂得很多，他有很多资源和素材，而且我觉得他的板书写的很快。他总是有很多东西灌输给你。我觉得上他的课就像探险一样，你会学到很多很多有趣的东西。

[I think David [pseudonym] is amazing. He knows a lot and he has a lot of resources and materials. He writes quickly on the whiteboard. He always has many things to tell you. Attending his lessons is like going on an adventure. You will learn many, many interesting things.]

Apart from being models in terms of learning knowledge, the foreign teachers also became moral models which, Crystal considered, was important, and which she could benefit from in the future:

在课堂上，我觉得外教不仅在学习上教你，还教你怎样做人。他们会给你灌输一些西方的价值观念。... 这看起来跟学习关系不是很大，但是他们会让你更快地融入西方主流的价值观念。如果我以后要出国留学或跟外国人打交道的话，我就知道什么是别人的底线你不能碰。

[During the class, these foreign teachers not only teach you knowledge, but also teach you how to be a good person. They will tell you about Western values and thinking. ... It may seem that these have little relation to your study, but these values and ways of thinking will help you integrate into Western mainstream society quickly, which is beneficial for the future when I want to study overseas, or need to do things with foreigners because I will know where the bottom line is.]

This view of learning Western values and thinking, however, is contradictory to the fears Crystal expressed of being Westernised when she talked about her ideal L2 self. With the direct learning experiences with her foreign teachers, she became less concerned about her Chinese identity, and saw the value of this learning as it helped her step out from the

bottom of her demotivated state, and see hope and inspiration for her future from these teachers. She commented:

我对这些老师是很满意的。他们懂得很多，而且的话他们很会做人。这是我之前遇到过在初中和高中的老师身上没有的东西。他们很耐心，而且很善良，对学生很真诚。所以有他们教我，我很开心。这也是很愉快的学习经历吧！

[I am very satisfied with these teachers. They know a lot, and they are my moral models. These things were missing from my previous teachers in high school. These foreign teachers are very patient, very nice, and very sincere with their students. So I am very happy to have them teach me. This is also a very pleasant learning experience!]

The foreign teachers' creative teaching styles also motivated Crystal to learn. Crystal said that the foreign teachers used various teaching activities in the class to make the learning experiences interactive, memorable and enjoyable, such as role play, peer discussion and group presentations. Also, these foreign teachers not only had the ability to adapt the teaching materials to the local context, but to extend this knowledge to the outside world, such resources such as TED talks or the New York Times in their teaching, which made Crystal understand that the knowledge she learned in class is not isolated, but can be applied to real life. Apart from the teaching activities and content of the lessons, the foreign teachers gave students equal opportunities to express their own opinions, and respected their views. For example, they always used students' writing as an example to teach academic writing, and assigned discussion tasks to students to evaluate the writing. According to Crystal, this practise created a motivational surge for her each time her writing was used as an example. As a result, she became very attentive, and benefited from these intellectual and interesting discussions, and improved her writing based on the feedback. Through these kinds of engagements, Crystal was aware of her strengths and weaknesses in her studies, and was motivated to spend time outside class on finding extra learning resources to improve her writing. Crystal said:

在老师的指点和鼓励下，我觉得我又多学点东西了，于是的话我更愿意学一些课外的东西，然后我学了课外的，我又可以用到课内的，就是一个良性的循环。就是一个成语吧，相辅相成。

[With help and encouragement from the teachers, I feel I have learned a bit more. As a result, I am more willing to learn something extra outside the class. When I learn things outside class, I can use them in class. This is a virtuous circle. There is a set phrase, 'mutually supplementing each other'.]

These learning efforts helped Crystal achieve good scores and outshine her classmates. Due to these achievements, Crystal not only earned approval from the teachers and appreciation from her classmates, but also, from herself. She felt fulfilled and happy. Therefore, Crystal said:

这些成功的学习经历激励我自己学习。我觉得自己的努力没有白费。然后它会帮助自己以后的学习。

[These successful learning experiences motivate me to learn. I feel all my hard working has paid off. Also these successful learning experiences will guide me to learn in the future.]

Crystal, however, pointed out that not everyone felt motivated in the same way as she did. She realised that individual differences in motivation exist. She gained this understanding by comparing her classroom performance with that of other students:

在上课的时候，很多同学都在玩手机，或者是在打瞌睡。其实很多同学不是很喜欢外教，像我这样喜欢外教的只是小数。

[During class, many classmates play their mobiles or doze off. In fact, many classmates do not like foreign teachers. Students who like foreign teachers, including me, just represent a small proportion.]

Crystal explained two reasons for this demotivated behaviour from her classmates. First, in her view, foreign teachers' teaching styles, which requires active participation and critical thinking, are not compatible with typical Chinese students' learning styles, who are used to a spoon-fed model, and who are very passive in their learning. Because of this dependant learning style, she said, some students clash with the new learning environment and teaching methods, and complain and resist. Thus, some students like Crystal may be motivated, whereas other students, at the very same time, may not be.

Along with individual differences in motivation, Crystal also understands that her motivation constantly fluctuates. These fluctuations happen in different ways. They can be very acute, appearing suddenly and, equally, disappearing quickly in response to particular experiences. For example, teachers' evaluative comments, such as "fantastic", or "you need to improve on this", can create a surge or drop in Crystal's motivation. Other times, this motivational state can last longer. Crystal provided an example:

之前有段时间我学习上遇到很多困难。这些学习上的不顺影响到自己的情绪，然后自己没有调整好心态，变得有点颓废。受到心理的影响，学习上起不了劲。但是你总不能这样，你要给自己找突破口，所以我在时时刻刻提醒自己，你一定要努力，一定要坚持，不然的话，之前的努力就会功亏一篑。

[Some time ago, I encountered a lot of difficulties in learning. These unsuccessful learning experiences had effects on my emotions. And I did not adjust myself well and felt a bit demotivated. Affected by these psychological impacts, I could not find passion for my study. However, you could not stay in this demotivated state forever, you needed to find a breakthrough for yourself, so I reminded myself constantly, by saying you must work hard and you must insist, otherwise all previous effort will evaporate.]

This example reflects the fluctuating nature of Crystal's motivation over a period of time. It also corresponds to Crystal's view of motivation, which is related to a person's 智商, 情商, 志商 [intelligence quotient, emotional quotient and will power quotient]. Due to this belief, very often in Crystal's case, she uses motivational slogans, such as 一定要努力, 一定要坚持, 不然的话, 之前的努力就会功亏一篑 [must work hard, must insist, otherwise all previous effort will evaporate] to motivate herself to study.

#### **C.4.5 Summary: Crystal**

The qualitative data gained from Crystal's interview both complements and expands on the findings of the quantitative analysis. Importantly, it presents insights into the nature of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System, and their motivational roles in relation

to Crystal's learning of academic English. These findings are summarised in the paragraphs that follow.

Crystal's interview provides evidence that the ideal L2 self is a multifaceted concept that is closely related to personal goals, involvement with China's affairs, and pragmatic investments that can only be made with a knowledge of English. This multifaceted concept, further, not only represents positive aspects of Crystal's future L2 self, but also fears of her future L2 self. These fears are caused by her personal characteristics, and worries about becoming too Westernised. These positive and feared perspectives, thus, construct a broad concept of her ideal L2 self.

Crystal's interview also illustrates how her ideal L2 self develops over time, which results in a two-layered ideal L2 self for her: a general, overarching ideal L2 self, and a more specific ideal L2 self. These insights provide an understanding into how Crystal's ideal L2 self motivates her to learn English. For example, the two-layered ideal L2 self definition shows that Crystal's ideal L2 self does not necessarily guarantee that she can be motivated. Other factors, such as the distance of goals, uncertainty, and the person she sees herself as, can influence the strength of the motivational effects of the ideal L2 self. Also, in Crystal's case, her broader ideal L2 self does not always produce positive motivation; it can generate demotivation for her as well. Thus, changes between being motivated, experiencing motivational surges, or becoming demotivated happen from time to time in response to events at specific moments, further revealing that Crystal's motivation from her ideal L2 self is fluid, and both complex and dynamic.

The ought-to L2 self has four aspects for Crystal in terms of her motivation. These are her study requirements, her classmates, her parents, and social contexts. These four aspects are not independent of one another. Rather, they are interrelated and influence Crystal's motivation to study English. For example, in Crystal's case, she understands she needs to pass her English exams, as well as meet her parents' expectations. Also, these influences can be dominated by one aspect depending on the particular context, as has been shown with Crystal. Further, Crystal's interview demonstrates that, as with her ideal L2 self, the motivational forces from her ought-to L2 self are also complex and dynamic. These complexities and dynamics are seen in changes in Crystal's motivational state from being

demotivated to motivated in response to her classmates' and her parents' attitudes towards her.

The interrelationship among these different aspects, and the complex and dynamic nature of Crystal's motivation, is seen to be even more profound when she talked about motivation from her L2 learning experience. First, through her learning experiences, Crystal created her ideal L2 self, and felt pressure from her ought-to L2 self. Second, in addition to changes in her motivational state, Crystal realised that her motivation fluctuated constantly. Sometimes the fluctuation can be very acute, and at other times, it can be less acute. Third, Crystal became aware that being motivated and demotivated can co-exist at the same time for different people in the same learning context. Crystal, thus, believed that motivation is an individual scenario, and how a person is motivated is closely related to their personal characteristics, their intelligence, emotions, and willpower in particular learning environments.

## **5.2 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings from the analysis of the interview data with the four focal students. Based on these findings in the particular learning program, it seems that the L2 Motivational Self System as described by Dörnyei (2009b) and measured by quantitative data alone, only partially captures the nature of the students' L2 selves and L2 motivation. These findings provide empirical support to look at the L2 self and L2 motivation from a complex dynamic perspective (Larsen-Freeman 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008), such as the self from a complexity perspective (Mercer 2014), and person-in-context view (Ushioda 2009), which is discussed further in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

# Chapter 6: Discussion of the Qualitative Findings

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## 6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a discussion of the qualitative findings of the study in relation to previous research on the topic. It is divided into two parts. The first part of the chapter draws on findings from the four focal students' interview data. It further discusses the quantitative findings from Chapter 4 on the nature of the students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves, and the interrelationships between the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System. The second part of the chapter addresses research question 3:

What are the students' individual motivations for studying the English for Academic Purposes courses in China from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System?

## 6.2 The Nature of the L2 Motivational Self System

This section presents a summary of key qualitative findings, which focus on the nature of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the interrelationships between the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. Comparisons of these findings are then made with those from previous research on the L2 motivational self system. Based on discrepancies found in these comparisons, the L2 self from a complex dynamic perspective is discussed.

### 6.2.1 The Nature of the Ideal L2 Self

Comparisons are made across the four students in terms of the nature of their ideal L2 selves. These results have shown that, while common themes were observed, there were also differences, which illustrated the students' individual sense of their ideal L2 selves.

Among common themes in the data, the most prominent was the multifaceted nature of the students' ideal L2 selves, which was also borne out in the quantitative data. This multifaceted ideal L2 self incorporated a cluster of images. In some cases, such as that of Amanda, these images seemed to be somewhat stable, and co-existed with one another over a certain period of time. In other cases, however, such as those of William, Zack, and Crystal, these images, from what they said in the interviews, were created within a particular time frame, and in response to a specific learning environment. This results in changes in the visibility and connectedness of their ideal L2 selves. Thus, an imagined image which is further from the student's current situation, or his/her general overarching ideal L2 self becomes elusive across time and space. The closer or more specific the ideal L2 self, the more it appears to be tangible for the student due to its proximity and relevance to their current situation. Imagining successfully using English for future studies (an image which is close to the student's current situation), for example, is more immediate in the student's mind compared to using English to find a job (an image which is further off and therefore less tangible). These findings, to some extent, correspond to the scores in the surveys for Ideal L2 Self subscale.

The visibility and connectedness of the ideal L2 self also reveal another related theme which was common in the responses in the students' interviews; that is, the ideal L2 self is complex and dynamic. It either developed in a sequence of steps over a period of time, or it emerged during the students' interactions with immediate learning activities. In this sense, the ideal L2 self is a temporal and learning responsive concept.

In this particular research context, in which the participants were studying on a program that was designed with a Western EAP curriculum, and delivered in a local Chinese university, students are able to imagine images that move beyond the traditional role of English typically associated with Chinese students. Such images may include English playing a transformative role on the students. English, thus, is not only related to future employment and instrumental matters, but is also related to the students' imagined selves and future roles in which English may play a part.

In addition, students' social and/or economic backgrounds have an impact on the construction of their ideal L2 selves. For example, Amanda, who came from an underdeveloped part of China, believed that this program would enable her to escape from



China to look for a better life overseas. However, for Zack, who came from a highly developed metropolitan area in China, social issues such as food safety and air pollution, were more pressing. Thus, his ideal L2 self has an advanced lifestyle perspective. These findings show that the ideal L2 self is reflective of both personal beliefs and values, which may have changed during the program as a result of its focus on independent learning styles and learner autonomy. These personal beliefs, however, as with values more broadly, are of course shaped by broader cultural, social, or political discussions and discourses. These values include self notions such as a bilingual self (the value of being bilingual), a knowledgeable self (the importance of being knowledgeable), and a progressive/ globalised self (the value of being both progressive and globalised).

Students all agreed that this future L2 self had a close relationship either with their affection for English, or with their personal characteristics. For some, this relationship is also a defiance of a negative image of them, or the anti self. Zack and William are the exemplars of this; both of them responded to teachers' negative views of them as students. The future L2 self, for some students, can also have an undesirable dimension, such as feeling afraid of being Westernised, as was the case with Crystal. This feared future L2 self, expressed in some way by all the students, is an indispensable part of the broader ideal L2 self that emerged in the interviews. It, as with the ideal L2 self, also shows a temporal, responsive, and developmental nature, such as was the case with Crystal.

Also, the construction of the ideal L2 self is not limited to the future. The interviews showed how some students drew on their past English learning experiences, or on social interactions in English, to set up their ideal L2 selves. This illustrates how, for some learners, images of their past experiences or interactions with English can become an impetus for their future ideal L2 selves. Such images may be stored in the students' memories, waiting to be activated at a particular time, and in a relevant setting.

These findings add new understandings of Chinese students' ideal English selves. These selves are not just about getting a job, gaining promotion, or bringing face (dignity) to the family in China, as discussed in Chapter 2, Background to the Study. They extend to the development of the students' personal selves, which is something that English is able to provide for them in relation to opportunities that will take them beyond China, such as studying overseas, and working and living in other countries. During the process of their L2

self development, there is an adaptive negotiation among many factors that a student is surrounded by, including affection towards English, personal characteristics, learning contexts, beliefs, values, emotions, and time. These factors, though, are not necessarily in a harmonious relationship with one another. They can be contradictory, inconsistent or even in competition with each other, which is something that became clear in the findings from the interviews.

### **6.2.2 The Nature of the Ought-to L2 Self**

Comparisons are also made, here, across the four students in terms of the nature of their ought-to L2 selves. While less data were obtained on the ought-to L2 self in the interviews, the comparison, nonetheless, shows that the students' visions of their ought-to L2 selves are less pronounced than those of their ideal L2 selves, which corroborates the quantitative findings of the study. The students' ought-to L2 selves demonstrated the following features. As with the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self was found to be a multifaceted and diverse component with a range of aspects mentioned by the students, such as pressure to pass examinations, requirements to meet study obligations, the need to meet expectations from parents, teachers and society, and competition from classmates. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the importance of these external factors for the students will also depend on other factors, which may change from time to time, such as parental attitudes towards the role they play in students' education, degree of family support, classmates and teachers, as well as students' personal attitudes towards these external factors and students' L2 learning experiences. These findings, to some degree, further reveal the nature of the ought-to L2 self based on the whole cohort's responses to the ought-to L2 self items in the surveys. These findings, nevertheless, do not fit perfectly with the generally held views of the way in which Chinese students are subject to parental and societal pressure, obligations and responsibilities. The more rebellious images of the students' ought-to L2 selves seen in this study, such as the case of William, who created a counter ought-to L2 self to defy negative representations held by his teachers, may be related to the particular program which promotes learner initiation, autonomy, and critical thinking. In this sense, the ought-to L2 self is not always passive. Rather, it has agency to react, resist, and take control of negative influences.

### **6.2.3 The Interrelationships among Students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience**

Many examples in the interview data show that the students' ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves, and L2 learning experiences are interrelated. These findings, further, support most of the results from the quantitative data, which show that the three components are correlated, and that there are no differences in terms of gender, demographic background, and academic program in the relationships between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, nor between the L2 self and the L2 learning experience. Most importantly, however, in contrast with the quantitative results, the interview data also reveal that differences do not exist in the pair of the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience, between male and female students, between the In-plan and Out-plan students, nor between regional and metropolitan students. Based on these findings, it can be said that from their L2 actual learning experiences, the focal students received various forms of input through their interactions with teachers, students, and the outside world. Students processed this input and modified their L2 self images in response to them.

The above summary not only extends the findings on the nature of the students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves (research Question 1), and the interrelationships among the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System (research Question 2), it also leads to the next section of the chapter, Comparison of the Interview Findings with those of Previous Research. In addition, these results illustrate how broad trends which emerge in quantitative studies do not necessarily hold true at the individual level, providing further justification for the case study component of the study.

### **6.2.4 Comparison of the Interview Findings with those of Previous Research**

The findings summarised above illustrate that the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are multifaceted, complex and dynamic constructs. A comparison of these findings are now made with existing studies through the lens of complex dynamic systems theory (Larsen-Freeman 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008). In complex dynamic systems, interaction is essential (Larsen-Freeman 2012). The focal students' interviews show that it is through

interactions with the learning experiences and social contexts, further, that the ideal and ought-to L2 selves react, change and evolve over time.

First, the study has highlighted the multifaceted nature and related visibility of the ideal L2 self. These findings are in line with Hinkley and Andersen's (1996) study, which suggests that the self can be better understood as "a family of selves with various overlapping resemblances and with some selves more prominent, elaborated and accessible than others" (p. 1281). As such, the psychological concepts of construal and construal-level theory (Trope & Liberman 2010) are relevant. As mentioned in Chapter 2, construal refers to the ways in which a self-concept is mentally represented, the nature of the image, and its level of abstraction (Henry 2017; Liberman & Trope 1998). The notion of psychological distance is important in this theory (Henry 2017; Nakamura 2019; Trope & Liberman 2010) because in comparison with more detailed and concrete imagined images, which are closer to students' current point of time, future images that are further from this reference point become more difficult to imagine, and are more abstract. For example, You and Chan (2015) report that as time progressed and participants became mature both educationally, and in terms of their L2 proficiency, images of their ideal L2 selves gained greater clarity, and became more specific, more elaborate and occurred more frequently. In comparison with You and Chan's (2015) findings, combining construal-level theory, the multifaceted nature and the visibility of the ideal L2 self emerging from this study seems to be better understood by drawing on the working self-concept (Markus & Nurius 1986), which explains coexisting L2 selves that individuals possess. That is, different L2 self images can interact with one another both in a positive way (e.g. a co-construction of multi L2 self visions), and in a negative way (e.g. competition among L2 self images). Once one of these images, or several of these images, are activated in a particular situation, these activated images temporarily become the dominant L2 self, or the working self. This activation not only activates other closely related future self-possibilities, but also increases the likelihood of more distant self-possibilities. This activation effect is reflected in the sequential development of the ideal L2 selves of some of the focal students in this study.

Second, the complex dynamic nature of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves is a recurrent theme in the findings of this study. As mentioned above, this complex dynamic nature is realised through interactions with the learning experiences. Few studies have looked at the

impacts of these interactions on the changes and development of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. For example, from a micro-level perspective in an EFL classroom setting, Nitta and Baba (2015) investigated how students' ideal L2 selves develop through repeated engagements in language learning tasks over a year. They found out that changes and revisions of students' ideal L2 selves happened through negotiations between learning tasks and the self-evaluations of these tasks. In a similar setting (EFL), the current study discovered that the formation, internalisation, and development of students' ideal L2 selves can also occur through classroom learning. This study, however, goes beyond previous studies in two aspects, and both aspects are related to the concept of time. First, the findings from this study reveal that students have the ability to form and develop their ideal L2 selves in a very short time frame. In this sense, the ideal L2 self is responsive and extremely temporal. Second, the findings also show that the ideal L2 self can draw on L2 learning experiences and interactions with English in the past. Images of these experiences and interactions are stored in students' minds and can be reactivated.

Apart from this micro-level investigation, the development of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are also examined from a macro-level perspective, that is, in relation to social context. As this study was carried out in China, some values in Chinese society have an influence on students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves. First, for the ideal L2 self, in China, competency in English is viewed as essential both for personal development, and in the current stage of economic globalisation. Some students' ideal L2 selves are related to this instrumental aspect of English, as they see English as an essential of obtaining prosperous jobs and financial benefits. This instrumental aspect of the ideal L2 self has been reported by a number of studies with Chinese students (Jiang & Dewaele 2015; You & Chan 2015; Yu, Brown & Stephens 2018). This pragmatic reason, however, is not exclusive to Chinese students. It is common in many EFL contexts. This instrumental aspect is also reported, for example, in Iran (Taguchi, Magid & Papi 2009) and Spain (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Mackay 2019). Also, not all the focal students in this study had this instrumental aspect related to their ideal L2 selves when they were interviewed. Instead, some students constructed their ideal L2 selves based on their current concerns towards development in China, such as issues with food safety, and air pollution. In addition to these concerns, triggers in the formation of some students' ideal L2 selves come from negative views of them from other

people in their society. Based on these findings, the view of cultural specificity of students' ideal L2 selves (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009; Taguchi, Magid & Papi 2009) does not always apply to the students in this study. It seems that a student's ideal L2 self is, while to some extent cultural, also personal, and depends on how that student values and believes in his/her future with English in relation to society.

Third, fears about a future which involves English is another emergent finding from the students' interviews. These feared L2 selves are mentioned briefly in You and Chan's (2015) study. In their view, the feared L2 self draws from characteristics of Chinese society, and is a by-product of pressure to do well in English tests and to find a job. This view is also supported by Jiang and Dewaele's (2015) research. It is Yu and her colleagues (Yu, Brown & Stephens 2018) who have taken this concept further, using the term "dreaded self" (p. 126) to highlight the severe consequences of failing in English in Chinese society. Thus, Yu, Brown and Stephens (2018) argue that the L2 Motivational Self System which is derived from Western studies and theories, may not be sufficient for Chinese learners of English. For example, parental pressure and obligations to parents are especially important in Chinese society, which is something that is not always reflected in L2 Motivational Self System studies carried out in other countries. These claims, tagging feared L2 selves and parental pressure and obligations with Chinese characteristics, however, are problematic. As recent studies have shown in other learning contexts, such as Spain, (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Mackay 2019), feared L2 selves and parental pressure and obligations also exist. This further illustrates how L2 selves are personal (as well as cultural), which is in line with findings in Mackay's (2019) study, which shows that students' "visions broadened into more personal domains and/or became more specific and focussed" (p. 60). This conclusion can be also drawn from the current study, in which it was found students had fears of not being able to escape from China, and of not coping well with studies when they went overseas. Further, some had fears of losing their Chinese identity, and being unconsciously Westernised while learning English. The interviews also illustrated that these feared L2 selves, as with their ideal counterpart, changed and were revised over time.

For the ought-to L2 self, the interviews of this study reveal that this construct is also important, and has a similar nature to that of the ideal L2 self. First, the students' ought-to L2 selves have been shown to be multifaceted and diverse components that draw from

familial and societal pressure and obligation. The pressure and obligation from the family and society have been discussed in a number of other studies (Magid 2009; Taguchi, Magid & Papi 2009), which highlights the importance of this type of pressure and obligation in the formation of the students' ought-to L2 selves. By contrast, in a more recent study, Yu and her colleagues (2018) found out the influence of this type of pressure and obligation on Chinese high achievers was low. This discrepancy can be explained by the developmental nature of the ought-to L2 self, as has been seen in this study. When changes in pressure and obligation take place at various points of time during students' learning, changes in students' attitudes towards these pressures and obligations also occur. In other words, students feel different obligations and pressures at different stages in their studies. One type of obligation or pressure dominates for a period of time, then gives way to other types of obligation or pressure once time moves on, and the learning situation changes. This developmental nature has both qualitative (You & Chan 2015), and quantitative (Jiang & Dewaele 2015) support in the literature. This nature, however, contradicts Mackay's (2019) study in which, in an intervention program, she reported that "there is no evidence to suggest any change in the learners' ought-to L2 selves" (p. 60). This discrepancy may be caused by the way in which the time concept is applied.

When investigating students' ought-to L2 selves, previous studies have sometimes amplified the impact of external factors, such as parental and broader societal influences, that place students in a submissive position. By contrast, this study shows that some students try to reverse this relationship by creating their counter ought-to L2 selves, which act against pre-conceived notions held of them by others. Following a similar reasoning, Thompson and Vásquez (2017; 2015) coin this behaviour as the anti-ought-to self, arguing that it is necessary to incorporate the anti-ought-to self into the L2 Motivational Self System to expand its explanatory value. In a follow up study, Liu and Thompson (2018) examined Chinese learners in China, finding that the anti-ought-to self also emerged for the students they were examining, which is line with Mackay's (2019) study, and the current study. Liu and Thompson conclude, thus, that the anti-ought-to self is very likely relevant in a variety of cultural contexts, in particular, in contexts that have severe socioeconomical disparities among language learners. Although, in principal, the counter ought-to self is similar to the anti-ought-to self, the counter ought-to self is not exactly the same as the anti-ought-to self.

First, by adopting the notion of 'counter' rather than 'anti', the counter ought-to self is a more neutral construct without the negative connotation of the anti-ought-to self. Second, unlike Thompson and her associates, who correlate the anti-ought-to self with specific cultural contexts and social groups, this study shows that the counter ought-to self is, for the focal students, also personal, in that it has a close relationship with students' personal goals and values. Third, the counter ought-to self is also a responsive concept, being created as a response to certain conditions. It is possible that once these conditions change, the counter ought-to self will change or disappear. Thus, it is temporal, rather than stable. Based on the interview findings, then, it is argued that, as with its ideal L2 self counterpart, the ought-to L2 self is also a complex and dynamic construct.

The interview findings provide further examples of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves interacting with one another through the medium of the L2 learning experience. It seems that it is only in You and Chan's study (2015) that this interaction is discussed. You and Chan (2015) described two-way movements between the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. Both the interview findings of this study, and those of You and Chan (2015) confirm that the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System are not separate, but interacting.

The interview findings and the discussion illustrate and argue that the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are complex and dynamic in nature, and that they interact with the L2 learning experience. This nature and interaction, however, in many aspects do not seem to be fully reflected in much of the research based on Dörnyei's (2009b) model of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. As discussed in Chapter 2, both the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self are often portrayed in previous research as being relatively stable and consistent over time. Due to this discrepancy, it is necessary to go back to the original theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986). This necessity seems timely in two ways. First, as yet, there have been few studies which have examined the complex and dynamic nature of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves (Henry 2017; You & Chan 2015). Second, there has been a call (Thorsen, Henry & Cliffordson 2017) to penetrate the L2 Motivational Self System's central constructs to reconceptualise L2 motivation from a complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman 2017; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008) perspective.



### **6.2.5 The Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self to the L2 Self from a Complex and Dynamic Perspective**

In their seminal paper, when introducing possible selves, Markus and Nurius (1986) stressed that, as future-oriented self-conceptions, possible selves are less tangible and are more likely to be influenced by external forces than other forms of self-concept. As they explain:

because possible selves are not well-anchored in social experience, they comprise the self-knowledge that is more vulnerable and responsive to changes in the environment. They are the first elements of the self-concept to absorb and reveal such change. As representations of potential, possible selves will thus be particularly sensitive to those situations that communicate new or inconsistent information about the self. (p. 956)

This emphasis, indeed, reveals that possible selves is a complex and dynamic self-concept, which is evident in the interview data. This complex and dynamic nature, according to Markus and Wurf (1987), consists of three aspects: the multifaceted self-concept, types of self-representations, and sources of self-representations. In the following paragraphs, these three aspects will be discussed with the support of the interview findings.

#### **6.2.5.1 The Multifaceted L2 Self Concept**

The first prominent feature of possible selves is its multiplicity, indicating it has a “multidimensional, multifaceted dynamic structure”, rather than being a “singular, static, lump-like entity” (Markus & Wurf 1987, p. 301). This view has been given a more recent interpretation as “a repertoire of possible selves” (Dabback 2018, p. 54), a view which is also held in the area of sociolinguistics in its discussion of multiple identities (Henry 2017; Paltridge 2012). Eckert (2002), for example, argues that “a person will have a multiplicity of identities which may be at play all at the same time at different levels of prominence. These identities may not all be equally salient at a particular moment, however. Rather, one or more of these identities may be foregrounded at different points in time for different reasons” (Paltridge 2012, p. 22). Concerning the multiplicity of possible selves, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) question whether learners have several different desired possible self images of themselves, or only one broad ideal self with various facets. From the students’

interview data, it is clear that both situations are possible. While Amanda's case supports the first possibility, in which several ideal L2 self images co-exist side by side over a period of time, the visibility of the two-layered ideal L2 self idea illustrates the second possibility. That is, the ideal L2 self broadly represents aspirations for in the future. Within these aspirations, more concrete and solid ideal L2 selves appear in response to specific times and situations.

Another question which is related to the multiplicity of possible selves is the relationship between these multiple facets, or how stable the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are. Being described as an uncharted area by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), the stability of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves remains under-researched because there has been an overwhelming tendency in empirical studies in which the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are treated as static constructs (Henry 2015). Revealed from the students' interview data, however, the ideal and ought-to L2 selves seem open to change, as seen in the visibility of the ideal L2 self and changes in the ought-to L2 self. Other examples, however, show less tendency to change, as with Amanda's relatively stable ideal L2 self. This contradiction leads to a question as to "whether a certain degree of self harmony is necessary or desirable" (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009, p. 351). When a timescales perspective (De Bot 2012, 2015) is introduced, the boundary between changeability and stability becomes less acute. De Bot (2015) argues that language learning is a complex process which takes place across many interacting timescales. Building on the concept of timescales, Henry (2015) further suggests that when conceptualising developments and dynamics of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, it is necessary to consider whether we are talking about developments and dynamics in a short space of time, such as a few minutes, or whether we are looking at these developments and dynamics over progressively longer timescales, such as weeks, semesters, years or a portion of one's lifespan. Applying this suggestion, we can see that the unification of these contradictory, and different versions of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are reflections of longer or shorter timescales. In Amanda's case, she considers her ideal L2 self over a longer timescale, while others are interested in a shorter time frame. This way of thinking about the developmental and dynamic aspects of students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves from the interview data fits with Mercer's (2015) idea of dynamical stability. That is, the future self-guide is "a complex dynamic system, which can be simultaneously stable, dynamic and/or dynamically stable" (Mercer 2015, p. 140). This seemingly contradictory picture of the ideal

and ought-to L2 selves can be understood in the sense that the L2 self is a collection of multiple self representations over time.

#### **6.2.5.2 Types and Sources of L2 Self**

The complex and dynamic nature of possible selves also lies in the types and sources of self-representations. In terms of the types of self-representations, Markus and Wurf (1987) highlight the heterogeneity of the self-representations:

Not all of the self-representations that comprise the self-concept are alike. Some are more important and more elaborated with behavioural evidence than others. Some are positive, some negative, some refer to the individual's here-and-now experience, while others refer to past or future experiences. Moreover, some are representations of what the self actually is, while others are of what the self would like to be, could be, ought to be, or is afraid of being. (p. 302)

The implication that can be drawn from this emphasis can be understood in four elements: centrality, tense, positivity and/or negativity, and individualism of the self interpretation. First, in terms of centrality, Markus and Wurf (1987) argue that, among the multiple possible self conceptions, it is inevitable that some of them are salient identities, while others are more peripheral. Markus and Wurf (1987) believe that perceived salient identities are generally better elaborated, and therefore have more power effects on information processing and behaviour than peripheral ones. This element was evident in the current study, including concrete and elaborate ideal L2 selves, and different dominant ought-to L2 selves at various stages.

Second, in regard to the tense of self-conceptions, Markus and Wurf (1987) list three types of self-representations: past, present and future views of the self, and place them at the same level of significance. The L2 Motivational Self System is representative of the future view of the L2 self, which has attracted a lot of attention since it was introduced (Dörnyei 2009b). Recently, Thorsen, Henry and Cliffordson (2017), and Yung (2019) have argued for the importance of the inclusion of the current L2 self to provide a deeper understanding of the L2 Motivational Self System and facilitate the investigation of motivational dynamics.

Compared with its future L2 self and the current L2 self, the past tense of the L2 self is still underexplored within the existing literature. This study, however, shows how some students have the ability to store past aspects of L2 self, and wait for the right time and setting for them to be reactivated. This finding provides empirical support for Markus and Wurf's (1987) thinking of this type of self-representation, reinstating the past view of the L2 self being as important as future and current views of the L2 self.

Third, the self concept also includes positivity and/or negativity. In previous research into the L2 Motivational Self System, there has been a tendency for work to focus on positive self-conceptions, with little attention being given to negativity. The findings from the interview data, however, fill this gap. The students in the study not only had positive self images for the future, but also negative ones. Thus, both positive and negative self images, and the ought-to and counter ought-to selves, present complex and dynamic L2 self representations which do not accord with Dörnyei's conceptualisation of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self.

The fourth element is individual self-representations. Although the findings of the study show some common themes across the four cases, they also vary individually. For instance, while both Zack and Crystal had a strong affection for English, and developed ideal L2 selves based on these affections, only Crystal constructed a feared L2 self, but later accepted this feared L2 self through her learning experiences with her foreign teacher. This evidence is just one of the examples that illustrates the individualism of self-representations in this study.

There is also the matter of cross-cultural issues in relation to the Motivational Self System. Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009), for example, compared three English learning contexts in Asia, and concluded that although the general structure of the L2 Motivational Self System construct applied to each of the situations they examined, there were significant differences in the weighting of the components of the L2 Motivational Self System. Building on this conclusion, You and Dörnyei (2014) discovered that this variation is not only culturally specific, but also gender, major, demography, and English proficiency specific. Based on the findings of this study, although culture, gender, fields of learning, demography and level of English proficiency may play a part in composition of students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves, this study argues that the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self are underpinned by the

dynamic self-concept that involves a person's views of their future identities, and is mediated by an individual's personal characteristics. Thus, there is a need to understand the L2 self at the individual level, as well as at the level of macro categories, such as culture, gender and demography.

This individualism can also be understood from the sources of self-representations. Markus and Wurf (1987) commented that the development of "self-structures is determined by both the information the person receives about the self (through self-perception, social comparison and reflected appraisals) and by the individual's ability to cognitively process self-conceptions" (p. 305). This thinking process is evident in this study. Through interactions with their outside world, students generated or reactivated their personal self-representations. Then they kept evaluating and revising these relatively stable self-representations through continuous negotiations with their outside worlds. This view of the relationship between the L2 self and the outside world and the ideal L2 self is in contrast with the efforts to look for a definitive answer to "at what point in the internalisation process can we claim with confidence that a desired possible self is 'ideal', that is, fully owned by the learner, rather than 'ought-to', that is, imposed on the learner by others" (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009, p. 352). The pursuit of such a definitive answer seems to be counterproductive from the complex dynamic perspective, because the L2 self, as a future-oriented concept, involves unpredictable "self-knowledge" in the future, and it is "not well-anchored in social experience" (Markus & Nurius 1986, p. 956).

With the support of the findings from the current study, the discussion of the L2 self from the complex dynamic systems perspective, including multiplicity, types and sources, extends Dörnyei's ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. This extension is further discussed in the following section, A Reflective Integrative Process View of the L2 Self.

### **6.2.5.3 A Reflective Integrative Process View of the L2 Self**

The above discussion has shown that the L2 self is more complex and dynamic than the finely defined concepts of the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self in the L2 Motivational Self System. The key themes that emerged from the interview data, such as multiplicity,

stability, time, interaction and relationship, emphasise this complex and dynamic nature.

Thus, the L2 self from this study is summarised as follows:

The L2 self is a social, cultural, and individual concept. It has many facets, including positivity and negativity. These facets are not equal in terms of cognitive representation, however, due to their interactions with time, immediate learning experiences, and social context. Also, as a result of these interactions, these facets are adapted, revised and developed, leading to new facets emerging in response to the learning situations within a timescale. As a result, some facets of the student's L2 self become more prominent than others. They can be consistent, they can be contradictory, or they can compete, reflecting the unpredictiveness of the L2 self. Thus, the L2 self is a reflective integrative process.

The view of the L2 self being a reflective integrative process not only has empirical support from this study, but also can be understood by drawing on two theoretical concepts: the working self-concept (Markus & Nurius 1986; Markus & Wurf 1987), and the self as a psycho-socio dynamic processing system (Mischel & Morf 2003). The working self-concept is a key idea which links self-representations with the complex dynamic perspective. This link was pointed to by Turner (1968), for example, who discussed "the passing images of self arising and changing in every relationship the individual enters" (p. 94). Further elaborating on this link, Markus and Nuriu (1986) realise the infeasibility of using the self-concept to generalise the multifaceted reality of self-representations, because not all the facets can be activated at any given time. The risk of doing this is to deny the complex dynamic nature of self-representations which has been discussed above. As a result, Markus and Nuriu (1986) introduce the working self-concept:

The working self-concept derives from the set of self-conceptions that are presently active in thought and memory. It can be viewed as a continually active, shifting array of available self-knowledge. The array changes as individuals experience variation on internal states and social circumstances. The content of the working self-concept depends on what self-conceptions have been active just before, on what has been elicited or made dominant by the particular social environment, and on what has been more purposefully invoked by the individual in response to a given experience, event, or situation. (p. 957)

This definition of the working self-concept shares key features with the view of the L2 self as a reflective integrative process. Based on these features, the notion of the working self-concept is worth considering when we try to understand the complex and dynamic nature of the L2 self in the following ways. First, Markus and Wurf (1987) state that self-views are not depictions of traits and demographic characteristics. They are representations of self with cognitions and/or affections, which become part of students' identities. Second, it recognises that there is not a fixed or static self, but only a current accessible self-concept, which is a result of interactions among various selves within a person's social experiences. Third, it provides an explanation for a self-concept that can be at once both stable and malleable. Thus, the working self is a result of the totality of the active elements and their various facets at any particular point in time. This is the integrativeness of the L2 self.

This attempt to understand the L2 self through the working self has support in recent literature. As an example, Henry (2015) employs the working self in understanding the dynamics of possible selves (with the focus on the ideal L2 self), and proposes "a model of possible self dynamics" (p. 92). This model incorporates the dynamic nature of the working self-concept, and is made up of three dynamic processes: up and down revisions of the ideal L2 self, changes triggered by interaction with other self-concepts, changes in the vividness and elaboration of the image at the heart of L2 selves, and in the availability and accessibility of the ideal L2 self.

The L2 self is a process, according to Mischel and Morf's (2003) psycho-socio dynamic processing system. Based on Mercer's (2014) interpretation of this system, there are at least three ways in which it can support the view of the L2 self as a reflective integrative process. First, central to understanding this system is the notion that the self is not a collection of static attributes, but is continuously developing. In this movement, cognitive-affective units (self images) are interconnected with one another, and form a unique network for each person. Individual differences are the result of different organisational structures of these units in the network. Second, the units are responsive to different contexts, and constantly adapt to and accommodate different features of social environments and interactions, depending on which situational factors are especially salient for a particular individual. Third, although dynamism and process are essences of this system, it is also relatively stable in a number of possible ways, for example, the types of

self-related processes typically activated for particular individuals in certain contexts may be stable.

#### **6.2.6 Summary –The L2 Self**

The findings from the interview data have further answered research questions 1 and 2, and showed the complex dynamic nature of the focal students' L2 selves. For example, their L2 selves are dynamic but can also be temporarily stable; they can be in harmony, but can also be in competition; they can be positive and/or negative; and the L2 self images can be future oriented and/or related to the past. From traditional (measurement oriented) perspectives which have viewed the L2 self as a well-defined construct such as the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, these findings could be considered to be ambiguous. However, from a complex dynamic perspective, these findings regarding the L2 self are expected and have been explained in the concepts of working-self and dynamic processing system. Applying these two concepts with the support of the empirical findings of the study, a reflective integrative process view of the L2 self is proposed. Central to understanding this view is the idea that the L2 self is not an intrinsically or extrinsically mental, static construct, but it is a reflective developmental process. In this process, multiple facets interact with one another, and are influenced by other factors, such as the L2 learning context, the social context, and other people. Through these interactions and external influences, the L2 self adjusts, adapts and changes, leading to the emergence of new facets. These external influences, however, are not unidirectional, as the L2 self can be an active agent. It mediates these external influences by choosing, evaluating and interpreting their relevance and importance for the composition of the L2 self. During this dynamic process, it is also possible that the L2 self can settle down temporarily due to one or more facets of the L2 self becoming prominent in a given situation.



### 6.3 Motivation and the L2 Motivational Self System

In this section of the chapter, a discussion of the relationships between the four focal students' motivations to study academic English in relation to the L2 Motivational Self System is presented. Thus, it aims to answer research question 3 of the study (see above). While some of the findings are generally in line with the existing literature, others are new and deserve special attention.

#### 6.3.1 The Motivational Function of the Ideal L2 Self

The motivational function of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves has theoretical origins in self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987), which has been discussed in Chapter 2. For the ideal L2 self, Dörnyei (2009b) provides a detailed explanation of its motivational power:

motivation in this sense involves the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's actual self and the projected behavioural standards of the ideal selves. Thus, future self-guides provide incentive, direction and impetus for action, and sufficient discrepancy between these and the actual self initiates distinctive self-regulatory strategies with the aim to reduce the discrepancy. (p. 18)

This explanation highlights the direct motivational function of the ideal L2 self. In this study, this direct motivational function was common among the four focal students. For example, a comment, like 如果一个人失去了想象力的话, 就会失去学习的动力 [if people lose their ability to imagine, they will lose their motivation to learn] (see Chapter 5), is a meta-motivational statement which reflects this direct motivational power. This direct motivational function can be understood from two perspectives: students' attitudes towards English, and the discrepancy between students' actual selves and their imagined selves. First, students' attitudes towards English play an important part in their motivation to learn English. An illustration of this is Zack's comment when he said affection for English was the main motivation for his English study. Second, the notion of discrepancy includes gaps, goals, and hopes. In order to close these gaps, the students became motivated to work out strategic plans to reach their goals and turn their projected self into reality. This direct motivational function of the ideal L2 self seen in this study finds statistical support in

the existing literature. Based on a number of studies investigating the relationship between the L2 Motivational Self System and students' motivation in learning, Dörnyei (2009b) reports that the ideal L2 self was found to have a high correlation with learners' intended learning effort. In other words, previous research indicates that the ideal L2 self is a key contributor that directly motivates students to learn. A more recent meta-analysis of statistical studies was carried out by Al-Hoorie (2018), which also shows that the ideal L2 self is a strong predictor of intended learning effort.

This direct motivational power can also be strengthened when students include the feared L2 self in their ideal L2 selves. The findings have shown that students became more motivated, and even some of them experienced surges in motivation, once they had thought of their feared L2 selves. The boost of motivation due to the feared L2 self has been discussed by Oyserman and Markus (1990). Oyserman and Markus propose that a desired possible self will have maximal motivational force when it is offset by a countervailing feared self in the same domain; for example, as in this study, students who expected good scores in their exams also fear failure in the exams. They argue that this kind of balance could create an optimal motivational situation, because there is a goal to achieve and a goal to avoid (Magid 2014). Along with this study, which supports their argument, a number of studies, such as Magid and Chan (2012), Chan (2014), Magid (2014), and Mackay (2019) also confirm the motivational effectiveness of the feared L2 self. The interview data from this study, however, shows that a desired L2 self and its countervailing feared L2 self do not always guarantee motivation and/or maximal motivation. It depends on the student and the learning contexts, because they can also create demotivation. Crystal, for example, clearly demonstrates this demotivational effect after having fears of losing her Chinese identity while she was constructing her ideal English self. So while for Crystal, English was an opportunity, it was also a threat. The findings also show this demotivational effect is not only limited to the feared L2 self, but may also occur as the result of the ideal L2 self itself; one of the students used a four-character Chinese sentence to describe this disheartening effect with a meta-motivational comment 希望越大，失望越大 [the more you hope the harder you fall]. As with motivation, this demotivated feeling can also surge, and last for a period of time (see Chapter 5).

The demotivational aspect of the ideal L2 self and the feared L2 self raises some issues that are worth considering in relation to the existing literature. The demotivational effect is not something that is included in the original theoretical design of the L2 Motivational Self System. In addition, surges in motivational state are also not discussed as a motivational capacity of the L2 Motivational Self System. This phenomenon, however, is similar in some ways to the notion of directed motivational currents (Muir & Dörnyei 2013). It is apparent, further, that the motivational function of the ideal L2 self can become less direct, and other factors need to be considered, such as the development of a student's L2 identity. The issue of a student's L2 identity is taken up by MacIntyre and his colleagues (MacIntyre, MacKinnon & Clément 2009), who discuss the explanatory power of the L2 Motivational Self System when it is mediated by its integration with identity processes. In all, these issues are at odds with the majority of the L2 Motivational Self System studies, which have applied statistical techniques to demonstrate a direct cause-effect relationship between the motivational function and the ideal L2 self. These issues are further addressed below.

As mentioned earlier, Dörnyei (2009b) draws on discrepancy theory to explain the motivational power of the ideal L2 self. This interpretation has its own historical background. For example, in Markus and Nurius's (1986) view, possible selves act as incentives as ideas about "what is possible for us to be, to think, to feel, or to experience provide a direction and impetus for action, change, and development" (p. 960). However, Markus and Nurius emphasise that not all motives directly instigate behaviour. Instead, we are only motivated by what we believe to be possible, and by the importance assigned to these possibilities. This emphasis is also pointed out by a number of social cognition researchers, who argue that desired future selves do not automatically have motivating properties (Hessel 2015). In response to this emphasis, Dörnyei (2009b, 2014a) proposes a number of key conditions for the full operation of the motivational capacity of the ideal L2 self, such as the ease and frequency of the future self constructed in the mind; a sufficient gap between the current self and the future self; the elaborateness, vividness and plausibility of the future self; and the future self being regularly activated in the learner's working self-concept. However, despite these conditions being considered as prerequisites, little attention has been paid to these proposed conditions, due to the widely adopted practice of employing standardised scales which describe the ideal L2 self at a general level, rather than with specific

descriptions. As a result, there is little knowledge about what type of ideal L2 selves are likely to be linked to self-motivated behaviour, nor how changes in these ideal L2 selves are related to fluctuations in students' motivation (Hessel 2015). The findings from this study provide some of the answers to fill this gap. For example, the interview data showed that a general, non-specific ideal L2 self is a fluid concept, and it only holds a limited motivational capacity. As Crystal explained (see Chapter 5):

离我很远的景象对我学习动机的作用有限，因为它们很虚，摸不着，看不清，我自己也不知道能不能达到。

[the motivational effect of images that are far from my current situation is limited, because they are so vague. Due to this vagueness, it is hard to feel and it is not clear enough. I, myself, am not sure if I can reach it.]

However, when the ideal L2 self becomes more elaborate, and situationally relevant in a specific time frame, it can be converted into motivation. The comment by William (see Chapter 5), for example, who said that once his future situation became clearer, the images of his ideal L2 self were more attractive, and had greater motivational drive, illustrates this change in motivational effect. In a similar finding, You and Chen (2015) looked at changes in motivation in response to changes in the visualisation of students' ideal L2 selves. They reported that when students get better at or gain experience in visualisation skills, it can bring about an increased level of motivation.

However, this study also reveals that, apart from these prerequisite conditions, a number of other factors, such as personal characteristics, can also have an impact on the motivational capacity of the ideal L2 self. Personal characteristics, along with identity, have been identified by motivation researchers (e.g. MacIntyre, MacKinnon & Clément (2009)) as one of the factors to look at when applying self concept to examine L2 learning motivation. This study has revealed that personal characteristics can mediate the motivation capacity of the ideal L2 self. An example from Crystal illustrates this mediation (see Chapter 5):

有近期的目标和计划不等于你就有学习的动力，是要看人的

[When you have your short term goals and plans, it does not necessarily mean you are motivated to study. It depends on who you are].

Comments from Zack's interview (see Chapter 5) further reinforce the effect of this mediation when he said that it depends on how strong the will a person has, and how decisive they are as to whether ideal L2 selves have effects on their motivation. Even though you create your motivation based on an ideal L2 self, he said, it is only temporary.

These interview findings present another way of viewing the relationship between the ideal L2 self and its impact on motivation. The dominant direct cause-effect relationship in existing studies cannot fully explain these complex and dynamic relationships (Ushioda 2020a). Since the motivational capacity of the ideal L2 self is bound by prerequisite conditions, is related to a person's characteristics, is concerned with a person's identity, and is ever changing and developing through time, it is inevitable that the motivation induced from the ideal L2 self becomes less direct, and surges and fluctuates. The motivational influences from the ideal L2 self, further, can be motivating and/or demotivating and sometimes be only temporary.

### **6.3.2 The Motivational Function of the Ought-to L2 Self**

The motivational power of the ought-to L2 self lies in its prevention focus which is concerned with security, safety, and responsibility (Higgins 1998). That is, the ought-to L2 self focuses on prevention, avoiding negative outcomes such as failing to live up to responsibilities. The motivational impact from pressure to fulfil responsibilities and obligations is common across the four focal students. For example, a comment, like 有压力就有动力 [if you have pressure, you will have motivation] (see Chapter 5), is a generic statement which reflects the direct motivational power of the ought-to L2 self. This predictive motivational power, however, does not always find statistical support in existing studies. Al-Hoorie (2018), for example, found in a large-scale quantitative study that the predictive validity of the ought-to L2 self was markedly lower than that of the ideal L2 self in relationship to both intended study effort and academic achievement because, he believes, the ought-to L2 self is related to someone else's expectations rather than one's own ideals, and mainly functions in a prevention focus. That is, when facing imposed responsibilities and obligations by learners' parents or other authoritative figures, learners may simply aim to achieve the minimum requirement to meet these responsibilities and obligation, instead

of maximising their efforts as one might do with one's ideal L2 self. As a result, there is a tendency in the existing literature for the ought-to L2 self to receive less attention than its theoretical counterpart, the ideal L2 self.

In this current study, the notion of the ought-to L2 self subsumes parental responsibilities, societal obligations, and study requirements. These moral features, to some degree, are related to the Chinese learning context. In the Chinese context, learning is regarded not only as a personal responsibility, but also as a fulfilment of family obligations and the needs of others over the needs of the self (Koh, Shao & Wang 2009). This is reflected in Amanda's choice of words such as 内心的折磨 [internal torture] or 不可想象的 [unimaginable] consequences (see Chapter 5) to describe the direct motivational power of responsibilities and obligations if she does not live up to expectations from her parents. Also, as revealed in this study, this kind of pressure can come from society. Crystal's comment 不得不学英文, 大时代逼着您去学 [I have to learn English because the current environment and situation are forcing you to do this] (see Chapter 5) is an example of societal pressure to learn English. This extension of pressure from parents to the wider Chinese society is also observed by You and Chan (2015) when discussing the dynamic nature of the ought-to L2 self.

Pressure from society to study English is an indicator of the increasing importance of English in Chinese society, because English is highly related to social and economic benefits. For example, with English, people are able to communicate with other people while travelling overseas or may be able to secure a higher paid job in the future (Bolton & Botha 2015). Also, the high-pressure, examination-oriented education system in China further consolidates the high-stakes status of English (Huang & Pan 2011). Therefore, the avoidance of failure in meeting study requirements provides motivation for the four focal students. For example, Zack commented that examinations and study duties serve the role of an external warning to remind him of the consequence of failing, and this role brings massive motivation for him to study English (see Chapter 5), which is in line with the prevention focus of the ought-to L2 self. This finding, first, does not support Al-Hoorie's (2018) explanation on the motivational capacity of the ought-to L2 self, which is less motivationally powerful than that of the ideal L2 self. Second, it is also not consistent with Taguchi, Magid and Papi's (2009) study, in which the researchers found that the ought-to L2 self among Chinese students in China focused on meeting others' expectation, rather than avoiding bad

consequences. That is, in the current study, the consequences of not achieving certain goals had an equally and, sometimes, more powerful effect on students than the fear of not meeting the expectations of others.

The above examples have shown how moral features in the Chinese context have a direct motivational impact on the ought-to L2 self and, subsequently, on Chinese students' motivation. Based on the interview data from the four focal students, however, this predictive direct relationship deserves further examination.

First, parental and/or societal responsibilities and obligation or study requirements, as supported by the current study and the existing literature (such as Huang, Hsu & Chen (2015); Taguchi, Magid & Papi (2009)), plays an important role in students' motivation. However, this direct relationship is not always guaranteed, as has already been shown in the findings of this study. An example which illustrates this less direct relationship is William's comments when he was asked about the relationship between his parents' pressure and his motivation to study English. He said that this pressure had little effect on his motivation as it was mediated by his autonomous and proactive learning style (see Chapter 5). This less direct relationship is also evident in study requirements. For example, Zack believed that the motivational power of study requirements depended on a learner's passion for English and learning style. If you do not have passion for English, and you are a passive learner, Zack said, the motivation to study English from study requirements is limited (see Chapter 5). Based on these two examples, it is argued that, as with the ideal L2 self, the direct relationship between the ought-to L2 self and motivation cannot be taken for granted, as this relationship needs to take into account a number of other factors, such as the students' attitude towards English and their English learning style. The finding of this less direct relationship supports Buchtel's (2009) argument that the importance of obligation as a motivator among members of East Asian societies does not just refer to going along with expectations, but also involves a sense of agency and positive self-regard while doing their duties.

This sense of agency and positive self-regard can also be activated when students receive negative comments or attitude towards them from others, and create their counter ought-to L2 selves. This activated counter ought-to L2 self provides motivation for students to

study English, for example, 老师总是说我这个不行那个不行, 我要证明给他看他的看法是错的 [my teacher always complains about me, telling me I cannot do this and I can do that. I will prove to him he is wrong] (from William, see Chapter 5), and 这种想法一直在鼓励自己去学习英语 [this thinking always motivates me to study English] (from Zack, see Chapter 5). These examples not only support the legitimacy of the counter ought-to L2 self in its own right, and its motivational power, which has been discussed in the literature (see e.g. Liu & Thompson (2018); Thompson (2017) and Chapter 2), but also signals a shift in the view of the motivational capacity of the ought-to L2 self from one assuming a direct relationship to one of a complex dynamic systems perspective.

A complex dynamic systems perspective on the motivational function of the ought-to L2 self includes demotivation, surge in motivation, and maintenance of motivation. As mentioned above, demotivation is still an underexplored effect in existing studies that use the L2 Motivational Self System as their theoretical framework. This study, however, fills this gap. As with its theoretical counterpart the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self not only brings motivation, but also can have a demotivational effect. An example which illustrates this complex nature is seen in comments from Crystal, when she described her parents' pressure as one of the factors leading to her failure in her exam, labelling this kind of pressure as 适得其反 [counterproductive] (see Chapter 5). This demotivational effect, as explained below, has its basis in a number of theories, but is not discussed in the L2 Motivational Self System. For example, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 2002) asserts that while more internalised forms of extrinsic motivation are positively related to L2 achievement, less internalised forms are negatively associated with achievement. Indeed, in her study, Mackay (2014) reported that some students interpreted external pressure to learn English as a demotivating factor, which is in line with Crystal's comments. These findings prompt the need to rethink the original conceptualisation of the ought-to L2 self component as a (largely positive) motivational factor, an assumption held in the field since it was formed (Al-Hoorie 2018).

Another aspect of the complex dynamic systems perspective is a conflicting view on the movement of motivation: the surge in motivation and temporarily stable motivation. The surge in motivation is exemplified by Zack's comments when he said that his motivation



went up sharply, especially one or two days before examinations or before the due date for submitting assignments (see Chapter 5). The motivational effect of this surge, as Zack described, is powerful as 它可以让你废寝忘食 [it will let you forget eating and sleeping]. Once activated, this powerful motivational state can remain at this level for a period of time, even after the examinations and the submission date of assignments, as it is sustained by Zack's fears of failing (see Chapter 5). This conflicting view shows how motivation is an elusive term, and is not always easy to define as it has a close relationship with the concept of timescales. This understanding of motivation is supported by De Bot (2015), who argues that "looking at one timescale only may block our view on the larger picture of phenomenon on different timescales" (p. 36). Indeed, as MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) and Waninge *et al.* (2014) show, motivation to learn a language can change from one moment to the next and different types of motivation may be influenced on different timescales. MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) further argue that motivation at different timescales interact with other factors and may vary in strength over time.

In line with this timescale concept and interactive nature, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) propose to add a new timescale to the conceptualisation of the ought-to L2 self. That is, along with the long-term sense of obligation, the ought-to L2 self should also refer to a near-term obligation to perform actions related to language learning. This more immediate sense of the ought-to L2 self is linked closely to the L2 learning experience, reflecting how motivation fluctuates as different types of L2 learning experiences are appraised by learners on an ongoing basis, which will be discussed below.

### **6.3.3 The Motivational Function of the L2 Learning Experience**

Although the important effect of the L2 learning experience on students' motivation has been pointed out as a "situated" and "executed" motive (Dörnyei 2009b, p. 29), very little attention has been paid to this construct in comparison with the ideal and ought-to L2 selves (Al-Hoorie 2018; Dörnyei 2019b; MacIntyre & Serroul 2015), making it the least theorised component in the L2 Motivational Self System (Ushioda 2011). A typical approach to examining this construct in motivation studies has been through surveys, which involves administering a survey to learners, and then examining the causal relationship between this

construct and other criterion measures (for example, learning outcomes), through measures such as correlations, regression and structural equation modelling (Al-Hoorie 2018). Recently, the validity of some of this research has been questioned by a number of researchers (e.g. Beleche, Fairris & Marks (2012); MacNell, Driscoll & Hunt (2015)), as they have become cautious when interpreting these kinds of causal relationships. Despite this cautiousness, the L2 learning experience, claimed by some researchers (e.g. Lamb (2012); Teimouri (2017)), is the strongest predictor for students' motivation in the L2 Motivational Self System. This type of prediction, however, has the risk of concealing the complex and dynamic effect of the L2 learning experiences on students' motivation, which has been revealed in this study. This nature is embedded in its definition, as the L2 learning experience is concerned with the impact of language learning experiences on students' motivation; that is, the impact of teachers, classmates, the curriculum and learning successes and failures as language learners on students' motivation. This, then, suggests that the motivational function of the L2 learning experience is susceptible to the ongoing interactions and evaluations of the learning environment. Indeed, as Nitta (2013, p. 268) concludes:

Second language (L2) classrooms are complex and dynamic spaces, where various agents (e.g. teachers and students) and elements (e.g. tasks, materials and classrooms) continuously interact and co-adapt to one another. As a consequence, student motivation in the classroom emerges as dynamically co-constructed processes that evolve and fluctuate through time.

Nitta's (2013) conclusion highlights the paradigm shift from direct relationships applied in traditional motivation studies that examine the L2 learning experience to a more recent understanding of the complex dynamic nature of L2 learning experiences, in particular, in classrooms where most English learning happens in an EFL setting. This classroom learning context is essential as it provides a good environment to examine this complex dynamic nature of motivation. The importance of such a learning context is pointed out by Waninge and colleagues (2014, p. 706):

If we look at the learning environment of a language classroom and focus on the behaviour of individual learners, their performance will be affected by various layers of contextual influences such as the behaviour of friends and classmates, the

constraints of the classroom space, or the leadership functions exercised by the teacher.

This emphasis illustrates how the L2 learning experience is a dynamic system that includes various contextual factors. Indeed, these contextual factors can play such a decisive role, pushing or pulling the motivation towards or away from a certain state, that they cannot be meaningfully separated from the dynamics of the whole system. This dynamism is also apparent in this study, as some of the students' comments revealed an interrelationship among their ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience (see William and Zack, Chapter 5). This interrelationship is further discussed below.

The interrelationship among the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience is reinforced through two major contextual factors which played a prominent role in students' motivation while they were learning. These two contextual factors are students' classmates and teachers, with whom they spent most of the time. In relation to classmates, this study shows that their motivational effects depend on how the individual student positions him/herself in relation to their classmates. For example, when students have a positive attitude towards their classmates, such as viewing their classmates as a learning model or a good learning competitor, they will be attracted to this image (the ideal L2 self), and feel motivated. The following quote (from Zack, see Chapter 5) confirms this point:

上课的时候，看到别人很勇敢地站起来发言，很自信地走到前面给大家做演讲，自己就觉得很有动力去学习，因为很羡慕这种人，希望自己有天也能够达到这样的英语水平。

[In the class, my classmates express their ideas bravely and do their presentations confidently in front of the whole class. In this immediate learning environment, I feel very motivated to learn because I admire them. Hopefully, one day, I will be able to speak the same level of English.]

This type of motivated behaviour, however, does not last forever. It is subject to change. For example, when students' evaluation of the relationship with their classmates changes from positive to negative, such as when they consider themselves as losers or as less capable, this

sense of L2 self could lead to a decrease in self-confidence, and result in demotivation. For example, some students felt 自卑 [a sense of inferiority] when positioning themselves in comparison with their classmates in terms of English proficiency. This sense of inferiority creates a sense of demotivation. For some, the effect of this type of demotivation is powerful, being described as 自由落体 [a free fall] (see William, Chapter 5), and is not easy to escape. However, demotivation, as with motivation, is a complex issue (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). Negative influences do not necessarily directly correlate with demotivation. Under the same adverse conditions, students show considerable variation in the extent of their demotivation. As an example, although Amanda had the same sense of inferiority as William, this feeling did not lead to demotivation for her. Rather, through her daily English learning experiences with her classmates, she created her ideal L2 self and was determined to close the gap between her and her classmates (see Amanda, Chapter 5). Even with students who were in a demotivated state, however, this is only often temporary and restricted to the particular situation and time. Once the learning environment changes, students self-reflect on the past learning experiences and re-assess the new learning situation, and their motivational state adjusts. The following quote from William (see Chapter 5) illustrates this development of motivational trajectory:

现在回头看，那时候我真的很堕落，因为同学的压力和差距，还有老师的问题。因为我不知道自己在干什么，我恨迷茫。这样的经历其实不是一件坏事情，要看自己怎样去处理，从中我学到了很多。现在的我很有动力去学英文，因为现在有清晰的学习目标了。

[When I look back at that period, I was really in a demotivational stage because of the competition of pressure from my classmates, and the gaps between me and my classmates. Teachers were another reason as well. I did not know what I should do. I was lost. However, I do not think this experience was a terrible thing. It depends on how you deal with it. I have learned a lot from it. Now I am very motivated to learn English because I have very clear study goals.]

Clearly, the transformation from one motivational state to another does not happen automatically. It needs initiators to start this movement. The quote cited above, having new study goals, or ideal L2 selves, helps William to shift from demotivation to

motivation, running counter to the suggestion that “one’s demolished self-concept is very hard to rebuild” (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011, p. 157).

The change of motivational state presented above shows the complex and dynamic nature of students’ motivational trajectories through interactions of the L2 self and L2 learning experience. Beyond that, as mentioned earlier (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), students’ demotivational states are still underrepresented in studies which use the L2 Motivational Self System to examine students’ motivation. This may be because these studies focus too much on external factors, such as the responsibilities of teachers (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011; Falout & Maruyama 2004), nationally imposed curricula, high-stakes assessments, and low investment in language education by governments (Lamb 2017), rather than on the L2 self concept. Thus, this study argues that since the L2 Motivational Self System is based on the self concept and immediate learning experiences, it is equally important to examine demotivational aspects from the self concept, as has been illustrated by this study. This argument, however, does not deny the impact of teachers on students’ demotivation. Studies (e.g. Falout, Elwood & Hood (2009); Kikuchi (2009); Kim (2009a); Sakai & Kikuchi (2009); Zhang (2007)) suggest teacher factors, including teachers’ attitudes, competence, language proficiencies, personalities and styles, are one of the leading contributors to students’ demotivation to learn English. This suggestion is also supported by this study in terms of teacher factors on students’ motivation, which is discussed next.

From the students’ interview data, teachers were seen to have profound impacts on students’ motivation, and the importance of these impacts has been emphasised by one of the focal students, as he held the belief that a good teacher can help him in his study and motivate him to learn, but a bad teacher can do the opposite (see William, Chapter 5). Beyond that, this study also shows that these impacts can become powerful and override other possible motives within the L2 Motivational Self System at the same time, such as future successes (the ideal L2 self), and pressure to pass exams and have good scores (the ought-to L2 self), to dominate students’ motivational state (see Crystal and William, Chapter 5).

Although teachers play such an important role in affecting students’ motivation, this relationship has received little attention (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011; Henry & Thorsen 2018a, 2018b; Ushioda 2014); in particular in studies

which use the L2 Motivational Self System as their theoretical basis. As illustrated in this study, motivating teachers share some similar characteristics, such as an attractive personality, a positive working attitude, and their use of motivating teaching methods. These are non-subject-matter-related factors that cannot be ignored (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). Indeed, teachers being accepted and admired by students can motivate students to learn. An obvious example is when some of the foreign teachers in this study are called 男神 [a male God, a very commonly used term these days in China to describe someone who is very attractive and popular among people]. Appleby (2010, 2013), for example, discusses the attractiveness of male English language teachers in Japan and how sexuality and desire motivate female students to learn. The motivational attraction by these ‘male gods’ is illustrated in Amanda’s quote:

因为你喜欢老师，你上课就不会迟到。上课的时候你就不会走神。你的眼睛总是盯着他，你的思维总是跟着他走。因为你很投入，你甚至会忘记你身边发生的事情。

[Because you like your teachers, you will not be late for their classes. You will not be absent-minded during the lessons. Your eyes are always staring at them, and your mind is always following them. Due to this high level of engagement, you will even forget what has happened around you.]

This type of motivated behaviour is not only triggered by the teacher’s personality, but also by teachers who are knowledgeable. Being knowledgeable is another aspect that motivating teachers possess, and serves as an attractor to motivate students to learn. This point is supported by Crystal who says (see Crystal, Chapter 5):

我觉得 David 很了不起。他懂得很多...他总是有很多东西灌输给你。我觉得上他的课就像探险一样，你会学到很多很多有趣的东西。

[I think David is amazing. He knows a lot...He always has many things to tell you. Attending his lesson is like going on an adventure. You will learn many, many interesting things.]

That a motivating teacher possesses these characteristics is supported in the existing literature. For example, Czikszentmihalyi (1982) points out that the most effective teachers are not the ones who have the most power or status, and they may not even be the most knowledgeable instructors. Instead, they are often the ones who love what they are doing, and who show high devotion to their students, and a passion for teaching. In a more recent study, Day (2004) has emphasised the importance of passion for teaching, based on the belief that a dedicated teacher can make a positive difference to the lives and learning of their students. The common point Czikszentmihalyi (1982) and Day (2004) make touches on the relational nature of teacher and the student relationships. According to them, motivating teachers are not necessarily the ones who are successful in knowledge transfer, but the ones who demonstrate the strength of their commitment to the subject matters and their students. Teacher-student relations, as Appleby (2013) notes, also influence students' desire to learn, and intrinsically motivate students' to pursue the acquisition of knowledge. More examples from the students' interview data support this point. For example, words like 老师为学生付出的努力使我非常感动, 我会努力学习来回报老师的辛勤劳动 [I felt extremely touched by the work the teachers spent on students and motivated to study hard to return the favours] (from Amanda) best reflect how dedicated teachers can have an influence on students' motivation. For some students, these teachers can also be the initiators which help them move from one motivational state to another. For instance, Crystal's university teachers helped her step out from the bottom of her demotivation to regain confidence and become motivated again, as she was inspired by these teachers and re-created her hopes for the future. Crystal's example not only illustrates the impacts from this relationship, but also illustrates the interaction between the L2 learning experience and the ideal L2 self. That is, students' new learning models (ideal L2 selves) emerge through their L2 learning experiences, drawing from the influence of these motivating teachers. It is these learning models that help maintain or change students' motivational state (Amanda's and Crystal's cases respectively). This finding not only sheds light on the motivational effects of imagery connected with teacher-student relationships, which remains largely unexplored (Henry & Thorsen 2018a), but also corresponds to the previous discussion on the complex dynamic nature of the L2 self and its motivational impacts. The impacts on students'

motivation from the teacher-student relationship have been acknowledged by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 191):

In past research teacher motivation has been seen either as an antecedent or (less frequently) as an outcome of student motivation. The reality, however, is that this is not an either/or situation because teacher motivation functions on both roles simultaneously in an ongoing manner. Thus, ... this reciprocal and recursive pattern of causality may be best captured within a complex dynamic systems framework.

In this perspective, recent understanding of students' motivation from the teacher-student relationship has been examined through the relational phenomenon lens (Henry & Thorsen 2019; Hiver & Larsen-Freeman 2020). That is, students' motivation develops through individual interactions in networks and contexts (Ushioda 2009, 2016). The essence of this relational phenomenon lens is the need for relatedness, the feeling of being connected to others. This feeling can function as a powerful motivational force for acting in ways that favour interpersonal relationships (Walton et al. 2012). When needs for relatedness are satisfied, students become better equipped to meet the cognitive and affective demands of their studies (Martin & Dowson 2009). Indeed, if relatedness is not established, even a devoted teacher can have difficulty motivating students, as shown in Crystal's classmates' engagement in the classroom (see Crystal, Chapter 5):

在上课的时候，很多同学都在玩手机，或者是在打瞌睡。其实很多同学不是很喜欢外教，像我这样喜欢外教的只是小数。

[During class, many classmates play with their mobiles or doze off. In fact, many classmates do not like foreign teachers. Students who like foreign teachers, including me, just represent a small proportion.

The students' behaviour shows how straightforward, linear relationships are no longer sufficient to explain teacher-student relationships. In this case, no matter how much work and time devoted teachers spend on students, students' motivation may still remain low, as some students do not relate to foreign teachers. This effect is likened to the 'butterfly effect' (De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor 2007; Waninge, Dörnyei & De Bot 2014), a term used to describe non-linear relationships in complex dynamic systems. As explained in Chapter 2, in non-linear systems, the automatic and predictable cause-effect relationships do not govern the



system's behaviour. Sometimes, a large amount of input does not guarantee equivalent output, whereas at other times, quite the opposite, a minimal change in input may lead to unexpectedly large effects on students' learning. This effect is evident in this study. For instance, Amanda (Chapter 5) commented that a small amount of praise from her teachers on her performance made her feel cheerful, but a small difficulty could discourage her. Although the butterfly effect is considered as one of the important principles of nonlinear system dynamics (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015), few studies have examined this effect in relation to individuals' L2 motivation, such as when and how it happens, and how strong this effect is. This study has shown this effect emerges unexpectedly, responding to moment by moment L2 learning experiences. Also, very often, its motivational impact is dramatic. For example, when Crystal received feedback from her teachers, a few appraisal words such as 很好 [fantastic] or 你在这方面需要下功夫 [you need to improve on this] can create a surge or drop in her motivation.

The phenomenon of surging or dropping motivation is evidence of fluctuation in students' motivation, which is a recurrent theme in the findings. The fluctuation, also, is in line with the related responsiveness perspective to looking at students' motivation; that is, a motivational reaction to the learning environment based on timescales. A good example of fluctuation is illustrated by Amanda's (see Amanda, Chapter 5):

学习经历是一个跌宕起伏的过程，有高有低。当你成功的时候你冲劲十足，但你遇到困难的时候你有挫折感。所以学习的动力很难预测。

[The learning experience is a fluctuating process. Sometimes it is up and sometimes it is down. When you have success in your study, you are highly motivated and full of momentum. But when you are in adverse situations, you feel demotivated. So, it is hard to predict learning motivation.]

This example underlines important aspects of fluctuation. First, the relationship between students' 学习经历 [the learning experience] and 学习的动力 [learning motivation] corresponds to the relational phenomenon perspective. It not only confirms that fluctuation belongs to this related view, but also extends this related view from a teacher-student to a person-learning environment, which has a broad

connection to Ushioda's person-in-context relational (2009) view on L2 motivation. In this person-in-context relational view, a focus has been placed on:

real persons rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. (Ushioda 2009, p. 220).

However, this relational view on L2 motivation, considering motivation as an organic process which emerges from the complex dynamic interrelations, has not received enough attention until recently. Also, this view is not sufficiently incorporated in L2 Motivational Self System studies which disproportionately rely on linear measurement. In this study, focal students' comments on how the learning context has an impact on their motivation represent this person-in-context view, as seen in this example from Zack (see Chapter 5):

我觉得学习的环境很决定动机。比方说上课的时候老师在授课，大家在讨论英语学习，我就很享受这样的学习气氛，我的学习动机就马上上来。当我一个人自己在家学习的话，我会被很多东西吸引过去，例如忙着做饭，看看电视，喝喝茶。这些东西的存在让我忘记学习的动机。同样有想学习的想法，但是在不同的学习条件下它所带来的动力就差别很大。

[In my view, I believe that the learning environment plays a decisive role on motivation. For example, in the class, the teachers teach and students discuss English learning. I really enjoy this learning atmosphere and my motivation increases immediately. However, when I study at home by myself, I am distracted by other things, such as being busy with cooking, watching TV or drinking tea. Because of the existence of these things, I am not motivated to learn. Although I have the same thinking about my study, it has a different motivational force under different learning circumstances.]

The person-in-context view on students' motivation echoes the previous argument that a straightforward linear relationship is no longer sufficient to explain the complex dynamic nature of students' motivation. This insufficiency becomes more profound when the phenomenon of fluctuation in motivation is further considered. In the existing literature (e.g. Piniel & Csizér (2015); Waninge (2015); Waninge, Dörnyei & De Bot (2014)), fluctuation is often used as a synonym for change. For example, You and Chan (2015) use fluctuation and change interchangeably when they discuss the evolution of students' L2 imagery. Moving beyond this, this study illustrates more distinct features of fluctuation in motivation.

First, fluctuation is closely related to timescales. As discussed previously, the timescale concept is an essential element in complex dynamic systems (De Bot 2015). Departing from this point, an equally important notion in timescales is rates of change.

Motivation not only can be expressed in terms of different timescales, but also is reflected in rates of change (De Bot 2015), showing a sudden jump or drop in students' motivational states, in response to immediate learning experiences. Examples from the findings of this study that illustrate this dramatic fluctuation are 来的很猛很强烈 [coming fiercely and strongly], 踩上油门 [step on the accelerator], and 自由落体 [a free fall] (see Chapter 5). This dramatic fluctuation in motivation, based on a relational view and shorter timescales, has a similar reasoning to that found in MacIntyre and Serroul's (2015) study, which examines approach-avoidance motivation during L2 task performance on a per-second timescale.

Second, viewing students' fluctuation in motivation through the shorter timescales relational lens paves the way to understanding the focal students' descriptions of their motivation as 很笼统 [very elusive] and 很难预测 [hard to predict] (see Chapter 5).

An analogy is used by William to illustrate this elusive nature of motivation (see William, Chapter 5):

动力这个东西不好衡量，它没有一个固定的公式去让你计算，它是变幻莫测的。有时候一个小小的事情或什么的，就会让你马上干劲十足，有时候让你就像一个泄气的皮球。

[Motivation is hard to measure as there is not a fixed formula to calculate it. It is unpredictable. Sometimes, even a small thing will have a huge impact on your motivational state. You will become highly motivated straight away or demotivated immediately, just like a deflated ball.]

Third, fluctuation in motivation can not only be understood from rates of change within each timescale, but also from the interaction of each timescale (Byrne & Callaghan 2013; De Bot 2015). That is, viewing motivation as a developmental process, each timescale represents a movement in motivation. When these timescales interact, they demonstrate a fluctuating orientation over time. This fluctuating orientation corresponds with the focal students' comments of 颠簸前进 [moving with fluctuations] and 矛盾中前进 [moving forward in a motivation-demotivation pattern] (see Chapter 5). In particular, the example of 矛盾中前进 [moving forward in a motivation-demotivation pattern] shows a pattern in fluctuating development. A similar finding is also reported in Waninge, Dörnyei and De Bot (2014), in which they examine the development of students' motivation in five minute time blocks in a classroom setting. They discovered that a pattern of decline→increase→increase→decline was uniform among all four participants they examined. A moving pattern was also found among the focal students in this study. For example, Amanda said (see Amanda, Chapter 5):

我的学习动力是在一个有动力-没有动力-有动力这样的循环中不断变化。

[My learning motivation changes and moves in a motivated-demotivated-motivated pattern.]

Regular fluctuating patterns of motivation are reported both in this study, and in the existing literature. These findings reflect situational dynamics (Mercer 2014), which suggests that in a complex dynamic system, although movement is random and unpredictable, there may be patterns which occur in certain situations, thus leading to predictability and stability.

### 6.3.4 Summary – L2 Motivation

The discussion on the motivational functions of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience has answered research question 3 of this study: What are the students' individual motivations for studying EAP courses in China from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System? It reveals that the focal students' academic English learning motivation is more complicated than that described as a simple linear relationship in many L2 Motivational Self System studies. The motivational roles of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are not automatic as suggested by the L2 Motivational Self System. That is, having a generic image of their ideal and/or ought-to L2 selves does not necessarily directly generate students' motivation. Many factors, such as students' attitudes towards academic English, affection for English, personal characteristics, and context can mediate the motivational power of their L2 selves. Second, students' learning motivation cannot be completely understood by just looking at one or certain L2 self representations, such as the ideal L2 self and/or the ought-to L2 self. Interactions between the L2 self representations and the immediate L2 learning experiences create various motivational phenomena, which reflect a complex and dynamic compilation of features. These features include the overriding power of actual L2 learning experiences over L2 self representations, sudden surges and drops in students' motivation, and fluctuation and stability of students' motivation over time. Third, using the concept of timescales and interactions of timescales are found useful for understanding the complex and dynamic features of students' L2 motivation.

Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Motivational Self System theorises the relationship between motivation and self-concept based on Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory (see Chapter 2). That is, motivation is initiated through internally reducing the perceived discrepancy between the current self and the desired future self; and externally complying with the expectations of others (e.g. parents and teachers), bowing to social pressures and demands, and avoiding unnecessary negative consequences. As the literature and some of the findings of this study have shown, this framework works well when the L2 self is conceived of as entailing stable goals and guidelines. However, as revealed in this study, the L2 self is a reflective integrative process, and L2 motivation is a complex and dynamic compilation of features, both of which are not strictly subject to measurement, compliance and avoidance.

In this case, self-discrepancy theory may not be able to provide an adequate theoretical basis to fully explain L2 motivation. The concept of attractor state (Hiver 2015), which was discussed in Chapter 2, seems a more suitable notion for linking the L2 self with L2 motivation.

A number of researchers (e.g. Dörnyei (2014b); Waninge, Dörnyei & De Bot (2014); You & Chan (2015)) have applied the concept of attractor state to explain motivational dynamics in L2 learning, but they have not made it explicit how this concept relates the L2 self to L2 motivation. This needs further elaboration. Based on the findings of this study, the relationship between attractor state and motivational dynamics can be understood in the following way: during the L2 learning process, an individual learner can create multiple facets of his/her L2 self. In a certain situation, certain facets may become prominent and integrate into a harmoniously activated facet. A sense of relatedness to this activated facet turns into an attractor to stabilise the motivational movement, to leave the student in a state of motivation or demotivation. Changes in facets originating from interactions with learning experiences can create fluctuations in motivation as responses to these changes. It is also possible that in such a situation, certain facets may become active, but in a competing format because some of them are desirable, while others are feared and/or avoidable. Fluctuations in motivation, thus, are the combination of drags and pulls of desirability, fears, and avoidance.

Realising L2 motivation is a complex and dynamic compilation of features, it is not realistic to use just one theoretical concept to explain these features, such as sudden surges and drops in motivation, or the overriding power of the immediate learning experiences on students' motivation. These features are more inclined to be explained from a relational view of motivation. Also, contradictory features of L2 motivation, such as fluctuation, stability, predictiveness and un-predictiveness, can be examined through the concept of timescales. Thus, rather than relying on a single synthetic model to investigate L2 motivation, it is more productive to apply a variety of theoretical notions from the complex dynamic systems perspective to understand L2 motivation.

## **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the qualitative data in relation to previous research on motivation. The study used findings from the quantitative data and matters discussed in the research literature that the quantitative data did not reveal as the starting point for the interviews, so as to provide a more in-depth analysis of the students' motivations. In particular, the chapter has discussed the findings of the nature of the students' L2 selves, and their L2 motivation from the complex dynamic systems perspective. Drawing on this perspective, this study views the L2 self as a reflective integrative process, and considers L2 motivation as a complex, dynamic and interactive compilation of features. These understandings have implications for knowledge advancement in terms of theory, methodology and pedagogy. These three aspects are the focus of the next chapter, Conclusion and Implications.

# Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

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## 7.1 Chapter Overview

This study investigated students' motivation for studying EAP courses at a language centre at a university in China. Commencing with the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei 2009b) then moving to a complex and dynamic perspective (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008), such as the self as a complex dynamic system (Mercer 2014), a person-in-context relational view (Ushioda 2009), and the idea of motivation as a relational system (Hiver & Larsen-Freeman 2020), this study explored the nature of the L2 self and features of the L2 motivation of the Chinese students who took part in this study.

The first three chapters of the thesis set up the foundation for the study: introducing the research topic (Chapter 1); providing the background to the study (Chapter 2); and outlining the research design and methods employed in the study (Chapter 3). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 addressed the study's research questions, and presented a discussion of the findings in relation to previous research on the topic. This final chapter briefly summarises the findings of the study, and based on this summary, illustrates the importance of the study. The chapter also presents implications of the study for methodological and pedagogical purposes. The chapter ends by discussing the limitations of the study and making suggestions for further research.

## 7.2 The Nature of the L2 Self and Features of L2 Motivation

This section of the chapter briefly summarises the key findings from the previous three chapters that have addressed the study's research questions. The results of the study support the complex dynamic systems perspective (see Chapter 2, Background to the Study) and a relational systems view of L2 self and L2 motivation.



### 7.2.1 Brief Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of the L2 self and its relationship with the students' motivation to learn academic English. Three research questions guided the study:

1. What is the nature of the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience when studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China?
2. How do the students' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience relate to one another in this particular context?
3. What are the students' individual motivations for studying the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System?

To answer these three research questions, a mixed methods research design in a sequential order was used, with a primary focus on the qualitative data. Quantitative analysis provided an initial view of the nature of the Chinese students' ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves and L2 learning experience and the relationships between these three constructs, showing that, in general, the students had positive attitudes towards their ideal L2 selves, ought-to L2 selves and L2 learning experiences. In addition, students were more attracted to the ideal L2 self than to the ought-to L2 self. In terms of relationships, the correlation analysis showed how these three constructs were related. At a more detailed level, for each statement related to the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self, the analysis of the questionnaire data illustrated that students did not value these statements at the same level. The findings suggest, further, that students' concepts of their ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves were multifaceted in nature, with different facets having various levels of visibility and vividness in terms of their proximity and relatedness to the students.

The interview data confirmed the quantitative findings, and more importantly, further revealed the nature of the focal students' L2 selves. The most prominent finding that emerged from the interviews is that the focal students viewed the nature of their L2 selves as “看不清，摸不透，很模糊” [cannot see clearly, do not have a tangible form, becomes very elusive]. This view of the Chinese students provides an illustration of how they see

themselves in terms of their relationship with English in their particular setting, moving beyond the finely defined categories which were discussed in Chapter 2, Background to the Study, such as face, employment, responsibility, family, and pressure that are often closely related to Chinese students. Also, this finding vindicates the use of the complex dynamic perspective to understand the students' L2 selves. First, in terms of complexity, the study shows that the students had a vast array of different L2 selves, such as a subject-related L2 self (for example, as business representatives or business negotiators for Chinese companies, or promoters of Chinese companies to the world), a positive L2 self (a bilingual self, a knowledgeable self, a progressive self, a globalised self), a negative L2 self (a feared self, a failed self), a rebellious L2 self (escape self, anti-self, counter ought-to self), and past L2 self. Second, the study demonstrates the dynamic nature of the L2 self. In contrast to the traditional view of Chinese students' English selves as isolated categories, this study reveals that different representation of the L2 self are interrelated through interactions with various factors which surround the focal students. Thus, the representations of their L2 selves can be consistent, contradictory, or competing with one other. Also, through these interactions, the students' L2 selves have the agency to react, reflect and revise, leading to the emergence of new L2 facets. Based on these findings, the nature of the students' L2 selves, a reflective, integrative process is proposed in this study (research Questions 1 and 2).

The Chinese students described L2 motivation as “很笼统，很难预测” [very elusive and hard to predict], which also shows its complexity and dynamism. A number of statements from the interview data contributed to this description. Beyond this, however, the relationship between the students' L2 selves and their L2 motivation cannot be fully explained by the concept of self-discrepancy, nor by a simple cause-effect model (Ushioda 2020a), as has been the case in many L2 Motivational Self System studies. That is, while students reported that having an ideal L2 self (imagining getting a high score in exams), or an ought-to L2 self (having pressure from parents) directly motivated them to learn English, they also stated that this effect was mediated by many other factors which kept changing over time, such as personal attitudes and affection towards academic English, personal identity, emotion, and the learning context. In addition, the demotivating experiences reported by the students in this study showed that the L2 self, in response to matters such as unrealistic study goals or too much pressure from authorities, or negative L2 learning

experiences, such as failure in learning, could also produce demotivation. The experiences of motivation, demotivation and re-motivation from the students add another layer of difficulty to describing their motivation. The students' relational view on their L2 motivation further complicates this phenomenon. This relational view focuses on students' immediate responses to their learning experiences. In these learning experiences, a student's motivation is influenced by their positional relationships to others (e.g. classmates, teachers), to the actual learning environment, and/or the social and cultural learning context. These influences could overpower the motivational function of some representations of the L2 self, such as the ideal self and the ought-to self, trigger motivational fluctuation, such as motivation and demotivation, intensify motivational impact, such as sudden surges and drops, and predict a temporary motivational state and motivational patterns. Last but not least, the introduction of timescales, and the interactions of each timescale contribute a developmental aspect to understanding L2 motivation. Thus, based on these experiences, the focal students' L2 motivation is considered as a developmental ensemble of features which impact on their motivations for studying the EAP courses they were attending in China (Research Question 3).

### **7.2.2 Extending Understanding of the L2 Self and L2 Motivation**

The above brief summary not only answers the research questions, but also provides empirical illustrations of the complex dynamic systems perspective on the L2 self and L2 motivation, which also has been argued for by other researchers (e.g. Mercer (2014); Ushioda (2020a); Hiver & Larsen-Freeman (2020); Papi & Hiver (2020)). Further, it serves as a platform to extend our understanding of the L2 self and L2 motivation. Central to this understanding is that the L2 Motivational Self System alone is not sufficient to explain the complex and dynamic phenomena of the L2 self and L2 motivation, as revealed by the Chinese students who took part in this study. This insufficiency has been discussed from the point of view of complex dynamic systems theory in this study. Thus, this study proposes the nature of the L2 self as a reflective integrative process and L2 motivation as a developmental ensemble of features. Three aspects need to be elaborated on in relation to this proposal: integrativeness, network, and time. First is the concept of integrativeness. As discussed in Chapter 2, Background to the Study, the most contested notion in L2

motivation is the definition of integrativeness. Gardner and Lambert (1972) use the term integrativeness to describe L2 motivation as an intention to become part of a target language community. Dörnyei (2009b) reinterprets integrativeness, drawing on the self concept as a motivational power that narrows the gap between a person's current L2 self and their imagined L2 self. Recently, Claro (2020) provides an evaluation of the contributions of these two foremost concepts in L2 motivation research:

But the ideal L2 self cannot replace integrativeness. Integrativeness (Gardner) and the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei) are complementary forms of identification that differ in locus of identification. Integrativeness represents identification with an external locus (role models and reference groups), while the ideal L2 self represents identification with an internal locus. (Claro 2020, p. 253).

This evaluation shows how integrativeness is still relevant, which is supported by the findings of this study, and by Dörnyei (2020a). In this study, integrativeness can be understood as, for the L2 self, an integration of various representations of the self, and for L2 motivation, a compilation of different motivational features, such as fluctuation, temporal stability, sudden surge and drops, and demotivation.

Also in this study, integrativeness cannot simply be interpreted as a sum of different L2 self facets and L2 motivational features. Drawing on the self concept, a reflective agent, this study moves away from the view of understanding the L2 self and L2 motivation as finely structured constructs that can be measured by simple cause-effect relationships. As seen in this study, a self concept involves many factors in relation to academic English learning, such as cognitive, affective, evaluative factors. These factors interact at the individual level, as well as between individuals and the learning and social contexts which lead to the construction of a complex dynamic L2 self and L2 motivation network. In this network, relations and interactions are key. While Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) used the metaphor of a knitted net to describe different understandings of L2 motivation between various existing theories, saying "If we lift it [the net] up by holding different knots, very different shapes will emerge" (p. 9), this study uses a similar metaphor to understand L2 self and L2 motivation: different representations of the L2 self and L2 motivational behaviour seem to reflect different knots within a closely related network. This network view of the L2 self and L2 motivation is in line with Hiver and Larsen-Freeman's (2020) systems view, which argues

that “using systems thinking is a primary way” (p. 298) to move understandings forward of complex and dynamic scenarios, such as L2 motivation.

The final key aspect of this proposal is time. The inclusion of time, and the interaction of different timescales have helped us to understand the temporal nature, adaptive changes and inconsistent views on students’ L2 selves and L2 motivational behaviour which have been seen in this study. Also, with the application of time, this study has illustrated how, during the interactions of multiple factors, some factors play more prominent roles at certain times, but not at others. The association with time allows this study to take a more developmental view on the L2 self and L2 motivation which aligns, as well, with the complex dynamic perspective.

### **7.3 Implications for Methodology and Pedagogy**

Understanding the L2 self and L2 motivation as a reflective integrative process and a developmental ensemble of features is important both for research methodology and language learning pedagogy. This section discusses these implications.

#### **7.3.1 Implications for Researching the L2 Self and L2 Motivation**

Issues related to researching complexity and dynamics have been highlighted by many researchers. For example, Dörnyei (2014b, p. 90) states “in complex dynamic systems change and evolution are often nonlinear, which makes the behaviour of such systems unpredictable and therefore nonresearchable”. This statement reflects a dilemma currently faced by many researchers who commit themselves to researching complex dynamic systems (Hiver & Al-Hoorie 2020). Thus, although the term complex dynamic systems sounds attractive and promising, most of the empirical research on this has still followed traditional, non-dynamic approaches (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015), and thus presented a limited view on the L2 self and L2 motivation.

The difficulty of researching complex dynamic systems becomes even more pronounced if one seeks to attain as much of a holistic view as possible of the L2 self and L2 motivation. In reality, however, it is not feasible to research the L2 self and L2 motivation in their entirety,

as they are developing. As a result, boundaries need to be set, and units of analysis need to be selected (Mercer 2014). Classroom-oriented methods can be a good starting point as most L2 learning is organised around the classroom. Also, a classroom has a spatial boundary. Within this boundary, individual students can be chosen to analyse the development of their L2 selves and L2 motivation, examining dynamic stability, fluctuations and conflicted movements as the result of various types of interaction within the classroom. To this end, the classroom itself can be considered as a complex dynamic system. It also needs to be pointed out that a boundary represents only a fragment of the spectrum. Other fragments still need to be brought in to gain a fuller picture of a student's L2 self and L2 motivation.

Another concept which is relevant to this discussion is time. Time is elusive (De Bot 2015) and context dependent (Mercer 2012). That means how time is defined, understood and experienced can differ from person to person. This subjectivity of time that an individual experiences is particularly significant in research into the L2 self and L2 motivation because the complexity and dynamics of the L2 self and L2 motivation can be examined on a longer timescale, such as a semester, a year or years, focusing on the development of the L2 self and the movement of L2 motivation along a learner's L2 learning path. They can also, however, be examined across shorter timescales, such as a second or a minute, concentrating on the intensity of changes, including rises and falls in motivation as a student engages in a learning task.

With regard to time, there are two research approaches worth mentioning: the concurrent approach, and the retrospective approach. The concurrent approach involves using traditional qualitative methods, such as keeping diaries and interviews over an extended period to enable multiple levels of dynamics across various sub-timescales to be looked at; these can be combined to create a comprehensive picture of the L2 self and L2 motivation (Mercer 2012). In this approach, case studies (Duff 2008; Yin 2018) work well as they can provide a detailed focus and in-depth view of a bounded case. For a retrospective approach, simulated recall methods can be used to examine short-term situational dynamics. An example of this is video recording learning activities with selected research participants. Immediately following the activities, the participants are shown the video and asked to talk about their L2 self, L2 motivation and the factors which influence(d) their learning

motivation. The answers are then collated and analysed to examine the concept of the L2 self and changes in the students' learning motivation.

There are, of course, limitations in the above mentioned research approaches and methods, such as memory bias and exaggerations in self-reported data. These approaches, however, are an attempt to move away from easily administrated cause-effect analyses in order to understand the complexity and dynamics of the L2 self and L2 motivation that was revealed in this study.

In sum, the implications of the study for researching the L2 self and L2 motivation can be summarised in the following way. It is crucial to explore the multifaceted nature of the L2 self and interactions among these facets. Context is not an isolated variable, but an integral part of the individual self system. These recognitions underline the importance of individuals-based research, and offer a way of moving towards more qualitative-oriented and fine-grained approaches and methods for examining L2 motivation. These recognitions also highlight the significance of change and development that can happen in the short and the long term. A timescale concept, thus, need to be incorporated into the design and development of these research approaches and methods.

### **7.3.2 Implications for Teaching**

The overarching argument of this study is that a student's sense of their L2 self and their L2 motivation is complex and dynamic, and often its evolution is difficult to predict. In the face of such complex dynamics, it is misleading to think that a student's L2 self is a stable personal trait, using a clear-cut and stable framework to describe his/her motivation. This argument has implications for language teachers and for their practices. Although as teachers, we cannot teach students how to feel about themselves as language learners, we can create conducive, positive learning conditions to nurture the sense of their L2 self and use this self-based approach to motivate students within the complex classroom environment.

In L2 classes, teachers need to consider the dynamic nature of the classroom and the diversity of their learner groups. It is essential that teachers realise motivational differences

between students, which are dynamic and may at certain times be changing. Thus, an accepting and cooperating environment should be fostered, so that students feel part of a group. As group relations (e.g. accepting, knowing one another, cooperating, competing, respecting individual space) emerge through interactions between students (with the guidance of the teachers), a supportive and cooperative classroom can be established. This learning environment is important, as it can enhance students' learning motivation. For example, in a supportive learning environment, students do not feel threatened or embarrassed by making mistakes. Rather, they will learn that making mistakes is a natural part of the L2 learning process. On the contrary, in a hostile learning environment, their self-esteem will be damaged, and a negative L2 self may become dominant. Being dynamic, classrooms are also subject to change, with some students leaving, new members joining, a change of teachers, changes in forms of assessments, and changes in policies from the education institution. Teachers (and students) need to adjust to these changes to maintain a productive learning environment.

Drawing on teachers' L2 self development and L2 learning experiences, teachers can discuss these experiences as a way of relating to their students. They can share their learning stories with their students, emphasising that it is natural to have motivated and demotivated learning moments, in order to encourage students' beliefs in themselves. If teachers display caring and supportive behaviours, it is hoped that students will follow suit with one another.

In terms of being a facilitator of learning, a piece of advice drawn from this study is that teachers need to understand that students' motivation is not always stable, but can fluctuate. A highly motivated student can become bored after a long grammar explanation, and an unmotivated student may suddenly become interested in an engaging learning activity. Thus, teachers need to take a proactive role and consciously use strategies to promote classroom motivation. For example, teachers can use multiple ways of enhancing students' language-related values and attitudes by using materials that are related to their lives outside the classroom. This is an example of how the concept of attractor state can be applied in the classroom. Teachers also need to avoid negative attractor states, such as decontextualised drilling or long grammar rules clarifications.



A final point is that, from a self-approach, teachers should have regular consultation times with individual students to talk about issues raised in their learning. During the consultation time, teachers can provide feedback to students and students can provide teachers with feedback on their learning experiences. This feedback can have a particularly strong impact on student's self-appraisal, because it is informative and urges both teachers and students to reflect constructively on areas which need further attention. Also, by constructing an atmosphere of trust and engagement, feedback can promote a positive self-concept and self-confidence in the student.

The above implications for teaching, however, are suggested principles, not fixed guidelines for language teachers to follow as there is no one-size-fits-all solution, as there are always limitations faced by teachers such as, to name a few, social and cultural values in certain learning contexts, and practical and logistical issues. These suggestions, however, should raise awareness among teachers of the inherent complexity and dynamics of students' L2 selves and L2 motivation in instructed L2 learning environments, and successful motivational teaching practices to build into them.

#### **7.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies**

Despite the contributions this study has made to L2 motivation research, it was, however, limited in scope. First, the quantitative component was based on non-probability sampling procedures which restricted the generalisability of the quantitative findings of the study. For the selection of participants for the interviews, while the four focal students were carefully chosen based on an identification of the learner archetypes technique, as recommended by Chan, Dörnyei and Henry (2015), the study may have excluded students who were not motivated in their learning of English. This excluded data may have the potential to yield findings related to the nature of L2 self and L2 motivation in different dimensions that have not been accounted for in the current study. Second, also related to sampling, the participants in this study were only older teenagers. Younger teenagers and older adult learners might present a different picture of L2 selves and L2 motivation. Data from a larger sample of students, further, and for a longer period of time would provide deeper insights into the development of the L2 self and L2 motivation at both the individual and the group

levels. Third, the study used metaphors imported from the natural sciences, such as attractor state and the butterfly effect to describe the complexity and dynamics of students' L2 selves and L2 motivation. A potential problem here is whether these metaphors can be meaningfully employed to describe human beings' behaviour. For example, Byrne and Callaghan (2014) have argued that attractor states are well described by equations in abstract topological spaces, but for the social sciences, they are "real regions in real state spaces" (p. 73). Perhaps in the future, motivation researchers need to create terms which can match up with these metaphors.

The implications and limitations of this study also open up a number of possibilities for future studies. In this study, the selection of participants for the interviews excluded other types of students, such as those who were showing no motivation to learn. Future studies may focus on a comparison of learners' L2 self and L2 motivation between different types of learners. Also, more emphasis could be placed in L2 motivation research on matters such as personality, emotion, and passion, as recommended by Dörnyei (2020b).

This study did not pay particular attention to the classroom setting except when this was reported on by the students. Future studies could use the classroom setting as the prime research context and investigate factors within this setting which help to further understand the complex and dynamic nature of students' L2 selves and L2 motivation. In addition, this study only focused on students. As teachers play a salient role in these settings, their perspectives should also be included in future studies.

In terms of research methodology, the study only used questionnaires and interviews. Other data would be useful for this kind of study such as dairies and online logs. It would also have been useful to have a longitudinal component to the study in order to capture the dynamic nature of learners' motivations. This, unfortunately, was not possible due to the amount of time I had in China to collect my data. Future studies are also encouraged to use the methods mentioned in the implications section of this chapter (7.3.1), and other research methods, such as new technologies and computers to track and record the trajectory of learners' motivation movements and to invite students to talk about these movements. In addition, this study employed a mixed methods approach, something that has recently been criticised by L2 motivation researchers. Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2020), for example, propose that an integrated approach be adopted in motivation studies, in order to avoid the

philosophical and ontological problems inherent in mixed methods research. This is something that should be considered in future L2 motivation studies.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

To conclude, then, while the quantitative findings of the study showed that the students, overall, had a positive attitude towards their ideal and ought-to L2 selves, a closer look at the questionnaire responses revealed that the students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves were both varied and multifaceted. The analysis of the focal student data, further, found the nature of the students' L2 selves to be changeable, dynamic and responsive to the particular learning environment. In addition, the students' motivational movements were both situated and fluctuated over time. These findings contrast with earlier research into the L2 Motivational Self System which has frequently portrayed learner motivation as something that is stable and uniform across settings. By contrast, the study showed that the students' motivations were non-linear, and that having a certain ideal and/or ought-to self did not necessarily guarantee that a student would be motivated to learn. The study also found that the students' L2 learning experiences were extremely powerful and could, on occasions, override students' views of their ideal and ought-to selves. The study, then, argues that research that examines second language students' self concepts and their motivation to learn needs to be considered from both contextual and complex dynamic perspectives (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015; Ushioda 2015, 2020a). L2 motivation studies, thus, need to move from a view of the L2 self and L2 motivation as being both stable and predictive to one that takes account of their situated, responsive, and sometimes fluctuating and unpredictable nature.

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# Appendix 1: Questionnaire

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## 问卷调查

我诚邀您参加由悉尼科技大学人文和社会科学学院主办的关于“中国学生学习学术英文的动机”的问卷调查。请根据您的实际情况填写，答案没有对错之分。本问卷结果仅供研究之用。您的支持对本研究能否取得成功至关重要。非常感谢您的帮助！

### 第一部分

请选择或填写以下的信息：

1. 中文姓名：\_\_\_\_\_
2. 如果您有英文名，请提供您的英文名：\_\_\_\_\_
3. 性别：男/女(请画圈)
4. 年龄：\_\_\_\_\_
5. 您来自中国哪个地方：\_\_\_\_\_
6. 这个地方属于哪一类(请画圈)：A 一线城市（北上广深） B 省会城市 C 一般城市  
D 城镇 E 乡村
7. 您是在哪里完成您的高中：\_\_\_\_\_
8. 您在家里跟您父母说什么语言：\_\_\_\_\_
9. 您爸爸的职业是什么：\_\_\_\_\_
10. 您妈妈的职业是什么：\_\_\_\_\_
11. 您在这个课程里学习了多久：\_\_\_\_\_
12. 您到过国外旅游吗？如果有，请写下您到过的地方和国家

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## 第二部分

在下面各题中，请在您认为合适的一个数字上画圈，表明您对该陈述的认可程度。请不要遗漏。

很不同意	不同意	不太同意	基本同意	同意	很同意
1	2	3	4	5	6

例如：如果您很同意以下说法，就请在数字“6”上画圈：

我很喜欢游泳。	1	2	3	4	5	6
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1. 对我来说学习学术英文很重要，因为我现在需要用学术英文来学习。	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. 对我来说学习学术英文很重要，因为我要通过考试。	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. 对我来说学习学术英文很重要，因为我要继续深造。	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. 我可以想象到自己将来能够熟练地使用学术英文。	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. 我可以想象到自己将来能够成为学术英文界的一员。	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. 我可以想象到自己能像英语为母语的人那样使用学术英文。	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. 我一定要努力学习学术英文因为我不想取得不好的英文成绩。	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. 我一定要努力学习学术英文因为我想取个好的雅思成绩。	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. 学习学术英文对我来说很重要，如果我学不好，我会被其他人认为我的学习能力不强。	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. 在学术英文取得好成绩对我来说很重要，因为我可以得到父母和亲戚的认同。	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. 在学术英文取得好成绩对我来说很重要，因为我可以得到老师的认同。	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. 在学术英文取得好成绩对我来说很重要，因为我可以得到同学们的认同。	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. 我喜欢英文课的学习气氛。	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. 当我在学习学术英文的时候，我感觉时间过得很快。	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. 我觉得学习学术英文很有趣。	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. 我有好的英文老师来帮助我的学术英语学习。	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. 在英文学习过程中，我得到其他同学的帮助。	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. 在英文学习上，我花很多时间。	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. 在课外，我会找机会练习英文。	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. 总的来说，我积极学习学术英文。	1	2	3	4	5	6

感谢您的合作！

English Translation

Questionnaire

I would like to ask you to help us by participating in a survey conducted by the Faculty of Art and Social Science of the University of Technology, Sydney, to better understand Chinese students' motivation for studying English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in China. This questionnaire is not a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. I am interested in your personal opinion. The results of this survey will be anonymized and used only for research purposes so please give your answers sincerely to ensure the success of this project. Thank you very much for your help!

**Part I**

Please provide the following information by circling the answer or writing your response in the space.

1. Your full Chinese name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. If you have an English name, please provide your English name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your gender: Male/Female (please circle)
4. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where do you come from? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which category does your place belong to? (please circle)  
First layer city    Provincial city    Normal city    Town    Countryside
7. Where did you finish your senior high school? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What language(s) do you speak to your parents at home: \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your mother's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many weeks/months have you been in this EAP program: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever travelled overseas? If yes, name the country/countries  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2**

In this part, I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any items.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Example: If you strongly agree with the following statement, do as follows:

I like swimming very much.	1	2	3	4	5	6
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1. Learning academic English is important to me because I need it for my current study.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Learning academic English is important to me because I need it to pass my exams.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Learning academic English is important to me because I would like to do further studies in English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I can imagine myself being able to use academic English skilfully in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I can imagine myself as a legitimate member of an academic English community in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I can imagine myself using academic English as if I were a native speaker of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I have to study academic English because I don't want to get bad marks in it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I have to study academic English because I want to get a good IELTS score.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Studying academic English is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of academic English, I'll be considered a weak learner.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Being successful in academic English is important to me so that I can please my parents and relatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Being successful in academic English is important to me so that I can please my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Being successful in academic English is important to me so that I can get approval from my peers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I like the atmosphere of my academic English classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I think time passes quickly while studying academic English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I find learning academic English interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I have good teacher(s) to help me with my academic English study.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I have support from my classmates for my academic English study.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I expend a lot of effort in learning academic English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I find ways to practice my English outside class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Overall, I think I am an active academic English learner.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

# Appendix 2: Interview Questions

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面试的问题（在面试开始前，请学生先自我介绍自己（名字，什么专业，年级，爱好），来建立一个轻松的面试环境）

- 1 学术英语扮演的角色
  - 1.1 是什么吸引您来学习学术英语？
  - 1.2 在英语学习的过程中，您觉得学什么会困难？
  - 1.3 在英文学习的过程中，您觉得学什么会容易？
  - 1.4 您是否认为英语会在某种程度上影响自己的未来？
  
- 2 您自己
  - 2.1 作为一名学术英文的学生，您能描述一下你自己的学习表现吗？
  - 2.2 作为一名学术英文的学生，您期待自己能学到什么东西？
  - 2.3 这些期待有没有随着课程的开展而改变呢？
  - 2.4 作为一名学术英文的学生，您觉得有什么目标一定要达到的？
  - 2.5 在学习过程中，您有哪些担心
  - 2.6 这些担心有没有进一步推动你去学习？如果有，您能解释一下吗？如果没有，请说明原因。
  
- 3 计划
  - 3.1 完成了这门课程后，您有什么学习计划？
  - 3.2 这些计划有没有随着时间而改变？如果有，请解释一下。
  - 3.3 这些计划是怎样激励您学习英语的？
  - 3.4 如果您的英文成绩没满足下一阶段学习的要求，您会有什么样的感觉？
  - 3.5 如果您的英文成绩没满足下一阶段学习的要求，您父母会怎样想？
  - 3.6 如果您的英文成绩没满足下一阶段学习的要求，您的同学会怎样看待您？
  - 3.7 如果您的英文成绩没满足下一阶段学习的要求，您的老师会怎样看待您？
  
- 4 将来
  - 4.1 您能想象到您将来是如何使用学术英语的吗？您能描述一下吗？
  - 4.2 这些想象的场景是怎样激励您去学习英语的？
  - 4.3 这些想象会不会不断地变化呢？如果是，您能解释一下吗？如不是，您也能解释一下吗？
  
- 5 外教
  - 5.1 您对外教有什么看法？
  - 5.2 您对他们提供的学习帮助和支持有什么看法？
  - 5.3 在这些支持和帮助当中，您觉得哪些最有效？
  - 5.4 在这些支持和帮助当中，您觉得哪些效果不太显著？
  - 5.5 您觉得外教是怎样激励您学习英语的？
  
- 6 本地的英语老师
  - 6.1 您对本地的英文老师有什么看法？
  - 6.2 您对老师提供的学习支持和帮助有什么看法？
  - 6.3 在这些支持和帮助当中，您觉得哪些最有效？
  - 6.4 在这些支持和帮助当中，您觉得哪些效果不太显著？
  - 6.5 您觉得本地的英文老师怎样激励您学习英语的？

- 7 学术英语课堂的学习经验
  - 7.1 您对课堂上的学习内容有什么看法？
  - 7.2 您对课堂上的学习活动有什么看法？
  - 7.3 课堂上的学习内容能激发您学习英文吗？请解释。
  - 7.4 课堂上的学习活动能激发您学习英文吗？请解释。
  
- 8 课堂外的英文学习经验
  - 8.1 您在课外有接触英语或参与任何的英语学习活动吗？如果有，请举例。
  - 8.2 您觉得这些课外活动是怎样激励您学习学术英语？
  
- 9 总的英语学习经验
  - 9.1 您能概述一下到目前为止，您课内学习学术英语的经验吗？
  - 9.2 您能概述一下到目前为止，您课外学习学术英语的经验吗？
  - 9.3 这些经验怎样激励您学习学术英语？
  - 9.4 在学习过程中，您最担忧的是什么？

## English Translation

**Interview Prompts with Chinese Students (before the interview, I will let students do the self introduction-their names, majors, which year, hobbies to establish light interview atmosphere)**

1. Role of academic English
  - 1.1 What motivates you to study academic English?
  - 1.2 What do you find difficult about studying academic English?
  - 1.3 What do you find easy about studying academic English?
  - 1.4 To what extent do you believe your future opportunities would be affected by academic English?
2. Yourself
  - 2.1 How would you describe your performance as an academic English learner?
  - 2.2 What are some of the things you hope to achieve as an academic English learner?
  - 2.3 Are these hopes changing over the course?
  - 2.4 What are some of the things you expect to achieve as an academic English learner?
  - 2.5 What are some of your fears as an academic English learner?
  - 2.6 To what extent do these fears further motivate you to study? Please explain why or why not?
3. Plans
  - 3.1 What are your study plans after this course?
  - 3.2 Are these plans changing from time to time? If so, why?
  - 3.3 How do these plans motivate you to study academic English?
  - 3.4 How would you feel if you don't get the English grades you need for your future study?
  - 3.5 How would your parents feel if you don't get the English grades you need for your future study?
  - 3.6 How would your fellow students feel if you don't get the English grades you need for your future study?
  - 3.7 How would your teachers feel if you don't get the English grades you need for your future study?
4. Future
  - 4.1 In the future, how do you imagine yourself using academic English? Can you describe this?
  - 4.2 Does this image influence the way you study academic English?
  - 4.3 Is this image changing from time to time? If so, how and why?
5. Foreign Teachers
  - 5.1 What are your views of foreign teachers?
  - 5.2 What do you think of the support you get from your foreign teachers?
  - 5.3 What are the most useful aspects of this support?
  - 5.4 Are there any less useful aspects of this support?
  - 5.5 To what extent do foreign teachers motivate you to learn English?
6. Local Chinese Teachers
  - 6.1 What are your views of local Chinese teachers?
  - 6.2 What do you think of the support you get from your local Chinese teachers?
  - 6.3 What are the most useful aspects of this support?
  - 6.4 Are there any less useful aspects of this support?
  - 6.5 To what extent do your local Chinese teachers motivate you to learn English?
7. The EAP Classroom Learning Experience
  - 7.1 What are your views of the classroom resources?
  - 7.2 What are your views of the classroom learning activities?
  - 7.3 Do the classroom resources motivate you to learn? Please explain.
  - 7.4 Do the classroom learning activities motivate you to learn? Please explain.
8. English Learning Experience Outside the Classroom
  - 8.1 Do you have any involvement with English outside the classroom? If yes, please describe it.
  - 8.2 In what ways does your involvement with English outside the classroom motivate you to study academic English?
9. Overall English Learning Experience
  - 9.1 How would you describe your experience of studying academic English inside class so far?
  - 9.2 How would you describe your experience of studying academic English outside class so far?
  - 9.3 How do these experiences motivate you to study academic English?
  - 9.4 What do you most worry about in your academic English study?