MOTIVATION, IMAGINATION, AND THE FUTURE SELF IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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A Project Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

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May 2017

ABSTRACT

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This M.A. project explores the theoretical role and classroom implications that imagination has on motivating human behavior, specifically as it relates to second language development. The focus of this project is to examine the current research regarding how imagination and visions of a future self may contribute to motivating language learners. I begin by examining the complex and dynamic nature of human motivation and how a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory approach to second language acquisition prevents over-simplifying the concept of motivation as simple cause-and-effect relationships. Then, I examine the influence possible language learning selves have on motivating individuals, specifically imagining the effects target language knowledge may have on achieving an ideal future self. Finally, I will discuss how guided-imagery exercises may be applied in the classroom to enhance language learners' visions of their ideal self in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to share my sincere gratitude to those instructors who have supported me over the past few years at Humboldt State University. First, I am forever indebted to Dr. Suzanne Scott and Dr. Michael Bruner for without their support and guidance this project would not have become a reality. Second, I would like to thank my family for encouraging me to return to college.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Learning a new language is hard. Second language (L2) learning is a complex process that requires time and motivation; some estimates suggest people attempting to learn a new language could spend between 1-3 years learning basic communication skills and 5-7 years for cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins; Collier). While motivation is behind every choice we make, the extensive effort involved in learning a new language may require language learners to develop and adapt strategies that they can use to increase and maintain their motivation. Motivated learners are likely to evaluate the effectiveness of their study strategies, chart their progress toward their learning goals, and seek learning opportunities. In other words, highly motivated learners have clear visions of who they want to become, and they use those visions to justify the effort they are exerting to acquire new knowledge. How might individuals generate the long-term motivation they need to learn a target language? And how might language instructors help language learners enhance their motivation? This M.A. project will explore these questions and more.

Learning a language may require extensive effort, but when language learners imagine the benefits L2 knowledge might have on their future, they can use those images to justify the effort. In California, for example, Justin Spence, an assistant professor in the University of California Davis Native American Studies Department, envisions a future where he is working to preserve the endangered Hupa language (“Saving an Endangered

Language"). If community members can be motivated to learn Hupa, then the language and the cultural activities to which it is attached may be preserved for future generations.

Individuals can envision many different personal and social reasons for deciding to learn a target language (e.g., preserving an endangered language, immigrating to a new country, meeting college requirements, gaining access to employment opportunities). The narratives language learners tell themselves about the value that learning the target language will have on their future may influence their motivation to study it. Thus, language learners may benefit from being able to clearly envision their reasons, hopes, and fears related to learning the targeted language. These visions are thought to be fundamental to generate and sustain the long-term motivation required to develop target language knowledge.

Fortunately, humans have the ability to use their imagination to envision possible futures. We can imagine which life goals to pursue (e.g., becoming fluent in several languages) and which to avoid (e.g., failing to preserve indigenous languages) in the hopes of making an imagined future a reality. When language learners direct their internalized cognitive functions toward imagining specific goals and processes associated with a desired future self, it has the potential to increase motivational behaviors (Dörnyei and Ushioda 130). As social psychologists Noelia Vasquez and Roger Buehler note, "A particularly tantalizing idea that has guided decades of research is that imagining a desired future might increase one's motivation and effort to attain it" (1392). In other words, when language learners create clear mental images of who they want to become in the future, they can use those images to adjust their behaviors. Therefore, it is important

to examine the impact that language learners' imaginative capabilities might have on their language learning motivation.

Using imagination-engaging activities in a purposeful and effective manner as a motivational tool is a skill that should be taught and practiced like any other skill. Students would never be expected to write an ethnography, for instance, without significant training and practice. Training learners to use their imagination to pursue language learning goals should be no different. Thus, imagination development for educational purposes should not be considered a passive exercise, but rather a regime that teaches students to develop and sharpen this skill.

For more than a century, some of the most influential educational theorists, such as John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, have understood the significance of the human imagination and mental imagery in education. Dewey states that "much of the time and attention now given to the preparation and presentation of lessons might be more wisely and profitably expended in training the child's power of imagery and in seeing to it that he was continually forming definite, vivid, and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes in contact in his experience" (15). Vygotsky suggests that if the main goal of education is to prepare students for the future, then "development and exercise of the imagination should be one of the main forces enlisted for the attainment of this goal" (2004, 88). Educational institutions, however, have been devising standards that do not specifically address the imagination development aspect of education (Egan 46; Gajdamaschko 34; Ryan and Irie 117). This oversight is somewhat surprising

considering the important contributions Dewey and Vygotsky have made toward our understanding of educational psychology (a topic beyond the scope of this project).

There are several problems with "selling" the value of imagination development to academic institutions, however. Educational philosopher Kieran Egan identifies two rather significant obstacles that may prevent pedagogues from adopting imagination training into their core curriculum. He writes, "first, it is difficult to get a clear grasp on what imagination is, and, second, whatever it is, it does not seem the kind of thing that lends itself to practical methods and techniques that any teacher can easily employ in the classroom" (1). This project will refute these objections by showing that current research provides useful definitions of imagination as well as practical techniques for employing imagination developing activities in the language learning classroom. Although the focus of this project is on theory, it also presents evidence of the utility of imagination development, as well as some practical pathways to implementation in the classroom.

A first step to address Egan's concerns may be to move away from the negative connotation that may be associated with words like "imagination" or "vision" and to come to some agreement on these terms. Although *vision* has many meanings in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* the definition that applies to this project refers to "a mental concept of a distinct or vivid kind" associated with one's **"**ability to conceive what might be attempted or achieved." For example, when a vision associated with winning the lottery is present in the mind of an individual, it may motivate that person to buy a lottery ticket. This same psychology may be applied to language learning. If we think of a vision as "a statement for a transformation, which can motivate, inspire and direct people" (van

der Helm 102), then a language learning environment that encourages learners to create visions associated with L2 development may provide them with a valuable motivational catalyst to engage in long-term learning. Visions are a critical aspect of L2 motivation that this project will explore in detail.

Chapter 2 of this project reviews the literature associated with language learning as a complex and dynamic process, and the related recent groundbreaking turn in L2 motivation theory. Target language development today is no longer viewed as a linear process, as it once was (Larsen-Freeman; Ellis and Larsen-Freeman; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; van Geert; de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor; de Bot; Ellis; Dörnyei and Ushioda; Dörnyei 2009; Dörnyei 2014). Various new theories and research studies, seeking to incorporate language learning's dynamic complexity, have incorporated visions of possible futures, sociocultural contexts, and learning environments into the field of L2 motivation.

Chapter 3, Imagined Selves, covers contemporary theories related to self-constructs. Applied linguists Stephen Ryan and Kay Irie argue that "imagined selves are integral and essential to the language learning process, and a greater understanding of the workings of the imagination may prove to be an invaluable resource for both teachers and learners" (110). How language learners imagine past, future, and current self-concepts may influence the effort learners exert toward accomplishing specific language learning goals.

Chapter 4, Mental Imagery Activities and Applications for the Classroom, provides examples of specific imagination-engaging activities that can be directly applied

to and practiced in a language learning classroom. Here educators will be presented with actual pedagogical activities designed to utilize the power of imagination as a means to increase or maintain internally driven motivational behaviors.

Chapter 5, Conclusion, summarizes the importance of explicitly instructing language learners about how valuable imagination is in motivating language study. Imagination is pedagogically important. Adding imagination development into the language learning curriculum may motivate learners to succeed beyond their expectations. Chapter 5 will also suggest some possible routes for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on theories of language learning and motivation is rich and extensive; this project will concentrate on four areas: Early Motivation Research, Complex Dynamic Systems, Dynamic Systems Theory, and Possible Future Selves. The literature review is organized topically and largely chronologically, based on which format best fits the issues at hand.

Early Motivation Research

Many factors have an impact on second language acquisition (SLA). What motivates an individual to exert effort to complete an objective? Why do individuals in the same classroom have varying rates of success? As Rod Ellis, a Research Professor on SLA with several academic appointments in Australia, New Zealand, and China, observes: "No single individual difference factor in language learning has received as much attention as motivation" (677). In general, motivation refers to "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out" (Dörnyei and Ottó 65). Within the broader topic of motivation, there are a few notable scholars who have pioneered the study of L2 motivation.

In the 1970's and 1980's, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert's approached L2 motivation via a social psychological perspective. The concepts of *integrative motivation*

and *instrumental motivation* dominated early motivation research. Integrative motivation is when the learner wants to integrate into the L2 environment (perhaps to settle there, or because of a close relationship with an L2 speaker). From this perspective, ethnocentric orientation or an individual's desire to identify with members from a specific speech community influences language learning success. Gardner and Lambert's early empirical studies looked at the relationship between integrative motivation and SLA. In a 1972 article, Gardner and Lambert argued that language learning was about "identify[ing] with members of another ethnolinguistic group" (135). The 1972 study found a clear correlation between integrative motivation and success in learning an L2 for Anglophone Canadians studying French.

Later research, moving into new contexts, found that instrumental motivation could also play a role in SLA. Instrumental motivation is associated with the pragmatic aspect of having L2 knowledge (e.g., getting a better job). However, meta-analyses of studies on integrative and instrumental motivation (like Au 1988) found mixed results. Rod Ellis offers one plausible explanation of the mixed results, suggesting that "[i]ntegrative motivation does not affect language learning directly; rather its effect is mediated by the learning behaviors that it instigates" (680). Over time, the terms *integrative* and *instrumental* have led to critical debates over confusing terminology and a failure of research "to identify [other] possible influences" (Dörnyei 1990, 47). Gardner and Lambert also emphasized the importance of affective, rather than cognitive factors, as contributing to L2 success.

Richard Clément (1980) suggests a *linguistic self-confidence* concept. That is, the quality and quantity of interactions between different speech communities will influence (positively or negatively) the willingness to learn another community's language, as well as the desire for intercultural communication in the future. Around the same time, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) were exploring motivation as self-determined. Their Self-Determination Theory views motivation as dependent on intrinsic (internal regulation) and extrinsic (external controls) orientations and had an enormous influence on motivational research through the 1990's.

The 1990's began a shift in emphasis towards cognitive and situation-specific approaches to understanding motivation factors (e.g. the classroom learning environment). An explosion of interest in researching L2 motivation emerged, with over 100 studies being published (Dornyei 2005). L2 motivational research expanded on the social psychology framework to include cognitive and situational frameworks. The cognitive-situated literature began incorporating mainstream cognitive psychology and focusing on situated language learning (Dörnyei 2005). Paul Tremblay and Robert Gardner (1995) suggest goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy are mediating variables between attitudes and behavior. Dörnyei (1994) conceptualized a 3-level L2 motivational framework consisting of the language level (ethnolinguistic vitality), learner level (individual characteristics), and learning situation (e.g., course-specific, teacher-specific, and/or group-specific factors). Marion Williams and Robert Burden's (1997) constructionist view of motivation suggests that individuals construct motivation based on internal factors (interest, relevance, curiosity, etc.) and external factors (parents,

teachers, peers, etc.) unique to the individual. The extensive L2 motivation work during the 1990s culminated in the publication of the large volume of collected essays, *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*, edited by Dörnyei and Schmidt (2001). The chapters range from theoretical expositions to classroom applications. Kyösti Julkunen's essay is especially relevant to the current project, because of the arguments that motivation is more than a character trait and teaching is one of the easiest variables to manipulate.

Historically, L2 motivation had been theorized as a linear process in terms of cause-and-effect relationships. Researchers reduced or essentialized individuals down to a limited number of imagined abstract qualities or generalizable binary characteristics attributed to the learner (e.g., introvert or extrovert) in order to make generalizable cause-and-effect predictions about learners (Dörnyei and Ushioda 76). However, researchers grounded in this linear and essentializing perspective may be missing the bigger picture because it neglects the synergic influence that multiple interconnected variables, working in unison, may have on an individual's unique self-system as a whole. It is not possible to directly observe and measure motivation, extroversion, or even intelligence, unlike variables such as height or age. Motivation, for example, is merely a label for an entire range of behaviors and characteristics. Furthermore, characteristics such as motivation and extroversion "are not independent of each other, and researchers have sometimes used the same label to describe different sets of behavioral traits" (Lightbown and Spada 78).

The issue plaguing quantitative data collection on the motivational characteristics associated with SLA is that researchers must reduce the quantity of variables to a manageable number of "key" variables in order to study the topic of interest. Dörnyei and Ushioda write, "incorporating too many variables clearly makes any linear model unwieldy and difficult to test empirically, and considerably weakens its explanatory power" (76). However, reductionist philosophy fails to account for the complex and dynamic interactions variables can have on the whole system over time. As a result, L2 motivation research has begun viewing motivation as "shaped by the multiple intersecting cultures, those of national origin but also those of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, workplace, sexual orientation, etc. that people engage each day and across their lives" (Markus 161). The era of assigning labels and categorizing individuals into neatly packaged archetypes has run its course.

In 1997, applied linguist and SLA researcher Diane Larsen-Freeman published an article in *Applied Linguistics* introducing the study of nonlinear system dynamics, sometimes referred to as chaos theory, to the field of SLA. She writes that "learning about the dynamics of complex nonlinear systems will discourage reductionist explanations in matters of concern to second language acquisition researchers" (142). As a result, some researchers have begun to take a broader, more integrated approach to understanding SLA than they have in the past. Consequently, L2 motivational research merged with Complex Dynamic Systems theory.

Complex Dynamic Systems

Complex dynamic systems emerge from multifaceted interactions between multiple interrelated components that are capable of independent change over time (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 200; van Geert 181; Dörnyei and Ushioda 88; Dörnyei 2014, 81). In this sense, the word "complex" does not necessarily refer to things that are complicated, but rather suggests that the observable behaviors emerging from the interaction between two or more interrelated components will on occasion become unstable and respond to input in an unpredictable or chaotic manner (Larsen-Freeman). For instance, a radio might be a complicated system, but because its elements are not capable of independent and spontaneous change, it is not complex. Complex dynamic systems, like human behavior, are defined by their ability to adapt and make internal changes over time.

Complex dynamic systems are viewed as being in a continuous state of evolution situated around two fundamental principles: self-organization and emergence (Van Geert 182). *Self-organization* refers to a system's ability to create a "spontaneous formation of patterns." It is this flexible and adaptive characteristic of complex dynamic systems that can produce unplanned system-wide change depending on environmental conditions (Van Geert 182). For example, as language learners receive L2 input, such as the introduction of a new verb tense, their L2 knowledge goes through a process of reorganization. Information is internally organized and given meaning by the system (self-organization), and as new information is organized over time, it should eventually

reach a point where it emerges as changed language production. The second principle of complex dynamic systems, *emergence*, refers to "the spontaneous occurrence of something new as a result of the dynamics of the system" (Van Geert 182). Language learning, therefore, may be viewed as a dynamic process of self-organizing new information resulting in the emergence of new system characteristics.

An interesting aspect of self-organization is that it will on occasion reach a critical point. Dynamic systems theorist and applied linguistics researcher Kees de Bot explains the concept of "self-organized criticality" as the moments before a sudden and massive restructuring of the system (172). The relationship between self-organization and emergence from a complex systems perspective is a nonlinear process (Larsen-Freeman 143) and, as a result, when an apparently stable system reaches a critical state, it becomes highly unstable, and its behavior becomes unpredictable. Sometimes complex systems endure enormous forces without showing any signs of change, and other times the smallest input will appear to cause a dramatic restructuring of the system. From this perspective, target language knowledge may not appear as a steady developmental process, but rather it accumulates until it reaches a point of critical mass, forcing the system to completely restructure itself in a way that enables increasingly complex target language production to emerge.

As a result, complex dynamic systems are notoriously difficult to study. A serious issue with convincing teachers and institutions of the value of incorporating imagination training into their curriculum is that scientifically measuring imagination and the long-term significance it has on language acquisition is challenging. The idea that learners'

imagination may generate a desire to act that will result in a predictable outcome is a very complex equation saturated with abstract concepts that are extremely difficult to quantify.

Nonetheless, researchers are able to identify some of the most significant phenomena. Cognitive psychologists Markus Kiefer and Lawrence W. Barsalou acknowledge that cognitive scientists are becoming increasingly confident that human cognition can be viewed as "a set of complex emergent phenomena" grounded in modality-specific systems (e.g., visual, auditory); the body and action (e.g., facial expression, gestures); the physical environment; and the social environment (382). However, isolating variables and coding them in terms of binary categories (introvert or extrovert, motivated or unmotivated, etc.) ignores the interdependent relationships among variables, the exact influence they have on each other, and the human being as a whole. For example, an individual may show signs of introversion in one situation and extroversion in a different situation.

Dynamic Systems Theory. An approach to understanding and researching complex dynamic systems is Dynamic Systems Theory. Applied linguists Kees De Bot, Wander Lowie and Marjolijn Verspoor propose Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) as a possible nominee for a general theory of language development (7). They discuss the development, characteristics, and application of DST within the field of SLA. The language-oriented section of DST looks at how interacting variables such as cognitive attributes, individual differences (the idea that every individual has unique learner characteristics or "trait complexes") (Dörnyei and Ryan 8), social and cultural norms, and learning environments, operate as part of a language development ecology (Ellis and

Freeman 579). DST incorporates both the social and cognitive aspects of SLA as an emergent property that happens when an individual and environment interact and react to each other (De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor 7).

A DST approach can help researchers to explore the dynamic relationship between agents (e.g., language learners) and various interconnected elements (e.g., sociocultural affiliations, classroom environments). DST acknowledges nonlinear progression over time as the norm. For instance, some applied linguistic researchers accept that "[l]anguage learning and language use are dynamic processes in which regularities and system arise from the interaction of people, brains, selves, societies and cultures using languages in the world" (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 577). At the same time, the learner is part of an even larger complex system. The language instructor, learner, and classroom environment are viewed as highly dynamic and comprised of many interactions working in concert and continually changing from one moment to the next moment.

Language itself is the final element to consider here. Larsen-Freeman suggests that languages can be viewed as complex dynamic systems that "are not the product of rules" but rather are determined by the user and, thus, "language grows and organizes itself from the bottom-up in an organic way" (1997, 148). SLA cognitive psychologist Nick Ellis outlines a program for contemplating SLA through a Dynamic Systems perspective, in which he indicates that rules do not govern language, but rather language emerges bottom-up in ecological and social interactions (234). Language flows through dynamic cycles. Ellis outlines the process as: language use leads to language change,

change affects perception, perception effects learning, and learning effects language use (Ellis 233). This perspective connects language development with dynamic system theory. In a sense, then, Dynamic Systems Theory helps to explain the theory of Complex Dynamic Systems. The next section looks at the individual aspect of complex dynamic systems.

Possible Future Selves

To understand the complex and dynamic relationship between the self, imagination, and motivation, it is important to understand that how one imagines past and future events will have an influence on current behaviors. In 1986, Stanford University psychologist Hazel Rose Markus and her colleague Paula Nurius introduced the concept of “possible selves.” Possible selves are cognitive constructs through which individuals imagine their desires and fears about developing into a possible future self. The concept of possible selves “allows us to make a more direct connection between motives and specific actions" (Markus and Nurius 961). In other words, the dynamic interaction between future-oriented hopes and fears are thought to motivate behaviors.

We are motivated to approach the thing we hope for and to avoid the things we fear. Because past experiences and hopes for the future influence how individuals attend, interpret, remember, and respond to different stimuli, "possible selves can provide an effective bridge between motivation and cognition" (Markus and Nurius 966). Language learners have the ability imagine possible future selves which have not yet been verified through social experience. They can envision what they might become, what they want to

become, and what they are afraid of becoming. They can imagine goals and behaviors that may facilitate their progressing toward an idealized version of their possible selves. SLA classrooms are ideal environments to encourage language learners to develop vivid mental images of possible future selves, where using the target language is viewed as beneficial to their future success.

Closely related to the concept of possible selves is Self-Discrepancy Theory, proposed by psychologist Tory Higgins (1987), who hypothesizes two different future self-guides, the "ideal self-guide" (an internally generated guide) and the "ought self-guide" (a socioculturally generated guide). Individuals use these future self-guides to identify the discrepancies between who they think they are now, who they imagine they want to become in the future, and who others think they should become in the future. Higgins posits that the imagined discrepancy between these future self-guides and one's perceived actual-self will lead to a state of discomfort, thus motivating an individual to act in a manner that reduces the discomfort. Higgins writes, "The greater the magnitude and accessibility of a particular type of self-discrepancy possessed by an individual, the more the individual will suffer the kind of discomfort associated with that type of self-discrepancy" (334). It is postulated that individuals strive to reach a state of homeostasis between their imagined possible future selves and their perceived actual-self that propels motivation.

Possible selves provide the foundational framework for Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. The L2 Motivational Self System focuses on three SLA related elements, the "ideal L2 self," the "ought-to L2 self," and the "L2 learning experience," as

being critical to the development and maintenance of language learning motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda 85-6). "[T]he L2 Motivational Self System offers a relatively new approach to understanding language learning motivation, and an important component of this theory is the learners' vision of themselves in a future state" (Dörnyei and Ushioda 125). The L2 Motivational Self System implies that a learning environment that encourages language learners to construct and regularly revisit vivid mental imagines of an ideal L2 self will enhance motivational behaviors, as learners will strive to reduce the discrepancies between their current L2 state and how they imagine their ideal/ought-to L2 states.

The ideal L2 self-guide, the first of Dörnyei's three key elements, is constructed from a learner's desire to use a target language; it is a hoped-for-possible self related to an individual's "L2-specific" aspect of his or her identity (Dörnyei and Ushioda 82). "Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives would typically belong to this component" (Dörnyei and Ushioda 86). The ought-to L2 self-guide, Dörnyei 's second element, is based on extrinsic influences. It motivates the learner to avoid negative outcomes associated with not having L2 knowledge (Dörnyei and Ushioda 87). The ought-to self uses fear to focus motivation. For example, if a student imagines she ought to study for a major exam because of the fear of failing or the fear of parental reprimand, then the ought-to self is the primary motivator. In this case, the motivation to study does not come from a desire within the individual, but rather from the fear coming from external forces. Dörnyei's final element is related to the influences the L2 learning

environment has on a specific learner (e.g., course relevance, personal interest in material covered).

Empirical Studies on Imagined Selves

In 2013, Dörnyei and Chan published a groundbreaking, complex study that "investigates the claim that the intensity of motivation is partly dependent on the learners' capability to generate mental images" (439). They hypothesize that there will be a positive association between one's ability to generate elaborate and detailed mental images of future selves (both ideal and ought-to selves) and between intended effort and course grades. That is, the mental representation one has of who she or he desires to be in the future will positively influence the motivational factors necessary to achieve specific goals associated with SLA.

Dörnyei and Chan's 2013 study examines 172 lower-intermediate proficiency level students studying both English and Mandarin as a foreign language in Hong Kong. Both of these languages "have obvious relevance and ethnolinguistic vitality" (445) for these students, and were taught "in a parallel manner" (444). The participants, between 13 and 15 years in age, spoke Cantonese as their first language. In order to investigate the relationship between participants' desired L2 self, L2-related effort and achievement in the acquisition of English and Mandarin, the researchers collected data using self-report questionnaires assessed using Likert-types scales to measure: motivation, sensory styles (visual and auditory), imagery capacity (ability to create mental images), self-reported effort, and actual achievements on an L2 final exam. Three hypotheses were tested via

five inferential statistical procedures (correlations, multiple correlations, exploratory factor analyses, paired-samples *t*-tests, and Steiger's 1980 *Z*-tests).

The results confirm the relationship between the ability to envision future selves, effort, and grades, across both languages. The only relationship to not reach significance is between the ought-to self and grades earned. An example of a strong positive correlation is between the ideal English self and intended effort, at .68, $p < .001$. As a result of their findings, the authors suggest that "the learners' sensory/imagery capacity has considerable pedagogical relevance because it is an important internal resource that can be harnessed" (457). Dörnyei and Chan recommend providing students with opportunities to create vivid mental images of the benefits that learning a second language may have on their possible future L2 self as an important and effective pedagogical practice that is teachable and applicable in the formal language learning classroom.

Another study by applied linguist Michael Magid and second language motivation researcher Letty Chan (2012) sets out to develop and assess an intervention program aimed at enhancing language learners' view of their ideal L2 future self. The authors' constructed an intervention program consisting of four workshops and two counselling sessions, based on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. The four workshops include activities designed to help students envision their ideal L2 self through scripted and guided imagery activities, which will be discussed in chapter 4. These activities provide students with opportunities to construct vivid images of an ideal future L2 self and create lists of personally relevant goals based on how they imagine their ideal future L2 self.

Their intervention program encourages participants to imagine goals that might help them to achieve their ideal future L2 self. Participants construct goal-achievement timelines and define how they might assess their progress. Participants also attend counselling sessions aimed at evaluating their progress towards their goal achievements and, with the help of a researcher, students also receive feedback to help them modify ineffective goal-achievement strategies.

Of the 111 participants, 31 of the participants were part of a voluntary program in London and 80 of the participants were part of a compulsory, credit-bearing program in Hong Kong. Magid and Chan adopt a mixed methods longitudinal design (pre- and post-workshop self-report questionnaires and three semi-structured interviews). Data were coded according to themes related to the program's influence on learners' motivation towards learning the language, learners' confidence in using the language, and effects activities had on learners' visions, goals, and emotions.

Their questionnaire data attempts to measure the strength of participants' pre- and post-workshop ability to envision an ideal L2 self. The results show a significant increase in participants' ability to visualize their ideal L2 self after undergoing the intervention program. Using a pair-samples *t*-test to compare pre- and post-workshop questionnaire data, both groups (London and Hong Kong) show a statistically significant increase in the ability of participants to visualize an ideal L2 self. In London, participants reported a significant effect between the questionnaire pre-test ($M = 5.30$, SD = 0.82) and post-test ($M = 5.46$, SD = 0.53), $t(30) = -4.40$, $p < 0.0005$ (two-tailed). In Hong Kong, participants report a significant effect between pre-test ($M = 3.86$, SD = 0.82) and post-test (M =

4.16, SD = 0.76), $t(80) = -2.65$, $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Although the eta-squared statistics (.39 in England and .21 in Hong Kong) indicates a large effect size, this study does not use a control group to compare results. Despite the lack of a control group, the "consistent results in two different contexts offer a strong indication" that programs such as these can help students develop their ideal L2 selves (Magid and Chan 119).

The overall purpose of the Magid and Chan's intervention program is to create a space where language learners practice imagining and developing vivid mental images associated with their vision of an ideal future L2 self while also imagining the steps necessary to make a possible L2 self an actualized self. By the end of the program, most students reported exerting more time and effort toward learning English, increased confidence in their ability to use English, and had clearly defined goals that motivated them to continue studying English (119-21).

One intriguing educational practice used by Magid and Chan in their intervention program involves scripted imagery activities, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4. Hall, Hall, and Leech suggest that not only can scripted fantasy or guided imagery be designed to engage students' imagination, but it may also be used to develop social and interpersonal skills, increase awareness of social issues, build empathic understanding, and arouse a high degree of student involvement and curiosity. Using anecdotal evidence from faculty at Nottingham University, Hall, Hall, and Leech suggest scripted fantasy has been used successfully for stress management, personal and professional growth, and self-exploration for both teachers and students. Guided imagery activities may provide language learners with opportunities to develop their imagination

while simultaneously building an atmosphere that encourages student-centered discussions aimed at building critical personal and social awareness. Hall, Hall, and Leech write, "scripted fantasy as part of a spectrum of experiential learning methodologies can play an important part in such programmes, by heightening awareness and increasing empathic understanding" (2). Scripted fantasy provides learners with opportunities to explore different possible selves in a way that develops imagination and enhances motivation.

In 2013, Hadfield and Dörnyei published *Motivating Learning*, a practical guide to building mental imagery associated with language development. This practical book provides ninety-nine different activities helping learners develop visions of their possible selves, and helping language instructors to incorporate imagination-based activities into their language learning courses. Their book "offers a variety of imaginative classroom activities designed to go from creation of the initial vision of the L2 self to actualization of the vision through goal setting, task identification, selection of appropriate learning strategies and time management" (x). Their motivational program consists of activities designed to assist learners in developing visions of their L2-related selves, intensifying their images of their L2 selves, supporting their visions of realistic future selves, operationalizing their visions of L2 selves, maintaining visions over time, and counterbalancing their ideal selves with their ought-to selves (Hadfield and Dörnyei 5-6).

You and Chan (2014) offer another empirical study using a Dynamic Systems Theory approach. They investigate the ways L2 self-imagery might influence L2 learning behaviors. The researchers employ a mixed-methods design including surveys and in-

depth interviews. The survey portion of the study's participants consists of 208 Chinese undergraduate and high school students who completed a questionnaire. The researchers selected 20 of those participants to take part in an in-depth interview.

During the in-depth interview the researchers noted that, as participants practiced visualizing their future self, a dynamic interaction takes place between mental imagery and three other factors—motivation intensity, language learning behavior, and language proficiency. Their findings suggest that visions of an L2 self and L2 learning complement each other in dynamic ways. As learners' visions become more elaborate and frequent, this improves their L2 learning desire, and in return, as the L2 learning process progresses, it improves the learners' ability to construct mental images of an ideal L2 self. In this sense, mental imagery and language learning seem to function as a positive *feedback loop*—one complements the other.

Working under the assumption that vision orientations influence academic performance, Shelley Taylor, Lien B. Pham, Inna D. Rivkin, and David A. Armor (1998), as part of a larger program, report on two separate experiments that look at specific types of mental simulation activities. Their assumption was that imagination is a tool that learners can use to manage emotional states, plan for future events, and generate solutions to problems. Pham and Taylor (1997) conducted the first experiment using seventy-seven participants who were studying psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Participants were randomly placed in one of three groups: a process-simulation group, an outcome-simulation group, or a control group. The process-orientated simulation group participants were asked to "visualize themselves studying for

an exam" daily for five minutes (432). The outcome-oriented simulation group participants were asked to imagine themselves getting an A on an exam, and the control group kept notes about their study habits. Their results show the process-imagining group studied an average of 14.05 hours and averaged 73.28% on the exam. The outcome-imagining group studied an average of 12.39 hours and averaged 67.61% on the exam, and the control group studied an average of 10.20 hours and averaged 65.28% on the exam. The process-oriented mental simulation group, the group visualizing the processes needed to succeed, outperformed the other two groups.

The second part of the larger study (Pham and Taylor 1999) included eighty-four participants and used similar methods applied to a college project. The second study, again, suggests that process-oriented mental simulation improved learner academic performance by reducing anxiety and facilitating an actionable plan. "Students who practiced the process simulation found the assignment significantly easier relative to the students in the outcome-simulation and control condition" (435). The authors conclude that students can effectively harness specific types of mental simulations to improve academic performance. What these findings may suggest is that envisioning a possible future self in progress toward a goal may be a beneficial exercise. Thus, language learners, it is argued should be encouraged to envision the processes associated with achieving a desired future self.

Dual Coding Theory

Mental imagery may also help language learners construct mental connections between images and language (Sadoski and Paivio). Neurobiologist Antonio R. Damasio writes, "Language—that is words and sentences—is a translation of something else, a conversion from nonlinguistic images which stand for entities, events, relationships, and inferences" (107). In other words, nonverbal images precede language. When language learners have opportunities to generate vivid mental images, those images are encoded and stored along with target language symbols.

How are mental images and learning connected? The answer is complicated, but Dual Coding Theory posits "that cognition in reading and writing consists of the activity of two separate coding systems of mental representations, one system specialized for language and one system specialized for dealing with nonverbal objects and events" (Sadoski and Paivio 43). These two systems encode externally generated data that comes from the stimulations of various sensory modalities: visual, auditory, haptic, gustatory, and olfactory (Sadoski and Paivio 44). The senses are used to gather information and code it in the form of mental images. According to Dual Coding Theory, cognition occurs through two interconnected but separate language identification systems that encode units of data as *logogens* and *imagens*. Logogens are modality-specific verbal representational units necessary to encode and produce language (e.g., graphemes, phonemes, words), and imagens are modality-specific nonverbal representational units (e.g., objects, scenery, events) (Sadoski and Paivio 46-47). For example, the concept of an apple is first encoded

through different nonverbal modalities such as its color and shape, the way it tastes, the sound it makes when someone bites into it, and then the concept of an apple can be represented with language (e.g., red, sweet, crunchy). The point here is that logogens and imagens both are useful for making possible L2 selves come alive.

Language education researcher Mark Sadoski and professor of psychology Allan Paivio theorize the two systems "as separate and capable of operating independently (activity in one but not the other), in parallel (separate activity in both at the same time), or in a connected way" (52). For instance, highly abstract words may not necessarily be associated with a specific nonverbal image. This suggests the two systems are capable of functioning independently. Similarly, someone may be reading a text while simultaneously generating mental images irrelevant to the text at hand. This suggests the two systems may function independently of each other. However, when a specific word generates a vivid nonverbal mental image, the two systems may be viewed as working in concert. From a language learning perspective, activities that engage the language learners' imagination in such a way may help them to make direct connections between the mental images and the target language, perhaps strengthening the neural pathways between words and concepts.

The relationship between Dual Coding Theory and L2 learning suggests that verbal and nonverbal coding systems can work together. According to Paivio, a learning environment that builds strong referential associations between logogens and imagens enhances one's ability to acquire L2 knowledge (353). However, "[m]any students do not spontaneously use mental imagery as a comprehension strategy but will do so if teacher

guidance and scaffold is provided" (Gambrell and Koskinen 307). Thus, developing a language learning curriculum rich in activities designed to stimulate mental imagery may help language learners to build strong connections between the verbal and nonverbal encoding systems in a way that enhances L2 learning. According to Sadoski and Paivio, "[i]magery is typically induced by giving readers instructions to form images or providing training programs on the formation of images" (179). For example, an instructor can provide a series of suggestions to students to engage their imagination in ways that generate and connect mental imagery with language. Over time and with practice, language learners may use these types of activities to enhance their L2 learning.

Metacognition and Self-Regulatory Competency

Another important reason to train language learners about the power of imagination, as well as to sharpen their focus on thinking about learning processes, is to develop and strengthen their metacognitive knowledge. Distinguished professor of educational psychology Barry Zimmerman defines *metacognition* "as the awareness of and knowledge about one's own thinking" (65) or, in everyday language, "thinking about thinking." Language learners need to be aware of their thoughts and determine which ones have a positive influence on their motivation. Being aware of one's ability to use imagination to self-regulate behavior for the future may improve academic performance.

Metacognition, then, is tied to learning via self-efficacy and self-regulation. Zimmerman defines *self-regulation* as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals" (65). Self-regulatory development can be viewed as a

proactive approach to education where students are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate how the mental images they construct may motivate them to act and take control of their own learning (related to autonomy and internal-locus of control). Self-regulation can be viewed as a personalized skill used to self-generate specific goals, adopt personally relevant learning strategies to achieve those goals, self-evaluate progression towards goal achievement, and revise unsuccessful approaches or techniques as necessary (Zimmerman 66).

Zimmerman (2002) reports a strong connection between quality and quantity of self-regulatory processes and academic performance. Furthermore, he notes that "self-regulatory processes are teachable and can lead to increases in students' motivation and achievements" (69). He also states, "few teachers effectively prepare students to learn on their own" (69). Developing a language learning environment that uses imagination development activities to enhance students' ability to learn on their own, then, is a critical aspect of teaching languages.

An important concept related to self-regulation is goal-setting theory. Edwin A. Locke, from the University of Maryland, and Gary P. Latham, from the University of Toronto (1990), who have done thirty-five years of empirical research on goal-setting theory, use the theory within an organizational setting to identify differences between individual performance and goal attributes. "Goals may simply motivate one to use one's existing ability, may automatically 'pull' stored task-relevant knowledge into awareness, and/or may motivate people to search for new knowledge" (1990, 265). Goals can be thought of mediating the effects interrelated variables may have on language learners'

motivation. For example, if a language learner has set a goal to spend four hours per week reading in the target language, she may be more motivated to seek out opportunities to read than if she had not set that goal. “It is important to note that goals are not only outcomes to shoot for but also standards by which to evaluate one's performance providing a definition of success” (Dörnyei and Ushioda 21). Using learners’ imagination to self-set language learning goals is one strategy students can use to self-assess progress and self-regulate behavior.

Self-regulatory competency (Lock and Latham 2006, 265), then, includes setting goals as outcomes and creating appropriate standards by which to measure goals. The types of goals language learners set also may influence their motivation. Achievement Goal Theory, for example, is centered on behaviors (Ames and Levin 261) and constructed around two fundamental principles of *mastery* and *performance* goal orientations. "Mastery goals refer to an orientation towards development of competence" (Kaplan and Flum 51). From a mastery goals perspective, the primary motive underlying the acquisition of new knowledge is self-development; assessments are made using the self as a reference point. In other words, "mastery goals refer to a psychological frame that involves defining success in relation to mastering the task itself or to self-reference standards such as improvement over past performance and learning new knowledge and skills" (Kaplan and Flum 51).

On the other hand, "[p]erformance goals refer to an orientation towards demonstration of competence" (Kaplan and Flum 53). Performance goals are positioned around an individual’s belief that ability is determined by externally and publicly defined

standards (e.g., receiving a high grade). Performance goal-oriented students see goal completion as a means to an end. The language learner's focus is not on becoming skilled at a task but either outperforming others as a way to enhance his or her self-concept (Ames and Levin 263) or completing a task so he or she does not have to think about it again. "Hence, for performance-oriented students, learning, or increasing knowledge and skills, are not ends in themselves but are means to the end of demonstrating ability and enhancing or protecting self-worth" (Kaplan and Flum 53). Language learners encouraged to imagine performance-oriented goals may be less motivated over the long-term than learners encouraged to imagine mastery-oriented goals.

Since the focus of this project is on motivation and imagination, these insights about goals and motivation are critical. As professor emeritus of educational psychology Carole Ames and Joel R. Levin note, "[w]ithin a mastery goal orientation, the focus is on effort, not ability, and belief in the efficacy of one's effort mediates approach and engagement patterns" (269). Because learning a foreign language is generally an individualized long-term endeavor, the focus should be on constructing goals toward mastering skills instead of outperforming others.

Chapter 2 set out to review the literature associated with language learning as a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear process, and how various conditions, including sociocultural context and learning environment, may lead to various outcomes. To summarize this chapter, L2 motivational research views humans as complex dynamic systems located within and surrounded by other complex dynamic systems. Language itself is one of those systems. Humans not only create language but, through self-

organization, are transformed by it. As the analysis revealed, both cognitive and situational factors come to bear on the language learner.

Motivation, one of the main themes in this project, is directly connected to imagination of an ideal future self. Chapter 2 discusses the theories of how mental imagery and learning are linked. Language learners who are presented with opportunities to construct vivid images of a possible future self can also construct a pathway to actualizing the desired future. The theories in Chapter 2 suggest that appropriate goal-setting and self-regulation can lead to higher levels of motivation. Classrooms that allow language learners to imagine the processes required to achieve their ideal future self will increase the likelihood of learners successfully developing into their imagined ideal future selves. In the next chapter, the influence of imagined selves on language acquisition will be examined.

CHAPTER 3: IMAGINED SELVES

The theories cited in Chapter 2 suggest that there is a strong link between mental imagery and learning. These theories also analyzed some of the factors that explain how, and the extent to which, imagination and motivation are associated. The present chapter now explores in more depth the complex and dynamic world of the imagined self, as well as the specific influences imagined selves may have on an individual's desire to commit to developing target language knowledge. It also examines how a person's mental representations within an imagined community may mediate one's desire to dedicate time and effort to learning a target language.

Applied linguist and SLA researcher Sarah Mercer suggests, due to the strong social component of language, that the individual's sense of self may potentially play a larger role in language learning than in learning other subjects. Furthermore, Mercer suggests that "[a] learner's sense of self is central in guiding their behaviors and approaches to learning as it connects together many other aspects of their psychology such as beliefs, motivation, affective responses, self-regulatory competence and strategy use" (58). Pedagogues aware of the complex connection between identity and the emergence of motivation may thus want to develop a course that accounts for and enhances learners' personal, social, and cultural connections to the target language.

Before broadening the inquiry into the imagined self, one must ask two questions: (1) What is the "self"? and (2) How can language learners' understanding of possible selves contribute to motivational behaviors and enhance their language learning

experience? With respect to the first question, Mark Leary, professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University, notes that the self "has been used to refer to several distinct phenomena, including aspects of personality, the cognitive processes that underlie self-awareness, a person's mental representation of him- or herself, an executive control center that mediates decision-making and self-regulation, and the whole person" (319). A danger in choosing one conception of self (such as self as "personality") is that this approach likely will generate representations viewed as a somewhat static set of variables (e.g., extrovert, confident, intelligent, motivated).

Psychologists and dynamic systems researchers Andrzej Nowak, Robin Vallacher, and Michal Zochowski write, "[t]he notion of personality implies some form of stability in thought, emotion, and action. At the same time, human experience is inherently dynamic and constantly evolving in response to external circumstances and events" (378). Thoughts, emotions, and actions are interconnected and each one can have a dramatic influence over the others. The self, therefore, should not be considered in terms of a static set of variables, but rather as adaptable and fluid processes of emerging characteristics. As a result, "[b]ehavioral incentives or strategies that motivate action in one setting can fall completely flat in another" (Markus162). Many contemporary scholars (see Gergen) see the self as "socially-constructed." A socially-constructed self is, almost by definition, a dynamic entity.

Because no two individuals will interpret an event in the same way, there is no way to accurately predict exactly what effect an event will have on one's sense of self. Prescribed curriculum, classroom policies, and parental expectations may differently

effect learners' motivations. This complicated situation actually is good news for language learners, because the imagined self can and will change.

It is important to understand that from a complex dynamic system perspective, the self continually edits internalized imagined stories based on personal experiences. Professor of psychology Dan McAdams describes the self as an internalized narrative in which the individual constructs a continuously evolving story of the self, and in which "people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful" (101). Thus, to build language learning motivation within the classroom, teachers must ask questions such as: Who would the language learner like to become in the future? What aspects of the past and future pleases and/or frightens the language learner? As teachers propose these questions to language learners, vivid images of the learner's sense of self may emerge.

McAdams' work serves as perfect segue to the second question raised above: How can language learners' understanding of possible selves contribute to motivational behaviors and enhance their foreign language learning experience? The manner in which one narrates personally relevant events influences which possible selves are likely to emerge. Because the self is a complex dynamic system, salient possible selves emerge and change in response to internal and external conditions (the learner's mood, the teacher, the perceived relevance of classroom activities, etc.). For example, the way a teacher runs the classroom (e.g., lecture-based or discussion-based) and establishes classroom policies (e.g., more or less structured) could have an impact on how language

learners imagine their possible future selves and the learning strategies that they choose to engage in.

When language learners engage their possible selves through imagined experiences, the imagined mental images may become encoded and stored in the mind as images that "feel" possible. To understand what is meant by possible selves, one must reflect on the possible responses that are generated when considering the questions "Who am I now?" and "Who do I want to be in the future?" These imagined selves "involve tangible images and senses; they are represented in the same imaginary and semantic way as the here-and-now self, that is, they are a reality for the individual" (Dörnyei and Ushioda 81). Because these imagined thoughts create tangible images, they may simultaneously influence emotions and actions. As language learning psychology researchers Stephen Ryan and Kay Irie note, "[o]ur sense of experience, and by extension our sense of who we are, comes from a subjective, malleable interpretation of events rather than the actual events themselves" (111). Because humans have the capacity to imagine themselves, the language instructor can provide an environment that helps learners to identify, generate, and explore different representations of their L2 self-located within an L2 community.

Imagined Communities

One way language learners can enhance their vision of a future self is to imagine themselves positioned within an imagined community. According to applied linguists Yasuko Kanno and Bonny Norton, "[i]magined communities refer to groups of people,

not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (241). When language learners position their possible selves within an imagined community, it may increase the vividness of their visions. When language learners envision themselves belonging to and participating in social situations associated with a desired community, they are, in essence, mentally simulating or practicing membership within that community. As applied linguist Liliane Assis Sade suggests, this vision is important when we consider that motivation might be viewed as "an experience of belonging rather than a personal trait" (42). For example, an individual may oscillate between being a mother, a student, or an employer, adjusting her identity to fulfill the prescribed social norms of the moment. "To each community of practice a person affiliates, a new social identity emerges" (Sade 47). Language learners' possible selves are positioned within communities that the learner appreciates (e.g., sports, pop culture, political). Visions of possible selves should include an imagined community element directly related to learners' personal interests.

Positioning possible future selves within an imagined community may potentially motivate or "compel learners to seek certain kinds of educational opportunities they might otherwise not seek" (Kanno and Norton 246). Activities that encourage students to seek educational opportunities on their own may have significant consequences on students' educational outcomes (e.g., risk taking and willingness to communicate using the L2). Willingness to communicate, a construct long connected to SLA success, is associated with "learners who experience social support, particular from friends, offering further evidence of the power of socially constructed conceptions of the self" (Brown

157). Therefore, activities that help learners define and elaborate on the connection between their ideal future L2 self and how that self is positioned within an imagined community may have a positive influence on learner motivation. Building connections between imagined communities and the positioned self can enhance language learners' sense of belonging, thus promoting learner investment in L2 development.

Poststructuralist Theories of Language Learning

Language is inherently social. It provides a way to communicate with others. Language is also communal. Therefore, one way to identify constructions associated with target language learning may be via "poststructuralist theories of language and subjectivity, and sociocultural theories of learning" (Norton and McKinney 76). From a poststructuralist perspective, language should be viewed as situated within the social context of a discourse community and as continually negotiated between interlocutors. According to Pierre Bourdieu, "Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power. A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, and distinguished" (648). The speaker's ability to receive respect comes from her or his position of perceived power in relation to an audience (e.g., teachers versus peers) in a specific context (e.g., taking a standardized exam versus talking over coffee). The discourses language learners are exposed to will influence which possible selves are imaginable.

While the language learning classroom can be designed to help students imagine enhanced visions of themselves related to their past experiences and their future desires,

it can also be an arena of conflict due to perceived power differentials. Vygotsky (2004) argues that imagination is not an exclusively internal process and can be driven by and be dependent on the environment. The creation of power constructs is a historically cumulative process where one builds off predecessors. “For many decades the English language teaching profession assumed that native English-speaking teachers, by virtue of their superior model of oral production, comprised the ideal English language teacher” (Brown 204). When instructors, then, tell certain populations of language learners that their specific version of language does not meet the imagined academic standards constructed by dominant ideologies regarding “proper” language use, this announcement can be demoralizing. A potential negative outcome is that learners may conjure negative mental images of themselves as well as that of their imagined community, initiating learner withdrawal from their (imagined) academic community, for instance. Instead, an instructor might offer different models of the many varieties of World Englishes, dramatically expanding learners’ conceptions of possible imagined language communities.

Critical pedagogues should therefore be aware of how nonnative speakers are positioned within the educational institution, certain sociocultural communities, and within the language learning environment. To help learners protect their preferred sense of self in the face of historically oppressive institutional policies, teachers should support dialogues that encourage students to speak as themselves. True dialogue “requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not the privilege of an

elite, but the birthright of all)" (Freire 90). Thus, dialogue between people can create and transform reality. Dialogue assembled around love, humility, and faith can transform an oppressive reality into a liberating one.

Sensitivity to the current language preferences of learners, then, is part of critical language pedagogy. Some postmodern theories go even further in taking the perspective that there can be no absolute truth, but only an individual-based understanding of reality. This view must be addressed here, because of the possible connections to identity construction among learners in the classroom. "A postmodernist view of identity focuses on the different identities a person has within a complex world, as people's identities cannot be defined solely by a particular role that they play in society and every individual can play more than one role in the communities they belong to" (Hemmi 76). For example, a language learner's identity may fluctuate between identifying as a student, a foreigner, a parent, and a life partner.

Therefore, critical pedagogy located within a postmodern framework will be mindful of the learners' need to build or perform an identity. However, at the same time, it is important to understand that some individuals may wish to *strategically* position themselves within a group or society through an identity; "people often wish to assert their identities as homogeneous and unitary, foregrounding a particular aspect of their experience such as gender, race, or religious affiliation" (Norton and McKinney 79). When people critically reflect upon their existence in a situation and in relation to each other, life is revealed as mutable. Education that stimulates learners to generate their own visions of an ideal reality in a way that opens dialogue and creates spaces where learners

can identify themselves positioned in a world of culture has the potential to transform how learners both imagine and *enact* their possible future selves.

To return now to the central theme of learning and imagination, applied linguist and motivational researcher Ema Ushioda builds on postmodern philosophy by focusing on what she calls a "person-in-context relational view" of motivation (12). With respect to the previous discussion of identity and imagination, Ushioda views people not as theoretically-constructed "subjects" but as uniquely individualized thinkers coming from diverse backgrounds built from unique experiences which lead to personalized thoughts, feelings, goals, and motives flowing around various social activities meaningful to the learner. Ushioda notes that by allowing language learners to "speak as themselves" using "transportable identities," teachers provide them with an opportunity to grow into the language learner they want to become instead of a teacher-regulated language learner (16). An SLA classroom rich in imagination-developing activities may encourage learners to create visions of themselves transported into a future state.

Sociocultural Perspective

Having touched upon imagined selves, identity, and community issues, we turn now to the function of narratives as understood from a Sociocultural Perspective. Vygotsky (1978) long ago suggested self-regulating internal narratives are an important aspect of human development. As Vygotsky notes, imagination allows individuals to envision themselves rehearsing future roles positioned around social values (1978, 129). He also views "imagination in action" as a precursor for an individual "to acquire the

motivation, skills, and attitudes necessary for their social participation, which can be fully achieved only with the assistance of their peers and elders" (1978, 129). In one sense, imagination in *action* can be seen as narrative construction.

Simply "day dreaming" does not count; critical imagination requires effort. Educators need to scaffold learners through the process of using mental imagery to imagine and construct educational goals that may have an influence on their sense of self in the future. When learners purposefully use their imagination to envision a desirable future, especially as part of a story, it can potentially ignite unrealized motives.

Vygotsky (2004) viewed imagination as a critical component of human development, but cautions that because imagination is a complex process that is difficult to master, it can play a dual role in human behavior, leading one toward or away from "reality." Others have acknowledged that simply fantasizing about success is not as effective as imagining the processes required to achieve a specific goal, as was illustrated in the empirical study by Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, and Armor (431). Therefore, pedagogues should assist or scaffold language learners in focusing their imagination toward specific processes associated with actualizing their ideal L2 selves.

Arguing for the importance of imagination development education, Vygotsky (2004) differentiates two types of cognitive behavior. His insights are similar to the previous discussion of process goals and outcome goals. One type of cognitive behavior is a *reproduction* activity based on experienced memories. For instance, when language learners write a letter to a childhood friend, they are reproducing a model based on a skill

learned in the past. The individuals are not the creator of letter writing, but rather they are reproducing a concept that already exists and has been committed to memory.

Vygotsky (2004) also identifies a second type of cognitive behavior, which involves using imagination to creatively construct mental images which may become a "reality." Vygotsky argues that imagination has the potential to become actualized based on four assumptions. First, he assumes that imagination always originates from elements of transformed past experiences. For example, it would not have been possible for someone with no knowledge of a lemon to imagine inventing lemonade. The second association between reality and imagination is built on the assumption that the human brain is capable of combining stored past experiences to form new images that were never actually experienced. For example, if someone can imagine an elephant and the African savanna, then she or he should be able to imagine riding an elephant across the African savanna. The third association is built on the assumption that mental images have a direct influence on emotional states. For instance, the mental images someone generates about characters in a novel can manifest actual emotional responses within the individual (e.g., anger, joy, or sadness). The fourth association may be the most important. Mental images have the potential to become externalized, thus becoming "real." Every construct of human society began as internalized imagery before crossing over the imaginary plane into existence and becoming part of an external construct (e.g., capitalism, the telephone, the university). Consequently, an imagined future self has the potential of becoming an actualized self.

In summary, imagination instruction should not only respect learners' individualized learning strategies (Weinstein, Husman and Dierking 727), but it should also offer a safe environment where language learners explore their identities positioned within an imagined community. A safe environment for narrative construction, then, is of paramount importance. Poststructuralist views are critical to understanding how identities are constructed in relation to a specific context. The relationship between an imagined self and motivation is a critical aspect of language learning pedagogy. So, given the complex dynamic construct of the self, how can language instruction implement theories of the self into actual classroom activities? The next chapter explores the application of imagining a future L2 self in the language classroom.

CHAPTER 4: MENTAL IMAGERY ACTIVITIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

This chapter provides a guide for implementing a visionary program in the language learning classroom. The focus is on incorporating mental imagery activities as a teaching supplement to help learners develop visions of their ideal L2 selves. What are some considerations that language instructors might need to consider when implementing a visionary program in their classroom? What are some usable activities that can be incorporated into L2 learning curricula? These questions are based on the theories discussed previously, especially theories linking learning and imagined selves. This chapter also considers some of the possible challenges that instructors could face while implementing a visionary program.

Before designing a visionary program, instructors should reflect on the learners with whom they are working. What are the learners' high-priority interests and concerns? How do the learners currently define their identities? With whom do the learners affiliate? What are the learners' goals? In other words, instructors need to have a critical understanding of their language learners' current hopes and fears (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 39). To answer these questions an instructor must know the learners.

Getting to Know Learners

How might language instructors develop a sense of the hopes and fears learners bring to the classroom? One way to become familiar with learners is to conduct

interviews. Educators might be able to find time to spend 10 minutes interviewing individual learners. During the interview, the instructor could find out about an unforgettable L2 experience, or a target language role model (see Appendix A: Interview Questions) Appendix A offers a list of potential interview question adapted from Chan (2014) that instructors can use to build knowledge about the learners' L2 self. Ideally, a list of learners' hopes and fears about the future could assist the instructor in deciding how to customize motivating lessons and develop learning strategies that resonate with individual learners and the class as a whole. A visionary program starts with listening and reflects an interest in the learners' and their concerns.

If interviewing learners seems unrealistic due to large class sizes or time constraints, another way instructors may get to know their students is by having the learners report on their life and language histories. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova suggest having learners write autobiographies, keep diaries, and write reflective journals. In these cases, the stories produced by learners are not meant to be judged or graded, but to act as an introduction to the learner. Learner autobiographies can inform instructors about learner individualities and life experiences (see Appendix B: Learning about Learners' Stories). Appendix B is adapted from Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) and offers three activities that an instructor can to use to develop a sense of the learners and one suggestion for how an instructor can use observations to learn about the learners.

Student interviews and life histories may help to guide instructors to develop appropriate visionary activities for a specific set of learners. In some ways, the instructor is becoming an "ethnographer" of the class. If the instructor observes, for example, that

the learners are resistant to studying the target language (e.g., they were forced to immigrate to a different country), then a logical starting point for imagery-centered activities is to focus on creating possible future selves where learners have the freedom to make life choices. On the other hand, if learners are accepting that L2 education has a direct value in their lives, then imagery-centered activities could be designed to strengthen and operationalize learners' visions, such as imagining the influence L2 knowledge will have on educational or employment opportunities in the future. Recognizing learners' present identity concerns is a critical step to implementing a program designed to build visions of an ideal future self (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 41).

One issue that may challenge a language instructor is large enrollment classrooms. Norton poses a serious question when she writes, "How can the lives of language learners become an integral part of the second language curriculum when a teacher may have thirty students in the classroom" (2000, 140)? A classroom with thirty learners, for instance, makes it extremely difficult to design learner specific activities that address immediate classroom concerns. It also makes it very difficult for an instructor to know each learner on a personal level. Due to classroom size, instructors may have to settle for identifying salient learner archetypes. Although everyone is unique, learners probably share some similar characteristics and interests (sports, popular media, music, food, etc.). Those characteristics might lead to generalized categories that are relevant to many of the learners (e.g., extroverted sports fan). Along with knowing the learners, there are several important conditions associated with implementing a visionary program.

Visionary Program Conditions

Dörnyei and Ushioda have identified nine conditions related to the motivational aspect of possible selves and learner visions of a future self (83) that language instructors should consider before implementing a visionary program.

1. The learner must be able to successfully imagine a desired future self.
2. The desired L2 self must be different from the current self.
3. The learner must be able to construct elaborate mental images of their possible future selves.
4. The learner's visions must be within the realm of plausible circumstances.
5. The learner's imagined future should be somewhat uncertain, thus requiring effort to be achieved.
6. The imagined future self should not completely conflict with perceived social or group expectation (family, peers, etc.).
7. Visions of possible future selves should be "regularly activated."
8. Imagined future selves must be accompanied with a "road map" or corresponding strategies to help learners attain specific goals.
9. Learners should imagine the possible negative consequences that could arise from failing to attain certain goals.

According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, these nine principles have "emerged from a synthesis of extensive theoretical and research activity across a range of disciplines" and have only begun to emerge in the field of SLA and applied linguistics (33). These

conditions provide an initial framework for instructors attempting to develop practical motivational activities designed to engage language learners' possible selves in the classroom (Dörnyei and Ushioda; Oysterman and James). By applying these principles to immediate concerns identified in the language learners, an instructor may develop a program that activates learner-centered visions of an ideal L2 self.

Assuming learners are able to successfully imagine an ideal L2 self (condition 1 above), the instructor can begin to create activities highlighting the *difference* between the learners' current identity and a personally relevant possible future self (condition 2 above). Instructors who have personal knowledge of the learners should try to generate activities that help the learners to notice the discrepancies between their current self and possible future selves. Without noticeable discrepancies, there is little incentive to motivate a change in behavior (Higgins). The perceived differences between the present and future self should make the learners somewhat uncomfortable, thus, fanning the motivational flame. Activities that ask learners to imagine and describe differences between their current and future selves should also create some dissonance and uncertainty (see condition 5 above). Learners' motivation should increase as they strive to alleviate any discomfort caused by the discrepancies and perceived uncertainty.

Learners may need some practice becoming acquainted with the process of converting imagination into action (imagined story into lived story). Activities should start out relatively simple and include suggestions that engage the learners' senses. According to Hall, Hall, and Leech, "[a]ttending to sensory data may block normal

rational thinking and encourage imagery" (54). Therefore, activities should include phrases that encourage learners to engage all their senses (sights, sounds, tastes, etc.).

Learners can be encouraged to generate multisensory images (Sadoski and Paivio; Hall, Hall, and Leech) in increasing detail (condition 3 above). For example, a classic beginning-level script has people imagine the way a lemon looks, feels, smells, and tastes. A guide asks an audience to imagine standing in the kitchen holding a bright yellow lemon and imagining the way the lemon feels as they run their fingertips over it, and how it smells as they bring it closer to their nose. Perhaps the guide suggests squeezing it. Next, the guide asks the audience to see themselves cutting the lemon, watching the spurt of lemon juice, and inhaling the lemon mist. Finally, the guide asks the audience to imagine sinking their teeth into a slice of the lemon. The idea behind the activity is to demonstrate the power of the imagination to produce a physiological response (salivary gland activation) by simply imagining a lemon. This type of exercise may help learners to recognize the connection between their imagination and physiological processes, as well as build multiple connections between the language and the mental images. As learners become comfortable with the process, the activities can become more challenging and connected to standard language learning tasks.

Another important aspect of a visionary program is creating a "roadmap" learners might follow to achieve their ideal L2 self (see condition 8 above). Activities that encourage learners to imagine *the process* devoted to advancing their current self toward their ideal L2 self can develop into a real plan of action. For example, the learners and instructor can brainstorm a list of learner-generated goals, and then learners might vote

on the goals that they feel are relevant for them. Learners could also generate a list of personal goals (see Goal Setting in this chapter). Hadfield and Dörnyei say "in order for a motivational program to be effective…it is necessary to relate the imaginative to the practical, the effective to the cognitive and the creative to the logical" (105). Visions have to be translated into actionable plans that directly relate to a plausible future (see condition 4) The point is for learners to create list of achievable checkpoints that move them closer to their ideal L2 selves.

To help learners develop various possible selves, instructors can provide learners with different L2 experiences or scenarios such as intercultural encounters, video conferences with L2 speakers, guest L2 speakers, class projects with L2 speakers from different countries, and study abroad opportunities. Any of these activities can potentially help learners to envision and consider alternative possible future selves. For example, students can bring in many different magazines they value, including travel magazines. They cut out images that appeal to them, and then the instructor asks the learners to create a collage of images and phrase significant to them. The collage may tell a "story," and reveals something of the cognitive processes, identities, and goals of the language learner (see Appendix C: Ideal L2 Self Vision Board Activity).

Another way that teachers may help learners explore various possible selves was recently demonstrated at the 2017 conference for the American Association of Applied Linguistics. There, a group of students from the University of Nottingham had a poster presentation which presented "a pilot study on understanding whether Chinese learners of English can realise their 'ideal L2 selves' by having their facial features blended into

existing videos of fluent English speakers" (Adolphs et al. 179). Such work clearly requires an instructor who is technologically capable of manipulating images, such that a learner's face can be inserted into existing videos. For visual learners, particularly, such a technique could be powerfully motivating.

Guided-Imagery Activities

A key way for instructors to engage learners in imaging possible selves is through guided-imagery activity. Guided-imagery work refers to activities where the instructor reads a script (text) that encourages learners to visualize themselves in a scenario (Egan 61). In the field of SLA, guided imagery is used to help learners create personal visions about aspects of their ideal L2 selves. According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, guided imagery helps language learners "consciously generate images of desired (language) selves in their own mind" (49). Guided imagery creates a space where cognitive and affective processes become centered on identifying a specific aspect of the desired L2 self, clarifying language learning goals (e.g., spend one hour every day reading a target language newspaper), and/or creating a plan of action (e.g., ordering a newspaper subscription). There are three main types of guided-imagery activities that can be used in the SLA classroom: scripted fantasy, scripted imagery, and image streaming (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 49-50).

The first type of guided-imagery script is *scripted fantasy*. Scripted fantasy refers to an activity where an instructor reads a scenario designed to engage the learners' ability to imagine. Fantasy scripts are designed around ambiguous questions and statements that

allow individuals to fill in the blanks using mental images. For example, if learners are asked to imagine a painting of themselves in the future, one possible scripted fantasy question might be "Where does the person in the painting live?" Scripted fantasy transports learners to imaginative space where they can contemplate aspects of their ideal self, their ought-to self, and various possible L2 futures.

Hall, Hall, and Leech provide an example of scripted fantasy that might help learners think creatively about what possibilities are ahead of them and about possible obstacles in their lives.

> Just take two deep breaths and allow your body to relax….Just let the tension go…. Imagine that you are walking through a dull, cheerless landscape…. There are no people around and little of interest to look at…. Be aware of your feelings as you walk along…. The path that you are walking along leads to a high wall which you can see in the distance… The wall is so high that you cannot see over it…. As you stand in front of it and realize it is blocking your path, be aware of your feelings about it…. What does the wall look like?…. Go up to it and feel the texture of its surface….
>
> Choose the direction that you are going to take in order to find a way round…. After a while you come across a ladder lying by the wall…. Pick it up and lean it against the wall…. It feels firm and safe…. By climbing up the rungs, you can look over…. What can you see?…. What is happening down there on the other side of the wall?…. What do you

> feel about it?…. Now if you want to you can climb over and permit the fantasy to go in any way you wish…. Find a way in the fantasy to do what you want to do…. When it is right for you, let that fantasy go and gently come back to the room (Hall, Hall, and Leech 60).

Looking over the wall is a metaphor for freeing the learner to envision an alternative future, as well as a way to resolve obstacles they may face along the way. Language learners, of course, may face many obstacles on their way to L2 mastery. Not only can this activity be used to introduce intermediate or advanced language learners to scripted fantasy, but it has the potential to generate meaningful group discussion. Learners might want to have class discussions on the issues they are facing learning the target language and brainstorm solutions, or learners could practice listening and speaking skills describing their wall, for instance.

The second type of guided-imagery script is *scripted imagery*. Scripted imagery is a highly detailed and specific form of scripted fantasy similar to "reading a novel or listening to a story" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 50). This type of activity can be designed to serve a specific function (e.g., simulating a target language conversation, preparing for a target language interview, or preparing for an important exam). Scripted imagery guides language learners through a process of mentally rehearsing a specific situation in as much detail as possible. These scripted scenarios are constructed "based on the students' current identity concerns and lived experiences" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 50). For example, if a learner wants to prepare for a presentation using the target language, then scripted imagery can help her mentally rehearse that scenario. Magid and Chan provide

an example of a scripted imagery situation that asks students to mentally rehearse a job interview.

> Close your eyes and imagine that today is the day of a very important job interview. You have been dreaming of this job for a long time. This job could be in any part of the world where you would like to live. You have prepared very well for the interview, and as you get dressed, you are feeling really confident that you will do well. As you look at yourself in the mirror, you are happy with how professional and mature you look. You arrive at the company a few minutes before the interview and are feeling very calm as you wait to be called into the boss's office. When you step into his or her office, you can see that the boss is impressed by your business-like appearance, friendly and confident smile, and your firm handshake. He or she asks you to sit down and starts to ask you questions. Although some of the questions are quite difficult, you are able to use your excellent English to answer all of them extremely well. You can see that the boss is pleased and very satisfied with all of your answers. The boss is also impressed by your fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in English. You show him or her that you have so much knowledge, so many skills and are highly qualified for this job of your dreams. As the interview ends, there is no doubt in your mind that you will get this job. Stay with this feeling of complete confidence as

> you open your eyes and come back to this room (adapted from Magid and Chan 117).

If learners are interested in preparing for a job interview, then an activity like this provides practice and builds confidence.

Scripts should be realistic and relevant, that is, based on "situations with which the majority of the students will be able to identify" (Hall, Hall, and Leech 53). Data gathered during student interviews could be used to construct positive scripted imagery situations that are relevant to a specific group of language learners (business presentations, public speaking events, ordering food in restaurants, etc.). Scripts should also be adjusted for the language learners' L2 proficiency (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced) and life experience (e.g., children versus adults), as well as for the course content (e.g., language for academic purposes versus business language). To reiterate, motivating imagery scripts will relate to the learners' immediate language concerns.

The last type of script is *image streaming*. Image streaming (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 50) refers to activities where learners receive an initial stimulus (e.g., imagine a city in a foreign country) and then receive minimal input describing the scenario. For example, learners imagine any place in the world that may require them to speak the target language and then imagine themselves there. The learners' imagination provides most the stimulus. Learners are encouraged to describe the things they see, hear, smell, and/or taste in detail. They might be asked to focus on one specific element of their vision to share or write about. This activity offers learners a chance to identify, share, and

develop their own visions and narratives related to their possible future L2 selves (e.g., studying abroad).

A specific example of imagery streaming might be to prompt learners with a future self that is studying abroad. For example, the learners might be instructed: "As you read the following paragraph, think about any place your future self might like to visit or a place where you would like to study a different culture. What images come to mind as you read the following imagery streaming script about studying abroad?"

> I'd like you to summon up an image of studying abroad. It doesn't have to be a place you know or that you have visited. Just go along with the first image that comes into your mind and as the image becomes more real to you, actually see yourself studying in the foreign country. Now describe aloud to me what you can see. Be in the foreign country. And now if you can, don't just see yourself in the image. Be there, looking through your own eyes at what you can see around you (adapted from Hall, Hall, Stradling, and Young 34).

Imagery-streaming activities provide learners with opportunities to create rich and detailed narratives about their possible L2 future. According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, "the essence of imagery streaming activity is to get students to provide descriptions of objects, scenes or people in increasingly elaborate detail in the *present tense*" (51). By later retelling their narratives to other people, learners reinforce and strengthen their vision of a possible L2 future (condition 7 above).

Another key aspect of guided-imagery is to begin with a moment of relaxation. This physical relaxation of the body may help to relieve muscular tension, dissipate stress, and center learners' thoughts. This technique is particularly helpful as learning an unfamiliar language can be stressful. Some learners may find the idea of speaking in class using the target language very threatening. They could experience moments of anxiety around an inability to accurately articulate thoughts, a fear of making a bad impression, and/or a concern over academic evaluations (Brown 162). Academic, political, social, and language anxieties compound the situation, leaving students feeling overwhelmed at times.

According to Hall, Hall, and Leech, "very little is done in schools to acknowledge the impact of such stressful interactions upon the learning process" (133). Instructors should encourage students to get comfortable (e.g., uncross legs, sit up straight) and take a few moments to breathe. For a sample relaxation script used for advanced learners see Appendix D: Sample Relaxation Script (adapted from Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 55). Taking a few deep breaths can help students release stress and center themselves. Keep in mind that "scripted fantasy can provide a unique opportunity during the school day for students to withdraw temporarily from stressful interactions in a way that is both legitimate and educational" (Hall, Hall, and Leech 133). Taking a few moments to practice the relaxation element before moving on to the actual scripted component is a nice way to center the learners' attention before transporting them to their imagined future.

After completing a guided-imagery activity, learners should have opportunities to share their narratives with others. Sharing a narrative can be a transformative experience for the individual and the audience. Because individuals need to construct a vivid image before being able to articulate it, sharing narratives about possible selves helps learners construct elaborate and detailed possible selves, and provides them with opportunity to practice meaningful speaking and listening in the L2.

Narrative sharing is also a fundamental principle of critical pedagogy. "It is critical in that it enables learners to question and critique social norms and power arrangements by enabling learners to see how they are located in (and their thinking is shaped by) larger cultural narratives" (Clark and Rossiter 66). Co-learners are a valuable classroom resource. Not only do students bring valuable life experience to the classroom, but they also bring a unique worldview that can influence how their peers and the instructor perceive the world. As Paulo Freire writes, "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student and student-teacher" (80). Sharing stories is an important aspect of implementing a visionary program.

Goal Setting

A critical step in implementing a visionary program is to move toward *actualizing* the learners' visions (Hadfield and Dörnyei). Guided-imagery scripts can be used to encourage learners to visualize the process of setting goals. Learners can imagine long-term goals, weekly goals, and daily goals. According to Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, and

Armor, "[s]tudents who envisioned the steps leading to a successful goal achievement had significantly better performance on midterm examinations" (438). Envisioning the processes that will lead to achievements or "success" is a critical part of any visionary program. For instance, if the learners want to increase their reading fluency, then they might imagine short-term goals associated with improving reading rate. A long-term goal for reading fluency might be to complete fifty timed-reading assignments in ten weeks. A short-term goal might be to complete five timed-reading assignments in a week. A daily goal might be to complete one reading on each weekday (Monday – Friday).

Goals should require some effort, but still be attainable. Of great importance is that the goals should be created and clearly defined by the learner (Hadfield and Dörnyei 107). Goals can be grouped and ranked according to importance, the resources that are required (e.g., self-study at home versus moving abroad), and/or the type of goal orientation (e.g., performance versus mastery goals).

However, learners may run into some problems tying to imagine and define their own goals. Depending on the learner's unique present positionality, some individuals may need additional assistance. One learner may need assistance in developing a workable schedule of short-term goals. Another learner might have a very specific and concrete goal, such as successful completing a job interview using the target language. The instructor who knows the learners in a class is better equipped to customize learning experiences for the learners.

Language instruction also should attempt to mitigate two other kinds of problems. First, there are logistical problems that frustrate some students. Access to textbooks,

language labs, and group meetings are real concerns. An instructor operating from a learner-centered perspective might be able to address some of these concerns with input from the class. A second type of problem could arise when the instructor, the syllabus, the textbook, and the students have differing opinions about which goals are important. The instructor has much power in curriculum design, and may be able to make meaningful changes from semester to semester depending on the learners' goals, perhaps by negotiating some curricular goals with the class.

Learner-defined goals should be comprehensive, practical, and attainable. "Activities types which help students fulfil this aim are brainstorms, checklists, mindmaps, and questionnaires" (Hadfield and Dörnyei 107). The instructor can help learners imagine a list of goals that align both with institutional and course requirements for the class as well as personalized goal statements. Learners can use checklists, for instance, to monitor and assess their own progress. Because goals and tasks are learner-centered, they should be more compelling to the learner than teacher-directed goals. Ideally, course goals and study plans are constructed by the learners of the class, and the instructor offers support as the learners request it.

Once students have defined their goals, they can begin to experiment with different strategies to achieve those goals. Learners are not necessarily going to automatically know the most effective learning strategies. Thus, an effective visionary program will teach different strategies and will help students notice unproductive strategies and make adjustments accordingly. This movement toward autonomy is crucial for life-long learning. For example, a brief guided fantasy script that has the learners

imagine their actual study space (e.g., noisy or quiet) compared to their ideal study space (e.g., quiet) could begin a discussion on study habits. Learners could also make posters, for instance, ranking the different study strategies they prefer (e.g., studying with others, reading in quiet space, taking lots of notes) near the beginning of the course. As learners monitor and evaluate their strategy use over time, they could make changes to rankings on their posters. Learners can be encouraged to imagine, practice, evaluate, and justify their own learning strategies. The point is for learners to develop an internal locus of control.

Instructors should also attend to the emotional side of language learning by balancing hopes and fears. Working together hopes and fears can be a powerful motivator, complementing each other and strengthening motivation. Hadfield and Dörnyei suggest that the learners' desired selves "should be balanced against a consideration of what would happen if the desired self is not attained" (47). Having learners imagine the realistic consequences of failure can actually enhance motivation. Nevertheless, a cautious approach in recommended. Learners need to be protected against developing a sense of hopelessness. Instructors need to gauge the attitude of the class. For instance, a "depressed" or "low energy" class may not be prepared for a discussion on failure. As a result, discussion should center on avoiding failure without overly worrying learners.

Finally, learners should make a *public* commitment to becoming their imagined future self and chart their progress as a means to increase motivation (Hadfield and Dörnyei 180). By publicly stating an ideal L2 self, the learner moves from an imagined

fantasy to a public declaration. Learners can sign study contracts, for instance, outlining goals and how much time they agree to study each week. Learners might use the contracts assess their performance ("I exceeded my learning goals for this week; I achieved my learning goals for this week," etc.). Again, an internal locus of control, coupled with public accountability, can be helpful in motivating learners to achieve their goals. The successful implementation of a visionary program, then, is a careful combination of activities, conditions, emotions, goals, and motivation.

In summary, building an effective visionary program requires at least four steps. First, the foundation for success must be laid, using the nine conditions identified by Dörnyei and Ushioda. Second, instructors must listen and expend considerable energy in getting to know the learners in the class. Third, appropriate activities must be created to help learners build visions of ideal L2 selves. Activities should raise learners' awareness to the connection between their L2 selves and motivation. Instructors should also help learners to construct goals and evaluate different strategies that might lead to successful outcomes.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This M.A. project has explored the theoretical connections between language learning, imagination, and motivation, as well as offered techniques that can be employed in the classroom to enhance learners' imagined selves. Among the extensive literature on learning and motivation, this project has concentrated on four areas: complex dynamic systems, possible selves, imagined futures, and classroom implications.

While many factors have an impact on SLA, this project emphasizes an individual's visions of a future self as being a primary motivator. But language is a complex system, the individual is a complex system, and the classroom is a complex system, so this project covers a range of theories about complex and dynamic systems, as well. The complex dynamic nature of human motivation does not lend itself to a linear analysis. Therefore, even as this project turned to imagined possible future selves as a prime motivating force, it acknowledges that many other factors are at play.

The expanding field of L2 motivation research has grown beyond the positivist view of research. Drawing on the concept of possible selves and Self-Discrepancy Theory, the L2 Motivational Self System has opened new avenues for exploring the relationship between learners' visions of a future self and motivation. "[S]elf theorists have become increasingly interested in the active, dynamic nature of the self-system, gradually replacing traditionally static forms of self-representations with a self-system that mediates and controls ongoing behavior" (Dörnyei and Ushioda 80). Recently, there has been an ever-growing body of empirical evidence to support the positive influence

imagined selves have on developing a motivating language learning environment. This evidence should inspire and motivate new types of language instruction.

The appendices are an attempt to link the theoretical work of this project with the language classroom. The activities illustrate how guided-imagery exercises may be applied in the classroom to enhance language learners' visions of their ideal self in the future. As Stephen Ryan and Kay Irie write, "imagined selves are integral and essential to the language learning process, and a greater understanding of the workings of the imagination may prove to be an invaluable resource for both teachers and learners" (110). The currency of the ideas presented in this project, and their applications in classrooms, is further illustrated by the fact that presentations on these issues are showing up at key applied linguistics conferences, such as at the 2017 American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) conference. Two presentations on the ideal self and motivation can be found in the most recent conference program (Adolphs et al.; Dörnyei and Muir).

L2 motivation is a fascinating and a complicated field of inquiry, covering a range of academic domains (e.g., psychology, language education, and applied linguistics). I originally was inspired to explore motivation as a topic for this project by the work of Vygotsky, as he combined psychology with education. I felt that language instructors need to not be dissuaded from exploring the central role imagination has on language learner development. My research into the role of motivation, imagination, and future selves has confirmed that conclusion, and has made me even more excited to learn more and to work to apply what I have learned in the language development classroom.

The human imagination can be a window into the future. “When used appropriately, it can enable a person to manage the basic tasks of life, namely…the effective use of planning and problem solving capabilities for combating stress, regulating daily activities effectively, and achieving personal goals” (Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, and Armor 438). Vision, although not intrinsically beneficial, can be developed and focused in a way that helps learners regulate behaviors. Dörnyei and Chan have demonstrated that visionary work has “considerable pedagogical relevance” and is a skill that can be developed with instruction (457). An instructor implementing an effective visionary program requires knowledge about the self-concepts learners bring to the classroom, encourages learners to imagine positive self-images within an imagined community, creates learner-centered discussions, helps learners define a pathway to achieve specific goals, and provides opportunities to mentally rehearse learner-relevant scenarios.

Instructors have access to many individuals who want guidance, but without building a personal relationship with each learner as an individual, they will be limited in their ability to directly serve the learners’ needs. A successful language instructor should be able to motivate language learners to participate in the classroom, seek out external opportunities to practice, and gain language knowledge from multiple sources in multiple contexts. Anyone who has ever tried to teach a class saturated with resistant, uninterested, and/or uncooperative learners understands that motivation is a critical component to learner success and will benefit from the information presented in this project.

Instructors can never truly know how much influence they can have on learners. When a teacher simply takes the time to talk with a student on a personal level, it is an opportunity to connect the individual with a community that cares about his or her success. An instructor willing to connect with each student on a personal level shows a commitment to the learning process. This commitment to the individual is the key to developing an effective visionary program that not only serves each learner but society as well.

A visionary program engages learners with elaborate internalized conversations filled with detailed mental images. It transports learners into self-narratives. As communication psychologist Melanie C. Green and John K. Donahue write, "The psychological theory of *transportation* (emphasis added) into narrative worlds suggests that becoming immersed in a story can have powerful emotional and persuasive consequences" (241). Activities that immerse language learners into their own narratives about ideal future selves can shape outcome trajectories. They can shape internalized narratives for a specific purpose and, in the process, develop highly motivated learners.

Well-constructed guided-imagery activities (scripted fantasy, scripted imagery, and imagery streaming) can transport the audience members' consciousness to another time and place. "In the classroom context, this means the learner moves from a cognitive understanding of a concept to link it to his or her own experience" (Clark and Rossiter 65). In other words, learning is the building of connections between cognitive understanding and personal experiences. When language learners link course content to their own narratives, it becomes personal and potentially motivating.

However, the evolving field of L2 motivation needs continuing research to mature. One way educators can contribute to the general acceptance of a visionary program is by conducting action research. Not only can this contribute to professional development, but it also has the potential to advance SLA knowledge as well. Hadfield and Dörnyei write, "action research is nothing more than reflecting on interesting or problematic areas in one's teaching in a structured way by looking at some actual information" (297). If, for example, instructors repeat the interview process conducted at the beginning of the course near the end of the course and compare the results, they are conducting action research that might advance the field. A pre- and post-course analysis of learner interviews, for instance, might contribute to the current evidence suggesting the effectiveness of a learning environment rich in guided-imagery activities.

Language instructors are encouraged to investigate and "explore the plausibility and relevance of these new ideas in their own practice" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 33). Because every set of learners is a complex dynamic system, instructors will need to make their own assessment about the effectiveness of guided-imagery activities in their classrooms. Approaching language learning from a complex dynamic systems perspective means moving away from "established quantitative data analytical procedures (e.g., correlation analysis or structured equation modeling) based on linear rather than nonlinear relationships" (Dörnyei 2014, 80). Instructor intuition will probably go a long way in determining activities that effectively motivate a specific set of learners.

SLA research embracing a complex dynamic systems approach will look for new ways to research the connections between possible future selves and learner motivation.

Dörnyei suggests "instead of the usual forward-pointing 'pre-diction' in scientific research, we reverse the order of things and pursue 'retro-diction': by tracing back the reason why a system has ended up with a particular outcome option we produce a retrospective qualitative model of its evolution" (2014, 85). How well did imagining future selves motivate learners to study the target language? This is a question for instructors to decide. The future of explicitly teaching language learners to imagine possible futures is dependent on its ability to continue to build academic acceptance. Cognitive scientists, linguists, educators, psychologists, and learners of all varieties are invited to enter into this conversation.

As Dörnyei and Ushioda recommend, motivational programs should help learners create a plausible vision of their ideal L2 self, strengthen their vision through imagery enhancement activities, allow learners to development their own plan of action, regularly engage visions of ideal L2 selves, and counterbalance ideal selves with feared selves (83). By applying the principles discussed in this project, a teacher may begin developing a visionary program that motivates learning through visions of an ideal L2 self. These experiences can become the foundations that aid in building histories that grow into new ways of imagining the future. As this M.A. project argues, teachers who have taken the time to really know their students as complex dynamic systems can offer them a taste of a future that they have not previously imagined and can therefore create a language learning environment that truly inspires and motivates.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Adapted from Chan 2014)

Instructors can choose questions to fit the learners' needs and the available time.

- When did you start learning the target language?
- Why did you begin learning the target language?
- Where have you studied the target language?
- What are your strengths and weakness in using the target language (e.g., reading, listening, writing, and speaking)?
- What are your opinions about the target language culture?
- What strategies are you currently using to learn the target language? How are these strategies useful? Why?
- What are your current goals?
- What type of learner are you (e.g., visual, auditory, and/or kinesthetic)?
- Do you like learning the target language? Have you always felt that way?
- What factors motivate you?
- Are there any obstacles when you are learning the target language? What are they? What effects do they have on your learning?
- How much effort have you exerted learning the language so far?
- Are you happy with the results?

- Do you think there is a relationship between your effort, motivation, and the results you obtained?
- Do people (your parents, peers, teachers) affect your motivation in learning the target language?
- Does location effect your learning?
- How important is the target language society? What does society expect of you in terms of target language learning?
- Do you have a sense of who you would like to become in the future? In other words, can you see, hear, or feel who would ideally like to become?
- Does this imagination of who you could become in the future motivate your language learning?
- Do you have a sense of who you ought to become?
- Are you afraid of not becoming a successful user of the target language? Do these thoughts influence your motivation in learning the target language?

APPENDIX B: LEARNING ABOUT LEARNERS' STORIES

(Adapted from Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014: 44)

The first three activities are designed for the language learners, and the fourth activity is designed for the language instructor.

Photovoice—A visual approach to learner ethnography. Learners are asked to take pictures of situations, events, people that matter to them as persons and L2 learners/users. Then they make a selection of the most important images and describe why they matter to them in an oral or written narrative.

Diaries—Learners document in a diary the complexities of learning an L2 in their specific setting. This can be an especially effective technique in study abroad and ESL contexts in which the L2 learning and use blend with the daily demands of study, work, housing, or relationships.

Reflective journals—Learners regularly reflect on their learning in the classroom in relation to their own experiences and aspirations.

Becoming an ethnographer of your own classroom—Instructors become ethnographers and carefully observe (and record, if possible) the dynamics of their own classrooms for what these can tell them about the students' identities and lived experiences.

APPENDIX C: VISION BOARD ACTIVITY

(Adapted from Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014: 47)

For this activity, instructors will need different types of old magazines (e.g., travel magazines, college prospectus), cardboard paper for each student, and glue.

Step 1: Ask learners to think about who they would ideally want to become and how the L2 features in that vision.

Step 2: Ask them to go through the magazines and cut out interesting pictures and/or phrases. Let them have fun looking through the magazines and pulling out pictures or words or headlines that capture their imagination. They should end up with a large pile of images and phrases.

Step 3: Then they should go through the images and begin to lay out their favorites on the cardboard and the instructors should encourage the students to design their board creatively, in any way they want. Once they have finalized the design, they can start gluing images on to the board. They can also add writing, painting, and coloring to complete their composition.

Step 4: Students should leave space in the very center of the vision board for a fantastic photo of themselves and paste it there. Alternatively, they can display a picture (or several pictures) of themselves being, doing, or having their desired future (traveling around the world, having a high-profile job, studying at a university, etc.). They should show themselves in a realistic setting and insert a corresponding caption (e.g., “This is me studying abroad”).

Step 5: Hang their vision boards in the classroom where they will see them often. You could revisit them every once in a while and refer to them from time to time during the class, perhaps when you feel that a boost in motivation is needed.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE RELAXATION SCRIPT

(Adapted from Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014: 55)

Using a quiet, serene voice say:

Please sit quietly with your feet on the floor, leg uncrossed. Keep your back straight so that your lungs can function at their best. Hold your head straight and, if you are comfortable, close your eyes. Now slowly take a deep breath. Feel the breath going deeply into your chest, feel your chest expanding as you breathe in. Slowly breathe out and feel the stress leave your body as you exhale. Take another deep breath, breathing in relaxation. Become aware of what is happening in your body as your chest expands. Release your breath at your own pace, noticing the stress leave your body. Take one more deep breath, and simply enjoy the quiet feeling inside you.