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Shifting Voices: Facilitating the Ideal L2 Self Through the Development of Imagined
Communities in the Language Classroom

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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To my grandmother for providing words of encouragement during our final conversation here on Earth, right as I was about to embark on this journey. I often drew inspiration from our conversation during this program, especially when I did not think I had it in me to continue pushing forward. I did it, Grandma! All my love.

“It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that nationalist ideologues treat them
- as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the
most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities,
building in effect particular solidarities.”

-Benedict Anderson

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My first attempt at describing imagined communities and the ideal L2 self as they pertain to language learning was published in the *MinneTESOL Journal* in 2021 (Volume 37, Issue 1). Portions of that article are present in the literature review, specifically an explanation about research on imagined communities and a brief background on the ideal L2 self. I would like to acknowledge and thank the editorial board at MinneTESOL for allowing me to explore this research and providing the platform for it to be published.

The article can be found here:

<https://minnetesoljournal.org/current-issue/peer-reviewed-article/imagined-communities-the-significance-of-imagination-and-language-learning/>

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Who are you, really? Where do you see yourself in three, five, ten years? These questions get tossed around in our minds and in conversations, interviews, and philosophical meanderings as we venture through life. We are consistently molding into new, while shedding—or partially shedding—old identities. As we maneuver between and even struggle with these varying identity positions, we can be positioned as someone with agency (given the right to speak and thus enhanced opportunities for communication) or as someone with limited opportunities to express ourselves, whether it be in reading, writing, or speaking (Norton, 2010).

If this struggle for identity is, in fact, real for everybody, imagine the struggle for identity while attempting to acquire a second language. If one attempts to acquire a second language, there is a possibility that as this challenge comes to fruition, one looks in the mirror and asks: “Who am I, really?”, “Which identity and in which situation will it present itself today?” One may look more deeply inward and ask: “How can I discover my ideal second language (L2) self?”, which Dörnyei (2005, 2009) reiterates as the self learners want to become in their second language. And, further, “Will this discovery, in turn, morph the communities of my imagination into communities of my reality?” Considering these questions in relation to second language learning allowed me to form the following question guiding my research: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?*

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I discuss my background and interest in second language identity, share a personal story about my own struggle with identity as a Japanese language learner and how the construct of imagined communities motivated me to keep learning, allowing me to see myself as a member of a community I so strongly desired to be a part of. I also highlight the rationale for my overarching question, previewing implications for classroom practices in both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. ESL typically refers to the study of English by nonnative speakers in an environment where English is the majority language outside the classroom. EFL contexts are those in countries where English is not the majority language outside the classroom, such as Japan, Poland, or Brazil. I also discuss the development of learners' ideal second language (L2) selves through transformative pedagogical practices (Norton, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011), which can help learners develop their own imagined communities and thus their ideal L2 selves.

Transformative pedagogy/classrooms view language not simply as a set of governing rules, but more importantly from a social perspective, taking into account learner identities as they shift in accordance with the social world. The classroom is viewed as a place where learner investment in the language can be enhanced, and if it is not, gains in language learning are restricted. Additionally, teachers allow opportunities in not only the classroom, but the school and the community for learners to gain various identity positions in which they can participate (Norton, 2010). This all ties into the rationale for my project, which is the creation of a website and podcast that lends itself as a resource for language teachers looking for ideas integrating L2 identity and the concept

of imagined communities into their language teaching practice. The goal of the website and podcast is to enable a community where teachers can find resources to help discover their learners' ideal L2 selves through constructs such as imagined communities and other L2 motivational systems. second language

Background and Interest in Second Language Identity

For the purpose of this paper, the term identity, as defined by Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015), is used to signify “a socially constructed affiliation with particular social categories, which is shifting, multiple and dialogical” (p. 407). Further, second language (L2) identity encompasses all additional languages studied, and is multiple and ever-changing, constantly in a state of negotiation (Norton, 2013). Additionally, imagined identities looks at how learners view themselves not only in the present, but how they see themselves in the future. Thus, imagined identities are important for the formulation of imagined communities and language acquisition has the potential to strengthen (Norton, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Imagined communities (Anderson, 2006; Norton, 2010, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Yim, 2016) is a burgeoning topic of research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and plays an important role in my interest in language learner identity and how to best approach identity-focused/transformative pedagogical practices in the classroom. Imagined communities are defined as “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). Norton (2010) adds that imagined communities are “a community of the imagination - a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of

identity options for the future” (p. 355). In essence, imagined communities connect with the previously mentioned imagined identities (Norton, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011), and are as vast as they are varied. Chapter Two offers more insight into the power imagined communities can have on language learners as they negotiate multiple and shifting identities in their second language.

Personal Story

From 2005 to 2010, I lived in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, “The City of Champions.” Edmonton is a community of just over 1,000,000 people nestled on the North Saskatchewan River. Looking back, it was a peculiar place to be introduced to Japanese language and culture. The city has a substantial population of people of Asian heritage (15.9%: 7.4% Chinese, 6.2% Filipino, and 1.5% Vietnamese), but Japanese does not make the list. In spite of these demographic statistics, Edmonton is the birthplace of my interest in Japanese language and culture, subsequently marking the beginning of my struggle to acquire an ideal L2 self. A colleague who became a close friend of mine (we were Workstation Support Analysts for a large oil and gas company), immigrated to Canada from Japan in the early 2000s to try and discover a slower-paced, more family-oriented life than what he had experienced post-university in a large city near Tokyo, Japan. Akihito (a pseudonym) and I became colleagues in 2007; I initially was drawn to his politeness. Not that people in Canada are not generally polite, but Akihito simply had this extremely welcoming sense of politeness that I was really drawn to and immediately respected. Looking back, I can start to connect the dots between Akihito’s polite persona and my developing ideal L2 self. I not only connected with, but also desired to portray a similar sense of consideration.

I was amazed, and eventually became highly motivated, not only by his command of English at the business level, effortlessly assisting clients with their computer-related enquiries over the phone and sending lengthy, explanatory emails, but also his facility at the interpersonal level. We would carry on conversations at great length, discussing everything from growing up in Japan to hopes and dreams for the future and his background in engineering. Akihito did not start seriously learning English until well into his 20s and always joked that he was not a very good language learner. Witnessing Akihito's proficiency with English gave me hope that I, too, could learn a new language as an adult. Akihito introduced me to a number of his friends that he previously met through his language studies in Alberta; learners from Korea, China, and Japan. We formed a close group, often going on camping and ski trips to the nearby Rocky Mountains. I often wrestled with the fact that we could not have formed this community of friends without a common language, and without their willingness to learn and acculturate into an English-speaking community. Our newfound friendships provided a completely eye-opening experience that hit very close to my soul. So much, in fact, that in 2009 I made a personal commitment to learn a new language, as well as to begin my teaching adventure as a volunteer tutor at a local literacy center.

I had studied German in high school, but never acquired anything beyond self-introductions and how to ask where the washroom was. I was somewhat frustrated with being monolingual and felt that if I wanted to take language teaching seriously (at this time I was also considering a career change, hence the aforementioned volunteer position) that I better buckle down and learn a new language. I chose Japanese as this

language as I felt a strong connection to the people (thanks in large part to my now very close friendship with Akihito), the culture, and its orthography (writing system).

I hit the books. I traveled to Japan. Alone. This trip motivated me to buckle down even more into my Japanese language learning. I struggled immensely on that trip with communication, but the little successes I did have enabled me to see the language come alive, living and breathing right in front of me, as I began coming alive in the language as well. Upon returning to Canada I resolved to focus on my Japanese in order to be accepted into this new community that I had discovered: this community, which at the time was an imagined community of Japanese speakers. I knew the only way I could gain acceptance into this community was to become proficient enough with the language to not be viewed as a tourist or a foreigner.

I had visualized my imagined community and with it the challenges of acquiring an L2 self in a language that is not traditionally spoken by non-Japanese people. In part, this motivated me to take an even deeper nose dive into the language. Japanese seemed impossible to even attempt (especially the writing system, which, at the time, was nothing but fancy looking text, mesmerizing to look at, but confoundingly complicated - perhaps even more so to my 28-year-old mind). Nevertheless, I persisted. I moved to Japan to teach English and study Japanese in the summer of 2010. While I have become relatively proficient with Japanese over the past 11 years, I still find myself struggling with my Japanese identity. This challenge has become more manageable over time; however, grappling with acceptance into various communities in Japan still has the power to affect me even to this day. At times, I have even rejected my L2 Japanese speaking self, whether it be simply ordering coffee at Starbucks, or chatting with a close friend. This

rejection has led to self doubt and apprehension in expressing myself in Japanese during situations where I feel a disassociation with my Japanese self. Examples include negotiation with colleagues and having interlocutors second-guess or misinterpret my intended meaning due to lack of language proficiency.

As a result of this ongoing struggle with my L2 identity, I desire to share my experience, strength and hope with English Language Learners (ELLs) in Japan. ELLs in Japan may have similar struggles in finding their identity, especially in a context where English is not necessarily readily available outside the classroom. I also want to research further into the reasons we grapple with second language identity. Therefore, I will listen to learners' personal stories through interviews and turn them into a podcast series themed around second language learning, framing episodes around L2 identity and intercultural experiences. I also desire to develop and expand upon pedagogical practices that can help my learners discover their best L2 self and potential imagined communities, by engaging with Norton's (2010) ideas that learners may very well be engaged in the practices of the classroom, but their individual imagined communities exist well beyond the context of the classroom. A critical awareness moving forward will be that each individual L2 self may indeed not be the same for all the possible imagined communities. In sum, my experience befriending ELLs in Canada, my personal struggle with forming my own identity as it relates to language learning, and strong desire to dive deeper into imagined communities and the ideal L2 self, sets up the rationale for my project.

Project Rationale

“Teachers are encouraged to expand the focus of instruction by imagining the multiple speaking situations their learners might face in the future.” (Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010, p. 276)

Connecting the dots between language learning and the varied imagined communities, identities, and potential L2 selves of our learners is a vital consideration in the L2 classroom. This important message from Celce-Murcia is a great reminder to have in the back of our minds while in the classroom. In Chapter Two, I offer resources from the literature on L2 identity, imagined communities, and the ideal L2 self on how to mitigate the various potential situations learners might find themselves in when engaging with language use in the L2 society. The importance here is that a large percentage of English communication today is among L2 speakers. Thus it has been argued that more examples of L2 to L2 interactions are beneficial in the ELL classroom in order to promote English use not only in the Inner Circle Countries, which are defined by Kachru as countries and regions where English is the native language of the majority (e.g. The United States, Canada, Australia), but in contexts that allow our learners to establish relationships with other L2 speakers (McKay, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to consider interactions between two second language (L2) speakers of English when implementing an identity-supported, transformative pedagogy. Additionally, as language and identity are inseparable, multi-faceted, complex, ever-changing, and context dependent (Norton, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015), I want to contribute to the professional conversation, potentially filling a gap in the EFL context in Japan, looking at how learners’ identities shift over space and time by ultimately

conducting qualitative and action/classroom-based research. I also want to help open an awareness in fellow language educators to uncover varying learner identities, asking the challenging question of “What are we doing as language educators in our instructional practices to help learners develop and explore their imagined communities?” As such, I believe that imagined communities of our learners exist regardless of context. I feel there is a need to extend the awareness of imagined communities in an EFL context, specifically in Japan, where there is not often immediate access to an English speaking community outside the classroom. Further, asking the challenging question of why we are engaging with English in such an environment as Japan where it may not seem immediately purposeful. This can be fostered through discussions as to why it may not seem English is purposeful, mitigating a path to discovering ways to make English more relevant outside the classroom.

While there is a plethora of studies involving imagined communities and L2 identity (Norton, 2010; Peng, 2015; Yim, 2016), little attention has been given to specifics on developing this awareness and, more specifically, how it can be implemented into the classroom in practical and beneficial ways. I stress that my project is not a curriculum, but ideas for a transformative pedagogy that is constantly evolving, much like our learners' vast and unique identity positions. And these ideas can potentially be juxtaposed into any existing curriculum, depending on the rigidity of the school or program.

Thus, I will create a website and podcast based on the sociolinguistic concepts of the ideal L2 self, imagined communities and transformative pedagogy. The purpose of the website and podcast will be to look at how the ideal L2 self and imagined communities

tie into language learner motivation, engagement, and L2 identity. The website will involve pedagogical implications pertaining to L2 identity constructs, guiding teachers to help learners develop L2 identity awareness through facilitation of tasks around learner-centered and learner-chosen content.

The reason for developing a website and podcast around this concept is two-fold: (1) to raise awareness of important topics that may not be well known to potential and current language teachers, and (2) to share personal learning and teaching experiences in relation to helping learners develop the ideal L2 self and imagined communities. I believe that creating a website and podcast will allow for awareness and discussion involving the ideal L2 self, imagined communities and language learning, which is the primary intended outcome of the project. Giving visitors to the website an opportunity to explore something new in relation to language teaching or share their own experience with this concept is another outcome I strive for. This website and podcast will be used as a discussion of how to start incorporating imagined communities into curriculum, which can be created once base knowledge is acquired around this idea.

My stance is that learners will benefit from teachers incorporating these L2 identity-related constructs (imagined communities, the ideal self, etc.) into our pedagogical considerations. Teachers may run a risk by not recognizing and hence promoting imagined communities in our learners. I believe a deeper connection to L2 identity can lead to a healthier sense of investment (Norton & Toohey, 2011) in learning the L2, therefore creating a more pleasant environment for all involved in the classroom, a place where we all are doing our best to facilitate language acquisition.

Summary

In this chapter I have established my research question: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?* I shared a personal story about my struggle with L2 identity, and provided justification for my project around a teacher-directed website and podcast highlighting L2 identity constructs such as imagined communities and pedagogical concerns surrounding these constructs.

In Chapter Two, I review literature related to L2 and the global English identity, anxiety and motivation in EFL contexts, the L2 Motivation Self System, the ideal L2 self, imagined communities, and pedagogical concerns as they relate to these constructs. In Chapter Three, I summarize how I planned, created, and executed the website, including the participants and setting, desired results, and assessment plans. In Chapter Four, I summarize my learning experience, including key takeaways from the project and ways in which this experience will guide growth in my teaching career.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

This literature review discusses various constructs within L2 identity research, looking at English learning in terms of a global identity, the varied imagined communities of second language learners, and motivation in L2 learning, in an attempt to uncover more about the guiding question for this capstone project: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?*

The primary purpose of this capstone project is to explain various constructs in L2 identity research in order to inform my readers and fellow colleagues the importance of understanding the multiple and ever-changing L2 identities in our language learners. Although the focus is on Japanese learners in an EFL context (Japan), I strongly believe teacher awareness of learner identity is crucial and can be applied to any and all contexts where L2 learning takes place. Thus studies from ESL contexts are also discussed. In this chapter, I present literature on L2 identity research, discussing identity clusters (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) as well as L2 identity as it pertains to the globalization of English, looking at how a relationship with the ideal L2 self coincides with actual usage of English in a local or study abroad context with EFL learners. Reviews of research on L2 anxiety and identity are presented, looking at how anxiety relates to L2 learner motivation (psychological) and investment (sociological) (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Further, I discuss the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), with a focus on the ideal L2 self, and how this relates to language learning in an EFL context.

Additionally, an overview of pertinent research on imagined communities of the language learner is presented. Finally, pedagogical implications and ways to develop an awareness for implementing classroom material based on language learners' multiple and ever-changing L2 identities through multimodal literacies (online learning communities, writing as an imagined identity, and the content-based language classroom) are discussed.

L2 Identity Research Overview

Much like second language learners' varying identities, L2 identity research is varied and vast, encompassing two principal theories: structuralist and poststructuralist (Norton, 2010). In structuralist theory, the linguistic system is formalized or conventionalized as the written grammar of the standard variety of the language, acting as an authority on meaning in words: linguistic communities are viewed as homogenous. Poststructuralist theory looks from the perspective of language as discourse and linguistic communities are viewed as heterogeneous with identities being both used in practice and received. More recent research has shown the learning context can be improved by closely looking at the relationship between these perspectives (Norton, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011). As seen in Norton and Toohey's work, L2 identity research encompasses varying learner models and constructs: The L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), identity and integrativeness (Dörnyei, 2009; Ryan, 2009), and imagined communities (Norton, 2010, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Yim, 2016). Norton (2013) argues that in order to have an elaborated theory of L2 identity there needs to be an understanding of more than one position from which language learners present themselves in regards to their identities. Even learners on the periphery have the capability to develop appropriate identities that coincide with the

desired language community. While identity research and theory on L2 identity ties into pedagogical concerns, addressed in the final section of this literature review, it is important to preview here because L2 learners have various identities to juggle when engaging in their L2.

Bucholtz and Hall (2008) state that identity operates on four levels: “the interactional, the ethnographic, the historical, and the political” (p. 152). It is important to note that L2 identity research tends to be ethnographic by its very nature and is thus qualitative, taking its methods from areas such as feminist poststructural theory, sociolinguistics, and conversation analysis (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008; McPherron & Smoke, 2019; Norton 2010). In line with the shifting of L2 identity and how identity is constructed through interaction within the social world (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008), Lave and Wenger argue that identities are constructed through actual use of language. “Through their progressive appropriation of the communities’ knowledgeable skills and practices and through gaining access to their resources, people negotiate their sense of self on an ongoing basis” (As cited in Haneda, 2005, p. 284).

Young Learners. Social relations in young learners as they relate to learner identity is an important starting point for background on L2 identity. Research (Willet, 1995) has shown that learners also develop identities in their early years. Willet (1995) analyzed L2 socialization in ESL first graders, noting that by framing language learning as the process of joining a group and the more exposure to the practices of the target group, the more likely membership in the group is able to happen. Willet’s study demonstrates a connection between L2 identity and an imagined community, even at a very young age. As the literature shows that L2 identity is constructed and patterned

through interaction with language, from young learners to adults, it is essential to understand how identity is perceived in different clusters, why this is important in regards to a global English identity, where learners strive for acceptance into a global market through proficiency in English (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), and, finally, a glimpse into learner anxiety and how it ties into motivation.

Identity Clusters. Pavlenko and Norton (2007) help to organize learners' identities through identity clusters. The five clusters are postcolonial, global, ethnic, multilingual, and gendered. Pavlenko and Norton argue these identities are interrelated when considering the learners' self in the context of English as an International Language (EIL), which takes into account communication between L2 English users and considers culture, including interactions between L2 and first language (L1) English speakers (McKay, 2010). For the purposes of this paper, global clusters are highlighted, as new imagined identities and futures found within these clusters are often tied to global use of English. Ethnic, multilingual, and gendered identities are also discussed.

The relationship between ethnicity and English reveals questions about the ownership of English and raises questions of assimilation. In contexts where English is the majority language, white immigrants' ownership of English is more accepted than that of immigrants who are non-white. Ethnographic studies in an Australian context L2 Motivational Self System and the Ideal L2 Self (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) have shown that white learners from countries such as Bosnia establish relationships more quickly with English-speaking locals than that of learners from China. Pavlenko and Norton discuss Miller's finding that authenticity of the Chinese learners' use of English was not recognized by their peers or teachers, causing feelings of discrimination (2007).

Additionally, immigrants' multilingualism may be seen as a deficit rather than an advantage, which could affect identity options, even to the point of limiting imagined identities and communities. In countries where English is the majority language, ELLs who are learning English as an additional language (whether it be their second, third, or fourth language), are not treated as native speakers and viewed as language learners, which puts them in a position of deficiency, deterring their potential imagined identities and communities (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

Finally, learning English has the potential to allow ELLs to form different identity options in relation to gender. For example, Pavlenko and Norton (2007) discuss Kobayashi and McMahon's findings in regards to Japanese females' engagement with English. Since they continue to face marginalization in Japanese society, Japanese females may feel more liberated when speaking English, and motivation to learn the language is high for reasons of becoming stronger and more confident.

Global English Identity. Global use of English is seen in job advertisements in EFL contexts such as Hungary and are used as a way to potentially weed out non-users of English, implying that for those attempting to find work, English is necessary (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Thus it is important to consider learners' identities in the context of global English, whether it be English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or English as an International Language (EIL), asking pertinent questions such as "who will and how will they interact with English in the future?" To differentiate, ELF is considered in situations where both interlocutors are L2 users of English (not sharing a similar L1 or a common culture), whereas, again, EIL takes into account communication between L2 English users and considers culture, including interactions between L2 and L1 English speakers

(McKay, 2010). There are over 1.5 billion users of English in the world, including 375 million native users (Dorren, 2019). Native English speakers appear to be a minority when it comes to the overall numbers of English users, bringing up consideration of what Arnett refers to as a bicultural identity and Duff as a transnational L2 identity (Crowther, 2019; Dörnyei, 2009). Both take into account L2 identity as it relates to both the local culture and global identity. A bicultural or transnational L2 identity may be more accessible in an L2 to L2 context, as opposed to language teaching and learning, which from the traditional view is to connect with potential native speakers. Crowther (2019) found that a first year university learner in a U.S. university from China was able to form a new identity by receiving broader access into the target community after previously receiving acceptance by her peers in high school. The acceptance at the high school is argued to have opened up her identity options for the future. The learner was also able to maintain a connection to her Chinese peers while attending university, which further allowed the development of a transnational identity (Crowther, 2019). Further, De Costa and Norton (2016) suggest that by using social media, transnational learners and teachers have the potential to connect to new identities that were not available before social media became an everyday communicative device.

With readily available access to these new global and transnational identities, whether it be by way of social media or study abroad, another significant question raised is “Who owns English?” (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019; Dörnyei, 2009). This question is of important consideration when it comes to EFL contexts where imagined identities appear to be as vast as the contexts in which English is used and in the multitude of varieties in which English is spoken. Dörnyei (2009) helps explain this by clarifying that English is

the language of the global identity, but suggests that it is still unclear as to who learners believe the owner of English is. Further, as English continues to expand globally, acting as the enabler of communication across a multitude of communities worldwide, no culture or country remains the model of its use (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019).

In sum, L2 identity is varied and vast, involving primary learners to adults. L2 identity encompasses identity clusters, which consider identity as a member of an international/global community by way of bicultural or transnational identities, and operates on four levels: the interactional, the ethnographic, the historical, and the political (Bucholtz & Hall, 2009; Crowther, 2019; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Undoubtedly, English continues to rise on the global stage, especially considering that 20% of books published globally are in English, the percentage of scholarly articles in English remains at over 80%, and roughly half of the world wide web's most frequented websites are in English (Dorren, 2019). With more societal pressure to become proficient in English, research on L2 anxiety and motivation in EFL contexts is discussed in the next section.

Anxiety and Motivation in EFL contexts

This section takes a brief, but important look at L2 anxiety, motivation, and investment, particularly in EFL contexts, before discussing the L2 Motivational Self System, the ideal L2 self, and how they construct the imagined communities of L2 learners. A question of interest is how L2 identity connects with anxiety and motivation in second language learning. Papi (2010) considers the importance of how emotions relate to the L2 self. The struggle with these emotions can be seen as connected to motivation for language learners, but also has implications for L2 anxiety.

L2 anxiety is an important variable in the L2 classroom although what effects it has on the learner is not always clear (Papi, 2010). Indirect effects of anxiety may surface in greater levels in even highly motivated learners in an EFL context when encountering native English speakers (MacWhinnie & Mitchell, 2017). Yashima (2009) raises a key point that anxiety can be alleviated when learners interact with positive results in either a study abroad experience (actual) or in a target language (imagined) community, furthering the attempt of this review of the literature to discuss the importance of recognizing and promoting the imagined communities of our learners. An important point to consider are the differences between motivation and investment as the terms relate to language learning (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Investment views language learners as having a variety of aspirations for connecting with social communities which are accessible to the learner. Additionally, the identities of language learners in these contexts are seen as multiple and shifting, changing as the individual enters varying contexts and situations. Conversely, motivation has often been viewed as stable and not shifting across space and time (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

In sum, language learner anxiety has been found to surface in even highly motivated learners and is an important point of consideration for language teachers. Motivation is seen as stable where investment shifts with the varying contexts learners find themselves in. In the next section, the constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System and the ideal L2 self are presented. Additionally, imagined communities and international posture, which expands imagined communities into imagined 'international' communities (Yashima, 2009) are explained.

L2 Motivational Self System and the Ideal L2 Self

The ideal L2 self is one component of Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). The L2MSS is broken down into three main components: the ideal L2 self (who the learner would like to become), the ought-to L2 self (expectations of the learner - by teachers, administrators, parents), and the L2 learning experience (classroom, curriculum). While all aspects of the L2MSS are deemed noteworthy and important in regards to L2 identity and learning, for the purposes of this literature review, focus on the ideal L2 self is given precedence.

The make-up of the idealized L2-speaking self is equal parts imagination of oneself in a target L2 community and actual experiences as members of a particular target community (Dörnyei, 2005). This idealized L2-speaking self includes actual communicative use of the target L2. As the idealized L2-speaking self encompasses the use of imagining oneself in a desired L2 speaking community, a connection between discovering the ideal L2 self and how this can tie into the vast imagined communities in ELLs can start to be constructed.

In line with Dörnyei's analysis of the ideal L2 self, Ryan (2009) discovered through a study in an EFL setting in Japan that there is a correlation with the ideal L2 self and finding personal satisfaction by using the target language with others; he formed this as integrativeness. Through constructing the ideal L2 self, learners can decipher between using the language outside the classroom (i.e., in the target community, engaging with other English speakers) as opposed to viewing English as an academic subject that is only used in the classroom. Such distinguishing can lead learners to view their use of English through the lens of an international self.

International Posture. International posture relates more closely to EFL contexts where English is not used as a lingua franca, by looking at how learners connect with a broader/international community as opposed to a particular L2 community (Yashima, 2009). Yashima corroborates Ryan (2009), expanding upon integrativeness by situating learning and the development of an ideal L2 self through English in an EFL context in Japan as it relates to this ‘international posture’. The connection to international posture sees learners understanding a relevance to communicating on an international level in English. Additionally, the ideal L2 self requires a proficiency in English to succeed in international business or working abroad (in situations in which English, again, is the majority language) (Yashima, 2009). Further, the L2 self is not simply bound to a local context in an EFL setting, but it has the possibility to expand into a potential international community. Japanese learners are often missing the fact that their purpose for learning English is to communicate with an international community (Ryan, 2009; Yashima, 2009). Instead, the reason for learning is merely a trigger to pass high-stakes English exams that would allow for advancement in, for example, the medical profession, but not necessarily for communicative use of English. In cases such as this, high school language programs that work to develop international posture may contribute to a heightened use of English for communicative purposes. When it comes to an imagined international community, international posture coincides with research on imagined communities expanding to contexts such as study abroad or other various types of intercultural communicative events (Norton, 2010; Yashima, 2009).

Learner Attitudes. Additionally, attitudes toward the L2 community have been discovered to play an integral role in developing the ideal L2 self. If their view of the L2

community is highly favorable, the better the chance the learner has to their idealized L2 self. On the contrary, if there is no such connection to the L2 community, there is unlikely to be a development with the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009). Short study abroad adventures for second year university Japanese learners in Australia can provide an opportunity to identify and confirm various representations of the self in future states (ideal L2 self, ought-to self and feared self). A short-term experience living abroad was found to fuel motivation even six months after returning to home culture (Fryer & Roger, 2018). Further, a study about “self-perceived changes” in Japanese university study abroad experiences in the Philippines found that learners were able to improve not only their communicative use of English, but their hesitancy to use the language decreased (Ikeda, 2020). Thus, the potential for study abroad is important to consider not only in Inner Circle countries such as the United States, Australia, and the UK, but also in Expanding Circle countries such as the Philippines where more realistic opportunities to study abroad can be made available to learners from Japan.

In sum, study abroad programs, English as a tool for connecting with an international community, and understanding attitudes through the L2 Motivational Self System can help form a connection to the ideal L2 self. Having discussed varying L2 identity from the perspective of young learners, English as a global identity, anxiety in EFL contexts, the ideal L2 self, international posture and learner attitudes, it is important to see how these facets correlate with imagined communities. The next section presents a discussion on imagined communities from these perspectives, looking at research related to imagined communities.

Imagined Communities

As stated in Chapter One, imagined communities are defined as “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). Norton (2010) clarifies that imagined communities are “a community of the imagination - a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options for the future” (p. 355). Further, Norton (2010) frames imagined communities as requiring imagination on the learners’ part, whether the community is in the professional setting or as a stay-at-home-parent. If successfully imagined, the target community has the potential to provide a variety of connections to diverse identities for future exploration. Kanno and Norton (2003) provide the example of a young Japanese man studying fashion design and English in Tokyo. In regards to an imagined community, he will perhaps see himself as a top designer in New York and an established member of a worldwide fashion community. To gain this status, English is a necessary skill. These connections are made possible by the people learners invest their time in. Pavlenko and Norton (2007) provide a compelling image of what imagined communities are capable of and how they can impact learners’ L2 identities: “Our orientation toward such imagined communities might have just as much impact on our current identities and learning as direct involvement in communities of our everyday life” (p. 590). Here, it is clear that these imagined communities are diverse and have the potential to exist beyond what is immediately accessible (i.e. the New York fashion community for the English learner in Japan) to the learner.

Imagined communities are the foundation of this capstone as the construct helps lay the foundation for the development of how an imaginative, transformative pedagogy

can be developed that will help learners in discovering their own imagined community, which will tie into their ideal L2 self. Imagined communities are, by and large, communities that learners imagine, idealize, and strive for in various endeavors for a myriad of reasons. The term was initially coined by Benedict Anderson in his book of the same title about nationalism as “imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). When it comes to language learning, imagined communities are more precise in definition and scope, helping uncover language learner identities and their connection to learner motivational systems.

Research on Imagined Communities

Two key researchers in this field, Bonny Norton and Yasuko Kanno (2003), explain that while imagined communities are, in fact, groups of people with whom learners communicate, there needs to be something more substantial for the imagined communities to truly make an impact on our lives: engagement. This explanation relates to Ryan (2009) as both argue that learning English is for making connections to a community, international or otherwise. Further, for an English learner, imagined communities correlate with an English-related future self as a way of seeing oneself in an English-speaking community, tying in with Dörnyei’s definition of the ideal L2 self. This English-speaking community, which may not be immediately accessible in an EFL context, requires a pedagogical strategy to allow learners access to the imagined community. The language presented in the classroom could have the potential to be connected to the learners’ particular imagined community, which could be an international community where English is the target language. This may, in turn, enhance

learners' motivation to use English. Learners' images of themselves as communicative members of an imagined community may motivate them to attain this ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2005; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009).

Peng's 2015 study, taking a look at university learners in an EFL setting in China, finds that correlation between positive past L2 learning experiences, similar to Dörnyei's L2MSS model (2005, 2009) and an intent to become a part of an imagined community could lead to envisioning proficiency in English. Additionally, Peng (2015) argues that students who imagine themselves as part of the global community and who construct the image of a proficient user in that community allowed the learner to look beyond tests in a heavily exam-oriented context, warning that the importance in passing examinations may undercut students' desires to connect with their imagined community. The study further suggests that it requires the effort of teachers and parents to help learners see their true potential in the L2, especially in relation to engaging with English outside of the classroom, addressed below by way of a transformative pedagogy. Similarly, Yashima's (2009) study of an EFL context in Japan, found learners pursuing their ideal selves as a member of the international community, using English for business reasons or working abroad.

Yim (2016) examines 20 primary school students in South Korea in a three year longitudinal study, looking specifically at the correlation between learners' learning experiences outside of school (i.e., private lessons and parental attitudes) and their imagined communities. Like Peng (2015), Yim (2016) argues that the ideal L2 self is one in which the L2 is being used proficiently through the imagining of using the target language, therefore forming a connection to the imagined community. Of the 20 students

she interviewed, 19 of them recognized English as something they would use in their imagined communities, whether that be a high school, college, or a future career where they may work with non-Koreans (Yim, 2016).

On the other hand, there can be potential drawbacks to imagined communities and the role they play for our learners. Kanno and Norton (2003) analyze a case of a Japanese teenager who had spent most of his life in English-speaking countries, identifying as Japanese despite this fact. He maintained his Japanese language ability while constructing an imagined community within Japan that awaited his return. Upon returning to Japan, his actual community did not coincide with his imagined one, which led him to reject his Japanese identity, causing him to not want to identify as Japanese any longer. However, in this case, Kanno and Norton (2003) argue that his imagined community allowed him investment in maintaining his Japanese language ability.

Imagined communities allow learners multiple reasons to engage with language learning. While they are often viewed as a positive for learner investment in language learning, and are as varied and vast as learner identities, they can lead to potential drawbacks where learners' imagined communities are not what they expected them to be. What does this all mean for classroom practices? How can learners' vast and varied L2 identities be supported in the classroom? In the following section, pedagogical concerns and ideas from the literature that will provide a clearer picture of how to implement these ideas into the classroom are discussed.

Pedagogical Concerns

The literature review has demonstrated that helping learners formulate imagined communities and identities is an important component of the language classroom. The research I reviewed suggests incorporating imagined communities and the ideal L2 self in the classroom to help promote language acquisition, and guiding learners to discovering new communities where language can bloom in perhaps ways never imagined possible (Norton, 2010; Fryer & Roger, 2018). In this study, I specifically look at online communities and CMC (Computer Mediated Communication), writing and identity, and content-based learning. I attempt to address a gap in the research, specifically looking at the context of EFL learners in Japan, examining how this correlates with imagined communities and the ideal L2 self.

Multimodal Literacies

Online Communities and CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). In an ever-increasingly connected world, it is important to discuss multimodal literacies as a way of engaging learners with varying communities of people using English. Joining online communities (i.e., Facebook groups, Skillshare, Language Exchange, Meetup, Tokyo English Connect) as part of classroom practice have been found to increase multimodal literacy practices outside of school. Additionally, a suggestion is to decorate the classroom with posters and photos of a potential imagined community (i.e. popular film or music stars from the desired community of practice) (Vaish & Towndrow, 2010). Dörnyei (2009) agrees by suggesting that we can connect to learners' L2 self by introducing films and music to the classroom or engaging in cultural activities, such as cooking events.

Writing through an imagined community / identity. Handea (2005) suggests using authentic materials to help scaffold learner writing. These sources can be newspapers, novels, picture books, graphic novels, magazines, anime and online material. While this case study focused on Japanese language learners in a JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) context, it can be easily flipped and used in an EFL context such as Japan. The learners selected themes based on the authentic materials, making comparisons between North America and Japan (university systems, employment) and discussed them in groups before writing short essays and making presentations (Haneda, 2005). It is evident here that by providing these authentic materials and inviting group discussion about cultural similarities and differences can have the potential to generate interest in a community outside of the current context. While this practice in the classroom will need scaffolding based on learner ability, it is one idea to help tie writing into a new imagined identity.

In addition, Sasaki (2011) argues there is a correlation between study abroad and motivation to write better L2 compositions, although a minimum of two months abroad is necessary to see such improvements. While it is known that learners in EFL contexts do not necessarily have to align their L2 writing goals within a community that does not use the L2 for communicative purposes, Sasaki (2011) discovered that learners in their third year of university study identified themselves as writing for imagined communities in which English was the primary language for communication. Like the development of a second language, a connection with an imagined community may not always take place from the beginning of L2 learning - patience and a willingness to try a variety of modalities is necessary.

Further, Spiliotopoulos & Carey (2005) offer that using asynchronous writing, allowing more time to reflect on one's own and others' writing, can lower anxiety and avoid the possibility of shame for speaking poorly. In asynchronous writing, a topic is decided and then learners are able to go into a module and post their thoughts, allowing for time to process the L2 and construct writings around a certain topic. While an appropriate Learning Management System (LMS) would be ideal in situations like this, there are also many online tools that can assist with learner writing such as Padlet or by using Google Docs. Additionally, collective identities can be fostered using particular linguistic varieties. Different roles can be generated through online writing, such as writer, storyteller, reader, editor, language learner, advisor (all identities assumed by learners in this study). Learners imagined themselves as great writers as a result of this online writing course. Other implications, including the development of a deep identity versus surface identity (home culture versus living abroad culture), were also discussed in this study, as well as promoting the understanding of others' cultures through writing (Spiliotopoulos & Carey, 2005).

Additionally, Pavlenko and Norton (2007) discuss options for writing that allow acceptance into an English-speaking community without speaking at all. The authors suggest that ownership of language is available to writers who use English as their medium of choice as it does not bring into play any type of physical appearance or potential non-native like accent. This has allowed for a reimagination of what it means to be a speaker of English, and allows for potential further generations to reimagine themselves in linguistically diverse contexts. Pavlenko (2001) argues that writing, whether it be in the form of diaries, journals, or memoirs, allows L2 learners to relinquish

a sense of self as they share their stories. In doing so, a connection to a new identity can be achieved through these writings. Further, L2 writing and identity can be linked through classroom practices that enable development of learners' identities as writers (Haneda, 2005).

In sum, writing through an imagined identity can allow learners to create new identities based on different roles as a writer. These roles enable a connection to a new identity without the concern of accent or physical appearance. Additionally, learners can connect to a new community by the medium of writing. With pathways to potential new identities in place by way of writing activities through multimodal literacies, it is also important to look at how developing various identities can be attempted in the content-based classroom.

Content-based L2 Classroom: Practical Communicative Events

Yashima (2009) argues that imagination is required in learners to enable them to realize the idea of task-related possible selves. The Model United Nations (MUN) is one such classroom project that can build task-related L2 selves. In this unit of study, learners are tasked with choosing the perspective of a country other than their own on a social issue such as human rights or child labor. For example, learners can engage in a task-based learning activity that, when considering all the news events of 2020 and 2021, can yield plenty of opportunity for authentic discussion, argument and stance-taking in a communicative classroom. According to Yashima (2009), "higher exposure to a content-based curriculum resulted in a higher level of international posture and willingness to communicate in the L2" (p. 150). Similarly, Yim (2016) argues that implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies in the classroom such

as interviews and surveys will allow teachers a better understanding of their learners' imagined communities.

The primary purpose of this chapter has been to explain various constructs in L2 identity research in order to inform my readers and fellow colleagues of the importance of understanding the multiple and ever-changing L2 identities in our language learners. As alluded to in Chapter One, it is important to reiterate not that language teachers must incorporate these L2 identity-related constructs (e.g. imagined communities, ideal L2 self, shifting identities) into pedagogical considerations, but rather to consider what risk language teachers are taking by not recognizing and hence promoting imagined communities and imagined identities in their learners. Recognizing and promoting imagined communities of language learners can lead to a deeper investment (Norton & Toohey, 2011) in learning of the L2 by the learner, providing social advantages (McKay, 2010). Therefore, it would create a more pleasant environment for all involved in the classroom, facilitating language acquisition.

Summary

To summarize, in this chapter I have discussed the research that underlies my project and the research question that guides it: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?* In L2 Identity Research Overview, I presented an overview of L2 identity research, discussing identity clusters and the L2 learner identity from the broader construct of English as a global identity. An important component of this section is understanding the vast and varied contexts in which ELLs have the potential to use English and how these contexts relate to their expanding identities. In the section Anxiety

and Motivation in EFL Contexts, I presented how anxiety and motivation are connected, adding a comparative construct of investment in language learning. In L2 Motivational Self System and the Ideal L2 Self, I highlighted the importance of these two constructs, specifically when it comes to discovering learners' individual ideal L2 selves as well as their international posture and varying attitudes. In Imagined Communities, I highlighted key research, emphasizing the importance of discovering and developing awareness around our learners' individual desires to connect with multiple and ever-changing imagined communities. Finally, in the final section of this chapter, I discussed pedagogical concerns around incorporating the constructs of the ideal L2 self and imagined communities in the classroom.

In Chapter Three, I develop the plans for my website and podcast from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which will serve as a resource for developing and supporting varying learner identities through the application of the constructs of the ideal L2 self and imagined communities. My research has shown there is a need to extend the awareness of imagined communities in an EFL context, specifically in Japan. Little attention has been given to specifics of developing this awareness and, more specifically, how it can be implemented into the classroom. Additionally, in Chapter Three, I summarize how I plan to execute the project, including the intended audience, goals and method, desired results, design framework, assessment, and project timeline.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Chapter Overview

For my project, I created a website, which provides resources for potential and current English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The content on my website is influenced by what I learned in pursuing my research question: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?* In relation to L2 identity and L2 learning, this website is accessible and applicable to all contexts, specifically developing an awareness of the constructs of the ideal L2 self and imagined communities. Within the parameters of this website is also a podcast about language learning and identity, titled Shifting Voices. This podcast takes a closer look at real life experiences of language learners from around the world and their interactions, challenges, and successes with second language learning. As I argued in Chapter Two, it is important for language teachers to have a developing awareness of learners' shifting and multiple identities; however, without that understanding, it is challenging to have sensitivity to these identities, especially in a language classroom. My project offers ideas to help teachers in this area.

As discussed in Chapter Two, L2 identity research encompasses varying learner models and constructs: L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), identity and integrativeness (Dörnyei, 2009, Ryan, 2009), and imagined communities (Yashima, 2009, Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Norton, 2010, Peng, 2015, Yim, 2016). It was important to take these models and constructs into consideration when designing lessons and creating content for this project. Additionally, the website provides instructional practices that will

help guide Japanese EFL learners in discovering their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities in order to become invested language users. As the research suggests, learners that are able to develop their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities exhibit higher levels of motivation and investment, which in turn can have a positive impact on learners' willingness to communicate (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Norton, 2010; Yashima, 2009).

In Chapter Two, I reviewed literature pertaining to the various constructs within L2 identity and how they can be unpacked and incorporated into the language classroom. In this chapter, I present the parameters of my project, which is the creation of a website and podcast that includes resources, teaching practices, and classroom strategies for helping learners to identify their ideal L2 selves as well as the imagined communities in which they will use English. This chapter includes the intended audience for the project, the goals and method for the project, desired results, the design framework, assessment tools, and the project timeline.

Audience

The intended audience for *Shifting Voices* is EFL teachers in Japan, specifically those working in after-school programs, private institutions, international schools, or universities where English is the medium of instruction, whether it be in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) contexts. *Shifting Voices* is also intended for teachers in any EFL context where immediate access to English is not readily available in the community outside the classroom. I came to the conclusion on this specific audience from personal experience working in after-school English programs and international schools in Japan where

English is largely the medium of instruction. From this experience, specifically working with smaller groups of learners in non-traditional (i.e. non-public school) classroom settings, I have seen opportunities to be more flexible with curriculum design as opposed to working with larger classrooms in the public-school setting. This flexibility may allow for more opportunity to explore individual learner identity. Additionally, learners that attend after-school programs or have studied at international schools where English is the medium of instruction, tend to have a strong communicative competence with English. However, challenges still remain as to the reason for continuing English studies, which prompts the parallel question for learners of “Why are we learning English?” Thus, incorporating an identity-focused/transformational pedagogy that hones in on the varying imagined communities of learners is the cornerstone to this project.

Goals and Method

Shifting Voices is based on the sociolinguistic concepts of the ideal L2 self and imagined communities (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Through the information presented on its website and podcast, the mission of Shifting Voices is to raise awareness and promote curiosity regarding L2 identity, imagined communities and the ideal L2 self in the EFL classroom. The tagline for Shifting Voices is *Exploring Imagined Communities in the EFL Classroom*. Shifting Voices houses classroom ideas and pedagogical resources pertaining to L2 identity constructs, guiding teachers to develop learners’ L2 identity awareness through task-based and content-based learning. Additionally, Shifting Voices hosts assessment ideas for learners taking English courses in an EFL context, focusing on how to assess various degrees of investment in English through personal vignettes and reflections on case studies.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the primary reason for developing a website and podcast as the primary method around this concept is two-fold: (1) to raise awareness of important topics that may not be well known to potential and current language teachers, and (2) to share personal learning and teaching experiences in relation to the ideal L2 self and imagined communities in an EFL context. Sharing these ideas via this platform is the most logical way to help promote imagined communities in the EFL classroom. A website is ever-changing and evolving, much like that of complex learner identities. In addition to sharing my teaching experiences, I share resources I developed based on the research reviewed in Chapter Two, focusing on best practices for delving into individual learners' imagined communities and the impacts this has on language learning. I believe that by having created a user-friendly website, according to usability guidelines discussed in *Don't Make Me Think: Revisited* (Krug, 2014) allows for teachers' awareness and potential discussion, focusing on English learners' ideal L2 self/imagined communities and language learning, which is the primary intended outcome of the project. My goal is to give visitors and listeners of Shifting Voices an opportunity to explore something new in relation to language teaching and learning and share their own experience with these concepts.

Desired Results

Shifting Voices' overarching goal is to create a space for teachers to explore learners' imagined communities in the EFL classroom. Backwards design, as proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), in which the design first tackles the desired results and works backwards from there, was employed to help steer the goals of the website:

- Provide resources for teachers to be able to accomplish this exploration in the classroom.
- Explore Learners' Imagined Communities in the EFL Classroom.
- Offer practical ideas for tapping into learners' ideal L2 selves.
- Capture insights for classroom practice through language learners' stories.

Fellow English teachers who visit Shifting Voices will learn about the above-mentioned constructs and how to implement them into transformative pedagogical practices, which will help to encourage learners' discovery of their L2 self, furthering their access to English in and outside the classroom, placing them in positions where they have more agency (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Further, the transformative pedagogy allows for learners to explore their imagined communities with the goal of allowing for deeper L2 identity discovery. Teachers will also learn how to create a learning environment that supports and encourages these constructs from the perspective of the language learner.

Design Framework

As a fledgling web designer, but someone with seven years of experience editing an online music journal, I understand the challenges of creating a user-friendly/easily accessible website where the navigation menus are clearly presented. I chose WIX as the foundational backend for my webpage. WIX is a one-stop-shop for all things webpage related, offering simple-to-use templates, and drag-and-drop features that allow for a fully integrated and creative web design to shine, even if the designer is a novice like myself. Shifting Voices' homepage design features a Z-pattern layout, which is an easy-to-read layout that spreads all the important elements of the page across a Z shape and includes the logo in the top, left-hand corner of the site (Spivak, 2020). Further, I incorporated

approaches to user-friendly websites based on suggestions from Krug (2014) *Don't Make Me Think: Revisited*. As the title of the book suggests, "Don't Make Me Think!" (p. 11) was and is the guiding principle for the design of Shifting Voices. Krug (2014) explains that a website should be "self-evident. Obvious. Self-explanatory" (p. 11).

With these considerations in mind, I set off to accomplish an easy-to-use, self-explanatory, and as obvious as possible website as I could. I started with logo creation. I knew an easily recognizable site identity could act as a guide for users of the site to get back to the homepage in one easy click or tap. I then decided on web navigation, a simple menu bar atop the page that allows the user to always know where they are on the page (the current page displays in red). Krug (2014) refers to this as part of his "trunk test" (p. 82), arguing that a user of a website should always know exactly where they are within a website. The identity of the website and its mission were also taken into consideration as the main page of the website should state clearly what the site is about (Krug, 2014). Thus, the tagline "Exploring Imagined Communities in the EFL Classroom" was created for the main page of Shifting Voices. The website should also clearly state its mission (Krug, 2014). Thus, I crafted an "about" page with pertinent background information in regards to what the mission of Shifting Voices is.

Additionally, I took into consideration how people actually use the web. Krug (2014) argues that web users do not necessarily read websites, rather they scan them. Thus, I employed a number of bulleted lists with pertinent information to allow for easier scanning of the material presented. This strategy can be seen throughout the pages on Shifting Voices. Finally, as web use only continues to increase on smartphones, Krug (2014) suggests paying close attention to how your mobile site works. Wix offers design

strategies for your mobile site, which I went to great lengths to ensure the mobile page and the desktop page looked congruent and continue to be as user-friendly as possible.

Content of website. Shifting Voices contains 14 pages, including a blog, which is being contributed to as time allows. Key pages on the website's navigation menu links are included in the table below.

Home Page	<i>Shifting Voices: Exploring Imagined Communities in the EFL Classroom</i>
The Navigation Bar	
About	Mission Statement / The Story So Far / Podcast information / Author Introduction
Title Page: L2 Identity	History of L2 identity and language learning (key quotes)
Subpage of L2 Identity: Imagined Communities	What is an imagined community and why is it important to language learners and teachers?
Subpage of L2 Identity: The Ideal L2 Self	What is the ideal L2 self and why is it important to language learners? What risks do we take by not recognizing and encouraging the ideal L2 self?
Title Page: In the Classroom	Describes transformative pedagogical practices.
Subpage of In the Classroom: Discover Your Learners	Offers ideas to assist teachers in discovering more about their learners through surveys, a simple star, and a cultural inventory.
Subpage of In the Classroom: Writing as an Empowering Identity	Offers various methods and suggestions to allow learners to explore potential imagined communities through writing exercises.

Subpage of In the Classroom: Listening with Intention	This page provides an example of active listening that ties into a study abroad community through making predictions.
Subpage of In the Classroom: Assessment	Offers two assessment strategies that tie into potential imagined communities.
Podcast	Page for podcast with listening links to major podcast providers.
Contact	Basic contact information.
Survey	Users can take a survey to assess legitimacy and practicality of Shifting Voices.
Blog	Further information and personal writing about language teaching in general.

Importance of Assessments. As the goal of implementing the practices presented from this website is to further develop learner curiosity in English by attracting them to various imagined communities, an assessment tool to demonstrate their evolution of how they interact with their L2 self and identity is necessary. As assessment is critical to our ongoing practice as educators (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), backwards design as inspired by Wiggins & McTighe was employed. As a result of these identity-focused classroom strategies, learners will be able to identify and discuss their imagined communities, sharing their hope and dreams for the future through a variety of communicative-based tasks, including, but not limited to journaling, group discussion, and collaborative exercises such as the jigsaw method.

One assessment is creating a personal vignette. A vignette is succinct and descriptive, ranging in length from a few sentences to 1000 words (Wiki How, 2020). This vignette includes the following questions and will be constructed at the beginning of the semester / school year: *Imagine yourself using English in the future. Where are you?*

What are your needs for using English? Who are you communicating with? The vignette can also be scaffolded for a variety of learner ages and levels (using a graphic organizer for lower level learners and an essay form for more advanced learners). Once the vignette has been written and collected, the data here can be used to help guide in-class discussion, relating the lesson material to the learners' imagined communities throughout the semester. When the semester ends, learners create another vignette to assess how their attitudes may have changed about their imagined community and reasons for engaging with English in their future selves. This strategy allows for the teacher to understand potential multiple imagined communities, which in turn will allow for a deeper understanding of the learners' investment with English (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

An additional assignment could be reading a series of case studies of Japanese learners who have studied abroad or integrated into a community where English is the majority language (this could be anywhere!) and recording their reflections via a series of reflective prompts: *Where did they go? How do they feel? Would you like to go here? What do you think their daily life is like (before reading) the study?* One possible idea is a case study on Kyoko Mori, an award-winning writer from Kobe, Japan, who has successfully integrated into Western popular culture. She and others have helped reimagine what it means to become an American writer by taking ownership of English (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Other options for assessment opportunities throughout the course of study include, but are not limited to five-minute papers, active listening strategies, Model United Nations, and writing as a safe identity, including but not limited to asynchronous writing tasks.

Additionally, a Google Survey has been implemented on the website to receive potential feedback on how users found the website. The survey also asks users their familiarity with imagined communities and the ideal L2 self, as well as how likely they are to attempt the provided tasks and two questions about the podcast. Finally, the survey asks users for suggestions on how to improve the website.

Project Timeline

Shifting Voices is an ever-changing project, ideally serving as a place to build community among teachers worldwide. I began designing version 1.0 of the website in early June, 2021. A completed version has been created for review at the end of August, 2021. The podcast recordings took place throughout the summer of 2021 via web-conferencing software with language learners in Japan, Canada, and Spain. Short-term goals include using the materials on this website to guide discussion of learner identity and imagined communities in my current context (an English Academy in Kobe, Japan). Long-term goals include building a community of resources, including a blog within the website, to help promote imagined communities in the classroom. Additional long-term goals include continuing the podcast and turning it into a series of interviews with multilingual speakers all over the globe that will help inform future L2 identity-related research. Eventually, I would like to present the material on the website at professional development conferences, connecting other teachers to these ideas, and sparking new conversations around identity, imagined communities, and language acquisition.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed strategies I implemented to create a website based on the idea of the L2 identity constructs of the ideal L2 self and imagined communities, incorporating user-friendly web design on both desktop and smartphone platforms. I provided an overview of the project, discussing the intended audience for the website, the desired results, the website design framework, and assessment tools for teachers. In Chapter Four, I summarize my learning experience, including key takeaways and in-depth reflection on how I can continue to employ my learnings in my current and future teaching.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection

Introduction

The guiding question for this Capstone project is: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?* The overarching goal of this project was to help unpack this question through tangible resources presented in an easy-to-understand and simple-to-use website. The website, which includes a podcast with episodes featuring conversations with second language learners from various backgrounds was created to spark conversation with fellow language teachers and learners around the topics of L2 identity, imagined communities, and the ideal L2 Self.

In Chapter One, I explained through a personal reflection on my own struggles with L2 identity and language learning, what drew me to this to the development of my research question. I provided background on the topic of second language (L2) identity, which set up the rationale for my project: The website and podcast will examine how the ideal L2 self and imagined communities tie into language learner motivation, engagement, and L2 identity.

In Chapter Two, I presented an analysis and synthesis of pertinent literature as it relates to my capstone topic and research question. I reviewed literature related to second language learning and the global English identity, anxiety and motivation in EFL contexts, the L2 Motivation Self System, the ideal L2 self, research on imagined communities, and pedagogical concerns as they relate to these constructs. I discussed practical classroom applications, including online communities, computer mediated

communication, writing tasks as they relate to transformative pedagogy, and the content-based L2 classroom.

In Chapter Three, I detailed my plan to create/execute the website and podcast, including the participants and setting, design framework, desired results, assessment plans, and time frame for completion of the project. I also discussed specific design strategies and best practices for user friendly website creation for both desktop and mobile browsing.

In this final chapter, I present what I learned as a result of this capstone project, including a discussion on what aspects of my learnings from the literature review proved to be the most impactful on my work. I discuss what new understandings of the literature I have gained as a result of the project creation. Finally, I consider implications, limitations, future research suggestions, benefits to the field, and how I plan to communicate the results of my project with the professional community in Japan and beyond.

Major Learnings

Key takeaways. The entire literature review process, including the Reading Journal I completed for ESL 8135, has allowed me a plethora of wonderful learnings, opening up my world to a wealth of information, which I am working on transitioning into knowledge to apply to my teaching and share with fellow teachers and administrators. Through the focus of my research, L2 identity and how it relates to imagined communities and the ideal L2 self (Anderson, 2006; Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Norton, 2010, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Yim, 2016), I was able to gain a much clearer understanding that L2 identity research is highly

malleable in its varying situations and is ethnographic by nature. As I previously mentioned, L2 identity research is vast and varied. Understanding how complex L2 learners' identities are, and how they continue to shift through various clusters and levels (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) is a learning that has and will continue to make a deep impact on my teaching and future research. It is clear to me after this process the importance of viewing English from the standpoint of a global and transnational identity (Crowther, 2019; Dörnyei, 2009). This stance has allowed me to understand the importance of making a correlation to English language learners' imagined communities and a global English identity; one where they are formulating an identity that will allow inclusion into a future self of engaging with not only native speakers of English, but other L2 users of English to facilitate investment in their own learning. Further, the role of writing as a new identity and how that can be applied to global use of English via different applications online is a critical learning for my current and future teaching.

Unexpected learnings. I was surprised to learn from the literature that imagined communities are not always met with a positivity on the language learners part (Kanno & Norton, 2003). I was also surprised at how involved website creation can be, including truncating written work for the web in order to be efficient and effective (Krug, 2014). While I understood the concepts of keeping it simple on the web before, the capstone project process really allowed me to take a step back, slow down, and attempt to construct a website that not only functions well, but is visually pleasing, not distracting, gets to the heart of the matter, and considers design for smartphone users as well as desktop users.

The most important literature. Bonny Norton, Aneta Pavlenko, and Kellen Toohey's work (Norton, 2010, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) work on imagined communities, the comparison between investment and motivation in the language learner, and the awareness of varying identity types (and reasons for formulating those identities for different reasons for learning English) were the most important pieces to help me understand how vital L2 identity research is. Additionally, Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) work with the L2 Motivational Self System (including the ideal L2) and how it connects to the global English identity was an invaluable addition to this project. These key resources heavily influenced the content for my website and helped guide my questions to second language learners on the Shifting Voices podcast.

New connections. Throughout this entire process, I strove to make connections to my current teaching practice and language learning. I am now highly curious about the correlation between the global English identity and investment in language learning, especially in an EFL context where access to English may be limited outside the classroom. I can also draw these new connections to an ESL context, where English is abundant outside the classroom as well. Questions I have in relation to these new connections: What other kinds of identity options are there? Do learners in an ESL environment strive for the same connection to a global identity as a user of English in an EFL context?

Implications of the Project

The Shifting Voices website and podcast provide current and future language teachers a resource on L2 identity, imagined communities, and the ideal L2 self. The website provides a background (albeit brief) of L2 identity research, an explanation of

imagined communities as they pertain to the language learner, how the ideal self coincides with imagined communities, and provides practical applications and lesson ideas in creating a space for learners to help discover, assess, and thrive in their imagined communities. The Shifting Voices podcast serves as a resource (growing with each episode) to share a variety of language learners' language learning stories, promoting equity among all language learners and all languages. While these may be the mission or goals of the website and podcast, they are also implications, as users of the site and listeners to the podcast can glean new understandings of how language and identity coincide with language learning. Additionally, the website offers a way to assess learners in regards to their imagined communities. While it is not a traditional formative or summative assessment, it provides an extra piece to the puzzle of assessing our learners' language development and perhaps a new way for teachers to think about assessment.

Limitations of the Project

As the project is a website and podcast and was designed to be ongoing, one limitation on the project at present is, simply, time. With the internet being so malleable and in constant state of flux and change, with more time the website and podcast will be able to grow considerably, offering more information about the constructs covered to language teachers. While I do argue that a lot of the concepts on the website can be applied to ESL programs, the current state of the information is geared towards the EFL audience, specifically with learners in Japan looking to connect with potential imagined communities outside of Japan. The assessment suggestions are also limited to those in Japan, but I argue a teacher could take the same ideas and apply them to whatever context they may find themselves in. Finally, as the project is completely web-based, it is only

available to those with an internet connection. Ways to provide the resources to teachers in contexts without access to the internet need to be considered, as well as archiving the podcast for physical distribution if deemed necessary.

Future Research and Projects

As mentioned, I plan to continue this project after completing the MA-TESOL program at Hamline University. A majority of the work will be dedicated to continuing the podcast and updating the website's blog. My hope and plan is that the interviews conducted on the podcast will open the door to my own future research on L2 identity and how it correlates with imagined communities and the L2 self. While a lot of work has been done in the field of imagined communities (Norton, 2010, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Yim, 2016), I feel that more research is needed in the realm of how the imagined community relates to the global identity of the English user.

Additionally, I am highly interested in how the ongoing pandemic has either constrained or expanded the imagined community of the language learner. As a lot of the work I read was conducted before or just as social media was starting to gain its relentless momentum, I am curious how instant access to essentially any community (via YouTube and social media) affects the imagination of the language learner. For example, future research could look at social media from the standpoint of either a limitation or a benefit. A key question could be: What are some of the best practices for implementing social media to help promote imagined communities in the classroom? I briefly discuss this on my website, but a much more detailed approach would be beneficial.

Communicating Results

I will share the website and podcast within my immediate networks (colleagues at my current and future schools). I will also use social media to promote the website and podcast, sharing the links on my personal pages as well as asking local teaching organizations (JALT - Japan Association for Language Teaching) and international organizations (TESOL International - Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages), both of which I currently maintain memberships, to allow me to share the project on their respective social media pages and discussion forms. I also would like to take the information from the website, and from what I have learned as part of the creation of the podcast and turn it into a professional development. While that was not necessarily the plan for this project from the onset, I feel there is enough applicable information to contribute to a future JALT or TESOL conference.

Benefits to Profession

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the Shifting Voices website and podcast lends itself as a resource for EFL teachers looking for ideas integrating L2 identity and the concept of imagined communities into their language teaching practice. The key benefit of this project to the field of TESOL is that it provides an easy-to-use website that offers information explained in a variety of ways (video, drawings, brief synopses). The "In the Classroom" section of the website provides ideas for teachers to start to understand that learners have multiple and shifting identities and there are implications for teachers to allow for a connection to these identities. The podcast provides language learners' stories in regards to language learning from a variety of contexts. Teachers can listen to these

reflections, which help us to understand what it is learners are going through as they learn a second language.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided major learnings as the result of this entire project; from a review of the literature to planning and implementing the Shifting Voices website and podcast. I highlighted new connections to the literature, implications and limitations of the project, future research suggestions, how I plan to communicate the results of my project, and benefits to the TESOL profession.

The goal of my project was to uncover answers in regards to my question: *How can a classroom environment be created which allows Japanese EFL learners to identify their ideal L2 selves and imagined communities?* While the answer very much still hangs in the balance, the question has been established, and sometimes that is the most challenging of all. And perhaps the answer will never fully be revealed. The quest will be a case-by-case, daily challenge, one that will take much contemplation, reflection, discussion, further reading, and conscious effort to allow language learners the opportunity to explore their imagined selves in a community that only they can conjure. I look forward to the uncertainty and all that will continue to influence the pursuit of finding out exactly just who we are and who we have the potential to be in our second language.

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