

The EFL Learner Identity Development: A Perspective of Metaphor

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between identity and language learning is of interest to scholars in the fields of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics. Most studies related to learner identity pay more attention to the factor of external contexts, while the role of metaphor seems to be underestimated, and seldom research has been done to investigate the influence metaphor on learner identity. The current study discussed the role of language learners' metaphor by describe their English learning attitudes and experience, and then investigated how the metaphor may play a role in development language learners' identity.

Keywords: identity development, identity construction, ideal self, ought-to self, metaphor, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Issues concerning learner identities have been discussed and researched extensively in the socio-cultural field of second language acquisition (SLA) recently. This study attempts to illustrate a need for dimensional expansion of the research area of learner identity by putting metaphor into consideration. In terms of contemporary theory on language learning and teaching, the identity of the language learner addresses the ways in which language learners understand their relationship to the socio-cultural contexts, how that relationship is developed or constructed across time and space, and how the learner understands their reflections for the past and possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). Interestingly, such relationship seems not to be unchangeable because the identity of the language learner is understood and theorized as multiple, a site of development and modification, and subject to *change*. Theoretically, Wang (2010) maintains that identity includes how one perceives oneself and how one is perceived by others; it also includes how one positions oneself in relation to the existing background (native culture) and the new settings (target culture).

In this way, the various conditions under which language learners use (including speak, listen, read, or write) the second language (L2) are influenced by different attitudes and environment; therefore, it is possible that learners can be highly valued in one setting/environment, while they may be marginalized in another, referring to the idea that learner identity is changeable based on inner and outer factors. For this reason, every time language learners interact in the target language, whether in the oral or written mode, they are engaged in identity construction, development, and negotiation. However, factors such as attitudes, conditions, and social contexts are not entirely determined. Therefore, language learners who struggle to speak from one identity position may be able to reframe their relationship with their interlocutors and claim alternative, more powerful identities from which to speak, thereby enhancing language learning (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001).

The following discussion addresses the issue of language learner identity under the influence of metaphors, which emphasizes not only what a person is doing based on the reflection but also how, where, and why the learner acts as he or she does. In addition, following Dornyei's (2009) re-conceptualization of language learner identity and motivation by providing the concept of L2 self, the goal of present study focuses on the relationship between EFL learners' identity (L2 self) and metaphor, and the role that metaphor plays in developing or reflecting English learners' identity (L2 self).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity in ESL/EFL Context

Learner identity, derived from post-structuralism, is a comparatively new theory in the process of language learning (Block, 2007; Lu & Huang, 2007; Norton, 2008; Ortega, 2009), and is understood to be affected by the socio-cultural context. Ortega (2009) proposes that the study of identity and L2 learning is one of the most vivacious research areas in the field of applied linguistics. Identity theory discusses and specifies the sense of self as socially constructed and socially constrained. Moreover, Schmitt (2010) states that identity is an important social factor because not only do linguistic patterns signal social and individual identity, but people's conscious awareness of their personal identities in language use.

Underlying this view of language learners' identity is the post-structuralism of language learning, which treats language as the site of identity construction (Block, 2007; Lu & Huang, 2007; Norton, 2008; Ortega, 2009). This approach has challenged the notion that language learners' identities are fixed, firmly anchored in the original culture and resistant to change (Norton, 1995; Pavlenko, 2002). Instead, learners' linguistic and cultural identities are seen as multiple --- learners can be members of multiple ethnic, social and cultural communities --- changing and permeable over time. Specifically, it is posited that the identity should be regarded as socially constructed and situated, always "dynamic, contradictory, and constantly changing across time and place" (Block, 2007; Norton, 2006). Similarly, according to Marx (2002), identity was originally realized as stable and fixed entity within a person which controls his or her actions and understanding of the surrounding environment, while in fact learners may not only cross the borders between cultures, but they may re-position themselves and modify their previous identities/selves without having to completely lose their old personalities. Consequently, identity is considered as changeable through negotiation and construction. Therefore, current research on learner identity focuses more on the constantly changing across time and place, and metaphor works as the mediating factor on learner identity development.

As mentioned earlier, learner identity is realized under the socio-cultural perspective; for that reason, researchers have considered language learning as social practices, and second language learning is a relational activity that occurs between specific speakers situated in specific socio-cultural environment or contexts (Lu & Huang, 2007). Generally, these contexts are viewed as "imagined community" and later, Norton (2000) was inspired by the imagined community to look into how it may influence the understanding of language learning and learner identity. Further, Norton (2000) proposes the idea of "investment" to replace the role of motivation by claiming that the amount that learners invest in language learning may affect learner identity.

Recently, Dornyei (2009) has begun to re-conceptualize the theory of learner motivation and identity by proposing the concept of L2 self, including the ideal L2 self, indicating the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e. a representation of personal hopes,

aspirations or wishes), and ought-to L2 self, referring to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e. a representation of someone else's sense of duty, obligations or responsibilities). According to Dornyei (2009), the theoretical shift is regarded as a move from the traditional conceptualization of motivation with an integrative/instrumental dichotomy to the recent theorization of motivation as being part of the learner's self system, in which the motivation to learn an L2 may be closely associated with the learner's ideal and ought-to L2 self. Specifically, the heart of this movement is the complex interplay of current and imaginative self-identities and its impact on purposive behavior (Yowell, 2002). In this way, it can be understood that, similar with learner identity, the L2 self is unstable and changeable, and the purpose of this study is to see how the metaphor plays the role to lead to the possible selves.

The influential studies by scholars such as Norton (2000), McKay and Wong (1996), Miller (2003) along with other prominent studies all focused on recent immigrants in English speaking countries. In the same way, Wang (2010) in her recent research discussed the role of learner identity in study-abroad context, and she considered that Identity had to do with the degree of belonging to a certain discourse community, that is, membership as perceived by the new member and the existing members. She found that the amount and the quality of interactional encounters with native speakers, along with learners' identity, play a major role in language acquisition in the SA context. Kanno (2003) studied bilingual speaker identities in the outer circle countries and provided interesting examples of how identities are constructed in relation to languages and the society. In fact, many of the researches on learner identity focus on the influence of different environment; however, little has been done to investigate the influence of metaphor and how it helps learners reflect their own roles, experience and attitudes on language learning processes.

Metaphor

Metaphors, referring to the idea that one entity stands for another, in a different situational context shape much of our experience of the world. Usually, they vary in their power, familiarity and role in the process of making and transmitting meaning (Taylor, 2008).

"Metaphors may be didactic or illustrative devices, models or paradigms or root images that generate new models. Some metaphors are heuristic whereas others constitute new meaning" (Klein, 1990, p. 93).

Viewed as an aspect of speech and writing, metaphor carries concepts and is essential to language and the communication of abstract thoughts. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are seen as the key to giving an adequate account of our understanding and expounding the world around us. In other words, metaphors serve the function to facilitate the understanding of the conceptual domains. Basically, language is active, generative and dynamic in the construction of understanding about reality, and that's why we come to understand the world through a process of "mental construction" (Orteny, 1989). Within this constructivist paradigm metaphors are significant, not only as a source of literal descriptions of reality, but also as a means of making sense of our concrete experience of the world and of explaining abstract concepts and theories. Rather than merely a rhetorical flourish, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) suggest metaphor as fundamental to our processes of meaning making:

"Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3)

As Crick (2007) mentioned, “the concept of learning power and learning how to learn must be understood and contextualized as part of a complex system in which the development of a learning identity, personal power to learn and competencies for managing ourselves in the post-mechanical age are as important as the acquisition of knowledge.” Therefore, the participants’ metaphors might be considered as the power to enhance learning.

In short, the ubiquitous use of metaphor suggests that it forms a core element of scaffolding in a reflective and embodied way, which means that the learner has encoded the language learning experience in ways that connect directly to their personal and unique contexts or environment, their individual experience, attitudes and feelings (Crick & Grushka, 2009). The metaphor thus connects to the learners’ real-life world, embodied through the collective experience of particular places and times to form “bridges” to develop learner identity or L2 self.

Purpose of the Study

Simply put, the present study emphasizes how the metaphor can be influential on learner identity (L2 self) and what effects can be brought about from the metaphor. Little research has been done to probe into the relationships between metaphor and language learner identity (L2 self), and moreover, the role of metaphor plays in influencing learner identity (L2 self) is still unclear. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the EFL students’ English learning process in a metaphorical perspective, to be more specific, the participants were asked to describe themselves in personal roles, attitudes, and experience in learning English by using metaphors, and then see what influences that these metaphors may have on their own language learning identity (L2 self).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What metaphors are used or described for Taiwanese EFL learners’ identity, attitudes, and experience?
2. Is there any relationship between the metaphor and EFL learners’ identity (L2 self)? If yes, what are the influences of these metaphors on Taiwanese EFL learners’ identity (L2 self)?

METHODS

In this study the author set out to explore the influences of metaphors on English learning experience to develop and construct language learner identity (L2 self). Hypothetically, the learners’ use of metaphors may reflect their attitudes and self-conception to English learning, and further trigger the motivation to learn English. Therefore, the potential identity (L2 self) development may be shaped through metaphor.

Participants

Thirty-five non-English-major freshmen from Taiwan, with a variety of backgrounds, were recruited as the participants, ranging from Department of Physics, Life Science, Business management, and Chemistry. All participants were 18 or 19 years old, randomly coming from northern, central and southern Taiwan. Specifically, in order not to hinder the schedule of syllabus, all participants were separated into three groups for the purpose of practicality of data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

Table 1 specifically demonstrated how the data were collected, including two stages. In the first stage, all participants were separated into three groups and were encouraged to make use of their creativity to think about personal roles, experience, and attitudes of English learning and tried to describe the learning process by providing some metaphors, including mental or physical description, and concrete or abstract imagination. This part mainly focused on answering the first research question. The open-ended questionnaire, mentioned in Table 1, can be divided into three parts. The first one asked about the demographics; namely, the participants' background information. Next, these students were required to write down their experience and reflections of English learning. In the last part, they were encouraged to come up with some metaphors that may best describe their reflections. Also, the definition of metaphor and some examples were provided for them to understand what they were supposed to do with metaphor.

In the second stage, the participants took turns to be interviewed to explain their metaphors of English learning roles, attitudes, and experience. The entire interview was recorded for further transcription. The researcher spent three weeks approximately to collect the data, one group for one week respectively. This semi-structural interview (or focused interview) was applied for hoping to reveal learners' possible L2 self development, therefore, the emphasis on explanations of metaphor was structured. Furthermore, some follow-up questions were raised by the researcher mainly for more concrete examples from the participants.

Table 1 Data Collection Procedure

Week 1 (Group 1)	1 st meeting (1 hour)	Open-ended questionnaire
	2 nd meeting (2 hours)	Face-to-face Interview
Week 2 (Group 2)	3 rd meeting (1 hour)	Open-ended questionnaire
	4 th meeting (2 hours)	Face-to-face Interview
Week 3 (Group 3)	5 th meeting (1 hour)	Open-ended questionnaire
	6 th meeting (2 hours)	Face-to-face Interview

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative approaches, while lay more emphasis on the later to describe and explain the relationships between EFL learners' identity (L2 self) and metaphors. The questionnaire was originally all written and carried out in the participants' native language, that is, Chinese. In order to ascertain the data was reliable, after the transcription, the participants were invited to check and review the written data to make sure their explanations of metaphor toward English learning were not misunderstood. Next, after the researcher translated the data into English, a doctoral English-major student was asked to back-translate the English data into Chinese to confirm the meaning. Some descriptive statistics were also provided by using SPSS 13.0 to see the different uses of metaphors between genders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Data

According to Table 2, more than half (54%) participants provided positive metaphors, while around one four (26%) learners had negative metaphors, and finally, one five (20%) participants used neutral metaphors.

19 (54%) participants, including 11 (32%) males and 8 (22%) females, applied positive metaphors to reflect their personal attitudes, experience and their role in learning English. In addition, 9 (26%) participants, including 7 (20%) males and 2 (6%) females provided negative metaphors. Finally, 7 (20%) participants, including 6 (18%) males and 1 (2%) female found the metaphors that reflect their English learning experience were comparatively neutral, neither positive, nor negative.

Although the number of the participants was not big enough, interestingly, it still can be found that, compared with male participants, female ones had relatively positive roles, attitudes and experience in English learning. Furthermore, Males had similar percentage in describing themselves with neutral and negative metaphors.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Metaphor use

Metaphor Type	Gender Difference	Example
Positive (54%)	Male (32%)	Learning English is just like travelling because I can get lots of joys.
	Female (22%)	Learning English is like doing expedition because encountering something interesting can make me feel comfortable.
Negative (26%)	Male (20%)	Learning English is just like a nightmare for me because I always feel being naked when talking to foreigners.
	Female (6%)	Learning English is just like eating fast food; the more I eat, the more difficult for me to digest.
Neutral (20%)	Male (18%)	Learning English is just like finding the destination in the mist.
	Female (2%)	Learning English is just like doing unfamiliar things because I will always encounter something new.

Qualitative Data

This part concentrates on the qualitative analysis of depicting the used metaphors, and then further elaborate how the metaphors reflect learner's identity (L2 self) development. In addition, the reflections of the participant's metaphors can help position and re-position themselves in English learning process, although the results can be positive, negative, or neutral. In the following parts, different categories of metaphors would be discussed separately.

Positive Metaphor

The positive metaphors refer to those depictions that may reflect learners' positive experience, attitudes and roles in learning English. One student, Student 1, portrayed himself as an animal in the English learning process.

Student 1: learning English to me is the growth process of a caterpillar. In the beginning, I crawl very slowly, then, I encounter adversities (in the cocoon), and I cannot have a great command of English until I get out of the cocoon. When thinking about this, I always encourage myself to learn English hardly.

Taylor (2008) takes a constructivist approach to the concept of learner identity by citing Barton's (2007) view that in the constructivist view "people construct a mental image of the external world, with language at the centre of the construction" (2007, p. 16). Actually, Student 1's metaphor applied external world image to explain his personal English learning, which entailed the idea of L2 self development or construction. Students like Shane depicted his English learning as travelling. Both Student 1 and Student 2 used the external world image to describe their own learning, while the images were concrete and abstract respectively.

Student 2: Learning English is taking adventures to me; the more I explore, the more surprises I will find. For example, I went to USA with my friends several years ago, and the life styles in different cities I'd been to were very exotic and unique. Owing to the joys I got from travelling, I feel English is very important. Somehow, I think I am a traveller, and that's why I want to learn English well.

The case of Student 2 is pretty common for EFL students because some learners also feel that the language learning is just like a journey. By and large, the metaphor of the learner as traveller suggests a certain category of person: an autonomous and enterprising individual, rationally choosing the mode, pace, direction and destination of their learning journey.

Student 3 shared her metaphor and how it constructed her L2 self, and she also provided some specific information about the way she wanted to develop her L2 self.

Student 3: Learning English is joining the marathon, and I am just one of the runners. I mean, we need to have the stamina and lots of supplies to help us stick it out, or we probably will fall behind. To me, I think learning English is like joining the marathon because it's very exhausting, but interesting. In order not to make the learning process boring, I would love to invite other people to join me. For example, I feel my English listening and speaking abilities are not as good as the reading and writing ones, so I hope to know some native speakers of English, and make friends with them, and treat them as the partners in the process of marathon...like, cooperation.

Student 3 used marathon to portray her learning experience, and she also mentioned that making friends with some native speakers of English was beneficial for learning and this was what she wanted to do. According to Ushioda and Dornyei (2009), such kind of identity development can be considered as the "ideal L2 self" because Winnie's attitudes reflected the personal hopes, aspirations or wishes, and she might be able to construct her own L2 self through personal interests and the free will. In line with Duff (2008), identity, participation and activity have always been important constructs in language socialization. In Student 3's case, her metaphor conveyed the ideas that they would like to participate in more activities to sharpen their English skills.

Additionally, similar with Student 3, Student 4 regarded English as one her best hobbies and learning English well to her was a means of self accomplishment.

Student 4: Learning English is another way of travelling. Before travelling, we have to equip ourselves, for example, the abilities of vocabulary, grammar, and four skills (listening, speaking reading & writing) are essential for learning. The more we equip ourselves, the easier we learn. We can see a broader world if we keep learning. It's just like...self-achievement, and I love it.

Noticeably, the metaphors that Student 3 and Student 4 presented in depicting the English learning roles, attitudes, and experience did influence them to become the one they want to be, and such kind of identity development may lead them to learn English more actively.

Student like Student 5 considered English as daily necessities. Student 5 felt English was important, and his learning attitudes and experience were motivating. In addition, his metaphor indicated the autonomous learning because he might actively select what he liked to learn.

Student 5: English is like shoes, which are the daily life necessities, so we have to learn it well; it's also like hamburgers, which can provide me enough energy to survive. Sometimes, I image English as the hamburgers, that's why I like to learn it. Maybe I am a gourmet, and I can choose the things (topics) I like to eat (learn).

Student 6 provided remarkable metaphor of English learning experience by using personification.

Student 6: English is the musical notes, and the purpose to learn English is to compose a good melody, and I always try my best to recognize the words as the musical notes. Sometimes, I consider myself as the composer, because I believe that there most a most important idea in English writing, just like songs. More or less, in order to listen to more beautiful songs, I hope I can learn it well.

Similarly, Student 6 expressed her willingness to develop or construct the ideal L2 self because she want to listen to more wonderful English songs, and with the purpose of achieving the goal, she hope to learn English well.

Learners like Student 7 claimed that successful English learning was a long journey which took consistent plan to realize the goal.

Student 7: I somehow consider myself as a mountain climber and English learning is mountain climbing to me because it takes lots of preparations; more specifically, I have to receive different training to make sure I am able to reach the top of the mountain. Similarly, in order to learn English well, I have to memorize vocabulary, know some helpful strategies, and make use of the multimedia to learn English.

Beyond the researcher's imagination, Student 7 pointed out the application of multimedia to assist learning. When asked to provide more specific information, he indicated that some online English learning websites were extremely beneficial because there were lots of different syllabi, and then he was able to choose the suitable one for him. In addition, Student 8's metaphor had something to do with his daily life activity.

Student 8: To me, learning English is playing computer games; the more I play, the more enemies I would encounter. In the same way, I found that the more articles I read, the more difficult it became for me to memorize the new words. Once in a while, I felt learning English became harder

and harder; however, as an active fighter, the situation motivate my desire to overcome the difficulties.

Consequently, although Student 8 declared that he felt English was more and more difficult to learn, he still had positive attitudes and considered himself as active a learner to overcome the obstacles. Apparently, these positive metaphors seem to reflect learners' attitudes optimistically and help develop their L2 self.

Furthermore, another related metaphor is about Japanese comic story. Student 9 illustrated his experience of English learning as the process of fighting with the evils. He imagined himself as one character of the comic story, Dragon Balls, to defeat the enemies. According to Student 9, in order to become stronger and more capable, learning more English is necessary for him to achieve the goal. Again, his personal metaphor elaborated why and how he develop himself to become the ideal L2 self.

Negative Metaphor

With similar metaphor, compared with Student 8, Student 10 had totally different reflection and attitude to English learning.

Student 10: I think learning English is a tiring task, maybe another kind of playing computer games. From time to time, I have to compete with others when playing games, and I don't like it. This is the same case for learning English. I always cannot help to compare the scores with my classmates, and the results are always upset. The problem could be the education policies in Taiwan, because we have lots of tests.

Student 10 pointed out one critical phenomenon in Taiwan, which is the *exam-led instruction*; more specifically, lots of students in Taiwan are under the pressure that they have to absorb the knowledge that could be tested in the exams, especially for subjects like English. Basically, although the authority has been trying to modify this phenomenon for several years, students still cannot get rid of the pressure to pay attention to the contents that could be assessed. When required to express more about the education policies, Student 10 specified that, before entering the university, learning English is like drinking water; it's everyday necessity. However, presently, as a freshman, learning English is like having a cup of juice, which is not necessary for everyday life. More or less, the situation partly reflected the phenomenon that the education in Taiwan seems to emphasize exams a lot, leading to the problem that before the college entrance exam, everyone learns English hard, while it turns out to be different after students enter the university.

Moreover, another negative metaphor is about Chinese traditional story. Student 11 described himself as the character in story who would like to chase and catch the sun, meaning that reaching the goal is impossible. By saying this, Student 11 asserted that it's impracticable to learn English well because he cannot find any relation or connection with the target culture. To some extent, his expression showed the idea of *sense of belonging*. In fact, resistance to socialization can result from identity factors such as ethnocentrism, a sense of superiority, a sense of inferiority, or a perception of being marginalized (Wang, 2010). Apparently, it seems that Student 11 cannot feel the sense of belonging in his experience, and that's why he could not understand the reason to learn English.

By describing English learning as nightmare, Student 12 also offered negative metaphor to reflect his negative attitudes and experience and further stated his unwillingness to learn English.

Student 12: Learning English is just a nightmare for me, especially when I find that I am surrounded by too many unfamiliar words. However, to learn English well, I have to know many words, but I don't like that.

Student 12 specified in his interview that classroom instruction of English in Taiwan was too traditional to attract learners' motivation. The design of curriculum and syllabus should be interesting.

Neutral Metaphor

Some participants used neither positive, nor negative metaphors to depict their English learning roles, attitudes, and experience; however, these descriptions were still critical because their reflections revealed important attitudes to learn English.

Student 13: Learning English to me is finding out the destination in the mist, and I am an explorer doing the expedition; therefore, I think having good learning strategies is significant and crucial to become a successful learner.

When asked if he had any idea about the English learning strategies, in his opinion, for instance, memorizing vocabulary required some good strategies to make sure the new words have been efficiently stored in the long-term memory. Moreover, Student 13 did emphasize the significance of communication strategies because he shared some embarrassed experience interacting with foreigners, and explained that he should have learned more strategies to avoid the moments when not knowing what to say.

Another student, Student 14, expressed that learning English is kind of like swimming because everyone needs to struggle for a period of time before being able to swim. Furthermore, she shared her personal experience by pointing out the influence of her family support.

Student 14: My parents know that my English performance is not good, so, they get me an English tutor, and also order lots of English magazines for me to read. I think they really want me to improve my English abilities, and I am the sort of person who usually listens to my parents, so, I just would like to become what they want.

Essentially, it was also found that language socialization, identity, and academic achievement are closely interconnected (Atkinson, 2002, 2003). Therefore, it can be seen that the case of Student 14 corresponded to the "ought-to L2 self" development because according to Ushioda and Dornyei (2009), her attitudes reflected the duty, obligations or responsibilities to learn English well.

Finally, Student 15 conveyed contradictory attitudes to English learning based on her metaphor.

Student 15: Learning English to me is taking shower in winter. At first, I am unwilling to take off clothes before taking a shower; however, I feel comfortable and satisfied after the shower. Learning English includes lots of things like vocabulary, grammar, collocation and communication, so, sometimes I am unwilling to learn it. However, as long as I really make up my mind to learn it, I may get some invisible rewards. I know English is important and this is my responsibility.

As a result, Student 15's metaphor, by describing English learning as shower taking, had reflected her encouraging attitudes and experience, and she even presented the "ought-to L2 self" by declaring that it's her responsibility to do it well.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

You may use this subheading for discussing future and *emerging trends*. Provide insight about the future of the research. Viability of a paradigm, model, implementation issues of proposed programs, etc., may be included in this section. If appropriate, suggest future research opportunities within the domain of the topic.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, similar with the research by Crick and Grushka (2009), in present study, the reflection of metaphors in personal language learning process can provide mechanisms through which the students may re-represent and re-construct their identities (L2 selves) as learners. The processes enable learners to develop self-identities or L2 selves for their own learning. As presented from the qualitative data, most participants considered themselves as different roles in English learning, showing various and distinctive attitudes and identities. It is critical to note that most active English learners tend to develop ideal L2 selves. In fact, the learner identity (L2 self) development involves influences from cognitive and socio-constructive aspects. Some learners might develop and even change their own identities (L2 selves) from inner cognition, resulting from factors such as motivation, interests, and personal strategies, while other might develop and change the identities (L2 selves) from outer environment, including factors like a rich variety of social activities. As it has been stated earlier, learner identity (L2 self) is unstable and changeable, while finding out the reasons that trigger the change is important because, as pointed out by Lam (2000), identity has been shown to have an effect on L2 development and performance (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1995). Further research may concentrate on the influences of advanced technologies on identity, such as the application of Facebook. What's more, the idea that how metaphors influence learners' identity (L2 self) development based on their English professional level can be investigate to see if there is any identity (L2 self) change among different levels of students.

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