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Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher Selves: The Case of University Pre-service Teachers in Costa Rica

El Yo Docente pre-servicio Ideal L2: el caso de docentes pre-servicio en Costa Rica

Carlos Murillo-Miranda
Universidad de Costa Rica,
San José, Costa Rica
carlos.murillomiranda@ucr.ac.cr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6857-7226>

Verónica García-Castro
Universidad de Costa Rica,
San José, Costa Rica
veronica.garciacastro@ucr.ac.cr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2849-2855>

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ABSTRACT:

The 'L2 Motivational Self System' (L2MSS) (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) sheds light on theoretical tenets for research in language learner motivation. The L2MSS has been adapted into the 'Possible Language Teacher Self' (PLTS) (Kubanyiova, 2009) to explore language teacher motivation. Nonetheless, there is scarce research on a self-system for L2 pre-service teachers. Therefore, in this qualitative study, the characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self were explored to identify a possible motivational self-system. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and thematic analysis was implemented. Participants (N=2) were pre-service L2 teachers from a university in Costa Rica. Findings revealed that participants mentioned four common traits of an ideal L2 pre-service teacher self: (1) passion, (2) knowledge, (3) adaptability, and (4) language proficiency. Contrary to Kubanyiova's (2009) PLTS and Dörnyei's (2009b) and Dörnyei & Ryan's (2015) L2MSS, both participants share an 'L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System' including four elements: (1) Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher Self, (2) ought-to L2 Pre-service Teacher Self, (3) current L2 Pre-service Teacher Self, and (4) Feared L2 Teacher Self. It is discussed and concluded that a PLTS system might include the elements just mentioned. However, further exploration on an L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self is mandatory to better understand the motivation and self-identity of L2 pre-service teachers.

KEYWORD: Pre-service Teacher Education, Motivation, Identity, Teacher Education, Teacher Educator Training.

RESUMEN:

El sistema motivacional L2 (L2MSS por sus siglas en inglés) (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) arroja luz sobre los principios teóricos para la investigación en la motivación de estudiantes de idiomas extranjeros/segundos idiomas (L2). El L2MSS se ha adaptado al sistema de 'Posible docente de idiomas' (PLTS) (Kubanyiova, 2009) para explorar la motivación de docentes de idiomas L2. No obstante, existe poca investigación sobre un autosistema para personas docentes de L2 en formación. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este estudio cualitativo fue explorar las características del yo ideal de la persona docente de L2 en formación para identificar un posible sistema de automotivación. Se realizó entrevistas semiestructuradas a profundidad y se implementó análisis temático. Las personas participantes (N=2) fueron docentes de L2 en formación de una universidad de Costa Rica. Los resultados revelaron que las personas participantes obtuvieron cuatro rasgos comunes de un yo ideal de docentes L2 en formación: (1) pasión (p.ej. pasión, gestión del aula, necesidades educativas especiales, entre otros), (2) conocimiento, (3) adaptabilidad y (4) dominio del idioma. A diferencia del PLTS de Kubanyiova (2009) y el L2MSS de Dörnyei (2009) y Dörnyei y Ryan (2015), se encuentra que las personas participantes comparten un 'Sistema de autoconocimiento de docente L2 en formación que incluye cuatro elementos: (1) Yo ideal docente L2 en formación, (2) el yo docente L2 en formación que debería ser, (3) el yo docente L2 en formación actual y (4) el yo docente L2 que temo ser. Se discute y se concluye que un sistema PLTS podría incluir los cuatro elementos mencionados anteriormente. Sin embargo, es necesario explorar con más profundidad el *yo de docentes L2 en formación* para una mejor comprensión de la motivación e identidad de dichas personas docentes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Formación de docentes, Motivación, Identidad, Educación superior, Enseñanza y formación.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Second language (L2) pre-service teacher motivation is paramount to better understand the nature and needs of future teachers. Despite research having explored teacher identity (Beltman, 2015; Chong & Low, 2009; Hong et al., 2017), language teacher identity (Kayi-Aydar, 2019a, 2019b), and possible language teacher selves (Kubanyiova, 2009), pre-service teacher motivation has not been explored towards a motivational self-system. There is also vast research on the characteristics that make learning take place, as an example, types of feedback from the teacher (Muncie, 2000), assessment (Bachman & Palmer, 2019; Brunfaut & Clapham, 2013; Coombe et al., 2007), classroom arrangement and management (Lindberg et al., 2005; Scrivener, 2012), teaching methodology (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), among others. For decades, the focus of research has generally been conducted towards L2 students while teachers are equally important stakeholders in the educational ecosystem (Holmes, 2005).

In this study, the researchers selected to explore pre-service L2 teachers as their motivations and ideal pre-service L2 selves are also relevant to the educational process, which to the best of their knowledge has not been directly researched up to the moment. The topic of 'Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves' remains unexplored but requires special attention due to the impact it might have in an identification of pre-service L2 teachers' motivation, identity, and considerations for current pre-service L2 teachers' knowledge base. In addition, it was important for this study to take place in the Costa Rican context as pre-service L2 teachers (and L2 teachers as well) from that context have not been voiced enough through research. The aim of this study is to investigate the key characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves in two pre-service L2 teachers and to gain deeper understanding on the pre-service L2 teachers' perspective of their current and future competence to teach. This could then in turn set a base for further study and improvement of L2 pre-service education in Costa Rica. For the literature review, the paper includes the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), pre-service teacher motivation, and key characteristics of L2 teachers. Then, the methodology, results and discussion, limitations, recommendations for further research, and conclusions will be presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 L2 Motivational Self System

Motivation has been a key factor in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and has been a subject of research for several decades. The study of motivation in SLA has been categorized into three periods: Social Psychological (1959-1990), Cognitive Situated (1990s), and Socio-dynamic (2000+) (Boo et al., 2015). The evolution of SLA motivation has progressed from an integrative and instrumental perspective of motivation (Gardner, 2001) to a socio-dynamic perspective (Boo et al., 2015; Dörnyei, 2009a; Dörnyei, 2009b), and led to the development of the L2MSS.

In 2005, Dörnyei introduced the L2MSS as a theoretical construct for second language learners. This theory was further expanded in 2009 to provide a more detailed theoretical explanation of this construct and to demonstrate its foundations and potential to broaden the scope of L2 motivation research (Dörnyei, 2009b). The L2MSS is a product of decades of research on SLA motivation, which has resulted in a shift in focus from integrativeness and instrumentality concepts to a more individualistic and dynamic one. The L2MSS encompasses the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self represents the idealized version of oneself

that a language learner aspires to become, while the Ought-to L2 Self represents the learner's perceived obligations and responsibilities to succeed in language learning. The L2 Learning Experience encompasses all aspects of the learning environment, including teachers, curricula, institutions, and peers (Boo et al., 2015; Dörnyei, 2009a; Dörnyei, 2009b).

To achieve the Ideal L2 Self, Dörnyei (2009b) established specific conditions such as elaborating vivid future self-images, perceived probability, a harmonious relationship between the ought-to and ideal L2 self, activation, procedural strategies, and the impact awareness of a feared self. In 2015, Dörnyei and Ryan expanded the list of conditions to aid in the creation of future self-images, which included elements such as a desired future self-image that differs from the current self, is elaborate and vivid, and is perceived as plausible, among others.

While the Ideal L2 Self is a crucial component of the L2MSS, there is a dearth of research on the concept of the Ideal L2 Teacher Self and the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self. Kubanyiova (2009) proposed a model for teacher motivation, known as the Possible Language Teacher Self, which includes the Ideal Language Teacher Self, the Ought-to Language Teacher Self, and the Feared Language Teacher Self. The Ideal Language Teacher Self represents the goals in identity that language teachers want to achieve in contrast to their current state. The Ought-to Language Teacher Self are “the language teachers’ cognitive representations of their responsibilities and obligations with regard to their work” (Kubanyiova, 2009, p.316). And the Feared Language Teacher Self which is who a language teacher might become if they do not achieve their goals and responsibilities. It is important to highlight that a concept from the L2MSS in the form of the L2 Learning Experience does not play a role in the Possible Language Teacher Self.

Murillo-Miranda (2020) presented an enhanced version of the Possible Language Teacher Self, known as the L2 Teacher Self System, which takes into account the L2 Learning Experience. In this case study, it was concluded that teachers may interpret their current L2 Teacher Selves as their Ideal L2 Teacher Selves, thereby necessitating a reshaping of the Ideal L2 Teacher Self concept.

Pre-service teacher motivation

Prior research in the topic of pre-service teacher motivation has focused on motivational factors to go into the career: being the teacher of a specific age group (e.g., children, adolescents), shaping the future of their students, contributing to society, autonomy in the classroom, among others (Carson & Chase, 2009), Fokkens-Bruinsma & Carrinus, 2014; Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). Pre-service teachers’ own motivation is an important factor (Kim & Cho, 2014) which aids pre-service teachers’ willingness to face the challenges that come with teaching (Malmberg, 2006). In terms of pre-service language teacher motivation, Zhang et al. (2020) concluded that factors such as family annual income, age and contact with foreigners predicted pre-service language teachers’ motivation in the context of Chinese as a second language teaching.

Despite scant research on pre-service language teacher motivation, Smid (2018) validated a questionnaire to measure pre-service English teachers’ motivation to teach in Hungary which could be a start to conduct further research on pre-service English teacher motivation in other contexts. Nonetheless, for this study, a qualitative approach was decided as it enables individualities to emerge within a situated and contextualized perspective. In addition, a qualitative approach is suited to explore “new, uncharted areas” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.39). Finally, it was not possible to find any pre-service language teacher motivation research through an L2MSS lens.

Passion, knowledge, adaptability and language proficiency

There has been prior research into some of the key characteristics of pre-service teachers. Passion is defined as “a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one loves, finds important and meaningful, and in which one invests a significant amount of time and energy” (Vallerand et al., 2014). Empirical work has supported the role of passion in pre-service teachers. For example, Kim (2017) conducted a study with 212 pre-service teachers in South Korea and found that passion was a predictor of self-efficacy. Several studies have also constructed on the positive impact of passion during this stage (e.g., Day, 2004; Plourde, 2002), while others have concluded that passion is linked to good teaching in in-service teachers (e.g., Day & Gu, 2010; Hargreaves, 1998).

In the case of knowledge as a characteristic, it is almost natural to admit that it is a key factor to foster during teachers’ pre-service education and most research has focused on how that knowledge is developed. Knowledge is defined as a construction of the context of their [teachers] education program, their practical knowledge integrates experiential knowledge, formal knowledge, and personal belief” (Ferry et al., 2022, p.33). Some research has explored the development of knowledge through mentoring; as an example, Mena et al. (2017) concluded that mentoring contributed to the professional knowledge of pre-service teachers. Nonetheless, the broadest work in terms of teacher and pre-service knowledge has derived from Shulman (1987) who proposes seven knowledge bases for teachers: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values. So, an argument could be made that knowledge is entangled into the roots of pre-service teacher education.

Adaptability is an important trait for teachers to master as teaching is often faced with unpredictable and novel situations. Adaptability means “being able to adapt to manage the novel and changing situations that occur in these everchanging environments is an important capacity for thriving and effective teachers” (Granziera et al., 2019, p.60). Several studies have elicited the benefits of adaptability for teachers. As an example, Collie and Martin (2017) found positive associations between adaptability and wellbeing and autonomy. Parsons and Vaughn (2016) studied the impact of teacher adaptability through the teacher’s own reflections and the learners’ reflections. They conclude in their study that students considered the teacher’s adaptability helpful, and that the classroom is complex, and the teacher navigates it by using knowledge and adaptability.

Finally, language proficiency is more domain-specific for language teachers. Mason and Matas (2015) indicated that striving for a high proficiency level of language is a stressor for pre-service and in-service language teachers which may lead to foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 1996). Therefore, language proficiency could be a key factor and a stressor for pre-service educators.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions and Aims

The aim of this study is to investigate the key characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves in two pre-service L2 teachers and to gain deeper understanding on the pre-service L2 teachers’ perspective of their current and future competence to teach. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the key characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves in two Costa Rican pre-service L2 teachers?

RQ2: What is a possible L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System for the two Costa Rican pre-service L2 teachers?

3.2 Research Approach

A qualitative research design in the form of an in-depth semi-structured interview was implemented for this study. One of the important elements of qualitative research is that it provides an emergent research design Dörnyei (2007). Therefore, it provides the necessary flexibility to explore a novel research topic as Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves. Moreover, due to the aim of this research which is to find the characteristics of an ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, it is important that participants elaborate from their own viewpoint and their own lens (Dörnyei, 2007).

A case study was implemented since it provides an in-depth look into the phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Duff, 2007; Gall et al., 2003). Case studies have provided multiple theories and models in different areas such as teacher cognition, teacher and language development, learner motivation, among others (Duff, 2014). Furthermore, Duff (2014) indicated that case studies have aided practitioners with a better understanding of socioeducational contexts. Duff (2014) states that a large quantity of case studies in applied linguistics focus on the study of changing identities and multilingual communities. Therefore, conducting a case study suits the needs and flexibility a novel topic such as Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teachers Selves needs. Moreover, similar studies implementing case studies have ranged from one participant (Kayi-Aydar, 2019b) to three participants (Vaughn, 2013). Vaughn (2013) also selected one semi-structured interview per participant.

3.3 Data Collection

The research instrument was an in-depth semi-structured interview. The data collection tool was chosen as it would provide a flexible mid-point between a structured interview and an unstructured interview (Dörnyei, 2007). Additionally, it was relevant for the research team to be able to ask for elaboration or keep track of emerging themes worth exploring further. An interview protocol was designed and piloted with two pre-service L2 teachers before conducting the interviews which led to minor changes in the wording of questions. Following Dörnyei's position on semi-structured interviews: "This format therefore needs an 'interview guide' which has to be made and piloted in advance" (2007, p.132). One interview session, lasting approximately between 30 to 60 minutes (Dörnyei, 2007) taking into account 15 minutes before and after the interview for administrative aspects and/or delays (Richards et al., 2012), was the aim for our data collection.

The interviews were held via Zoom as it was the available tool for the researcher conducting the interview and were recorded in a password-protected computer which was only accessed by the researchers. The interviews were held in English; nonetheless, the participants were also given the option to use their L1 if they felt more comfortable doing so. The interview was conducted by one of the researchers who had been a former professor of the two participants. This prior relationship might have affected what the participants said in the interview and/or might have contributed because of the interviewer's knowledge of the context and the participants.

The interview protocol was divided in three sections: (1) background information (e.g., what languages have you learnt?, how long have you been teaching English?, what has your teaching experience been?, etc.), (2) self-vision (as students and pre-service teachers) and the participants perception on ideal teaching practices (e.g., to what extent would you say you were a good language learner?, can you remember a teacher (of any subject) who had a positive impact on you and your learning?, what was special about this teacher?, how have your past experiences as a learner affected

your English teaching?, what aspects of your English teaching do you think you need to improve, if any?, etc.), and (3) the characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher and future self-vision or lack thereof (e.g., what do you think are the characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-Service English teacher in your current teaching context?, to what extent do you think you meet your requirements for the Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher?, etc.)

As an additional element to the interview protocol, a checklist was implemented to keep track that all the main topics had been addressed and decide on the possibility of additional follow-up questions. In total, the two interviews generated a corpus of 15,712 words. One interview lasted 56 minutes generating a corpus of 8,267 words and the other participant's interview lasted 60 minutes generating a corpus of 7,445 words.

3.4 Participants

Data was obtained from two volunteer pre-service L2 teachers from a B.A. in English Teaching Teacher Training Program. The two participants were on their fourth year of their B.A. which would mean they had already done their teaching practicum and were on their final year of studies. Two participants were selected for this project due to the amount of data that is collected through the interviews in this type of research studies. Nonetheless, having two participants may limit having a representative sample. In addition, as it is a case study, a more personal approach was given to the results of this study as previous research projects have done related to language teacher identity (Kayi-Aydar, 2019b) and Ideal L2 Teacher Selves (Murillo-Miranda, 2020).

3.5 Data analysis

Both members of the research team familiarized themselves with the data through several individual readings while memoing the transcribed in-depth semi-structured interviews in the data analysis software atlas.ti. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021) was chosen to analyze the data. First, one member of the research team did the first wave of coding. Then, the other member of the research team examined the first wave coding and the code list by looking at codes that could have been merged together, broad or narrow codes and any potential overlaps. After agreeing on the changes, a second and third wave of coding took place with a discussion by the research team after each wave. Then, after the third wave of coding, the research team brought codes together and decided on the emerging themes from the data: passion, knowledge, adaptability, and language proficiency. There were not any other strong emerging themes in the data.

3.6 Ethics

For this study, ethical considerations were analyzed and implemented into the research design. Ethical approval was gained from the Ethics Committee from Universidad de Costa Rica. The informed consent form included details such as the general information of the project, the participants right to withdraw at any time or deciding not to participate, the anonymity of names by using a pseudonym, the elimination of any information that might identify the participants, and how the data would be handled. The interviews took place over Zoom, but they were only voice-recorded. Data was stored in password-protected computers and could only be accessed by members of the research team. As the transcriptions took place, all identifiable markers were anonymized and the recordings were deleted from the password-protected computers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the key characteristics of an ideal L2 pre-service teachers will be drawn out from the common characteristics mentioned by the two L2 pre-service teachers (P1 and P2), and a possible L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System. Both participants shared the same perspective on some characteristics that are key on the ideal L2 pre-service teacher self. In addition, as an Ideal Self is part of a system, this project aimed to identify it as a part of a whole.

4.1 Key Common Characteristics in the Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher Self

As part of the ideal L2 pre-service teachers selves, both participants shared key elements in common: passion, knowledge and language proficiency. Passion is one of the key characteristics of the ideal pre-service L2 teachers.

4.1.1 Passion

Passion has been previously linked positively to pre-service teachers in the form of developing their self-efficacy (Kim, 2017) and good teaching practices (Day & Gu, 2010; Hargreaves, 1998). This aligns with the relevance provided to passion by both participants. P1 mentioned that “you should be passionate, for sure. Because, again, if you're not passionate, it shows you're going to be just another regular teacher” (February 23, 2022) and P2 indicated that “although I know that some pre-service teachers can become great teachers with time, I think that to be a teacher, it's really important to have this call maybe” (February 23, 2022).

Both participants felt passion is a paramount characteristic that it should translate to in-service teaching. As an example, the participants mentioned “what I would say is, a couple of constants need to remain, for example, the passion and knowing your direction. And those I feel like are two aspects that are essential to any teacher anywhere” (P1, February 23, 2022) and “at the end, these pre-service teachers (pre-service teachers that went into the major without a passion for teaching) do not want to really become teachers [and this] could affect their future” (P2, February 23, 2022). Therefore, P1 and P2 consider passion to be an ideal characteristic for both pre-service L2 teachers and in-service L2 teachers. In addition, there is also fear expressed by both participants in terms that not having a passion for teaching during the pre-service stage that may lead to not being good teachers. For both participants, passion stood out as a relevant characteristic of not only the Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher but of the Ideal L2 Teacher as well.

4.1.2 Knowledge

Knowledge is also a highly valued key characteristic for P1 and P2 as part of their preparation to become teachers. Knowledge is a key characteristic to develop as pre-service L2 teachers and that it will be reflected towards their future teaching careers as stated by both of them: “the methodology to teach for reading, speech, writing . . . having knowledge of different activities, to also know the steps . . . being able to break into steps every [scaffolding]” (P1, February 23, 2022) and “special needs' knowledge is very important because at the end, that helps us as teachers to, to help the students in, like, in a most effective way” (P2, February 23, 2022). Additionally, P1 considered the knowledge of the culture which is a key element for language pre-service and in-service teachers as intercultural aspects are to be taught through language.

Nonetheless, as important as cultural knowledge to teach intercultural aspects is, having to teach them can place additional stress on language teachers (Sercu, 2006). That could explain why knowledge of the culture is specifically an important characteristic for P1. The aspect of knowledge was also reflected on who P2 is and wants to be as a language teacher displaying an important factor about her future vision by affirming the following: “I want to be the best English teacher I can with the knowledge I have and the knowledge I want to acquire” (February 23, 2022). This means that knowledge is a valued present and future characteristic for P2. She values her knowledge and the knowledge she will acquire. Therefore, knowledge is reflected as a key characteristic for the Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher of the participants.

4.1.3 Adaptability

Adaptability is a key trait to master if you want to become a teacher (Collie & Martin, 2017; Granziera et al., 2019; Parsons & Vaughn, 2016) and both participants considered it part of the ideal pre-service L2 teachers. P2 addressed the element of adaptability by reflecting on how to address students’ different needs: “in second place, I really think it's important to know how to address and . . . to be inclusive, you know, with all these needs” (P2, February 23, 2022) and “usually everyone tells them to adapt, but also we should be the ones that adapt to them and adapt the education system” (P2, February 23, 2022). In the case of P1, adaptability is considered an important trait that the participant feels he cannot master yet: “I feel like it's something important to have as a pre service teacher or be aware of. And I feel like in terms of adaptation, I'm not really sure that I have the capability yet” (P1, February 23, 2022). Nonetheless, the participant is aware that it can be a characteristic to develop with more practice in a near future.

4.1.4 Language proficiency

Language proficiency is an aspect both participants indicated to be key as ideal pre-service L2 teachers. Language proficiency by L2 teachers has been of relevance in Costa Rica as language teachers must take a proficiency test in order to be able to opt in for tenure in the Ministry of Education. P1 and P2 stated several times that language proficiency was paramount for pre-service L2 teachers. For example, it was mentioned that “if it is an English teacher, that person . . . should be preparing to be proficient in the language,” and that “if we are going to be English teachers, we should have, like, you know, the maximum knowledge we can in English” (P2, February 23, 2022). The other participant stated that he “would say they should have a high level of English, to me at least, the way I see it, as their speaking ability should be their best as an English teacher” and that “[it] should be in terms of knowledge, being able to communicate and articulate their ideas properly in English” (P1, February 23, 2022). Both participants consider language proficiency highly relevant for pre-service L2 teachers as it was mentioned in different moments during their interviews. Nonetheless, as a stressor, it could also mean that their wellbeing might be affected by it.

4.2 L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System

The previous section elaborated on the common characteristics both participants elaborated on regarding an ideal L2 pre-service teacher. The ideal L2 pre-service teacher is part of a system which has been identified through the data and taking as a starting point the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2009b) and the PLTS (Kubanyiova, 2009): the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Current L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Ought-to L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self and Feared L2 Teacher Self.

4.2.1 Current L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self

Participants referenced a current L2 pre-service teacher self and both showed awareness of who they are at the moment of the interview. As an example, one participant mentioned: “I can improve a lot my vocabulary or my listening, my understanding of other accents,” “when talking to other people, I usually get very nervous, so I don't usually practice talking or speaking in this case” (P2, February 23, 2022) and the other one indicated that: “there's another thing that I think that has helped . . . shape who I am as a [pre-service] teacher, which is being yourself and being passionate about what you do” (P1, February 23, 2022). It can be interpreted that both participants have an awareness of some aspects of their current L2 pre-service teacher self. Nonetheless, both mostly focused on weaknesses rather than strengths and aspects of their current teaching competence were not clearly addressed.

4.2.2 Ought-to L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self

The participants showed awareness on their areas for improvement as they focused on their language proficiency, lack of knowledge to deal with special needs and the lack of confidence while teaching. While both participants did not address explicitly what they felt needed to be done to achieve change from their current selves towards their ideal ones, there was some implicit reflection who their Ought-to L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self should be. For example, they stated: “I don't seek these opportunities to be a better language learner” (P2, February 23, 2022) and “I feel like in terms of adaptation, I'm not really sure that I have the ability yet. Well, of course, because I've had a very narrow experience teaching” (P1, February 23, 2022).

4.2.3 Feared Teacher Self

When asked about their good and bad experiences as learners, it was found that bad experiences have had an impact on a Feared L2 Teacher Self. It does not have an impact on their current situation as L2 pre-service teachers but more of who they do not want to become in the future as in the following statements: “I can talk about a professor, who had been teaching the same year, the same class, every single class the same exact way . . . very repetitive” and “there was no passion behind them when talking about these topics” (P1, February 23, 2022). While P2 also elaborated by stating: “the professor was very, very, very disrespectful to that classmate. Like keep treating him very, very badly,” “he seemed really confused in terms of what was exactly what we were supposed to be learning because honestly, I didn't really learn much in that course,” “even though he tried to make the class fun, his humor was very... how do you say sexual, maybe?” (P2, February 23, 2022). It was clear through the data that both participants focused a lot on prior experiences and who they did not want to become as teachers. Most of the answers related to feared characteristics of previous bad experiences with teacher behavior, knowledge, and methodology. This in return, should shed reflection upon the impact teachers and teacher educators have on pre-service teachers.

To summarize, this study provided a possible structure for an L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System and identified common characteristics in both participants for their Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher Self, which represents an important foreground for future research in pre-service teacher motivation in this specific context. These insights are valuable as there was not a previous study on pre-service L2 teacher motivation or pre-service teachers in general for the Costa Rican context. Therefore, this study could represent a cornerstone for deeper exploration of pre-service teacher motivation in Costa Rica. In terms of L2 teacher preparation in Costa Rica, understanding some of the particularities, characteristics, and motivation of this population could help in better designing

programs tailored for pre-service teachers. For this study, both participants are part of a possible system resulting in a combination on concepts from Dörnyei (2009b) and Kubanyiova (2009): the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Current L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Ought-to L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self and Feared L2 Teacher Self. Interestingly enough, aspects related to a possible L2 Learning/Teaching Experience were not prompted by any of the participants.

5. LIMITATIONS

One of the main limitations was that we were able to collect the data with just two participants. This in part is linked to another limitation to consider which was the time available for this project since it was to be conducted through a year. Conducting this project with a more sizeable sample and more time available would have allowed more significant results. Another important aspect to take into account was that the interviews were held in the participants L2 rather than their L1, which might have affected the participants range of elaboration and expressing their ideas more confidently. Nonetheless, the participants were given the choice to select the language the interview will be held on and had a full command of English. Participants were also made aware that they could clarify any aspect they did not understand in their L1.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As a qualitative research project, this project sheds light on the analysis of two specific cases in an intent to better understand the individual. One of the biggest areas where further research is needed is in consolidating the possible self system for pre-service L2 teachers that has been proposed. In order to have more conclusive results, it would be important to reach a higher number of participants and engage in cross-cultural studies. Implementing a study with a bigger sample would also allow to find more characteristics in common between the participants. In addition, in light of the scarce research on pre-service English teacher motivation, more research approached from qualitative and quantitative approaches is much needed. In terms of quantitative research, Smid (2018) provided a first step by validating a questionnaire on motivation of pre-service teachers of English in the Hungarian context and conducted research with this population (Smid, 2020). A further step in research would be approaching pre-service teacher motivation quantitatively across contexts.

Another aspect that arose from this project was the relevance provided by the two participants to reaching a high level of English proficiency. This is an area worthy of further research and analyzing how the pressure of reaching a high level of English proficiency can affect pre-service teacher motivation and their wellbeing. It would also be important to analyze how it might affect their motivation to become language teachers. Another aspect relevant to explore is whether that stress is caused by the expectations coming from native-speakerism.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This project investigated the characteristics of the Ideal L2 Pre-service Teacher Selves. There were four key common characteristics: passion, knowledge, adaptability, and language proficiency. It is recommended to deepen the concept of ideal selves for L2 pre-service teachers as it might help the betterment of their academic success. It could also lead into improving pre-service teachers'

knowledge bases as to understand the aspects that are important for pre-service teachers themselves. Therefore, there might be key elements in pre-service teacher education in specific contexts that should be pronominally bound. This means that some elements might be conceptualized differently depending on the context and then need to be researched as such. The data analysis of this project suggested that the two participants were aware and recognized an ideal self as a self to thrive for. The relevance of identifying more key characteristics for L2 pre-service teacher selves by conducting research with a more representative sample could lead to finding gaps in pre-service teacher's knowledge base.

The Feared L2 Teacher Self was represented in the participants' fear of adopting some characteristics from teachers from previous bad experiences was present in both participants in the form. It can be concluded that fear plays a role into shaping the identity of who they will eventually become as teachers. The negative and positive impact role models and non-role models can have on someone's future is yet to be analyzed in the context of this project.

Finally, the process of the data analysis led to finding a possible system that would fit the two participants of the study. An 'L2 Pre-service Teacher Self System' which includes the Ideal L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Current L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self, the Ought-to L2 Pre-Service Teacher Self and Feared L2 Teacher Self. In terms of Dörnyei's (2009b) L2 Learning Experience, participants did not take into account everything related to their current learning environment and future teaching environment. This system, even if it is not representative, could help as a starting point for future research and in an attempt to build a self-system for pre-service teachers.

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