



Understanding Taiwanese Adolescents' English Learning Selves through Parental Expectations

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This paper explores the interplay of Taiwanese adolescent English learners' motivational selves and their parents' expectations, with a special focus the identified perceptions of both teenage learners and their parents towards English learning as a duty and obligation. Using the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS, Dörnyei, 2009), the qualitative study foregrounds the cultural and relational aspects of the self system in understanding language learning motivation. Results from semi-structured interviews suggest that parental expectations of children's English learning exhibit a duality characterized by the hope that their children will become successful members of the globalized world and a belief that English learning is a basic responsibility for their children. Adolescent language learners' and their parents' actual selves, including their identification with societal roles and social obligations, mediate between parents' investments in their children's English education and teenage learners' perceived obligations to meet parental expectations. The paper concludes by suggesting further research on parental expectations and the development of global selves, and on the synergized effect of language learners' actual selves and future self-guides in motivating language learning.

Keywords: EFL, L2 Motivational Self System, obligations, parents, adolescents

Introduction

Over the past decade, research into second language (L2) motivation has focused its inquiries on language learners' self-concepts in order to understand motivational dispositions (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Studies based on the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS, Dörnyei, 2009), for example, have investigated learners' relationships with their imagined future selves, discrepancies between future and current selves, and the generation of motivation. The fundamental hypothesis of the L2MSS is that language learners' imagined future selves, together with their L2-related visions, energize their learning behaviors. More specifically, if an individual wants to interact confidently with international others, the identity of a fluent L2 user can act as a powerful motivator to reduce the gap between their here-and-now present-self state and their ideal end state.

In a Confucian-influenced society such as Taiwan, language learners' motivation to learn English is further complicated by pressure to honor one's family and show filial piety (Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005; Warden & Lin, 2000). Recognizing the importance of English proficiency to educational success and social mobility, parents in Taiwan allocate a significant portion of household expenditure to their children's English learning. The formation or development of Taiwanese teenage learners' identities in learning English, therefore, may be simultaneously influenced by the self-images they hold in imagined

future contexts and the culturally endorsed values of studying English as a duty and obligation to their parents.

It is against this backdrop that this study explores the motivations of Taiwanese adolescent learners to learn English. Adopting the L2MSS model as a frame of reference, a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was conducted among secondary school students and their parents. The aim is to explore the interplay of the students' motivational selves and their parents' expectations, with a special focus on both the learners' and their parents' identified perceptions of English learning as a duty and obligation.

Literature Review

The L2 Motivational Self System

In his L2MSS framework, Dörnyei (2009) repositions L2 motivation as an internal process of self-identification. The origins of the L2MSS are the psychological theories of self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The fundamental premise of possible selves is that individuals have an actual self and a vision of who they can become in the future. One's conceptualization of the future (i.e. possible self) functions as a self-guide to channel motivation and explains how learners move from their present state to their desired future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Dörnyei developed three core constituents in his L2MSS framework: *ideal L2 self*, *ought-to L2 self*, and *L2 learning experience*. The ideal L2 self is reflected by learners' idealized visions of the future and represents the L2-specific attributes that one would ideally like to possess in becoming a proficient L2 user. The complementary ought-to L2 self responds to external motives often concerning the perceived expectations of significant others and embodies the attributes that one feels obliged to possess in connection with L2 learning. The L2 learning experience consists of situated motives relating to the immediate learning context as well as accumulated past and current experiences of language learning success (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29).

In the L2MSS, the centrality of the ideal L2 self has been demonstrated in past studies, particularly with adult L2 learners (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). A strong ideal L2 self has been shown to lead to language learning engagement and success across wide sociocultural settings (e.g., Henry, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Lamb, 2012; Papi & Teimouri, 2012; You & Dörnyei, 2016), and the converging empirical evidence of the ideal L2 self as a substantive motivator has further encouraged pedagogical intervention studies which have implemented visualization techniques to develop and strengthen learners' ideal L2 selves (e.g., Chan, 2014; Magid & Chan, 2012). The determinant influence of the L2 learning experience has also been reported, particularly from research examining adolescents' self-concepts and language learning motivation. Cross-sectional surveys focusing on language learners' age, for example, have shown that young language learners' experience with L2 learning contributes more to the criterion measures than that of their adult counterparts (Kormos & Csizér, 2008; You & Dörnyei, 2016).

While the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience are validated by empirical investigation, the study of the ought-to L2 self as a motivator for learning is the least straightforward and therefore least theorized. Past survey studies have excluded the ought-to L2 self due to questionable reliability coefficients (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Lamb, 2012). Studies which have included the ought-to self have found its motivational effects to be largely insignificant (e.g., Kim, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009). Qualitative inquiry offering a contextualized picture of learners' experiences and beliefs associated with the development of the ought-to self is also scarce. In explaining the ambivalent role of the ought-to dimension, researchers have suggested that variations of sociocultural contexts may contribute to differing perceptions of social expectations (Kim & Kim, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009); moreover, the diverse conceptualization of the ought-to L2 self has led to calls for not only the

reconceptualization of this core construct, but also a reexamination of the L2MSS framework itself (Hessel, 2015; Lanvers, 2016; Thompson & Vásquez, 2015).

Viewing Possible Selves in Context: Actual Self and Societal Obligations

While the L2MSS perspective has occupied firm ground in the landscape of L2 motivation research, concerns remain as to the conceptual ambiguities of the core constituents (e.g., the ought-to L2 self) as well as the potential of extending the theoretical base to incorporate socioculturally specific motivational constructs. One such concern is the exploration of the nature of language learners' actual selves in relation to the influences of social interactions (Mercer, 2011; Taylor, 2014). Though basing its origin on self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), which capitalizes on the generation of motivation through reducing perceived gaps between the actual and ideal self, the L2MSS does not explicate or encompass the actual self as its central basis. Actual self is defined by Higgins (1987) as the representation of the attributes that an individual or others believes he/she actually possesses in the present (p. 320). In other words, an individual's current attributes—his or her emotions, values, beliefs, and self-recognition—are the means by which motivational behaviors are compelled through a discrepancy between future and current states. L2MSS research to date has largely taken an interest in the theorized effect of the ideal L2 self, but rarely with reference to the kind of person an individual believes he/she actually is (Taylor, 2014, p. 99).

Furthermore, as the self is socially conditioned and contingent on an individual's milieu (Markus & Nurius, 1986), one's actual self or perception of what is socially acceptable in given relational contexts is developed during interaction with and integration into diverse relational groups (Taylor, 2014). Through the internalization of social values, one's sense of self or beliefs about perceived cultural norms, acceptable behaviors, or desirable goals can be seen to emerge not from within the individual but from the interaction of the individual with others (Lamb, 2013).

Incorporating a relational perspective into the exploration of current self-concepts to explain the construction of future self-guides is a rarely charted research area. To date, Taylor (2013) is one of the few researchers who has explicitly focused on the relational impacts of social interaction on the actual self. With adolescent Romanian English learners, Taylor (2013) used a mixed-method approach to study the learners' selves in relation to their families, friends, teachers, and classmates. In addition to finding that learners' self-displays in each relational context did not parallel with what they believed about themselves as language learners (i.e. their actual selves), Taylor called for further research on "the multiplicity of selves that individuals may experience in their varied social interactions" (2014, p. 92). Another study which examined language learners' actual selves with respect to social networks was conducted by Huang, Hsu, and Chen (2015) in Taiwan. Drawing on insights from indigenous psychology (i.e. Confucianism), Huang et al. (2015) applied the construct of social role obligations to explain the motivational profiles of Taiwanese L2 and L3 learners—that is, the extent to which learners identify with particular societal roles and the socially defined qualities or behaviors inherent within them (Chen, Wang, Wei, Fwu, & Hwang, 2009; Hwang, 2012). An individual within a Confucian relationalist society is commonly expected to pursue socially valued goals in a network that offers little freedom of personal choice. If life goals are determined by negotiating with significant others and pursued following societally defined criteria, the individual is perceived as fulfilling his or her obligations. In their survey investigation, Huang et al. (2015) examined the predictive effects of learners' future L2 self-images and their social identities on L2 (English) and L3 (German, Japanese, French, or Korean) learning motivation. Results from 1,132 college students showed that Taiwanese language learners have unique motivational characteristics that are mediated by their identification with the societal role of being a student. The study showed how language learners' beliefs about their current identities and the socioculturally influenced aspects of their actual selves interacted with their language-related self-guides to generate motivation.

Parental Expectations, L2 Motivation, and L2 Selves

In the realm of L2 motivation, parents' beliefs about the importance of learning a foreign language, their effort to help with language homework, and their financial support or verbal encouragement of children's language learning have been researched as potential antecedents to motivation. Age and regional differences aside, past studies have confirmed that parents can influence, whether positively or negatively, young learners' L2 learning motivation (e.g., Fan & Williams, 2010; Iwaniec, 2014; Zhang & Kim, 2013). In past L2MSS-based research, (perceived) parental expectations have been studied as an element subsumed under the ought-to self and often portrayed as prevention and avoidance oriented. In these studies, parental expectations have been associated with academic performance, career prospects, and social positions. For example, You and Dörnyei's (2016) survey study in China reported that parental expectations were significantly associated with university English majors' devotion to language learning. These parents saw English proficiency as having a direct impact on their children's careers; therefore, they had high demands of their children's English learning. Similarly, Magid (2009) reported that parental expectations had a greater impact on the ought-to selves of university learners than on those of junior high school learners because university students felt more pressure to meet parental expectations in both the academic and career domains. In Jiang and Dewaele (2015), changes in immediate learning contexts, such as the timing of important examinations, interacted with parental expectations to influence the fluctuation of students' ought-to L2 selves.

Extending the concept of identification with social role obligations to parent-child relations and English learning, culturally endorsed duties may complicate Taiwanese adolescents' English learning selves and motivation. The socially defined and reinforced criteria in Confucian-influenced societies suggest that parents must do their best to nurture and provide for their children. In return, children show their filial obedience by fulfilling their parents' expectations (Hwang, 2012). Such values may explain why these parents invest considerable time and money in their children's English education and have high demands of their children's English proficiency (Magid, 2009; Wei, 2011). With the escalating importance of English to academic success, parents may feel duty bound to support their children's education, while adolescent English learners too recognize their responsibility to make an effort in their studies.

Thus far, very little research has involved both language learners and their parents or investigated how parents' expectations and their identification with certain social roles and obligations influence their adolescent children's English learning selves.

The Present Study

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to examine the motivational selves of a group of Taiwanese teenage English learners and their parents' expectations of them. To examine the participants' personal understanding of English learning and their expectations thereof, semi-structured interviews and content analyses were employed. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What expectations do Taiwanese parents have of their adolescent children's English learning and academic achievement? How do teenage learners perceive their parents' expectations?
2. How do the parents' expectations of their adolescent children's English learning influence the nature of the learners' ideal English selves and ought-to English selves?

Method

The Research Site

The study was undertaken in a private comprehensive high school located in a rural and coastal district in northern Taiwan. The school has a junior high, a senior high, and a vocational school branch. The junior high branch of the school is well regarded within the area, but is not particularly famous or elite. Though mixed, the socioeconomic background of the students is predominantly middle class. Ninety percent of the students in the school have computers and internet access at home. On a weekly basis, the students have 5 to 6 hours of English courses covering the national curriculum guidelines and 2 hours of English listening and speaking targeting everyday conversation.

Participants

To recruit the participants, the researcher first obtained consent from English instructors at the junior high school branch to observe their classes and recruit potential participants. Nine students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9) and their parents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7) from four intact classes volunteered. The students' ages ranged from 13 to 17. Five of them were from the 9th grade, two from the 8th, and two from the 7th. Before entering junior high, these students had 4 to 6 years of English instruction from formal schooling, depending on what was offered at their primary schools. In addition to mainstream learning, all except one student (S8) had additional English education from tutors, private institutes, or bilingual kindergartens in their preschool or primary years. S8 had regular lessons at home with his mother, a former English instructor at a cram school. Students' test scores and grades from the previous academic year were collected for reference. Compared with students in the same year, three students (S2, S6, and S8) could be considered high achievers, five students (S3, S4, S5, S7, S9) fell somewhere in the middle, and one student (S1) appeared to be a lower achiever.

The parents of the nine participating students were also interviewed. Seven parents participated, including two males and five females. P2 is the mother of S2 and S3, while P3 is the father of S4 and S5. The parents are in their thirties or forties and work in a variety of fields. Four of the parents have a college degree, two completed senior high school and one completed junior high school. To obtain an estimation of the parents' English proficiency level, mock General English Proficiency Tests (GEPTs) were distributed to the parents to complete. Except for P6, who majored in English in college and passed the intermediate GEPT, the rest of the parents found the elementary-level GEPT to be difficult and were thus considered to have beginner-level English.

Interviews and Data Analysis

The interviews, lasting about 60 to 90 minutes each, were semi-structured and conducted in a one-to-one, face-to-face format. At the onset of the interviews, the participants were asked to discuss their (a) attitudes and reasons for studying English, (b) previous and current English learning experiences, (c) resources and uses for English learning, (d) expectations regarding English learning, and (e) future career, study, or travel plans. The participants addressed these broad themes, with the interviewer probing for further relevant information by asking follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, the participants' first language, and audio was recorded for verbatim transcription.

After being transcribed, the interview files were coded following Corbin and Strauss's (2008) open, axial, and selective methods. Applying the open coding procedures, key words and phrases relating to recurrent topics were identified through recursive readings. Subsequently, axial coding was carried out through selecting frequently occurring codes and establishing salient categories by finding themes and patterns between the codes and clarifying the relations between the categories. In order to answer the

research questions, participants' references pertaining to the elicited categories were compared, contrasted, and synthesized, with a particular focus on evidence of (a) parents' and students' attitudes towards parental expectations and English learning as a duty and obligation, and (b) students' motivational selves, including their ideal English selves and ought-to English selves (i.e., selective coding and theoretical sampling). Questions used for the semi-structured interviews and emerged coding categories are presented in the Appendix.

Results

The Formation of a Global Identity

Parental expectations of globalized English

Throughout the interviews, the parents were unequivocal about English as a means of success in the globalized world, its superior status over other academic subjects, and its permeation into career opportunities and social standing. Though English is rarely used in daily life for most of the Taiwanese population, the parents claimed that internationalization has accelerated the influence of English in Taiwan. They unanimously indicated that, living in a globalized world, "one cannot escape from English" (P4), and it has become increasingly demanding to be a "multilingual who can communicate with people from around the world" (P5).

The parents' perspective of English as the international language resembles the reportedly strong sense of English as the *de facto* lingua franca prevalent in countries such as Japan (Butler, 2007), Korea (Park & Abelman, 2004), and China (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). Such views may be a reflection of the dominant role English occupies in the education system (Chen & Hsieh, 2011) as well as Taiwan's changing cultural and ethnic landscape over the past two decades. To cope with internationalization, Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) has made English a compulsory subject from the primary level onwards (MOE, 2006); this was taken by P1 and P5 as evidence that English is the passport to global participation. Similarly, P4 and P6 explained how English is an important subject at every transitional stage of education and is adopted as a graduation benchmark at the tertiary level (Pan, 2011), illustrating its importance in the international job market. The government's education policies are themselves powerful messages legitimizing the instrumentalist approach to language (Wee, 2008), giving English dominance over other academic subjects.

The parents' beliefs about the determinant role of English in the multicultural context of Taiwan seem to be further reinforced by a perceived increase in foreign contact, though this does not necessarily lead to extended use of the language. Six of the seven parents made this connection when discussing English use in their daily life. Over the past two decades, the number of foreign permanent residents, foreign visitors, and international students has increased substantially (Chou, Roberts, & Ching, 2012; National Immigration Agency, 2017; Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation & Communications, 2017). While the chances of foreign or intercultural contact have increased, uses of English for the parents in this study remain limited to short exchanges when traveling abroad and brief media-based exposure, such as songs, movies, and TV. Despite such rare usage, the seemingly more globalized sociocultural context in Taiwan, along with the demand from the education system, was interpreted by the parents as evidence of the ineluctable nature of globalized English.

When discussing expectations of their children's English learning, instead of focusing on achievements in the academic domain, the parents placed greater emphasis on communicative ability on the international scene. This may be related to their hopes regarding their children's future. Five of the seven parents were explicit about the importance of internationalization to their children's future careers: P1 and P2 expressed hopes for their children to work in foreign companies, P3 and P5 talked about their children expanding the family business to include international services, and P7 indicated that studying abroad

would be the next step in her child's development. The remaining two parents, while respecting their children's academic and career plans, stressed the need for them to acquire English as a prerequisite for global citizenship.

In witnessing the rapid globalization of the past decade and contrasting this with their monolingual life experiences, these parents had strong expectations for their children to become "world citizens" or "members of the international community" (P5). This notion was repeatedly articulated by all the parents. In fact, they saw the frequent exposure to and use of English as key contributors to internationalization and the main criteria to becoming legitimate world citizens. P6, for instance, commented, "To be internationalized, one has to use English. If my child does not speak English often, he simply cannot be considered a citizen of the world." Opportunities for intercultural communication, an appreciation of multicultural diversity, sensitivity and adaptivity to other cultures, and responsibility as a global citizen received only rudimentary attention from P3, though he acknowledged they could not be developed until basic communicative competence in English was acquired.

Teenage learners' ought-to and ideal English selves

The conviction that English is the global standard of literacy has an influence on parent-child interactions and adolescent students' self-development, especially in terms of their ought-to L2 self. All the parents would impress the communicative and functional aspects of the language at home. This was done by frequently discussing possible scenarios or sharing with their children their own successes and failures in using English, starting from a very young age. The parents' purposeful advocacy of the value systems embedded in acquiring functional English became apparent when students discussed how their self-expectations largely conformed the expectations of their parents. Every student described in detail the consequences for their academic and professional prospects if they did not persist in learning English. S4, referring to conversations with his father, explained:

I will definitely need to achieve a basic level of English in the future, because no matter what I do, I will need those skills. My father keeps on telling me that I'll be like an illiterate if I don't know any English. He always uses playing video games as an example. The manuals and the instructions are all in English... I can't even play video games if I don't know English, and I love to play video games! And, so yes... Of course I should be studying English. I need it.

S4's father guided his son to contemplate a feared image of the self. This image has been reinforced and made more lucid through constant reminders and may very likely have initiated the emergence of S4's avoidance-oriented ought-to self. Incidences such as these, in which parents warn their children about missed opportunities, were described by the students as 'frequent' (S1, S4, S5, S7, S8), 'constant' (S3, S6, S9), or 'everyday' (S2), and the possible scenarios span across the personal, academic, and professional domains. S1 explained how his mother had suggested English would be necessary in job interviews:

In the future, no matter which career I choose, I will need to have a certain level of English proficiency in order to pass the company tests and the interviews. My mother says that I will need to do my interviews in English, and in the interviews I will need to introduce my own professional skills in English... She tells me that I may not find a good job if my English is not good enough...I may be an outcast from future society.

In framing their English learning goals, a strong sense of ought-to self was intertwined with the students' expectations, derived from their own aspirations, parental endorsements, and societal demands, which converged towards an awareness of the role of English as a medium for becoming a globally involved self. These findings reflect those of Dörnyei (2005), in which the use of English is associated

with a “globalized citizen identity” (p. 97). With multiple and probably competing possible selves in adolescent learners’ limited “working self-concept” (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the mental imagery of becoming a functioning English user in a globalized world was repetitively activated through parent–child conversations regarding future-oriented self-conceptions. The parents shared with their teenage children an imagined future community in which English is indispensable. Such imagined communities, however, may not necessarily reflect reality, as “increased multilingualism in local communities actually creates speech situations counter to the idea of English as a shared language” (Kubota & McKay, 2009, p. 596).

Compared with the more elaborate conceptualizations of their ought-to self-guides, the students’ idealized English selves were still inconsistent and speculative in terms of their future academic/professional plans. However, when the students were invited to envisage their future language-speaking selves, their responses revealed strong hopes of becoming global citizens. Five of the nine students imagined interacting and befriending people from around the world and conversing with others from diverse cultures and countries. Two expressed similar hopes, but were unsure of the contexts in which English could be used. These scenarios were commonly associated with conversations the students had had with their parents. S7 gave the most detailed description:

I would really like to have more chances to use this international language with people from all different countries... In a few years, I will be talking with people from maybe Japan or Korea... My mother said that since I love pop culture from Japan and Korea so much, I can share my interests with friends from there, maybe talk to them about pop culture in Taiwan... I can say [in English], “Hey, do you know Jay Chu? A famous singer from Taiwan?”... When my friends come to Taiwan, for concerts maybe, I can show them around. Or I can travel to Korea for the concerts. My mother said that I can do that when I am older... Wow, that would be so much fun! Like international fan clubs, [where] fans from different places can discuss how to support [their] idols.

In these conversations with her daughter, S7’s mother appealed to her hoped-for self, conversing in those imagined communities in which she wished to socialize. Imagination is central to connecting possible selves to envisioned language use contexts (Ryan & Irie, 2014), and imaginary training strategies can guide language learners to envision their successful future selves and in turn strengthen their ideal L2 self (Chan, 2014; Magid & Chan, 2012). These conversations between S7 and her mother afforded her the chance to project herself into the future, constructing favorable images of herself as an L2 user (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). For the three students (S2, S6, S7) whose descriptions of their future selves were comparatively more elaborate, their parents reportedly made more of an effort to connect their personal interests and past experiences to their abilities in English (e.g. S2 discussed how his mother suggested that his dream of traveling around the world could be realized by being a language teacher; S6 talked about how her mother gave her the idea of becoming a translator because of her hobby of watching YouTube videos). In discussing the process of internalization and the motivational effects of ought-to and ideal selves, Kim (2009) pointed out that “an L2 learners’ ideal L2 self needs to be aligned to the learners’ life experiences in a variety of communities” (p. 291). These conversations, if conducted with learner-contingent imagined contexts in mind, are likely to scaffold a young learner’s understanding of his or her personal reasons for studying English, so that they may envisage and expand their self-representation.

Although befriending foreigners during travel, in work places, or in personal areas was the only aspect of future life the students were able to explain in any level of detail, and although their idealized future selves lacked definition, their responses regarding their future selves (both ought-to and ideal) gravitated towards desires for multicultural interaction and images of globally involved English-speaking selves, a vision that may have been regularly primed and socially mediated through their parents’ purposeful encouragement. More specifically, in the present study, each student’s sense of global identity seemed to be constructed and transformed through interactions with his or her parents (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Culturally Influenced, Self-perceived Role Obligations

Parents' actual selves and expectations

Unlike the Indonesian rural parents interviewed by Lamb (2009), who held “fatalistic attitudes” towards their children’s English education despite recognizing its importance to their future (p. 22), the parents in the present study, residing in rural neighborhoods and coming from not particularly elite educational or socioeconomic backgrounds, demonstrated proactive engagement in their children’s English learning. To nurture their children’s English skills, the parents would regularly purchase a variety of learning materials for use at home. Six of the seven parents (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7) ensured early access to English instruction for their children by sending them to bilingual kindergartens and immersion programs, and/or hired English tutors while their children were at primary school. English learning support was not limited to household expenditure: six of the seven parents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7) reported continued monitoring of and deep involvement with their children’s English learning, even into their secondary years.

In addition to believing in globalized English as the gateway to internationalization, culturally induced values about role obligations emerged as another factor that could explain parents’ deep involvement in their children’s education (e.g., Bond, 2010; Hwang, 1999; Oishi & Sullivan, 2005). In the analysis, every parent considered creating an optimal English learning environment to be “what one has to do when being a parent” (P3). The parents believed that it was their chief responsibility to ensure their children’s success, not only within the academic domain but also in future international contexts, including their occupational prospects and daily social exchanges. Helping her child to cope with the future globalized world, P6 explained, involves a strong sense of obligation:

English is needed for traveling or for future work. It is needed to do business. Even if you stay only in Taiwan, you will need good English proficiency to navigate online, to communicate with foreigners who come here... We do our best to help him. My child’s [learning] is why we work hard and earn a decent living, so he can learn more and have better English proficiency.

For some parents, providing the best environment and resources possible for their children’s English learning is not only their basic responsibility but also an important life goal requiring dedicated support and sacrifice. P1 shared how, given these obligations, her own needs and aspirations were negligible:

The primary role of being a parent is to educate my child. This is a highly competitive world. English is a required subject at school and you need English in every aspect of life... At this stage, it is our responsibility to offer them support in learning English. The parents are not the focus, and I don’t dare think about myself that much now.

Such devotion and unselfish orientation adheres to the basic duty defined by the parent–child relations in Confucian-heritage societies (e.g., Park & Kim, 2006).

The parents’ expectations of their children seem to exhibit a unique duality characterized both by high hopes of their children becoming successful members of the globalized world and by their beliefs about English learning as their children’s basic duty. The parents explicitly indicated that they considered learning to be “a student’s only job” (P4) and that “the children’s part is to make an effort in learning” (P7), adopting an attitude that is core to beliefs about social obligation, whereby everyone should duly perform their duty within the relational network (e.g., Bond, 2010). As P4 put it, “As long as my child has any interest and intention to learn English, I will do my job and continue my support. Her duty, then, is to take care of English learning.” P2, P5, and P6 echoed this belief that is the child’s basic and inalienable responsibility. As P5 indicated, “I can help my children to learn English. It is my obligation. Studying, then, should be his duty. I cannot learn English for him... We each have our own part [to play].”

Students' actual selves and obligations

Just as parents consider their support a precondition of their children's success in English learning, the adolescent learners' perceived social obligations reciprocate the support they receive. Although not every teenager explicitly expressed a perception of English learning as their duty, they all indicated that the main reason why they *should* do their best to learn English was because of their substantial parental support. Rather than associating parental expectations with a fear of sanctions or punishments, some of the students viewed the deep parental involvement in their English learning as a sign of warmth and care, while others offered largely positive comments expressing gratitude, respect, and most of all a sense of indebtedness (Chen, Wu, & Yeh, 2016; Yeh, 2003). The reciprocal nature of this relationship was best illustrated by S1:

I think it would be great if I could, at least, make [my mother] happy, and so I try my best to learn English well... I guess if parents want their children to learn English well, they need to provide help and resources. This is mutual, I think. Without my parents' help, it would be difficult for me to find the resources needed to learn English. I would be on my own... Now that I do have these [resources], I'd like to make the best of it.

Learning English, for seven of the nine students, was seen as a shared and socially important goal both parents and students achieve together. In fact, as opposed to the avoidance-based orientations associated with the ought-to self, a promotion-oriented interpretation of parents' expectations surfaced. S8, for example, explained how her mother's expectations of her English learning were not entirely external: "I am fulfilling my duty if I study English well... I don't think having good English is just my mother's goal and aspiration. It is mine too. After all, I do have filial piety and a reverence for my parents." S6 too commented how he would like to learn English *for* his mother: "My mother does not have good English skills and does not want her children to have broken English. I think by learning English well I would ... make our dreams come true." For these students, making an effort was associated with their own moral obligations as students or as sons and daughters, an interdependent self-construal and behavioral pattern commonly reported in Confucian societies (e.g., Fwu, Wei, Chen, & Wang, 2014). In contrast with past L2MSS research which focused on the motivational power of future selves, distinctive in this group learners is the prominent role played by the mutual responsibilities of parents and children, who view English learning as a shared familial/societal goal in addition to an individual's future vision.

Discussion

By examining Taiwanese adolescent learners' and their parents' perceptions of learning English as a duty and obligation using a qualitative approach, this inquiry foregrounds the relational aspects of the self system in understanding language learning motivation. Broadly, the study suggests that the learners' and their parents' actual selves, including their identification with societal roles and beliefs about social obligations, mediate between the parents' investment in their children's English education and the learners' English learning selves. Parents' expectations of their children were conveyed through extensive support and deep involvement on the home front. Further, the students' perceived social obligations intertwined with the more dominant self-guide, the ought-to L2 self, to act as critical motivational forces. The interaction between the current self and future self-guides in generating motivated language learning is one of this study's contributions to the field of L2 motivation.

In accordance with many past studies which have reported parents' positive disposition towards English, the Taiwanese parents interviewed in this study recognized the importance of English to their children's future material resources and social capital. The parents also placed immense focus on their children's international orientation and their prospects of becoming global citizens. The expectation for

their children to participate in the international arena was associated with the need for them to be effective users of English in their professional and everyday lives. These expectations resonate with what Dörnyei (2009) termed *world English identity* and with Yashima's (2002) concept of *international posture*. From these perspectives, language learners' motivation, in learning a lingua franca such as globalized English, is to join an international community of English speakers from multilingual or multicultural backgrounds.

In the present study, the parents singled out international communication as the primary expectation of their children's English learning, and this expectation was conveyed to their children through their efforts to initiate learning discourses, create opportunities for interaction, and expand their children's exposure to English. These learning opportunities and discourses started as early as kindergarten and seem to have had an impact on the learners as teenagers, as evident from their favorable attitudes towards interacting with English speakers from around the world. Such an upbringing may very likely help the young learners envision themselves as part of an international community. While past research has acknowledged that favorable attitudes towards the global community solidify students' visions of their possible selves (e.g., Iwaniec, 2014; Yashima, 2009), the present study further suggests that Taiwanese parents' proactive role in English communication may shape young learners' goals and their potential to envisage their membership in an international English-speaking community. Though the parents' understanding of internationalization is restricted to the frequent use of English, their view of English as more than a school subject may nurture their children's readiness to interact with speakers from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, thereby laying the groundwork for their children to see the personal and functional relevance of English in the future.

One's construction of the possible self cannot be separated from the actual self. The findings suggest that one's current self, including beliefs about one's societal roles and obligations, lies at the heart of English learning motivation. In the absence of a stable idealized self, young learners' investment in English learning is a direct response to the abundant parental support they receive. The findings suggest there is a relational orientation to effort investment, both in supporting and learning English, as evidenced by parents' enduring support and teenage learners' growing identification with the vision that their parents have for them (e.g. S4's realization of the necessity of English after his fathers' explanation).

English learning seems to be a collaborative goal, achieved by fulfilling the reciprocal expectations that family members have for each other. For the parents, personal aspirations are secondary to the socially defined obligations inherent in being a parent. For the teenage learners, the perceived reciprocal norms and intergenerational responsibilities probably lead to a unique form of motivation involving an autonomous wish to accomplish their goals *for* their parents. Seeing English as being of high social value, the young learners and their parents revealed patterns of effort that were driven by socially constructed identity and motivation. In contrast to previous literature which focuses on the impact of the ideal L2 self and L2 experience on young learners' L2 motivation, the actual self—or an identification as someone's son or daughter and an internalized sense of obligation—emerges as a strong influence in explaining their desire to invest effort.

Of the two self-guides, the young English learners' ought-to L2 self was found to be more dominant than their yet-to-be-consolidated idealized self-images. One explanation for this could be found in the nature of their parents' expectations and the parents' efforts in impressing the ubiquity of English on their children. Through recurring messages at home about the value of English, the students were reminded of the discrepancy between their selves and the visions that their parents have for them, all of which is necessary for future self-guides to exert motivational forces and encourage subsequent learning behaviors (Dörnyei, 2009).

It is also possible that the actual self acts as an impetus in initiating and strengthening the ought-to self-guide. Driven by external sociocultural factors, the ought-to L2 self resembles the identification with social role obligations, both of which capture extrinsically sourced motivational forces. For possible selves to be effective, "they should feel congruent with important social identities" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 20). As social role obligations are a stable and integral part of Taiwanese teenage learners' current selves, their ought-to selves can be clearly delineated because beliefs about learning English have been subsumed to

their current social identity as sons and daughters who bare the responsibilities of parental expectations.

While the ought-to L2 self is commonly thought to be less internalized within the self system, because such future images are channeled by the pressure of conforming to social demands and avoiding negative consequences (Dörnyei, 2009), the students aligned their parental expectations and sense of obligation with their own personal values and aspirations (e.g., S8 explaining how she and her mother shared the same goal, and S6 fulfilling his mother's dreams for him). Culturally rooted beliefs about their societal role and inherent duties may have prepared the young English learners in the study to transform and internalize parental expectations, thereby shaping the development of a self-endorsed, aspirational ought-to self. While past L2MSS-based research has adopted varied definitions of the ought-to self (You & Dörnyei, 2016) and continues to expand the theoretical discussion of the construct, the findings in the present study suggest that various degrees of internalization refine the conceptualization of the ought-to self.

Conclusion

By interviewing both adolescent English learners and their parents, this enquiry reveals how language learners' beliefs about who they are as individuals in the present, their perceived duties and obligations towards societal roles, and the nature of their relations with significant others mediate the emergence of self-guides and language learning motivation. In explaining her person-in-context view of research motivation, Ushioda (2009) emphasizes the need to "understand second language learners as people, and as people who are necessarily located in particular cultural and historical contexts" (p. 216). It is demonstrated in the present study that being a language learner is only one facet of the students' identities, and their identities as sons and daughters as well as their parents' identification with societal role obligations contribute to their engagement with English learning. Given the vast complexity of the self-construct, this study highlights the cultural and relational aspects of the self in understanding the motivational capacity of an individual's identity.

It should be noted that the cases presented in this paper cannot be claimed to be universal to Confucian-influenced societies or individuals. Instead, they are illustrative of how co-constructed, culturally endorsed expectations and obligations play a salient role in one's motivation. Neither is it assumed that beliefs about expectations and obligations are static and unchangeable. It is likely that the dynamics of interaction and contextual variations bring about changes in individuals beliefs and behaviors over time.

The data from the present study suggests that the parents have created an environment which fosters beliefs about learning English for use in the international English-speaking community. The emergence of young English learners' global identity under parental guidance may be a fruitful research direction. Research into how parental expectations and support encourage the development of a full-fledged global self could be done in reference to understandings of the actual self as well as the dynamic changes in parental expectations and parent-child relations.

Given that parents have idealistic expectations of their children's achievements in English, equating learning English with gaining international and intercultural understanding becomes problematic (Kubota, 2002). In practical educational terms, language teachers can be involved in the formation of young English learners' global identities by eliciting discussions on the global presence of English. Classroom activities which encourage an interest in global affairs, improve international or transnational understanding, and provide opportunities for intercultural learning (Baker, 2012) may stimulate young English learners to project themselves as multilingual and globally active agents.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. This project was partially supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taiwan (105-2410-H-007-054).

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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

(a) Attitudes and reasons for studying English

Do you like learning English? Why? In your opinion, how important is learning English? How committed are you to learning English? What efforts have you made to improve your English? What is your goal for learning English?

(b) Previous and current English learning experiences

When did you start learning English? How are you learning English at primary schools? At junior high? Please share with me your memories of significant people or events related to your English learning.

(c) Resources and uses for English learning

What resources and materials do you use when learning English? How often do you use English?

(d) Future career, study, or travel plans

What is your expected English proficiency level? Please tell me about your ideal life in the future. Please imagine yourself in two years, five years, or ten years, after you have studied hard and succeeded in your goals, what are you doing? Or what can you do?

(e) Expectations regarding English learning

(For parents) What expectations do you have of your children's English learning? How do you help your children's English learning?

(For students) What do you think are your parents' views towards English learning?

Appendix B

TABLE B1
Coding of Interview Data

Theme 1: Formation of a global identity	
Categories	Sample codes
Parents' expectations towards their children's English learning (becoming globally involved)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic survival, necessity, competitive edge, internationalization, multilingual communication, English as an international language, world citizenship, communication competence
Vague explanations of future self-images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making friends with foreigners, conversing and interacting with people from other cultures/countries, fluency ● Conversations with parents, places/contexts of future use, personal interests/hobbies/aspirations
Prevention-based future selves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internationalization, future opportunities, survival skills, global involvement, English as an international language, passing exams ● Parental influences, consequences, missed opportunities, places/contexts/scenes of future use
Theme 2: Culturally influenced self-perceived role obligations	
Categories	Sample codes
Parents' expectations towards their children's roles (as students and as someone's children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inherent duty, being a diligent student, learning as obligation
Parents' perceived obligation to support English learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sacrifice, putting children first, parenting and life goals, providing for family, creating the best learning environment, resources and effort for learning ● Mutual obligations, what parents and children can do in English learning, <i>our</i> dreams
Students' promotion-oriented "shoulds"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being sons and daughters, not letting parents down, being a student in adolescence ● Reciprocal respect/responsibilities/actions, parental devotion/support, current and mutual goals, English learning <i>for</i> parents