MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER-RESEARCHER: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN POSSIBLE SELVES AND CONTEXT SYSTEMS

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Abstract
Research motivation is an essential element of teacher psychology. This paper attempts to disclose the variation in the possible self of English language teacher-researcher during the research process, and the evolution of his/her research motivation over one semester. For this purpose, a case study of teacher psychology was carried out with the author as a typical English language teacher-researcher. Three types of data were collected through a semester, namely, reflection journal, stimulated recall of student interview and stimulated recall of colleague discussion. Through person-in-context relational approach, the research data were subjected to thematic analysis. The results show that the teacher-researcher’s research motivation declined rapidly at the first month, and fluctuated in the next two months; through the semester, the teacher-researcher struggled to maintain reasonable views on time limitation, correct cognition on teaching, research and learning to teach, as well as effective interaction with students and colleges; the research motivation is enhanced by the dissonance between actual researcher self and ought-to researcher self, and the balance between actual teacher self and actual researcher self. The research results help language teacher-researchers to maintain psychological well-being.

Key words: Research Motivation, English Language, Teacher-Researcher, Possible Self, Person-In-Context Relational Approach, Teacher Psychology.

INTRODUCTION
Ever since Borg discussed teachers’ involvement in TESOL research, there have been a great number of researches on language teachers. Many of the researches focus on the external factors of their research engagement, such as whether they should take as much time as possible to do researches or to be focused on the teaching etc. (Borg, 2010; Liu & Borg, 2014). However, scant attention has been paid to the teachers’ psychology of research, such as their research motivation. Among a few researches on teachers’ research motivation, some scholars seek to examine two high school English teachers’ psychology of research in China. It is found out that the lack of research knowledge causes the disparity between actual self and ideal self of the teachers and handicaps the development of ENGLISH LANGAUGE teachers’ research motivation. There are few researches on ENGLISH LANGAUGE teachers with research knowledge. With a person-in-context motivation in Complex Dynamic Theory and possible selves concept in Self Discrepancy Theory and Language Teacher Self, the current study is aimed to inquire the following two questions about language teachers’ psychology (Yuan Sun, & Teng, 2016; Higgins, 1987).

1. How do ENGLISH LANGAUGE teacher-researcher possible selves change when they...
are doing research?

2. In what way does the teachers’ research motivation along with possible selves change and evolve over the whole semester?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The health of teachers’ psychology state is equal to if not more important than that of learners’ psychology state. It matters and may have an effect on their ultimate persistence in the profession of teaching. Recently, some researches on language teacher psychology has been published. However, the conceptualization of individual psychology is rather oversimplified and isolated. The study in this paper will generate context-sensitive, dynamic and complex insights to teachers’ motivation, which is an essential part of language teachers’ psychology state (Mercer, Oberdorfer, & Saleem, 2016).

The concept of motivation in language learning comes from Gardner’s Socio-educational Model of Language Learning in which he emphasizes that the primary factor in the model is motivation, which refers to a combination of efforts plus desire to achieve the goal of learning, additionally plus favorable attitudes towards learning (Gardner, 1985). Gardner, Dörnyei and their associates define motivation in language learning and pay special attention on its different aspects in the following years. No matter how the focuses change in the denotation and connotation of motivation, it is wildly accepted that motivation is “what drives a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action”. In a sense, motivation is the strength of initiative, which can trigger a person to decide, sustain and persist to do something (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

Recent studies have demonstrated that L2 Motivation Self System can explain a noticeable portion of variance in one’s efforts. Therefore, motivation is related to self-concept which includes individual self-knowledge, such as how the person sees him/herself. To put it in details, motivation is a situated, dynamic and “person-in-context relational” concept. In this perspective the focuses were put on the intentional agency of real people engaged in social relation and multiple contexts. The emphasis changes to the complexity and idiosyncrasy of a person’s motivation response to particular events and experiences in their life rather than the predictable and clear-cut relations. “Person-in-context relational view of motivation” holds that motivation emerges through the process by which people seek the meaning. Ushioda made a point that through the social engagement peoples’ motivations and identities emerge and develop in a dynamic and co-constructed process (Papi, 2010; Ushioda, 2011).

Ushioda (2015) further explored the concept of context from ecological perspective and complex perspective. She proposed that there is a dynamically evolving relationship between people and context, as each responds and adapts to the other. Through this process of co-adaptation, the learner necessarily becomes an integral part of context of the interaction. Ushioda then further extends the concept of context as a systematic background of various elements with which the focal elements interact or co-adapt with each other. So context refers to not only the external environment, but also something that is a mutually constitutive and co-adaptive relationship between internal and social-environmental elements, such as social identity.

The possible selves concept comes from Self Discrepancy Theory by Higgins. He defined three keys points of the concept of selves: the actual self, the ideal self; the ought-to-be self. The latter two refers to one’s expectations of themselves, such as some qualities one ideally or ought to possess. It is particularly important to stress that possible selves come from the current social environment and actual social experiences because people of nowadays are “unlikely to engage in the adoption, modification, maintenance, or abandonment of images in social isolation” (Marshall, Young, & Domene, 2006).

Markus and Nurius’s Possible Selves Theory and Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self-system are both linked to possible selves concept. They stress the impact of self-concepts on personal motivation. Dörnyei also focuses on the learner’s learning experience and learning attitudes (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Dörnyei, 2009).

During the education of language teachers, Kubanyiova, in keeping with possible selves concepts and L2 Motivational Self- system, proposes three keys of Language Teacher Self: the ideal language teacher self, the ought-to-be language teacher self, and the feared language
teacher self (Dörnyei, 2009). The first refers to language teachers’ identity goal and aspiration; the second refers to language teachers’ cognition of responsibility and obligation with regard to their work, mostly from the external pressures, such as school norms, students’ expectation, colleagues’ competition etc.; the third refers to someone that the teacher would become when he or she failed to achieve the first two.

Overall, based on the theories forementioned, it is hoped that this research will shed lights on how the teacher-researcher dynamic possible selves change over the whole semester and in what way language teachers’ research motivation evolve in such a context.

THE STUDY
Research context and participant
The current research is based on the author’s experience over one semester in one public university in Chongqing, China. Generally, in China, publish of research papers has been one essential path for career promotion for language teachers in tertiary institutions. If a language teacher intends to apply for a career promotion, he or she must engage in certain academic researches and the research paper must be published on magazines. In that way, most of ENGLISH LANGUAGE teachers tend to generate two different identities/elves: teacher and researcher, which means they must undertake the workloads of both identities.

In this context, I have two selves, as a classroom teacher of an English major class (28 students in total) and a researcher. The whole class students passed College Entrance Examination in 2018 and became first-grade students of the university. They took my Intensive Reading Class at their first year. The course is of 6 credits per semester, the highest among all the compulsory courses, and of 6 lessons per week. For the whole academic year, I have collected this class’ motivation data for China Ministry of Education Project Retrodictive and Longitudinal Studies of L2 Motivation from the Perspective of Dynamic Systems Theories. While I was collecting the data, I yet found some students’ responses provided certain new insights to my understanding of myself and my research motivation. I’ve decided to extend the data in the next semester.

As this paper centers on my research motivation, it is necessary to provide the brief introduction of myself. I got my doctoral degree of English Language & Literature in China in 2014. Since graduation, I have been working for the University of Chongqing. Owing to my research direction and my career, I am quite familiar with ENGLISH LANGUAGE education in China. I have published 11 articles about ENGLISH LANGUAGE teaching and teacher education and very eager to do more researches on English teaching.

Data collection and analysis
It is noticed that in a dynamic system, the interaction among different elements and the changes in timescale are vital (Verspoor, Lowie, & Van Dijk, 2008). Case study can provide in-depth, contextualized interpretation of the phenomenon of interest in the system. I choose myself as an example for research because of two reasons: by doing this I can get more complete data; I can get promoted during this process. When I collected and analyzed students’ data for my own Project, I always found that despite however delicate I designed the research, there still lack some data of what I planned to collect. Some students’ feedback/reaction upset me. For example, they are unwilling to show their true feelings on my teaching because they all are afraid of outraging me. With regard to myself, however, I can show my true feelings at any time. In order to ensure the validity and reliability, stimulated recalling when students get interviews and colleagues discuss are collected. In addition, I think teachers should continue to develop the further potentials of them in a comprehensive way. To pursue self-development, firstly I need to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of myself. To some degree, research about myself is a good trial. In this process, we can systematically explore what level a teacher can develop to. So I decided to throw myself into the research and face the constant inquiries. The auto ethnographic case study employed here can show a complexity of individual motivation, which would be an adequate tool to present my research motivation (Borg, 2016).

As my data collection is closely linked to my Project of students’ learning motivation, I have to introduce my research work and my teaching job here. During the semester, I met with my students three times a week. Two semi-structured interviews with students are...
conducted at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Every week students are required to write motivation journal in English as homework in my class. Sometimes I read their journals and feedback on their journals. Either of the interviews or writing of journals are obligatory and students are supposed to get involved in it voluntarily. A total of 20 students (about 2/3 of my class) participated in this project.

At the beginning of the second semester (March, 2019-July, 2019), I began to record reflection journal on my teaching and research. A total of 36 pieces were collected, four of which were deleted from the collected database because they have no relation to the research motivation. The rest are adopted, covering my feelings, beliefs, events, cognition, motivation (in my journal, I use “motivation” more informally, likening “desire”, “emotion” or something else. In the paper, the operative definition of “motivation” is different from them.) etc., all of which come from the workloads of my two identities. Stimulated recall is a good way to help identify the aspects of context that seems salient to the participants and thus help constrain the multitude of potential contextual factors to be considered in the analysis (Ushioda, 2015). The stimulated recall in the study is introduced as following.

By the frequent meetings with my class every week, I can draw some break time to ask them their need, motivation, learning strategies or others. Students, at the same time, can ask me some questions (In China, PRC., we do not have private offices in most universities, which means that we don’t have regular office time, and free space to interact with our students. So on most occasions, teachers have few chance to talk with students. Here, I often use break time between my lessons.). One impressive thing is that some of them ask about my motivation during my university life, which give me great stimulus to recall my actual self and ideal self. My main points have been recorded down in my journals. There are three other teachers of Intensive Reading for Grade One students. We sometimes discuss about students’ learning performance on QQ online. Their words often inspire me on my teaching and research. Some are recorded on my journal and some are on my notebook. The three types of data are triangulated to enhance the research validity.

All the data are analyzed through a qualitative inductive process. According to the introduction of thematic processing, firstly, I found out the frequent variables in the journals and simulated calls. Secondly, I summarized the related sentences of these variables based on motivation concepts. Thirdly, I combed down all the concepts and concluded several core elements. Fourthly, I analyzed all the core elements in the data.

Through the whole semester, some phenomena were identified in terms of research motivation. 1) The research motivation declined at the first month and fluctuated on the next two months. 2) A relatively stability of research motivation in the mid and late stage because the cognition on the teaching, research and the intention of learning to teach keeps changing. 3) The dissonances between the actual self and ought-to-be self as a researcher, and the balance between actual self as a teacher and the actual self as a researcher; these are the key catalysts for adapting research motivation and the intention of learning to teach. With reference on concepts of possible selves (Higgins, 1987), the changes and the core elements are further analyzed, which reveals the interactive relationship between motivation and different selves (e.g. “a teacher with an academic doctoral degree”; “a teacher with weak ability to teach”).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, we firstly introduce what motivates the author to engage in the research/project, and how the decline of research motivation and the temporary fluctuation happen in relation to different selves in the process of research. Reflective journal and stimulated recall are respectively marked by RJ and SC (The data used in the paper are all translated from Chinese into English.).

Motivation to engage in the research

I decided to do the research on students’ motivation because I joined in an Educational Ministry Project. I believe there’s a close connection between teacher learning and students learning, which is why I joined in the project. On the initial stage, I had high interest in this project and then turned this interest into a decision of engage myself in the Project despite of predicted difficulties.

I’m interested in research and reading. When all my minds and bodies involved into these activities, I feel extremely satisfied. ... Although
our universities do not have good conditions to do grounded research and qualitative study, I insist doing this. (RJ. 27/3/2019)

Through the whole semester, I was always reminded of my project when meeting our project members or being informed of some messages in our project QQ chat online, as I wrote in one reflection journal,

In today’s graduate thesis defense, I met Mr. X, the head of the Project. Frankly, I felt a little tired about my research and had stopped examine the data for 2 weeks. When I met him, he told me the project had to be postponed because the number of research publications was not enough. On hearing that, I felt unhappy because meeting him reminds me of my research. I must revitalize to continue in spite of my exhaustion. (RJ. 11/05/2019)

These occasional meetings or irregular discussions on the project happen frequently at any time, which give me instant impetus to go on my research. It is obligatory to satisfy my identity of a project participant, for whom the goal should be to try his or her best to do research/project. This is temporary, but it suggests that the identity of researcher is so influential and enduring. Actually, this ought-to researcher self is what I live up to. The motivation comes from the strong cognition of my research responsibility. In consistence with strong sense of researcher identity, high research motivation works.

Motivation declines in long term

In the first month, I was maintaining a high motivation. I had beautiful dreams on research and enjoy the process of it very much. During that period, I interviewed students for collecting research data. I found I was full of passion even if I feel tired.

Why do I do this research? I want to change the world and make the world better. Doing teaching research must be beneficial not only to students but to myself even to ENGLISH LANGUAGE education. ...I suddenly fell in love with interview although transcribing the interview is a little boring. I found students’ motivation can get improved after they received the interviews. The research is quite useful, isn’t it? (RJ. 12/04/2019)

However, in the mid-term and the end of term, my research motivation declines gradually. There were more negative words in journals, such as “pressure (RJ. 23/04/2019; RJ. 21/05/2019)”, “worry (RJ. 21/04/2019)”, “conflict (RJ. 16/04/2019)”, “dissatisfaction about the research (RJ. 01/06/2019)” etc. Some reflective journals revealed that the reasons are time limitation and the doubt of physical problems.

Tonight, I downloaded some text analysis of unit 10 and uploaded them to student autonomic learning website; then I gave remarks on some students’ online grammar homework. The online homework system was incredibly slow, but I have to finish all of the work in time. However, I haven’t read students’ journal writing until now. How busy I am! Once the term begins, my time and energy are all occupied by teaching job. Although I do the investigation on students’ motivation in the period of teaching, the point is not on teaching. It seems that there is a loose relation between teaching and research. (RJ. 16/04/2019)

I know clearly that I am full of energy to the class at the beginning of the term. Every day I save time to read research materials or analyze the research data. However, when it comes into April, I found out I lose the interest on the research gradually. I only felt very exhaustive every day. It is possible that I had physical problems because I was so easy to get tired. (RJ. 22/04/2019)

These suggest that I can feel my negative motivation on research in the mid-term. From then on, such feeling has never diminished. Sometimes it is better, but sometimes it is worse. The reasons are mainly two types: time limitation and physical problem (suspecting). Comparatively, time limitation is more obvious.

Time, as one vital contextual element, is relevant to my motivational development. Through the semester, this theme appears 8 times in RJs. At the last time, it was pointed out that it is the absolute reason why I was in such a tense.

In fact, I think the main problem is that a qualitative study takes a lot of time. This kind of study lasts too long and involves too much data. I am so tired about the work. It’s hard for me to maintain a higher motivation through the whole semester. And you must do some teaching work, such as mentoring the graduates’ theses and reviewing students’ assignments, because these are your job, which are supposed to take most of your time. (RJ. 17/06/2019)

Apparently, the heavy teaching work and qualitative study are conflicting. Time, an
external factor, has a big influence on my motivation as a researcher. At the same time, this external system interplays with my individual internal system. From the perspective of Complex Theory, it is more important how the external context interconnects with the internal sub-systems and how the individual responds to the external context. These internal contexts encompass my cognition and my have-to-do obligation in my awareness. Their interconnecting relation leads to a time context motivational ecosystem. If any component changes my motivation will be affected.

**Motivation fluctuation in short term**

With the dynamic and complex interaction between the following three types of external and internal systems, my research motivation has been experiencing a series of fluctuations. The systems are time system, cognition system, and have-to-do obligation system respectively. The first is an external system and the other two are internal ones.

**Time system**

Time is the most significant system affecting my motivation. At times I complain about the short of time because I don’t have enough of it to devote into my research. But at other times I try to find the problems on myself for not using the time in a more efficient way. These lead to the fluctuations of my research motivation.

My time apart from that for work has always been scattered. The only way that enables me of enough time to do my research is to focus all of my scattered time on the research. Why didn’t I think of this point in the past? Or I put the research on the back burner. I am quite clear that doing research is Ph.D. work, one essential working aim. (RJ. 28/05/2019)

Besides time, there are some other systems extrinsically affecting my research motivation, such as “academic training class (RJ. 14/04/2019)”, “research materials (RJ. 26/03/2019)”, and “my students and colleagues (RJ. 19/03/2019)”. These systems appear less than the time system in the data. My cognition and have-to-do obligation are always interconnected with time system.

**Cognition system**

During the whole semester, the cognition context I was in affect me a lot, which exhaust me at some time, but rekindle my motivation at other time.

Teacher cognition includes many elements. In Borg’s words, they are what teacher know, think, and believe and the relationship of these mental constructs to what teachers do in teaching. As for me, my belief in the relation between teaching, research and teacher learning has been constantly changing. When my low motivation appears, I know one of reasons is I underestimated the relationship among the above three kinds of jobs. At the beginning, I am very confident that I can achieve a very good balance between these three jobs.

I wrote back to students’ motivation journal. In this way, students can practice writing skills and learn to express their ideas in English. At the same time, the teacher can be familiar with students and their writing capabilities. According to their actual needs, the teacher can make some adaptations in teaching. In this way, our teacher and students can benefit each other. (RJ. 27/03/2019)

Later on, my resistance to their close relation was radical.

Although I did the investigation on students’ motivation in the period of teaching, the point was not on teaching. It seems that the relation between teaching and research is actually rather loose. (RJ. 16/04/2019)

In the following days, sometimes I became frustrated, at other time I was full of passion. To be frank, most of the impact came from the teaching job. In the mid-term, I felt frustrated because students made a low evaluation on my teaching, which made me doubt about my ability of teaching research. At the end of the term, when reading my colleague’s complaints who is also an Intensive Reading teacher, I disaffiliated, showed passion on teaching and research, and wrote down.

I want to continue with the teaching of students because of my research. Even if long stay together will make students lose interest in my class, I still insist on my research. I want to know how my students’ motivation will change. (SC. 13/06/2019)

**Have-to-do obligation system**

I mentioned frequently about my identity as a researcher, which often remind me to
reengage into my research.

Our university often presents new documents to collect the data of our publication. I try to ignore it as much as I can, but the pressure exists everywhere. In this case, I have to consider what my advantages in this job would be if don’t go with the paper publish and don’t apply for the project, and what is a Ph.D. job. (RJ. 21/05/2019)

The above systems are always interacting with each other. Different views on time might lead to different views on my research. For example, when it occurs to me that I can use my scattered time, I rekindled research motivation with the identity of Ph.D. (see RJ. 28/05/2019). Vice versa, different views on research might constrain my time views.

Another thing worthy noticing is that I have two identities: a teacher and a teacher-researcher. During my research, the two can’t be distinct in practice although I have flexible ideas on their boundaries. For example, my students are always discussing with me about my research in my teaching. They ask me why I did my research, when I decided to do teaching as my career, how I balance teaching and research etc. Their words remind me of the past a lot. I unconsciously recall the reasons that I engage into teaching career and my motivation on teaching. Most importantly, these recalls gave me great impetus to keep on doing the teaching research.

In a whole, according to the definition of motivation mentioned above, I have decreasing desire, slowing action and constantly struggling efforts towards research. So there is a declining tendency of research motivation in long term. However, in the mid and late time, I do with time system changeably. My two internal systems, cognition system and have-to-do obligation system, interact with time system and change frequently. In this way, my research motivation is fluctuating in short term and personal psychology changes frequently.

**DISCUSSION**

The above three systems interconnect together to affect research motivation. However, they do not produce the effects directly, instead, they constitute different contexts for teacher-researchers. In such contexts, the teacher-researchers should take their various abilities to control the different systems. Then these actions construct and reconstruct different self-knowledge which directly influences their motivation. As Dweck & Molden said, “people’s self-theories have a cascade of effects on their personal motivation”, so does this study argue. People have free will and are cognizant of the factors. They are conscious of adapting to the context and any influential element upon their motivation. Based on human agency, the above (sub) system contexts interact within and with the teacher-researcher. At last, these interconnections transform into the dynamic possible selves. In the following section the teacher psychology is discussed. To start with, a tentative model of dynamic working self and context in teacher psychology is proposed, which is beneficial to understand these complex and dynamic relations (Dweck & Molden, 2008; Al-Hoorie, 2015).

**A tentative model of dynamic working self and context in teacher psychology**

As sketched out in Figure 1, two dynamic processes appear to be important when considering the ways in which across the timescale, with the self-guide may change. To put it in detail, there are two dynamic processes: dissonance between actual researcher self and ought-to-be researcher self; balance between actual teacher self and actual teacher-researcher self.

![Figure 1. A tentative model of dynamic working self and context in teacher psychology: a visual representation](image)

Figure 1 shows how the congruence and the disparity mediate researcher self in teacher psychology. These dissonance and balance trials are main strengths to promote motivation.
towards research. The systems consider the unnoticed work self as a nest context around working self and produce impact for each other. To put it simple, time system, cognition system and have-to-do obligation system and others interconnect with different selves: actual researcher self, ought-to-be researcher self and actual teacher self. On selves system, there are two forces which give impetus to the research motivation system in teacher psychology. They are shown as followed.

**Dissonance between actual selves as researcher and actual selves as teacher**

In the data, it is apparent that the ought-to-be researcher self is the most critical component in the teacher-researcher self-concept system, which is on ebb and flow, constantly interacting with everyday work. When facing the challenges or suffering depression in work, the ought-to-be selves would contribute to the teacher-researcher motivation, mediating low self-efficacy and defeating fears.

In have-to-do obligation system, my identity of researcher Ph.D. and my obligation are mentioned many times. To some extent, this reference reveals the dissonance between actual researcher self and ought-to-be researcher self. As an actual researcher, I have drawbacks. So ought-to-be researcher self needs to overcome or correct them. These drawbacks refer to my negative cognition on teaching, research and learning to teach (RJ. 02/04/2019); being slack on my responsibility as a researcher/Ph.D. (26/05/2019). These dissonance works and personal psychology is adjusted.

**Balance between actual selves as researcher and actual selves as teacher**

Owing to my two identities, my actual researcher self and actual teacher self often conflict with each other, mostly on time use under focus. Time limitation is one critical reason for weakening the research motivation. Concretely, teaching and teaching work concerned occupies too much time, which drives me to reduce research time, such as reading related materials or doing data analysis etc. However, as a teacher, teaching work is essential. Therefore, I hope to balance them and try to converge them with teaching research all the way. This endeavor adjusts my psychology and motivation frequently. At the initial period of the semester, I optimistically declared that my research can be easier along with my teaching because it is a teaching research (RJ. 12/03/2019). In the mid time, I corrected my ideas of separating research and teaching (RJ. 02/04/2019). In the late time, I repeatedly told myself that my research is serving teaching (RJ. 28/05/2019).

**CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The findings highlighted the connected and situated nature of teacher psychology. Theoretically, any element can be incentive to promote motivation under the condition that the agent takes active actions. For example, promotion, an instrumental motivation, is popular among ENGLISH LANGUAGE teachers. The present research, focusing on experienced ENGLISH LANGUAGE teacher-researcher, demonstrates how one researcher coped with the personal challenges (e.g. How to arrange time adequately) rather than attributing to extrinsic strength to develop motivation. Previous researches have also identified a variety of obstacles to ENGLISH LANGUAGE teachers’ research motivation. For example, limited research competence and strict school curriculum make ENGLISH LANGUAGE middle school teachers lose confidence. However, in the present research, there is an experienced ENGLISH LANGUAGE teacher-researcher with a research project, who has basic research knowledge and the institution’s support. The obstacles mainly focus on personal negative cognition on teaching, research and learning to teach. Teacher’s cognition is vital to teacher’s action. At this moment, teacher’s agency presents quite obvious and get the low motivation attractor out.

The dynamic, complex, interactive system nest makes it hard to handle the context elements clearly and steadily. However, based on person-in-context concept and possible selves concept, it is easy to find out various context systems acting around possible selves in this case study. Although one case has limited generalization, the current study can add our deeper understanding on how an experienced teacher-researcher possible selves (e.g. actual teacher self; actual researcher self; ought-to-researcher self) shaped and is shaped by different contexts and how research motivation interacts with various possible selves. For example, on one hand, actual teacher self does
obligatory teaching work, so she has some complaints on limited time. On the other hand, the ought-to-be researcher self suggests to use time more efficiently. Teacher-researcher and context interplay each other closely. Simultaneously, research motivation changes along with the changes of cognition.

All in all, this study reveals the powerful generator of dynamic possible selves to teacher-researcher’s motivation towards research. A process of self-discrepancy in ENGLISH LANGAUGE teacher-researcher different possible selves changes when doing research, which interacts with time system, cognition system and have-to-do obligation system. These constitute a complex and dynamic situation in which motivation acts and teacher psychology lives.

This study can enable teachers to make sense of the interconnections between their perceptions of themselves and different context systems, which represent the emerging patterns of language teachers’ psychology and ensure their positive professional selves. Some implications can be drawn from the research findings. ENGLISH LANGAUGE teacher may face some obstacles, such as time limitation and heavy teaching work. On insisting ought-to researcher self and balancing between teacher self and researcher self, the teacher-researcher, changing their cognition on teaching, research and learning to teach, defeated the low motivation and endeavored to maintain a comparatively higher one. Thus, agency is the first condition. In order to support ENGLISH LANGAUGE teacher research, the institution, on one hand, can organize some teacher research community, build up some cooperative groups and establish teaching research special departments and other supports. On the other hand, teacher-researchers themselves should be more optimistic about the research. Although it is hard to repel against the negative motivation attractors, the process of research itself is an enjoyment and can contribute to establish a positive professional belief.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by China Humanity and Social Science Program Foundation of the Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China under Grant No. 16YJA740006, with the name of “Retrodictive and Longitudinal Studies of L2 Motivation from the Perspective of Dynamic Systems Theories”.

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