

**WELLSPRING OF MOTIVATION AND L2 VISION IN SECOND  
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA): SACRED TEXTS AS SOURCE**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses a largely unexplored territory in second language motivation research. Its focus was to account for unusual persistence, effort and success among learners acquiring additional language(s) in conjunction with a sacred or special text. More specifically, the project sought to identify the factors, mechanisms and conditions that contributed to exceptionally high motivation for SLA. The guiding theoretical frameworks were Ushioda's Person-in-Context relational theory and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. A qualitative research approach was employed which included a series of in-depth interviews with 20 highly successful language learners. The findings confirmed both Ushioda's and Dörnyei's theories. The Person-in-Context relational theory was helpful in understanding the significant role of the wider socio-religious context in which learners lived their lives. In addition, the three core components of the L2 Motivational Self System (Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and the language learning environment) shed light on these important components in the informants' learning trajectories. The research identified an ideal self in the form of a spiritual vision core to the informants' identities. In addition, the L2 vision was identified as inseparable corollary that enabled informants to achieve their spiritual vision. The third key component in the motivational matrix was the sacred text. However, beyond ideal selves, participants envisioned a shared ideal future grounded in imagined faith communities with concerns for broader societal well-being. The shared ideal future took form in the informants' imagination, not

only within their lifetime, but beyond, extending to an 'ultimate' environment.

The thesis includes implications for motivational researchers, language teachers and learners.

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# Introduction

## Background to the study

Motivation matters. In fact, there is little debate about its importance for second language (L2) learning. Some L2 educators argue that “motivation is probably the most important characteristic that students bring to a learning task” (O’Malley, 1990, p. 160) and research has indeed shown it to be one of the key learner characteristics in L2 acquisition (for a recent review see Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). Investigations into L2 motivation are important because they allow us to tap into the reasons for language-learning success or failure. This information can benefit language teachers and curriculum writers in gaining a deeper understanding of motivational dynamics in language learning, and fostering learning environments that are conducive to learners’ success. While much progress has been made in the field over the past sixty years, researchers and teachers continue to grapple with the complex factors interacting with learners’ motivation, and the ways in which these impact L2 acquisition. With the current globalizing trend affecting almost every area of life, motivational dynamics in language learning and teaching have been significantly impacted (Dörnyei, Csizér, and Németh, 2006; McKay, 2002).

One recent approach that has been useful in understanding motivation, especially in highly motivated language learners, considers the motivational impact of *L2 identity* and *vision*. The close connection between language and personal identity comes into play in the learners’ projected future selves and, for the purposes of the current study, in visions of their future *L2 selves*. Generally

speaking, we also know that *faith* motivates people; it is not uncommon to observe people motivated by belief and devotion to a deity or a set of religious ideals engaging in actions that otherwise would not be undertaken. In this thesis, I set out to examine how people's motivated language learning behavior can be traced to their response to a *sacred or special text* that gives impetus to their language learning. In other words, these people are learning a language primarily in order to access and/or to make accessible to others a specific text in this language. For example, British essayist and playwright Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957) learned Italian specifically in order to translate Dante's works (Simmons, 2005). Admittedly, in considering motivational sources for language learning, factors concerning faith and sacred texts may not be the first to come to mind. In fact, Miller (2005) notes that spirituality has been a taboo subject and a 'blind spot' in psychology as a whole, and Maehr (2005) confirms that psychological studies in motivation per se have paid very little attention to the possible role that spiritual beliefs play in shaping thoughts, actions, feelings, and emotions. However, several factors in the global context point to this topic as a fruitful direction of inquiry. Given the increasing importance of faith factors in global public discourse (Coupland, 2010; McGrath, 2010a; Mooney, 2010) and the widespread access to and influence of sacred texts (especially the Koran and the Bible) in most parts of the world, it is clear that a great number of people are affected by these factors. Globalization has also led to increasing migrations resulting in ever increasing numbers of people of different languages coming in contact with one another (Fishman, 1999; Hinkel, 2011; McKay, 2011).

A number of anecdotal observations led me to hypothesize a possible motivational link between *sacred* or *special* texts and language learning. First of all, in my work as a language teacher educator at a private theological seminary in Canada, I observed the passion with which my theologian colleagues engaged in learning of historical languages, such as Greek and Hebrew, in order to better understand the biblical text and related materials. Meanwhile, in response to repeated requests for suitable materials in faith-based English language programs, my colleague Gail Tiessen and I wrote several communicative, task-based English language course books using portions of the Bible as text (Tiessen and Lepp-Kaethler, 2010). The course books were designed for English language teaching (not proselytizing). They are, in essence, a form of language teaching through literature, which is currently making resurgence in contemporary language classrooms (Lazar, 1996; Paran, 2008). After receiving positive feedback from programs using these course books, I began to wonder what difference using the Bible as text might make in terms of learner motivation. A rather unexpected incident provoked further thought. I was teaching English for Academic Purposes at a public Canadian university when, during an ice breaker activity, a student from China shared enthusiastically that he was Buddhist but went on to eagerly encourage his classmates to read the Bible as a way of learning English. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this view is not uncommon in China. With these experiences as a backdrop, I began to explore a possible link between learner motivation and a sacred text. When I discovered that this topic is largely

uncharted territory in L2 motivational research, the focus of my study became clear to me.

## **Scope of the study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the motivational impact of special or sacred texts in L2 learning. Specifically, this study was guided by the following research question: *What is the role of special or sacred texts in enhancing motivation and living the vision in exceptionally motivated, successful L2 learners who are learning an L2 in conjunction with a special or sacred text?* This broad research question was broken down into three specific research objectives:

- a) To examine the relationship between motivation, faith and social context in highly motivated language learners using sacred text as content for language learning.
- b) To identify motivational influences which contribute to intention formation and executive action of language learning behavior in these learners (the intensity, quality and longevity of language learning behavior).
- c) To identify motivational influences of 'Ideal and Ought-to L2 selves' on language learning behavior and achievement in these learners.

At the core of this study is evidence gathered from 20 highly motivated, successful adult language learners on four continents. All learners reported learning language in relation to a sacred or special text. A qualitative multiple case study approach with in-depth interviews was employed.

The results of this study will hopefully contribute useful insights into the nature of L2 motivation, especially in relation to faith identities and ideal L2 selves. In particular, it is my goal to help language learners identify hopes, expectations and fears in order to enhance the L2 learning experience, and to contribute to their success in L2 learning outcomes. Such knowledge could inform language curriculum writers and teachers in their efforts to promote success in language learning.

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first three chapters comprise the literature review. The fourth chapter focuses on methodology. Three subsequent chapters consist of the analysis and results section, and the final chapter draws conclusions.

Chapter 1 is a focus on motivation and vision, which begins with a brief overview of motivational theories in mainstream psychology. After outlining the major cognitive theories of the past five decades, I summarize theories of L2 motivational research more specifically. This chapter concludes with a look at current studies on the motivational impact of authentic materials, a category to which sacred texts belong.

Chapter 2 examines the literature on the role of identity in motivation. I highlight several fundamental experiences of identity from a social-psychological standpoint, emphasizing their motivational implications. The role of language in

identity is another important consideration in this chapter. Finally, identity in L2 motivational research is examined from five major perspectives.

In chapter 3 I turn my attention to the central topic of the thesis: the intersection between motivation and faith as it relates to language learning and sacred texts. I begin by examining literature on faith and motivation in broader social psychological perspective. Then I narrow the focus to faith and motivation in SLA. After reviewing current research on Christian faith, L2 teaching and learning, I describe links between faith and selected core elements of identity referred to in chapter 2. Globalization and international posture, and their interrelationships with faith are also addressed. I introduce the notion of *sacred text*, as a unique junction between faith and language, identifying some significant implications for language learning, language change, and language spread. Finally, I raise possible implications of viewing language learners as spiritual beings.

Chapter 4 outlines the research approach, design and procedures employed in the study. I begin with an overview of quantitative and qualitative paradigms, demonstrating the appropriateness of qualitative inquiry for this topic. I describe the qualitative cycle: the warm-up, the study proper and the reflection phase. My description of the study begins with a summary of the pilot study, after which I describe in detail the study itself, including a description of the tools and principles of analysis employed.

Introducing the results section, chapter 5 examines the wider socio-religious context in which the informants are situated. I divide the learners into

four groups, according to their purposes for language learning. I examine evidence for relationships between motivation, faith and social context. After offering several observations concerning beliefs about sacred texts, I describe five imagined faith communities with which participants align themselves. I highlight the notion of international posture which is prevalent in all five. Finally, I examine how the participants' engagement with the sacred texts, and participants' investment in imagined faith communities gives expression to core elements of identity and motivation.

Chapter 6 explains the elements involved in the pre-actional phase of motivation where informants describe their spiritual 'call' or 'vision'. I draw parallels between descriptions of 'vision' and the fundamental experiences of identity outlined in chapter 2. I examine how ideal and ought-to L2 selves form important parts of this vision. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how sacred texts as meaningful authentic material contribute to L2 motivation and vision.

Chapter 7 describes the actional phase of motivation, that is, the ways in which informants live out their vision. A depiction follows of how motivated language learning behavior, once begun, takes on a self-propelling dynamic. I draw upon evidence from the data that sheds light on the *intensity*, *quality* and *longevity* of goal-oriented behavior.

Chapter 8 forms the conclusion of the thesis, in which I discuss implication for teaching and learning language, and implications for L2

motivational research. I make suggestions for future research directions and conclude with my personal reflections.

# Chapter 1: Motivation and vision

The purpose of this chapter is to situate my topic within the larger context of motivational research in social psychology and L2 acquisition. I begin with an overview of motivational theories in mainstream psychology. In light of their influence, I provide a synopsis of motivational theories in second language acquisition (SLA) over the past five decades. With both mainstream and L2 theories as background, I review three current directions in L2 motivational research: Ushioda's *Person-in-Context relational theory*, Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System* and *Complexity theory*. The second of these is dealt with in more depth in a subsequent section as this is the primary theoretical framework guiding my research. I summarize contributing developments that led to the conceptualization of the L2 Motivational Self System and give an overview of current and future directions grounded in this paradigm. Several concepts central to the L2 Motivational Self System need to be examined in closer detail because they are fundamental to my thesis: *a) self and identity, b) vision, imagination and ideal L2 selves, c) motivational function of future self-guides and d) the conditions under which ideal L2 selves flourish, sustaining and motivating language learners*. Finally, I provide a review of the literature on the motivational role of authentic texts and materials in instructed environments. First, however, some definitions are in order.

## *Defining motivation*

Motivation accounts for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to engage in a given task, and how much effort they are willing to expend

in working at it (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). Synonyms of ‘motivation’ that come to mind are: *enthusiasm, influence, incentive, impulse, momentum, passion* and *drive*. While motivation may seem to be a straightforward concept, research seeking to account for it indicates that it is complex and elusive (Vallerand, 2012). Words that frequently appear in psychological definitions are: *arousal, intrinsic vs. extrinsic, goals* and *needs*. For example, Vallerand (2012) draws attention to both *inner* and *outer* influences. In his words, motivation is “the hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and/or external forces that produce the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior” (p. 42). The focus on behavior or activity is similarly central in the following description: “Motivation is the process whereby *goal-directed activity* is instigated and sustained” (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996, p. 4). In addition to behavior as a manifestation of motivation, Bargh, Gollwitzer and Oettingen (2010) include *cognition* and *emotion*. They observe that motivation expresses itself “cognitively (e.g., searching), affectively (e.g., excitement) and behaviorally (e.g., running)” (p. 268). Goals, which also figure prominently in some theories, are closely related to motivation, as noted in Pintrich and Schunk’s definition above. A more comprehensive definition describes motivation as “the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out” (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998, p. 65). Despite its importance

in almost every area of human life, motivation is a multifaceted phenomenon not easily explained.

## **1.1 Theories of motivation in mainstream psychology**

In an overview of psychological studies of motivation, Vallerand (2012) explains that research in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on both inner impulses such as emotions and instinct (Freud), and environmental factors (Skinner). Vallerand clarifies that while these two perspectives are fundamentally different, they share a common assumption: that people are passive beings who are at the mercy of either internal or external influences. In the latter half of the last century the perspective of human beings as active agents became increasingly prominent, along with a shift towards more cognitive models that focused on individual goals, expectations, attributes, and beliefs about self (Vallerand, 2012). However, the tension between inner and outer influences has remained as social psychological theories have traditionally fallen into either individualistic or societal perspectives (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy, and Eidelson, 2008). The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought with it a renewed focus on affective factors such as emotions as well as attention to multi-cultural variables and context (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996). These ideas were integrated into a dynamic framework that spawned new non-linear, contextualized, multivariate perspectives (MacIntyre, MacMaster, and Baker, 2001). While still provoking much debate and producing a range of theoretical models, current research rests on the premise that motivation is influenced by a large number of factors

including unconscious and conscious aspects, cognitive and affective dimensions, contextual, temporal, and culturally specific variables (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009; Heckhausen, Wrosch, and Schulz, 2010).

### **1.1.1 Cognitive theories**

Since the mid-seventies, a cognitive approach has guided research in motivation in educational psychology (Bandura, 2001; Mitchell and McConnell, 2012). In a survey of themes and theoretical frameworks over the past 16 years, Mitchell and McConnell (2012) observe that the topic of motivation has been the centre of research attention. They conclude that social cognitive perspectives have been the most prevalent social educational theories during this time. The term ‘cognitive’ in everyday speech denotes thinking or reasoning. From a theoretical perspective then, “cognitive theories view motivation to be a function of a person’s thoughts rather than a person’s instinct, need, drive or state; information encoded and transformed into a belief is the source of action” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 276).

Motivation as viewed from this standpoint is determined within the individual, while sensitivity to societal and cultural influences plays a role. Cognitive theories can be divided roughly into three categories: a) expectancy-value theories, b) goal theories and c) self-determination theories (Davies, 2008; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011).

#### **Expectancy-value theories**

The basic premise of expectancy-value theories is that motivation to engage in an action depends upon two primary factors: first, the expected rate of success in

achieving the desired outcome, and secondly, the value placed on the outcome or achievement including subsequent rewards (Atkinson and Reitman, 1956).

Theories within this paradigm include the following:

*Achievement motivation* focuses on an individual's need for achievement and the value placed upon success. The motivation to achieve is also in tension with the motivation to avoid failure. This theory proposes that those individuals whose motivation to achieve is stronger than their motivation to avoid failure show greater persistence and higher efficiency than those in whom the motivation to avoid failure is more prominent (Atkinson and Litwin, 1960).

*Attribution theory* suggests that people's motivation is dependent upon the causes to which they attribute their success or failure. If they attribute success to their own sustained efforts, they are more likely to invest in the activity, whereas if success is attributed to chance or fate, motivation to engage in a task will be lower (Weiner, 1991).

*Self-efficacy theory* posits that individuals are more likely to engage in actions where they believe that their efforts will bring about some type of desired result. Levels of self-efficacy influence thought patterns, actions and emotions. Perceived self-efficacy and personal goals lead to higher levels of motivation and achievement (Bandura and Locke, 2003; Pintrich and Schunk, 1996).

*Self-worth theory* proposes that people are motivated by a desire to maintain a particular sense of self-worth. This motive results in a range of face-saving behaviors. For example, if people are faced with a situation in which failure is likely to be attributed to their lack of ability, they will sooner withdraw

from the situation in order to avoid having their self-worth damaged. If poor performance can be attributed to factors other than ability, they will be more likely to be motivated to engage and will also perform with more success (Thompson, Davidson, and Barber, 1995).

### **Goal theories**

While in previous theories, the directionality of motivation was referred to as 'needs' or 'drives', goal theories constitute a reformulation of these terms. The word 'goal' focuses more specifically on the directional nature of motivation (Ames and Archer, 1988; Bandura and Cervone, 1983). Theories in this category include *goal orientation theory* and *goal-setting theory*.

*Goal-orientation theory* has grown out of an educational context and seeks to explain achievement behavior. This theory focuses on learning outcomes and performance goals. It also takes into account the role of group dynamics, moods, rewards, and competition in their effects on motivation. Two major dimensions of goal orientation—intrinsic and extrinsic motivation—are widely used constructs. Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a task for its own sake while extrinsic motivation entails an external reward (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

*Goal-setting theory* highlights the effects of articulating objectives on motivation, depending on how specific, how detailed, how difficult and how much commitment is required to achieve the goals. This theory examines the role of goals as mediators of incentive. Here we also see the beginnings of time considerations, and attention to the future in which the learners envision the achievement of their goals (Corker and Donnellan, 2012; Locke and Latham, 2002).

A recent study utilizing goal-theory as a theoretical framework focuses on temporal elements, specifically long-term goals (Bateman and Barry, 2012). This study investigates people who persist in goal-oriented behavior in exceptionally long-term pursuits. Goal accomplishments may lie decades or even generations in the future. The authors of the study cite examples of organizations and people groups who consider the impact of their decisions up to seven generations into the future. Bateman and Barry (2012) found multiple motivating themes which they consolidated into four aggregate dimensions: *possible futures*, *possible selves*, *task interest* and *near-term gratifications*. The first two aggregates point to distal (long-term) goals, while the last two indicate proximal (short-term) sources of motivation. ‘Possible futures’ are oriented towards the realization of broader societal impacts or outcomes beyond personal benefits. ‘Possible selves’ (Marcus and Nurius, 1986) relate to personal or professional achievements as a result of goal pursuit. I will develop this concept in more detail in a later section (see 1.3.2. L2 Motivational Self System). The third aggregate, ‘task interest’ captures motivation springing from the satisfaction people experience when they are engaged in the daily tasks involved in pursuing their long-term goals. Interest, defined as “the psychological state of engaging or the pre-disposition to reengage with particular...content” (Hidi and Renninger, 2006, p. 112), has been identified as a motivational variable (Hidi and Renninger, 2006). I also elaborate further on the notion of interest as it relates to identity in chapter 2 of this dissertation. The fourth aggregate of motivational themes, ‘near-term gratifications’, involves outcomes that people achieve in the process of pursuing long-term goals. The

authors of the study also point out that whether long-term or short term, all four of these dimensions can exist psychologically in the present and can potentially be a source of encouragement at any time during the pursuit of long-term goals. The constructs utilized in this study are of particular relevance to my research, since longevity is one important factor in my data set.

### **Self-determination theories**

Self-determination theories have been particularly influential in the past thirty years of research (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Swann and Bosson, 2010; Vallerand, 2012). According to the aforementioned theorists, the premise of these theories is that the self functions as agent in self-regulation. For example, when people set goals and engage in action to achieve them, especially if the realization of these goals is many years away, they exert their ability to self-regulate. Motives for agency begin their guiding function early in life, deriving from a need for autonomy, self-determination and competence rooted in a striving for self-enhancement (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These theories build on the well-known categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and amotivation (lack of motivation). These three types of motivation can be measured in terms of their global, contextual and situational spheres. Categories of intrinsic and extrinsic can also be viewed on a continuum; for example, intrinsic motivation can be directed by a variety of intrinsic factors (e.g. to learn, to experience stimulation). Extrinsic motivation can be measured on a continuum in terms of the degree of self-determination involved. Over the years, studies in motivation have shed light on the person-as-agent within the influences of the task and the environment.

### **1.1.2 Motivation and context: Current directions in psychology**

As mentioned above, there is increasing recognition that motivation is influenced by a wide range of contextual factors (Heckhausen, et al., 2010; Vallerand, 2012). The contextual influences on motivation that have received most attention in the research are those in instructional environments, and those with social/cultural dimensions. Instructional factors include items directly involved in formal educational contexts such as materials, curriculum design, and evaluation practices. Social and cultural influences include the following factors: group dynamics, peer groups, and teacher relationships with students. The role of competition vs. cooperation in motivation is also a factor. Beyond educational institutions, there is the strong influence of family and community. As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explain, three major perspectives have a guiding influence in current thinking about motivation: insights from socio-cultural theory, self-regulatory perspectives and complex dynamic systems approaches. Since L2 motivational research is working along the same lines, these perspectives will be dealt with in more detail in the sections following.

## **1.2 Theories of L2 motivation**

In the broader field of SLA from a western perspective, the history of L2 motivational theories spans more than fifty years (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012). Before that, up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was believed that the ability to learn an L2 was a matter of intelligence, and having successfully learned an L2 was an indication of an educated person (Kelly, 1969 as quoted in Gardner, 2009, p. 1).

Beginning in the 1950's, there was a burgeoning interest on the part of L2 teachers and researchers to account for the varying rates of success in instructed L2 acquisition (Dickinson, 1995; MacIntyre, et al., 2001). L2 motivation research has its own distinctive agenda apart from mainstream psychology. Motivation researchers of L2 acquisition rightly emphasize that learning an additional language is fraught with unique challenges, which are qualitatively different from other learning. One reason for this distinctiveness is the special interrelationship of language and identity, which takes on new significance in an era of globalization (Coupland, 2010; Crystal, 2010). Because language and identity are closely intertwined, I will deal with this topic in more detail in chapter 2. In this section, I will briefly outline four major periods and the theoretical models that undergird their development over the past five decades (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011):

1. The socio-psychological model (1959-1990)
2. The cognitive educational model (1990's)
3. The process-oriented model (early 2000's)
4. The complex systems/socio-dynamic model (currently emerging)

### **1.2.1 Social-psychological theories of motivation**

L2 motivational research has been profoundly influenced by the pioneering work of Robert Gardner and his associates in Canada (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Their research was grounded in a macro-social psychological approach (also referred to as a socio-educational approach). Gardner and his associates

investigated English-speakers learning French in Montreal in the 1950's. The results of their studies indicated that people are motivated to learn a language by the degree to which they identify with the target L2 community and have a desire to integrate with this group. Two terms emerged from their analysis: '*integrative*' and '*instrumental*'. The term 'integrative motivation' was used to describe "a complex of attitudinal, goal-directed, and motivational variables...[which] requires identification with the second language community" (Gardner, 2009, pp. 1-2). They also introduced the concept of 'instrumental motivation', referring to the motivation arising from the practical value of knowing a language. Gardner and Lambert's model spawned numerous studies, and has been highly influential for at least four decades (1959-1990) (Gardner, 2009; MacIntyre, et al., 2001; Oxford, 1996).

While Gardner's theory of L2 motivation dominated this period, there were several other social-psychological theories that approached the topic by exploring the role of ethno-linguistic communities (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p. 43 ff). Clément's (1980) concept of *linguistic self-confidence* includes both a social and cognitive component. The basic premise of this theory is that in multi-lingual contexts the quality and quantity of contact between linguistic groups influences motivation to learn the L2. The *inter-group model* based on Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory examines the conditions that contribute to L2 learning in terms of ethno-linguistic vitality (Giles and Byrne, 1982). Schumann's (1978) *acculturation theory* is also designed to explain L2 acquisition in multi-ethnic settings from a social and psychological perspective. The main tenet of his

theory is that methods of language teaching have little relevance so long as there is no opportunity for acculturation. The focus on acculturation, ethno-linguistic identity, and L2 learning has been further developed in a *situated identity theory* which examines the complexity of situational factors affecting L2 motivation (Clément, Noels, and Deneault, 2001).

Social-psychological theories of identity in SLA continue to be relevant into the present as they highlight the social-psychological factors that impinge upon motivation to learn an additional language, such as identity changes and cultural assimilation. These theories also draw from the cross-cultural psychology approach to intergroup contact. This approach examines the phenomenon of identity changes resulting from contact between different ethnic and language groups, and the way in which they relate to individual psychological adaptation (Clément, et al., 2001). A basic premise is that “L2 learning is influenced by aspects of contact with the L2 community, L2 confidence, and identification to both the first language and L2 community” (Rubinfeld, Clément, Lussier, Lebrun, and Auger, 2006, p. 609). In the same vein, Segalowitz, Gatbonton and Troviovich (2009) conclude that there is a “link between ethno-linguistic affiliation and attained L2 proficiency” (p. 174).

### **1.2.2 Cognitive-situated theories of motivation**

In the 1980's, researchers identified the need to expand Gardner's integrative paradigm with alternative, complimentary theories (Clément and Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012). The early nineties brought with them a

renewed interest in L2 motivational research. A number of researchers (Brown, 1990; Oxford, 1996; Skehan, 1991) identified gaps in Gardner's model. Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) seminal critique of the social-psychological tradition drew attention to the fact that the integrative paradigm was not as applicable in some L2 learning contexts as in others. They called for a concept of motivation that would be more practitioner-oriented and applicable to the language classroom. They expanded the notion of L2 learning motivation, drawing from research in mainstream psychology. Building on cognitive theories from the broader field, they suggested an array of factors that could be identified in a more situated analysis of specific L2 learning settings. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2012) describe the period as follows:

This period was characterized by two interrelated trends: (a) the need to bring L2 motivation research in line with cognitive theories in mainstream motivational psychology, and (b) the desire to move from the broad macro perspective of ethno-linguistic communities and learners' general dispositions to L2 learning to a more situated analysis of motivation in specific learning settings (e.g., classrooms) (p. 397).

As pointed out by Dörnyei (1994), there was a need to account for notions such as goal-setting, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and achievement within classroom environments. The findings of a large-scale longitudinal investigation in Hungary (Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels, 1994) identified several broad dimensions in an integrative motivational subsystem roughly along the same lines already identified by Clément and Kruidenier (1983): "interest in foreign

languages, people and cultures, desire to broaden one's view and avoid provincialism, desire for new stimuli and challenges and a socio-cultural dimension" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 277). Four key motivational factors: interest, satisfaction, relevance and expectancy informed Dörnyei's (1994) conceptualization of a new L2 motivational framework with three levels: language level, learner level, and learning situation level.

The language level encompasses various components related to aspects of the L2, such as the culture and the community, as well as the intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits associated with it. The learner level involves individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process. The learning situation level is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning within a classroom setting: course-specific components, teacher-specific components, and group-specific components (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 280).

Other influential models in this period include the *social constructivist model* (Williams and Burden, 1997), *attribution theory* (Ushioda, 2007), the widespread influence of *self-determination theory* (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and *task motivation* (Willis and Willis, 2007). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into details on each of these theories, it is important to emphasize that, from their various perspectives, they offered insights into social and contextual influences, and resulted in more detailed frameworks of motivational factors capable of explaining components left unidentified in previous models. And not least, these theories were particularly useful in informing language teachers of

practical motivational strategies that could be employed in the classroom (Dörnyei and Schmidt, 2001; MacIntyre, et al., 2001; Oxford, 1996).

### **1.2.3 Process-oriented theories of motivation**

A key challenge for motivation theories is to account for the ebb and flow of motivation over time. A number of researchers describe this temporal process (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998; Williams and Burden, 1997). Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) proposed a process-oriented model which is particularly relevant to my thesis. I will expand on it shortly. The importance of socio-cultural context also became increasingly prominent. Constructs such as *imagined communities*, *identity* and *investment* in the L2 community, informed by critical pedagogy, moved into the spotlight (Norton, 2000; Norton and Kanno, 2003). Other key lines of inquiry included a focus on the global changes in motivation (Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005), motivation across the lifespan (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2005) and motivational self-regulation (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998).

As mentioned above, Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process model is of particular interest for my research. This model grew out of the need for more concrete motivational strategies for intervention in the L2 classroom. Three gaps in previous models were identified. First, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) observed the lack of a comprehensive summary of motivational influences in the L2 classroom. Secondly, most theories focused on the motivational influences at work in initiating behavior but neglected to address factors necessary in sustaining the execution of motivated behavior. Finally, little attention had been paid to the

temporal element, i.e. the changes of motivation over a period of time. As a means of addressing these gaps, they developed a model with two main dimensions: action sequence and motivational influences. At the core of the theory is the notion of the *Rubicon model* of action phases (Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, and Ratajczak, 1990) which includes a distinction between goal setting and action behavior in motivation, and integrates a temporal element. With regard to L2 acquisition, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) developed three phases of motivational sequences which are summarized below.

**Pre-actional Phase (choice motivation).** This segment describes the selection of the goal or activity to be embarked upon. It is comprised of three sub-phases: goal setting, intention formation and initiation of intention enactment. Included in this phase are the motivational influences on each of these sub-phases most likely arising from both internal and external factors, such as the learner's values, beliefs and attitude towards L2 and its speakers.

**Actional Phase (executive motivation).** A key concept in this phase describing the initial force is the Rubicon of action mentioned above. Learners make an executive decision to move forward and actually begin the task through observable behavior. Three processes occur in this phase: *subtask generation and implementation* (putting together an action plan with smaller, manageable steps), *appraisal* (evaluating the effectiveness of the mechanisms in place) and *action control* (ensuring that strategies are in place for the continued execution of the task). The end result is a decision to either terminate the action or make a renewed

decision to continue. Motivational influences most likely arise from the learning situation in this phase.

**Post-actional Phase (evaluation).** This phase involves reflection on the completed action and entails an evaluation of progress made. The learner compares initial expectations with current results and makes plans for further action. Motivational influences in this phase include self-concept beliefs and external affirmations.

#### **1.1.4 Toward socio-dynamic perspectives**

While the process orientation of L2 motivation theory fills in a number of gaps, it does not take into account the interplay of factors affecting motivation beyond the immediate context of the language learning environment. Two primary weaknesses remain: first, the assumption that the beginning and end of the learning process can be identified and second, the lack of attention to simultaneous processes happening in the rest of the learner's life (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012). Currently, the direction of research in this field is moving away from a linear, cause-and-effect thinking that has characterized earlier models, towards a more dynamic non-linear systems approach (Mercer, 2011a, 2011b). Increasingly, L2 motivational researchers hold to the view that L2 motivation is much more than a just a cognitive, psycholinguistic process. In fact, socio-cultural and socio-historical *situatedness* and factors concerning ethnic and linguistic identity continue to gain prominence in L2 motivational research (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007; Norton and Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko, 2002). Also, with the rise of

globalization and English as an International Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the field of L2 motivation research is going through a paradigmatic shift, both from a cognitive and socio-cultural perspective (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012). Several theories are currently emerging that integrate both cognitive and socio-cultural influences, which I will develop in more detail in the following section.

### **1.3 Socio-dynamic perspectives**

Research in the currently emerging phase parallels research trends in mainstream psychology as well as trends in other disciplines such as physics and engineering (Gregg, 2010). There is increasing awareness of interacting environmental variables in motivation. Three major theories currently emerging are: the Person-in-Context relational view of emergent motivation (Ushioda, 2009), L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009), and Complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2012).

#### **1.3.1 A ‘person-in-context’ relational view**

Ushioda (2009) critiques positivist psychometric research approaches as falling short in their fundamental assumptions about individual differences in motivational patterns. She notes that, while attempting to identify overarching patterns, quantitative approaches create an abstract, homogenized persona that has little resemblance to a real live language learner in a particular context in relationship with specific people. She identifies the need for a more qualitative research approach that sheds light on the unique, individual identities and contexts

embedded in the complexity of interactions in real life relationships. One problem Ushioda sees in most other paradigms is that context has generally been defined as an independent background variable which learners do not control. She emphasizes the importance of seeing human beings as agents in interaction with others and with their environments. The person-in-context relational view embraces a more holistic perspective of human nature and the “mutually constitutive relationship between persons and the contexts in which they act—a relationship that is dynamic, complex and non-linear” (p. 218). The person-in-context relational view can be integrated into other relevant theoretical frameworks such as the L2 Motivational Self System (discussed in the next section).

Ushioda (2009) summarizes her theory as follows:

I mean a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. My argument is that we need to take a relational (rather than linear) view of these multiple contextual elements, and view motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations (p. 220).

### **1.3.2 L2 Motivational Self System**

The L2 motivational Self System (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011) embodies a major restructuring in L2 motivational theory, in that it builds on the combined theoretical constructs in mainstream psychology and other current L2 motivational frameworks. Markus and Nurius (1986) suggested a conceptual link between cognition and motivation that shows how self-regulation occurs through setting goals and expectations. Their theory centres on the idea of “possible selves...represent[ing] individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming” (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Instead of building on past selves, the focus on possible selves is future oriented. The range of selves that arise in the thoughts of an individual are another way of exhibiting goals, aspirations, hopes and fears of that which is to come. Possible selves give form, meaning and direction to these aims. The theory of possible selves provides insights into motivation since the interactions between current and future selves have an impact on purposeful behavior.

Building on possible self theory, Dörnyei (2009) has reinterpreted the construct to apply to the L2 learning situation. “As learners envision possible future scenarios of what they could become or might become or are afraid of becoming as a result of acquiring a new language identity, their possible future L2 selves become in many ways the personalized carriers of their goals and

aspiration” (p. 80). This approach has been formalized in a three-component construct, the L2 Motivational Self System:

1. The *Ideal L2 Self* is the L2-specific aspect of one’s ‘ideal self’. If the person we aspire to become speaks an L2, the ideal L2 self exerts a powerful motivational force to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Thus, the image of being a person who can converse in the L2 motivates learners to study the L2.
2. The *Ought-to L2 Self* concerns the characteristic that one believes one should possess to meet external expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes.
3. The *L2 Learning Experience* concerns the motivational impact of how the learner’s actual self experiences the immediate learning environment (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, and the experience of progress).

(Dörnyei, 2009a)

Because this is the central paradigm upon which my research rests, I will give an in-depth description of this theory in a later section (see 1.4).

### **1.3.3 Complexity theory and related theories**

Since the late 1950’s, the ‘computer as metaphor’ has been prominent in speaking of language and language learning (e.g. Krashen’s ‘input’ and ‘output’).

Currently, there is an increasing understanding among applied linguists that this

metaphor limits our understanding of how language works and how language acquisition occurs, both in L1 and in L2 processes (Mercer, 2011a; Weiner, 1991). Complexity theory (CT) and closely related theories such as dynamic systems and chaos theory describe systems that are “complex, dynamic, emergent, open, self-organizing, and adaptive” (Larsen-Freeman, 2012, p. 74). Larsen-Freeman and others are borrowing from the natural sciences, specifically physics, mathematics and biology, where CT has its roots. Such a paradigm appears to be better suited to describe the organic nature of language and the process of language acquisition in contrast to earlier linear theories. De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007) outline the characteristics of language development as a dynamic system, its “sensitive dependence on initial conditions, complete interconnectedness of subsystems, the emergence of attractor states in development over time, and variation both in and among individuals” (p. 7). CT offers a more holistic perspective, taking into account the interconnected nature of language and the ‘ecosystem’ of language processing in the brain. According to this theory, language itself is a complex adaptive system that changes with every interaction. These changes demonstrate a remarkably complex system of self-organization that occurs in real time. Observers of L2 acquisition need to take into account this dynamic nature of language. Researchers and teachers need to take into account the learner’s “capacity to create their own patterns with meanings and uses (morphogenesis) and to expand the meaning potential of a given language, not just to internalize a ready-made system” (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008 as quoted in Larsen-Freeman, 2012, p. 79). It is important to factor

in that human beings are agents, constantly making choices in terms of their interaction with their environments. This agent-based framework in constant interplay with the environment contrasts sharply with the cognitive model of motivation that has dominated most of latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2012).

There are important implications in this organic paradigm for language teaching and learning. Awareness of the dynamic system of language and language learning can help teachers understand that they are only one factor (albeit an important one) in the classroom but, by far, not in control of what people in their classes learn. However, teachers can take advantage of the language and learning dynamic, and manage it in a way that creates an environment conducive for language development. Among other things, the use of an organic syllabus and motivational strategies are part of creating that environment (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2012).

While Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System was originally proposed in 2005, it has now been integrated into the dynamic systems framework in two ways. First, the concept of major attractors has been adopted. Secondly, vision is now viewed as an expression of the conglomerate of cognitive, emotional and motivational factors (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012), which I will expand on in the subsequent section.

## **1.4 L2 Motivational Self System**

In an earlier section (1.3.2) I gave a brief overview of the L2 Motivational Self System. Since it is foundational to my study, I will now examine this theory in more detail. In order to understand the L2 Motivational Self System in the context of the wider field of self psychology, motivational psychology, and L2 motivational studies, I will give an overview of contributing conceptual developments that inform this theory. Since its inception in 2005, there is a growing literature about the various facets of the L2 Motivational Self System in its theoretical and practical aspects. After giving a summary of current and future research directions, I will focus specifically on four central concepts that are particularly relevant to my study.

### **1.4.1 Contributing conceptual developments**

In the past several decades, self-theorists have become increasingly aware of the dynamic nature of the self, and those aspects of it that are related to motivation (Leary, 2007). Collaboration between motivational psychology and personality psychology has made it possible to see the implications of self-systems on motivation. In addition to possible selves theory, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System is informed by several other conceptual developments: *group dynamics*, *de-motivation*, *self-regulation* and *neurobiology* (Dörnyei, 2005). The motivational influence of group dynamics, for example attitudes of peers in the language classroom, can be significant in both positive and negative ways. Both overt and covert group norms can be powerful influences in their motivational

impact. The darker side of motivation—de-motivation—has often been overlooked in motivational research. The limited literature in this area points to factors in the learning environment, specifically, factors within the teacher's control. In addition, the concept of motivational self-regulation, drawn from the notion of learner self-regulation in educational psychology (Kuhl, 1987, 1992), informs Dörnyei's system. Self-regulation is based on the idea that "students who are able to maintain their motivation and keep themselves on-task in the face of competing demands and attractions should learn better than students who are less skilled at regulating their motivation" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 91). And finally, neurobiological investigations on L2 motivation by John Schumann (1999) have identified 'stimulus appraisals' which are made according to a number of dimensions: "novelty and familiarity, pleasantness, goal or need significance, coping potential and self and social image" (pp. 29-30). In particular, it is the last dimension concerned with assessing compatibility of the event with the self-concept or ideal self, which is relevant to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System.

The L2 Motivational Self System is a reformulation of mainstream motivational theory linked to identity studies. There are several premises that Dörnyei (2005) makes that give cause for this integration. First of all, he believes that language learning is different from learning other academic subjects in that it is closely related to the 'core' of one's identity. Secondly, there have been some aspects of Gardner's notion of 'integrativeness' that leave gaps in explaining L2 motivation, especially in contexts where there is no contact with target language speakers. Distinctions between integrative and instrumental motivation are often

blurred. The ‘integrativeness’ concept could possibly be extended metaphorically by viewing the “non-parochial, cosmopolitan, globalized world citizen identity” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 97) as the L2 community with which learners find themselves emotionally and psychologically identifying. However, instrumental motivation would be included here as well. Bonny Norton’s (2001) construct of ‘imagined communities’ mentioned earlier could also explain the pull that learners feel in regard to an L1 or L2 speech community. However, Dörnyei suggests leaving the ‘integrativeness’ label behind and instead focussing on learners’ self-concept. In this respect, the concepts of possible selves and ideal selves lend themselves to explaining the versatile and fluctuating nature of motivation.

The L2 Motivational Self System has been integrated into a dynamic systems approach (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). A situated and process-oriented approach naturally flows into a non-linear dynamic framework. The traditional variables referred to as individual differences (ID) have shown themselves not to be as stable as they seemed in theory. Three broad distinctions can be made in ID research: motivational, cognitive and emotional. Motivational conglomerates of relevance for my topic are (a) *interest*, (b) *motivational flow* and (c) *motivational task process*.

(a) Interest: An important motivational variable is the desire to engage with particular content (objects, events or ideas) (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). According to Hidi and Renninger a person’s interest has a strong impact on learning. Interest expresses itself through longevity of attention span and through goals. Contrary to the popular misconception that learners’ interest is simply present or absent, Hidi

and Renninger demonstrate that it can be developed and nurtured. Their 'Four-phase Model of Interest Development' offers some concrete ways in which teachers can intervene in order to awaken and develop increasingly higher levels of interest. I will summarize the basic tenets of their model here. Interest has both cognitive and affective elements that are grounded to some degree in biological roots. Interest develops through a person's interaction with a particular content. While the potential for interest is latent within the individual, the environment in which this interaction takes place influences the level of interest developed. Factors in the environment such as other people, organizations and individual efforts such as self-regulation all have an influence on interest development. Also relevant to my study is the idea that interest is content-specific and does not necessarily apply to a range of activities. In addition, Renninger and Hidi distinguish between situational and individual interest. Situational interest can entice a person to give short-term attention to a subject matter. Individual interest is characterized by a more enduring desire to interact with a particular content. Studies have shown that both situational and individual interest have a positive impact on attention, persistence, effort, academic motivation and levels of learning (ibid.). Situational interest can lead to the more enduring individual interest through repeated engagement that generates positive feelings. The four phases indicate that people can move from (1) situational interest that results in short-term positive affect towards (2) maintained situational interest, (3) emerging individual interest and (4) well-developed individual interest. Hidi and Renninger's summary of research concludes that learners' self-efficacy, effort,

goal-setting and strategies are connected to interest and its development. It is also important to be aware that interest generally does not develop in isolation. It must be supported or it will become dormant. Recognizing the contribution of interest to motivation can have important implications, especially if conditions for enhancing interest can be identified.

(b) Motivational flow: Related to interest is the notion of enjoyment.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has investigated the nature and conditions of enjoyment in a wide range of highly creative individuals. Also described as 'self-forgetfulness' and 'optimal experience', it is characterized by a complete absorption in one's activity because of the intense enjoyment involved.

Individuals who describe this subjective experience are involved in work or play that presents a challenge, stretching their abilities and experience at an appropriate level to their capacities. Clarity of goals and immediate feedback are also part of the experience. Flow is a state of intense concentration and focus, a loss of awareness of oneself, a sense of time passing more quickly than normal. Flow is also seen as a dynamic system of interaction between a person and their environment. An interesting example of self-forgetfulness is found in descriptions of Matteo Ricci, a sixteenth-century Italian missionary to China (Hamer, 2004). Ricci's approach to language learning involved creating a 'memory palace' in which he visualized mental images of Chinese words. Ricci was so intrigued by this inner world of Chinese vocabulary he spent long periods of time in it oblivious to his immediate surroundings. Ricci's work is also relevant to my topic in other ways, which I will describe in a later section (Chapter 3.2.5).

(c) Motivational task process: In addition, the dynamics at work while language learners are engaged in language learning tasks also shed light on the Motivational Self System. Using the dynamic task processing model, Dörnyei and Tseng (2008) examined task execution (level of actual learning), task appraisal (comparing actual outcome with expected outcome) and action control (self-regulatory mechanisms to scaffold learning) of learners involved in language learning tasks. They found a difference between novice and expert learners. Novice learners have difficulties in task appraisal which result in a reduced ability to create self-regulatory scaffolds for learning. This difference has implications for motivation while involved in the task, as well as for subsequent learning tasks.

#### **1.4.2 Current research on the L2 Motivational Self System**

The L2 Motivational Self System was first proposed by Dörnyei in 2005, but the first collection of studies regarding the impact of the Ideal L2 self were published in a 2009 edited volume (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). These studies provide evidence that visions of future selves do indeed correlate with effort (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, and Papi, 2009). After 2009 there has been an increasing number of studies from a range of countries and institutions (see for example Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizér, 2011; Mercer, 2011a, Papi and Abdollahzadeh, 2012). Furthermore, in the field of L3 motivation, Alistair Henry (2010, 2012) investigated the impact of multiple L2 ideal selves on one another. Henry concludes that learners have different ideal L2 selves for each language they are learning, and that these have an impact on learner's motivation

to learn that particular language. In addition, studies in the field of gender and motivation also indicate differences in language preferences (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2002; Henry, 2009, 2010). Drawing on studies in mainstream identity psychology, Henry (2012) observes three broad directions that are promising in furthering understanding of differences between female and male L2 or L3 ideal selves: *studies in gender and possible selves, research on gender and self-competence beliefs, and work in gender and identity-based motivation*. In terms of practical applications, the results of Magid and Chan's (2011) study of two groups of university students (in England and in Hong Kong) suggests that strengthening students' vision of their ideal L2 selves leads to increased linguistic self-confidence and greater clarity of L2 learning goals. From the current directions in the literature and works in progress, one can surmise that the L2 Motivational Self System is becoming the predominant paradigm in L2 motivational studies (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2012).

### **1.4.3 Central concepts in the L2 Motivational Self System**

Drawing on this backdrop of studies, I will examine in greater detail four central concepts of the L2 Motivational Self System that are particularly relevant to my topic: (a) self and identity/ideal L2 self, (b) imagination and vision, (c) motivational function of future self-guides and (d) conditions for the motivating capacity of ideal L2 selves.

**a. Self and identity**

'Self' and 'identity' are central concepts in the L2 motivational Self System. The nature of human selfhood has been a major topic of study in the history of psychology. Understanding motivational aspects self and identity requires an examination of interdisciplinary scholarship that contributes to our understanding of them. Because this is one of the topics central to my dissertation, one that must be dealt with in depth, I have devoted the entire chapter 2 to it.

**b. Imagination, vision and L2 selves**

The role of mental images in human cognition and emotions is more powerful than it may seem at first glance. Information coming into our consciousness, including information about an L2, comes to us not only in words but also in images and emotions. Possible selves tap into the imagination as individuals envision themselves in future actions and roles. Markus and Nurius (1986) point out that images in the mind can have the same effect on a person as if the images were tangibly present. "Possible selves involve tangible images and senses; they are represented in the same imaginary and semantic way as the here-and-now self, that is, they are a reality for the individual—people can see and 'hear' a possible self" (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p. 81). Mental images are also related to visions and dreams, which have been connected to exceptional achievements in scientific discoveries or in sports. For example, in 1865 chemist Friederich August von Kekule' describes how his discovery of the closed-carbon-ring structure of organic compounds occurred unconsciously in a dream:

The atoms were gambolling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by

repeated visions of this kind, could now distinguish larger structures, of manifold confirmation; long rows, sometimes more closely fitted together; all twining and twisting in snakelike motion. But look! What is that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightning I awoke. ...Let us learn to dream, gentlemen. (as quoted in Modell, 2003, p. 28)

The human capacity for imagination is a powerful motivator, as educators past and present know intuitively. Aristotle viewed imagination as the core of that which drives humans to action. His understanding was that “when some desirable object is not actually present to our senses, exerting its pull on us directly, our motivation to strive to obtain it is driven by our awareness of its (memory or fantasy) image” (Thomas, 2009, p. 450). John Dewey saw a connection between harnessing mental imagery and learning (Puchta, Arnold, and Rinvoluceri, 2007). The link between imagination, possible selves and motivation is explained by Oyserman and Markus (1990), who demonstrated how vivid images of possible selves contribute to the process of regulating behavior. The guiding power of imagination through clearly elaborated images of ideal selves becomes apparent as these images provide strong incentives towards specified goals. Taylor, Pham, Rivkin and Armor (1998) further build on this relationship, suggesting that by active mental stimulation of imagery, these events or images of a future self can be strengthened in order to increasingly resemble real life experiences. In this way, the imagination can be more deliberately harnessed in order to provide a scaffold for goal-oriented behavior.

The motivational power of mental imagery is a theme within cognitive psychology (Modell, 2003) and motivational psychology (Oyserman and James, 2009; Taylor, et al., 1998), from which other disciplines draw their insights. In sports psychology, imagery enhancement has proven beneficial to athletes to keep their focus in training and performance (Gallwey, 1984; Monsma, et al., 2011). “Specifically, dream frequency, self-verbalizations, and certain forms of mental imagery seemed to differentiate the best gymnasts from those who failed to make the Olympic team” (Mahoney and Avener, 1977, p. 135). Many Olympic athletes use high-achieving role models in order to create powerful possible selves to enhance their performance in the Olympic Games, as illustrated by the following example.

Many [young runners] no doubt absorbed the performance of Carl Lewis within the realm of their own possible selves, just as Carl Lewis claimed to have used the early track victories of Jesse Owens to create a possible self and to give a specific cognitive form to his desire to become the world’s fastest runner. (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954)

The link between imagery and motivation can also be found in other arenas. Possible selves can become the link between motivation and self-concept (Jackson and Jackson, 2010) as illustrated in presidential election of Barack Obama. This historic event created opportunities for many Afro-American children to envision possible selves that previously seemed unattainable. Likewise, in stress management, imaging is used as a form of reducing stress through imagining relaxing places. Vision is also a key idea in leadership and

organizational management studies (Dilts, 1996). Another example taken from the field of physics is the story of Albert Einstein's 'thought experiments' where he perceived visions of himself riding on a beam of light, precipitating his insight into the theory of relativity and the speed of light (Johnstone, 1997).

While these are dramatic examples, it is important to note that there is a significant difference between visualizing the end result versus visualizing the process that is required to get to the result. It seems that when people simply envision the results, they are not necessarily motivated to engage in self-regulating tasks. On the other hand, if they 'see' themselves engaging in the process, they will be more likely to take the necessary actions to achieve the desired end. Highly motivated individuals not only envision the end result, but they are motivated to engage in the actual behaviors that lead to their learning goal, as noted by Taylor, et al., (1998):

The distinction between problem-solving activities and emotional regulation has been fundamental to our thinking. We maintain that process simulations effectively address the two main tasks of self-regulation, namely, enlisting problem solving activities, such as planning, and regulating emotional states. (p. 432)

In terms of L2 learning, practitioners and theorists have long observed anecdotally the correlation between language, language learning and mental images (Hadfield, 1998; Stevick, 1996). Investigations in recent years have confirmed this connection. When applying the theoretical framework of ideal selves as guides in a language learning context, it is the L2 aspect of the learner's

ideal self that is of key importance in the fantasy element. Studies in a variety of cultural settings have been conducted to demonstrate the link between a lucid image of an ideal L2 self and purposeful behavior in learning the target L2 (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009; Magid and Chan, 2011).

A number of recent studies have examined the link between imagery and motivated language learning behavior. One such study investigating the relationship between visual learning style, imagination, ideal language selves and motivated language learning behavior indicated that “visual learners are more capable of perceiving a vivid representation of their ideal selves, which in turn is reflected in heightened motivated effort and behavior” (Al-Shehri, 2009, p. 168). As explained by Lyons (2009), the framework of ideal L2 selves lends itself to examining the context-dependent and multi-faceted nature of motivation in SLA. He concludes that contextual factors such as group dynamics, unequal power relations, peer pressure, and learner L2 self-confidence contributed to the imagined identity and ideal L2 self in the French Foreign Legion. The activation of a powerful ought-to L2 self image was also an important factor, which highlights the role of imagination. Jane Arnold (1999) and associates explore ways in which mental imagery and visualization can be employed to promote memory and positive affect for teachers and learners in language learning (Arnold, 1999; Puchta, et al., 2007). Kramsch (2009) also examines the power of imagination in subjective aspects of learners’ learning trajectories.

**c. Motivational function of future self-guides:**

How do future self-guides exert their motivational force? Self-discrepancy theory is helpful in explaining the motivational dynamics of ideal selves (Cantor, 1990;

Higgins, 1996; Hoyle and Sherrill, 2006). According to this theory, people are motivated to make those changes in their lives that enable them to align their current self-concept with their ideal self. In other words, motivation in this sense involves the wish to diminish the incongruity between one's actual self and the projected behavioral principles of the ideal/ought-to selves. Future self-guides give people direction, induce them to change and motivate them to action. "Ideal self-guides have a promotion focus, concerned with hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth and accomplishments; whereas ought-to self-guides have a prevention focus" (Dörnyei, 2009a, p. 214). The ideal self "is the core mechanism for self-regulation and intrinsic motivation. It is manifest as a personal vision, or an image of what kind of person one wishes to be, what the person hopes to accomplish in life and work" (Boyatzis and Akrivou, 2006, p. 625).

There are several reasons for the importance of possible selves from a motivational point of view (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Oyserman and James, 2009). First, they function as incentives for future behavior—which behavior to strive for, which behavior to avoid. Secondly, they function as self-regulators, that is, they enable people to adjust their current behavior in pursuit of becoming what they envision in the future. Third, possible selves function as standards or benchmarks against which past behavior can be self-evaluated. They provide a framework within which other behaviors can be interpreted.

The motivational function as future self-guides in L2 acquisition transpires as follows:

The Ideal L2 Self is part of an image of an ideal self that a learner would like to become. If the ideal self is a person who speaks the particular L2, then the learner will be motivated to engage in L2 learning behavior. The discrepancy between the current state of the learner and the ideal self will generate a tension that the learner will endeavor to eliminate. The ‘Ought-to L2 self’ is the pressure exerted by expectations of others and the ‘Feared L2 Self’ is a reminder of the negative consequences of not achieving success. (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p. 86)

Barreto and Frazier (2012) draw attention to an additional self-regulating function of possible selves. In the midst of stressful events, possible selves can be mediators of coping skills. While Barreto and Frazier’s study investigates people dealing with difficult life situations beyond their control, such as a serious illness, language learning can also be a ‘stressful event’ where learners are in need of “problem-focused and emotion-focused coping” (p. 22).

**d. Conditions for the motivating capacity of ideal L2 selves**

As mentioned previously, not all images of future selves lead to motivating behavior. There are certain circumstances that need to be in place for this to happen. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, pp. 131-132) list a series of six components for the motivating capacity of the ideal and ought selves, which I summarize below:

*1. Construction of the ideal L2 self: Creating the vision.*

In order for possible selves to function as future self-guides, learners must have some type of L2 vision. If this is not the case, it will be difficult for them to engage in language learning. The vision may also be dormant; perhaps it was

more alive at a previous time. In this case, the vision needs to be reawakened. Adolescent learners typically experiment with a variety of visions for the future. This is an opportunity for L2 instructors to provide scaffolds for creating L2 visions that resonate with the learners. One way of doing this is to provide for role models of L2 speakers who have succeeded in their learning. One advantage of fluent L2 speaker teachers is that they can be daily examples of successful L2 learners (Destin and Oyserman, 2009).

### *2. Imagery enhancement: Strengthening the vision.*

L2 learners may have visions of being successful L2 speakers, but the vision may not be strong enough to sustain the effort required to achieve their vision. The learner needs to have a plan, to perfect it and implement it. Guided imagery can be helpful in integrating affective and cognitive dimensions of self, especially for those learners who are having difficulties integrating various aspects their identities. An example of learners working with Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech illustrates the point. After listening to the speech, learners are guided to envisioning their own 'dreams' along with steps towards achieving them (Arnold, 1999; Puchta, et al., 2007). Teachers can be catalysts for strengthening vision towards an ideal language self (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2006).

### *3. Making the Ideal L2 Self plausible: Substantiating the vision.*

As noted previously, if a learners' self-efficacy is very low—that is, they do not believe that they are able to succeed, then they will not be motivated to put effort into the endeavor. A study on the Ideal L2 selves of Iranian learners of

English (Papi and Abdollahzadeh, 2012) confirmed that “the possible future selves do not necessarily result in motivation unless they are perceived as ‘available’ and ‘accessible’ through specific learning channels” (p. 18). The more likely their success appears to them, the more willing they will be to spend effort towards making it a reality. This may include identifying challenges that might prevent them from putting in the effort. One way of approaching motivational challenges is through metaphors (Bateman and Barry, 2012; Weiner, 1991). Language learners can be encouraged to identify metaphors for their experiences of language learning. These can be written out (higher level) or drawn (lower levels) and shared. Metaphors can be explored for their fearful and hopeful elements. Also, metaphors lend themselves to exploring a learner’s self-efficacy. Together, the learner and the teacher can explore ways to make the vision plausible (Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006).

#### *4. Activating the ideal L2 self: Keeping the vision alive.*

Since language learning is usually a process that requires several years, it is frequent that learners become discouraged. Once the initial excitement of being able to communicate at a basic level wears off, and their learning ‘plateaus’, learners can become very discouraged. This is where understanding the sources of motivation over time are vital. Here is where the ice-breakers and group-warmers frequently used in the communicative classroom can also play a role. These types of activities—besides giving learners communicative practice and enhancing group dynamics—can serve to reignite learners with their L2 visions and to keep those visions alive (Dörnyei, 2001; Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006).

### *5. Developing an action plan: Operationalising the vision.*

As noted previously, one of the conditions necessary for the vision to become reality is not only a vision of the final result but also of a game plan with manageable steps of how to achieve it.

The critical component of this successful use of mental simulation is an emphasis on simulating the process needed for reaching a goal. ...[From a] process-simulation viewpoint, one sets a goal and then actively mentally rehearses the steps one needs to go through to reach it, which leads to appropriate changes in behavior, increasing the likelihood that the goal will be obtained. (Dunkel and Kerpelman, 2006, p. 432)

Teachers can assist in helping learners develop realistic, achievable and measurable objectives that break up the overarching goal into bite-sized pieces, then point to strategies that will help them achieve these ends. Connecting objectives to effective strategies can smooth the progress of learning (Oyserman and James, 2009).

### *6. Considering failure: Counterbalancing the vision*

A part of the L2 Motivational Self System is the 'feared self', a vision of the self that a person does not want to become. Some measure of failure and its consequences can provide a healthy counterbalance that contributes to motivating learners not to give up (Magid and Chan, 2011; Patrick, MacInnis, and Folkes, 2002).

## **1.5 Motivational impact of authentic materials**

In previous sections of this chapter, I have examined the motivational dynamics of L2 acquisition from a theoretical point of view. Moving now to a more practical element of instructional environments, I will examine the impact of authentic texts and materials on learner motivation. There is some evidence that teaching materials play a key role in learner motivation (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Gao, 2004; Tomlinson, 2012). The use of authentic texts and materials for L2 learning has a long history. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, using classical literary texts such as Aesop's fables, Virgil and Cicero for teaching Latin was common practice in Europe (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). As Richards and Rogers explain, in the 19th century, the so-called Grammar-Translation method applied the Latin teaching methods to the teaching of modern languages; however, the content for the most part ceased to be classical texts but rather de-contextualized sentences. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'era of methods', there has been more focus on form and method than on thematic content of materials in L2 classrooms (Gilmore, 2007; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). However, this changed with the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT). CLT was based on the premise that learners needed more than focus on form in order to learn a language (Larsen-Freeman, 1995). The rise of learner-centredness in L2 classrooms gained popularity, and greater emphasis was placed on learner needs in terms of content themes, especially in adult language classrooms (Graves, 2000; Nation and Macalister, 2010; Richards, 2001).

Focusing on learner needs can also be seen as one way of addressing *authenticity* and *motivation*.

Before going further, it is important to articulate what exactly is meant by 'authentic texts'. Tomlinson (2012) provides a helpful explanation:

[A]n authentic text is one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach.... The text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original which has been simplified to facilitate communication. (p. 162)

The case for using authentic texts for language teaching has been made from a number of vantage points. First of all authentic texts give a snapshot of language as it is used in real life, and therefore bring the L2 learner in contact with the range of structures naturally arising in context. "Authentic materials can provide meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used, motivate learners and help them develop a range of communicative competencies and enhance positive attitudes towards the learning of a language" (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 161). Artificial or contrived language runs the risk of over-emphasizing some aspects while neglecting others which may be more prevalent or important. This argument was already put forth over a century ago by Henry Sweet, one of the first linguists to acclaim the advantages of authentic texts in language learning.

The great advantage of natural, idiomatic texts over artificial 'methods' or 'series' is that they do justice to every feature of the language.... The artificial systems, on the other hand, tend to cause incessant repetition of certain grammatical constructions, certain elements of the vocabulary,

certain combinations of words to the almost total exclusion of others

which are equally, or perhaps even more, essential. (Sweet, 1964, p. 177)

The concept of authentic language relates to motivation, based on the assumption that learners are motivated to learn language for authentic purposes. Secondly, the classic argument for use of authentic material is the notion that authentic materials are intrinsically more motivating. Lazar (1996) describes anecdotal evidence of the richness that literary texts can bring to the language classroom.

[L]iterary texts are a rich source of classroom activities that can prove very motivating for learners. Literary texts encompass every human dilemma, conflict, and yearning. They elicit strong emotional reactions from learners. Unraveling the plot of a novel or decoding the dialogue of a play is more than a mechanical exercise—it demands a personal response from learners and encourages them to draw on their own experience. By doing so, learners become more personally invested in the process of language learning and can begin to own the language they learn more fully. (p. 773)

Other researchers and practitioners echo similar arguments (Heath, 1996; Paran, 2008; Tomlinson, 2012). While the belief in the motivational impact of authentic materials in the vein articulated by Lazar has long been prevalent among language teachers and materials developers, the body of empirical research on its validity is quite small and relatively recent (Gilmore, 2007; Paran, 2008; Peacock, 1997). Some studies clearly show that language learners are indeed more

motivated when they are taught with authentic materials that are related directly to their everyday language needs.

Authentic texts provide the best source of rich and varied input for language learners'. ...[They have an] impact on affective factors essential to learning, such as motivation, empathy and emotional involvement and stimulate whole-brain processing which can result in more durable learning. (Mishan, 2005 as cited in Tomlinson, 2012, p. 168)

(For other examples see Coniam and Wong, 2004; Duda and Tyne, 2010; Gilmore, 2007, 2011). On the other hand, Gilmore (2007) points to the difficulty inherent in establishing a direct causal link between authentic materials and motivation in L2 learning. Defining what we mean by 'authentic' is only the first step. Then, the sheer range of 'authentic texts', both oral and written, is so wide and so varied that the single common denominator of 'authenticity' is difficult to isolate. Thirdly, Gilmore raises the issue of motivating specific groups of learners.

[T]he success of any particular set of authentic materials in motivating a specific group of learners will depend on how appropriate they are for the subjects in question, how they are exploited in the class (the tasks) and how effectively the teacher is able to mediate between the materials and the students, amongst other variables. (Gilmore 2007, p.107)

Other variables affecting authenticity and motivation for language learning include learners' goals, cultural backgrounds, and the specific contexts of the learners (e.g. how much contact they have or expect to have with speakers of the language) (Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). Some researchers have

made arguments against the use of authentic materials, pointing to the challenges they pose for learners (for a discussion see Tomlinson, 2012). Gilmore (2012) summarizes the challenge inherent in gathering conclusive evidence.

With language learning occurring across such a diverse range of contexts and cultures, the search for general principles to guide materials design and evaluation is an important starting point. This is a formidable task, however, since it requires drawing together expertise from a wide range of disciplines, reconciling disparate views in order to formulate generalizable principles, and testing these out in different learning environments over extended periods to determine their effects on students' motivation and acquisition. (Hulstijn and Schmidt, 1994 as quoted in Gilmore, 2012, p. 257)

Related to the concept of authenticity, though distinct, is the matter of *interesting non-linguistic content* in course books. In one of few studies on the motivational impact of course books, Gao (2004) demonstrates Chinese university students' dislike of simplistic and childish texts used in course materials. She concludes that learners need to be intellectually stimulated through the content of the texts. Among Gao's learner-based criteria for course book evaluation, she includes 'subject-matter (topics and themes)' and 'interests'. "Subject matter deals with non-linguistic aspects of the coursebook, including variety and range of topics..." (Gao, 2004, p. 103). In her factor analysis of appraisal items, 'interesting topics in the course books' was rated highest among 20 other factors. She concludes that subject matter is a major factor in learner satisfaction,

especially for mature learners. As mentioned previously, the notion of interest as a motivational variable deals with content (Renninger, 2000), which has been identified as a powerful influence on learning in terms of attention, goals and levels of learning (Hidi and Renninger, 2006).

An area of potential motivational factors investigated in my study concerns the anecdotal evidence of learners being motivated to learn a foreign language by specific, authentic *texts of significance*. As I mentioned in the introduction, the British writer Dorothy Sayers learned Italian in order to translate Dante's *Divine Comedy* from the original Italian to English (Simmons, 2005). Other examples could be the literary scholar learning Spanish to read Borges in the original, the philosopher learning French to study Rousseau, or the theologian learning German to better understand Barth. In my case, the text of significance under focus for the most part is the sacred text of the Judeo-Christian faith, the Bible. While the motivational impact of sacred texts in L2 learning may be connected to their authenticity, Gilmore's caution in establishing direct causal links is well taken. In subsequent chapters, I will come back to the issues of authenticity, interest and content with a more detailed look at the unique nature of sacred texts in terms of their influence in shaping identities, and the way they are understood in imagined faith communities.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Motivation matters. In fact, it matters "greatly with respect to living a meaningful life" (Vallerand, 2012, p. 49). In considering the multi-determined nature of

motivation and vision in SLA, I have begun by situating the topic within the context of motivational theories in mainstream psychology and motivational theories in SLA over the past half century. These theoretical frameworks provide a backdrop for the focus on current directions in the field: Ushioda's Person-in-Context relational theory, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System and Complex Systems theories. Then, for a more detailed look at the theory central to my thesis, I have identified the contributing conceptual constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System and an overview of the empirical studies to date that have put the theory to the test in a variety of contexts. Following, I have given more specific attention to several key concepts relevant to my research: self and identity, vision and imagination, the motivating impact of self-guides and the conditions under which the ideal L2 self can be most effective in sustaining and motivating language learners. Because sacred texts are authentic materials, it is important to consider the literature examining authentic materials and texts in language learning, specifically their motivational impact. In sum, this chapter has placed the topic of my study within the wider context of motivational research. The next chapter will build on this foundation and examine the growing literature on the role of self and identity in L2 motivation.

## Chapter Two: Motivation and identity

As I have mentioned in chapter 1.4.3, one of the central concepts of the L2 motivational Self System is the notion of self and identity. This is also an important concept in my study; consequently I will deal with it in depth in this chapter.

The ease and familiarity with which the words 'self' and 'identity' are used in everyday speech obscures the complexity of their multidimensional nature. There has been a considerable increase in attention to self and identity related topics in the social sciences and humanities (Morgan and Clarke, 2011), and in particular in psychological research in the past four decades (Swann and Bosson, 2010). The extensive and varied literature makes it difficult to review this vast topic (Leary, 2007; Vohs and Baumeister, 2011a and b), and therefore, even narrowing the focus to the research most pertinent to my study is no small task.

In this chapter, I begin by giving some definitions and background of the terms 'self' and 'identity'. Then, leaning on Swann and Bosson's (2010) Tripartite Motivational Approach, I examine three core concepts central to motivation and identity: *the desire for communion, the desire for agency and the desire for coherence*. In the third section, I explore the relationship between *identity and language* since these two are closely intertwined and connected to sacred texts and motivation. The fourth section is dedicated to a review of five key identity theories from an L2 research perspective:

1. L2 socialization (Duff, 2011)

2. Social constructivist perspectives on identity (Pavlenko, 2002)
3. Imagined communities and situated learning (Norton, 2000)
4. Identity, culture and motivation: international posture and the ideal L2 self (Yashima, 2009)
5. Identity, autonomy and motivation (Murray, Gao and Lamb, 2011)

The first three of these identity theories in SLA are not specifically concerned with motivation although I will emphasize those aspects with motivational relevance. The last two theories identify a strong tie between identity and motivation.

## **2.1 Definitions and historical background of identity studies**

For the most part, both 'self' and 'identity' refer to the same core of human personhood and are often used interchangeably (Swann and Bosson, 2010). However, pinpointing their precise meaning, especially for the purposes of empirical research, is fraught with difficulty, as they have been used in such diverse and sometimes contradictory ways (Leary, 2007). Social psychologists use the term 'self' when referring to the ways in which people perceive themselves as individuals that are separate and unique from others in terms of their physical bodies, their emotional life, their character and personality (Dunning, 2007). 'Identity', on the other hand, is used in the context of social roles and group memberships. These can be focused on the past, the present or the future. The future-orientation of identities is interesting for my topic because it

opens the door to the ideal, ought-to and feared selves (Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith, 2012).

Identity encompasses the self as it changes throughout the stages of a person's life, and is experienced with continuity over a period of time (Martin and Barresi, 2008; Morgan and Clarke, 2011). However, it also relies on differences. “[I]dentity is about the psychic, social and semiotic work necessary to sustain a sense of unity and sameness across time and space. Yet...[it] relies on difference and on social categories in order to achieve its coherence” (Morgan and Clarke, 2011, p. 817). Since ‘identity’ is the larger, more encompassing term, I will primarily be using it in this chapter.

In terms of background, it is important to see psychological perspectives within their wider historical frameworks, as summarized by Martin and Barresi (2008). Since the faith perspectives of my informants are central to this study, it is important to identify links between the notion of identity and historic Christianity. Early references to the nature of human identity can be found in ancient Greece, where philosophers such as Aristotle and Socrates sought to understand the ‘psyche’ and the ‘soul’. However, beginning in early Christianity, Christian understanding of the human ‘soul’ had major implications for western views of personhood for at least 17 centuries (Baumeister, 1999; Martin and Barresi, 2008; Morgan and Clarke, 2011). A sustained investigation into the topic began in the Patristic Period (2<sup>nd</sup> century, CE) with Christian theologians working out the implications of the Genesis accounts of human creation and fall from grace for the core of personhood. Of concern to theologians were also the ramifications of

human mortality, and Christ's resurrection with regard to post-mortem identity. For many centuries, identity was understood as a static integrated whole in the context of family, community and religion. Christian concerns with how to live one's life so as to achieve a desirable afterlife (in contrast to Greek philosophers' preoccupation with living well in the present life) pervaded much of western thinking about human nature.

With the rise of the enlightenment and rationalism, religious concerns over identity receded into the background as science took the lead in these investigations. Morgan and Clarke (2011) summarize the historical factors that have influenced the rise of identity as a concept central to contemporary social sciences, drawing attention to the process of secularization between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in western cultures. The Christian concept of 'soul' was no longer a useful construct in a scientific framework, and concerns over identity became the focus of secular philosophy with a movement towards naturalizing the 'soul'. Morgan and Clarke (2011) describe this shift "from theo-centric to anthropo-centric visions of the universe and from the 'soul' to the 'mind' as the locus of what we now refer to as identity" (p. 818). The change in focus is described as follows by Martin and Barresi (2008):

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most progressive intellectuals still held that humans had been made in the image of God. By the end of the century—due primarily to the influence of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx—most held that humans had been made in the image of biology and society (p. 201).

With the birth of psychology as a science in the first half of the twentieth century, terms for 'self' such as 'persona', 'ego' and 'subject' aided in removing vestiges of spirituality from the concept. Increasingly the focus was internal, on the 'mind' and the brain, and identity became "to a great extent...something to be achieved or constructed by an individual" (Burns, 2006, p. 149). The 'self' became a central construct in Jung's archetypes with the view that "the goal of life is to realize the self" (Martin and Barresi, 2008, p. 246). Some psychologists such as Mead and Vygotsky drew attention to the role of language and social interaction in the development of the self. However, Descartes' dictum "I think therefore I am", expressing a view of the mind as the seat of human will, action, knowledge and truth epitomizes the anthropomorphic worldview that has to a great extent remained central to present-day western psychology (Morgan and Clarke, 2011; Weaver, 2006).

## **2.2 Identity: Fundamental experiences**

Numerous psychologists have made distinctions between layers of identity. William James, in his classic text *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), proposed four levels: "the material self, the social self, the spiritual self, and the pure ego" (James, 1890, as summarized in Comello, 2009, p. 338). Mikhail Bahktin's 'I-for-myself' describes the way in which an individual perceives their own consciousness in contrast to the 'I-for-others' (Joseph, 2004). Henri Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory distinguishes between personal and social identity. Baumeister's (1999) three major human experiences provide a robust framework

to examine identity in current social-psychological theory. These three are: *reflexive consciousness*, *self as interpersonal being*, and *agency*. Within this broad framework, I will narrow my focus to motivational implications of these constructs of identity.

### **2.3 Identity: Motivational implications**

Swann and Bosson (2010) address some of the same concepts as Baumeister but reformulate them specifically in terms of their motivational relevance. Swann and Bosson (2010) suggest a ‘Tripartite Motivational Approach’ with three core desires: desire for communion (belonging and connection with others), agency (the capacity for decision-making), and the desire for coherence (meaningfulness).

Other psychologists use the term ‘identity motives’ which are defined as “motivational pressures toward particular ways of seeing oneself” (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, and Scabini, 2008, p. 1166). Vignoles and her associates make a link between identity motives and possible selves. They identify six identity motives that account for why people are more likely to be attracted or repelled to certain ideal and feared selves: self-esteem, efficacy, meaning, continuity, belonging and distinctiveness. These six motives are in essence finer distinctions of Swann and Bosson’s three core desires. In addition, the social environment is an important factor in influencing possible selves. “Individuals learn not only what is possible, but also, what is desirable from their social contexts” (Vignoles, et al., 2008, p. 1168). Vignoles and associates also

emphasize the role of these identity motives in self-regulation. Identity motives will be reflected in people's feared and ideal selves.

### **2.3.1 Communion and motivation**

As referred to earlier, 'self as interpersonal being' is one of Baumeister's (1999) primary experiences of identity. Swann and Bosson (2010) shed light on the motivational dimensions of this experience, that is, "the desire for belonging and interpersonal connection" (p. 606). They explain that one reason for the obvious pleasure people experience when they are evaluated favorably by others is that positive evaluations are perceived as indicators of self-worth. Affirmations from others are "markers of one's *social worth* (and thus satisfy a desire for communion)" (p. 606). This desire for relationships is widely viewed as foundational for many aspects of personality and social behavior, and as a fundamental human motivator (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). In practice, the desire for communion finds expression when people engage in relationship-seeking behavior (Swann and Bosson, 2010). Naturally there are personality and cultural differences in the ways in which this motive expresses itself, but in principle it is an elemental pillar of motivation.

### **2.3.2 Agency and motivation**

The desire for agency is also a fundamental motivator (Baumeister and Vohs, 2007; Swann and Bosson, 2010). Desire for agency is related to self-control and self-regulation (Leary, 2007), though Baumeister and Vohs (2007) point out that

not much attention has been paid to motivation in self-regulation theories. As described in chapter 1.1.1 of this thesis, self-determination theories of motivation are based on the premise that the desire for agency expresses itself in self-regulatory behavior, rooted in the need for autonomy, self-determination and competence (Baumeister, 1999; Deci and Ryan, 1985). In terms of motivation, this means that people are generally more motivated to engage in behaviors if they have had opportunity to exercise their agency, that is, make decisions for themselves.

The desire for communion and agency are the focus of a large number of studies in psychological literature, and are assumed to lie at the foundation of many aspects of behavior (Swann and Bosson, 2010), but, as Baumeister, Vohs and Schmeichel, (2007) point out, attention to their motivational role has been underestimated.

### **2.3.3 Coherence and motivation**

Coherence is the degree to which people experience overall stability, certainty, significance, and autonomy, such that they perceive a unifying “correspondence between [their] enduring self-concept and the other elements in [their] psychological universe” (English, Chen, and Swann, 2008, as quoted in Swann and Bosson, 2010, p. 606). Other terms that have been used are ‘security’, ‘need for closure’, ‘need for structure’, and ‘need for meaning’ (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002). Hazel Markus’ (1999) work on self-schemata sheds light on how people feel compelled to form unifying self-concepts. Self-schemata are “cognitive

generalizations about the self, derived from past experience that organize and guide the processing of the self-related information contained in an individual's social experience" (p. 123).

To reiterate, coherence relates to regularity, predictability, meaning, and control. The intuitive search for regularity can be identified in infants, and indeed without this inclination to regularity, learning would be impossible. As Popper (1963) explains,

an inborn propensity to look for regularities, or...*a need to find* regularities...is logically a priori to all observational experience, for it is prior to any recognition of similarities...and all observation involves the recognition of similarities (or dissimilarities). (as quoted in Swann and Bosson, 2010, p. 607)

Pioneered by Viktor Frankl in the mid-twentieth century, the focus on 'meaning in life' as a research agenda in psychology was a radical break from the behaviorist and psychometric tradition of research at the time (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002). While empirical studies on the pursuit of meaning have been sparse (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan and Lorentz, 2008), attention to meaning is gaining momentum, as evidenced by a recent edited volume with multiple perspectives on the topic (see Wong and Fry, 2012).

There is some evidence that people have a deep-seated need for psychological coherence and meaning (Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Wong and Fry, 2012). "The ability to create higher order meaning from seemingly unrelated stimuli or events does seem to have been hardwired into human brains"

(Baumeister and Vohs, 2002, p. 613). In a similar vein, Vignoles and associates (2008) suggest that ideal and feared selves are also indications of human's need for meaning, since a clear sense of identity is obviously related to meaning in life. Western existentialists have long observed that human beings seem to be incessantly searching for meaning (Heine, Proulx and Vohs, 2006). In response to what psychologists have been saying for decades and philosophers for centuries, Heine et al (2006) propose a *Meaning Maintenance Model* (MMM), which offers a psychological explanation of this search for meaning, and is helpful in expanding on the desire for coherence. The three tenets of the MMM are:

1. *Meaning is relation.* In other words “meaning is what links people, places, objects, and ideas to one another in expected and predictable ways” (Heine, et al., 2006, p. 89).
2. *Humans are meaning makers.* “[H]umans possess an innate capacity to identify and construct mental representations of expected relationships between people, places, objects, and ideas. As self-conscious entities, humans...possess a unique capacity to reflect on these representations” (Heine, et al., 2006, p. 90) and to identify inconsistencies and breakdowns.
3. *Disruptions lead to new meaning frameworks.* When people are confronted with a disruption in their overarching meaning constructs, they will create new structures (Heine, et al., 2006).

It is also noteworthy that the new coherent structures people impose on events are attempts to reframe negative experiences into positive ones (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002).

In terms of its implications for motivation, Viktor Frankl stated that “searching for meaning is the primary motivational force in man” (as quoted in Steger, et al., 2008, p. 200). The desire for coherence is also the third pillar in Swann and Bosson’s (2010) ‘Tripartite Motivational Approach’. They propose that the desire for coherence may be an even more important motivator than the desire for communion and agency.

Naturally, the three identity-related motives described here, the desire for communion, the desire for agency and the desire for coherence, interact with one another, sometimes one, sometimes another taking precedent (Swann and Bosson, 2010). Any changes in people’s identity, including that of acquiring another language, will occur within the balance of these three motives.

How does our understanding of identity contribute to an overarching theory of what motivates people? In this section I have offered some sign-posts towards answers to these questions. I have framed the discussion referring to fundamental experiences of identity from a social-psychological perspective. Then, leaning on Swann and Bosson’s (2010) helpful framework, their ‘Tripartite Motivational Approach’, I have considered three core motivators: desire for communion, desire for agency, and desire for coherence. Before I consider identity and motivation in L2 research, it is important to consider the relationship between motivational aspects of identity, and the nature and role of language.

## **2.4 Identity and language: Motivational implications**

In this section, I explore the relationship between identity and language as they relate to motivation. Since sacred texts have fundamental ties to identity, language and motivation, this is an important topic for my study.

The close alignment of personal identity and language is expressed by numerous linguists and psychologists (Clément, 1980; Fishmann, 1999; Watkins-Goffman, 2001). “A major function of language is the expression of personal identity—the signaling of who we are and where we ‘belong’” (Crystal, 2010, p. 8). John Joseph (2004) makes a strong case for the inextricable relationship between identity and language. He suggests that identity is what language is about, and that all use of language emerges from an expression of identity. From the vast literature on identity and language (see Fishmann, 1999; Riley, 2007), I will restrict my review to the nature and role of language as it relates to the three motivational aspects of identity summarized in the previous section (interpersonal relationships, agency, and coherence).

### **2.4.1 Interpersonal relationships and language**

“Language is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007, p. 207). Linguists and psychologists have long identified *communication with others* as a primary function of language, as it is virtually impossible for human beings to live in isolation from one another

(Crystal, 2010; Joseph, 2004; Vygotsky, 1962). It is difficult to separate linguistic and social identities since much of social interaction occurs through language. Equally, language is of little use without a community of speakers. Our identities are shaped within speech communities, and they are constructed through language performance (Stockwell, 2007; Wardhaugh, 2011). As John Joseph (2004) succinctly points out, “individual identity is socially and linguistically constructed” (p. 8). He gives the example of how, in many cultures, there exists some kind of naming ritual in which the newborn child is welcomed into the community. Our names are linguistic labels that symbolize our identity. Studies in human development confirm that children develop through being addressed and addressing others (Stockwell, 2007), also referred to as ‘language socialization’ (Duff, 2011; C. Kramersch, 1998), which I will develop further in a later section. As Hurlbut (2006) explains, the physical and mental capacities that human beings share provide a basis for a common understanding that makes community possible and within which personal identities can develop. Language builds on these capacities and enables human beings to embrace shared cultural meanings. Social identities develop within a system of meanings inaccessible to the isolated individual.

#### **2.4.2 Agency and language**

“The issue of agency is crucial, especially in relation to its causal connections with language...” (Morgan and Clarke, 2011, p. 819). There is only a fine line between identity construction through language on the one hand, and language as

a means of agency on the other (Schrag, 1997). Already early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wilhelm Stern (1905) identified three roots of speech: expressive, social and intentional (as reviewed by Vygotsky, 1962). Stern's notion of intentionality refers to "a directedness toward certain content, or meaning" (p.25) which implies agency. Wilhelm Wundt (1912/1973) also identified three dimensions of language: cognitive, volitional and social. Wundt notes that "every outward voluntary action...corresponds [with] inner acts of volition.... Therefore ordered expression of thought in speech corresponds as outward volitional activity" (as cited in Segalowitz and Trofimovich, 2012, p. 179).

Segalowitz and Trofimovich (2012) explain that, of Wundt's three dimensions, the cognitive has been emphasized, while the volitional and social have been largely overlooked in both L1 and L2 processing. Every time people use language, they are acting as agents, and this has implications for processing. In both reception and production, linguistic information is embedded within cognitive processes with communicative intentions. The communicative intentions are part of the context which gives meaning to the linguistic information that is passed between interlocutors. The communicative intentions have their own implications for processing, for example, finding the appropriate word or tone of voice in which to say something (Segalowitz and Trofimovich, 2012). All of these dynamics occur while adhering to the norms of the speech community. Hymes (1967/1972) noted that L1 users acquire "the communicative competence that enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code use, when, where and to whom, etc." (1967, as

cited in Segalowitz and Trofimovich, 2012, p. 184). Drawing on speech-act theory and on Bahktin, Hodges (2006) observes that “speaking is a social act that has immense consequences. Addressing and being addressed are embodied social acts for which the persons involved are ethically responsible” (2006, p. 76). He notes that identity construction, language, and agency are inseparably enmeshed. Schrag (1997) aptly describes “the self constituting itself as it lives in and through a maze of speech acts and a plethora of language games, articulating its thoughts and expressing its feelings within the spheres of scientific, moral, artistic, and religious endeavors” (p. 19). All of these are choices that require volitional action which clearly has implications for motivation.

### 2.4.3 Coherence and language

As noted previously, “humans are meaning-makers” (Heine, et al., 2006, p. 90). In other words, humans are motivated by a pervasive need for coherence and meaning. The nature of meaning is that it connects things, ideas and people. The pursuit of meaning is a form of connecting the ever-changing nature of life, and imposing order on it. In the flux of life, meaning is a form of stability. Language plays a central role in this quest for meaning. Language is only usable by groups of people because the meanings of words are relatively stable. Baumeister and Vohs (2002) describe several examples of the role of language in the human quest for meaning and coherence. The voracity with which children learn language gives evidence of meaning-making as they seek to name their world and articulate their thoughts and actions. Another example is evidenced when people who have

experienced trauma are encouraged to talk or write about their experiences and are thereby helped to make sense of their suffering. Through the use of language, people are afforded opportunities to new insights and strategies. These are indicators of a strong drive to acquire a sense of coherence through the use of language.

## **2.5 Identity in L2 motivational research**

Up to this point I have discussed the nature and role of identity in motivation, and in particular the central role that language plays. Now I will examine the role of identity specifically as it relates to L2 motivation. Given that language as such is profoundly connected with identity, it should not come as a surprise that people experience new dimensions of themselves as they become speakers of other languages (Goldstein, 2003; Henry, 2012; Pavlenko, 2002). Nonetheless, the study of identity in SLA is a relatively recent phenomenon (McKay, 2011). Joseph (2004) notes that “our understanding of the role of linguistic identity in second-language learning is still in the early stages” (p. 161) although only seven years later Norton and Toohey (2011) point to an explosion of research in the field in the past 15 years. In a recent overview of the literature on identity in L2 teaching and learning, Morgan and Clarke (2011) observe that “identity has become a major conceptual lens for understanding theory and pedagogy in SLE” (p. 829).

In the previous chapter, I have reviewed Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System, which is the primary paradigm within which research in L2 motivation is

currently conducted. In this section, I will review five additional L2 identity theories that offer relevant insights on L2 motivation. An important consideration in each of these theories is the context in which the L2 is acquired. The five theories of L2 identity are:

1. *Imagined communities and situated learning* (Norton, 2000; Norton and Toohey, 2011)
2. *Social constructivist perspectives* (Pavlenko, 2002)
3. *L2 socialization* (Duff, 2012)
4. *Identity, culture and motivation: international posture* (Yashima, 2009)
5. *Identity, autonomy and motivation* (Murray, Gao, and Lamb, 2011).

In the first three of these, the theorists' concern is not strictly motivational. They are primarily interested in L2 identity. However, as I will show, these theories have significant implications for L2 motivation. The final two theories are more specifically focused on identity as it relates to L2 motivation.

### **2.5.1 L2 socialization and identity (Patricia Duff)**

Research in L2 socialization is situated in the broader domain of language socialization, a field that has its roots in anthropology (Bayley and Langman, 2011; Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011). Ochs and Schieffelin explain that the study of language as socialization emerged in the 1980's from the conviction that language plays a fundamental role in children's learning of social and cultural knowledge. This dimension is not captured in the traditional study of language acquisition. As Ochs notes, "language socialization research examines how language practices

organize the lifespan process of becoming an active competent participant in one or more communities” (Ochs 1999 as cited in Bayley and Langman, 2011, p. 292). Based on Gumperz and Hymes’(1964) ‘ethnography of communication’ (see Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011), Ochs and Schieffelin point to the importance of factors that are part of the communicative event such as: setting, participants, topic, purpose, code, channel and genre. Research in language socialization has traditionally focused on the role of language in children’s socialization but has gained increasing attention in SLA (Watson-Gegeo, 2004). Duff (2011) defines L2 socialization as “a process by which non-native speakers of a language...seek competence in the language and, typically, membership and the ability to participate in the practices of communities in which that language is spoken” (p. 351).

L2 socialization is a broad field that encompasses many continents, cultures and languages, as well as many aspects of language socialization (e.g. gender, social hierarchies, pragmatics, and morality). My concern here is the role of language socialization in identity development. The main tenet of L2 socialization theory is that “identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language” (Duff and Uchida, 1997, p. 452). For this reason, identity is conceptualized as “a process of continual emerging and becoming” (Duff and Uchida, 1997, p. 452). As will become apparent in my results section, my informants are socialized in L2 (and additional languages), and are developing competence in the languages they are

learning. Communicative competence opens the door to membership in a speech community and the ability to participate in the practices of the community.

## **2.5.2 Post-structuralist perspectives on identity (Anneta Pavlenko)**

Other scholars concerned with the social influences on L2 learning draw on post-structuralist theory (Pavlenko, 2002) for explanations beyond psycholinguistic ones. Pavlenko (2002) outlines critiques of the prevalent socio-psychological approaches to L2 motivation. First, monolingual and mono-cultural biases underlying these approaches portray the world as groups of homogenous, monolingual cultures, e.g. a 'native culture' and a 'host culture'. Such assumptions do not take into consideration the ongoing flux of change and hybridity that is characteristic of many people and groups, especially in the context of globalization. In addition, the assumption that people learning additional languages are doing so in order to assimilate into particular groups of speakers is not applicable everywhere, especially in EFL situations. A further problem is the limited explanation of attitudes, motivations and beliefs, that is, the lack of understanding of the multi-faceted, multi-directional and context-dependent nature of motivation. In sum, "the key weakness of the socio-psychological approaches is...the idealized and de-contextualized nature attributed to language learning, which is presented as an individual endeavor, prompted by motivation and positive attitudes, and hindered by negative attitudes and perceptions" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 281).

Post-structuralism provides a framework within which to analyze the historical and structural processes that are part of the social environment in which language learning occurs (Pavlenko 2002). From this perspective, a number of assumptions about language, language acquisition and identity are made. Language is viewed as symbolic capital and a site of identity construction (Bourdieu, 1986); language acquisition is viewed as language socialization; L2 users are agents with multiple identities that are dynamic and fluid (Pavlenko, 2002). Inherent in this perspective is also recognition of the inequalities that exist between languages and people groups.

A number of studies from a post-structuralist perspective have been conducted with EAL learners and teachers (see for example Curran and Stelluto, 2005; Goldstein, 2003). In one study (Curran and Stelluto, 2005), a learner reflects on being told by a bank clerk that her English was deficient. Her reflections illustrate the social constructivist perspective that language is much more than a linguistic and communicative code.

Not speaking English is equal to not speaking language. Language equals her voice. It means more than making sounds. It means speaking her thoughts, her mind, and herself. She lost her voice in front of the clerk.... Before this incident, she honestly thought that she knew the alphabet, had learned English in her country, and especially believed that language is just language, not life, so she had never imagined that she did not have her voice in both languages, Korean and English. (as cited in Curran and Stelluto, 2005, p. 783)

Post-structuralist theories have dominated the discussion on the role and nature of identity but recent collaboration between applied linguists and language psychologists in their joint interest in SLA has provided both fields with insights into the psycholinguistic processes involved in learning an additional language (Dörnyei, 2009b). These also have implications for our understanding of motivation. The theories introduced next exhibit evidence of that collaboration.

### **2.5.3 Imagined communities and situated learning (Bonny Norton)**

Up until the mid-nineties, identity theory in SLA was dominated by perspectives from psycholinguistics and social psychology (Morgan and Clarke, 2011). Then, drawing on post-structuralism, critical theory and on Bourdieu's (1986) ideas of language as social capital and site of identity construction, Bonny Norton (1997) introduced a number of concepts influential in how identity in L2 learning was viewed. Instead of focusing on learners' motivation as a psychological construct, she drew attention to the social and historical situatedness of language learning (Morgan and Clarke, 2011; Norton, 1997; Norton and Toohey, 2011). She posits a dynamic sociological concept of identity with multiple and contradictory aspects, in which the motivational construct of *investment* refers to the underlying reasons for language learning. Because language is more than just a code for communication, learners are renegotiating their identities and their positions in the social world through its use. When learners choose to use a particular language, they are investing in the speech community associated with that

language. Norton also draws on Anderson's (2006) construct of *imagined communities* and Lave and Wenger's (1991) notions of *situated learning* and *communities of practice* to describe the ways in which learners' sense of belonging to communities impacts their sense of identity and their role in a language learning context. Imagined communities are groups of people with whom we have a sense of connection, not only through tangible and geographic links but also through our imaginations. They extend beyond groups in our immediate surroundings, to include those groups we view ourselves a part of on the basis of our projection beyond spatial, geographic, and temporal boundaries (Norton and Kanno, 2003; Norton and Toohey, 2011).

Since Norton's work on identity, the notion of language acquisition as 'situated learning' has gained momentum within the literature in educational and SLA research in the past two decades. Most of the research has focused on the direct involvement of learners within their immediate context such as their neighborhoods, workplaces, religious and educational communities.

Several themes emerge in the studies of language learners and imagined communities that are relevant to understanding learner identity as it relates to motivation in acquiring an L2. First of all, imagined communities inspire learners to enlarge their array of possible selves in ways that enhance their involvement in language learning. Secondly, technological advances significantly extend learners' resources in terms of access to imagined communities. Communication technology, and increased global travel and migration are blurring the distinction between local and global, thereby drastically changing the landscapes that shape

learners' possibilities in participating in their imagined communities. Thirdly, the construct of imagined communities can help us understand language learning as it is impacted not only by spatial dimensions but also across time. Dörnyei (2009b) notes that the concept of imagined communities can help us understand the notion of a 'world English identity', a topic I will develop in more detail in the following section. The construct of imagined communities is of central importance in my study, as it becomes obvious how investment in an imagined community has important implications for L2 motivation.

#### **2.5.4 Identity, culture and motivation: International posture and the ideal L2 self (Tomoko Yashima)**

In the past several decades, discussions in applied linguistics focusing on the global spread of English have increased dramatically (Kheng and Baldauf Jr., 2011; McKay, 2011). As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, language and identity are deeply intertwined, and therefore the nature of English as an international or global language has significant implications for L2 identity (McKay, 2011). It is within this context that a term such as 'world English identity' (Dörnyei, 2005) is appropriate. In this section I will develop Yashima's (2009) construct of '*international posture*', arising from the unique status of global English. I will discuss how L2 identity and L2 motivation are a part of international posture.

As was mentioned in chapter 1, Gardner's construct of integrativeness is applicable in settings where there is considerable contact between L2 learners and

a corresponding L2 community. However, questions about the validity of integrativeness in an FL learning context have been raised (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991, Dörnyei, 1994). In FL contexts, the community of speakers is not readily accessible to learners or there is no particular L2 community. Building on the non-ethnocentric attitudes that Gardner classified as a part of integrativeness, Yashima (2002, 2009) introduced the concept of *international posture* to explain motivated language learning behavior in EFL contexts. International posture describes the tendency of language learners to identify not with a particular group but with the international community as such. Three subcomponents were identified: “1. intergroup approach tendency, 2. interest in international vocation and activities, and 3. interest in foreign affairs” (p. 146).

In addition to the concept of integrativeness, Yashima also draws on concepts from several other theoretical perspectives: Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009a), MacIntyre’s construct of *willingness to communicate* (WTC) (2007; MacIntyre, et al., 1998), Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of *communities of practice* and Norton’s (2000) *imagined communities*. Using each of these constructs as a part of his theoretical lens, Yashima discovered evidence for the validity of international posture.

In terms of the L2 Motivational Self System, international posture is linked to possible and ideal selves as learners envision themselves as future users of English in an international setting, as illustrated by the following description.

Those students with a higher level of international posture might generate possible selves...speaking with international students, helping foreigners

lost on the street, reading English language newspapers. ...[T]hey might envision their ideal selves pursuing an international career, working in a foreign country, or conducting business negotiations in English. These ideal selves require proficiency in English as a necessary component and therefore function as incentives for L2 related actions. (Yashima, 2009, pp. 147-148)

McIntyre's (2007) WTC also plays a role. Research employing a structural equation model revealed that "international posture leads to motivation and L2 WTC as well as frequency of self-initiated communication inside and outside the school context" (Yashima, 2009, p. 147). From a 'communities of practice' perspective, Yashima's research shows that "students who most fully participated in the community of practice of global studies developed proficiency, international posture and grew to be more active communicators as they were acculturated into the community" (p. 150). Other studies have confirmed similar results (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; McKay, 2011).

In sum, international posture has become an empirically validated construct that aptly describes the L2 identity of people who are drawn to an international community of L2 speakers, are interested in foreign affairs, and demonstrate willingness to interact with people other than those of their own L1. As will become apparent in the results section, the notion of international posture is significant in my data set.

### **2.5.5 Identity, autonomy and motivation (Murray, Gao and Lamb)**

In the ever-widening trajectory of research on L2 identity and motivation, Murray, Gao and Lamb (2011) compile a comprehensive range of perspectives and studies by an international collection of researchers in order to examine the links between identity, motivation and autonomy. A relationship between autonomous learning and motivation has been established, as well as a link between autonomy and identity (for a review on autonomy in language learning see Benson, 2007). Since the terms ‘identity’ and ‘motivation’ have already been defined earlier in this dissertation, a definition of ‘autonomy’ is pertinent. It is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec as cited in Benson, 2007, p. 22). Holec (1996), who pioneered research in the field of autonomy and language learning, offers a further expanded explanation: “learning a language by self-directed learning, i.e. ‘without being taught’, is learning by taking one’s own decisions with respect to the objectives to achieve, the resources and techniques to use, evaluation, and management over time of the learning programme, with or without help from an outside agent” (p. 90).

Researchers are increasingly becoming aware of the interrelationship of identity, motivation and autonomy; therefore drawing these three fields together creates cohesion between what have been disparate agendas (Murray, et al., 2011). In order to do so, a variety of theoretical perspectives are suggested as possible ways of exploring links. Ema Ushioda (2011) sheds light on how engaging, constructing and negotiating identities is an important part of

motivation and autonomy. As already mentioned in her person-in-context relational view of motivation (see chapter 1.3.1), she emphasizes the importance of seeing learners as fully-rounded persons in specific contexts, and as agents who are responsible for their choices. Xuesong Gao and Lawrence Jun Zhang (Gao and Zhang, 2011) examine the role of agency and meta-cognition in autonomy research. These are two concepts that have been divided into sociological (agency) and cognitive (meta-cognition) constructs. In their view, such a division is unnecessary since agency and meta-cognition work together in people's autonomous learning. Examining the interaction between agency and meta-cognition in a longitudinal study of learners in Hong Kong, the authors conclude that this approach can 'synergize' our understanding of L2 learning. Two further theoretical perspectives are rooted in complexity theory. Liliane Assis Sade (2011) contends that emergence, dynamicity and change are increasingly characteristic of human relations in a global society, and that social selves are significantly affected by this milieu. Language learning affects and is affected by these dynamics. According to Vera Lucia Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva (2011), L2 learning must be viewed as a process within a dynamic system with multiple elements (including identity, autonomy and motivation) since this is the nature of language. When one element is changed, the entire system is affected.

Empirical studies examining autonomous language learning in a variety of educational and cultural contexts are compiled in Murray, Gao and Lamb's (2011) edited volume. Several examples suffice to illustrate. A study exploring the link between plurilingualism and autonomy in Mexico (Castillo Zaragoza, 2011)

illustrates that “what learners are, and also what they want to become (ideal L2 self), or think they have to become (ought-to L2 self), has a strong influence on the decisions they make towards their language learning” (p. 146). Murphy (2011), in a study on distance learners of French, German and Spanish, found that negative motivational factors influence part-time distance learners, especially at beginner levels. Murphy also saw evidence of the power of the ideal L2 self in maintaining motivation. A study on teachers’ roles as agents and facilitators of self-access centres (Reinders and Lazarou, 2011) sheds light on the tensions between teachers’ and learners’ beliefs, leading the researchers to conclude that agency cannot be separated from motivation and identity. Studies in a variety of cultural contexts (e.g. Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Bahrain) and a range of methodological approaches explore learners’ and teachers’ perspectives, reaffirming the interconnection between autonomy, agency and motivation in L2 learning. Through an integrated approach and with a broad range of contexts, Murray, Gao and Lamb (2011) present a convincing case for considering implications in the broader field of language learning and teaching. Autonomy is also a factor that emerges in my data set, since many of my informants must rely on themselves to put scaffolds for language learning into place.

## **2.6 Conclusion: Motivational relevance of identity research**

In this chapter, I have dealt with a broad range of literature on ‘self’ and ‘identity’. In order to narrow the focus to the topic of my dissertation, I have

examined the motivational relevance of core experiences of identity (Swann and Bosson, 2010). Subsequently, I have drawn attention to the significant role of language in the expression of identity (Joseph, 2004), specifically those aspects of identity and language that are relevant to motivation. Building on this background, I have directed the reader's attention to identity research in SLA. I have reviewed five major L2 identity theories.

In conclusion, I invite the reader to step back to consider a few general observations about the vast and inconclusive nature of research on self and identity. First, almost 70 years ago, the founding figure in the psychology of personality Gordon Allport observed that "personality is something and personality does something." (Allport 1937 as quoted in Cantor, 1990, p. 735). In social psychological research of personality, there has been a great deal of emphasis on investigating individual differences in terms of traits that individuals 'have' (Cantor, 1990). As Cantor explains, there has been a recent marked shift towards actional elements of the self, the 'doing' side of personality. More recently the focus has been on the ways in which personality traits are expressed and maintained in social contexts. The emphasis on behavior "shows how individuals interpret life tasks of work, play, intimacy, power, and health, in light of their most accessible schemas, envisaging alternative future selves, and devising cognitive strategies to guide behavior in relevant situations" (p. 735). The emphasis on 'being' gives insights into basic stable attributes, while the emphasis on 'doing' allows one to investigate how, why, when and under what conditions individuals exercise their capacity for agency, resulting in changes. As

I have shown in this chapter, such a perspective offers new angles on identity and on motivation which lend L2 motivation researchers new insights. Consequently, I will be focusing on observable behavior in my informants, from which inferences about their motivation can be drawn.

A second issue in relation to L2 learner identity is the growing tendency to take a holistic perspective, which includes a new look at the self. Psychological self-theories have been revisited by SLA researchers interested in identity. Some of these scholars are not specifically interested in motivation (e.g. Duff, Pavlenko, Norton), even though, as I have shown, their identity theories have L2 motivational implications. Others, such as Yashima and Murray et. al are increasingly seeing identity and motivation as inextricably bound. Yashima's theory is an example of an L2 motivational model that links identity and culture, while Murray, et.al.'s L2 motivational model makes a link between autonomy and identity. A further indication of a holistic perspective is an area of increasing interest and debate in SLA, namely the domain of *spirituality* (Morgan and Clarke, 2011; Smith, 2009; Wong and Canagarajah, 2009; Wong, Kristjánsson, and Dörnyei, 2012). In the last reference cited, I have also contributed as a co-author of one chapter. Within the wider context of globalization there is increased attention to the role that religion plays in international political and cultural relations (Coupland, 2010; McGrath, 2010b; Mooney, 2010; Thomas, 2005). Taking this context into consideration, the relevance of faith in SLA is becoming more apparent. In chapter 3 of this dissertation, I will expand on this subject and examine links between L2 motivation, identity and faith.

## Chapter Three: Motivation and faith

For many language teachers and SLA scholars, the notion that religious faith and language teaching could be a fruitful focus of empirical research is viewed with skepticism (Canagarajah, 2012). The subjective nature of faith appears to be incompatible with non-partisan, scientific research. However, as Paulo Freire (1986) and other critical theorists (see Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) have long pointed out, the notion of purely 'objective' research is a fallacy. In the past several decades, proponents of the qualitative research paradigm have highlighted the value-laden nature of all scientific study and have called for researchers to make their prior assumptions and beliefs explicit (Biklen and Bogdan, 2007). This view has become more common, and as Canagarajah (2012) notes, "in the post-positivist period in the academy and society, people are more willing to consider the ways our values shape our scholarship and research" (p. 6).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role that faith plays in motivating people in L2 learning. Building on my previous two chapters on 'Motivation and vision' and 'Motivation and identity', I will examine the role of faith in this constellation of factors. In my preceding chapter I have argued that identity is central to motivation, language, and language learning. In this chapter I contend that faith is central to identity. It follows then, that faith can have a profound influence on motivation per se, and more specifically for my purposes, on L2 learning. The chapter begins with a focus on the 'faith taboo' in mainstream social psychological perspective. Narrowing the focus to faith and the

psychology of motivation, I observe that a lack of attention to ‘the faith factor’ in motivation research constitutes a significant gap in our understanding of human motivation. The psychology of ‘ultimate concerns’ provides a helpful beginning in bridging this gap. Imagination, a concept I have explored in relation to the L2 Motivational Self System (see section 1.4.3 b), has an important link to faith and motivation. Then I narrow the focus to faith and SLA. After summarizing current research on faith and L2 teaching and learning, I examine the interrelationship of faith and selected core elements of identity: (a) faith and agency, (b) faith and communion, (c) faith and coherence and (d) faith and language. Globalization and international posture also have an interesting connection to identity, faith and language. Then, central to my argument is an exploration of sacred texts and their unique relationship to language and language learning. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the notion of learners as spiritual beings and the implications thereof for L2 acquisition. First, however, some definitions are in order.

### *Definition of terms*

For the purposes of this chapter, the terms ‘spirituality’, ‘religion’, ‘belief’ and ‘faith’ need to be clarified. While their meanings are related and sometimes used interchangeably, I follow developmental psychologist James Fowler and comparative religionist Wilfred Cantwell Smith and others in drawing distinctions between them (Fowler, 1981; Emmons, 1999). Nonetheless, Fishman’s (2006) caution in articulating definitions is well taken, when he notes that the word ‘religion’ encompasses more than one can easily articulate conclusively.

- *Spirituality* is that aspect of human experience that deals with the sacred and the transcendent. It is “the quality pertaining to the spirit as the seat of the moral or religious nature, pertaining to sacred things or matters; religious; devotional; sacred” (dictionary.com). Spirituality is the personal expression of ultimate concern (Emmons, 1999). It is related to some life force beyond oneself (e.g. God, Creator, a higher self or purpose). It is about a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things, about meaning making (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid and Tyson., 2000). “Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes manifested through image, symbol, ritual, art, and music. But these dimensions of spirituality are often deeply cultural, hence the connection of spirituality to cultural identity” (p. 375). A more concise list of components includes “(1) life and death; (2) soul and self; (3) cosmology; (4) knowledge; (5) the ‘way’; (6) focus; (7) practices of spirituality and the role of others; and (8) responses” (Fenwick and English, 2002, p. 33).
- *Religion* is a more formalized and institutionalized expression of spirituality. It includes the “cumulative tradition of the various expressions of faith of people in the past...constituted by texts...visual and other kinds of symbols, oral traditions, music, dance, ethical teachings, theologies, creeds, rites, liturgies, architecture and a host of other elements” (Smith as quoted in Fowler, 1981, p. 9).

- *Belief* is “the holding of certain ideas” (Smith as quoted in Fowler, 1981, p. 11).
- *Faith* is related to all of the above but captures to a greater degree the personal response to religion or spirituality. Faith is “the relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent about which...beliefs are fashioned” (Smith as quoted in Fowler, 1981, p. 11). Faith is often based on the tenets of religion but is a personalized lens through which one views life and the world as a whole. It affects one’s thinking, feeling and acting.

### **3.1 Faith in mainstream social psychological perspective**

Emmons (1999) makes a pertinent observation about the relationship between faith and scholarship: “The persistence of religion in the modern world appears as an embarrassment to the scholars of today” (p. 12). While there have been a few notable exceptions, Miller (2005) and Paloutzian and Park (2005) observe that spirituality has been a taboo subject and a ‘blind spot’ in psychology as a whole for most of the 20th century. If faith has been dealt with at all, it has mostly been cast in a negative light. A common psychological explanation dispenses with faith as follows: “Evolutionary psychology suggests that we are built for religious belief. To adapt to a dangerous world...our minds have evolved to over-interpret the presence of ‘intentional agents’” (Troop, 2012).

As mentioned previously, with the rise of scientific positivism and efforts to establish the field as a legitimate scientific discipline, faith became marginalized in mainstream psychology. Nonetheless, there has been a small but

growing minority of psychologists who see value in seriously attending to faith as a factor in psychology from a more balanced perspective. In the 1960's, psychologists directed their focus to more practical themes such as racism, sexism, and religion. In the mid 1970's in North America, psychology of religion as a scientific discipline emerged as a division in the American Psychological Association (Paloutzian and Park, 2005). In an overview of the interface between Christian faith and the roots of psychology over the past 2000 years, Miller (2005) highlights the significant contributions of faith perspectives in psychology. Recent research into the role of spirituality and faith in mental health and positive psychology demonstrates a renewed interest in the positive effects of faith on well-being (Miller, 2005; Paloutzian and Park, 2005).

### **3.1.1 Faith and motivation research**

Even the foremost psychologists of religion, whose purpose it is to offer a comprehensive survey of empirically-based research on the interface between psychology and religion, begin their recent 590 page tome with the following truism: "Religion is the greatest force for both good and evil in the history of the world" (Paloutzian and Park, 2005, p. 3). Though their statement is obviously a generalization, it implies that religion is a significant source of motivation for humankind—and that this observation is self-evident. However, up until recently, faith taboos have also ruled studies of motivation (Maehr, 2005; Miller, 2005). Maehr (2005) draws attention to the fact that psychological studies in motivation have paid very little attention to the possible role that spiritual beliefs play in

shaping thoughts, action, feelings, and emotions. When considering motivational effects of religion, the first to come to mind are often suicide bombings carried out in the name of Allah, or violence by fundamentalist-extremist Christians targeting abortion clinics.

In this chapter, I would like to argue that ignoring the ‘faith factor’ or viewing it only as a negative influence is an impediment to our understanding of human nature, the nature of identity and motivation. There are a number of reasons why disregarding faith is an unnecessary roadblock. I will present these arguments here in brief, and expand on them throughout the chapter.

Spirituality is a significant dimension in the lives of most people. To ignore this, especially in fields such as psychology of personality and motivational research—fields that claim to investigate the whole person—is a significant oversight (Emmons, 1999; Watson-Gegeo, 2004).

The disregard of spirituality as an important factor in human knowledge and learning supports the privileged position of a secular, scientific worldview. This entails a disenfranchisement of voices that fall outside this mainstream western paradigm (Morgan and Clarke, 2011; Smith, 2009; Watson-Gegeo, 2004).

Religion is on the rise in many parts of the world, more notably in Asia, Africa and South America. Within the context of globalization, this trend is increasingly difficult to ignore in any part of the world, and has therefore become of growing importance in social, economic, and political discourse (Coupland, 2010; Mooney, 2010).

Fortunately, the increasing openness towards examining values undergirding empirical research is beginning to create space for the interrelationship of faith, identity and motivation as topics worthy of serious academic attention (Miller, 2005). Maehr (2005) observes that religion often has an influence on basic psychological processes (such as the self, goals and purposes) studied by psychologists. "Religion demonstrably has been, and remains, a powerful motivational force in the lives of many people" (p. 141).

### **3.1.2 Motivation and ultimate concerns**

Research on goals, literature on 'self' and 'identity', and attention to the need for belonging, lays the groundwork for an empirical study of faith motivation (Baumeister, 1999; Emmons, 1999). Emmons' (1999) contends that goals are the key to motivation and well-being. His work in the field of positive psychology forges a new connection between research on motivation, and studies on spirituality in personality. The term 'ultimate', also used by Fowler (1981), seems to be a common element in descriptions about spirituality and religion. Emmons (1999) draws on the work of psychologists of religion in the past half century. Allport (1950) identified religion, religious sentiment, and search for God as being concerned with ultimate meaning. Tillich (1957) suggested that the response to religion is a state of being "ultimately concerned, having 'a passion for the infinite', a passion that is unparalleled in human motivation" (Tillich as cited in Emmons, 1999 p. 4). Emmons points to the work of Hebrew scholar Rabbi Abraham Heschel (1955), who speaks of the search for God as 'a search for

ultimacy'. Providing an excellent model of empirical research on spirituality and psychology, Emmons (1999) draws attention to the constructive role that spirituality plays as a part of motivation and as a part of personality development. In his theory of 'ultimate concerns', he explores the role of spirituality in goal-setting, in personal striving and to meaning in people's lives (Emmons, 1999; Misajon, 2001). Leaning on Allport's extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation scales, he has developed a 'spiritual intelligence test' in which he invites people to express their goals, strivings, wants and desires, which reveal, among other things, spiritual motivations. He uses the term 'striving' to note the effort and the desire that people invest in a goal, whether or not they are successful. Noting the positive outcomes associated with spirituality, he proposes that spirituality be viewed as a form of intelligence alongside Gardner's well-known intelligence types.

### **3.1.3 Faith, imagination and motivation**

As noted in chapter 1 on motivation, imagination is a powerful force that involves images in the mind which can move a person to action. Referring to the distinctions between religion, belief and faith, Fowler (1981) comments that belief and religion are the temporary outcomes of trying to bring to expression what faith 'sees' as an end result. He suggests that faith is as a way of knowing, a type of imagination that is seeing with the inner eye. These holistic images integrate the conditions of our existence in what Fowler calls "the ultimate environment" (p. 24). He is certain that faith influences our dealings, relationships and

aspirations, allowing us to see them against the backdrop of that which we view as the meaning of life. Fowler compares this ultimate environment to the ultimate theatre in which human beings arrange the sets, understand the grand plot and act out their lives. Fischer (1983) observes that the Apostle Paul understands faith as a mode of inner vision when he speaks of enlightened eyes of the mind (Ephesians 1:17) and when he uses imaginative language to hold up possible future selves (e.g. Colossians 3). Faith, then, is an active mode of knowing, of composing a felt sense or image of the condition of our lives taken as a whole. It unifies our lives' 'force fields'. These images often take the form of metaphor, ritual and symbol. For many people such faith may remain chaotic, subconscious, functioning without their being aware of it, yet this does not detract from the power it emanates (Fowler, 1981).

## **3.2 Faith and SLA**

The interface between faith and linguistic identity is central to my thesis. This includes beliefs about sacred texts and the languages they are written in, the endeavor of translating sacred texts and the implications this has for people's motivation to learn additional languages. However, before I delve into this topic in more detail, I will give a summary of the small but growing body of literature on faith and L2 teaching and learning.

### **3.2.1 Current research on faith, L2 teaching and learning**

While research on faith and language is not new (Crystal, 2010; Wong, Kristjánsson, and Dörnyei, 2012), the last decade has seen a rise in publications concerning faith and language teaching, especially, though not exclusively, by faith-based practitioners and researchers (for an extensive bibliography, see Bleistein, Wong and Smith, 2012). The first major publication delving into this topic was an edited volume critically examining the place of Christian faith in the field of TESOL (Wong and Canagarajah, 2009). Half of the voices represented identified themselves as Christians, while the other half represented a range of spiritual perspectives, including Buddhism and atheism. All contributors shared the belief that values play an important role in the language teaching classroom, whether or not one is aware of this. The editors successfully structured the book as a dialogue, shedding light on the ideological, political and spiritual dilemmas facing language educators with profoundly differing viewpoints.

While Wong and Canagarajah's volume represents a major step forward in transparent and respectful dialogue between differing perspectives on the role of faith in TESOL, there remains a lag in empirical studies to correspond with philosophical positioning (Wong, et. al., 2012). In response to that gap, Wong, et al. (2012) present an anthology with a specific focus on empirical research conducted at the interface between faith and SLA. The volume is comprised of data-driven studies that examine a variety of issues and perspectives on how faith impacts educators and learners involved in L2 acquisition. Contributors represent a range of countries and teaching contexts. Major sections focus on the following

three topics related to Christian faith: (1) language teacher identity, (2) the English language learning context, and (3) Motivation, and L2 Learning Process. Each section ends with a response to the studies in the respective section, highlighting common themes, connecting the studies to broader theories and proposing ideas for further research. This book promises to be valuable not only for Christian educators, but also for all practitioners and researchers in the broader fields of TESOL and SLA who are interested in how faith shapes pedagogy and identity formation (Canagarajah, 2012; Ushioda, 2012).

Two common themes that emerge from this volume are of particular relevance to my study: the role of faith in identity formation and the role of faith in motivation. In terms of theoretical frameworks, most authors focusing on identity research utilize Wenger's (1998) social identity theory. This theory lends itself particularly well to explaining the social nature of faith formation in teaching and learning. The notion of 'communities of practice' illuminates the social context of identity formation within faith communities. Studies in motivation employ Dörnyei's (2005, 2009a) L2 Motivational Self System, which is useful for examining the role of both identity and faith in motivation.

Thematically, most contributions concerning identity focus on faith and language teacher identity (Chapters 1-6, 13). Most authors identify a strong faith influence in language teacher identity and motivation. Only two contributions, Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei (2012) and Ding (2012), focus on identity and motivation among language learners. Similar to those studies focusing on teacher identity, both Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei, and Ding's chapters point to faith as a

salient factor in learner identity and L2 motivation. Employing Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei examine the relationship between spiritual vision and L2 vision in highly motivated, successful language learners. They identify the use of sacred texts as a source of singular determination and force among some language learners. When three key components—divine call/vision, L2 learning vision, and a sacred text—are pooled, synchronized, and channeled meaningfully, they appear to generate an unusually high 'jet stream' of motivation for language learning. Learners are caught in a powerful inner current that propels them to acquire language with exceptional intensity, persistence, and longevity. My current study is an expansion on the study described in Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei's chapter. In a similar vein, Ding's (2012) study focuses on the motivational impact of Christian faith on L2 acquisition among Chinese university students. She identifies an intertwined relationship between Christian faith and learning English, which includes international posture, a link to the Bible and an "imagined Christian world" (p. 158) and a strengthened L2 vision in the face of language learning challenges. Ding concludes that "the impact of the Christian faith upon the L2 motivational disposition of all participants was evident across the group" (p. 160). Two additional key transformative elements form the crux of Ding's results: a correlation between Christian faith and cosmopolitanism, and empowerment through Christian faith in the face of challenges.

Firstly, young Chinese university students, compelled by the forces of globalization and the consequent cosmopolitanism resulting from China's

increased integration with the modern world, are exploring Christianity as a form of cosmopolitanism which, in many cases, leads to an adoption of Christian beliefs. The second transformative factor, which is related directly to their newly found faith in Christianity, is the optimism and empowerment that young Chinese Christians may feel when confronted by challenges in their lives, including but are not limited to, learning English. (p. 161)

The results of Lepp-Kachler and Dörnyei's and Ding's research show an unmistakable link between learners' sense of identity, their L2 motivation and their faith. These results confirm those of the other contributors in the volume, making quite clear that "faith can impact both the teaching and the learning of languages in a decisive manner" (Wong, et. al, 2012, p. 220).

### **3.2.2 Faith and core elements of identity in SLA**

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I focused on primary experiences of identity and their motivational implications (Swann and Bosson, 2010). I extracted three fundamental elements of identity: communion, agency and coherence that have primary motivational relevance. Then, I examined the relationship between language and these elements of identity (Joseph, 2004). In this section I will examine the relationship of faith to the three core elements as well as the relationship between faith and language: 1) faith and agency 2) faith and communion, 3) faith and coherence and 4) faith and language.

## **Faith and agency**

In chapter 2.3.2 I have discussed the relationship between agency and motivation. People will generally be more motivated to engage in activities if they have a choice in the matter. In Vaidehi Ramanathan's (2009) critique of Christians' interactions with non-Christians, he is particularly concerned with what he perceives as arrogance and bigotry on the part of Christians. He uses several terms that allude to Christians' disrespect for agency, or at least, his perception of an infringement on agency. First, he refers to himself, a non-Christian from India, as "prime meat for Christians" (p.178). In other words, his perception of Christians is that they do not view people as individuals with executive function, but rather lifeless targets for their mission. Secondly, he uses the word 'proselytize' to describe Christians' attempts to influence others. In current usage, 'proselytize' is a pejorative term used to indicate that the influence has been forced on unwilling victims. When people are imposed upon and not taken seriously as equal partners in dialogue, they experience an infringement on their agency. The third word choice that Ramanathan uses is the phrase "disallowing other ways of being, living, thinking" (p. 181). The word 'disallowing' refers to an exertion of power over another, which constitutes an infringement on their executive function. The arrogance and bigotry Ramanathan describes, lies, among other things, in Christians' infringement on the agency of their non-Christian interlocutors. Nonjudgmental discourses and dialogue between people of different faiths can only take place between persons who are free to exercise their agency in one another's presence.

## **Faith and communion**

Imagined faith communities are an obvious example of how faith and the desire for communion intersect. Faith communities serve as imagined communities and are increasingly important self-identifiers in a global context (Cochrane, 2009; Mooney, 2010; Kheng and Baldauf Jr., 2011). For example, Wong (2012) identifies a number of communities of practice related to Christian missions in Myanmar, in which language teachers were engaged. Ding (2012) also identifies an imagined faith community as a factor in generating and sustaining vision among language learners in China. In addition, Ding describes the learners projecting this faith community into the future. “By using biblical phrases and metaphors the learners also created images of a future world in which Christians and God interact—that is, an eschatological ‘imagined community’” (p. 158). This future faith community is similar to the ‘possible futures’ identified by Bateman and Barry (2012), discussed in section 1.1.1 b.

Faith is also a factor in the quality of interpersonal relationships in language teaching and learning situations. Shu-Chuan Wang-McGrath (2012) investigates the role of faith in collaboration between Taiwanese and expatriate teachers, and found that faith was demonstrated in “being a cooperative team teacher, working diligently, and caring for and motivating students” (p. 43). Hospitality, the practice of hosting and caring for others, especially those that are different from oneself, has ties to faith (Smith and Carvill, 2000). Alternatively, others point to the negative impact of faith on relationships due to the lack of respect that some Christians show in their interactions with those of other faiths (Pennycook, 2005; Johnson and Varghese, 2006).

Without doubt, faith has a profound effect on the ways in which human beings think of their fellow human beings and interact with them. In many faith communities, identity is believed to survive even beyond death in the form of an immortal soul—again, a form of ‘possible future’ (Bateman and Barry, 2012)—resulting in a view that all persons are sacred (Riley, 2007).

### **Faith and coherence**

Coherence entails a sense of unity, meaning, purpose and significance. People generally perceive their lives as meaningful if they can identify with a deep sense of purpose that, despite any challenges, gives their lives significance (Emmons, 1999). For many people, meaning is related to spirituality in some form. The dynamics of faith are “the ways we go about making and maintaining meaning in life, the most vital processes of our lives” (Fowler, 1981, p. xii). Emmons (1999) describes the interrelationship as follows: “Religion or spirituality can provide a unifying philosophy of life and serve as an integrating and stabilizing force that provides a framework for interpreting life’s challenges and provides a resolution to such concerns as suffering, death, tragedy, and injustice” (p. 151). As Wong (2012) notes, religious faith is a salient factor in the answers to the questions “who are we and why are we here?” (p. 31). John Joseph (2004) identifies a ‘religious identity’ which he notes encompasses the most profound source for understanding the meaning and purpose of life and the existence of the universe.

Ethnic and religious identities concern where we come from and where we are going—our entire existence, not just the moment to moment. It is these identities above all that, for most people, give profound meaning to the ‘names’ we identify ourselves by, both as individuals and as groups. They

supply the plot for the stories of our lives, singly and collectively, and are bound up with our deepest beliefs about life, the universe and everything.

(p. 172)

### **Faith and language**

Language has always been, and continues to be central to religious practice and, indeed, much of faith has long been mediated through language and sacred texts (Crystal, 1965; Mooney, 2010; Spolsky, 2003). Equally, Sawyer (1999) observes that “religion has always played a role, often a very significant and even crucial one, in the history of language and linguistics” (p. 262). Research on the link between faith and language has a lengthy history, which was already highlighted in Crystal’s (1965) early work on what would later come to be known as ‘theo-linguistics’ (Mooney, 2010). Faith and language can be examined from a variety of perspectives. The language of faith has received some attention in Applied Linguistics over the past half century. As early as 1959, pioneer in the field of sociology of language, Charles Ferguson repeatedly stressed the centrality of religion in understanding important sociolinguistic phenomena (Fishman, 2006). Religious language, for example, is the focus of an extensive body of research (Spolsky, 2003, p. 81). Sawyer, Simpson and Asher (2001) in their *Concise Encyclopedia of Language and Religion* outline a systematic approach to the overlap of these disciplines, compiling a collection of succinct articles by linguists and scholars of a wide range of religions. Omoniyi and Fishman (2006) bring together the first comprehensive text on a subfield of sociolinguistics: the field of sociology of language and religion, a discipline still in its infancy. They explore a wide range of concerns from a variety of geographic, cultural, linguistic and

religious backgrounds, e.g. the effects of religion on language, the effects of language on religion and the roles of language and religion in literacy. Joseph (2004) rightly observes that with the evidence available, “it would be difficult for any socially inclined linguist not to take ethnic/religious identity seriously as a topic” (p. 181).

Ferguson observes that “all religious belief systems include some beliefs about language” (as quoted in Spolsky, 2003, p. 83). In the sacred texts of a number of religions, the creative power of language is evidenced by a deity that creates the world through his/her spoken word. An ancient Egyptian text describes how the deity Ptah creates the world by his command. In a similar fashion, the Hindu deity Prajapati also calls forth the world (Sawyer, 2001b). Genesis, the first book in the Hebrew and Christian Bible, recounts how God employs language to speak the universe into being. “In the beginning was the word...” is the opening phrase of John’s Gospel, often quoted by linguists pointing to the ways in which some human beings view language itself as sacred and primordial (Pasquale and Bierma, 2011). As mentioned above, much of religious activities such as sermons and teachings employ language centered on interpreting the “word of God” and responding to God or ‘the gods’. Texts such as prayers, blessings and curses are examples of performative speech acts that have faith implications. Religious languages such as glossolalia are further examples of language that carries important religious meanings.

While research on the relationship between religion and language is not new, Spolsky (2003) notes that the study of religion and its effects on language

contact is a little explored field that will likely attract increasing academic attention. Scholars concerned with linguistic imperialism draw attention to the role of religion in language contact (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 2005; Phillipson, 1992). As mentioned above, the relationship between faith and second language teaching has received some attention recently in discussions on the pedagogical and ethical dilemmas facing values-based English language (Baurain, 2007; Smith and Osborn, 2007).

### **3.2.3 Faith, globalization and international posture**

Finally, one other component relevant to my research, one that is also closely related to faith and identity is the notion of *international posture*. The subject matter of faith and identity in SLA must be placed in a wider global context. Scholars from a range of academic fields suggest that faith is 'a human universal', that is found in people of all religions and those who profess no religion (Fowler, 1981; Hamer, 2004). In addition, as mentioned previously, faith and spirituality is on the rise in many parts of the world (Kheng and Baldauf, 2011). Globalization has pushed questions of faith and its impact on human relationships and structures to the forefront of public discourse (Coupland, 2010; Mooney, 2010). Thus, the past several decades have brought with them a wider interest in the role religion plays in geopolitical and cross-cultural dynamics. Heather is right that "today the understanding of religious forces is perhaps rather higher on the agenda of the international community than for many years" (as quoted in Mooney, 2010, p. 340).

As a result of globalization, the decline of nation states and social class as identity markers, ethnicity and faith have become more important as forms of identification and more significant factors in cross-cultural dynamics (Cochrane, 2009; Weller, 2004; Kheng and Baldauf, 2011). Joseph (2004) describes the global shifts as follows:

In Western Europe, one of the most striking social phenomena of the last 40 years has been the decline of Christian identities, in contrast to the great strengthening of religious identities taking place in the rest of the world. The most dramatic of these have been the rise of 'militant Islam' and the resurgence of Christian worship and identities in Eastern Europe and Asian countries where they had been suppressed or banned outright until the fall of communism. Christianity has also made steady gains in parts of Africa and South-East Asia where Islam or forms of Buddhism had previously been dominant. (p. 176)

As mentioned above, religious groups constitute one form of imagined community where one can recognize a strong sense of identity (Anderson, 2006). With increasing movements across the globe, people tend to find more belonging and identity in diasporic ethnic and faith groups with both local and global connections, than they do with their nationalities. The increasing social significance ascribed to religious identity as a self-identifying rubric is especially apparent among immigrant populations from south Asian origins living in western countries. Weller (2004) notes that "this form of religious self-identification...has led to religion once again becoming a significant feature of public discourse and

policy at local, national, and international level” (p. 3). Gerald Parsons (as quoted in Weller, 2004) observes a shift in this regard from the relative absence of religious data on migration reports in the 1960’s and 70’s, now demonstrating a “steadily increasing recognition of the relevance of religious themes and issues in the discussion of race relations in recent and contemporary Britain” (Parsons as quoted in Weller, 2004, p. 5). From an African perspective, Cochrane (2009) notes that with the disempowering impact of globalization, faith, especially if it has some element of hope for change, appears to be a framework that disenfranchised people look towards for empowerment. Despite its demands and structure, faith addresses, “the centre of our need for belonging and identity, the core of our search for security and...sanctuary, the possibility of the new” (p. 31) for many people.

English as a global language is associated with a cosmopolitan, international identity. This idea is not new and not unproblematic (Canagarajah, 1999; Jenkins, 2006; Phillipson, 1992). As learners develop new linguistic identities, we do well to pay attention to the role that religious faith plays in this process. Critical voices presume imperialistic motives on the part of Christians involved in English teaching (Johnston and Varghese, 2007; Pennycook, 2005). While this is clearly a valid concern, recent research relying on data from learners themselves sheds light on another angle in the link between linguistic identity, international posture and the motivation to acquire an additional language. In addition, several researchers identify a link between Christian faith and global competence, also referred to as international posture. Ding (2012) observes a

connection between the mobility and fluidity of 21st century on the one hand, and Christian faith on the other. She notes that “notions of modernity and cosmopolitanism appear to play a strong role in attracting people to the Christian church” (p. 156), and to learn English, especially among university students. “The dataset clearly revealed an international outlook among the young Chinese converts with regard to learning a second language” (p. 156) and, “[c]learly, in this particular Chinese context young Christian converts hold an international outlook, which they view as being entirely consistent with their Christian faith and the goal of becoming a global citizen” (p. 156).

However, lest one see this as evidence for Christian faith as a corollary inextricably linked to western imperialism, John Joseph (2004) illustrates that language learners are not passive recipients of culture, language and religion. In his research on linguistic identity and naming customs, Joseph (2004) relates the story of Peck Sim, a Singapore Chinese woman that illustrates the link between linguistic identity and faith. Because of her dislike of her Chinese name, Peck Sim took on the western name Vionna during her teen years, which were characterized by a flamboyant lifestyle of partying. However, when she became a university student, she converted to Christian faith. She was reluctant to undergo baptism under her western name because of its connotations of a life she now wanted to disassociate herself from. Finally, she chose to be baptized under her Chinese name which, because of its meaning (‘pure heart’) became symbolic of her new faith identity. “If my Pinyin name, ‘Peck Sim’ means ‘pure heart’, then it has assumed linguistic connection and scriptural connotation in the context of the

Beatitudes (Matt. 5:8) ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’” (as quoted in Joseph, 2004, p. 177).

David Smith (2009) points out that for people of Christian faith international posture is not necessarily a recent phenomenon. He argues that throughout the history of Christianity, believers have sought cross-cultural interactions, and that cross-cultural communication has long been viewed as a mark of maturity in Christian faith. In their study on emerging TESOL educators’ cultural learning and spiritual formation in Myanmar, Wu and Wong (2012) also found that positive cross-cultural relationships and spiritual maturity were correlated.

### **3.2.4 Sacred texts: Unique junction of faith and language**

Sacred texts are the locus of a unique interface between faith and language. A sacred text is a written piece of language that is believed to originate in divine revelation, that is, divine communication with human beings. Among these are: the Koran, the Hebrew Bible, the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Bhagavad Gita, to name just a few. These texts are revered by respective religious adherents as the ‘word of God’, a theological term that is also used in Christianity, for example, for Christ, who is the ‘incarnate word’. Sacred texts are viewed as imparting ‘Truth’ and considered an authority on belief and conduct. They are treated with awe and viewed as holding power. For example, up until relatively recently in some western countries, it was customary to ask citizens, before testifying in a court of law, to ‘swear an oath’ to a Supreme Being using a Bible or other sacred

text, as a way of encouraging people to speak truthfully. These texts play a foundational role in religions and faith communities, as well as in wider cultural traditions. More specifically for the purposes of this dissertation, the languages they are written and read in are of great importance in several ways.

The centrality of sacred texts becomes obvious in the great care taken in transmitting the text with optimal accuracy from one generation to the next. Many ancient texts that have survived are of a religious nature (Sawyer, 1999), testifying to their central role in many cultural groups. The emphasis on precision and transmission has had profound effects on language and linguistics. Religious educational institutions have often been entrusted with the task of preserving and passing on the texts, which results in such institutions placing a heavy emphasis on linguistic endeavors, particularly language learning. Despite these common beliefs about sacred texts, there is a key difference in how they are approached in terms of the original languages they were written in. This is a distinction between beliefs about the nature of language regarding translatability (Sanneh, 2009; Spolsky, 2003). In some faiths it is considered essential to keep the text in its original language in order to maintain a maximum of accuracy in transmission. The original language of the text then becomes infused with the sacredness of the text. As a result, specific languages have links to specific faith communities, e.g. Arabic is the sacred language to people of Muslim faith, Hebrew, the sacred language to people of Jewish faith, and Sanskrit to people of Buddhist faith. In other faiths where translation is permitted or encouraged, the translation of the sacred text has long-ranging implications for the languages into which the text are

translated, as well as for the recipient speakers and their cultures. This is especially true if orthographies are devised for these languages.

### **3.2.5 Faith and motivation in reading and translating sacred texts**

Sacred texts, the beliefs surrounding them and the resulting realities have profound implications for faith motivations in learning additional languages. For faith communities concerned with expanding their faith, translating the sacred text into other languages becomes important. The history of Bible translation is a prime example of this phenomenon (for an overview see Sannch, 2009). Lewis (2001) notes that “from its earliest days Christianity has been characterized by a drive to translate the Bible as a means of providing a basis for the preservation of orthodoxy and an accurate recounting of the life and teachings of Jesus” (p. 510). Especially since the modern missionary movement, spearheaded by evangelical Protestants, which continues to gain momentum since the 1700’s, the translation of the Bible is considered an imperative part of spreading the faith (Walls, 2001). In many languages, especially minority languages, the Bible is the first text to be written down (Sawyer, 1999). “Missionaries have long seen languages as barriers to communicating their faith, then as vehicles for transmitting their message, and more recently, in E. W. Smith’s words, as ‘the shrine of a people’s soul’” (as quoted in Walls, 2001, p. 371).

A number of educational and humanitarian organizations dedicate themselves to work with languages and linguistics for the purpose of serving

minority peoples. Linguistic surveys, analyses, literacy and Bible translation are among their projects. Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in its 80 year history, has worked with over 1000 languages, and since 1970 has trained on average 1200 translators each year. Their goal is to provide literature of educational, moral and spiritual value. “All [workers] share the same motivation—service to minority people and, in particular, the provision of Scripture for them” (Bendor-Samuel, 1987, p. 744). The work of SIL is funded primarily by individuals and Christian churches “who share a strong desire to see the Bible made available to all the peoples of the earth” (Bendor-Samuel, 1987, p. 739).

Three extraordinary examples of such motivation to translate the Bible are John Wycliffe (1330-1384), Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), and William Carey (1761-1834). Theologian and reformer, John Wycliffe’s “consuming commitment to Scripture” (Lewis, 2001, p. 500) compelled him to initiate the first translation of the Bible into English, in the face of strong opposition.

Matteo Ricci, whom I have already mentioned in section 1.4.1 when discussing motivational flow, represents a particularly relevant example for my topic because he brings together a number of the factors I have been speaking of: faith motivation, imagination and language learning. I have made reference to his imaginary ‘memory castle’ of mental images as a language learning strategy. During the course of his 27 years in China, he translated numerous biblical, scientific and mathematical documents from Latin to Chinese (Hammer, 2004).

The third example is missionary-linguist William Carey, who together with his colleagues translated the Bible into 44 languages in East Asia. He also

spearheaded the production of numerous grammars and dictionaries in many of these languages, in order to provide guidance to his successors (Lewis, 2001). Sawyer (2001a) observes that churches have invested enormous resources on Bible translation and related work, in their attempts to make the Bible accessible to speakers of at least two thousand languages.

### **3.2.6 Impact of faith on language learning, language change and language spread**

Missionaries of all religions have good reason for their interest in languages and linguistics. Language acquisition, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, translation theory, orthography design, bilingual education and literacy are of primary concern to them. Indeed they have often been on the forefront of gathering linguistic data, analysis and application of theory. Lewis (2001) notes that they have “a very practical motivation to engage in the study of language” (p. 510) which is, among other aims, to provide access to their sacred texts in the languages of the people they are serving. They have been motivated not only to learn the languages themselves but also to create tools (dictionaries, grammars) for their successors, who share their goals. They have planned for a long-term presence. Translation work which entails language learning, linguistic analysis and frequently orthographic design, is a project that can take several decades (Lewis, 2001; Walls, 2001). The intensity, effort and longevity of their motivation to learn languages (among other linguistic tasks) are exceptional, in many ways similar to the participants in Bateman and Barry’s (2012) study on long-term

motivation. As Walls (2001) observes, “These concerns required them to grapple with language at a more fundamental level than most of their secular contemporaries” (p. 386).

Language change and language spread is also intimately linked with the diffusion of faiths and the work of missionaries particularly among Muslims and Christians (Mangalwadi, 2011; Sanneh, 2009; Spolsky, 2003). In fact Ferguson claims that “religion has been one of the most powerful forces leading to language change and language spread” (as referred to in Spolsky, 2003, p. 82). Spolsky notes that the spread of Arabic through Islam is the most obvious example; however, the spread of European languages through Christianity is also significant. Linguistic consequences, including ritual languages, orthographic systems and relationships between language varieties have also been a part of the spread of religions (Spolsky, 2003). For example, the spread of Islam introduced Arabic script, while where ever Christianity has spread, Latin orthography was introduced. Religions have also had an impact on language maintenance and language loss.

A number of significant implications for both languages and for faith have followed from these missionary and translation efforts. First, the translation projects have contributed immensely to the spread of faith to many parts of the world. Sanneh’s (2009) work expands on this point. “Translation gave Christianity indigenous momentum and credibility” (p. 26). Second, the interaction between European missionaries and the people groups that have been exposed to them, has also increased contact and spread of European languages

into many parts of the world. “Language contact and change is a common result of religious conversion” (Spolsky, 2003, p. 88). And finally, the role of faith, particularly Christianity, in the study of languages, linguistics and literacy has had a profound influence on local languages and cultures. While there are differing views as to the value of that change especially for minority languages and their speakers—Pennycook (2005) emphasizes its destructive nature; others emphasize positive effects (Mangalwadi, 2011; Sannch, 2009)—the repercussions have been profound and far-reaching without question. The relationships between faith and language contact are only just beginning to gain scholarly attention (Spolsky, 2003; Wong and Canagarajah, 2009). The implications of faith motivations, especially from the perspective of language learners in these situations are largely unexplored. Spolsky (2003) notes that a recent book on motivation in language policy makes no mention of religion as a factor. Along with Paloutzian and Park (2005) and Machr (2005), Spolsky is puzzled by the blind spot mainstream scholars in sociology and linguistics have for questions of faith. He suggests that perhaps it is researchers’ own strongly secular worldviews that has prevented them from seeing existential life concerns.

### **3.3 Conclusion: Language learners as spiritual beings**

The disregard of spirituality as a factor in SLA reinforces the purely cognitive perspective on language, and on learning, a view that the field is currently moving away from. Considering faith factors is in tune with current directions towards a more holistic understanding of language, and language learning (Morgan and

Clarke, 2011). Given the importance of motivation in L2 learning and the evidence that learners are more motivated if the language class deals with authentic materials relating to their everyday needs (Gilmore, 2007), there is reason to consider the role that faith plays in some language learners' motivation. Research into the impact of learners' faith on their motivation to learn an additional language is only the beginning. In one quantitative study of motivation in learners of Arabic, researchers identify, among other well-established factors, an aspect which they call 'religious motivation' (Bakar et al., 2010). As mentioned earlier, Ding's (2012) innovative research on motivation to learn English and about Christian faith in contemporary China is the first of its kind.

While most of the research referred to above deals with the macro-context of language learning and faith, the motivational impact of the immediate learning experience with regards to faith perspectives is another related area that has received little attention. Recent work on the view of language learners' identities has drawn attention to the frequently reductionist views of learners as they are dealt with in language classes and language learning course books. David Smith (2009) ponders what it might mean if we would take the view of learners as spiritual beings. He encourages teachers to keep their eyes open for the complexity of learners' needs, drawing on Comenius' notion that learners are not lifeless raw material for carving but rather "living image[s], shaping, misshaping and reshaping [themselves]" (p. 5). He notes that categories of 'spiritual' or 'moral' are consistently ignored, marginalized or reframed as affective or political in literature on language teaching and in course books. On the other hand, the

hidden curriculum of language course books communicates views of personhood that cannot be neutral. Smith (2009) describes the people that populate such materials:

Their lives consist largely of shopping and engaging in other minor economic transactions, taking vacations and engaging in leisure pursuits, eating, drinking and visiting the doctor. These are all valid activities, but when they form the whole they fall short. By and large, the people depicted do not suffer, do not die, do not face difficult moral choices, do not mourn or lament, do not experience or protest injustice, do not pray or worship, do not believe anything particularly significant, do not sacrifice, do not hope or doubt. They represent a consumer culture to which we have become all too inured, and from which many central human experiences have been quietly marginalized in such a way that to introduce, say, the language of prayer feels awkward and clumsy.... (p. 7)

Such narrow views of life have little to offer in terms of deeper meaningful interactions in the language classroom. Research into the motivational impact of content in course material is minimal (Tomlinson, 2012).

Given that faith is an increasingly important identity marker, and that globally there is increasing language contact through mass people movements, the relationship between faith motivation and language learning may be a fruitful field of inquiry that could offer insights for curriculum writers, teachers and learners.

# **Chapter Four: Research approach, design and procedures**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology employed in systematically wrestling with the research questions. While questions and answers abound in everyday conversation, research differs from these in several ways. First of all, research questions are clearly articulated and their answers are arrived at in an orderly way. Freeman (1996) illustrates the importance of systematic inquiry. “Method is the attribute which distinguishes research activity from mere observation and speculation” (Shulman as quoted in Freeman, 1996, p. 92). Research also differs from ordinary questions and answers in that it contributes on a wider scale to knowledge in the field. Ultimately, the purpose of research is to generate knowledge that will contribute to the discipline (Dörnyei, 2007; Brown and Rodgers, 2002).

I begin this chapter by clarifying some definitions regarding systematic research terminology. I examine salient characteristics of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research, contrasting the paradigms within which the first two emerge. Most research in the area of motivation in second language acquisition has been conducted from a quantitative perspective, though in the last decade there have been an increasing number of qualitative studies. After highlighting fundamental features of qualitative research, I will describe my approach and design. I will give a brief summary of my pilot study which led me to make

changes in my approach. I will highlight the reasons why I rejected a mixed-methods approach and chose to use an exclusively qualitative methodology. Then the main aspects of the project will be described: the participants, instruments and procedures, transcription, ethical considerations, the researcher's role, reliability and validity.

## **4.1 Qualitative and quantitative research**

### **4.1.1 Quantitative and qualitative research, the good researcher**

One fundamental way to define research types is to look at the ways in which the research is conducted and the data collected. Dörnyei (2007) offers concise definitions for qualitative and quantitative research:

*Quantitative research* involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods. *Qualitative research* involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. (p. 24)

While these different research types are reflective of different research paradigms, they have often been unduly separated into camps, with their corresponding proponents expressing antagonistic views towards one another. The differences between these paradigms will be dealt with in the next section. It is becoming increasingly common to argue for more constructive approaches in which these research types are viewed on a continuum, leading more researchers

to apply a mixed-methods design (Brown and Rodgers, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991).

Beyond looking at the various types of research, we may do well to define what the good researcher looks like. To ease our fears of intimidating figures in white lab coats, Dörnyei (2007) describes the ideal researcher in rather accessible terms, outlining four fundamental features: “genuine curiosity, a lot of common sense, good ideas...and...a combination of discipline, reliability, and social responsibility” (p. 17). Because research involves a lot of hard work, the researcher needs to be driven by a strong passion for the question under investigation. This passion must emerge not only from current interests that make sense from a career perspective but from a genuine personal interest. In the midst of the often elaborate and convoluted research world, researchers do well to keep their feet on the ground and their head clear with common sense so as not to lose touch with the reality of every day teaching and learning. As mentioned above, good research questions and ideas are interesting, original and fairly simple. Dörnyei’s (2007) final quality underlines the need for the researcher to be disciplined, systematic, ethical and thorough, unwilling to cut corners or make unsupported claims. With these qualities, the role of researcher is accessible to ‘normal’ people who are invested in the everyday activities of teaching. This way of looking at research was particularly helpful for me personally to gain confidence in myself as a researcher.

### **4.1.2 Contrasting paradigms**

The differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods have been frequently cited (Cresswell, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Punch, 2005). To illumine these differences in great detail is beyond the scope of this chapter, however I will only draw attention to a few salient points that highlight the contrasting paradigms. The most common difference cited—that quantitative research employs the use of numbers and qualitative research relies on the analysis of text—is a dissimilarity that obscures the deeper differences between these approaches. Richards (2005) points out that qualitative and quantitative research use both texts and numbers. More important is the philosophical frameworks that underlie each of these approaches. While the ideological wars in the 1970's and 1980's between these approaches is largely past (Dörnyei, 2007), there is value in understanding the different perspectives from which they spring. Quantitative research, whose roots are in the natural sciences, is more concerned with precise and accurate data that is 'objective' and that can be quantified in some ways. Because of its emphasis on large number sets, it is useful for illumining macro-perspectives. On the other hand, qualitative research initially evolved as a reaction against a strictly numbers-orientation, drawing attention to those aspects of research that are not quantifiable. The study of human behavior is not as predictable as the behavior of animals or other natural phenomena. From the perspective of qualitative researchers, the results of quantitative studies are "overly simplistic, de-contextualized, reductionist in terms of their generalizations, and failing to capture the meanings that actors attach to

their lives and circumstances” (Brannen as quoted in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 35).

Polkinghorne (2002) eloquently articulates the reasons why looking to the natural sciences limits the scope of inquiry when studying human behavior.

W]e need to recognize that science’s considerable success has been purchased by its self-chosen limitation of the scope of its enquiry. Science only considers impersonal experience, reality encountered as an object that we can manipulate and put to the experimental test. Its questions are framed in terms of efficient causes and not in terms of meaning or purpose. Its official discourse deals with measurements and not with values. As a methodological strategy, this narrow view has proved an effective technique for certain kinds of discovery. [However] it would be a grave mistake...to suppose that the whole of reality can be caught in the wide meshes of the scientific net. To speak of music in terms of neural response to vibrations in the air is to say something of validity, but it falls far short of being able to embrace the mysterious reality of our experience when we listen to a Beethoven symphony. (pp. 44-45)

Keith Richards (2003) counters the common perception that qualitative inquiry is ‘soft’, ‘fuzzy’, and less scientific, and that it cannot be taken as truly serious and rigorous. He points to the shortcomings of quantitative methods, noting that, while quantitative research has its place, its superficial nature can obscure the complexity of the topic in question. Janesick (1994) notes that the difference between qualitative and quantitative is not so much in methods as in “a matter of substantive focus and intent” (p. 213). Qualitative methods lend

themselves to deeper probing into the intricacies of human nature. Dörnyei (2007) explains that while quantitative research depends on large numbers, qualitative inquiry requires smaller numbers in order to give time to probe into the unique and idiosyncratic nature of individual cases. Regardless of the approach taken, researchers need to adhere to basic principles of disciplined inquiry.

The following chart (adapted from Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, p. 12) summarizes the differences between the paradigms.

**Table 1. Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms**

Qualitative Paradigm	Quantitative Paradigm
Concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame of reference.	Seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals.
Naturalistic and uncontrolled observation.	Unambiguous and controlled measurement.
Subjective.	Objective.
Close to the data; the insider' perspective. Emic perspective	Removed from the data; the 'outsider' perspective. Etic perspective
Grounded, discovery-oriented, exploratory, expansionist, descriptive, and inductive.	Ungrounded, verification-oriented, confirmatory, reductionist, inferential
Process-oriented.	Outcome-oriented.

Valid; 'real', 'rich', and 'deep' data.	Reliable; 'hard' and replicable data.
Ungeneralizable; single case studies.	Generalizable; multiple case studies.
Holistic.	Particularistic.
Assumes a dynamic reality.	Assumes a stable reality.

The disparity (and name-calling) between the two camps brings to mind the two cities in Norton Juster's children's fantasy *The Phantom Tollbooth*: Dictionopolis (the city of words) and Digitopolis (the city of numbers). The respective kings of each city forcefully argue over the importance of words versus the importance of numbers. It may be most helpful to see the two traditions as complementary, each bringing a perspective to research that makes up for the weaknesses of the other. Not only has qualitative research gained respectability in recent decades (Dörnyei, 2007; Duff, 2008), mixed methods seems to be currently the 'latest rage' in research fashions. Dörnyei (2007) draws attention to the benefits and weaknesses of mixing methods. The mixed approach can build on the strengths of each while minimizing their weaknesses. These methods allow a micro and macro analysis of the issues involved, allowing both a broad and deep look at the issues. While there are benefits from this 'cross-pollination' approach, Dörnyei warns that the expertise necessary to carry out each type of research may be beyond one researcher and can make unrealistic demands on the researcher. Also, mixing methods in a random manner can foster an 'anything goes' kind of mentality that must be curbed in a principled approach to mixing methods.

### **4.1.3 Naturalistic inquiry: Multiple models and cyclical processes**

Ely (1991) uses the word 'qualitative research' as an umbrella term to describe many different types of research that fall outside the quantitative paradigm. She likens the process of giving an adequate definition of qualitative research to trying to squeeze an elephant into a pint jar and still keeping it alive. More than being a research method, it is characteristic of an entire approach to life that is inextricably linked to the emotions, intellect and thought processes of the researcher. "It is an intensely recursive, personal process, and while this may be the hallmark of all sound research, it is crucial to every aspect of the qualitative way of looking at life" (Ely, 1991, p. 1). There is a wide range of labels for various research methods, each arising from a particular theoretical model and from various interpretations of that model. Despite their differences, there is an underlying network of principles and philosophic beliefs that allow us to connect these methods. Taken together, they represent a loosely unified paradigm that fits under the qualitative umbrella, also referred to by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as the 'paradigm of naturalistic inquiry'.

Lyn Richards (2005) draws attention to several core characteristics of qualitative research: 1) its non-linear 'looping' nature, 2) the challenge of maintaining a purposeful focus and 3) the role of researcher bias. It is not uncommon for qualitative research projects to begin without a clear hypothesis of outcomes. These emerge throughout the data collection. "The ultimate excitement and terror of a qualitative project is that you can't know at the start where it will

end” (p. 125). Despite the cyclical nature, it is important to begin with a clear focus, for without it, the overwhelming amount of data will be futile.

Qualitative researchers are looking for participants who will give their own perspective in words and actions, creating an interactive process in which those who are being researched teach the researcher about their lives and experiences. Researchers approach the experience as a whole, not as separate parts. The purpose is to understand and reflect on the experience as a whole. There is no one general method that encompasses all the principles.

#### **4.1.4 Qualitative research: A good fit for the study**

The proposed research paradigm for this study was initially a mixed methods approach, which would allow for an exploration of both the depth and breadth of the questions. However, after conducting a pilot study, it became clear that quantitative methods were not appropriate to examine the question under investigation, and so I adopted an exclusively qualitative approach. There were several reasons for this decision. First of all, quantitative research lends itself better to dealing with large numbers of participants. The numbers of potential participants in this study was very small (20) and so for this reason quantitative research was not suitable. Secondly, the area under investigation—the motivational impact of sacred text in SLA—is new to the field of motivation in SLA. Exploratory research is better served by a qualitative approach (Dörnyei, 2007). Thirdly, after designing, administering and analyzing a quantitative survey instrument for my pilot study, the results seemed inadequate to address the

research question in any meaningful fashion. Since questions of meaning and purpose are at the core of this study, a qualitative case study approach was adopted because it seemed better suitable to address the issues involved.

Richards (2005) also highlights the role of agency and the need to acknowledge the part played by the researcher in the process. "Never lose focus on telling how you see it" (p. 42). He emphasizes the need for reflexivity as an essential part of data collection and interpretation. This enables the researchers to more readily identify the 'baggage' that they bring to the process. By reflecting constantly on how the data is collected and the part the researchers play in this process, the 'bias' that is undeniably part of every research endeavor can be skillfully utilized to shape the 'fabric' of the study.

Questions of faith and belief are hot potatoes in the field of language teaching. The topic of response to a sacred text is one that can hardly be discussed without some kind of researcher bias and baggage, elements that are equally found in the audience of the research. Research in the area of religious motivation falls into the discipline called 'psychology of religion', a sub-discipline of social psychology. Daniel Batson (1997) expresses concern over the shortcomings in research in this field. He laments that researchers are often too eager to "demonstrate the positive value of religion in human life rather than to make an honest inquiry in an attempt understand the way religion operates in human life" (p. 8). He observes that religion may well have a positive effect, but it is important to also entertain the possibility that it may not. The qualitative paradigm seemed most suited to wrestling with the nature of such issues.

## **4.2 Research approach and design: The qualitative cycle**

Rather than depend on precise definitions, Janesick (1994) offers a metaphor as a way of conceptualizing research design. She suggests that “metaphoric precision is the central vehicle for revealing the qualitative aspects of life” (p. 227).

Qualitative research is compared to an artist in the choreography of a dance, with three stages in research design: 1) Warm-up: Making initial design decisions; 2) Exercises: Conducting the study, the pilot study and ongoing design decisions and 3) Cooling Down: Decisions made at the end of the study, reflecting and writing up. Leaning on Janesick’s basic structure, I will elaborate on each of these three phases.

### **4.2.1 Warm-up: Making initial design decisions**

#### ***Research topic***

Before engaging research, we must ask ourselves what kinds of questions are worthy of investing our time and effort. We must choose issues that are relevant, that are important to us and our audience. Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) stress the need to pursue questions that contribute to the overall formation or refinement of an overarching theory or relevant practice issues:

Our research questions are interesting to the extent that they can (a) apply to theory formation or theory testing, (b) apply to practice (e.g., curriculum design, materials development, development of language policy, test development), or (c) apply to both theory and practice. (p. 4)

As mentioned in the introduction, my interest in the topic of sacred text as a motivational source for language learning emerged from the context of my work as a curriculum writer and language teacher educator in an MA TESOL program, which is housed in a theological seminary. Given that the Bible is a globally widespread text, and given that unprecedented numbers of people world-wide are engaged in language learning, it seemed to me a research topic that could have broad implications for applied linguists, curriculum writers, and language teachers interested in faith and identity in learner motivation. Upon encountering Dörnyei's Motivational Self System (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009), I discovered a theoretical framework within which to conduct this research, with hopes of both theoretical and practical outcomes.

### *Site and participants*

Another important issue to consider at the beginning of a study is the selection of a site and participants in line with the research question. Access and entry to this site is particularly sensitive. Since the researcher will be spending a fair amount of time in this setting, it is important to gain the trust of the participants at the outset (Janesick, 1994). The researcher must make agreements with the participants in line with ethical research considerations. Related to this is the timeline of the study. How often and when will the researcher access the site?

Several possible sites and participants presented themselves to me. There was one particular faith-based English language program in a large city in eastern Canada using the Faith Series curriculum (Tiessen and Lepp-Kaethler, 2010) with teachers and learners as possible participants. This option was eliminated because

of the distance to the site. It was not practical for me to spend extended periods of time at this site. Another site in closer proximity began to use the same curriculum and so this became an option for conducting the pilot study. Other motivated language learners as possible participants included my theologian colleagues, and Bible translators within my acquaintance. It was the latter two groups of language learners that I ultimately chose as most of my informants.

### *Methods*

In addition to the research topic, site and participants, the researcher must make decisions regarding research methods. The list of possibilities is extensive.

Qualitative researchers use a combination of the following options: participant observation, interviews, document analysis, case study methods, oral history, including narrative and life history approaches, grounded theory and literary criticism (Biklen and Bogdan, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Dörnyei, 2007).

The researcher must relate methodological choices to theoretical constructs of research design which are often chosen based on ideological frameworks.

Janesick (1994) reminds us that “qualitative researchers [must] accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free design” (p. 212). Delving into contentious issues such as faith identity and the role of the sacred in motivation in language learning, it soon becomes quite obvious that there is no value-free zone here. Qualitative research offered a forum to examine my own ideological frameworks and biases pertinent to my study.

All human thought is rooted in a particular worldview and is based on beliefs in fundamental presuppositions about ultimate reality. In this dissertation I attempt to examine aspects of religious faith within the conventions of a western scientific perspective. These two systems of knowledge have sometimes been in conflict with one another in the past several centuries; however, upon examining their epistemological underpinnings, I have found a way to integrate them. Paul Hiebert's (1999) taxonomy of epistemological positions has been helpful for me to see the frequent positivist and instrumentalist presuppositions of western scientific worldviews. Hiebert's description of 'critical realism' most closely represents my own position. In my view, western science and religious faith are two systems of knowledge that both grow out of the cultural and subjective nature of knowledge. They need not contradict one another but can be complementary. Neither is a photograph of reality. Both begin with beliefs based on underlying premises; both draw on historical experiences to help them understand the order and meaning of the world. My alignment with Christian faith is based on a 'critical realist' epistemology that allows me to integrate both a scientific and a faith perspective. My favorable bias towards Christian faith also includes a bias towards seeing the sacred text as a positive influence in the lives of faith adherents. I have worked hard to prevent this bias in unduly coloring my results. As I have said earlier, complete impartiality is not possible. However, I do believe that a researcher not aligned with Christian faith would have come up with largely the same results. This is illustrated by the fact that my analysis of the data from my sole Muslim informant--despite our difference of faith alignment--confirmed

for the most part the same patterns as resulted from my analysis of the rest of the data.

### ***Research group support and emotions***

Collaborative learning has become a buzz-word in education in the last several decades. In many learning environments, part of the educator/ facilitator's job is to set structures in place that require learners to interact in collaborative settings. At times, researchers are required to put these collaborative structures into place themselves. Ely (1991) describes the benefits of such groups. They can become the 'ties that bind' and the 'life lines' (Ely, 1991) that allow researchers to support one another through frequently arduous and lonely paths. Some researchers consider groups indispensable to the research process. Research groups are places where researchers can present current work, discuss and discern direction, consider findings and suggest alternative routes and explanations. Group members can act as auditors and accountability partners to the research process, giving researchers space to air concerns and frustrations with the process, test new ideas and hunches, and offer emotional support. Within such a group, researchers can establish goals and interim deadlines. Long term goals can be paralyzing. Breaking these down into manageable, bite-sized chunks can be energizing. Group members can help one another clarify ideas and thoughts. Sometimes just expressing one's ideas out loud to others can be a way of discovering another point of view. One participant in such a research group confesses, "Our peer group was a strong element in the entire course and the strength and direction of

their comments began the first week” (Ely, 1991, p. 36). Groups can be structured in weekly or bi-weekly meetings where researchers take turns presenting what they are reading, writing and working on. These documents can be sent before the group meetings. Research group members are invited to critique and give feedback.

With these ideas as my inspiration, I invited two of my TESOL colleagues, Gail Tiessen and Amber Wylie, to form a ‘Nottingham Extension Research Group’—NERG for short. The purpose of this group was to provide me with a local ‘community of scholars’ so as to circumvent the isolation I felt, being far away from the Nottingham campus. NERG was designed to be a forum for discussing ideas, insights and problems. I was hoping to get feedback on the steps I was taking in my research, and on the various drafts of the documents I was writing. From January 2009 to the present, we have met once or twice a month for two hours each time. Prior to each meeting, I emailed excerpts from my research journal and any current chapter I was working on, so as to give my colleagues time to prepare. The meetings were face-to-face in one colleague’s home, until August 2010 when one colleague moved to a distant city. After this, we continued our monthly meetings via Skype. In the last year, the NERG interactions consisted mainly of documents sent back and forth with fewer face to face meetings. The support and feedback I received from my NERG colleagues was immeasurably valuable, indeed, a lifeline.

Ely (1991) places emphasis on the role of emotions in the research process. Frequently, researchers face negative emotions such as fear, self-doubt,

uncertainty, anxiety and loneliness. “It is typical for the researcher to experience a slew of unanticipated, perhaps chaotic or disorganizing emotions during the course of the research” (Friedman as quoted in Ely, 1991, p. 109). Entering into an unfamiliar research process can evoke anxieties for researchers not accustomed to unconventional methods. The experience can be akin to a language learner having arrived on the shores of an unfamiliar landscape, encountering inhabitants with an unintelligible language. The metaphor of paddling alone in a canoe across the ocean is a picture that frequently came to my mind. Friedman’s overwhelming sense of loneliness echoes my own experiences at the beginning my research without a research support group:

For some people, dissertation brings up anxiety, panic, a sense of being found out as a fraud. For me, too, to some extent. But it has really brought up wellsprings of incredible loneliness such as I have never felt. Day in, day out, isolated, not connected to anyone in a meaningful fashion. (as quoted in Ely, 1991, p. 114)

Friedman comments (reassuringly) that qualitative researchers as a lot are not faint-hearted. Other forms of research no doubt come with similar challenges. However, because qualitative researchers are encouraged to be ‘in tune’ with themselves and the research process, they will naturally stumble upon these emotional aspects and are urged to see them as a natural part of the process that can be mined for the insights they provide. In addition to the normal insecurities noted here, I developed an acute anxiety disorder and clinical depression that required me to take a ten-month medical leave from my work and studies. Despite

my inability to work at my research during this time, I continued to meet with my NERG group, which saw me through these very dark months.

## **4.2.2 Conducting the study**

### *Choosing a sample*

Once the researcher has gone through the steps of setting the stage, he or she is ready to 'enter the field' for data collection. The data collection should ideally involve a pilot study in which research instruments can be tested and preliminary rapport with research participants established. Once the researcher has begun collecting data, the analysis begins as well. Central to a qualitative methodology is an emic perspective, that is, the researcher must strive to gain an 'insiders' perspective as much as possible. The research must look for the meaning and perspective that the participants give to their experience. The researcher must keep his or her eyes open for relationships of events and experiences as well as tensions and conflicts between the evidence (Janesick, 1994).

I conducted an initial pilot study with language learners engaged in a classroom setting utilizing Bible-based curriculum. This choice of participants proved not to be useful for gathering data, as there were too many variables beyond sacred text impacting learners' motivation. I will describe the pilot study in more detail in a later section of this chapter. In order to rule out detracting variables, I then decided to hone in on language learners with just two qualifications: first, they demonstrated extraordinarily motivated and successful language learning behavior, and second, their language learning was intimately

related to accessing (or making accessible to others) a sacred or special text.

Through snowball sampling, I was able to secure 20 participants without difficulty.

***Method of data collection: Semi-structured interviews***

Interviews are the mainstay of qualitative research because here we gain access to the words in which the people we are studying express their ideas and thoughts from their perspective. Asking questions and getting answers is more complex than it may seem, and finding opportunities for engagement more varied than might be supposed. Some interviews are more formal with structured questions, others happen 'on the fly' at unanticipated moments in a variety of unforeseen situations and circumstances. In-depth interviews seemed the most conducive to probing into questions of meaning and purpose, and consequently they became the mainstay of my data collection.

***The observer's paradox***

The observers' paradox is a phenomenon widely viewed as a factor in research. Davies (2008) notes that researchers need to be aware of the fact that their involvement in research necessarily changes the subject at hand. She calls for researchers to be cognoscente of the ways in which their involvement in the process changes the issues under investigation. "All researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research" (p. 3). She speaks of 'reflexivity', a process by which researchers examine the ways in which the results of their research are affected by the people and processes involved in research. Such awareness is relevant for all social research but is particularly

important for ethnographic research. Powdermaker argues that both involvement and detachment are important skills for ethnographers as they fulfill roles of both 'stepping in and out of society'.

In order to incorporate such insights into research practice, individual ethnographers in the field—and out of it—must seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience and reflection on it as an intrinsic part of research. (as quoted in Davies, 2008, p. 5)

Ladson-Billings grapples with the tensions researchers face as they negotiate their roles as researchers and individuals connected on a personal level with the subject matter and with the people who are the focus of the research. She underscores that it is no small challenge to juggle multiple roles and to do them justice. She describes an equivalent of the 'observers' paradox' but as it operates within the mind of the researcher, i.e. how the researcher's own investment in the community affects the research and the researcher's role. "Thus our understanding of our roles includes an interweaving of the personal and the public—the intellectual and the emotional—the scholarly and the political" (Ladson-Billings as quoted in Merchant, 2001, p. 59). Merchant expresses "growth and struggle, joy and pain, fear and confusion, worry and doubt" (p. 74) as she come to grips with her roles as a researcher within her own community.

The observer's paradox became particularly obvious while I was conducting the pilot study, and ultimately it became another reason for

withdrawing from the site I had chosen. My multiple roles connected to the site became hindrances to the research agenda.

### **4.2.3 Analysis and writing up**

After the warm-up and the 'work out' stage of Janesick's (1994) tri-part dance choreography metaphor comes the final 'cooling down' stage, in which design decisions are made at the end of the study. This includes triangulation in analysis of the data and considerations in writing up the research report. Janesick suggests five different types of triangulation:

1. data triangulation: the use of a variety of data sources in a study
2. investigator triangulation: the use of several different researchers or evaluators
3. theory triangulation: the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data
4. methodological triangulation: the use of multiple methods to study a single problem
5. interdisciplinary triangulation: the use of perspectives from other disciplines (pp. 214-215)

In terms of considerations in writing the narrative, it is important that the researcher rely on inductive analysis, allowing categories, themes and patterns to emerge from the data. Reporting the results of the research can be likened to telling a story. "Like the choreographer, the researcher must find the most effective way to tell the story, to convince the audience (Janesick, 1994, p. 215).

## 4.3 The study

### 4.3.1 The pilot study

Dörnyei (2007) expresses concern that while piloting is generally endorsed by researchers, it is not often done or done superficially. Piloting helps to prevent major errors and frustration in the study. While it is more important to pilot quantitative studies, piloting in qualitative studies can also be beneficial, and has the added benefit that data obtained in a 'dry run' can be incorporated into the actual study.

My pilot study was designed to test logistics and gather information prior to a larger study in order to refine the research design. The research site I focused on was an 'English for Academic Purposes' (EAP) program in a North American Christian university using *Faith Portraits* (Tiessen and Lepp-Kaethler, 2010, 2011). The pilot study addressed the question: In what ways does Bible-based curriculum enhance or detract from meaningful language learning? The proposed research paradigm was initially mixed methods, with interviews and a survey as the main means of data collection. However, as the study progressed, it became clear that the survey was not helpful in examining the question under investigation, and so I adopted an exclusively qualitative approach. The project was designed as a case study using in-depth interviews and focus groups as primary data collection techniques.

A total of 16 people participated in a combination of face to face interviews and focus groups conducted in two stages (Dec. 2009 and April 2010). Nine English language learners participated in face to face interviews, two of which were interviewed twice. The learners were between the ages of 19 – 42 from Korea, Latvia, Costa Rica, Brazil and Rwanda. Seven learners were male and two were female. Their language levels were between Canadian Language Benchmarks 5-8.<sup>1</sup> All learners aligned themselves with Christian faith except for one. Four learners had had prior studies in theology and six were planning to study in a Christian post-secondary institution either at a Bachelor's or Master's level. Seven EAP teachers participated in a focus group, two of which participated in follow-up face to face interviews. Three teachers have Bachelor's Degrees with TESOL certificates, three teachers have Master's Degrees in TESOL and one has a PhD in Education with a Certificate in TESOL. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed manually.

The study identified a number of flaws in the research design that prevent a conclusive result. Some of the weaknesses I identified were: a) too many variables in the research setting; b) an unclear research focus; c) my over-involvement with multiple roles in the research site and d) gaps in my understanding of motivation in SLA.

**a. Too many variables.** I set out to discover the role of sacred text in enhancing (or detracting) from motivation in second language acquisition.

By examining the context of a language institute going through the process

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Canadian Language Benchmarks descriptors see <http://www.language.ca/>

of curriculum change and using a Bible-based curriculum in an EAP program, I found myself embroiled in numerous issues that were beyond the scope of my research question. I found myself inadvertently conducting a curriculum and program evaluation, which was not my intent. I realized that this context was not ideal for my research question because it involved too many variables other than the ones pertinent to my study.

- b. **Unclear Research Focus.** Because of the number of variables, I found myself confused in terms of my research question. I was not sure how much of the data was actually applicable to my study. I was also not clear on what to include in the report. I realized that the way in which I had formulated my research question to the participants (“how the \_\_\_ Curriculum is being received”) is actually quite different than my actual question (what is the role of sacred text in enhancing motivation in SLA?). This confusion originated in a quandary over how to explain my somewhat complex research question to second language learners in a manner that would be comprehensible to them. I realized the importance of a clearly focused research question and of articulating this clearly to the participants.
- c. **Too involved in the research site.** As noted earlier, I realized that my position vis a vis the institution was conflicting. My multiple roles as advisor, co-author and researcher resulted in over-involvement. These multiple roles created unequal power relationships that presented problems

of validity and reliability. I realized that I needed to redesign my study in such a way that allowed me more of an arm's length engagement

**d. Gaps in my understanding of motivational theory and theory of researching motivation in SLA.** As I was conducting and writing up the study, I repeatedly found myself asking if I had really understood what motivation in SLA is, how it expresses itself and how it can be researched. Sometimes I felt like I was simply doing a textbook evaluation that was only tangentially related to researching motivation. I was concerned that my study was not thoroughly grounded in the research. The importance of a thorough grounding in the existing research became even more evident to me.

As a result of conducting the pilot study, I made the following changes in my research design:

- I conducted my research in settings with fewer variables.
- I established a more thorough grounding in the literature with a clear connection between the literature and the study.
- I sharpened the research focus and ensured that it was theoretically grounded in the literature in terms of its methods and procedures.
- I chose participants and settings that were less involved for the researcher in order to enhance reliability and validity.
- I gave participants interview protocols in advance.
- I put into place additional methods to ensure reliability and validity.
- I used NVivo software for data analysis.

The pilot study was timely not only for my research purposes but also because it coincided with the implementation of a new curriculum in the English language institute. I drafted a complete report and submitted it to the supervisory committee of the institute (see Appendix A for an executive summary).

### **4.3.2 Participants**

With the experience gained in the pilot study, I set out to target a different sort of language learner. I chose participants based on two criteria: first, demonstrating unusually intense and lengthy observable language learning behavior and achievement, and secondly, engaging in language learning in a way that is linked to using, or desiring to use, a sacred text. The 20 participants chosen for this study were selected using snowball sampling. Seventeen of the 20 participated in semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which lasted between 45 and 75 minutes each. One informant participated in an interview via Skype. Two participants responded extensively in writing to an interview protocol. Participants were from a number of nationalities and were located in several continents. In terms of their religious background, all were strongly affiliated with Christianity, except for one informant allied with Islam. In addition to their L1, participants had learned a variety of languages—between one and seven—in order to use, understand, or access a sacred or ‘special’ text, in most cases, the Bible. In terms of their educational background, all participants had post-secondary education ranging from three to nine years. Table 2 presents a short introduction to the 20 interviewees.

**Table 2. Brief descriptions of the 20 participants**

(Pseudo)name*	Brief description
Myat	Myat, in his mid 30's, is from an east Asian country. He is a theology student studying for a Master of Divinity in North America. In his home country he directs a Bible/Discipleship School. He has learned English in order to be able to read the Bible in English.
Kelvin	Born and raised in North America, Kelvin is adjunct professor of Greek at a theological seminary. He has learned Greek in order to read and teach the New Testament.
Julius	Julius, in his early 60's, is North American and has a PhD in Old Testament Studies. He works as Professor of Old Testament in a theological seminary, where he is also an instructor of biblical Hebrew. He has learned seven languages (Hebrew, Greek, French, German, Akkadian, Aramaic, and Ugaritic) in order to understand the Bible and the biblical literature better.
Linda	Linda, in her early 50's, is North American, with an MA in Linguistics. She and her husband have worked for 20 years as missionaries and Bible translators in an African country. She has learned three languages (French, Swahili, and Bosdong) in order to translate the Bible.

Shauna	Shauna is North American, in her late 20's pursuing a MA in linguistics in an east Asian country while learning an east Asian language in order to translate the Bible into this language.
John and Eunice	John is in his early 60's and was born and raised in North America. He has an MA in Global Studies and has taken numerous courses in linguistics and translation. Eunice is in her late 50's and was born and raised in a Central American country. She is a master's student and has taken numerous courses in linguistics and translation. They have both learned three languages (French, Sulla, and Bilabongali) in order to translate the Bible. They and their family have worked for 35 years in language learning and Bible translation in an African country.
Peter	Peter is a North American New Testament scholar. He has learned Greek and Hebrew in order to read the Bible, and teach theology and Biblical languages.
Leona	Leona is North American, in her early 30's pursuing a MA in linguistics in an east Asian country while learning an east Asian language in order to translate the Bible into this language.

Dominic	Dominic, native of North America, is a New Testament scholar. He also has an MA in English Literature, and teaches both English Literature and Theology at a university. He has learned Greek in order to read and teach the New Testament.
Daryl and Penelope	Daryl and Penelope are in their mid sixties, born and raised in North America. They both have degrees in Biblical Studies and have taken numerous courses in linguistics, second language acquisition and translation. They have learned two languages in order to work as missionaries and translate the Bible. Together with their family, they have dedicated 35 years to language learning and Bible translation work in a South American country.
Lucinda and Aiden	Lucinda and Aiden are both in their mid 30's, both raised and have lived in South America for most of their lives. Aiden is the son of Daryl and Penelope. They both have degrees in Biblical Studies and have taken courses in translation and adult literacy development. They have learned two languages (Biba clo and Mankhuet) in order to do Bible translation and related work. They have worked as Bible translators and adult literacy workers in a South American country for 12 years.

Margaret	Margaret is in her early 70's, born and raised in a South American country. She has completed a diploma in Biblical Studies, and has taken numerous courses in linguistics and translation. Together with her husband, she has learned two languages and has spent approximately 50 years in language learning and translation of the Bible and related literature in a South American country.
Bill	Bill is in his mid 30's, born and raised in North America. He has a PhD in theology, and specializes in German theologians in his research and teaching at a theological seminary. Bill learned German in order to translate works by a German theologian as a part of his doctoral dissertation. He continues to work at improving his German for the purposes of his ongoing theological research.
Shakel	Shakel was born and raised in a middle-eastern country where he achieved two master's degrees, one in pharmacology and one in business administration. He is in his mid 30's and is affiliated with Islam. He immigrated to North America in about 2005. Since his childhood and to the present he has learned Arabic in order to read the Qur'an in the original.

Barb	Barb, in her mid 40's, is a native of North America. With a master's degree in theology, she teaches Koine Greek in a central American country. Her students are pastors who would like to read the New Testament in the original. She continues her learning of Greek.
Garret	Born and raised in North America, Garret is a theologian with a specialty in New Testament. He has learned Greek in order to read and teach the New Testament.
Susan	Susan is an Old Testament scholar who has spent most of her life in North America. She teaches theology and Hebrew at a theological seminary. She has learned Greek and Hebrew in order to read and teach the Old Testament.

\* The participants' names and the names of countries and languages have been changed in order to protect the informants' anonymity.

### 4.3.3 Instruments and procedures

All Skype and face-to-face interviews were recorded with an electronic voice recording device; the data was transcribed and analyzed with the NVivo software. The responses from the two informants who had opted to respond in writing were also analyzed with NVivo.

#### **4.3.4 Interview protocol**

In the context of qualitative research, the interview is the dominant strategy for data collection. It consists of a directed conversation conducted by the researcher in order to get information from the informant, to analyze it and develop insights on the topic at hand. I opted for a semi-structured interview style, in order to give sufficient leeway for relevant tangents not addressed in my questions. The interview protocol changed somewhat from one interview to the next as each discussion illuminated new ways of approaching the subject.

Often the participant is a stranger to the researcher, however, in my case, because I relied on snowball sampling, most informants were not entirely strangers to me. In each case there was some personal connection. Participants were initially contacted via email or face to face and given a brief overview of the purpose of my research. If they expressed interest and consented to receiving more information before making their decision, I sent them a formal letter of invitation and informed consent (see Appendix B), and an interview protocol (see Appendix C-1 and C-2 for samples). These documents explained the project in more detail. I arranged for meetings with each participant that responded positively after reviewing the interview protocol and letter of invitation/informed consent. Each informant signed the letter of informed consent to indicate their agreement. The interviews were conducted in English except for one which was conducted in the informant's first language.

The interviews began with a preamble thanking the participants for their willingness to take part in the research. I checked if there were any clarifying

questions. I explained the procedure of audio-recording again and assured the participants of confidentiality. After giving a brief overview of the purpose of the study, I invited the participants to respond to the questions outlined in the protocol. I ended the interviews by thanking the participants again for their time and their contributions, reassuring them that they would get a copy of the dissertation if they so desired.

#### **4.3.5 Transcription**

Initially I had planned to hire someone to transcribe the data, however, when this did not materialize, I decided to do it myself. This proved to be a wise decision as it held the advantage of being immersed more thoroughly in the data. While some researchers find transcription tedious and boring, I thoroughly enjoyed the process as it slowed down the flow of information to such an extent that it allowed me to pay close attention to intonation and other details that I missed in the rush of the interview.

#### **4.3.6 Ethics**

The importance of ethics in research is critical. Two issues of primary importance in most guidelines on ethics are: informed consent and protection of the participants from harm (Biklen and Bogdan, 2007). In my study, the participants' interests were protected through the following means: 1) the purpose of the research was articulated to them; 2) their voluntary participation was made clear to them, and both verbal and written consent was obtained; 3) it was outlined to

them how the data would be used; 4) they were promised access to the results if they so desired; 5) their confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and withholding of other identifying data in reporting.

#### **4.3.7 Researcher Role**

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is particularly sensitive because of the personal nature of one's involvement and the delicate nature of relationships. It is essential that the researcher identify any personal values, assumptions and biases from the outset. Biklen and Bogdan (2007) suggest that the researcher not study something in which they are directly involved. Since I align myself with Christian faith, I am partial towards viewing the Biblical text in a positive light, and could easily fall prey to Batson's (1997) concern, in being overly anxious to demonstrate the positive effects of religious faith and giving less priority to ambivalent or negative effects. In order to circumvent this possible bias, I made sure to highlight some ambivalent and negative effects that surfaced in the interviews.

#### **4.3.8 Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity have been topics of contention between qualitative and quantitative researchers. Some qualitative researchers have rejected the terms outright as coming from a quantitative paradigm grounded in the natural sciences and not applicable to a qualitative framework (as outlined in Richards, 2003).

Reliability deals with the question of how consistent our data is. This is a matter

of procedure. Validity is concerned with how well our representation of the data reflects the reality, hence a matter of interpretation.

In terms of reliability, there are two major considerations that should be taken into account: inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability. Inter-rater refers to the degree to which two or more individuals agree about the coding of an item. Intra-rater reliability relates to consistency over time of the individual researcher (Biklen and Bogdan, 2007). In terms of inter-rater reliability checks, I have had my advisor and the members of my NERG group (Nottingham Extension Research Group) Gail and Amber read extracts of the interview transcripts. We compared notes in terms of our understanding of the data. To address intra-coder reliability, I left time between applying the coding, then recoded and checked it to see if my coding had changed.

Validity concerns must be attended to from both internal and external perspectives. Internal validity is “the degree to which the researchers have observed what they set out to observe and have reported all the critical observational data” (Brown and Rodgers, 2002, p. 289). Matters related to internal validity include choice of research participants, time, history, adequate database and issues related to instruments used. The researcher must consider the number of participants to be included so as to make sure the study is representative. The task and instructions given to participants must be consistent, carefully formulated and piloted. Researchers must be aware of the ‘observer’s paradox’ also known as ‘Hawthorn effect’, that is, they must take into account the effect their work will have on the research results.

Johnston (2000) reminds us that “observations are not always (and may never be) completely trustworthy, so we need ways of ensuring that we are doing all we can to observe from different perspectives and in different ways (p. 37), also referred to as triangulation. Trustworthiness is also earned by thick descriptions and by keeping a meticulous audit trail.

Richards (2003, p. 237) suggests three key validity checks, which I have attempted to incorporate throughout the course of my research:

1. **Member validation:** Seeking the views of the participants on the accuracy of the data, descriptions and interpretations. I have sent data summaries to key informants along with my interpretation to ensure that it is an accurate representation of their intentions.
2. **Constant comparison:** Keeping on comparing codings with other codings and classifications. I have conducted numerous cycles of coding.
3. **Negative evidence:** Seeking out negative evidence and assess their relevance to interpretations. I have given careful attention to ambivalent and negative evidence in my interpretation.

After a researcher has established internal validity, she must attend to questions of external validity, “the degree to which results can be generalized beyond the study itself” (Brown and Rodgers, 2002, p. 289). Here we are concerned with how representative the results are for the group of people we are intending to represent and make inferences about. We need to take care in how we represent the generalizability of our findings. We need to remember that we are working with small and possibly idiosyncratic data sets. It is tempting to claim

that our findings are more generally applicable than they are in reality. Though we want our research to be useful outside our own research setting, we can only suggest that it might be and that others conduct further research to verify these generalizations (Johnstone, 2000). On the other hand, individual accounts of small data sets illumine the complexity of factors at work, and while it may not be possible to replicate or generalize the research, these cases raise useful questions that can then be pursued in other avenues (Caughey, 2006).

## **4.4 Reflecting, interpreting and writing up**

### **4.4.1 Research journal and transparency**

Research is a problem-solving process that cannot be gone about in a straight-forward analytical way. Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) emphasize the need to take time to analyze the many options and not to hurry into a project before the ideas have crystallized into coherent forms. Giving in to initial pressure to produce—a pressure novice researchers often face—is ultimately detrimental to the process and the end result because it will render results that are not satisfactory. Novice researchers also need to be cautioned against the common misperception of research as proving an idea right or wrong. Things are usually more complex than that. Research is often exploratory in nature and more of a matter of collecting evidence to support the relationship that the researcher has suggested in the hypothesis.

According to Biklen and Bogdan (2007) transparency in qualitative research is a key element in reporting results. As suggested by numerous qualitative research experts (Biklen and Bogdan, 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; Ely, 1991; Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991) I began a research journal early in the process. It was an invaluable resource in sifting through ideas and possible research questions. This has given me space and time to reflect on the data and on my experiences in a way that has allowed me to see more of the complexity of relationships and factors. My journal also became part of the data collection, parts of which I have also coded with NVivo. I kept detailed records of the means by which I dealt with the data, which included my hunches, ideas, speculations and observations. I reflected extensively on the method, the analysis, the ethical dilemmas and conflicts. In my research journal I included correspondence with my advisor Zoltan, and with Gail and Amber, my NERG associates. I took note of unsolicited comments from a variety of sources that might provide insights into the data analysis. I included reflections on my reading of theory.

#### **4.4.2 Ongoing analysis**

Analyzing consists of sifting through the field notes, interview transcripts and other data collecting, then grouping them in terms of subject categories, also called 'codes'. While it is tempting to wait until all the data is collected before analyzing, there is value in beginning analysis as soon as data collection begins. "The most important part of the analysis takes place gradually during fieldwork" (Davies, 2008, p. 246). One of the most important aspects of qualitative research

is the 'back and forth' that occurs between the data and the theory, so that the categories are grounded in the data and that the theoretical analysis emerges as a result of an analysis of the primary materials themselves. While interpretation of data begins along with data collection, it is in the final phase that researchers must take the results of all the data collection and come to some kind of conclusive summary.

Once all the data has been gathered, the researcher conducts a combination of inductive and deductive analysis of the information gathered. It is important for the researcher not to super-impose categories but rather to pay attention to themes, categories and patterns which emerge from the data.

My ongoing analysis of the data very much represented the aforementioned 'back and forth' between the literature and the data. My categories emerged from a combination of inductive and deductive analysis. Initially, I created categories based on the literature and tried to find examples of these in the data. The categories employed in chapter six were to a great extent taken from the L2 Motivational Self System. However, I also encountered important themes in the informants' accounts that were left unaccounted for in the overall structure of my categories. I then immersed myself in the data and discovered inherent patterns. Chapter five describes several categories that emerged from an inductive analysis. For example, the four groups of language learners categorized according to the purpose of their language learning (5.1) emerged from the data. Also, the five observations regarding shared religious beliefs and values outlined in 5.2 were categories that surfaced from the data

itself. Likewise the five types of imagined faith communities described in 5.3 were also the result of inductive analysis. The three overarching categories for chapter six and chapter seven (spiritual vision, L2 vision and sacred text) emerged from an inductive analysis.

At other times I delved back into the literature to search for new models that would lend themselves to better explaining the dynamics of what I was seeing in the data. When I came upon these sources, I added them to my literature review and used them as categories of analysis. For example, there were several sources I discovered rather late in my analysis. Swann and Bosson's (2010) 'Tripartite Motivation Approach' and Bateman and Barry's (2012) study on exceptionally long-term work motivation provided me with categories for analysis that were particularly pertinent to my data set. Having discovered them in the literature, I used them in a deductive analysis of my data (see 5.4 and 7.1).

Ongoing analysis in my project was facilitated through a number of other events. For one, I was invited to co-author a chapter in a research anthology. The chapter was a brief summary of the research I had conducted thus far, focusing only on a third of my informants. This provided an opportunity for me to concentrate my focus and distill my research into a brief text that in essence was the heart of my dissertation. Presenting it in publishable format was enormously helpful in cutting to the core. This also had the added benefit of demonstrating (to myself, first and foremost) that an overarching pattern could be found in my data.

In addition, I was able to present a lecture on my research at a professional research conference. This gave me further opportunity to distill the research to its main thrust.

#### **4.4.3 NVivo functions**

Before the age of personal computers, ethnographers worked with large files of handwritten or typed materials. Bazeley (2007) and Dörnyei (2007) outline the ways in which computer-aided qualitative data analysis aides the research process. Working with software packages such as NVivo, allows researchers to have quick access to large amounts of materials. Categories are linked to an index in the database of field notes and other materials, so that all sections of a particular code can be accessed directly. The software assists the researcher in managing, organizing and keeping track of data. It helps the researcher manage ideas and knowledge and lends itself to conducting queries of the data, opening potential for new strategies for analysis. The researcher is able to graphically model ideas, cases or concepts, and to present reports with an easily generated audit trail. Software can enhance the thoroughness and completeness with which analysis can be conducted.

While computers make accessing materials quicker, they also come with some challenges of their own. Davies (2008) warns that computers cannot be expected to do the thinking; researchers themselves must assign the categories. A computer program cannot make up for sloppy work or poor reasoning. Bazeley (2007) puts it well: “a poor workman cannot blame his tools, good tools cannot

make up for poor workmanship” (p. 3). Having quick access to large amounts of data can also become problematic when a researcher over-categorizes and assigns too many small codes that need to be revised or re-categorized later on.

I decided to use the software NVivo8. Because I was not near a center in which training for NVivo was offered, I flew to Toronto to attend a two-day workshop held by QRS<sup>2</sup>. This training was highly valuable in that it gave me a basic understanding of the software. More importantly, it helped break the isolation that I felt with the project, in that I was able to engage in face-to-face networking with other researchers facing similar challenges in learning the software. I came away with user guides and contacts to complimentary help-lines, which have been of considerable assistance.

#### **4.4.4 Coding**

After entering the interview audio files into the NVivo program, I transcribed them. After I had transcribed seven or eight interviews, I began the coding process. In order to develop a coding system, I studied the data searching for words, phrases and subjects’ ways of thinking that repeated themselves and stood out. I developed a list of coding categories; I created nodes<sup>3</sup> for each theme. I also created free nodes<sup>4</sup> based on some of the themes I had identified in my literature review. After sifting through the data, I was able to identify sub-themes, which I then coded as tree nodes.<sup>5</sup> I ran into a common error made by novice

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<sup>2</sup> QRS International is the software developer of NVivo.

<sup>3</sup> A container for a theme or topic within the data.

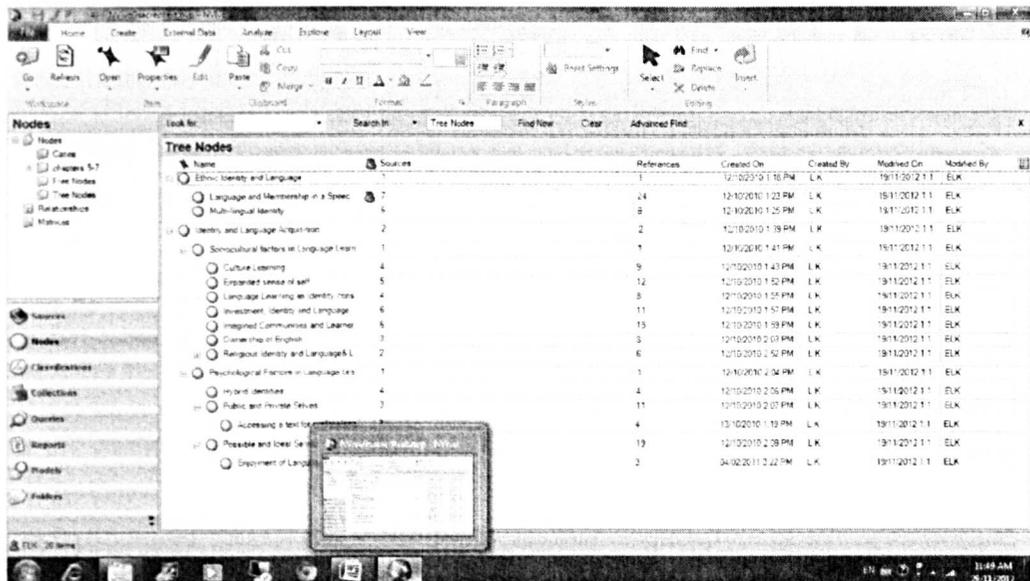
<sup>4</sup> A ‘stand alone’ node that has no clear logical connection with other nodes.

<sup>5</sup> Nodes that are organized in a hierarchical structure.

researchers in that I developed an intricate system of tree nodes with multiple sub-topics. At times, I decided to change my structure and found it rather cumbersome. After discussing the emerging patterns with my advisor, I was able to come back to the coding with a more global outlook that allowed me to simplify my coding categories.

In the following images, the reader can see screen shots of how my categories changed over time. Figure 1 below shows the categories that I made up in advance based on the stage I was at in my literature review. I kept records of the stages of coding so as to be able to look back at the process. This was two and a half years before completing my dissertation.

**Figure 1: Tree nodes based on literature review**



The next three screen shots (Figures 2, 3, 4) are of the three chapters in my results section. These shots illustrate how I was still in the process of learning the NVivo software. I had each chapter in a separate folder. As the reader can see, my categories have changed significantly from the previous screen shot.

Figure 2: Nodes of chapter 5 in process

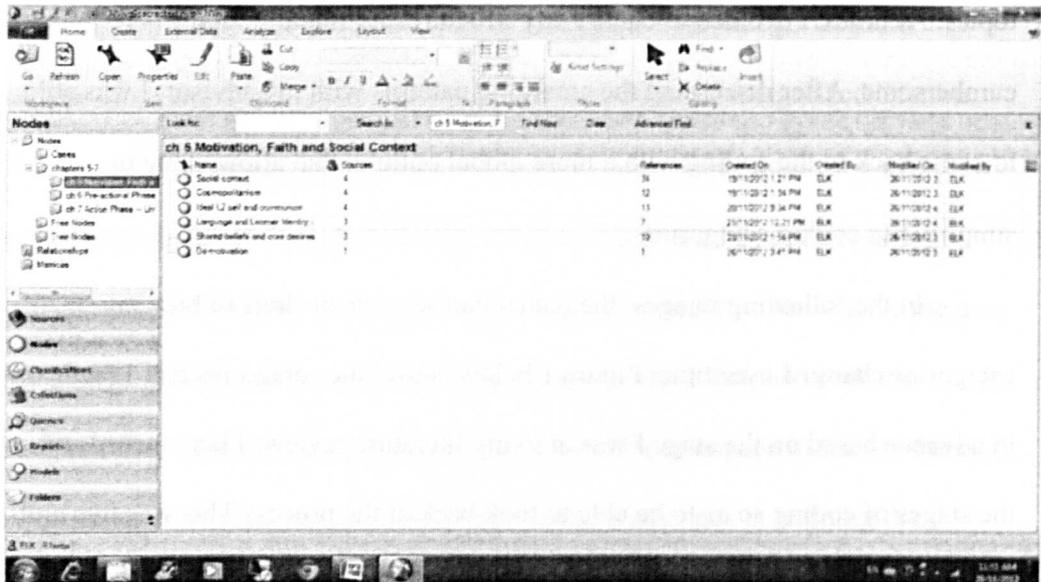
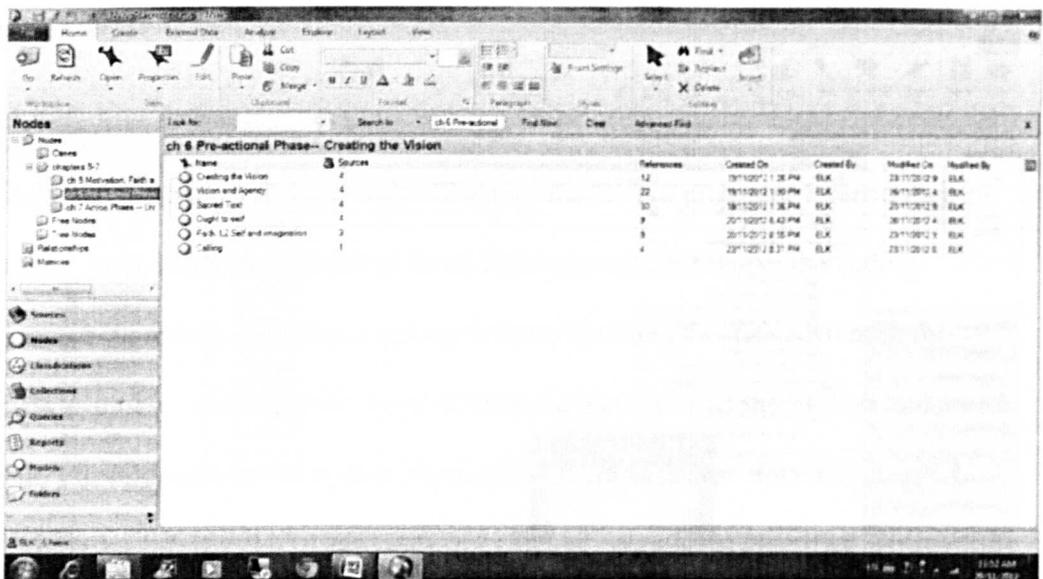
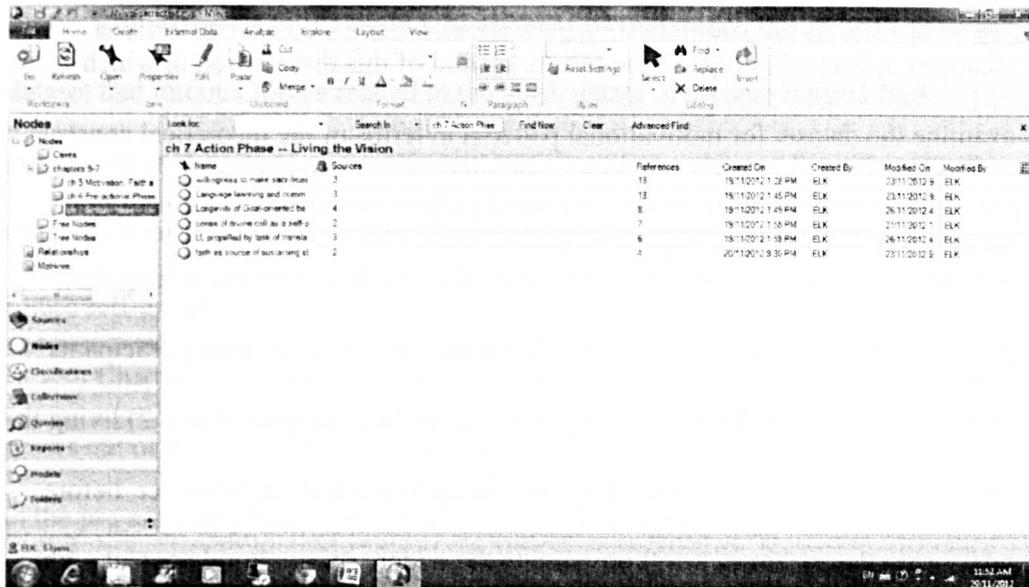


Figure 3: Nodes of chapter 6 in process



**Figure 4: Nodes of chapter 7 in process**



My experience with NVivo was generally positive. The software certainly was helpful in managing the data as I coded and recoded. On the other hand, there were numerous features in the software that I did not utilize because my project was small in light of NVivo's capacity for very large scale research projects.

## **Introduction to chapters 5, 6 and 7**

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 comprise the results section of this dissertation in which I examine the dataset for motivational patterns in terms of the theoretical constructs identified in the literature review. As noted earlier, motivation is the source of why people engage in something, how hard they work at it and how long they pursue it. In this regard, two distinct phases can be observed in the participants' accounts: 1) creating the vision (why participants learn language) and 2) living the vision (how hard and how long they are willing to work at it). However, before addressing these phases, I will investigate the wider socio-cultural context within which my informants function, in chapter 5. Subsequently, chapter 6 explores the first of these phases (pre-actional): creating the vision, while chapter 7 elaborates on second phase (actional): living the vision.

Chapter 5 examines the socio-religious context in which the vision of an L2 Self emerges and is lived out. Following the person-in-context relational theory (Ushioda, 2009) and the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009a), I demonstrate how the social milieu sets the stage for a joint spiritual/L2 vision to emerge. Of particular importance in this chapter is the social nature of religious faith. I examine the evidence for relationships between L2 motivation, faith and social context. Both external and internal forces contribute to this context. External forces include communities of readers, and their beliefs concerning the sacred texts. Participants align themselves with one or more of five types of imagined faith communities. Despite their differences, all imagined faith communities promote a stance of international posture. This cosmopolitanism

situates informants' language learning and contributes to their experience of meaningful investment. In addition to external surroundings, it is evident from the dataset that internal forces related to the participants' own core desires find expression as they respond to their contexts. Based on evidence from the data, I illustrate how shared beliefs embedded in imagined faith communities function as future self-guides.

Chapter 6 builds on the previous chapter by explaining how the L2 vision grows out of the socio-religious context. The focus here is on elements involved in the pre-actional phase of motivation, where informants describe their spiritual 'call' or 'vision'. It becomes clear that informants' spiritual call/vision and their L2 vision are, for the most part, very closely related. I examine the data, first for evidence of the spiritual vision, and then evidence for the L2 vision. In both cases I apply Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011, pp. 131-132) set of six components for the motivating capacity of the ideal and ought selves. In addition, an important element in this joint spiritual/L2 vision is the sacred text. Sacred texts are meaningful authentic materials that play a distinctive role because they represent a unique juncture of faith and language. The chapter gives a thorough discussion on the question 'why participants learn language'.

After examining how the joint spiritual/L2 vision has formed in chapter 6, I present evidence of how hard and how long informants are willing to sustain language learning. In chapter 7 the focus is on the actional phase of motivation of Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process model. This includes the ways in which this vision is lived out in the observable goal-oriented behavior informants engage in.

A description follows of how motivated language learning behavior, once begun, takes on a self-propelling dynamic. I draw upon evidence from the data that sheds light on the intensity, quality and longevity of goal-oriented behavior. The dataset points towards a shared ideal future grounded in imagined faith communities with which informants align themselves. This shared ideal future gives rise to strong self-guiding and primary motivating attractors.

## **Chapter Five: Social context, faith and L2**

### **motivation**

#### **5.1 The role of context**

Before examining the emergence of an L2 vision in my informants, it is important to consider their socio-cultural and religious contexts. The primary theoretical framework for this dissertation is the L2 Motivational Self-System (Dörnyei, 2009a) as described in chapter 1.4. Of the three major components in this framework, the current chapter concerns itself with the third dimension, namely the L2 learning experience. In Dörnyei's framework, this dimension refers to the learner's experiences in the immediate learning environment (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, and the experience of progress). I have chosen to draw a much wider arc surrounding the immediate learning experience, following Ushioda's 'person-in-context' relational view. The contexts in which my informants live and work can be divided into external and internal dimensions (Vallerand, 2012). In terms of the external forces surrounding my informants, I will describe the imagined faith communities (henceforth referred to as IFCs), their fundamental beliefs concerning sacred texts (section 5.2) and their salient characteristics clustered in five types (section 5.3). The notion of international posture can be identified in all five types. Within the context of IFCs, the motivational aspect of my informants' language learning illustrates Norton's notion of investment and situated learning. The data indicates that IFCs are highly influential in the lives of my informants. However, because learners are

not passive objects that automatically follow the scripts their IFCs present them with, it is important to consider internal forces at work. Hence, I will describe the ways in which informants respond to and interact with the external forces in their environments, leading them to choose particular life paths that require L2 learning. Important internal forces become apparent as I describe informants' core motivators (agency, communion, meaning, and the role of language). Together, these external and internal forces tap into the learners' future self guides.

As outlined previously (Chapter 1.3.1), Ushioda (2009)'s 'person-in-context' relational view of motivation draws attention to the fact that people who are learning languages, are more than just language learners. This perspective highlights unique individual identities and the contexts within which people live. Ushioda emphasizes that background environments must not be viewed as factors beyond the individual's control. She reminds researchers and teachers that the person who is learning a language is not the passive recipient of environmental influences. She rightly emphasizes human beings' capacity for executive action. Ushioda underscores the dynamic, complex and nonlinear nature of the interaction between a person and their environment, which calls for a more holistic approach in researching L2 motivation. As mentioned earlier in connection with socio-dynamic systems theory, De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2007) also point to motivation occurring within a complex self-regulating ecosystem in which each part is interconnected with all other parts.

My informants and their particular contexts provide ample illustrations of this ‘person-in-context’, and ‘person as agent’ perspective. An analysis of these aspects is the topic of this chapter. The contexts within which my informants live their lives, the values they adhere to, the decisions they make and the circumstances they experience (in part as a result of their decisions) are all integral elements which contribute to our understanding of their L2 motivation. Without a broader understanding of this context it is difficult to appreciate the intensity, quality and longevity of their goal-oriented L2 learning behavior.

Among the many types of possible imagined communities (ethnic, social, professional, national, etc.), in this study I am concerned with imagined faith communities (IFCs). The IFCs within which my informants are situated are unique forms of imagined communities. As I have outlined previously (see chapter 3.2.2), IFCs are places in which people frequently find a strong sense of belonging and communion. All participants in this study align themselves closely with an IFC. In response to research on L2 motivation and Christian faith (e.g. Chan, 2012; Ding, 2012; Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2012), Ema Ushioda (2012) notes the intrinsically social nature of religious faith identity.

[T]he history of human civilization attests to the inherently social nature of religious faith. This social nature is reflected in shared religious belief systems, cultures and practices within various communities through the ages and across the globe, and in associated processes of socialization and religious education within communities as well as (in many cases) a mission for communication and dissemination beyond. This underlying

social impetus to share, communicate and mediate (or translate) one's faith (in current or future imagined communities) emerges as a very strong theme in the three chapters under focus. (pp. 178-179)

Ushioda has identified an important background theme that is vital to understanding the joint spiritual/L2 vision of my informants, especially the idea that IFCs extend across the globe and through the ages. I will come back to these temporal and cosmopolitan aspects of IFCs in a subsequent section of this chapter.

The IFCs referred to by my informants are characterized by a number of distinct features. First of all, these IFCs share basic religious belief systems. While there are naturally some variations within and among IFCs, five core beliefs can be distilled that are foundational to these communities and are pertinent to my topic of study. Secondly and flowing from these shared beliefs, several types of IFCs emerge from the data. The first two types are geographic in nature, namely local and global IFCs. The third and fourth have temporal dimensions: historic and future IFCs. In addition, I have identified a fifth type of IFC, namely academic/professional IFCs. Informants were, for the most part, nurtured in local IFCs, but were socialized into a global perspective from early on. In addition, informants chose professions that entail either a global or an historic focus. Some informants merely allude to a future-orientation while others speak quite clearly of a future dimension; in some cases with eschatological<sup>6</sup> elements. Most informants also have ties to academic and professional IFCs. All

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<sup>6</sup> Doctrinal beliefs that concern ultimate things such as death and the end of the world.

five types of IFCs play distinct, though partially overlapping roles. The shared beliefs communicated within the IFCs have implications for ideal and ought-to-selves, which in turn are major influences as future self-guides.

Before delving into the details of shared beliefs and other characteristics of IFCs, I will describe four groups into which I have divided the informants, according to the purpose of their language learning: (a) academics, (b) linguists, (c) appreciators and (d) influencers. A brief description of each group and its members will further highlight the role of context in L2 motivation.

***(a) Academics***

The academics group is composed of those informants who work in faith-based universities or theological seminaries. Their work entails research and teaching in the areas of Bible, theology and ancient languages. Their students are pastors, counsellors and educators who work in church or para-church organizations. Informants included in this group are: Julius, Garret, Kelvin, Dominic, Susan, Peter, Bill and Barb.

***(b) Linguists***

The linguists group is composed of those informants who work in faith-based non-governmental organizations that are dedicated to humanitarian development and to communicating the faith in cross-cultural settings. Their work entails linguistic analysis, language learning, community development, creation of orthographies, development of literacy and other educational materials, training translators and teachers and Bible translation. Informants included in this group

are: Margaret, Linda, Lucinda, Aiden, Penelope, Daryl, Eunice, John, Shauna and Leona.

*(c) Appreciators*

The appreciators group is composed of just one informant, Shakel. His language learning is not related to his profession, but to his personal appreciation of the sacred text.

*(d) Influencers*

The influencers group has Myat as a representative. While he shares some of the same characteristics of both the academic and linguist groups, his language learning is unique in that it is most obviously related to his desire to influence people towards positive ways of thinking (beliefs and values) and behavior. His work includes teaching and public speaking.

Unfortunately, the groups (c) and (d) each have only one informant. Obviously this is a major limitation of my study to have only one informant in these groups; however, I have decided to include them in the study as representatives of these groups because they address my topic of inquiry in highly relevant ways. Their accounts provide for some interesting parallels and contrasts. Also, anecdotal evidence suggests that it would not be difficult to find other informants in these categories. My only consideration is one of timely completion of this dissertation.

## **5.2 Shared religious beliefs and values**

The first dimension of my informants' external context is the notion of shared religious beliefs and values. The reader may wonder why I have categorized values and beliefs as part of the external forces. The reason for this is that in this section, my aim is to demonstrate how these shared beliefs function as foundational blocks within the context of IFCs. Even though the informants have internalized the beliefs, my purpose here is to show that the beliefs are central to the context in which informants have been socialized.

As I have outlined in chapter 3.2, many researchers agree that values play an important role in language learning contexts, whether teachers are aware of this or not. Differing values may give rise to ideological, political and spiritual dilemmas for those involved in language teaching (see Wong & Canagarajah, 2009). While previous research has emphasized the role of values from the perspective of language teachers, there is very little research into the role of faith and values from the perspective of language learners and their social contexts. My current research seeks to explore the ways in which shared values are foundational for these language learners who align themselves with IFCs. For the purposes of this study, a primary characteristic of these IFCs is their shared religious belief systems, specifically beliefs concerning a sacred text. I will make five observations that demonstrate the centrality of shared beliefs about a sacred text. As will become clear, these beliefs have major motivational relevance to the informants. While not all beliefs are shared by all informants, there is significant

data to suggest that these are widely held beliefs within many IFCs. The five observations are as follows:

Observation #1: Sacred text is believed to be divinely inspired.

Observation #2: Sacred text is central to a community of readers.

Observation #3: Sacred text is held as a treasure worthy of devotional and academic study.

Observation #4: Sacred text is a key source of ideal and ought-to selves.

Observation #5: Sacred text is a means for communicating the faith.

### **Observation #1: Sacred text is believed to be divinely inspired**

Participants in all four groups (academics, linguists, appreciators and influencers) describe a belief in a divinely inspired sacred text. For the majority of informants, specifically those who align themselves with Christian faith, the sacred text referred to is the Judeo-Christian Bible. Other terms used to speak of the Bible are 'God's word' and 'the Scriptures'. The following excerpts are representative:

*Frieda: Why is the Bible so important that you would invest so much?*

*...because...this is the one place that we can with certainty go and know that God has communicated with us (Linda).*

*...because it is an inspired text, it is THE text [speaker's emphasis] of the faith (Susan).*

*...because I think it is inspired. I think it is God's word to the church (Garret).*

*I just believe this [book] really is divinely inspired (Julius).*

The words of the informants make it amply clear that divine inspiration of the text is a central belief to which they hold. Their use of the plural 'we' and

'us', and the word 'church' indicate that these are beliefs widely held within the IFC. As will become clear, this belief has profound implications for my informants' motivation.

## **Observation #2: Sacred text is central to a community of readers**

Just as speech does not stand in isolation from communities of speakers, written sacred texts cannot be understood apart from the context of their readership.

Sacred texts only gain relevance through the meaning assigned to them by the communities of their readers. Those informants in the academics group articulate most clearly the central role of the biblical text in communities of readers. These informants make unambiguous links between the concept of a divinely inspired text and the historic community of believers that base their beliefs on their understanding of it. In the quotes that follow, the first two articulate in general terms the centrality of the text, referring to 'the church' as the core community of readers. The last quote articulates this centrality in personal terms that highlight the socializing role of the IFC.

*Frieda: Why is the Bible so important that you would invest so much?*

*The life of the church is grounded in the Biblical text (Susan).*

*The church down the ages has said... it is God's word to the church (Garret).*

*I went to [a Bible school] and there I was taught that the Bible is foundational to everything. "The word of our God shall stand forever." That was a huge stone at the entrance at the time (Julius).*

Besides overtly articulating this belief as informants in the academics group above have done, the centrality of the text becomes apparent in several

other ways: (a) through the care taken in translating and interpreting it, (b) through the power that the community of readers attributes to it and (c) through seeing parallel phenomena in the centrality of other 'special texts' in other reading communities.

***(a) Careful translation and interpretation***

Since the text is viewed as sacred, there is much resting on its translation and interpretation within the communities of readers. The same sacred text may have numerous 'reading communities' because of numerous translations. Dominic points out that it is impossible to achieve a translation that is ideologically neutral. He refers to the notion of 'reading communities' which clarifies why adherents of certain faith traditions prefer one translation over the other. The following comments indicate the importance attributed to translating and interpreting the sacred text in ways that are as close as possible to its original meaning:

*The closer we can get to some mythical original the more we can say, 'this is what the story is; this is what it means' (Susan).*

*It is the believing community reading the scriptures that collectively becomes the authority in understanding the Scriptures (Julius).*

Kelvin articulates how the reader's beliefs influence the way in which the text is read and interpreted, pointing out the uniqueness of the biblical text for those to whom it is central.

*When you are looking at a biblical text, whether you admit to it or not, you are treating it differently than any other narrative. The way you treat what is happening in it, how much stake you put into its historical reality or theological value—all those things influence how you interpret the narrative.*

***(b) Perceived power of the text***

The centrality of the sacred text is also apparent in the power the community of readers attributes to it and the motivating effect it seems to have in particular situations. Referring to the Benedictine<sup>7</sup> tradition, Susan addresses the awe with which the believers in this tradition view the text. She speaks of the ‘*power of the text*’ when it is read in community through spiritual disciplines such as ‘*lectio divina*’ and ‘*recitation*’. She observes the motivating effect of the text when she uses it in her Hebrew classes.

*I use the blessings—the Shemah—...and we will read it together and they can do that even when they are just learning the letters. They can go away with a text that they know is central, crucial to Judaism and...they can look at the words...and say them, know what they mean, and that seems to motivate them.*

**(c) Other ‘special’ texts**

Thirdly, texts other than the Judeo-Christian Bible can also be central to communities of readers. For Shakel, it is the Koran that is central to the community of Muslim believers with whom he is aligned. For Bill, the texts of the German theologian Karl Barth are central to the community of Barth scholars to which Bill belongs. The context in which Bill participates in the task of translating some of Barth’s writings from German into English is an international group of Barth scholars.

*The language [German] gives me entrance into a whole community of theologians and the scholarship that centers around these theologians. It is that conversation, that community that emerges from the texts. We are known by these texts. We might not know each other. In a way that is isolating but also collegial (Bill).*

My academic informants draw attention to the fact that ‘sacredness’ and

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<sup>7</sup> A monastic religious order founded by St. Benedict of Nursia in the fourth century.

centrality of a written text is not limited to a faith community. Garret points out that for a Goethe scholar, the *Faust* text would be viewed as 'sacred' and central to a community of Goethe scholars.

In sum then, the centrality of the text becomes apparent through the meticulous processes of translating and interpreting it, through the authority that the readers attribute to it, and through seeing similar dynamics with other 'special texts' in other reading communities. From the informants' comments and from their vocational choices, it is obvious that the sacred text is central to the communities of readers they align themselves with.

### **Observation #3: Sacred text is valued as a treasure worthy of devotional and academic study**

One outcome of the previous two beliefs is that faith adherents tend to invest a significant amount of time and energy studying and interpreting the sacred texts of their traditions. Many informants express a strong personal attachment to the text, which they see as a key influence in their lives and in their vocations. For those in the academics and linguists groups, core aspects of their careers involve extensive engagement with the text. This attachment to the text frequently expresses itself in strong emotional language, such as *passion, drive, love, precious, interest, joy and delight*. The second of these three excerpts illustrates the socializing effect of IFCs in terms of this belief.

*If this is a sacred text that comes from God like no other text does, then it deserves that careful attention. I believe in that (Peter).*

*All my Bible college professors were incredible people who really instilled in me a love for studying God's word. In particular, my Hebrew professor was a special man who really gave me a love for the Bible and specifically, the Old Testament (Leona).*

*[W]hen you are dealing with something as precious as God's word, you better not be just winging it (Lucinda).*

As these quotes demonstrate, informants find great pleasure in studying the sacred text which they value beyond any other text. Reading this highly significant text in its original language heightens the pleasure and brings a “freshness” (Susan) and immediacy that is prized.

#### **Observation #4: Sacred text is a key source of ideal and ought-to selves**

On account of the belief that the biblical text is divinely inspired and is central to the reading community that surrounds it, a strong guiding function is attributed to it. For those who align themselves with Christian faith, the biblical text is held to be authoritative for faith and life within IFCs through the ages and for all people groups. According to the interpretation of most IFCs, the text communicates principles for meaningful living in human community. The reading community generally speaking, finds numerous ‘ought-to’ and ‘ideal possible selves’ that served as future guides in the past, and continue to do so in the present and future. Numerous informants refer to this guiding function of the biblical text. Linda says it tell people how to live. Barb calls it a ‘guidebook’ for how to live; Peter uses the metaphor of a compass for the IFC. The Koran, the sacred text of Muslim believers, functions in a similar guiding role. Shakel offers some very specific

'ought-to' and 'ideal selves' that he finds in the sacred text. Susan's statement (quoted below) alludes to a deep engagement with the text, no mindless obedience, but rather a stance of humility and meaningful submission to its authority. I have chosen just a few of many quotes illustrating the guiding function attributed to a sacred text.

*If we really want to be happy, find wisdom and have a future as a people—then we need to find this in the Bible. If we follow what is written here—this is the way. This book explains to us where we have come from, where we are and where we are going (Margaret, paraphrasing the words of an indigenous church leader).*

*This is the book that teaches me, this is the book that helps me (Myat).*

*The Koran...has a lot of things that we should follow but we are not following it. According to the Koran, [interest] is not allowed because it makes rich people richer and poor people poorer. And like drinking is not allowed...and betting and...murder...is not allowed.... We should always have a brotherly relationship with each other. Even Muslim and non-Muslim should have a friendly relationship (Shakel).*

*I am a Hebrew scholar. I want to master the grammar of the text because I want to know, but we always stand under the text (Susan).*

Discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) can help explain the motivational relevance of this belief. When people are faced with the tension they perceive between their current selves and their ideal and ought-to selves, they are more likely to engage in behavior that brings the selves in harmony with one another. Shakel clearly articulates this tension. He sees a disparity between the ought-to selves in the sacred text on the one hand and the behavior of many of his fellow believers in the Muslim IFC around him.

For people who hold to this fourth shared belief (along with the first three), there is significant incentive to engage with the sacred text in one way or

another to understand more clearly its guiding content. Because the text is viewed as foundational by the reading community, an element of socialization (group pressure) is also at work. I will deal in more detail with the specific ways in which this group pressure expresses itself when I focus on specific IFCs (see section 5.3 of this chapter). Because the sacred texts of concern here (the Bible, the Koran, or other significant works) were originally written in languages not yet acquired by the informants, this belief also has motivational implications for language learning. Shakel points out the language gap in accessing the meaning of the sacred text.

*The people who read [the Koran], they just read Arabic but they don't know what it means.*

### **Observation #5: Sacred text is a means for communicating faith.**

The fifth observation, which is a corollary of the previous four beliefs, relates to the value of communicating and disseminating the tenets of faith to current and future IFCs. For most of my informants, this belief entails the notion that the sacred text must be understandable. The sequence of events envisioned is as follows:

Access to the sacred text is created (through translation or through learning the original language of the text)

The sacred text is read, understood and embraced.

The ideal and ought-to selves described in the sacred text become visible.

Readers will experience the tension of discrepancy between current and ideal selves.

Readers will adjust their beliefs and behavior in line with ideal selves.

Part of that behavior includes joining existing IFCs or creating new ones.

In the following excerpts, the informants' desire in this regard comes out clearly. They wish to create access to the sacred text in order that it may be read, understood and embraced. In each case, the informants mention their L2 learning as being motivated by the desire to make the text accessible. In describing her main reason for learning and teaching Koine Greek, Barb underlines her desire to equip pastors for their role as interpreters and communicators of the sacred text to present and future faith communities. Lucinda describes the manner in which she hopes her L2 learning will contribute to the L2 faith community in which she is working. She articulates her view that the sacred text must be understood in order for the faith community to be informed. Because of this imperative, the difficult task of translation is essential.

*I do it for pastors to understand the Bible. The only reason...how does it impact my faith and how does it impact my ability to share that faith to communicate into other people's lives (Barb).*

*I hope the Bible will be used and accepted.... And, that is a strong motivator for me to not only learn the language well, but to try to understand the culture as well (Leona).*

*At this point we are just learning the Bibaclo [language] in order to understand truly if there is a need and we are part of their church there and we would like to fill in any gaps that are lacking in their understanding of the word of God. Our hearts desire is that the Bibaclo [people] would be able to read with understanding the word of God.... [W]e believe that when God spoke the word of God, people understood. It is a huge nation of people and we would love to provide for them the word of God in the language of today (Lucinda).*

Shakel, who aligns himself with Muslim faith, shares with his Christian counter-parts, the value of nurturing and communicating the faith through the

sacred text. However in his belief system, access to the sacred text is not created through translation. With Shakel, there is a different dynamic at work, namely, the belief that translation of the Holy Book is generally not acceptable.

*Frieda: Why can't you just stick to [your L1] for reading the Koran?*

*Shakel: Because Koran is a Holy Book which was given in the form of Arabic. It is more preferable to read it in Arabic. That is the real language of the Koran. And so if you translate it, it does not have the same kind of pleasure if you read it in Arabic. You feel more better if you read the Koran in Arabic.*

Similar to beliefs surrounding the Judeo-Christian Bible, the beliefs surrounding the Koran also have momentous ramifications for language learning, but in quite a different way. Without learning Arabic, Shakel observes, the community of Koran-readers does not access the text in a meaningful way. In this context it becomes understandable why, according to Shakel, the ideal and ought-to selves explained in the Koran remain inaccessible to many Muslim believers. Since they do not make the effort to learn Arabic, they are not reading their Koran with understanding and hence the guiding function of the sacred text is lost. In Observation #4 I have quoted Shakel as he spells out in detail the implications this has for the everyday life of Muslim believers.

This belief has far-reaching implications for motivation, for how one understands the nature of language and for language learning. The motivational relevance of this fifth belief is interesting for my topic, but not necessarily straightforward. The problem of access to the sacred text is dealt with in a variety of ways. Participants' strong convictions regarding sacred texts result in significant time and energy spent studying these texts for the purposes of

communicating the faith, among other reasons. Because the original languages of the text are not languages known to the participants, a major part of this investment involves language learning. With the Judeo-Christian sacred text, it is only expected of a selected few (academics) to learn the original languages. In order to deal with the language gap in the sacred text of the Islamic community of readers, according to Shakel, all believers are expected to learn the original language. Shakel observes that for many believers, the motivation to learn the original language of the text is weak or non-existent. Linda finds this consistent with her experience, pointing out that the entire enterprise of sacred text translation in Christian IFCs is based on the premise that, generally speaking, the average person will not be sufficiently motivated by the sacred text to learn the original languages. Those learners, who do make this effort, are extraordinarily motivated.

### **5.3 Characteristics of imagined faith communities**

In the previous section, I have summarized the predominant religious beliefs and values surrounding the sacred texts that have motivational relevance for the participants of my study. Clearly, the sacred texts play a key role in the IFCs in which my informants were socialized. As I have mentioned previously, the texts are always interpreted within specific communities of readers. This next section focuses on the role that IFCs play in nurturing and socializing informants. As I have highlighted in section 3.2, Wenger's (1998) social identity theory lends itself to explaining the social nature of faith formation in teaching and learning

generally speaking. The notion of ‘communities of practice’ is especially helpful in demonstrating the role of social context in identity formation within faith communities. The results of Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei’s (2012) and Ding’s (2012) research show an unmistakable link between learners’ sense of identity, their L2 motivation and their faith. In addition, I have referred to Smith and Carvill’s (2000) work that draws attention to the role of the spiritual nature of language learners which has been neglected in second language acquisition research. In this chapter I will focus on identity, faith, and motivation in general terms. The L2 motivation aspect of this equation will be dealt with only in passing in this chapter; however, I will deal with it in greater depth in the next two chapters.

As Ushioda (2012) observes, the social nature of religious faith is reflected in practices “throughout the ages and across the globe” (p. 178). Here I will explore the dynamics of the IFCs, and the participants’ situatedness within their respective communities. Informants’ positioning within IFCs contributes to their motivation towards major life decisions, including the choice to learn one or more languages in relation to a sacred text. With evidence from the data set, I will examine five types of IFCs in which informants are socialized. First, I will examine the roles of (1) *local* and (2) *global* IFCs in nurturing believers. Then I will explore the roles of IFCs from a temporal perspective, namely IFCs of the (3) *past* and (4) *future*. I illuminate the role of (5) *academic* IFCs in informants’ motivation for major life decisions. Finally, I highlight how all five types of IFCs exert influence towards an international posture in the informants.

### **5.3.1 Local faith communities**

As Ushioda (2012) correctly points out, faith communities have a strong role in socialization and religious education, which frequently also includes a social impetus to share and communicate its beliefs. In this section, I will focus on the nature of local IFCs in creating a nurturing context. First I will show that local IFCs are most often the environments in which informants first encountered an L2. Secondly, I will highlight the role of local IFCs in the social impetus to communicate one's faith in current or future IFCs. Thirdly, I will give evidence of the fact that local IFCs have had and continue to have a significant impact on the lives of informants.

First of all, many of the informants describe an IFC in which they were first nurtured as children and youth. Their immediate and extended families were often the primary environments in which they were socialized. Informants' families were for the most part integrated into extended IFCs. These groups took the forms of local congregations of believers (churches) and faith-based post-secondary educational institutions whose goal is to nurture faith development (e.g. Bible school). Numerous informants also point to mentors (parents, professors or classmates) who had an influential role in this socialization process. My informants provided a rich array of examples of these sites of early socialization, of which I note just a couple:

*Frieda: What led to you become interested in learning languages?*

*That actually goes back to my childhood. I grew up in a church that was conducted entirely in German. My parents spoke German and all our relatives... (Julius).*

*When I was 5 years old, my parents hired a tutor. And they came into our home and they teach us how to pronounce these words, how to read the Koran (Shakel).*

A second characteristic of local IFCs is their key role in the impetus to communicate faith to others. Many informants elaborate on the role that the local faith community had in influencing them to choose vocations with this thrust. Exposure to this notion led them to their eventual commitment to linguistic or academic work within the context of an IFC. This type of work requires language learning as an essential part. The desire within these IFCs to communicate the faith is illustrated by the following quotes from informants of the linguists group:

*I can remember...my mom pushed me as a kid. She always had missionaries in the house; she always wanted to go to Japan...missions was always important so I got to know a fellow in our church...and he would say when you are older you are going to go [communicate the faith cross-culturally] (Daryl).*

*My interest in missions began when I was a girl... Missionary speakers at church...had me particularly captivated.... One speaker [spoke] about Sri Lanka.... I was totally enraptured by the fact that there was some little island so far on the other side of the world (Shauna).*

A third characteristic of local IFCs is the intensity of their influence on informants. The informants' experiences within these communities were highly influential in their lives as a whole. As participants became adults, the connection to a local faith community continued. A number of informants took on leadership roles, giving an indication of their level of identification and investment in these communities. The following excerpts from informants in both the linguists and academics groups illustrate this point.

*But socially and in terms of Christian growth those were probably the most important years of my life—my time at [Bible school] (Julius).*

*When I look at my journey to where I am now, in the midst of language learning for the purpose of Bible translation, I see many members of the Christian church having impacted that journey so significantly. The local body I've been a part of...has given me opportunities to minister, people have believed in me and allowed me to lead or teach. I've been invited to be part of intercessory prayer groups and prayer ministry training that have been highly impacting to me in my relationship with and freedom through God (Shauna).*

In sum, the beginnings of informants' faith trajectories took place in local IFCs for the most part. It is apparent that informants, especially those in the linguists group, were socialized in local IFCs in ways that influenced them strongly in terms of their values and beliefs as well as in vocational choices that involve communicating the faith in cross-cultural settings and hence involve language learning.

### **5.3.2 Worldwide faith communities**

After being socialized in the local IFCs, many of my informants identify and align themselves with global IFCs. As I have stated in section 3.2.3, people tend to find belonging and identity in ethnic and faith groups which often have global connections. In the case of my informants, people of various ethnic origins relocate to geographically and culturally distant contexts. Linguists' connections in these cross-cultural settings were not first and foremost family, ethnic or national connections but primarily faith connections. I will give several examples. With ethnic roots in North America, Shauna and Leona relocate to East Asia and connect with IFCs characterized by beliefs similar to their own. John and Eunice

spend decades in an African country, encouraging growth in IFCs centered on similar beliefs. Myat leaves his East Asian homeland and relocates to North America for purposes of education. He chooses an academic IFC because it resonates with his own beliefs. With roots in Central Asia, Shakel's relocation to North America is primarily motivated by economic need; however he seeks an IFC of Muslim believers who share his religious beliefs but who come from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Most linguist informants spend decades of their lives working in countries far away from their home. Within their host countries, they connect with IFCs that share many of the same values and beliefs mentioned in 5.2, despite language and cultural differences. For example, Aiden and Lucinda choose to move to a remote village in order to get away from the distractions of a more urban, multi-cultural setting, to connect in a more intense way with the specific people group they are working with.

*We could live in town here but just knowing ourselves and the distractions of town, it would take us years to learn here and...the [Bibaclo] culture here is quite broken down. Out there they still work the land and they are all out there so in terms of finding a helper for us to learn the language and culture of the people (which are equally important to us) (Lucinda).*

### ***Suffering in worldwide faith communities***

One contextual influence that has ramifications for IFCs in some contexts outside the Americas is the experiences of political repression, war and religious intolerance. In Myat and Linda's accounts these themes surface as challenges with implications for their work and language learning. Myat describes the unfortunate situation of his East Asian home country, where a repressive government has cut

off ties with the outside world. Through learning English, some of that social and political isolation can be broken. Linda describes the horrific conditions caused by war and religious intolerance for linguists working with faith-based organizations in several African countries. She describes the death threats, burning of homes, and massacres of entire villages. She and her family faced repeated evacuations from these countries. These conditions had profound effects on her and her colleagues' ability to engage in their linguistic work including language learning. In a later section, I will deal with the motivational implications of these contexts.

### *Ties between local and global IFCs*

Linguist informants are in part motivated by their desire to integrate into a global IFC. Yet at the same time, they maintain close ties to their local IFCs in their home countries, resulting in them investing in both. These ties take a number of different forms.

First of all, linguist informants are supported (financially and relationally) by their respective local IFCs to communicate the faith in a cross-cultural setting. Informants travel between local and global IFCs on a regular basis. Secondly, there are those informants who are second or third generation cross-cultural workers, who have been nurtured in global IFCs since their childhood. They begin their faith and vocational paths in cross-cultural settings, resulting in a straddling of local and global IFCs. For example, several informants point to the influential role of their up-bringing in cross-cultural families, that is, in communities geographically and culturally distant from their own. I will give examples of two

informants describing how they view their upbringing in this cross-cultural setting as a major influence in their path towards becoming linguists:

*Frieda: What influenced you to become a missionary/linguist?*

*I grew up in South America, my parents were missionaries there, and my grandparents were missionaries there and my other grandparents were missionaries in East Asia, so there is a long history of [cross-cultural workers] in our family (Lucinda).*

*[F]or me going into missions was a practical use of what I had since I grew up in [a Central American country] as a missionary kid myself. Cross-cultural understanding is something that I grew up with (Eunice).*

In the this section, I have shown how my linguist informants show a strong inclination towards global IFCs in that they are motivated to travel to remote geographic locations and learn the languages and cultures of global IFCs.

### **5.3.3 Historic faith communities**

In the previous section, I have focused mainly on the linguists group and their inclination to travel and to connect with global IFCs. In this section, I will consider informants from the academics group, who distinguish themselves from other informants by their focus on IFCs of the past. They see their historical focus as foundational to understanding the sacred texts in their original contexts. The languages academic informants learn are for the most part ancient dead languages which give them access to the ancient world from which the sacred texts emerged. Academic informants learned Greek and Hebrew—the original languages of the sacred texts. They also learned other ancient languages that allowed them to read parallel texts from the same time periods, which shed light on the geography, history and cultures of those times. These informants identify with a historic

tradition of an academic community whose adherents through the centuries have dedicated their lives to studying the sacred text. While the focus is on building on the traditions of the past, the purpose is for nurturing current and future IFCs.

Julius clearly articulates this perspective:

*The church down the ages has said that it needs people who can study it. Calvin...all through the ages there have been people who have said—this is the church's Bible, this is God's word to the church and therefore it needs people who can study it.*

In speaking of the effort required to understand the sacred texts, Peter uses travel metaphors. He speaks of “taking a journey” whose vehicle is language.

*I decided that in order to understand the NT<sup>8</sup> properly, I needed to take a long journey into the OT<sup>9</sup>. I started by taking two years of Hebrew.*

Informants from the academics group make efforts to ‘travel’ into the past in order to enter into the world in which the sacred texts were written. For example, in his efforts to understand the OT and the NT, Julius has learned a total of seven languages. Only three of those languages (Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic) are the original languages of the sacred text. Two other languages he learned—Akkadian and Ugaritic—are also ancient dead languages which give him access to historical documents from the time periods in which the OT was written. In addition, he learned French and German in order to participate in the academic community (more on academic IFCs in 5.3.5), that is, academics of the past several centuries whose writings offer additional insights into the interpretation of sacred text.

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<sup>8</sup> New Testament

<sup>9</sup> Old Testament

### **5.3.4 Future-orientation in faith communities**

So far I have described local IFCs that provide a nurturing context for the early faith formation of my informants. In addition, I have described how IFCs are increasingly important self-identifiers globally speaking, and how many informants straddle both local and global IFCs. Third, I have described IFCs focusing on the past, where the study of ancient languages and cultures becomes the vehicle by which these temporally distant worlds can be explored. I will now consider how IFCs can also reach beyond the conventional space and time dimensions to include the future.

Both historical and future-orientations within IFCs are based on a linear understanding of time. Hence, the current IFCs are viewed as part of a larger chain of IFCs that began in the distant past, continue in the present, and are anticipated to reach into the future. Informants do their work with the assumption that theirs is only a small part of the ongoing work of the larger IFC of the Christian church that spans millennia. Each generation builds upon work done by the previous generations, and contributes to the foundations for the work of future generations. The metaphor of a marathon has been used by informants to refer to language learning (a notion I will examine in greater detail in a later section). In terms of the relationship between the past, the present and the future, the metaphor of a relay marathon could be used to illustrate how each generation carries the 'baton' of their work and passes it on to future generations. Part of the future-orientation is also inherent in the ought-to and ideal selves understood to be

communicated in the sacred text and contribute to its guiding function. Linda points out that in the Bible, Christ tells believers to go out and communicate the faith. Embracing these ought-to and ideal selves as communicators of the faith, and integrating them in terms of behavior requires people to embrace an imagined shared future in which the hoped-for IFCs can materialize.

*[In the Bible there is] really a direct command to get out there. ...Christ's last command to the church was to go out and tell people. Preach and teach, make disciples...because that is what we have been told as a church to go out and [do] (Linda).*

This future-orientation becomes apparent in several ways. The first of these ways is through long-range planning and strategizing within IFCs. The second is through visions of future scenarios on the time line that are either aspired to (ideal selves/scenarios) or feared (feared selves/scenarios). The third way, in which future-orientation is expressed, is through considerations of 'ultimate concern' in light of an eschatological understanding of time. I will expand on each of these and give illustrations from the data.

The long-range planning in IFCs becomes particularly clear in the ways in which linguist informants speak of their work. The translation of the sacred text is a lengthy undertaking that requires planning for decades into the future. Linda describes a typical scenario of how her linguist organization works.

*You would have one couple go to a language group, learn the language then translate the word of God with people at your side, do all the community development, all of literacy, all of the linguistic analysis. If you do all of that, then you know, 20 or 30 years later you are done, [that is], with one language. It takes that long.*

Because it is such a long process, many things can interrupt the work, so that it is often not completed by the same people that began it. Part of the long-

range planning is also demonstrated through the task of writing grammars for a future generation of language learners and translators that will pick up where others have left off. Daryl speaks of the dictionaries and grammar lessons he has written for future linguists that would need to learn the language. Margaret, who is undoubtedly near the end of her career, is still concerned about grammar books that need to be written for future generations.

The second way in which future-orientation becomes evident is through imaginary future scenarios that are either feared (feared futures) or hoped for (ideal futures). Lucinda's comments about the suffering and limitations the Bibaclo women impose upon themselves, illustrate both hoped for and feared futures. The ideal shared future, which Lucinda sees in her 'mind's eye' and finds motivating, is a world in which these women will be freed from their restrictions and fears. The corollary feared future, which is not explicitly stated, but can be inferred, is the future in which these women will continue in bondage.

*And what motivates me is getting to know the [women] ...they are so bound by these taboos and these fears of what they can't eat and can't do.... I can just imagine the freedom...when they are able to understand more clearly.... [God] cares about sickness, ...about me today, hunger, this life right now (Lucinda).*

John explains his long-term motivation by describing an ideal shared future in which he sees himself as a conversation partner and learner within an imagined future IFC of a cross-cultural nature. His words illustrate how the clarity of his imagination (vision), his desire for belonging and his motivation are tied together. His words also portray his stance of international posture (see section 5.3.6). He is eager to learn from the insights of other cultural perspectives. From

his account one can also infer his belief that human beings are not products of their environments but are agents and active participants.

*One thing that motivates me and that is a vision that...I am expecting that is going to happen one day...when there will be a church group of [Bilabongali] people that will be studying the translated scriptures in their language. ...I am looking forward to the day when I will make some new discoveries of what God's word means and what some of the ramifications and nuances are of God's word which the [Bilabongali] people are going to understand because they are hearing this in their language and in their culture and they are going to see things that we as [North Americans] don't even see. They will interact with God's word in a different way than we do because of their cultural insights and because of their language. And I want to...learn more about the richness of God's word from their culture.*

There is also evidence for third kind of future-orientation, one with an eschatological quality, as described by Ding (2012). The linear understanding of time mentioned earlier is not understood to be without end. As the term 'eschatological' indicates, the common view in Christian IFCs is that the end of the timeline is death for an individual and 'the end of the world' ultimately for everyone. The motivating impact of future events is intensified in this case because, as Fowler notes, these events are what the 'mind's eye' sees, not only in the present world but particularly in an 'ultimate environment' (Fowler, 1981; Emmons, 1999). Several of my informants' comments give evidence of their investment in this global, eschatological IFC.

In the context of explaining her career choice, Lucinda describes this ultimate environment that is, in her view, a basic premise of her IFC. From the perspective of this ultimate environment, she re-evaluates her life priorities and decides to invest her life in those things she sees as having lasting value even beyond life itself:

*I remember it all of a sudden became so clear to me, the shortness of this life and eternity and just realizing that in the end there are just two things that are going to last for eternity: the souls of men and the word of God.*

Margaret describes a similar eschatological scenario which played itself out in the ‘mind’s eye’ of her late husband. Her words are based on beliefs that are central to her IFC, namely the idea that she and her husband had a sense of responsibility and accountability in a future other-worldly divine courtroom where they would be called to account for their call to serve the Bibaclo people.

*My husband said, ‘God will not ask of me what I have done for other people groups but he will hold me responsible for the Bibaclo nation’. He [my husband] felt the weight of this responsibility before God.*

Daryl and Penelope express ‘ultimate concern’ over the future imagined scenario that awaits the Mankluet people after their deaths. In this future imagined scenario, all people who have not embraced the faith communicated to them are doomed. Daryl describes his response to a sick Mankluet man’s imminent death and how this affected his motivation to learn language. Daryl’s motivation emanates from the imagined future scenario (a feared future) he sees in his mind’s eye: a man dying who is about to face endless doom. Daryl has a sense of urgency that is evident in his voice. Penelope uses strong emotional words that are often used in the context of a love relationship.

*I realized he would die and I didn’t know if I was going to be able to share the gospel with him. THAT [emphasis by Daryl] is what motivated me: learn the language as quick as you can (Daryl).*

*It broke our hearts constantly thinking that these people are going to hell (Penelope).*

These quotes give glimpses into the ‘mind’s eye’ of these language learners who envision an ultimate environment all human beings must face. From

informants' comments about this ideal shared future (and feared future) it can be inferred that they are motivated by their desire to prevent feared futures from occurring and to facilitate the coming of shared ideal futures in an ultimate environment. It is in light of this environment that they engage and exert their agency to become involved in their chosen field of work.

### **5.3.5 Academic faith communities**

All academic informants align themselves with academic faith communities; all linguists have had some training in academic communities. In this section, I will explore the dynamics at work in this type of IFC. While the faith-based academic communities represented by my informants reflect all five observations concerning sacred texts (see 5.2), their primary focus is on #3, 'sacred text is valued as worthy of serious academic study'.

Bill, whose target L2 is German, is the sole participant in my study who is not learning the L2 in order to read a sacred text, technically speaking. However, in other respects he fits within the description of other academic informants. He is motivated by a series of 'special texts', namely the 'canon' of works of German theologians Barth and Bonhoffer. He has a desire to read the works of Barth and Bonhoffer in their original German. In addition, he is also motivated by his desire to participate in the international community of Barth and Bonhoffer scholars (a type of global IFC). Anecdotal evidence suggests that German has traditionally been the 'domain language' of theologians, especially those whose area of expertise is in the theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe. The desire for

a voice in the academic theological community provides a strong motivation for Bill to learn and to keep learning his target L2. He anticipates his language learning to continue throughout his life. The following quote sheds light on the academic IFC that Bill sees himself participating in. He uses metaphoric terms like ‘conversation’, ‘speaking circles’ and ‘voices’ to refer to the dialogue that happens in this cross-cultural academic IFC.

*Keep translating. That is the bottom line. I want to keep up with Barth and Bonhoeffer scholarship, to keep track of the conversation that is going on in the continent...and although a lot of the Barth scholarship is being done in English-speaking circles...yet there are still some very important voices in Germany that I need to be cognoscente of. I need to...I want to be able to bridge the English-speaking and German-speaking conversations as far as Barth and Bonhoeffer are concerned.*

Bill’s vision of his ideal L2 self includes a continuation of his studies of German at the university where he has recently accepted a professorship. Also, he envisions a future sabbatical in a German city which is in the heartland of German theologians of the past two centuries. Bill expresses a strong desire to identify with the entire community of German theologians.

*I have noticed that...my academic English writing is—is this a word?—germanicized. It’s because...my scholarship is predominantly wrapped up with German-speaking scholars, and having translated so much over the course of my doctoral program, ...my thesis supervisor told me...you are writing like a German.... Long sentences and numerous qualifications, semi-colon, semi-colon, verb at the very end (Bill).*

Part of the drive in these faith-based academic IFCs is similar to other academic communities. The academic informants name a number of pressures that push them to excel in language learning: meeting academic requirements, getting a job in a competitive environment, gaining a reputation as an authority in their field, and keeping their mind stimulated.

The first reason to learn a language is often to meet academic requirements for advanced degrees. Once finished their graduate studies, theologians, like anyone else, are faced with the pressures of finding employment in a competitive environment, as Bill's comment below indicates. The notion of professional competence also emerges as a strong theme, highlighted by Garret and Susan's comments. Some academics, perhaps not surprisingly, note the cognitive exercise of language learning as a motivating factor.

*I was motivated to learn German in order to write a dissertation that would distinguish me from my peers and help me to get a job. Given the cut-throat world of academia... (Bill)*

*The best commentaries are written based upon an understanding of the original languages. In order to understand the commentaries you need to be able to work with the languages (Garret).*

*It [your knowledge of language] is just more your level of competency, when you want to speak authoritatively... 'so and so says this' (Susan).*

*I found that language acquisition activated parts of the brain that were not activated. I think I wrote a much better dissertation because I had to spend so much time translating the material in order to write the dissertation and it used a different part of my brain (Bill).*

### **5.3.6 Imagined faith communities and international posture**

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I have dealt with Yashima's (2009) concept of international posture, also known as global competence. International posture can be described as an attitude of openness towards learning about cultural norms different from one's own, and using this knowledge to interact effectively with people of other cultures (CCLB, 2012). Wu and Wong (2012) name three dimensions of global competence, symbolized by the head (knowledge of cross-

cultural cultural norms), hands (skills in relating cross-culturally), and heart (affective aspects such as motivation, humility, respect and empathy towards people of other cultures). This cosmopolitan character is an important ingredient in the social and religious contexts of the informants of my study. Using Wu and Wong's categories of head, hands and heart, I will demonstrate how global competence expresses itself in these ways among my informants.

***Head (knowledge of cross-cultural cultural norms)***

Numerous informants, especially linguists, describe their interest, from early on in their lives, in gaining knowledge about cross-cultural perspectives and norms. The data suggests that their interest in cross-cultural learning has only increased after decades of interactions in cross-cultural settings. Of the many examples in the data illustrating positive attitudes towards knowledge of other cultures, I have only chosen a few.

Penelope describes her interest in people of other cultures even as a child in school. She relates how she chose projects that involved researching cross-cultural topics.

*I got interested in Native American Indians.... Any research I had to do in school I...did it towards that kind of a thing [cross-cultural topics].*

Daryl describes the way in which he combined language learning with learning about the culture of the Mankhuet people group.

*Every day I would go to sit in the village with one particular man—he was an easy guy to talk with—he told me names of the birds, the stories of creation, stuff that I needed to know anyway and he was just rattling it off all the time (Daryl).*

In section 5.3.4 I have noted John's stance of international posture, which is further illustrated by his excitement about the things he has learned from what he views as the rich store of knowledge of the Bilabongali people.

*It is absolutely fascinating to go out into the field and this guy can tell you all the names of these plants and what they are used for, its medicinal purpose or for making something or for eating. Sometimes it is the root, leaf, bark...the education that you get from using this language and hearing them talking about their knowledge of their world which is so different than ours.*

While these examples demonstrate informants' interest in particular cultural groups, a further example from John illustrates a broader interest in many languages and cultures which is also consistent with the data from other participants in the linguists group. To illustrate the concept of the various languages and cultures in the world, John uses the metaphor of a long hallway with many doors. He views each language as a doorway into an intriguing new world.

*As I get further, I can open the door a little more and there is this whole world in there. It is a culture and a language and a way of thinking of a people group and you can't really get in there without knowing how to speak their language and when you get to a place where you are almost fluent and you can communicate it is like the door is wide open and you can walk in there and you can see all this stuff and it is so amazing and it is so fascinating and things that I could never have seen or heard or if I had not walked into this door. So there are all these doors, so to me that is...one way that I can describe life.*

The most striking example of interest in cultural learning is Margaret. At age 70 and after fifty years of language and cultural learning, she is still attending conferences to deepen her knowledge of the languages and cultural groups in her field.

*At the congress I learned [more] about the five language groups in this region, that is, dialects of Bivaco—and then some terms get mixed in from other languages. ... You have to keep asking for clarification. We need to agree on a standard for the written language. To a great extent we agree; there are a few [phonetic] symbols...*

***Hands (skills in relating cross-culturally, interest in international vocation and activities)***

Many informants of the linguists group are influenced by international experiences such as study abroad, church mission trips, or exposure to role models within the IFC that work internationally and are held in high esteem by the community. Informants look back on experiences in their youth where they were encouraged to participate in humanitarian activities and interact with people of other languages and cultural backgrounds.

Leona illustrates this aspect of international posture in her description of her first international trip as a teenager. Her willingness to spend time (quite literally using her hands) in another culture and seeing its value for her life demonstrates her interest in working with people of other cultures.

*I went on my first missions trip with my High School youth group<sup>10</sup> when I was in Grade 10. We went to Mexico for about a week and helped build a foundation for a church building.*

Penelope looks back to when she began her work three decades earlier. She was given the nick-name ‘jungle bunny’ because of the amount of time she spent with the Mankuet women learning both the language and the culture, all the

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<sup>10</sup> A common term for faith formation groups designed for teenage youth within a church community.

while accompanied by her three young children and living in a remote region with a harsh climate and extreme temperatures.

*One [Mankluet] woman said, "I spend more time with you than I do with anyone in my village". ... We did everything together.*

Again, these excerpts are chosen from a wide range of examples in the data that illustrate linguist participants' interest and skill in relating cross-culturally.

***Heart (affective aspects such as motivation, humility, respect and empathy towards people of other cultures)***

The third characteristic identified by Wu and Wong (2012) concerns the attitudes of empathy and respect towards people of other cultures. The 'heart' aspect is illustrated by Leona's self-assessment (as a teenager) of having fallen short of her ideal self, namely to be a person who desires, initiates and nurtures cross-cultural relationships.

*I also came away from that experience feeling like I hadn't taken full advantage of it...my introverted nature kept me from doing much sharing and integrating with the Mexicans we met. Others in my group had been far more outgoing.*

A few years later, after having worked and learned several languages in East Asia, Leona expresses one of her reasons for language learning, namely that it is simply a respectful thing to do when you are living with people of other cultures. She notes how learning the language is a catalyst for positive cross-cultural relationships.

*[L]earning the language is a matter of showing respect to the people you work with. ...[I]t creates a bond.*

A number of linguist informants express empathy for the people whose language they are in the process of learning. They describe the suffering they

observed, both physical and emotional, and express a desire to alleviate that suffering. I have quoted Lucinda in section 5.3.4 who expresses compassion for women bound by taboos and fears. The following two excerpts also illustrate this desire:

*My desire was to learn the Bibaclo -- I listened to the mourning of the people at a funeral and I thought -- I want to become a missionary in order to share the biblical truths with these people. ...that was my goal right from the beginning (Margaret).*

*[S]eeing people...very lost, very dark, very scared...so that was probably my biggest motivation—seeing it first hand, seeing the people...the fear (Aiden).*

John's words expose an attitude of humility towards the people he works with. Even after more than three decades in the same African community, he is aware of the gaps in his cultural knowledge. He expresses continued eagerness to learn more about the culture. His desire is for even deeper relationships with his Bilabongali friends.

*There is still a lot to learn and the excitement of getting to know an African culture and to get to know these people deeply and intimately through many years of relationships.*

## **5.4 Shared belief systems, imagined faith communities and motivation**

In the previous three sections of this chapter, I have dealt with the external forces that impact my informants. I have explored the beliefs and the characteristics of the IFCs in which they live and work. In this section, I will address the internal forces that are catalysts for motivating behavior. I will examine the ways in which

my informants personally have responded to these external forces. As Ushioda (2012) reminds us, language learners are not passive recipients of their environment. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I have highlighted core aspects of human identity that Swann and Bosson (2010) refer to as core desires: the desire for agency, the desire for communion and the desire for meaning. I will now explore the ways in which informants have responded to IFCs and to beliefs and values regarding sacred text. These ways illustrate the motivational force of internal core desires. In addition, I will address the topic of language as a key factor in the expression of core desires. Finally, I will show how informants have embraced ought-to and ideal selves grounded in their contexts which in turn function as future self-guides in their life and work.

#### **5.4.1 Desire for agency**

People learning languages are active agents who make conscious deliberate decisions about many things. Several themes emerge in this section, which illustrate the ways in which informants exercise their executive function. First of all, informants describe their choice to align themselves with specific IFCs and to engage in specific vocations. In this context, they frequently make reference to their religious beliefs and values as primary reasons for these decisions. Secondly, a number of informants describe a struggle for agency which takes the form of initial resistance to ought-to selves. Finally, informants express respect for the agency of other people with whom they come into contact. To conclude this

section, I respond to some strong negative responses to sacred text, which relate to the exercise of agency.

***Informants' choice to align themselves with specific IFCs and to engage in specific vocations.***

Many informants describe the reasons for their choices to align themselves with specific IFCs and to opt for specific vocations. Their answers expose an exercise of agency. Many of the informants point to their religious faith as a primary reason for their decision to choose particular paths. As I already have noted, careers as academics and linguists require extensive preparation. Many informants have master's degrees or doctoral degrees. Language learning is integral to the preparation and execution of these fields of study and work. Informants give many examples of how beliefs influenced their career choices. Upon being asked to consider the impact of removing Christian beliefs from the equation, they respond in ways that indicate the key role of faith in their career choices.

*Being a believer is the main reason why I got going in Biblical Studies to begin with and that led just naturally to Greek and Hebrew. If I weren't a believer I doubt whether [Biblical Studies] would be the track I chose. ...Without being a believer it is hard to say that I would be raising these same theological questions that drive me to understand, that make me feel it is important to understand (Kelvin).*

*It would change everything 100%! I can't imagine being a Bible translator if I wasn't a Christian! I also doubt I would have found my interest in languages if I wasn't a Christian. I don't think I ever would have left [North America] or ever would have learned any other languages...! I would probably be a dentist and hating every minute of it (Leona)!*

As these and many other responses indicate, faith is a key factor in making career choices. Informants chose their professions well aware that language learning was going to be a major part of their work.

In this section I have emphasized the informants' initiative in terms of their executive function; however, there is another element that bears mention: informants' sense of divine call. On the one hand, informants make choices and see themselves as responsible for those choices. On the other hand, they view themselves as 'called' and are therefore responding to a divine call and submitting themselves to this call. I will develop this aspect in further detail in the section on vision in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

### *The struggle for agency*

Another way in which the desire for agency shows itself, is in the struggles several informants describe. When a classmate and friend observes Leona's ability in analyzing Hebrew, she suggests Leona choose a career that would allow her to make use of this skill, for example, become a Bible translator. Leona expresses strong resistance to this idea. She slowly changes her mind, finally coming to a place of decision, a process that she describes as a kind of collaboration with 'God' and her own thoughts and desires.

*I said, "No way!" However, God had planted the seed and from then on, I couldn't get that idea out of my head. We had chapel every day and every day for a month, the speaker mentioned the need for Bible translation (though, I'm sure I'm the only one who noticed)! And so finally, I gave in and God has taken me on a long journey of preparing to do this work to finally doing it and the journey is just beginning.*

The struggle involved in exercising executive function is also illustrated by Lucinda's wrestling with the ought-to self held up within her extended family.

She comes from a family in which her parents and grandparents have worked as missionaries. She expresses her desire for agency by resisting the pressure that she perceives from her family, friends and 'God', to follow in these footsteps.

*I did not want to do what everybody else did. I wanted to be different. Even though I felt in my heart that this is probably what God wanted me to do, I didn't want to do it because everyone expected me to do this.*

In section 5.3.4 I have already made mention of how Lucinda comes to the decision to embrace this role in which the magnitude of her 'ultimate concern' strikes her. In light of this concern, her choice is more compelling though not easier.

*So why dedicate your life to anything but... (inaudible).... That was really hard for me because I wanted to be different. But anyhow, I reconciled with what God wanted me to do.*

Lucinda recounts another struggle of agency involving a decision concerning where to live. She resists coming to the country where her husband had been raised because she knows it means her individuality will be compromised.

*I also did not want to come to [a specific South American country] because I didn't want to go somewhere where I would just be Aiden's wife. I wanted to start together somewhere new. And so I fought in my heart with that.*

As with the notion of career choice, here too there is another perspective that bears mention. Informants engage in these struggles and make decisions as a part of their executive function, but the other side of the coin is their sense of divine call that cannot be ignored in this process. I will develop this idea further in Chapter 6.

***Respect for the agency of others***

Contrary to popular notions of missionaries imposing their beliefs on unsuspecting targets, a number of informants clearly express respect for the agency of others. Lucinda and Aiden speak of their desire to proceed with humility and caution with their colleagues and neighbors. They see themselves as responding to a need that has been expressed to them. Linda emphasizes that their organization enters communities only upon invitation.

*We wish for the [Bibaclo] to have a translation that speaks their language. We certainly do not want to offend our brothers and sisters....so we go cautiously and prayerfully and very humbly. We do not want to.... It is not us asking to do it. It's people asking us to do it (Lucinda).*

*[O]f course the way [our organization] works is that you come in [only] if you are invited (Linda).*

As can be seen in these examples, informants do not passively embrace the roles that are presented to them by their family, friends and IFCs. Informants wrestle with decisions concerning career and location. Naturally, their IFCs exert some influence over them, but informants come to decisions through voluntary exercise of agency. In addition, informants are sensitive to the agency of others and proceed upon invitation and expression of need.

On the topic of agency, another important point needs to be made. In the methodology chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 4.1.4), I mentioned Batson's (1997) concern that researchers in the field of psychology of religion are often too eager to demonstrate the positive effects of religion rather than making an honest attempt at understanding how religion works in human life. He suggests that it is important for researchers to entertain the possibility that religion may not have a positive effect. An unexpected example of a strong negative response to sacred

text surfaced in my pilot study (see Appendix A). As I describe in the executive summary of the pilot study, I set out to observe the motivational impact of sacred text in a language course where task-based, text-based curriculum using biblical text was employed. Because of flaws in my research design (as I have described in chapter 4) my results were inconclusive; however, I gathered some unanticipated data that sheds light on the importance of agency. In this instance, learners were not given a choice regarding course materials. Despite most learners' alignment with Christian faith and their sympathetic view towards the sacred text, they expressed strong negative responses towards the use of Bible-based materials. This negative response quite clearly demonstrates a curtailing of learners' desire for agency that would be represented by giving them a voice in choosing curriculum content.

#### **5.4.2 Desire for communion**

It is common knowledge that humans are by nature social beings. As I have highlighted in chapter 2, one basic human motivator is the desire for communion (Swann & Bosson, 2010). In this section I will highlight informants' desire for interpersonal relationships. This desire is expressed in several ways: (a) a general interest in friendships (in particular those of a cross-cultural nature), (b) relationships within IFCs and (c) informants' desire for a human-divine relationship.

***(a) A general interest in friendships (in particular those of a cross-cultural nature)***

Informants express a general desire for relationships and explain how this affects their motivation to learn language. These relationships may be on a small scale, such as those encountered in daily life, described by Leona. Linda articulates how her motivation for translating the text cannot be separated from her motivation to build relationships.

*The relationships (both deep and surface level) are a strong motivator for me to learn the language (Leona).*

*I think my motivation for relationships was just as high as my motivation to translate the text. I can't really separate that because to me the gospel is life and it is about how you live and how you relate (Linda).*

**(b) A desire for relationships within IFCs**

In section 3.2.2 I have highlighted the role of faith in expressing the desire for communion. Beyond the generic desire for interpersonal relationships, an IFC tends to have an added dimension of relationship building capacity, due to the commonalities in matters of belief. Informants express their desire for communion within the IFCs they align themselves with. This desire for communion becomes apparent through the metaphors informants use to describe their stance within the IFC and through the role IFCs play in supporting and encouraging informants in their work.

The metaphors informants use to describe their place within their IFC indicate the sense of connection they experience within these communities. For example, Leona describes her movement from a marginal position to one of greater acceptance in her local IFC. She uses the metaphor of the human body and of lines crossing the globe to speak of the connection between people in both local and global IFCs.

*I come from a very musical church body and have no musical ability whatsoever! I think, growing up, I felt somewhat marginalized by that because most people asked to serve in my church are singers or musicians. Now though, I see my place as an important member of the body (both in my home church and in the church as a whole). ...I want them to be able to feel like they are a part of the work God is doing around the world and I am one of the lines connecting them to that work!*

Another avenue through which the desire for communion becomes apparent is through the role IFCs play in supporting and encouraging informants in their work, including their language learning. This support expresses itself in several ways: through prayer, through financial support, through emotional support, and through admiration. Informants use positive relational words such as ‘accepted place’, ‘surrounded’, ‘supportive’ and ‘team mates’. Leona describes how her sense of belonging in her faith community contributes to her motivation in her work as a linguist.

*I really feel like I have an accepted place and like I am surrounded by the rest of my church in a supportive way. They sent me out, they are my supporters. They are my team mates in my ministry. They pray for me and support me financially and as such, they are just as much a part of this ministry as I am! And, I think that mindset has really given me a sense of responsibility to them and that has motivated me to push through hard times in language learning to get to the translation stage. It has also kept me translating in tough situations as well. ...[T]hey are proud of me and proud of the part that they play in this ministry. ...They...are one more layer of motivation to keep going in this work of language learning and Bible translation.*

Academics in particular express satisfaction in belonging to the historical IFC through the ages that becomes the authority on the interpretation of the sacred text. In section 5.2 I have discussed the centrality of the sacred text in communities of readers. I quoted Julius on his beliefs on the role of this community in interpreting the sacred text. He goes on to articulate how his

fluency in Greek and Hebrew enabled him to have a stronger voice in that community.

*And I was now a part of that community. I could write articles and so forth.*

### **(c) A desire for a human-divine relationship**

A third area of communion goes beyond relationships between human beings. Several informants describe their desire for a human-divine relationship as a motivating factor in the work they do and in language learning. Susan expresses this most clearly, using the metaphors of 'hunger' (to describe desire) and 'door' (to describe a means of access).

*My primary motivation...is a hunger to know God. I wanted to know and understand. I knew from preaching, that the OT and the NT were related, but I was dissatisfied. I wanted to see that connection. That was very key in growing in my relationship with God. So that was and is still my primary motivation both as a scholar and more specifically as a teacher of Hebrew and a learner of Hebrew. It is a doorway; it is one of the doorways into a deeper relationship with God.*

As I have shown in this section, informants express a strong desire for communion as a primary motivator. This desire takes the form of inter-personal relationships in general, relationships within IFCs in particular and in divine-human relationships.

### **5.4.3 Desire for coherence**

People experience coherence when they have an overall sense of harmony, significance and purpose about their lives. As I have already stated in 3.2, the desire for coherence is a primary human motivator (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Human beings are drawn towards creating meaning through connecting otherwise

unrelated events (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). When people have a deep sense of purpose, they perceive their lives as meaningful even in the midst of difficult challenges (Emmons, 1999). For many people, meaning and coherence is often related to spirituality (Fowler, 1981), because it provides an overarching framework within which life's events and challenges can be interpreted. As Wong (2012) observes, religious faith is a leading factor in answers to the questions "who are we and why are we here?" (p. 31).

The informants from all four groups make frequent reference to shared belief systems that serve as a scaffold for their sense of coherence. Without their faith as the underlying rationale for their work and their language learning, informants describe a loss of meaning.

Faith in 'the living God' is the holding center that gives Peter his sense of being involved in meaningful work. Without this center, he cannot imagine any motivation for him to be an academic in a faith-based setting or to learn languages.

*I think it [my desire to learn and teach Greek] would evaporate. I can't get into a headspace where I would be interested in these languages. That is key. It is not about the book—it is about the living God. The book is about the living God. The book is one important way we access Him there would be very little point. It would be a job like piling lumber.*

Despite Julius' fascination with languages and the joy he experiences in figuring out how they work, he makes clear that as an end in and of itself, language learning would have no meaning and offer him no enjoyment. Emmons' (1999) construct of 'ultimate concern' is echoed in Julius' term 'the greater end', which he uses to describe his role of an interpreter and preacher of the sacred text

within the context of IFCs. Julius also clearly articulates the human need for purpose, which he finds in his Christian faith. He also sees a connection between the sense of purpose and enjoyment of the process.

*So, but as an end in and of itself it [language learning] wouldn't have given me any joy at all. Oh no, no, no, no, no....It was a MEANS to the greater end that I could preach from the Bible in ways that others can appreciate.... You can never get away from the fact that somewhere in the human spirit is a need for purpose. ...And for me that is found in the Creator and us being made in God's image and what it means to be created in God's image. It really all comes back to that sense of purpose. So the motivation ultimately comes back to that and that's no doubt a big part of the reason for the joy.*

Kelvin also makes the connection between purpose and enjoyment in language learning for academic purposes.

*What's enjoyable is having some sort of purpose; to have it apply. I'm using it [Greek] to study narrative. If I am practicing for the sake of practicing then there is not the same level of enjoyment. It is hard to just sit down and translate. You really need some sort of target to add a level of enjoyment.*

As I have shown, informants' responses to their macro contexts illustrate how they express the core human desires of agency, communion and coherence. From the perspective of the informants, their shared beliefs and their engagement in IFCs represent a satisfying fulfillment of human desires for communion and coherence. The beliefs and IFCs surrounding them are viewed by the informants as strong attractors, worthy of exercising their agency through not only aligning themselves with these beliefs as theoretical constructs, but also investing their reasoning, emotion and behavior accordingly.

#### **5.4.4 The role of language**

In Section 3.2.2, I discussed religious beliefs about language. In this section I will

give examples of how participants' comments shed light on the role of language in the expression of core desires in the context of shared belief systems, IFCs and motivation. A key theme that emerges here is the role of language as a divine gift, and language as a catalyst for human community.

Julius emphasizes the connection between the nature of language as a receptor of divine inspiration and as a central bond in fostering relationship.

These ties contribute to a profound sense of coherence about life.

*Divine inspiration accommodates itself to human language and this is what human language is. Sometimes...we forget that in the end humanity is about people.... There is nothing better in the world that anyone can ever do is learn languages because relationships come through languages and relationships are what matter. So if you are going to bend your mind at something, bend it to languages, learn somebody else's language...relationships and people...and that has significance. ...What lasts is relationships and relationships come through language.*

Peter also expresses his belief in the divine origin of language, and how the idea of bridging languages and cultures is grounded in the sacred text.

*God invented languages. This was all his idea. Pentecost—all those people of different languages in Jerusalem—hearing the mighty deeds of God in their own language. The assumption is that...the gospel is translatable. ...It is actually embedded in the text that this will go to lots of languages.*

Linda observes how the languages people speak affect their ability to express their personalities in relationships with others. At times this is limiting in a negative sense, in that people are not able to 'be themselves'. On the other hand, limited language ability necessitates greater dependency and collaboration in work teams made up of different L1 speakers. She describes how her own limited ability in Swahili resulted in her being perceived as a peace-maker, which was an unforeseen positive outcome of a language gap.

*My natural tendency to talk a lot and listen a little flipped in [Swahili]...whenever I went to a seminar I would go...to [being] a person who listened a lot and didn't say a lot. And as a result of it, I ended up many times especially in these inter-tribal things or issues within the project, because I would do a lot of workshops on program management and planning so...I ended up with this bizarre reputation of listening and I would be [called in to be] the mediator. I thank God for that.*

Myat refers to relationships between people in the imagined communities of nationality and ethnicity, and the role that language takes in these relationships.

*What I recognize is that we have to have a language that will connect us to the rest of the world.*

Speaking for his fellow citizens, Myat expresses a keen sense of isolation resulting from the repressive government of his home country. His description of the role of language in breaking this isolation is powerful. His imagined community extends beyond his IFCs to the entire world which he describes using the metaphor of 'family'.

*Now I realize that...that we were not there as an isolated human being, or people group but we have a larger and bigger family, the world of which we are a part. So now because I speak a little bit of English; that makes me feel...that I am a part of the family of humanity. That is a tremendous truth that I hold to my heart.*

#### **5.4.5 Future self-guides**

In an earlier section of this chapter (5.2 Observation #4), I have made reference to the sacred text as a key source of ideal and ought-to selves. In addition, the participants' investment in IFCs (see section 5.3) adds to the external pressure to conform to these possible future selves. In this section I will revisit some of the ideal and ought-to self guides that participants identify, and I will analyze them in terms of how they function from a motivational point of view. Markus and Nurius

(1986) identify three reasons for the motivational importance of possible selves. Possible selves function (a) as incentives for future behavior, (b) as self-regulators and (c) as standards. I will provide examples from the data set to illustrate each of these reasons.

### *Incentives for future behavior*

Future selves function as incentives in that they present themselves as roles and behaviors to strive for and those to avoid. Nearly all informants described some of the people and experiences that influenced them early in life, that were instrumental in guiding them to the fields of study and work in which they now operate. Their early exposure to positive role models within the context of familiar and safe environments (IFCs) was conducive to embracing these role models and incorporating elements into their own ideal selves. At age nine, Linda was exposed to a linguist speaking in her place of worship. This experience allowed her to emerge with an unusually clear picture of her own future self as a linguist that she has never forgotten. Aidan, Lucinda and Eunice, who were raised in cross-cultural settings, experienced this environment as positive. These experiences were conducive to their ability to envision similar future roles as they had been modeled by their parents. Leona, Garret, Julius and Peter mention particular college professors who positively exposed them to the ways in which knowledge of biblical languages could be beneficial. These relationships and experiences were key in presenting incentives for their own future behavior.

### *Self-regulators*

Possible selves can function as self-regulators, that is, they enable people to adjust their current behavior in pursuit of becoming what they envision in the future. The examples that come to mind here are those informants who describe future scenarios. John envisions a future in which he will gain biblical insights from the Bilabongali people. This has a self-regulating effect on his behavior. After 35 years of service, he and Eunice have returned to the same African country yet again, to continue their work as linguists. I have already mentioned Margaret, who also speaks for her late husband, and their sense of accountability before a divine judge. This 'ultimate concern' sustained them in many times of illness and challenge over the decades, functioning as a self-regulator in sustaining their linguistic work.

### *Standards*

Possible selves can also function as standards or benchmarks against which past behavior can be self-evaluated. They provide a framework within which other behaviors can be interpreted. In Section 5.3.6 I discuss international posture and cited Leona's report on her first international humanitarian trip as an example. As I mentioned, in this report she self-evaluates her own participation in the experience in comparison to her peers and also in terms of her own standards of what she saw as an ideal way to relate to people of other cultures. The fact that she recalls this incident and describes it 15 years later, indicates that in her mid-teens she was developing standards of international posture, and that these are standards she continues to hold and develop. When Linda refers to Christ's

command to communicate the faith (see section 5.3.4), she is articulating a standard which she expects believers to live up to.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

*It's all in context (Susan).*

Susan's remark, spoken in the context of why it is more important to her to improve her Hebrew rather than her German, captures the essence of this chapter. All language learning is in context. In considering L2 motivation, the immediate context of the language learning situation is of supreme importance, that is, factors such as the teacher, the curriculum, group dynamics, learning tasks, content, and classroom environment. However, the much broader context of people's lives, the unique, individual identities embedded in the fabric of everyday life must be considered if we want to gain an even greater understanding of learners' L2 motivation. Obviously, the 'person-in-context' is as broad as human life itself, which makes its impact on motivation in language learning difficult to measure or explain in any comprehensive way.

In this chapter, I have attempted to address a small slice of that broader context of my informants. I have considered both internal and external forces that my informants wrestle with. Participants in my study are highly accomplished L2 learners who have learned one or more languages in relation to a sacred text. In this chapter, I have examined the broader context of their lives in terms of the IFCs in which they were socialized and with which they align themselves. One central characteristic of these IFCs is the constellation of beliefs and values

concerning sacred texts. In addition, I have categorized the IFCs represented into five basic types. I have presented excerpts from the data that illustrate informants' alignment and identification with these communities. International posture is a salient characteristic that is apparent in all five types of IFCs. Then, in terms of internal motivational forces, I have examined how informants have responded as agents positioned from within these IFCs in ways that illustrate how they are driven by their desire for community and meaning within the context of their lives generally speaking. I also considered the role of future self-guides functioning through ideal and ought-to selves.

In the next chapter, I will narrow the focus of the 'person-in-context' language learning environment, to the joint spiritual and L2 ideal selves.

## Chapter Six: Creating the vision for an ideal L2

### self

In the previous chapter, I examined in detail, the socio-religious contexts in which my informants were socialized. I outlined observable elements of beliefs surrounding sacred texts and I explained their centrality to the IFCs with which my informants chose to invest themselves. In this chapter, I will explain how my informants' L2 vision grows out of this socio-religious context. The participants demonstrate three core characteristics that work together in harmony to create the wellspring in which their language learning vision is embedded and from which their language learning motivation surfaces: (a) *spiritual vision*, (b) *L2 goal/vision of L2 self* and (c) *sacred text*. I begin by describing informants' spiritual 'call' or 'vision'. The spiritual call/vision and the L2 vision are very closely connected for most informants. In sections 6.1 and 6.2 I will show how the same six conditions for successful language learning operate in both the spiritual vision and the L2 aspect of informants' call. The ideal and ought-to L2 selves form important parts of this vision. In the third section of this chapter (6.3), I expand on how sacred texts as meaningful authentic material contribute to L2 motivation and vision. This chapter gives a thorough discussion on the question 'why participants learn language'.

## 6.1 Spiritual vision/call

Central to the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009) is the notion of an ideal self, which I have examined in detail in chapter 1. As I have argued previously, the notion of an ideal self has long had a place in psychological research beginning with William James and is evident in the works of Rogers and Maslow (see Evans, 2005). Parallel to the concept of ideal self is what, for centuries, has been referred to as ‘vocation’ or ‘calling’. The concepts of ‘ideal self’ and ‘vocation’ share the notion of an envisioned end. Evans summarizes Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard’s (1813-1855) view, that all human beings have this fundamental call on their lives. Far from being a call to eccentricity or alienation, Kierkegaard views it as a call to love God and to love one’s neighbor (ibid). According to Kierkegaard, it is each person’s responsibility to discover their calling, to discern what specifically this might look like and work their way towards becoming the person envisioned. Translated Kierkegaard’s idea into contemporary psychological language and it sounds very much like the motivating impact of an ideal self.

Most of the participants in my study describe a strong inner prompting which they perceive as a divine call on their lives to vocations of service (e.g. academics, linguists, influencers) within the context of an IFC. This call includes a vivid sense of themselves moving toward a hoped-for shared vision in a future world. It is no coincidence that the spiritual vision in most informants comes in the context of an IFC. Christians in particular, hold the belief that the call of God can be seen in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This revelation becomes

embodied in the life of a historical IFC. For this reason, the call is perceived in the context of the community and is available to anyone, not just exceptional individuals (Evans, 2005).

For the informants it is difficult to separate their call to a vocation and their L2 learning. The language learning is simply viewed as a corollary, a necessary part of the vocation. Several informants articulate this fusion of vocation and L2 learning.

*Frieda: How do the languages connect to your sense of divine call?*

*I feel my calling has been to Biblical Studies.... Because I am so interested in interpreting the Bible, learning these languages just naturally fits into that (Kelvin).*

*Not everyone can take the time to learn Greek and Hebrew—and so I think those that can, have a sense of calling to be the best that they can be (Garret).*

*The call is not to the languages. It is to explain the scriptures to people. My call is not to teach people how to read Greek and Hebrew. My call is 'read the whole bible' and when you are finished, read it again. Because how can you lead people to God without this going on in your mind (Peter)?*

*I think there's something about my personality and way of looking at things that both highly motivates me in language learning, and also has brought me to want to be involved in Bible translation. And so, in some ways I might see it as a single motivation that has two outcomes (namely, a priority on language learning and a work with Bible translation) which are strongly linked to each other (Shauna).*

In order to understand the high level of motivation for L2 learning in my informants, it is important to see how this fusion of spiritual/vocational and L2 visions functions. As has been argued earlier, not all ideal selves lead to motivating behavior. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, pp. 131-132) list a series of six essential components that need to be in place for the motivating capacity of the

ideal and ought selves to be activated, which I have summarized in chapter 1.4.3.d. Here I will present evidence from the data that illustrates how these conditions are met in terms of informants' spiritual/vocational vision (in 6.1) and their L2 vision (in 6.2). I have reformulated Dörnyei and Ushioda list of components to target the ideal vocational self:

Construction of the ideal vocational self: Creating the vision

Imagery enhancement: Strengthening the vocational vision

Making the Ideal Vocational Self plausible: Substantiating the vision

Activating the Ideal Vocational Self: Keeping the vision alive

Developing an action plan: Operationalizing the vocational vision

Considering failure: Counterbalancing the vocational vision

### **6.1.1 Construction of the ideal vocational self: Creating the vision**

In order for ideal vocational selves to function as future self-guides, people must have some type of vocational vision or call. Many of my informants describe strong inner promptings, some which they recall from their childhood, to pursue specific vocations. They understand these promptings as a divine call on their lives. For some this sense of call crystallized in a particular memorable moment; for others the call developed slowly over time. Informants also use metaphors to illustrate their sense of call. Their reasoning for choosing to respond to a divine call into observable behavior alludes to core motivational components of self, a point I will come back to later in this chapter. The following examples illustrate

how critical incidents within the context of IFCs resulted in a clear sense of vocation.

*Frieda: What prompted you to choose your field of work?*

*God! I was absolutely not interested in missions at all when I was growing up. In fact, I wanted to be a dentist the whole time I was growing up and after my first year of Bible College, I even applied to the [university] and was accepted into pre-dentistry. However, I felt God calling me to go back to Bible College for another year so I did. ...By this point, I was feeling God calling me to do Bible translation (Leona).*

*When I was a young boy I was convinced that God called me into ...the ministry of sharing and preaching the gospel to all nations.... [T]hat calling was very strong (Myat).*

*It was just an absolute conviction that I just felt that that was what God was telling me to do. It's hard to explain but it was very very strong. And from age nine on I would tell people that I was going to be a writer and a translator...a very strong sense of call...which was a really good thing for me because I really needed a high motivation. Because I would never ever have gone...otherwise (Linda).*

As was mentioned earlier, adolescents typically experiment with a variety of visions for the future. Linda's account illustrates this experimentation, which ultimately led her back to her initial call.

*As a child, I said, that is what I am going to be. And you know in the years as a young adult you do try different things. But in the end I just came back to that and I said, 'That is what I need to do'.*

For some of my informants, the call to a vocation did not begin with what they perceived as a sense of divine call, but came in the form of a literal call/invitation from a local IFC. Julius describes how his career path to becoming an engineer was 'derailed' through the invitation of a small church for him to become their pastor.

*I wanted to be an engineer. ...Well, then I got derailed on my own intentions because I wasn't even three months outside of graduation [from*

*Bible school] and I received an invitation to pastor which was the remotest thing from my mind. But that church didn't actually leave me alone. ...So okay I went back and [preached a sermon] and then they met that very day and they asked me to come and be their minister which in that little church...it meant being minister of the whole congregation.*

### **6.1.2 Imagery enhancement: Strengthening the vocational vision**

People may sense a call to a specific vocation, but the vision may be blurred or not be strong enough to sustain the effort required to achieve it. The strengthening of vocational visions is best illustrated by the metaphors informants use and the role models they describe.

#### ***Metaphors***

Metaphors that illustrate movement over time are those of a seed planted, and a journey. The seed metaphor illustrates how, in hindsight, informants reflect on an idea that began at a certain point in their lives, slowly gained clarity and developed into a sense of divine call with more clarity. The journey metaphor illustrates the process of a development of call over a period of time. Though I have already quoted Leona (section 5.4.1), I will repeat the same quote here because it is an example of both the seed metaphor and the journey metaphor to illustrate a sense of vocation.

*However, God had planted the seed and from then on, I couldn't get that idea out of my head. ...God has taken me on a long journey of preparing to do this work to finally doing it and the journey is just beginning.*

As a part of the journey metaphor, informants use words like 'leading' and 'following'. The divine call is perceived as a gradual growing awareness, which they understand primarily in hindsight through the circumstances and events that

followed. Their use of the metaphor of 'leading' indicates a perception of divine initiative illuminating a possible ideal vocational self. The metaphor of 'following' alludes to participants' voluntary embrace of that initiative. Taking a step backward, one may ask what motivates humans to embrace the ideal vocational self that they believe originates with the divine. Kierkegaard's answer to this question addresses the core human motivators, namely that human beings are rooted in social relationships, including a divine-human relationship. Kierkegaard argues that all social relationships entail obligations of respect. Just as romantic lovers share obligations to one another grounded in their mutual relationship, human beings are obligated through a relationship with the divine, beginning with their birth and continuing beyond death (Evans, 2005). The word 'obligations' points to an ought-to self, which in this case is congruent with the ideal self. The sense of joy that informants exude is perhaps explained (in part) by the congruence they perceive. Informants understand their abilities as divinely bestowed gifts, which they feel obligated to employ in ways that are grounded in a reciprocal divine-human relationship. Hence the 'leading' and 'following' metaphor gives hints of primary human motivators at work: a relationship of trust (desire for communion), voluntary submission (desire for agency) and meaningful engagement (desire for coherence). This way of understanding divine vocation is illustrated in my informants' reasoning:

*God very specifically led me back to Asia... (Shauna)*

*The fact of the matter is, that I feel this is where God is calling me to be and what God is calling me to do for now. And, I'll do it for as long as that is the case. ...God has given me an ability to learn languages. So, it*

*makes sense that I use these gifts and passions that God has given me to serve Him (Leona).*

*For me, duty and pleasure are not very far apart (Peter).*

### **Role models**

Vocational vision can be enhanced through role models because these integrate affective and cognitive dimensions of self. Several of my informants describe professors they encountered during their education that became role models with significant impact on strengthening their vocational visions.

*I had a professor who read Greek and read it very fluently—NT Greek and boy, that fascinated me. Then there was another professor who knew logic and philosophy and that fascinated me. That was at least as interesting as anything I had ever learned in physics. And so that year...I got invited to be a pastor again, and again I accepted it with some ambivalence but now I had at least a little bit more preparation (Julius).*

### **6.1.3 Making the ideal vocational self plausible: Substantiating the vision**

Expectancy value theories (discussed in chapter 1.1.1) remind us that self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific task) has an effect on motivation. If people do not believe they will succeed then they will generally not be motivated to put in effort towards a task. The more likely they perceive their success to be, the more willing they will be to expend effort towards achieving their goals. One way that achievements appear more accessible is through identifying challenges. Another is through metaphors that illuminate fearful and hopeful elements. I will give examples from the data that illustrate how my informants' experiences substantiated their vocational visions.

Shauna's process illustrates a movement from a lack of vocational self-efficacy, towards a joyful embrace of her vocation. She uses the metaphor of journey: finding one's vocation is like following a path. She perceives herself to be led by divine guidance, which, as argued above, addresses her desires for communion, agency and coherence. As a part of the divine guidance, she views people from her IFCs coming alongside her on the path to encourage her, further addressing her desire for communion. Because these companions and mentors on the journey are able to envision her ideal vocational self (linguist), she is helped to envision this vocation as plausible for herself. Again, the joy that is evident in her account, attests to a meaningful engagement, addressing her desire for coherence.

*But even before I knew much at all about what Bible translation might look like or what kind of need was out there, the thought that it might be interesting to me did bounce around in my brain, but I dismissed it as something that would be too big or important a job for me to be part of. God led me to a place where...I would find much joy in that journey! There were people who asked me if I had ever considered work in linguistics or Bible translation as part of that journey.*

Peter also uses the journey metaphor. He describes his need to expand his understanding of the OT in order to enhance his knowledge as a NT scholar. He describes his decision to focus on the OT as a 'long journey'. The metaphor seems useful as a way to acknowledge the challenges involved. He uses the metaphor in order to remind himself that despite its time-consuming nature, the task of expanding his OT knowledge is plausible. This is important, especially in light of the fact that this 'journey' will be undertaken alongside all his other professional responsibilities.

*I realized that the NT writers were referring to the OT all the time and I wasn't getting it. So I decided that in order to understand the NT properly, I needed to take a long journey into the OT. I started by taking two years of Hebrew...on the side.*

In Peter's last statement, we see an example of the fusion of vocational vision and L2 vision that I referred to earlier. The vocational vision in this instance is an ideal NT scholar who has a well-rounded understanding of the OT. One corollary of that vocational vision is an L2 vision: the ideal NT scholar who is able to read the OT in its original Hebrew.

John's ideal vocational self became more plausible through conversations with people in the field. He describes his conversations with people involved in linguistics during his time in college. This helped him envision more of the specifics of what this could look like for him and Eunice.

*We had [linguists] coming [to our college] and I would talk to them about what they were doing and how they were doing it and that was very intriguing to me. That....shaped the direction that we wanted to go.*

Leona alludes to the role of imagination in her fear of living 'overseas', which was a requirement for the work of a linguist. She had imagined this aspect of her ideal vocational self to be difficult. However, by trying it out, she realized that it was not as difficult as she had imagined. The experience ended up strengthening her vocational vision.

*The scariest part of that for me was living overseas. So, my time in China was really kind of my 'test' to see if I really could live overseas. While I realized that China was not a place I wanted to go long term, the year overseas was not as scary as I had imagined and I realized that, while going overseas involves sacrifice, it is also a rich resource of adventure and experiences.*

#### **6.1.4 Developing an action plan: Operationalizing the vocational vision**

One of the conditions necessary for the vocational vision to become reality is a series of manageable steps entailing how to achieve the end result. The vision takes the form of a simulation where informants mentally rehearse the steps they know are necessary to reach their goal. The simulation leads them to make behavioral changes that move them towards achieving their vision. In order to proceed from a vision to behavior that will move them in the direction of their vocation, people need to have a plan, to perfect it and implement it. Some tested out their call through preliminary experience in their field. For all my informants, the plan towards realizing their calling involved seeking further education. Those with a call to become linguists sought out training (both prior and ongoing) in linguistics and translation studies (often MA programs). Academics pursued extensive biblical and theological training, completing MA, M.Div and PhD programs. Many informants chose specialized training beyond the required education for their field

*The next step was to study a semester at [organization of linguists] to study linguistics in order to find out whether in fact we would want to do that. We studied phonology, phonetics, grammar and anthropology. In the phonology course we learned about the tools to analyze a language that had not been written (John).*

After completing undergraduate degrees in anthropology and linguistics, John and Eunice enrolled in summer courses specifically designed for translators. They also undertook a short-term cross-cultural assignment closer to home, alongside more experienced community development workers. Then they began the

lengthy process of learning multiple languages, which became by far the most prolonged and labour intensive aspect of the preparation and execution of their vocation. I will go into more detail regarding their L2+<sup>11</sup> vision in 6.2. Again, John and Eunice's situation illustrates the fusion of operationalizing their spiritual vision and their language learning vision (which I will develop further in 6.2).

### **6.1.5 Activating the ideal vocational self: Keeping the vision alive**

Since most of my informants perceive their vocation as a life-time calling, they see this as a very long-term commitment. In long-term commitments there are inevitably times when people face challenges and discouragements. The initial excitement of entering the vocation wears off and people can find themselves struggling with the ongoing learning that their call requires of them. Long-term workers need support in order for their vocational visions to remain alive.

My informants described a number of ways in which they were able to maintain their long-term vocational vision. Two themes emerge here: (a) the supportive role of IFCs and (b) the inner spiritual resources at the core of informants' identity.

#### ***(a) The supportive role of IFCs***

A significant theme in this section is the supportive and encouraging role of IFCs. Informants from the linguist group operate within organizations that offer them support. They are also supported by their local and global IFCs. For academics, the academic community is a source of renewal in terms of their vocational

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<sup>11</sup> I am using 'L2+' in order to indicate second and additional languages learned.

vision. Their teaching, research, publications and professional development conferences are significant sources of keeping their vision alive.

In section 6.1.1 I have addressed the question of call to a vocation. As I have emphasized previously, the call is understood within the context of an IFC. John and Eunice's process illustrates the role of their local IFC in keeping their vision alive. There is a vision that the local IFC shares. Therefore, John and Eunice feel confident in approaching their IFC and asking for a mandate. John explains how this works:

*You go to your home church and make known your desire and your call and then ask them to send you or become available for them to send you. And so we did that.*

In section 5.4.2 I have described Leona's relationship with her home church. She also addresses the notion of receiving a mandate from the IFC and how that sustains her vision in the long run. John describes the importance this support means to them in terms of keeping their vision alive over three decades. Like other linguists, John and Eunice see themselves as ambassadors and extensions of their home IFCs.

*This is very important. We have continued that relationship and to this day we feel that we have been sent by the [church] ...they are involved in our decision-making, planning, financial, prayer...very much involved.*

After a burn-out experience ten years earlier, John and Eunice invited a smaller group to give them more intensive support within the larger local IFC. This small group made up of a dozen people committed themselves to meet regularly to pray for John and Eunice and their work. The relationship between John and Eunice, and this group, illustrates the strong bond of belonging and

identity that exists. At the time of my interview with John and Eunice, this group had been meeting monthly over a period of eight years. During that time, the group has made efforts to inform themselves on the host country and the people group John and Eunice are working with. Some members of their support group traveled to this country as volunteers to help with a building project and to meet John and Eunice's friends. Not only are John and Eunice deeply invested in this group of supporters, but the people in the group are equally invested in John and Eunice's project. John describes his attempts to thank the group for their support; however, the people in the group do not see this as a one-way relationship. John's excitement about this group's investment in them personally and in their project indicates the sustaining function of the extended IFC's support in John and Eunice's vocational vision.

*[H]e said, 'It is not us helping you—we are all doing this together. This is our project now.' And so this group has taken ownership of the...translation work and the church planting work and we are doing this together...so that is very exciting.*

***(b) The inner spiritual resources at the core of informants' identity***

Despite the support linguists experience from their IFCs, following their vocation can be a lonely and isolating path. In the midst of this aloneness and need, informants look to their relationships with the divine for reassurance and solace. Shauna describes a spiritual experience that further confirms her call to a long-term vocation of a linguist, which includes an element of sacrifice. During an illness that interrupted her preparation for linguistic work, she is faced in a new way with the cost of following her sense of call. Her 'vision' includes living very far away from her family and home country probably for decades. In her mind's

eye she ‘sees’ some of the details of her loss that loom even larger in light of her illness: her absence at family events such as the upcoming wedding of her sister, her fear of becoming a stranger to her nephews and nieces. In a time of prayer, she comes to a renewed sense of her vision and call, and a willingness to embrace the cost.

*But in this moment of illness and considering my family and the future, I sensed God asking me if I would be willing to do that for him. If I would be willing to give up what my life in [my home country] meant, even when I was feeling that sacrifice the most deeply. I didn’t have any certainty at that time that that’s definitely what he was going to ask of me, or what it would look like if it did come about that I lived overseas, I came to a point of release, I wanted what he wanted in terms of where and how I would invest the years of my life, and was willing to take the cost.*

Another element that seems to be at work in Shauna’s account that contributes to keeping the vision alive is the sense of being called to do something difficult. Despite the high cost that Shauna perceives her call to entail, her response indicates a clear sense of agency. In other words, she feels free to make a choice. Also, she feels no pressure to make that choice quickly. She embraces this call in part also because it addresses her need for coherence. In connection with her call, Shauna describes how her spiritual life addresses her desire for meaningfulness.

*There’s [always] been a desire for real life, the depth of life that only deeply walking with Jesus gives. Maybe I just feel that deeply walking with Jesus for me includes...the special privilege of knowing him through peoples of other cultures, knowing him differently by discovering myself and my needs and looking for him in new contexts.*

A further extension of the journey metaphor is that of a compass which I have already mentioned in section 5.2. Peter uses this metaphor to illustrate his view of the role of academics for the wider Christian IFC. As other quotes have

illustrated, it is common to use the journey metaphor as way of understanding call. The role of a compass is to give guidance to travelers on the journey. The metaphor expresses the notion of constancy, stability, direction and depth.

*It is good to have some in the church who are working hard at this book, sort of like a compass for the congregation. My sense of call is that I am one of those people who is supposed to read the book and explain it to the people. That [motivation] is very high in this because Greek and Hebrew help me understand what is going on (Peter).*

Again in this excerpt the vocational ideal self and the L2 ideal self are difficult to separate. The ideal vocational self for Peter is being an academic that is able to guide the church based on his in-depth knowledge of the sacred text. His ideal L2 self is being able to use Hebrew and Greek in order to have a thorough understanding of the sacred text. Without the ideal L2 self, the vocational self is not possible. Without the vocational ideal self and the sacred text, the L2 self is irrelevant. This irrelevance is illustrated by Peter's evaporation metaphor. In response to removing his faith from the equation he responds:

*I think it [my motivation for language learning] would evaporate. I can't get into a headspace where I would be interested in these languages. ... There would be very little point.*

### **6.1.6 Considering failure: Counterbalancing the vocational vision**

A final motivating condition for translating a vision into behavioral reality is considering the feared self. Some measure of failure and its consequences can provide a healthy counterbalance that contributes to the drive not to give up. Also, the ought-to self can add to the pressure to align one's behavior towards the vision, that is, as long as the ought-to self is in line with the ideal self.

Bill's situation illustrates the motivating function of the ought-to and feared selves. He describes the ought-to academic self, who is skilled in German (and often also Latin and French). He aspires to be a 'top tier' academic. His feared vocational self is being a second or third tier academic.

*I was motivated to learn German in order to write a dissertation that would distinguish me from my peers and help me to get a job. Given the cut-throat world of academia...any systematic theologian worth their keep needs to be able to work in German. You can't do theology without what has historically been the first language [of systematic theology]. Yes, professional identity depends to a degree [on your language ability]. Yes, yes. In my field what would differentiate a second tier, third tier scholar from a top tier, one of the things is just the language skills. There is an appreciation in the guild of those who have taken the time to get their Latin or their French, especially their German. They get more of a hearing because there is a recognition that this person has put in their time and gotten their language tools necessary in order to do theology well.*

In section 5.2 I have outlined the centrality of the sacred text both for the IFC as such and for communicating the faith. Informants in the linguists group in particular emphasize the implications of communicating the faith without the sacred text in an understandable language. They describe what could be called the 'feared-vocational-self', that is the failure of linguists to do their jobs.

Linda describes the implications of a lack of the sacred texts in the L1 of the IFCs in the region of Africa where she has worked. She describes IFCs that only have the sacred text in trade or national languages. She is horrified at the warped understanding of faith that these IFCs are left with.

*[It] gets really warped. It is kind of like playing the game of gossip. And by the time you get to hear some of these guys, it's like whoa! So they are so far removed from the scriptures...*

Lucinda describes both an ought-to vocational self and a feared-vocational self that motivate her to continue in her vocation. The ought-to self is communicated in the core values of the organization she works with. Linguists are expected to refrain from communicating anything related to faith until they are fluent in the L1 of the people.

*It is almost more than obligation. [It] is like our core value [in our mission agency]. They don't want us to be speaking in Spanish to the people. They want us only to be speaking in the heart language of the people in a culturally appropriate way in order to avoid confusion.*

Similar to Linda's story in Africa, Lucinda tells of an indigenous pastor in South America who is using the sacred text in Spanish, a language that he is only partially fluent in. She describes the chaotic mix of teachings and biblical stories that are communicated in Spanish, which are then translated into the Mankluet language. Lucinda is horrified at the distortion of the sacred text, which she ascribes to the lack of access to an understandable translation in the pastor's L1.

*And so he told a whole bunch of OT stories just mixed them up. That was his sermon to the people. This we saw was a result of him trying to study the Bible in Spanish instead of in his own language. This is why it won't do for me to go to the Mankluet and take a Spanish Bible and say—hey, here is a Bible, read this. Very sad. Twisted. We've got to get it in their heart language for them to understand this.*

Linda addresses another vocational ought-to self that causes some tension for her in several ways. She describes how in the past thirty years, there has been a very strong emphasis on linguists to acculturate with the people they are working with. This involves linguists from one culture incorporating cultural elements from their host group and of course becoming fluent in their languages. While she sees this as a vocational ought-to and an ideal-self worthy of aspiring

to, she is concerned that there is too great a pressure on linguists. In section 5.3.2, I have described the complex situation of the global IFCs in which Linda and her family worked, including conflict and violence between people groups. Choosing to acculturate with one ethnic group can result in conflict with other participating groups that are involved in similar projects. Another tension is the effect that her acculturation has on her children. She and her husband live with the tension of, on the one hand, adjusting to the local culture and yet on the other hand, raising their children to navigate not only the African context, but also to maintain their ties to their own cultural roots in North America.

*...because you're always saying, how much can I really adjust to this culture without casting my kids adrift? That whole sense of obligation of...learning a language is very high from that.*

In sum, for the informants it is difficult to separate their spiritual call to a vocation from their language learning. The language learning is simply viewed as an integrated part of their vocation. In this section, I have attempted to pull apart the vocational and language learning visions. I have extracted examples from the data to illustrate the six components conducive to the motivating capacity of ideal and ought-to vocational selves.

## **6.2 L2 goal/vision of an L2 self**

In this section, I will address the same six conditions that I discussed in the previous section, but draw out examples that relate specifically to language learning. The six conditions are as follows:

- 1 Construction of the ideal L2 self: Creating the vision

- 2 Imagery enhancement: Strengthening the L2 vision
- 3 Making the ideal L2 self plausible: Substantiating the vision
- 4 Developing an action plan: Operationalizing the L2 vision
- 5 Activating the ideal L2 self: Keeping the vision alive
- 6 Considering failure: Counterbalancing the L2 vision

### **6.2.1 Construction of the ideal L2 self: Creating the vision**

As I have pointed out earlier, the particular vocations the participants embraced required that they learn one or more languages. Participants view these languages as an aspect integral to fulfilling their divine call. While most participants identify a link between their desire to learn language and their divine call, Myat's account is particularly striking in its vividness and clarity. As the reader will recall, Myat was still a boy in his East Asian home country, when he perceived a divine call to be an influencer, that is, a communicator of the faith to people of other cultures and languages. He remembers with clarity the moment he realized that learning English was one of the first tasks on his path towards his vocation. He plainly articulates that his spiritual call is his primary motivation to learn English:

*I came to the realization that unless I am able to speak English, how can I go to other nations and do this work? And so I learned English so that I can bring the gospel to the people in a language they can understand.*

Myat goes on to describe particularly lucid images of a 'future English self' that he recalls from his childhood. From an early age, even before he knew about English as a language, he perceived himself being drawn into a 'different world' and a different language:

*When I was a boy, about 7 or 8 years...I had a very strong sense that I had to be in a different world, different from the world I was living in at that time and I used to dream something entirely different, about a people group that spoke a different language. And when I grew old enough to recognize that there was such a thing as English people, having different cultures and the language, then there was no sense of doubt in me that this is the one.*

This image of a future English-speaking self went so far as to appear even in his dreams, where he clearly saw himself speaking English fluently. The world of English in his dreams gave him a great deal of pleasure; in fact, it became a kind of virtual world which he inhabited in his mind and in his dreams:

*In my dream, I was very good at English. I spoke to people, but when I [woke] up I did not know what I spoke. But I sensed the joy of speaking English. So I lived basically in two worlds. In the world of English, and in the reality where there is very little English.*

Other participants' data is less dramatic but nevertheless demonstrates a clear motivational connection between language learning and faith-related vocation. Linda explains how in her initial post-secondary education, she chose Greek language courses as a way of laying the foundation for a possible vocation as a linguist, even though she was still tentative about it:

*I went to Bible College for three years and made sure I was taking Bible courses. And I took Greek with the idea that if I ever went into Bible translation I would want Greek. So I took about 12 credit hours of Greek.*

Margaret describes the importance of call as the starting point for her and her husband's work. The ideal L2 self was an obvious first and central step for them:

*We could only do this work under the condition that God called us to do it. Language learning is of course part of it. How else could we do this work? How else could we understand the people, understand their way of thinking? You have to know the language.*

In Peter's account, the word 'obligation' appears again, alluding to the ought-to L2 self that forms part of the construction of his ideal L2 self. Peter's motivation is increased because the ideal and the ought-to L2 selves are congruent with one another as well as with his ideal and ought-to vocational selves.

*It is part of the job and I have a duty and I take that seriously. It is part of the job but I have a sense of obligation that I need to know what I am doing. That is not demeaning to me (Peter).*

In section 6.1.5, I have drawn attention to Peter's evaporation metaphor when speaking of removing his faith from his vocational vision. In that quote, it is also interesting to note Peter's use of the word 'headspace', which is another way of referring to imagination and vision. He credits his faith as the key in creating 'headspace', ie L2 vision.

### ***Role models***

Several informants spoke of role models that first inspired their L2 visions. Julius and Garret both encountered senior academics who were fluent in biblical languages. Julius and Garret both describe fascination with these people's ability to use additional languages in order to access the sacred text, creating in my informants the vision of their own L2 selves. Eunice, Aiden and Lucinda grew up in cross-cultural settings exposed to their parents and undoubtedly other adults who learned one or more languages. While they do not specifically make reference to the impact of these L2 role models, this impact can be inferred from Eunice's comment.

*Cross-cultural understanding is something that I grew up with, something that I have.*

As these examples demonstrate, a clear motivational connection between the ideal future vocational self and an ideal future L2 self can be identified early on in the vocational path. Both of these are constructed in response to a spiritual call.

### **6.2.2 Imagery enhancement: Strengthening the L2 vision**

For my informants it was obvious that the ideal L2 self was an integral part of achieving their ideal vocational self, but the L2 vision was for some initially blurred or not strong enough to sustain the effort required in achieving it. The strengthening of L2 visions is demonstrated in three ways: (a) through informants' tentative experimentation with language learning, (b) through the metaphors informants use and (c) through seeing meaningful results.

#### ***a. Tentative experimentation with language learning***

John describes some of the courses he took as a part of this academic training to become a linguist. He describes a second language acquisition course that introduced him to the strategies involved in language learning. His study of Greek for biblical and theological purposes gave him a hands-on experience of language learning, which awakened an interest and enjoyment of the process.

*It was a strong missions program that touched many aspects of missionary work and cross-cultural ministry. One course was simple basic language learning, just to expose you to the challenge of language learning, just a little beginners tool for getting some hands on experience of how to learn a language. I also studied Greek two of my three years. I enjoyed that very much. My interest in language developed there.*

#### ***b. Metaphors for strengthened L2 visions***

A theme that emerges here is the notion of an ought-to L2 self slowly becoming a

strong ideal L2 self as the vision is strengthened. Two metaphors illustrate this gradual strengthening: the ‘appetite’ metaphor and the ‘falling in love’ metaphor. Both of these metaphors give clues about the dynamics of motivation over time.

The appetite metaphor is useful for illustrating the impact of an ought-to self that strengthens L2 motivation over time. Just like a person may not like the taste of an unfamiliar food at first try, they can learn to like it with frequent exposure. Peter uses this metaphor to explain how his motivation for language learning has increased over time, due to repeated exposure to the languages. The increasing skill in using the language in conjunction with the sacred text leads to a rewarding and satisfying experience for him. He also uses the appetite metaphor to explain the difference between aptitude for language learning and motivation, a distinction he sees in himself and in his students.

*When I started learning Greek I did not have this [high] motivation. It was part of my program, and I thought well, let's do it. But my motivation grew slowly as my knowledge of Greek grew. I came in with low appetite. As I took more—I had to for my program—I became more attracted to it and believing in what this could do. How it helped. I have modest ability in languages—never been a top student—but I have a lot of appetite. [I have] a lot of appetite to learn Greek and Hebrew. That was true 30 years ago and it is still true today.*

Peter also uses the ‘falling in love’ metaphor. The interview question was: *What kept you going when it [language learning] was hard?* In his response, he indicates that a turning point came just at the time when he had completed all the required Greek courses in his academic program. He recounts how, in his third semester of Greek, the teacher required the learners to read a portion of the sacred text in Greek for 20 minutes a day for 80 days. He describes how this experience transformed his ought-to Greek self to an ideal Greek self. This metaphor

illustrates how the drudgery that may accompany the ought-to L2 self can be transformed over time into an ideal L2 self that ignites passion and joy.

*At the start it was pretty slow but at the end of four months, I could read First John almost as fast as in English. The sheer repetition and I loved that. I can do this. That was sort of the shift. Nothing heroic and this is what can come from it. I knew First John and I saw stuff. Most of it I could have seen in English but I wasn't doing it in English; I was doing it in Greek. That was all part of my falling in love with doing all of this. That is what motivated me to keep going.*

### **c. Seeing meaningful results**

Again, the notion that an ought-to L2 self slowly develops into an ideal L2 self is illustrated by Kelvin's account. At the beginning of his L2 trajectory, he is motivated by the ought-to L2 self represented by grades. Then he rephrases this assessment of the source of his L2 motivation to include elements from the language learning environment: his classmates and his instructor. He notes that these also play a strong role in sustaining him through the difficult initial year of L2 study. The strengthening of the L2 vision occurs when he begins to see the meaningful results of reading the sacred text in its original language and translating narratives. Kelvin makes reference to purpose and meaning, indicating that his L2 vision is enhanced through satisfying the desire for coherence.

*What gets me through the first year? To be honest: the grades.... But that is not the only factor. First year tends to be most difficult. You need a context—classmates, professor—without that it is hard to keep going. When you get to a higher level, you are looking at translating actual passages. Then you feel like you have gotten somewhere. There is purpose to your study; that is encouraging.*

### 6.2.3 Making the ideal L2 self plausible: Substantiating the vision

As has been noted previously, the belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific task has motivational implications. If people believe they will succeed then they will generally be motivated to put in more effort towards a task. Highly successful language learners tend to use effective learning strategies that help them to see the L2 self as achievable. Again using metaphors and studying role models help learners to envision the L2 self as an accessible goal. I will give examples from the data that illustrate how my informants applied these strategies in order to substantiate their L2 visions.

#### *Using metaphors*

Several interesting metaphors emerged as informants spoke about analogies for language learning, that help learners see the plausibility of their L2 visions:

*A marathon:* Because language learning is such a long-term process, the marathon metaphor helps learners to keep the larger picture in view. The metaphor helps Lucinda when she encounters difficulties. Because she prefers shorter term goals, the marathon metaphor reminds her that despite the lengthy process, it is achievable if she endures.

*Well for me, I'm a much better sprinter than I am a marathoner. And so I have to keep reminding myself that language learning is a marathon. And that you just have to keep going.*

Bill's use of the marathon metaphor comes from his own experience as a real-life marathon runner. He has the reputation among his colleagues of being an extraordinarily disciplined scholar and runner.

*It is like running a marathon—it took an unbelievable amount of discipline to become somewhat proficient in theological German, but I feel*

*extraordinarily satisfied.*

*Swimming:* This metaphor illustrates the notion of ‘immersion’ that is commonly used in Canadian public schools offering content-based instruction in an L2. It also draws parallels between sports and language learning, helping learners to see that just as physical skills can be trained through practice, language learning can also be honed through active participation. Myat’s depiction goes even a step ‘deeper’ (pun intended). While he presents the swimming metaphor as a language learning strategy to his students, he sees his own ‘immersion’ into English as taking on a new identity:

*I use swimming as my analogy. ...I told my students, learning English has to do with self-indulging, self-giving into the language itself as much as we put ourselves completely in the water when we want to learn how to swim. Swimming is never learned on the top of the water. Swimming is always learned in the real river. If we want to learn English we have to be willing to throw ourselves into the language itself and swim whether we can or not. ...So we must be willing to completely immerse ourselves in the language. ...[L]earning [English] has to do with our spirit and soul. I would like to say, the totality of our being must be immersed in this learning process.*

*Keeping a ‘dead’ language ‘alive’:* Several informants from the academics group use the metaphor of keeping a language alive. They are speaking in the context of so-called ‘dead’ languages that have no current use other than to read the ancient texts that are central to my informants’ scholarship. Academics are not speaking of resurrecting these languages, such as has been done with Modern Hebrew in the state of Israel. They just want to keep the languages at a maintenance mode. The ‘keeping languages alive’ metaphor alludes to ‘life lines’ staying attached; the language is ‘fed’ by using it. This metaphor also makes sense in light of academics’ ties to the historical IFCs that surround the ancient

texts. It illustrates academics' ability to more clearly envision these ancient worlds to which they 'travel' and thereby making their L2 vision more plausible.

*I still like teaching because it keeps it alive and so I still get to teach Hebrew sometimes so I don't lose it (Peter).*

### ***Studying role models***

I have previously given examples of the power of role models in inspiring and strengthening L2 visions. Myat's example (see section 6.2.1) puts an interesting twist on the motivational impact of role models. A salient aspect of his context at the beginning of his L2 studies is that he has very little exposure to real life role models. However, remarkably, he is exposed to his ideal L2 self in his dreams while he is sleeping.

*Myat: Yes, I used to go to a foreign country, I did not know which country...*

*Frieda: in your dream?*

*Myat: Yes, in my dream...when I sleep. I had a dream and I met white people speaking English and I had no trouble at all. English was just my own language. And they had no problem understanding me. It was perfect world.*

*Frieda: Was this before you began to learn English?*

*Myat: That dream were frequently happening after I embarking my learning English. But at that time I was not at all able to make sentences. I had a fantastic time.*

*Frieda: And you were conversing with people? ...[W]hat were you conversing about?*

*Myat: just having fun and being in the midst of a huge multitude....shopping, doing fun things. ...[a]nd I wake up and I could not remember what I said or how I said it.*

Then Myat goes on to point out the connection between this future

'English self' in his dream and his sense of divine call. He sees the clear difference between his English ability in the dream and his English ability in real life. The future ideal L2 self as he sees himself in his dream becomes his role model that he imitates and aspires to. Even though he has not yet attained the L2 fluency he desires, his future L2 self as he sees and experiences it in his dreams gives him hope that it is indeed possible to achieve fluency. He connects this future ideal L2 self to his divine call and identifies it as divine providence putting into place a source of motivation that helps him to keep pushing forward in his language learning efforts.

*I tried to imitate the dream I had but it was impossible. However there was a strong sense, as a result of the dream, there is a possibility that I will be able to speak as in the experience of my dream. That always strengthened me. ...I interpreted the dream as God helping me see myself in the future. I am too far away from the point I would like to be in the future, but I can see the absolute possibility that I can reach that point.*

Years later, as the L2 vision and spiritual vision/call have become reality, he looks back at his 'divine call' as the starting point and sees himself having come a full circle:

*Some churches [in an English-speaking country] invited me to speak [in English] and I see my preaching in other churches as a part of God's fulfilling my dream. So...the gospel is the main motivation.*

#### **6.2.4 Developing an action plan: Operationalizing the L2 vision**

As a part of the plan to become equipped for their vocation, each participant put into place a plan for achieving the ideal L2 aspect of this vision. I have grouped my descriptions of these plans into four types. I will develop each of these and give examples from the data:

- 1 Enrolling in formal language classes.
- 2 Seeking out informal opportunities to practice L2 (library, media, interactions with people who are fluent in the respective languages.)
- 3 Becoming informed about the process of second language acquisition, finding a language coach or tutor, and developing their own curriculum for language learning.
- 4 Isolating themselves from opportunities to use their L1.

***Enrolling in formal language classes.***

For academics, formal language classes were usually a part of their required program of studies. In these instances, the ideal vocational self and the ought-to L2 self worked in harmony with one another. Several informants describe the need to learn several languages as prerequisites for their further education as academics:

*As soon as I started doctoral studies... I had to learn to read German. I had to learn to read French or I couldn't pursue doctoral studies (Julius).*

*In terms of why did I learn German, well the first reason is a very pragmatic one. My doctoral program required two ancient and two modern languages. Because I'm in theology, it would make sense that one of the modern languages be German. I had to take a year of learning theological German for reading. That was during my first year of PhD studies. I had to have my languages in place to matriculate in the program, to proceed to comprehensive exams (Bill).*

It is often through these initial classes that academics' interest and motivation is kindled for further language study. Once academics have gotten a sense of meaningful engagement with the sacred text which allowed them to experience the benefits of using the language for their vocation, they seek out

language courses above and beyond the requirements of their program. For example, as Bill's interest in German theologians develops during his doctoral program, he realizes that he will need to take additional German classes. He takes courses and achieves a German language certification at a language institute. In addition, he also hires a German tutor with whom he meets every week for several hours over the course of two years in order to get help in translating the theological works that become the central text for his dissertation.

*I went to the Goethe Institute. I took seven courses there. ...I got my Sprach Diplom Deutsch which is speaking, writing, translating. After that I spent two years, 10 months of the year...I met with my German tutor...once a week. I translated a whole book that was...relevant to my dissertation. It was about 300 pages...and every week...I translated and then I brought my copies to her and we went through it.*

***Seeking out interactions with people who are fluent in the respective languages.***

Besides accessing formal language classes, informants developed other action plans that helped them operationalize their vision. The second strategy informants employed was to seek out informal opportunities to use the L2. To supplement his formal German classes, Julius initiates correspondence with his father in German.

*I had always wanted to read [German] anyway so this went back to my boyhood and so now I got my Dad to write me letters in German all the time (Julius).*

Bill seeks out a variety of mediums to practice his L2. He emphasizes his desire to expand his knowledge of German beyond the academic genres he uses for his work.

*I spent a lot of time in the German Bible. That was very helpful for vocabulary acquisition. Biblical terms are often also theological terms. It was helpful to see familiar biblical passages.... I read a lot of children's books. That all helped in terms of that living sense of the language:*

*reading the newspaper, listening to the Deutsche Welle<sup>12</sup>—anything to not just have an academic understanding of the language.*

Julius and Bill's examples represent small-scale efforts to practice their languages. For others, this interaction required substantially more effort. Linguists in particular, often relocated for months or years at a time to a place where they could have natural interactions with L2 speakers. Before arriving in the African country that would become their home for over 35 years, Eunice and John spent a year in France to learn French (L2). After arriving in Africa, they relocated several times within the country in order to learn two further languages that they needed to function in for them to pursue their work as linguists.

*Then when we got to [the African country] we knew that we were going to translate the Bible into the Bilabongali (L3) language but we also knew we would have to learn a little bit of Sulla (L4), the trade language so in between we studied a little bit of Sulla but focused on learning Bilabongali.... (John).*

Linda and her husband were in a similar situation, having to learn three languages within a short period of time. They relocated to Quebec to learn French (L2) before arriving in Africa. Once in Africa they attended classes to learn Swahili (L3), a widely used trade language. For their L4, there were no classes or materials available, so they moved into a small village so as to learn the language from living with the people. Not surprisingly, this plan turned out to be a bit too intensive. Also, the political unrest in the country led to their evacuation and cut short further efforts to progress towards their ideal L4. Linda summarizes their situation as follows:

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<sup>12</sup> A German news channel.

*[B]y then languages were just a mish-mash for us because it was one and a half years and we were on [our L4]. It was a mess. We really did try to work at it [for a couple of years] to live in a tiny little village where everyone was pretty much monolingual [L4], so we wouldn't be tempted to use French and Swahili but never really carried through with it because we got evacuated again.*

Shauna's account gives an example of how the global IFC becomes an immediate and helpful context for language learning. She describes how her participation in the global IFC becomes an opportunity to progress towards her ideal L3 self. From her description it also becomes apparent that the context is very meaningful for her. This meaningfulness derives from the content (sacred text and other faith-related material) and the process (interactions with others who share her beliefs and values, though not her L1 or her ethnicity).

*Besides spending time with tutors (which has ranged from 2 to 12 hours a week, averaging around 8 or 10), I've had the privilege of getting to be part of a community of [L3] speakers at a church here in [this Southeast Asian city]. God has provided so richly in terms of friends, neighbors, a body of believers with whom I can interact in [L3] even in [this country]. I've practiced telling familiar Bible stories; I've tried to describe characters in different Bible stories based on pictures I found representing those stories. I've read children's Bible story books. Attending prayer meetings, Bible studies, youth services, worship and outreach services have all been part of my language study and exposure time, not to mention community building.*

***Becoming informed about the process of second language acquisition, finding a language coach or tutor, and developing their own curriculum for language learning.***

As was mentioned in the previous point (section 6.2.4 b.), for some languages there were no classes or materials available to the informants. Mostly informants from the linguists group fund themselves in these circumstances. Some linguists were able to take courses in second language acquisition, where they were trained

in how to learn languages. Others gained some knowledge from the linguistics courses they were taking as part of their professional training to become translators. In order to progress with their L2+ learning, informants without access to language classes put together plans for themselves. Shauna describes her process of learning how to give leadership to her own language learning with the help of an untrained tutor.

*I made it back to [my destination, a South East Asian country] ...intending to spend the next year and a half committed to full-time... language and culture study. I was somewhat hesitant about the thought of being in charge of telling a tutor what I wanted to learn, and even how I wanted to learn it. But after a bit of time with [my organizations'] language learning coordinator, some picture books and ideas from her, and the reassurance that my skills in teaching English could be flipped around and used to study another language, I got started.*

Juggling her role as a language learner with that of caring for sick people, and mothering her own six young children, Margaret decides that if she would translate the sacred text in a simplified form, together with an L3 language helper, she would accomplish two things at once: she would progress towards her ideal L3 self and she would complete a simplified translated version of sections of the sacred text.

*I took care of sick people but continued to ask people—how do you say this? ...I had six children. I could not take time to learn the language first. And there were no materials and so I decided that if I would translate the Bible together with a helper, I would learn the language. [My youngest daughter] was a baby and she sat on my lap.... [Later] we used the children's Bible in schools. We revised it later. ...The women used the [simplified, translated] Bible to learn to read.*

### ***Isolating themselves from opportunities to use their L1.***

In Linda's account quoted earlier (section 6.2.4 b), she indicates that by moving into a village of monolingual [L4] speakers, she and her husband hoped to make

greater strides towards their ideal L4 selves sooner. One reason for this move was also to isolate themselves from speakers of the languages they already were able to use (English, French and Swahili), so as not to be tempted to use these languages. Other informants describe similar relocations. Lucinda and Aiden decide to move into a more rural, monolingual [L4] village for some of the same reasons.

One extreme case of removing oneself from opportunities to use one's L1 in order to progress more quickly towards one's ideal L2 self is Myat. He developed an elaborate system for teaching himself English on his own. He was so drawn by this future ideal L2 self that he went so far as to voluntarily remove himself from his L1 altogether in order to propel himself more quickly into this future world of his new L2 self:

*[The reason] I used this [swimming] analogy, [is because] I also have in mind my personal experience. I said good-bye to my native language the very moment I step into the campus of our school. I considered that as my personal immersion into the well of the English language. I was very dedicated to learning English. What I did was, the moment I stepped into the campus of the school I said goodbye to my own native language. I said to myself, I will never speak or read anything in my own language. And I said to myself, I will even dream my dreams in English and I did not want to get out of the campus without learning the language.*

He describes the prayer he engaged in before he began to learn English. The force of his determination is expressed through abandoning his L1 in order to acquire his L2 more quickly, even to the extent of giving up language altogether in the interim, and engaging in prayer without language:

*Then I went to my room and I wanted to dedicate myself to God in prayer and I knelt and wanted to pray but how should I pray? I had no language. I gave up my native language and here I was ready to learn a new language but I can't use it at that point in time yet. And so I just prayed*

*without words.*

Then, in addition to his studies at the theological seminary (where the medium of instruction was neither English nor his L1), he proceeded to teach himself English by working with nothing more than an English version of the New Testament, an English–L1 dictionary, and a notebook. During this time he had virtually no exposure to English speakers. To practice pronunciation and fluency in speaking, he made a habit of going into the forest alone and lecturing to the trees:

*I went to a jungle, a place where there was no people so I will preach to the trees, I will preach to the open space with the intention that I will train my...lip/mouth organs and also to make myself make sentences spontaneously.*

In two and half months he had worked through the entire New Testament and created an L1–English dictionary in his notebook, based on the words in the sacred text.

In sum, the informants I have highlighted here are just several examples from many others in the data set, that illustrate the action plans informants put in place in order to operationalize their ideal L2 (or L3, L4) self. As this section has shown, these highly motivated language learners employ a significant amount of creativity and effort in order to follow through with their action plans to progress towards their L2+ vision.

### **6.2.5 Activating the ideal L2 self: Keeping the vision alive**

Since most of my informants perceive their vocation as a life-time calling, they also see their language learning as a part of this very long-term commitment.

Learning even just one language is a lengthy process, and since many of my informants are learning more than one additional language, this process becomes literally endless. In learning just one additional language, people face challenges and discouragements. With multiple languages to learn, the challenges can become overwhelming. The initial excitement of being able to use the language at a basic level wears off and people find themselves on a plateau. Learners need support in order for their ideal L2 (+) visions to remain alive. The question addressed in this section is: how do these highly motivated language learners maintain their vision over such a long period of time?

In the data I was able to identify several primary ways that learners approach the challenge of keeping their ideal L2(+) visions alive.

- 1 Participating in ongoing activities that require them to keep honing their L2 skills
- 2 Tapping into the inner spiritual resources at the core of informants' identity.
- 3 Taking a rest from language learning
- 4 Interacting with role models
- 5 Making specific plans to take formal L2 courses in the future.

*1. Participating in ongoing activities that require them to keep honing their L2 skills*

One way in which informants keep their ideal L2 visions alive is through participating in a variety of vocation-related activities that require L2 competence.

*Reading the sacred text in the original language on a regular basis:* As soon as their language proficiency permitted them to do so, academics began reading the sacred texts in their original languages as much as possible.

*Once I had studied Greek I always read the NT in Greek because that is the way I would learn it. So once I had studied Hebrew I just read the OT in Hebrew (Julius).*

*Teaching languages in conjunction with the sacred text in faith-based schools:* My academic informants enjoy teaching Hebrew and Greek in theological schools as a part of their professional/vocational role. They express quite clearly that their main motivation for teaching Greek or Hebrew is in order to improve or at least maintain their language skills. Hence it is their ideal L2 self that motivates them to teach language.

*I got asked to teach [Greek] at [a] Bible institute. And that was a fascinating experience.... That was just...sooo enjoyable because that is how I learned so much more about the fundamentals of Greek, answering the students questions and so forth and I was reading Greek and Hebrew all the time (Julius).*

*Participating in vocational/faith-based groups:* Bill participates in a group of twelve Karl Barth translators that are in the process of translating Barth correspondence documents from German into English.

*Being part of the Karl Barth translators' seminar keeps me in the loop.* Susan organizes 'Hebrew lunches', that is, weekly reading groups within the theological seminary. She invites colleagues and divinity students to bring bag lunches and spend their noon hours reading the Scriptures in Hebrew: a community of Hebrew learners.

*2. Tapping into the inner spiritual resources at the core of informants' identity:*

In section 6.1.5 I have described how the inner spiritual resources of the informants have a motivating effect in keeping their vocational vision alive. Informants also look to these inner spiritual resources in order to sustain them through the arduous process of achieving their ideal L2+ visions. Participants draw encouragement from these resources and interpret events through this lens. Informants create meaning through connecting seemingly unrelated events. Shauna's account is illustrative of these phenomena. First, she describes the 'plateau' experience of language learning, with its accompanying frustration and discouragement. Also, she describes how tapping into spiritual resources and creating meaning through connecting of events encourage her to persist amidst the frustrations of her L2 trajectory.

*I have found an amazing cycle over my past year or so of language learning. I get to the point where I feel like nothing is really moving or changing. Or where I get very frustrated that I'm not doing some skill or other in the language yet. And just as I'm getting quite impatient with myself, it seems like God provides exactly what I need.... He'll send me encouragement in all kinds of forms, one after another for at least the length of time that I was getting frustrated and discouraged and impatient. Whether through people's comments about my language, or whether through the sudden feeling that I'm accomplishing something I didn't think I was accomplishing in the language, or whether some looking back and realizing that I communicated without thinking, just being part of the moment.*

3. *Taking a rest from language learning:* Shauna describes how taking a rest from learning can have a rejuvenating effect and result in faster progress in the long run.

*Breaks also make a difference. A few times I've taken a break from language learning more because it seems that I had to (e.g. my visa requires me to leave the country) than that I felt I wanted to. I often wanted to keep at the job, not giving it a rest for a day. But sometimes not studying for a week or so, and then coming back could really show me the*

*progress I had made, could perhaps even allow concepts to sink into my brain during its idle time.*

4. *Interacting with role models:* Another factor that affects Shauna's motivation is role models of other L2 learners who have progressed further than she has. This helps her to see the value of pressing on and helps her to enhance her L2 vision.

*Another motivator is being surrounded by people who have worked hard at language learning. When I see colleagues giving workshops in a second language, I don't want to settle for some low language ability.*

Susan's ideal L2 self is made plausible through the role model of her senior colleague, who exclusively uses his Hebrew Bible on all occasions, public (teaching or preaching) or private (personal devotional reading of the sacred text).

*My goal would be not to use an English Bible. [My senior colleague] has been doing that for 20-30 years. I'm well on the way.*

5. *Making specific plans to take formal L2 courses in the future:* Several academics indicate that they have already made specific plans for further language study. Bill is making plans for continued German studies in the university where he has recently accepted a position. Since his academic ideal self is well developed and he has a high sense of self-efficacy in this environment, he plans on getting academic degrees in German language.

*What I would like to do is get a BA in German and then an MA. This is really a long-term.... I work well with goals and so if I can get a BA in German Language and Literature [at the university] on a very part time basis and then pick up an MA, I would be very happy.*

I have already mentioned Bill's plans for a sabbatical in Germany city both for vocational and language learning purposes. His ideal vocational self—a systematic theologian on sabbatical in Germany—necessarily precludes greater

progression towards his ideal L2 self—a more advanced user of German, both academic and every day colloquial varieties.

*We want to take a sabbatical in [this German city] so that would be ideal obviously to have more advanced rudimentary understanding of the lived language, if we are so fortunate as to go to [this city].*

Susan is enthusiastic about her plans for advanced Hebrew studies for her next sabbatical. Her ideal vocational self (well-prepared, careful OT scholar) works in tandem with her ideal L2 self, which is to be fluent enough in Hebrew to read her Hebrew Bible without the aid of an English translation.

*I would love to—and this is a project for my next sabbatical—I want to find someone somewhere, where I can learn more about the nuances [of Hebrew] that no one seems to teach. That is my level of interest. I would like to improve my fluency.*

### **6.2.6 Considering failure: Counterbalancing the L2 vision**

In a context of learning multiple languages, Alastair Henry (2012) observes that there are different levels of motivation for each language being learned. Among those informants who learned multiple languages, a pattern emerges in terms of the purpose for use of each language. With this in mind, it is helpful to examine less successful attempts at L2 learning. In addition, the ideal L2 vision becomes even more effective in motivating L2 learners if it is offset by their ‘feared L2 selves’ and reminded of their ‘ought-to L2 selves’. I will begin with exploring informants ‘failed L2 selves’ and my analysis of the reasons for these failed selves. Then I will consider ought-to L2 selves, whose motivational impact is closely related to the ought-to vocational selves of the informants. I will also

consider the feared vocational selves (from section 6.1.6) that are difficult to separate from the feared L2 selves.

*Failed L2 selves:* Most informants began their L2 learning trajectory with L2 classes in elementary or secondary school. Languages studied were usually French or Spanish. In most interviews, informants lament about the failure of these language learning ventures, attributing this failure to a lack of relevance of these languages to their lives. Informants contrast this early negative L2 experience with their current high motivation for the languages they are learning.

*In high school we had to take French so that the people in Quebec would be happy—not so that we would learn to speak it. I did not enjoy learning French. I learned just enough to not fail and that was sort of the normal attitude (Peter).*

*I had flunked out in Spanish in High School...but suddenly it was easy because High School Spanish is a whole lot different than when you are learning it in the environment and all of a sudden I was out in the streets speaking with people and it was fun, it was actually fun (Daryl).*

Kelvin relates an incident about a failed L2 self when he attempted to learn Latin on his own. He attributes his failure to the lack of elements from the learning environment—the instructor, the classmates. He also mentions a lack of a clear purpose, which would indicate a weak sense of an ideal L2 vision as well as a mismatch in terms of coherence.

*I tried a bit of Latin in my free time. Independently it didn't go very far. There was no real definitive reason. [There was] nothing to keep me going (Kelvin).*

*Ought-to L2 selves:* The ought-to self can add to the pressure to align one's behavior towards the vision, that is, as long as the ought-to self is congruent with the ideal self. For those informants learning multiple languages, it becomes

clear that the ought-to L2+ selves exert pressure. Some languages were learned first in order to function in the country. For example, a number of linguists learned the official and the trade languages first in order to function in their respective countries. I will call these ‘preliminary’ languages. Among the languages being learned, informants expressed a higher degree of instrumental obligation regarding preliminary languages.

*I will admit that a good deal of my [official] language learning came from a sense of obligation that as missionaries we ought to know the language of the people we work with...especially as...linguists. It enables/facilitates relationships that wouldn't otherwise form, it makes life there easier, and it shows a respect for the people who live in the country we work in (Leona).*

Only when they had reached a functional level in these preliminary languages, were they able to begin language learning of the primary target languages, the languages they were learning specifically in order to translate the sacred text.

*Feared vocational selves:* A final motivating condition for translating an L2 vision into behavioral reality is considering the feared self, which can provide a healthy counterbalance that helps learners not to give up. In section 6.1.6, I have given several examples of feared vocational selves that remind informants of the undesirable consequences in their work. In Lucinda’s account, the close relationship between the feared L2 self and the feared vocational self becomes clear. She recounts the incident that I have quoted in section 6.1.6. The feared L2 self has a motivational impact because of the feared vocational self that is attached to it. A reminder of the undesired results for her vocation are clearly motivating her to put effort towards her ideal L2 self.

### 6.3 Sacred text as authentic material

In this chapter so far, I have explored two of three core elements that are integrated in highly successful language learners. I have discussed informants' spiritual vision (section 6.1) and their vision of an ideal L2+ self (section 6.2). Now I turn to the third core element, the sacred text. In this section, I expand on how sacred texts as meaningful authentic materials contribute to L2+ motivation and vision. In chapter 1.5 I discussed the theoretical and practical implications of using authentic materials for language learning. I examined the research surrounding motivational considerations with regards to authenticity, interest and content in language learning. In chapter 3.2.4, I discussed the unique junction of faith and language that sacred texts represent. I now proceed to examine the data in light of these issues. It is very difficult to separate these concepts as isolated motivating factors, but I will offer examples from the data that highlight how they work within several informants' language learning trajectories.

#### *Authenticity of sacred text as a motivating factor for L2 learning:*

Shauna's deliberations illustrate that authenticity of the sacred text is a motivating factor for her. She deliberates whether or not she should use Buddhist sacred texts or the Bible as a text for language learning. Even though she ends up using the Bible more, she is not entirely sure this was a better choice. Both the Buddhist sacred writings and the Bible are authentic texts that are widely used by their adherents. Shauna points out that because of their wide usage, they provide access to cultural values.

*Although in some ways I have been interested in using Buddhist teachings or concepts as part of my language learning process, since that is a big part of the culture and people's lives to be understood in order to reach out, I have definitely ended up using the Biblical text much more. If I very carefully and intentionally laid out well thought out ideals and then made a language plan and really stuck to it, I'm not sure to which of the two sides of this coin I would give more favor, when considering learning in connection with the Biblical text versus in connection with the prominent national religion.*

*Interest in sacred text as a motivating factor in L2 learning:* Several informants use words like 'interest', 'passion', 'desire' to articulate the importance the sacred text has in their view, which translates into motivation to learn an L2 in relation to it. Their interest in any other text pales in comparison to their interest in the sacred text.

*The fact that it is the Bible to me plays a huge role in how interested I am in interpreting it to start with. Because I have not seen myself take the same interest in other narratives, even if they are an English narrative which I can read easily whereas with the Bible I have taken much more of an interest. The fact that it is the Bible to me, plays a big role. in how much I want to study and interpret and read it (Kelvin).*

*My passion is the Bible. I wouldn't be doing this for any other book unless it was a commentary or study help for the Bible! My interest in this work goes only as deep as the practical need for people to have the Bible. It doesn't come from a love of languages or academic study (Leona).*

*I would not learn Mankhuet or Bibaclo. I would not go through the hard effort of learning another language unless it had to do with translating the word of God or communicating the word of God in some way.... It is much too hard of work if it were not for the burning desire to communicate God's truth to people who need it (Lucinda).*

*Content as a motivating factor:* As I have mentioned previously, authenticity and interest cannot be separated from the content. Informants are interested in the sacred text because of its contents. Julius describes the key link between the sacred text and his motivation to learn Hebrew. He explains that a

deeper understanding of the sacred text could only be attained through learning Hebrew:

*When I took Hebrew my main motivation was...I was entirely intrigued by the way the gospel was preached [in the NT]. And the only way I could figure that out was to start to learn Hebrew.*

Myat describes the centrality of the sacred text in his language learning, again with exceptional clarity and focus. He notes several reasons why he has chosen to learn English using the Bible: first, it makes the process easier because he is already familiar with the content; second, he had no access to any other resource in English; and third, immersing himself in the Bible as a part of L2 learning results both in enhanced knowledge of the sacred text and the acquisition of the language that is his L2 vision:

*I used the Bible as my textbook...this was a help because many of the New Testament stories were familiar to me; ...the Bible was the only book in English that I had in my hands. The ultimate goal of learning English is that with this language I will be able to read and understand the Word of God. For me learning the truth from the Bible and learning English in my own way are inseparable. So as I read the Bible, I learned the truth and at the same time I learned English. And so it served two purposes together, two in one.*

Peter makes clear that the content of the sacred text is at the core of what motivates him to teach Greek (which for him is a means towards learning Greek). He uses the metaphor of 'lights turning on' as a way of speaking about how the content of the sacred text enhances his motivation to teach language.

*The text is key. It is not about teaching the language; it is about that text...I would still get to say what the text is about and that would turn my lights on (Peter).*

From the informants' comments regarding authenticity, interest and content, it is also clear that their investment in the sacred text is central to their faith and central to their language learning.

## 6.4 Conclusion

As I have shown in chapter 5, an understanding the unique context in which these informants are situated, is important background information to appreciate the learner's highly motivated investment in L2 learning. In this chapter, I have built on that foundation and examined in detail why the participants learn language. I have identified three core characteristics in the data, that together account for why informants learn language: (a) *spiritual vision*, (b) *vision of L2 self* and (c) *sacred text*. I described how informants' spiritual 'call' or 'vision' is foundational for their vocation. A crucial element necessary for them to follow their calling is the achievement of their ideal L2 selves. The spiritual vision/call and the L2 vision are inextricably linked in many informants. I drew examples from the data to show how the same six conditions operate to enhance motivation in both the vocational and the L2 aspect of informants call. The 'ideal and ought-to L2 selves' form important parts of this 'vision'. In the third section of this chapter, I showed how sacred texts as meaningful authentic material contribute to L2 motivation and vision.

To restate the central question of this chapter: why do participants learn language? In a nutshell, the answer is: because they sense a divine call to a vocation which requires of them to learn at least one L2—frequently more—in

order to interact with the sacred text, which is central to their spiritual vocation.

They are highly successful because many of the conditions necessary for realizing their L2 vision are in place.

## **Chapter Seven: Living the vision towards a shared ideal future**

Upon examining the reasons why the participants engaged in language learning, a tri-part make-up of their vision becomes apparent: a spiritual calling, a vision of an L2 self, and a sacred text. In the twenty cases that I have selected for this study, a key component of operationalizing a response to the spiritual vision/call involves a vision of a future L2 self with a particular projected end in mind. As a rule, participants see themselves as fluent L2 users in the future. A central facet of this mental picture involves interacting in an L2 with the sacred text and the IFC surrounding it. When participants engage in goal-oriented language learning behavior that is synchronized and harmonized with this joint spiritual/L2 vision, the process of language learning is energized with extraordinary vigor. I will now examine the data for behavior from which we can make inferences about the intensity (*how hard*) and the longevity (*how long*) of the participants' engagement in language learning and related activities. Before delving into these topics, I will examine some of the self-propelling dynamics inherent in the tasks themselves that sustain participants' long term motivation.

### **7.1 Self-propelling dynamics**

In chapter 6.2.5 I have described some of the activities participants engaged in, that aid them in keeping their vision alive. Those activities were more or less strategies that the participants put in place for themselves and exerted themselves

in order to keep their vision alive. In this section I focus on those ongoing motivational dynamics that by their inherent nature propel ongoing L2 motivation. These could also be termed 'near-term gratifications' (Bateman and Barry, 2012).

### **7.1.1 Sense of divine call**

As I have described in 6.1.1 and in 6.2.1, most informants perceive a sense of divine calling on their lives. The sense of calling is important in the construction of their ideal vocational self and, by extension, their ideal L2 self. The motivational impact of the sense of divine call goes much further than inspiring an initial vision. Informants understand this calling in the context of their IFCs, inviting them to engage in vocations of service to the larger community and to God. But the call is more than 'doing'; it begins with a sense of 'being'. In other words, it is rooted in their core identity and gives them a sense of coherence. As has been argued earlier, an experience of coherence is the sum of an overall sense of harmony, significance and purpose. Coherence also comes from making meaningful connections between otherwise unrelated events (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Even in the midst of overwhelming difficulties, people perceive their lives as meaningful if they have a deep sense of purpose (Emmons, 1999). A sense of divine call gives participants an overarching framework within which life's events and challenges can be interpreted. It is this sense of calling that they keep coming back to, to remind themselves of why they have embarked on their chosen paths, especially in times of difficulty. It is a foundation upon which informants base

their work and their identities in the long term. Their calling is a source of strength and solace for them in times of struggle. In all of these ways, 'calling' functions as a continual source of motivation. The following quotes allude to the ways in which a sense of calling creates coherence for informants.

*Frieda: Considering all the other things in the world you could be doing, why do you devote your life to this work?*

*Leona: I must admit that I ask myself that question frequently...especially when things are tough! The fact of the matter is, that I feel this is where God is calling me to be and what God is calling me to do for now. And, I'll do it for as long as that is the case.*

Informants see a causal relationship between their understanding of an inspired sacred text, an IFC bound to this text, and their own sense of place within this context. Garret draws connections between these points (which may seem unrelated by someone else's standards), which contribute to his sense of coherence/meaningfulness.

*Because I think it [the sacred text] is inspired. I think it is God's word to the church and so there need to be some people who can explain it and understand it in the best possible way. And I feel called to be one of those people.*

Like other informants, Linda emphasizes that the divine call on one's life is a call to submission. An important part of her understanding of calling is that it comes with the resources to fulfill it. As she explains, the situations she and her husband (and their three young daughters) experienced were often very challenging. Learning multiple languages was only one part of much bigger challenges. In the midst of political unrest, physical danger and repeated evacuations from the country, the sense of divine call was a source of stability, assurance and motivation for her.

*I think the bottom line is really obedience and God gives you what is necessary to do what he calls you to do. Yes, call is that God will give you what you need.... There were so many times when I thought: why am I here? Even the linguistics thing when I got there, I thought—oh my goodness, it is so different from...what you do in school. [There] it's all nice and concise, and I was drowning, I was floundering for the first few years. [I thought] if I am going to do this, it is because God has called me to do it. The language thing is only part of it.*

Peter uses the word 'call' seven times in the interview. He repeatedly returns to the topic of his initial call, giving it as the reason for his engagement in this field, where he has been for over 30 years. His call is a foundation upon which he builds his entire work, and it gives coherence to his life.

*Frieda: Why are you [learning and] teaching Greek and Hebrew?*

*Peter: I wanted to study the Bible and teach it. It goes back to that basic call and direction. ...my sense of call is that I am one of those people who is supposed to read the book and explain it to the people. The [motivation for languages] is very high in this and because Greek and Hebrew help me understand what is going on.*

Part of the continual self-propelling motivational dynamics of the sense of divine call relates to the notion of divine intervention in daily events. The sense of coherence that is reflected in the following quote is drawn from the connection that Garret sees between what may seem unrelated events to others. He draws attention to different scopes of 'vision'. A passer-by's scope is limited to surface-level features and events. The same events from the scope of vision that Garret's faith lends, are viewed as divine acts of intervention.

*God is at work here at [this university]. From the outside, it might appear that we are just a small higher educational institution.... But God is at work here. If we stop and look around, we can see evidence of it...in the...things...that happen here. God's work brings tears of joy to me and many others. When we come to work we pray that God will work here. God is answering those prayers.*

As I have shown with my analysis and these examples, the informants' sense of divine calling was instrumental not only in creating the initial vocational and L2 vision, but also is a source of inspiration and meaningfulness over many years of engagement, especially in the midst of difficult challenges.

### **7.1.2 Desire for communion**

As I have argued in chapter 5.4.2, the desire for communion affects motivation within IFCs with shared belief systems. The data reflects this desire in a variety of different ways that not only affect L2 learning directly, but also indirectly in sustaining favorable conditions for long-term L2 learning. I will begin this section arguing that the desire for communion within IFCs is a self-propelling motivational dynamic. Then I will focus on the specific ways in which the desire for communion with L2 speakers enhances and sustains L2 learning over a long period of time.

Informants repeatedly stressed the importance of the support within their IFCs. This is especially true of those informants who are linguists living far away from their home countries and cultures, supported by their local IFCs. The desire for communion is met through this support, which in turn creates conditions for ongoing L2 learning. Shauna's account is illustrative in eloquently describing her sense of support within her local and global IFC sustaining her in what she perceives as very tangible ways.

*Knowing that Christ's body [the church], is behind me, with me, knowing that I can go to other parts of the world where I know no one and nothing but can still meet up with "family"—these kinds of things are not only*

*motivating but foundational. I'm humbled at how often I forget it, but I'm fully dependent on prayers, emotional support, and finances of others.*

As been frequently argued in the past, initial language learning is often motivated by the desire for relationships with L2 speakers. This desire for interpersonal relationships is also a factor in sustaining efforts in L2 learning in the long run. Once the benefits of language learning have become perceptible in the form of a growing relationship, the bond often continues to fuel the desire to become a more fully competent L2 user. The data shows that continued language learning contributes towards meeting needs for communion, both within and beyond the IFC. Structural metaphors that informants choose to express communion are: *human body, family, bond and growth metaphors (flowers, roots)*.

In the quote above from Shauna, the 'human body' and the 'family' metaphors describe Shauna's view of relationships within the IFC of Christian believers, regardless of language and ethnicity. Leona eloquently describes the ways in which her growing competence in her L2 contributes to her ability to initiate and sustain relationships with people from her target L2. I have quoted Leona earlier when speaking of international postures, where she says that "*language learning conveys a basic respect for the people, culture and country that you work in.*" She goes on to give examples of how her relationships with L2 speakers are enhanced by her L2 skills, and how these relationships enhance her motivation to further improve her competence in L2.

*I know many [people in this Asian country] ...are thrilled that I have taken the time to learn their language. Especially in a country/culture that has so much contact with tourists, a little language learning goes a long way.*

*I've been on tours with people who have come to visit me and as soon as the tour guide finds out that I can speak [their language], they usually tend to almost ignore everyone else and focus mainly on me because it creates a bond. I wouldn't have the same [Asian] friends that I have if I hadn't taken time to learn the language. The relationships (both deep and surface level) are a strong motivator for me to learn the language.*

Leona values not only the ability to connect with target L2 speakers at a surface level, but expresses the desire to make friends. A situation she constructed for the purpose of learning language becomes meaningful beyond the language learning potential. Because it results in a 'real friendship' it has an added level of meaningfulness. Note the growth-metaphor in Leona's comments.

*Shortly after beginning my language learning, I began meeting with a [Asian] friend twice a week. One evening we would speak [her language] and the next evening we would speak English. That way we both got something out of the relationship and it really blossomed into a real friendship.*

Beyond superficial relationships and friendships, informants point to relationships within IFCs that add a deeper dimension. Leona and Shauna's increasing L2 competence allows them to engage in deeper discussions that concern the common beliefs of the IFC the L2 speakers share with them. This lends a further dimension of enjoyment and meaningfulness of the task of translation.

*Once I began working on the team, we hired a young Northern [Asian] woman to join the team and to work on translation with me. I really enjoy working with her. She is a new Christian and I find her questions challenging and insightful. It's neat to see her experience the Bible with the perspective of trying to translate it (Leona).*

*The most rewarding is realizing friendships I have built in the new language where it would have been impossible to a year ago, or finding that I have been refreshed or convicted by God through a message in the language, or hearing a colleague who mostly communicated in English*

*tell me that because of my presence and language help we were able to have a conversation on a topic they never would've touched (Shauna).*

The desire for relationships with people from the L2 community is also reflected in the ideal L2 selves my informants describe. Leona describes her desire to be accepted and fully integrated into her L2 community. In describing her ideal L2 self, she alludes to the reciprocity that is inherent in dialogue and in relationship-building. Her ideal L2 self is not only a fluent L2 speaker, but also a person who is addressed by her L2 community in the L2. She had mentioned previously that her L2 is a language that is not generally used with people outside the circle of family and friends. With her desire to be accepted in this circle, she is expressing a desire for intimate friendship with L2 speakers.

*If I was a fluent [L2] speaker in an ideal world...I would be accepted as one of them and they would use the language with me.*

As I have demonstrated in this section, the desire for relationships sustains informants in living out their ideal vocational selves in the long run. This creates conditions in which not only the initial ideal L2 self can be inspired, but leads also to self-sustaining dynamics that enhances the ideal L2 self in the long run.

### **7.1.3 Interest**

Interest is the desire to engage in specific topics or activities repeatedly because this interaction evokes positive emotions (as I have developed in chapter 1.4). In this section I will discuss four elements concerning interest that are relevant to my study: interest development over time, interest in specific content, task interest, and lack of interest.

*Interest development over time:* The third element of the L2 Motivational self system, the language learning experience addresses interest development over time. First of all, the data provides evidence for the element of time in developing interests. Many informants reported a slowly developing interest in learning languages for the purpose of studying a sacred text. As I have pointed out earlier, this interest did not develop in isolation, but in the context of encounters with colleagues or mentors, mostly in educational settings. Both Garret and Julius describe their interest first being awakened upon seeing their professors use Greek and Hebrew in order to better understand the sacred text. Kelvin had initially only planned on studying the Bible for a year or two, but through the process of studying found his situational interest growing into a more sustained enduring interest that has lasted for 10 years. He anticipates (envisions) his involvement to continue for decades to come, which is evident in the fact that he views himself 'just a beginner' in comparison to his colleagues who have been doing this for thirty years. Through repeated engagement over time with the content (sacred text), positive feelings resulted, which resulted in greater self-regulation.

*Interest in specific content:* Secondly, informants' interest in language learning was directed at different content areas. Several informants describe their inherent interest in the technical aspect of language. They use metaphors that indicate their interest in this type of problem-solving: solving a puzzle, the technical aspects of language, physics. They find language learning in and of itself cognitively stimulating and enjoy the creativity involved learning 'how it works'. Several accounts illustrate this interest.

*I find it just a fascinating puzzle (Julius).*

*Part of [what interested me] was the technical stuff that [linguistics] involved (Daryl).*

*The following exchange illustrates a combination of interests in both the form and the content of the sacred text.*

*Frieda: Can you expand on that. What interests you: the actual language or the insights that you gain?*

*Garret: Both. I enjoy them both. I enjoy working with languages both the text and the language.*

Several female informants, who were working at language learning together with their husbands, contrast their husband's interest with their own. Lucinda, Penelope, Eunice, and Linda (the latter's husband I did not interview) described their husbands as more interested in the technical side of language, whereas they (the women) were more interested in the relational aspect. Penelope's motor metaphor of her husband's technical interest in language is illustrative:

*The difference between the two of us was—he [Daryl] was more like the engine, the motor part and put it all together. ...I don't mind all the technical...but that does not hold my interest. For me it is more...why do you think that way? I want to know you as a person. I want to know how you feel. I want to be your friend, kind of thing.*

The other aspect that these four women have in common is the fact that they are engaged in this work together with their husbands. The entire enterprise is a long-term family undertaking including their young children. While none of the women express this overtly, it can be argued that their interest lies also in the relationships with their husbands and their children. These women's lives are

heavily invested in their family units, which no doubt contributes to their ongoing motivation to stay with the project.

In terms of content topics, informants not only expressed interest in learning languages. Their interests were directed to, among other things: interest in missions, in theological studies, in languages, in specific languages (e.g. Arabic), in the Bible, in interpreting the Bible, in the work of translation, in history. *Their interests in these content areas contributed to their interest in learning languages as these languages were frequently important tools in the pursuit of these interests.*

*Task interest:* The notion of ‘task interest’ draws attention to the motivation arising from the satisfaction people experience when they are involved in the daily tasks necessary to pursue their long-term goals (Bateman and Barry, 2012). Here I will focus on the effects of the task of translation on motivation. Motivation for language learning and motivation for translation seem to have a mutually enhancing effect on one another, as Leona explicitly states:

*I find that my language learning experience has been enhanced considerably as I began translation. There is always more to learn.*

Both academics and linguists spend significant amounts of time and energy at the task of translating the sacred text. A number of informants describe the dynamics at work while they are engaged in the task of translation. The motivating effect of translation functions in several ways: *satisfaction of engaging in a task that has limited parameters, satisfaction of engaging in a task that accomplishes multiple goals, experience of meaningfulness through a deeper engagement with language and with the content of the text.*

*Satisfaction of engaging in a task that has limited parameters:* Language learning is an exceedingly open-ended process where it is often difficult to have a sense of progress. Translation, on the other hand, is a task that is relatively objective with limited parameters. Translating allows language learners to engage in a meaningful task, and experience the motivating effect of task completion. Language learning occurs to some degree as a by-product but one that is carried by the motivational momentum of task completion. Several informants describe the satisfaction they experience while engaged in the translation task, which allude to these elements:

*Translation is...a fairly objective undertaking given academia that is so open ended. It is very nice to see one progressing. ...It was lonely but I enjoyed it because there is something to show in the end (Bill).*

*I know things are percolating and it's just not ready to put on paper yet, I'll translate. Translating—there is a rhythm to it, there is an orderedness to it. That is one thing I love about translating; it is a discipline—there is a freedom in that discipline (Susan).*

*Satisfaction of engaging in a task that achieves multiple goals:* Some linguist informants are especially motivated by a sense of urgency about the task of Bible translation, rooted in their belief in the need to communicate the faith (see chapter 5.2 Observation #5). Margaret's account illustrates this urgency. In section 6.2.4 I have already mentioned Margaret's action plan for L3 learning. The task of translating and producing a simplified version of the sacred text, one that she correctly anticipates (envisions) will be useful in the future for literacy and other educational purposes, enhances motivation because it accomplishes more than one goal at the same time. The task of translation enables her to

strengthen her vocational and L3 ideal selves, making them more plausible. It also gives her a concrete plan to work on (operationalizing the vision).

*Experience of meaningfulness through deeper engagement with language and content:* As I have mentioned elsewhere, because of people's beliefs surrounding the sacred text, much care is taken in the task of preserving and translating it accurately. This requires linguists and academics to conduct their work with utmost care and precision. A number of informants address the impact of slowing down the speed with which they approach the text. Especially academics, who are accessing the sacred texts in their original languages, appreciate the sense of immediacy this lends them. The slowness of the task allows for time to meditate on the sacred text, making translation a kind of existential spiritual experience that is deeply meaningful. Susan's account illustrates this with clarity:

*A needful reason for translating yourself is that there is a freshness. ...My experience is that there is a creative sense of immediacy to what God is trying to communicate. Now that could be just my own existential experience.... [I think it is]the slowness of it. You have more time to hear, to ponder...simply because of the time demands. I think it is important for those reasons, for nuance, for authority in preaching and teaching, for the freshness of the word.*

*Lack of interest:* A fourth area concerning 'interest' frequently mentioned in the data, was 'lack of interest'. I began each interview with a broad question inquiring about any and all language learning experiences. Most informants who had been raised in the Americas would begin speaking about their French or Spanish learning experience as children and youth. Informants invariably expressed their lack of interest in learning these languages. I have already quoted

Daryl and Peter in section 6.2.6 in discussing failed attempts at L2 learning. The following are additional excerpts typical of most informants.

*I was not very interested in learning French (Barb.)*

*I learned French in grade school; it was not something that stuck with me, not something I got into. ...Hebrew in my 3rd year in college was completely different. I enjoyed it (Kelvin).*

In chapter 1.4.1, I have discussed the motivational factors of interest. My data set revealed these factors functioning as self-propelling motivational dynamics. As I have shown in this section, interest was something that developed over time in my informants. Also, they demonstrated interest in a range of content topics, some of which were tangential to language learning. Task interest was also an important factor. Lastly, their lack of interest in languages learned in high school was contrasted with their current high interest and motivation.

#### **7.1.4 Experience of ‘flow’**

Related to the notion of interest is also the concept of enjoyment and flow. As I have described in 1.4.1, the study of optimal experience, also known as ‘flow’ (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997) is related to motivation. To reiterate, ‘flow’ is a psychological state that is characterized by a high level of enjoyment and concentration. A number of my informants used words such as ‘enjoy’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘delight’ in describing aspects of their work. I have described Peter’s metaphor of ‘falling in love’. This positive experience functions as a self-propelling dynamic.

*Oh...I just never had so much joy in my life! ...[T]his doing languages was better than engineering by far (Julius).*

*And I loved it! Oh, I loved it! The linguistics really clicked with me (Linda).*

*If I was not a believer, I can imagine being an anthropologist and doing this out of the pure joy of learning languages and cultures...there is still a lot to learn and the excitement of getting to know an African culture and to get to know these people deeply and intimately through many years of relationships. That is so exciting that even apart from the spiritual and biblical need to do this, I find it to be absolutely enjoyable. I can't think of anything else I would rather do (John).*

*In my first year Hebrew...I had a study carrel in the library and my greatest joy was going there and wrestling through a verse. ...In the midst of that discipline [translating], suddenly, the text catches you, and delights you, and challenges you (Susan).*

*Access all these ancient texts in their original would give you great pleasure, pleasure as a reader, pleasure as an academic (Dominic).*

In sum, the notion of enjoyment is a renewable motivational source that nourishes informants over decades of engagement with their work.

### **7.1.5 Sacred text as source of power**

A further dynamic that propels L2 and vocational motivation on an ongoing basis is an understanding of the sacred text as an inherent source of power. Access to the sacred text is described with metaphors that speak of it as a source of continually replenishing energy. This energy functions as a strong source of vocational and L2 motivation.

The metaphoric use of 'fire' is commonly used in every day parlance as an idiom expressing 'determination', 'enthusiasm' and 'passion', in other words, motivation. Lucinda uses this structural metaphor when she speaks of her 'burning desire' to provide a sacred text in the community's L1. Susan uses this

metaphor to speak of the passion with which the church fathers were compelled in their interactions with the sacred text. She alludes to the fact that through the millennia, believers have tapped into this source of power, resulting in momentous changes in the world.

*One of the things that sparked the reformation, one of the things that fired the church fathers in their writing which has been so influential to the church is that they were accessing the biblical text themselves (Susan).*

In order to rule out other motivational influences, I asked informants to remove the sacred text from the equation of their motivation for language learning and teaching. Peter's use of the word 'energy' illustrates the 'sacred text as source of power' metaphor.

*My motivation would drop considerably. Part of the reason I teach is so that I keep up with the content. [Without the sacred text] I would only be keeping up my own knowledge in Greek and Hebrew. I would lose quite a bit of energy working without the biblical text (Peter).*

The notion that the sacred text is capable of affecting change in people's thinking and in their actions is a common concept among informants.

*It's God's word that works in our hearts (Penelope).*

*And suddenly [the translator] realized that [the sacred text] was telling him something he did not know before. And it would have a huge impact on their culture (Daryl).*

### **7.1.6 Identity, faith, sacred text and coherence**

While my informants are obviously very interested in their field of work and do it with a great deal of joy, they are careful to distinguish the enjoyment and interest in language learning from the overarching framework of meaning that their faith provides. The following examples illustrate the notion of joy that is indicative of a

sense of coherence drawn from beliefs about the sacred text and about the IFCs that are grounded in it. They also illustrate the centrality of faith and the sacred text as an anchor in informants' identities.

*There was a delight in studying scripture, like nothing else. I couldn't compare it to anything. In comparison to reading any other text, there is just nothing like it (Garret).*

*In the midst of that discipline [translating], suddenly, the text catches you, and delights you, and challenges you (Susan).*

*My identity is not about Greek; it is about the scriptures (Peter).*

*It is such a joy and delight to know the fellowship of the connection in the family of God and how powerful that is in the midst of many other areas of differences (Shauna).*

In a previous point (section 7.1.4) I have used an excerpt from Julius speaking about the thrill of learning biblical languages during his doctoral studies in Old Testament. It is noteworthy, though, that he makes a distinction between his enjoyment of language learning—which he admits is itself fascinating—and the 'greater end' of understanding the sacred text at a profound level so that he is equipped to communicate his faith with deeper insight and effectiveness:

*It [language learning] enabled me to read the Bible in ways that I had never been able to read it before. ...I got involved in languages: German, French, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew. But as an end in and of itself it wouldn't have given me any joy at all. Oh no, no, no, no, no.... It was a means to the greater end that I could preach from the Bible in ways that others can appreciate.*

It is interesting to note the use of the word 'imagine' and 'see' in the following accounts. These words point to the role of the imagination in the construction and maintenance of ideal selves. Faith is foundational to these informants' ideal vocational selves. They are unable to construct an ideal

vocational/L2 self in their imaginations in the absence of their faith's overarching structure of coherence.

*If I was not a believer, would I do Bible translation? I don't see why. No. There would be no motivation for translation. I can't even imagine being involved in linguistic analysis that leads to an alphabet and literacy. I can't imagine [it] without the goal of the bible and a church (John).*

*Although there's something about both linguistics and language learning that is really in my personality and interests and desires and abilities, it's very hard for me to see myself doing anything similar if I were not a believer. The reason this work caught my interest so much is not because of some aptitude in linguistics. It was because I found something where I could use my aptitudes, and felt that using them was life giving, life fulfilling, purpose-filled (Shauna).*

In this section, I have highlighted those self-propelling dynamics inherent in the informants' activities that allow the informants to tap into a continual source of motivation for L2 learning that sustains them over the long haul.

## **7.2 Intensity and quality of goal-oriented behavior**

After having considered ongoing sources of motivation from the data, I will now focus on several observable behaviors and end results that allow us to infer the intensity and quality of participants' engagement. First of all, the participants' overall willingness to make significant personal investments and sacrifices is striking; secondly, we have evidence of the high level of language proficiency achieved; and finally, in a number of the participants, there is a tangible 'end product'—a translated document.

### **7.2.1 Willingness to make significant personal investments, changes, and sacrifices**

All participants indicate in one way or another that their decision to learn language(s) as a part of their overall spiritual call was a decision made with great care, and entailed a significant investment of time and money. Linguists demonstrate this in particular. For these participants and their immediate families, this decision involved relocating from their home country to live in the midst of cultures significantly different than their own. For some, it included moving to countries of extreme poverty, political unrest, harsh climates, isolation and minimal access to medical services. It entailed living on donations from the members of their IFCs. Most linguists learned minority languages without written codes for which resources such as language instructors, classes and course materials were minimal, unavailable or non-existent. As a result, learning these languages required significantly more initiative on linguists' part to put such scaffolds into place for themselves.

In section 6.2.4 I have described in detail Myat's choices to isolate himself from his L1 and exert great effort to teach himself English with very limited resources. His experience illustrates the intensity with which he pursued his language learning.

John describes the particular challenges of learning three languages as follows:

*We had no resources, no other linguists working with Bilabongalij, nor was there any other language that was similar. It was a very unique, exceptionally complex tonal language. We were not adequately prepared for such a challenge. We were still weak in French and we thought we*

*would just pick up Sulla along the way, but that was not happening so we had to set aside six months just to learn Sulla. Then we went back to Bilabongalij.*

John and his wife chose to make sacrifices that included simple living conditions in a poverty-stricken country, far away from extended family. They and their children suffered illnesses without having readily accessible health care.

While some informants described themselves as naturally adventurous, Linda's account illustrates the challenge she faced in living in a poverty-stricken setting.

*I wouldn't say that I am naturally a cross-cultural worker and that relates to language learning actually and I really, really dislike physical discomfort. And I knew that was part of it. To me, my idea of camping was being in a 5 star hotel. So that was really, probably the most important thing.*

Linda also describes the difficulties she and her family encountered in experiencing danger and political unrest which gave rise to their repeated evacuations from their host country. Her motivation to continue comes to some degree from witnessing the hardships that her translator co-workers are experiencing. In the continued political unrest and violence, she has turned her attention away from language learning towards training translators. She describes the horrendous conditions and circumstances these translators face and how this affects her motivation, which I will quote at length:

*The rebels had come through and burned down all their houses and they had been hiding in the bush for the last two weeks, but they were determined to get to this workshop, so they built these grass lean-tos...and were there two weeks later. ...[F]or me it was a tremendous motivation. ...One time I sat behind a guy...—he was just skin and bones. He had been in captivity, held hostage for three months, beaten, his legs broken, starved and he was released and a week later he made a 200 km trip...—first 100 km on bicycle and then by motorcycle determined to get there.*

*...Many of the [translators] were on death lists and hiding. And it affects motivation and even for myself. You were asking about long-term rewards. Maybe it's not rewards. Maybe it's seeing other people's sacrifice. That motivates you highly.... [National] friends of ours had just flown out, because his life was in danger and they came into our room where we were staying and they just heard word that in her village, everybody had been massacred. She lost 50 family members in one night. And you just think—what am I sacrificing? It does motivate you highly to give out in ways that you might otherwise not have done. Just the horrendous suffering. And you just think what can I do to help alleviate the suffering or to join in the suffering. So I think those are high motivations.*

As examples from the data illustrate, some informants were willing to make significant personal investments and sacrifices in order to bring their joint vocational/L2 vision into fruition.

### **7.2.2 Level of language proficiency achieved**

While I was not able to measure the interviewees' L2+ proficiency levels, the linguists were accountable to their sending agencies and international organizations that oversee Bible translations world-wide. These organizations require a high level of fluency as one condition for authorizing translations. They employ highly trained linguists, Greek and Hebrew scholars and other translation experts who enforce these standards. In describing the checks and balances in the lengthy translation process, Daryl notes that *"Bible translators have to be at the top of the proficiency scale."* Lucinda describes the standards in her sending agency, stating: *"I had to pass all the levels of learning before I was allowed to help [my husband] with translation."* She explains that with other cross-cultural work such as health care, one can get by with a lower level of language, but when working with translation, *"it requires a much higher level of fluency."*

Most academics have published articles in peer-reviewed journals, and Bible commentaries with reputable publishers. As a part of writing a Bible commentary, academics must translate the respective Biblical text from the original language it is written in. Bill also makes reference to the ‘Sprach Diplom’, an internationally recognized standard for German language proficiency, which he achieved. The accountability provided by peer-reviewers, editors and publishers permits me to conclude that the level of language proficiency achieved by my academic informants has reached the standards acceptable in their academic fields.

In Myat’s case, his completion of a Master of Divinity in an English-medium theological school in North America indicates that he has achieved a high level of fluency in English.

### **7.2.3 A tangible end-product: a translated document**

A number of linguists and academics have completed translations of all or significant sections of the Bible, that have gone through rigorous checks under the direction of organizations such as Wycliffe Global Alliance ([www.wycliffe.net](http://www.wycliffe.net)), SIL International ([www.sil.org](http://www.sil.org)), and Biblica, an international organization with a 200-year history of Bible translation ([www.biblica.com/scripture-ministry/translation](http://www.biblica.com/scripture-ministry/translation)).

### 7.3 Longevity of goal-oriented behavior

It is not unusual for someone to commit themselves to intense and rigorous language study for a short period of time. For all these participants however, language learning was an essential part of a life-long commitment to learning. After 35 years of language learning and translation, Daryl recalls that in their preparatory training, it was instilled in them that they were committing for *'the long haul.'* Daryl spent ten years in language learning before he was able to begin with translation, but language learning continued in the years that followed; as he recalls, *"I kept having to go back to the dictionaries that I had written."*

Like Daryl, John also spent over three decades in learning languages. It was only after 15 years of language learning, linguistic analysis, and creating a written code that he was able to begin with translation. At one point, with the help of a more specialized linguist, he dedicated five years exclusively to deciphering the exceptionally complex tonal system of Bilabongalij.

Some of the metaphors used by the informants to explain their motivation relates to the longevity with which they viewed their commitment to language learning. Again, metaphors are also a form of using the eye of the mind in order to envision an ideal future. I have already discussed the marathon metaphor in section 6.2.5.

The second is marriage as a metaphor. Margaret looks back at the commitment she made fifty years earlier to become a translator, which in her mind is as sacred as her marriage vows:

*There were two questions that my husband asked me when he proposed: if I would marry him and if I would share his work as a missionary and*

*Bible translator. Now that he has passed away, [my marriage vows] are no longer...but the second promise remains. This is why I continue.*

At over 70 she continues to work at translation and at improving her language skills as the language changes with cultural and generational shifts:

*It is a very long process to learn a language. We had to figure out the grammar and all, and of course we had no materials—the way the words are constructed—it is very complicated and to get it all right—well, I won't reach that in my lifetime. I was recently at a linguists' conference and I learned more about the language groups in this region. I learned about new ways in which certain words are used and new phonetic symbols. And now we have to continue working with the language—a grammar book, a dictionary...*

Summing up, from the participants' observable behavior we can make inferences about the *intensity, quality, and longevity* of their engagement. Their willingness to make significant personal investments and sacrifices, the high level of language proficiency achieved, and finally the tangible 'end product'—a translated document—all suggest that participants have pursued language learning with a high level of intensity and quality. Informants' lengthy commitment to language learning speaks of extraordinary persistence and depth of investment, fuelled by an unusually intensive wellspring of motivation.

## **7.4 Beyond the ideal self: Vision of an ideal shared future**

The informants of my study are people who persist in behavior that is oriented towards exceptionally long-term goal pursuits. Their ideal vocational/L2 visions are continual sources of motivation but their ultimate goals are decades in the future. As I discussed in chapter 1.1.1 b, Bateman and Barry (2012), identify four

dimensions operating in people who are engaged in long-term goal pursuits: task interest, near-term gratifications, possible selves and possible futures. The authors of the study suggest that all four of these factors simultaneously can have a motivating influence during the pursuit of long-term goals. I have already discussed the motivational impact of possible selves, task interest and near-term gratifications in my data analysis so far. In this section I will discuss how the notion of ‘possible futures’ is a motivational force in the data. I will demonstrate that the motivation engendered by ultimate concerns is linked to the notion of ‘possible futures’. As Bateman and Barry argue, possible futures are directed towards broader social change that entails outcomes beyond personal benefits. The data suggests that informants generally speaking are motivated by ideal shared futures at three levels: *the relatively short-term ideal shared future foreseeable in the informants’ own lifetime, the longer term ideal shared future foreseeable beyond their own lifetime in future decades or centuries and the ideal shared future which informants see in an ‘ultimate’ environment.*

First of all, a number of informants describe imaginary future scenarios in which people are living in harmony, free from conflict, free from bondage and suffering. These are visions of harmonious IFCs in which access to the sacred text has given them hope and freedom. Lucinda’s account is indicative of such a positive broader social change.

*I can just imagine the freedom that they will be able to have when they are able to understand more clearly the message of grace and truth. ...And it will be able to impact them at a worldview level.*

Shakel’s indictment of his fellow Muslim believers (see section 5.2

Observation #4) is a combination of ought-to selves and an image of an ideal shared future of people from different religious backgrounds living in harmony with one another.

Secondly, my informants are motivated not only to learn languages but to write Bible commentaries, theological treatises, dictionaries and grammar books. All of these are behaviors that indicate concerns far beyond immediate personal benefits and even beyond their own lifetimes. Both academics and linguists see themselves in a long succession of workers in the greater IFC that spans far into the past and far into the future. Academics dig in ancient documents from the past to gain insights for future IFCs. Linguists plan for long-term presence, assuming that their successors will continue where they have left off.

Third, I have already described in section 5.3.4 the future-orientation in IFCs. In the discussion on ultimate concerns (chapter 3.1.2) I have examined the notion of goals that are beyond one's lifetime and have an eschatological quality about them. The data set hints at such long-term visions that motivate the informants. The ultimate environment (Fowler 1981; Emmons 1999) that informants envision is a shared ideal future. Garret speaks of '*the hope of heaven*' which is another way of addressing an ultimate environment. He sees not only his work as a scholar as his investment in this shared ideal future, but also sees his family as a part of this future. Linda makes reference to '*eternal life, hope, salvation*' and Lucinda considers '*eternity*' as compared to life on earth.

Shauna most clearly articulates these levels of shared ideal futures at work. She has been invited to work as a linguist by a small isolated people group

in East Asia (less than 2000 people) and is considering whether or not to accept this invitation. The group has a very strong positive linguistic identity, but because the speech community is so small, and because other influences are encroaching, there is concern for how long the language can be maintained. The project would include learning the language, conducting a linguistic analysis, creating an orthographic system, literacy materials and a Bible translation—clearly a project of decades. She envisions the long-term impact. In the immediate future (the next several decades) it would enable this people group to develop a writing system and to have access to the sacred text. She envisions the hope that current and future generations could experience, both the spiritual transformation that can come through access to the sacred text but also the current and future benefits of preserving their language. The ideal shared future that she sees in her mind's eye begins now, goes on in future generations and 'forever' in an eschatological sense.

*I am thinking about the long-term...how the word of God in their language will impact this generation and generations to come...beginning now, culminating into and going on for eternity. I believe that it is only a God-rich life which is most truly, most deeply life, and that the Scriptures point the way to choose that life by grace, grow into that life, and ultimately fully realize it.*

In sum, the dataset points towards more than an ideal self as a primary motivator. A shared ideal future comprised of a global, historic faith community acts as a self-guide and primary motivator.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

Research in second language acquisition achieves its purpose only when the findings contribute to the greater body of knowledge informing researchers, teachers and language learners. In this final chapter I will summarize the results of this research project, and identify some limitations of the study. Then I will examine implications for teaching and language learning and for L2 motivational research. I will make some suggestions for future research directions and conclude with personal reflections.

### **8.1 Summary and limitations**

This research project was aimed at understanding the thought processes and behaviors of highly motivated and successful language learners. A primary purpose was to examine the factors that contribute to their remarkable language achievements. This study has offered insights into these informants' motivational dynamics that can benefit the field of SLA research. A valuable approach used in examining exceptionally motivated language learners involves investigating their identity and vision. In this study I have conducted in-depth interviews with twenty language learners who are learning one or more languages in relation to a sacred text. In my analysis, I have used Ushioda's (2009) person-in-context relational theory in order to explore the wider socio-religious context in which learners live their lives. I have observed shared religious beliefs and values that are important to the participants. Of particular relevance are informants' beliefs concerning the sacred text: its divine inspiration, its centrality to the community of readers, its

value as a treasure worthy of serious academic and devotional study, as a source of ideal and ought-to selves and a means for communicating the faith. Using Norton's (2001) construct of investment in imagined communities, I have identified five imagined faith communities that informants align themselves with: local, worldwide, historic, future and academic faith communities. Then, using Dörnyei's (2009a) L2 Motivational Self System as a theoretical framework, I have uncovered a joint spiritual/L2 vision that functions like a tandem bicycle. Informants point to the spiritual vision as core to their identity and to the L2 vision as an inseparable corollary, enabling them to achieve their spiritual vision. The spiritual vision is like the front rider of the tandem bicycle, giving primary direction. The L2 vision is like the second rider whose crank is linked with a timing chain (the sacred text) allowing the riders to move in tandem. While this mechanistic metaphor has its limitations, it does illustrate the close partnership between the two visions and the sacred text. Without the L2 vision, informants' spiritual vision is unattainable. Without their spiritual vision, their L2 vision is irrelevant. Without the sacred text, the bicycle would not move forward at all.

Looking at the data in greater detail, I have identified two phases that are essential in order for learners to achieve this joint spiritual/L2 vision: 1) creating the vision (why participants learn language) and 2) living the vision (how hard and how long they are willing to work at it). In terms of creating the vision, the data provides evidence that six key components are in place: construction of the ideal self, imagery enhancement, making the ideal self plausible, developing an action plan, activating the ideal self and considering failure. With these

components in place the motivating capacity of the ideal and ought-to selves (both spiritual and L2) could be accessed. In addition, a vital element in this joint spiritual/L2 vision is the sacred text. Sacred texts represent a unique juncture between faith and language, and are therefore meaningful authentic materials. Once learners have begun pursuing their spiritual/L2 vision through observable behavior, their L2 learning taps into some continually renewing sources of motivational energy. Participants demonstrate exceptional intensity, quality and longevity of goal-oriented behavior. Informants' motivation is propelled by a number of factors: the tasks themselves and by near-term gratification. In addition, participants describe detailed spiritual/L2 ideal selves that propel their motivation. However, beyond ideal selves, participants envision a shared ideal future grounded in imagined faith communities with concerns for broader societal well-being. The shared ideal future is visible in the informants' imagination, not only within their lifetime, but beyond, extending to an 'ultimate' environment.

### *Limitations of the study*

I will identify two primary limitations of the study. First, in the methodology section of this dissertation (Chapter 4.3.7), I have referred to the need for researchers to identify personal values, assumptions and biases. At the outset, I have stated plainly that my own alignment with Christian faith could jeopardize the reliability and validity of the research. I have made attempts to be especially vigilant in identifying this bias, highlighting negative or ambivalent elements in the data. However, I could have probably employed additional means to counteract this bias.

Secondly, the reliability and validity of my study could have been enhanced had I recruited a more equal distribution of informants in each of my four groupings (linguists, academics, appreciators, influencers). My attempts to include more informants aligned with a variety of sacred texts were unsuccessful, although I could have gone to greater lengths in order to find more of these. Unfortunately, the bulk of the interviews had already been done when I identified these categories. The timely completion of this dissertation was the main consideration in refraining from seeking out additional informants.

## **8.2 Implications for teaching and learning language**

This study suggests that there exists an underground reservoir of motivation for SLA that taps into some learners' identities in harmony with their ideal L2 selves, their spiritual vision, and a sacred text. What implications might this have for the second language classroom? The third pillar of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System concerns the L2 learning experience, that is, motives related to the immediate learning environment such as the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the classroom dynamics, and the experience of success. How might the results of this study affect these variables? How could these elements of the L2 learning experience be adjusted in ways that could contribute to the language learning experience as a more meaningful, rewarding and fruitful use of time? I would like to suggest three broad implications to consider.

We might consider more seriously the implications of L2 curriculum content and its relationship to learner self-identity for learner motivation. David

Smith and Barbara Carvill (2000) have pointed out that the content of L2 curricula often reflects a confined image of learner identity, such as the learner as a consumer, the learner as a cog in the economic machinery of a society, or the learner as a tourist. For example, in a language classroom, food and drink are routinely treated as items of consumption; however, Smith and Carvill suggest that this may not be the only or even most educationally interesting and necessary way to deal with this vocabulary. What might it mean to engage learners in discussions about those who do not have enough food and drink, or to consider the idea that 'humans do not live by bread alone'? Smith and Carvill observe that questions concerning deeper meanings of life or the spiritual identity of language learners are seldom addressed in L2 curriculum. The results of this study indicate that some learners would welcome such a focus.

An interesting and well-documented parallel to this need for deeper meaning in actual classroom practice is described in Bonny Norton's (2001) case study research of two Canadian immigrant language learners, Katarina and Felicia. Norton argued that while these learners were actively engaged in classroom practices, the realm of their community extended beyond the four walls of the classroom; that is, they were operating at the interface of reality and imagination. However, because the teacher failed to give room to practices of imagination but only focused instead on the pragmatic aspects of the curriculum and the classroom reality, Katarina and Felicia ultimately withdrew from their ESL classes.

We might consider using sacred texts—or more generally, texts of special significance—as L2 curriculum content. The selection of the particular text could be a response to needs identified by the learners themselves. With regard to sacred texts, we should not discount learner motivations other than religious ones, which is well illustrated by ways in which the Bible is commonly used in state universities in China, a country where religious proselytizing is forbidden: I was astounded when, in a Canadian public university, a student of Chinese heritage and Buddhist persuasion ‘preached’ to my English for Academic Purposes class on the importance of reading the Bible as a way of learning English. Later I discovered that this view is not at all uncommon in China as there appears to be a widespread perception there that reading the Bible is an important source for understanding western literature, law, economics, and history (Zetzsche, 1997) and also for learning English. Accordingly, courses in ‘Bible Stories’ are routinely taught in English in Chinese universities. Further research could investigate the nature of the motivational disposition of students, teachers and university administrators who most likely do not align themselves with the faith communities surrounding this sacred text. Nevertheless, they choose to use sacred texts for language learning, presumably for their literary, cultural and historical value. In fact, Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye (2002) argues that in order to appreciate western literature, art and creative imagination in general, some understanding of the Bible is essential because of its profound cultural influence. Using sacred or special texts for language learning is likely to share several features with aspects of the ‘language through literature’ movement that has been

so widespread in language teaching methodology and is currently regaining momentum.

While the Bible has had a profound influence on western culture, we do well to remember that it is not a western text. In addition, large numbers of people who align themselves with faith communities associated with the Bible (Jewish and Christian believers) do not align themselves with western culture, my informant Myat being just one example. In this context, we might consider using sacred texts as L2 curriculum content in response to learners' self-identified needs, for example with learners who are learning language for theological or missiological purposes. Immigrants desiring to integrate into a faith community which functions in their new target L2 may also find Bible-based English curriculum attractive. The same could be said of international students aspiring to study in theological academic communities. While the informants of this study represent cases of extraordinary L2 motivation involving a sacred text, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are many people who align themselves with faith communities and engage in language learning at least partially motivated by their religious identity. We have found, for example, in several faith-based English language programs that used *Faith Portraits* (Tiessen & Lepp-Kaethler, 2011), which is a Bible-based English language curriculum and course book series, that many learners responded positively not only to task-based methodology but specifically also to the Bible content for learning English. While sacred texts by no means tap into all language learners' motivations—which of course could be said about any content in ESP courses—the current study indicates that there are

L2 learners for whom sacred texts do constitute meaningful and highly motivating input for language learning.

### **8.3 Implications for L2 motivational research and future directions**

Research into the role of identity and vision in L2 motivational is in its infancy, but growing. For over a decade there has been a marked increase in studies concerning identity in SLA. Identity studies that focus specifically on L2 motivation and vision are gaining momentum. In terms of research methods, this research project was a qualitative inquiry utilizing semi-structured interviews. The same content area, as well as additional areas suggest below, would benefit from quantitative or mixed methods research in order to address a wider range of learners. I will briefly describe a number of themes which could be fruitful fields of inquiry:

*Globalization, person-in-context and L2+ motivation:* The increased interaction between the local and the global has profound implications for understanding language learners' motivations. As I have referred to in this study, Ushioda (2009) has emphasized the importance of attending to the wider environment in which language learners live their lives. With the rapid rate of global change, there are many questions still unanswered relating to how the context of globalization influences learners' identities and their ideal L2+ selves. McKay (2011) highlights some of the themes that are emerging in the relationship between globalization and language learning. What impact does the role of

English as a lingua franca have on learners' L2+ motivation? Related to this is the question of how computer mediated communication enables learners to explore new identities. Increasingly, learners live with hybrid identities in multi-lingual and multi-cultural environments. Pavlenko (2005) has done some work in the area of writers who find their voice in a 'translingual' environment. In this regard, I am still puzzled by a quote from my informant Myat that leaves me with questions far beyond this study:

*I like the term you use here: identity. When I was there in my country...I felt like I had not found my identity. ...I realize that now I am connected to the rest of the world. I find my own identity as a member of the family of humanity. And that gives me an absolute satisfaction to my heart.*

As Morgan and Clarke (2011) note, looking at the inner world of L2 learners marks a contrast to current cognitive approaches to affect and motivation. These inner worlds are vast, unexplored regions in the field of L2 motivation and vision.

*Imagined communities, ELT and L2+ motivation:* The topic of globalization and ELT is intimately related to the construct of investment and imagined communities. Bonny Norton Peirce has introduced the SLA research community to a new post-structural approach to researching identity in language learning. In the years since her landmark article (1995) there has been an increase in attention to the role of imagined communities and learner investment (for a summary see McKay, 2011). However, there is such a wide range of imagined communities and the spectrum has only grown as a result of globalization and computer-mediated communication. There is a need to investigate the relationship of L2+ motivation to imagined communities in greater detail.

*Identity, agency and L2+ motivation:* In this dissertation, I have made mention of the relationship between identity and agency. I have argued that the desire for agency is a cornerstone of people's identity. Morgan and Clarke (2011) explores the problem of identity and agency. They raise questions about the nature of human beings on the continuum between being in control of their own choices or determined by the language we use. Given the importance of agency in identity and motivation, studies on the interrelationship of L2+ motivation, agency and identity could prove insightful.

*Spirituality, vision and L2+ motivation:* Finally, the topic of spirituality, vision and L2+ motivation is a theme which is only recently gaining attention in the wider field of SLA and applied linguistics. While this topic may seem to be coming 'out of the blue', it is less surprising when seen in light of wider historical trends. Morgan and Clarke (2011) point to the shift in western thinking in the past several centuries, which has moved from a theocentric to anthropocentric secular view of human nature. As I have discussed earlier (Chapter 3), the process of secularization has moved from a focus on the 'soul' to a concern with the 'mind' as the seat of human identity. Morgan and Clarke point to Descartes's 'I think therefore I am' dictum as the epitome of anthropocentrism, as though the self were an independent self-contained entity apart from other human beings and social systems. The birth of psychology as a discipline launched a century of research on the 'self' with, barring a few notable exceptions, a curious absence of any attention to spirituality, other than to deal with it in a negative light.

The ethical and professional dilemmas involved when spirituality and faith enter or are barred from language classrooms have recently become hot topics of debate and interest in SLA. Some voices dismiss the topic of spirituality as irrelevant to the language classroom. Critiques of this wariness suggest that the cognitive emphasis in SLA research reflects the privileged view of scientific and secular worldview and a disregard for worldviews that do not fall into these ideological frames. With the current emphasis on learner-centeredness and inclusion of the wide range of worldviews ELLs bring with them, an exclusion of spirituality seems oddly out of step with the current rise of interest in religious identities worldwide. All learners bring spiritual aspects of their worldviews into the classroom, and it seems contradictory to treat these as a taboo subject. In light of increased global travel and unprecedented movement of people across the globe, language teachers and researchers of L2 motivation can no longer afford to ignore the impact of religious faith in L2 acquisition. Not least, we do well to hear the voices of learners themselves, as my research has done.

## **8.4 Personal reflections**

My interest in the topic of spirituality and L2 motivation is also best understood from a 'person-in-context' relational view. My motivation for this project emerges from my own investment in an academic community that aims to educate language teachers within a Christian worldview. In the wider context of Canadian post-secondary educational institutions, educating within a Christian worldview is in and of itself viewed with suspicion. In this environment, it is doubtful that my

topic would have found a hearing in an average Canadian university Ph. D. program (if, in fact, I could have gained entrance to such a program, having been barred from one because of the faith-based nature of my pre-doctoral credentials). Beyond my specific Canadian context, the topic of faith and language teaching is contentious in the wider TESOL community, and I was not eager to enter into this debate. I am embarrassed by those who align themselves with Christian faith but engage in English language teaching using ‘bait-and-switch’ approaches without reflection on the inherent deception involved (and often without training as English teachers). Critiques of these approaches are urgently needed, but most of those critiques have left me dissatisfied. It has given me great satisfaction to tap into learners’ positive experiences of motivation in language learning.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

The results of this study point to a hidden but surprisingly powerful motivator for SLA that has received little attention in the field of Applied Linguistics: Employing Dörnyei’s L2 Self System in examining the relationship between spiritual vision and L2 vision, my study highlighted the use of sacred texts as a source of singular determination and force among some language learners. I have found that when the three key components examined in this study—divine call/vision, L2 learning vision and a sacred text—are pooled, synchronized and channeled meaningfully, they appear to generate an unusually high ‘jet stream’ of motivation for language learning: learners are caught in a powerful inner current that propels them to acquire language with exceptional intensity, persistence and

longevity. These results, then, may encourage materials writers, curriculum designers and teachers to try and tap into these or analogous sources of motivation in ways that support positive outcomes for language learning.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

The Role of Sacred Text in Enhancing Motivation in Second Language  
Acquisition

Pilot Study: English Language Institute December 2009 – April 2010

By Elfrieda Lepp-Kaethler, June 2010

### Executive Summary<sup>13</sup>

This report describes a qualitative case study of language learners in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in a Canadian Christian post-secondary institution. The study examines the role of Biblical text as curriculum content in motivating learners in the process of language acquisition. This executive summary is a condensed version of the longer report describing the study in more detail. I will briefly review the rationale for the study, the research methodology, results, suggestions for improvement as expressed by the participants, and conclusions.

#### i. Rationale

Investigating motivation in second language learning is important because it can shed light on the reasons for language-learning success or failure. This study is based on the notion that the quality of the learning experience (Dörnyei, 2009), including the course-specific components of curriculum content, teaching materials and learning tasks has a significant impact on the motivation of learners.

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<sup>13</sup> This executive summary is drawn from a more complete 13,000 word report that is available upon request.

The purpose of this study is to address the question: In what ways does Bible-based curriculum enhance or detract from meaningful language learning?

## ii. Methodology

This project was designed as a qualitative case study using in-depth interviews and focus groups as primary research techniques. Nine English language learners and seven instructors participated in interviews conducted in two stages (Dec. 2009 and April 2010). The majority of the learners identified themselves as Christians, though not all. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and withholding other identifying data in the reporting. The participants were invited to express their responses to the curriculum as a whole even though the primary research question concerned the motivational role of curriculum content.

## iii. Results

Even though the study's focus was on the impact of curriculum content, I have included responses to the curriculum's methodology as well. The results are described in terms of motivating and de-motivating responses to 1) Methodology: learning tasks and skills, and 2) Content: Biblical text as curriculum content.

### 1. Methodology: Learning Tasks and Skills.

The learners expressed a number of motivating aspects of the curriculum in general. By and large, they found the learning tasks engaging and found satisfaction in noting their improvement, particularly in speaking. Teachers echoed these perceptions. Most learners expressed enjoyment of the tasks because they invited

participation and addressed different interests, learning styles and personality types. Learners found the tasks motivated them to speak. Most learners were satisfied with their improvements in English through the use of the curriculum. Teachers noted that the curriculum facilitated general improvement, particularly in the areas of speaking and critical thinking strategies.

The learners and instructors also expressed a number of concerns about the curriculum's skills focus, organization and methodology. Of primary concern is the perceived insufficient emphasis on academic writing and grammar. One instructor expressed concern over the faith-formative tendency in the methodology.

Learners' suggestions re methodology:

- Focus on more grammar and writing.
- Give more assignments that require students to use the library.
- Use more multi-media.
- Allow for more student talk time and less teacher talk time.

Instructors' suggestions re methodology:

- Begin the course with portfolio assessment in all four skills.

- Raise learners' awareness of which skills are being worked on by indicating this in the learner workbook.
- Place more emphasis on academic writing.
- Evaluate the use of the curriculum after three years.
- Avoid methodology that results in manipulative faith formative pressure.

## 2. Content: Biblical Text as Curriculum Content:

The learners expressed a number of motivating factors in using the Bible as curriculum content. First of all, the familiarity of the material from their own languages was viewed as helpful for learning English. They also saw the applicability of topics addressed in the text to daily life. The most salient feature highlighted by the learners was the sense of support and encouragement they received for their faith and also an affirmation of their identity as Christians. Several learners expressed satisfaction with the idea of combining language learning with learning about Biblical content.

The learners and instructors expressed several concerns regarding using the Bible as curriculum content for the course. These included: disadvantages in prior knowledge because of diversity in faith backgrounds, a gap in addressing the diversity of the interests of the students, and variations in personal responses.

Another major concern was the perception that using exclusively Bible text limits the range of topics to discuss. The learners and instructors felt the need to address a wider range of topics in order to develop the learners' language adequately. The Biblical text, the way it was used in this curriculum, did not satisfy this need sufficiently.

Learners' suggestions regarding content:

- Use a broader range of reading material: Other stories, novels
- Address a broader range of discussion topics

Instructors' suggestions regarding content:

- Ensure that learners are aware that the program is using Bible-based material before they enter. State this clearly on website.
- Address every day topics tangential to the text.

#### iv. Conclusions:

The results of this study show that in this particular context, Bible-based curriculum evokes both motivating and de-motivating responses in terms of methodology and content. The research methodology employed in this particular study is insufficient to sort out the interrelationship between the multiple factors that contribute to these responses.

## **Appendix B**

### **LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT**

**Title of Research Study: The Role of Sacred Text in Enhancing Motivation in Second Language Acquisition**

**Student Researcher: Elfrieda Lepp-Kaethler**

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a study I am doing for a doctoral dissertation at the School of English, University of Nottingham, UK. Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 45-60 minutes long to take place in an agreed upon location and time.

You may refuse to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. You may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded, and later transcribed. All information you provide is confidential. Your name or any other personal identifying information (e.g., name of your school/organization, country where you work) will not appear in the course project paper resulting from the study. However, with your permission, quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your identity. Transcriptions and and/or audio recordings collected during this study will be kept until the end of the project in a locked filing cabinet at my house and then shredded, deleted or erased. Only my supervisor, my advisory committee and I will have access to the data. If you have any questions, or would like any more

information to help you decide if you want to participate, please contact me by email at Elfrieda.Lepp-Kaethler@prov.ca or by phone at 204-326-2077 OR 204-433-7488 ext.298.

Your signature on this form shows that you have understood what it means to participate in this project. It also shows that you agree to participate. I very much look forward to speaking with you and I thank you in advance for your help in this project.

Please read the following statements and use a check mark to indicate your response.

I agree to participate in this study. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to have my interview audio recorded. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in the course project paper. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward a summary report of the research findings to me by email using the following address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Elfrieda Lepp-Kaethler

Participant's name (please print)

Participant's signature

Date

Student Researcher's Signature

Date

## **Appendix C-1**

Sample interview protocol for Bible translators:

1. Tell me about your background in missions, where you have worked, what type of work you have done etc. What was your motivation, i.e. the ultimate reason and purpose of engaging in this work?
2. I am particularly interested in the language learning you have done in connection with your work. Which languages have you learned; when and why did you learn them?
3. I am particularly interested in your work with Bible translation. Tell me a bit about your work of translating the Bible. Did you learn any language specifically with the goal of translating the Bible in mind (or partially for this purpose)?
4. Considering your level of education, and considering all the other things in the world you could be doing, why do you devote yourselves to Bible translation and related work? What factors and experiences have contributed and continue to contribute to this choice?
5. How did you experience the language learning process in relation to the Biblical text? What role did the Bible play in your language learning?
6. How would you describe your motivation to learn the language/s in relation to your motivation to translate the text? Is there a link? How would you describe that link?
7. Why is translating the Bible (vs any other text) important to you?
8. How much of your drive to learn the language/s came/comes from

- a. a sense of obligation that as missionaries you ought to know the language of the people thoroughly?
  - b. the sheer joy of language learning?
  - c. relationships that are enhanced because of your knowledge of the language?
  - d. the desire to translate the Biblical text?
  - e. your own sense of divine call in your ministry?
  - f. a joy in seeing the people's eyes open to the insights that come from learning reading and hearing the Bible in their own language?
  - g. Any other sources?
9. If you were not believers/followers of Christ, how would this change your motivation to be involved in the work you are doing? How would it change your motivation to learn the language/s you have learned?
10. How does your identity as part of the community of faith play into your motivation for learning language and for translating the Biblical text?
11. If you were translating any other text, how would that impact your motivation for translation and for language learning?
12. If you were working as missionaries but not as Bible translators, how would that change your motivation to learn language?
13. Language learning is often an arduous process, especially for adults. How difficult was it for you? What did you find particularly difficult? What came easily to you? What motivated you to persist in the midst of difficulties? (short term rewards?long-term rewards?).

14. The same could be said of translation. What motivated you to persist in the midst of difficulties (short term rewards?long-term rewards?).
15. Describe yourselves as fluent users of (fill in the languages you have learned) in an ideal world. What meaning would it have for your sense of who you are (identity/self) What would it mean to you personally/professionally? Describe who you would be, what you would do, how it would affect your life.
16. Have you had other language learning experience, not related to Bible translation or mission work? how does that experience compare to those language learning experience/s related to Bible translation? How is it the same, how is it different?
17. Do you have a desire to learn another language? If yes, which language? For what reasons?

## Appendix C-2

Sample interview protocol for scholars specializing in a specific sacred/special text:

1. Tell me about your learning Hebrew and any other languages related to the Bible. When did you begin to learn? Why did you learn these languages?
2. Describe to me the process you went through to learn Hebrew. Who were your teachers? What methods did you use?
3. Did you achieve the level of fluency that you had set out to achieve? Why or why not? Perhaps you are still learning to improve? Describe that process.
4. How did you experience the language learning process in relation to the text? What role did the Hebrew Bible play in your language learning?
5. How would you describe your motivation to learn Hebrew in relation to your motivation to read the text? Is there a link? How would you describe that link?
6. Describe the importance of knowing Hebrew in O.T. Studies.
7. How much of your drive to learn the language came/comes from a sense of obligation that as a professor of OT you ought to know Hebrew? How much comes from the sheer joy of language learning? How much comes from the desire to access the text? Any other sources?
8. Language learning is often an arduous process, especially for adults. How difficult was it for you? What did you find particularly difficult? What

came easily to you? What motivated you to persist in the midst of difficulties?

9. How would you describe yourself as a language learner? Would you consider yourself a 'good' language learner? What makes a 'good' language learner?
10. Describe yourself as a fluent user of Hebrew in an ideal world. What meaning does it have for your sense of who you are (identity/self) What does it mean to you personally/professionally? Describe who you would be, what you would do, how it would affect your life.
11. Have you had any other L2 learning experience? If so, describe that experience. How motivated were you? Why? How does that experience compare to learning Hebrew? How is it the same, how is it different?
12. Do you have a desire to learn another language? If yes, which language? Why? How does this compare to your learning of Hebrew?