

## Comparing Omani Student-teachers' Expressions of Identities in Traditional EFL Classrooms and Digital Contexts

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to investigate how virtual social spaces facilitate the expression of female and male Omani student-teachers' identities, as compared to classroom contexts. The study follows a qualitative research design that is grounded in an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. Focus group discussions and Language Learning Histories were used for data collection. Fourteen Omani EFL student-teachers participated in this study. The findings are discussed in relation to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2009), the Self-Determination Theory (2002), and Yashima's International Posture (2009). The research data support the tripartite motivational model, with the expression of Omani-Islamic identity as a powerful motivation for Omani learners to participate in social media. Significantly, the findings reveal that participants' online identity relates to their actual identity and, thus, bringing their offline identity to the digital context. In a sense, what they consumed offline fed into their online identity. Their online identity was filtered through the lens of English which facilitated their participation in virtual social spaces. The paper argues that social and cultural platforms afford wealthy exposure to and participatory involvement in multicultural-oriented spaces, promoting extensive research of the digital context. The findings of the research are topical as they resonate with the current thinking in the realm of motivation.

**Keywords:** identity, motivation, traditional & online learning context

مقارنة تعبير الطلبة - المعلمين العمانيين عن الهوية في الفصول الدراسية التقليدية والسياقات الرقمية لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة مدى تأثير البيئات الافتراضية على الطلبة المقبلين على مهنة التدريس (ذكورا وإناثا) في تحديد هوياتهم بالمقارنة مع بيئات الفصول الاعتيادية. ارتكزت الدراسة على المنهج البحثي النوعي والذي يعتمد على إطار تفسيري/بنائي. اعتمدت عملية جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة على مناقشات جماعية مركزة وتاريخ تعلم اللغة. شملت الدراسة 14 طالب وطالبة من طلبة بكالوريوس اللغة الإنجليزية والمقبلين على مهنة التدريس كما اعتمدت الدراسة في تفسير نتائجها على النظام الذاتي للدافعية لدورنيه (2009) ونظرية العزيمة الذاتية والنموذج العالمي لياشيما (2009). اعتمدت بيانات الدراسة نموذج الدافعية الثلاثي مع تحديد الهوية العمانية الإسلامية كدافع رئيسي للمشاركين في التعبير عن هويتهم على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة تقارب الهويتين الافتراضية والحقيقية للمشاركين، بمعنى آخر ما يتلقاه الطلبة واقعا له تأثير على تشكيل هويتهم الافتراضية، كما أن اللغة الإنجليزية لها أيضا تأثير على هوياتهم الافتراضية والذي بدوره سهل مشاركتهم في البيئات الافتراضية. وتشير الدراسة إلى أن المنصات الافتراضية الاجتماعية والثقافية توفر محتوى خصص وفرص للمشاركة الفاعلة في بيئات متعددة الثقافات والذي بدوره يعزز أهمية البحث المكثف الذي يعنى بالسياق الافتراضي. تعتبر نتائج هذه الدراسة موضوعية حيث إنها تتوافق مع المنهج الحالي المستخدم في تطوير الدافعية لدى المتعلمين للغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، الدافعية، بيئة التعلم الافتراضية والتقليدية

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## Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) in Oman has witnessed considerable efforts to develop the level of English competency of Omani students in an attempt to respond to constant calls from the government of Oman (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Yet, I would argue that such efforts have no clear future vision of where they would lead students, drawing such an argument on my professional experiences and lack of research in this area in the Omani context. It appears to me that improving English proficiency has become the ultimate goal. In order to explore this in more detail, this study refers particularly to the construct of the ideal self, as part of the theoretical framework of Dörnyei's (2009) tripartite model, to solve the challenges encountered in diverse EFL contexts by motivating students to pursue English learning if they cannot view its immediate necessity, as suggested by Yashima (2009). Within this framework, seeking English language learning pursuits implies the development of an individual's actual self, moving forward to the realisation of the future idealised self. Omanis who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) do not perceive the intrinsic values of language learning due to various theoretical and methodological challenges which characterise the EFL context in the Omani educational system (Al Wahaibi, 2019). Their perceptions of the language use are neither personally meaningful nor socially relevant to their experience of life outside the classroom (Al Wahaibi, 2019). To this end, the present study aims to explore real-life experiences concerning students' active involvement with current technological applications outside classrooms. Since the wide spread of technology has brought with it infinite exposure to the English-speaking culture, thus, it engages students in real-life experiences where language use is perceived as an extension of their personal habits in a meaningful manner rather than viewing English as an object of learning. In this regard, Arnett (2002, p. 777) illuminates the effect of the status of English as a global language on learners' second language (L2) selves;

*At a national level, this has often implied a struggle to construct a coherent national identity while absorbing and re-working external influences. At an individual level, citizenship for many necessitates a simultaneous working of national and international attachments. For example, many people are encouraged to develop a bicultural identity, allowing them to feel at home among family and friends in local society as well as in more alien, international con-*

*texts among people with different moral, religious, and cultural values ... By virtue of the same processes of economic and cultural globalization, however, English is assuming an ever-larger role within nations, often serving many domestic purposes – to educate, to market and sell goods, to control entry to certain professions, inter alia. It is also used to mediate their relations with other countries, both in official points of contact, such as international organizations (e.g. the United Nations), and through more informal channels (e.g. reporting in the media).*

In fact, such experiences are likely to alter learners' views of the language and have a positive impact on their motivation as they can relate English language learning to their daily lives (Murphy, 2014; Yashima, 2014). By so doing, Omani learners are able to control their language learning experience, and, thus, sustain a motivating involvement in learning. Eventually, they can nurture their identities, and, hence, develop effective motivational thinking as a crucially important aspect of learner autonomy. It should be noted that while a few researchers differentiate between the notions of "self" and "identity" (e.g. Benson et al., 2013; Block, 2007; Taylor, 2013; Van Lier, 2007), many researchers use them interchangeably (e.g. Chik & Breidbach, 2014; Dörnyei, 2009; Lamb, 2011; Murphy, 2014; Ushioda, 2011; Yashima, 2014). Therefore, I have decided to use these notions interchangeably as well, otherwise it can be problematic.

It is worth mentioning that prior research studies have not focused on the chances afforded by virtual social spaces for the development of English language learning. Thus, this study will discuss this niche, allowing for critical examination of participants' perceptions and experiences which, in turn, help them invoke their identities, and increase their motivation in order to optimize their autonomous language learning experience (Lamb, 2011; Ushioda, 2011).

## Mapping the Literature

### Students' Identities in Digital Times vs. Traditional EFL Classrooms

Before discussing the construct of identity in the era of Web 2.0, it seems pertinent to provide a definition of Web 2.0, which obviously extends far beyond the delivery of viewable and downloadable subjects that the previous 'read-web' provides to its viewers (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008). Web 2.0 is the

‘read-write web’ which enables its members to collaboratively create content, thus, changing them from being passive users to active contributors and producers (Greenhow et al., 2009). McLoughlin and Lee (2007) emphasize that Web 2.0 applications provide students with “the freedom to decide how to engage in personally meaningful learning through connection, collaboration and shared knowledge building” (p. 669). Drawing on Bryant (2006), McLoughlin and Lee (2007) further explain that Web 2.0 applications “hold considerable potential for addressing the needs of today’s diverse students, enhancing their learning experiences through customization, personalization, and rich opportunities for networking and collaboration” (p. 665).

Discussions around learners’ identities in digital social spaces entail referring to the notion of “curatorship” (Potter, 2012, p. 5). Potter (2012) considers how a person gathers, collects and distributes his/her life via digital social platforms, highlighting the necessity to focus on “human rather than technological determinism” (p. 5; cited in Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017, p. 178). Moving to the argument raised by Ushioda (2011) pertaining to the ideas of self and identity, which are palpable in the current theorizations of L2 motivation, and the criticality of evoking learners’ identities in their social communication, she relates specifically to the students’ digital interactive participation. She further explains that:

*students’ transportable identities are grounded not only in the physical world of their lives, interests and social relations outside the classroom, but increasingly in the virtual world of cyberspace ... in which so much of their life is immersed (Ushioda, 2011, p. 12; cited in Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017, p. 178).*

To justify her point, she draws on Prensky’s general description of the new generation of students as ‘digital natives’ compared to the previously ‘digital immigrants’ of students, highlighting how proficient and comfortable these students are with technology (Prensky, 2001; cited in Ushioda, 2011). Chik and Breidbach (2014) expound on the development of Web 2.0, highlighting the value of collaborative communication and interactive engagement through blogs and different social media. Murphy (2014) regards learners’ participatory involvement in social technologies as an integral aspect of their motivations and identities. Drawing on Ushioda (2011), Little and Al Wahaibi (2017) argue that autonomous participation is required if these social technologies are to be considered as “motivational resources for

language learning and language use ... and hence are to be directed by students themselves” (p. 178). Ushioda (2011) also cites Levy (2009) to further elaborate that autonomy is vital in re-assuring that learners’ participation in social technologies is being shaped by themselves so as to realise their personal needs and interests. In this respect, Little and Al Wahaibi (2017) refer to Potter’s (2012) curatorship, emphasizing that this notion “in and of itself implies choice and control – Control over what to share, how to share it, and how to present oneself in cyberspace” (p. 179). Moreover, learners’ participatory involvement in the digital social space generates the opportunity of developing their L2 future selves which could boost their motivations and increase their autonomous capacities (Chik & Breidbach, 2014; Murphy, 2014). It should be noted, though, that the above cited literature does not inform us how Web 2.0 technologies can potentially facilitate the expression of L2 identity. Therefore, the present study aims to address this niche in the existing literature. Also, Lamb and Budiyanto (2013) claim that there is a scarcity of research around adolescent identity in diverse international settings, yet much research has been targeting youth development in western settings. Unlike these outlined studies, my research focuses on the identity of young adults, trying to fill that gap by paving the way for future research. In fact, identity work is largely absent in the Omani context.

## The Research Question

- How do virtual social spaces facilitate the expression of female and male Omani student-teachers’ identities, as compared to classroom contexts?

## Methodology and Methods

Within the area of second language motivation, quantitative methodology was predominantly embraced in the past decades (Ushioda, 2011). Anchored in quantitatively positivist paradigm, motivation research has been currently criticised for relying heavily on linear cause and effect models (Ushioda, 2009). She explains that such generalisable models of learner motivation are not useful in understanding the unique identities and motivations of a particular individual (Ushioda, 2009). According to Lanvers (2016), qualitative data elicitation encourages “free discussion, permitting participants to contribute (novel) aspects that might go undetected in ques-

tionnaire-style instruments” (p. 84). Another significant feature of the qualitative methodology is that it allows investigators to examine the intricate nature of the social world (Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017). Accordingly, I embraced a qualitatively interpretivist/constructivist paradigm to frame this research, and thus examine the connection between language learners' identity, autonomy, and motivation through participation in social technologies such as Blog, Twitter, and YouTube, as compared to traditional modes.

### Context of the Study

This research was conducted in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, which is responsible for the teacher preparation program since its inception in 1986. This program aims at preparing future EFL teachers for the teaching profession, equipped with a robust pedagogical training and a myriad of pre-service tasks so that trainees are able to cope with the challenges of teaching. Put simply, student-teachers are provided with both conceptual frameworks and practical skills pertinent to the teaching practice. Al-Mahrooqi (2011) explains that the teacher training program at SQU encapsulates “three main components: English language teaching methodology, microteaching, and teaching practice” (p.244). To further elaborate on the teaching practice, this program is geared towards empowering student trainees to apply and demonstrate the specialized knowledge they have obtained so as to strengthen their professional practices and their teaching competencies, since these candidates are considered as resident teachers in partner schools. The course provides candidates with opportunities to apply, in a practical and direct way, the components of the conceptual framework of the college. The components of the conceptual framework are: academic capability, variation of teaching, attitudes and values, research culture, life-long learning and technological skills. Teaching practice is based on several pillars to ensure success of the program. These pillars are partnership, cooperation, integration, commitment, accountability and sustainable development. Candidates are expected to use different teaching strategies that support students' learning. Candidates should be prepared to meet their students' needs. Candidates are directed during their teaching practice towards bearing responsibility of their students' learning and attainment. They also must meet all other professional responsibilities during the teach-

ing practice period (Sultan Qaboos University, 2016, pp. 1-2).

### Recruitment of Participants: Study Population and Sampling Methods

With regard to sampling methods, it is a ‘purposive sampling’ in terms of selecting the research population (Cohen et al., 2011). It was crucial that all participants were final year EFL student-teachers, doing their teaching practicum. In this regard, Bryman (2016) argues that purposive sampling does not entail random selection of participants. Rather, researchers are required to recruit participants who are thought to be suitable to the questions being examined by the study (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, purposive sampling does not aim to generalise the research findings in relation to the research population (Bryman, 2012).

My rationale behind locating my research in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, which is in charge of the teacher education program, is to gain an insightful understanding of teacher trainees' dual identities as EFL students and future EFL instructors. Also, at university, students have sufficient levels of English to navigate social spaces, and are not subject to parental gatekeepers. Besides that, Dörnyei (2009) proposes that the self-perspective might not be suitable for elementary pupils. University-aged students are deemed quite mature to elaborate on their L2 future visions, and thus better articulate their views regarding the value of English in their real lives. Such grown up students are supposed to have a solid ground to adequately express their desires to learn English based on their long-term exposure to EFL learning at both school and university levels as well as their perceived needs for future professions. According to Zenter and Renaud (2007), learners at this age are presumed to have a much more complex understanding of the wider social and cultural factor influencing their second language motivation and future selves in comparison to younger learners. A secondary reason is that sound images of one's future self cannot be clearly formulated before the period of adolescence, as claimed by Zenter and Renaud (2007), thus university-aged students are considered suitable to be recruited for such an exploratory study. It is worth mentioning that I selected the site of the study for easy access because I work as an academic at Sultan Qaboos University.

After receiving official permission to gain access to the research location, ethical issues were rigorously followed. The total number of participants is fourteen, including eleven females and three male students at the age of twenty-two years old. At the recruitment stage, I sought equal gender representation. However, gender distribution was not even because four males initially expressed their keen interest to participate in the research. Recruiting participants was grounded on their voluntary participation. Originally, sixteen students decided to participate in this research study. Subsequently, two participants, one female and one male, withdrew because of academic pressures.

### Employing the Research Methods

The present research study employs qualitative research methods, encompassing reflective focus group discussions and language learning histories.

### Conducting Reflective Focus group discussions

I decided to conduct focus group discussions instead of individual interviews or questionnaires to allow participants to voice their concerns and express themselves, and thus encouraging an increased level of autonomy. In this regard, Lamb (2005) ascertains that learners' voices provide insightful understanding of how learning and teaching can be improved, promoting greater levels of autonomy. Al Wahaibi (2019) argues that students are capable of articulating their voices and hence affect pedagogical practices. However, they are not usually given the chance to voice their concerns (Al Wahaibi, 2019).

Thus, I formed three focus groups, including two female groups and one male group. With regard to the size of the focus group members, it has been proposed that the appropriate number often ranges from six to ten (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, I initially planned to have six participants in each group in order to give every member a fair chance to exchange her/his views and experiences. However, given the limited number of male participants, three participants only constituted the male group. The other two female groups included five and six members respectively. Although there were differences in size, all groups produced valuable data.

Moving to the actual conduct of the focus groups, two group discussions were arranged for each group

for a one-month period, comprising six discussions in total. Each session of the focus groups shed light on a particular topic. Those discussions were guided by the research questions and the theoretical underpinnings of the study as well as relevant literature, progressing in breadth and depth. Regarding the language of communication, I asked my research participants to choose between Arabic or English. They chose to communicate in English, reflecting their high-motivations to speak in the target language. Using a digital voice recorder, all six discussions were audio-recorded. Afterward, they were transcribed.

### The Discussion Guide and the Role of Theory

Badwan (2015) asserts the role of theory in formulating a set of questions for the group discussions. She maintains that the guiding literature can provide "guidance on what to address and how to interpret what is addressed" (Badwan, 2015, p. 101). While developing the prompts for focus group discussions, I referred to the existing literature to identify relevant topics to my research question. In particular, I referred to the main theoretical frameworks guiding this study, including Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivation Self System and the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). I also referred to the construct of integrativeness (Gardner, 1985) and Yashima's (2009) international posture. Prior to the fieldwork, I was aware of how to phrase straightforward questions. To quote Badwan (2015), "big questions needed to be put in simpler terms, addressed through many sub-questions, and introduced at different intervals for consistency and evidence" (p. 101). Basically, the topics discussed in the focus groups were guided by the research question which informed the study. The research question includes the following areas:

- Comparing Omani Student-teachers' Expressions of Identities in Traditional EFL Classrooms and Digital Contexts.

In order to investigate these areas in detail, I decided to divide each area into researchable questions to be asked in two sessions (see appendix 1 for the open-ended questions asked during focus group discussions). Therefore, I made a decision to conduct two focus group discussions with each group to investigate these issues with the research participants. The following discussion guide provides a summary of the two sessions and the topics featured in each session;

**Table 1:** Thematic Representation of the Discussion Guide

Topic	Session 1: Expressions of Identities in Traditional EFL Classrooms and Digital Contexts
Issues Discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ideal and ought-to</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students' ideal Future Self</li> <li>2. Investigation of possible uses of English in the future</li> <li>3. Examples of English-using selves</li> <li>4. Investigation of participants' L2 future selves (ideal and ought-to) and their potential influences on learning behaviors</li> <li>5. Investigation of students' participation in Web 2.0 platforms in relation to their future L2 selves (ideal and ought-to)</li> <li>6. Investigation of whether there is any obligation imposed on participants to learn English</li> </ol> </li> <li>• <b>National Progress</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Role of English in Oman</li> <li>8. Investigation of whether English poses threats to participants' religious and national identities.</li> <li>9. Investigation of whether it is essential for Omani nationals to learn English</li> <li>10. Investigation of whether participation in English-speaking social technologies help or constrain participants' contribution to the national development of Oman</li> <li>11. Investigation of whether there is any influence of the Omani culture in the English language</li> <li>12. Status of technology in Oman</li> <li>13. Participants' reasons to engage in social technologies</li> <li>14. Investigation of whether social technologies support/constrain participants' expression of identities</li> </ol> </li> <li>• <b>International Posture</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. Status of English in the world</li> <li>16. Investigation of whether participants prefer to communicate with English native speakers or with international speakers of English</li> <li>17. Investigation of whether participation in English-speaking social technology limit/encourage students to communicate their ideas at an international level</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Topic	Session 2: Affordances of Cyberspace
Issues Discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving participants the choice of a specific social technology that they are interested in to discuss its affordances. For example, group (A) chose Blogs, group (B) chose Twitter, and group (C) chose YouTube. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigation of whether participants have their personal Blog/Twitter/YouTube or not. Why/Why not?</li> <li>2. Investigation of how they represent their personal digital platform.</li> <li>3. Investigation of whether they keep academic Blog/Twitter/YouTube or not. Why/Why not?</li> <li>4. Type of activities which participants engage in through blogging/tweeting/youtubing?</li> <li>5. Advantages of Blogs/Twitter/YouTube</li> <li>6. Investigation of whether these social platforms facilitate the expression of participants' identities. If so, how?</li> <li>7. Investigation of whether these social technologies facilitate social communications and reflective discussions. If so, how?</li> <li>8. Investigation of whether these social platforms generate critical thinking. If so, in what ways?</li> <li>9. Views on peers' comments.</li> <li>10. Investigation of whether participants integrate social technologies into their teaching practice. If so, how and why?</li> <li>11. Investigation of whether these social technologies help participants develop their motivation. If so, how?</li> <li>12. Investigation of whether these social platforms are appropriate for language learning and teaching.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

## Collecting Introspective Language Learning Histories

This present study employs language learning histories (LLHs) as a research method so as to gain an insightful understanding of the participants' cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of their language learning experience (Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017). It should be noted that LLHs are employed to go over similar ground to the focus group, being used as triangulation. According to Holloway and Fulbrook (2001), triangulation can be "another form of establishing truth value" (p. 547).

According to Benson et al. (2013), learners' narratives are "a means of organising pieces of information that would otherwise lack coherence into meaningful sequences of events" (p. 24). They describe learners' stories as a glue which sticks together different fragmented dimensions of their identities. They affirm that a language student holds a unique narrative about his/her former experiences of learning, playing a vital role in determining his/her future learning possibilities and results (Benson et al., 2013). They recommend that language educators and practitioners should raise students' awareness about their personal stories, identifying the similarities and differences between their stories and that of others, and thus support them to revisit or amend their stories in light of realising their desired results (Benson et al., 2013).

It is worth noting that all participants critically pondered upon their language learning histories. Fourteen language learning histories were composed by the research participants. Participants started composing their language learning histories following each discussion, and thus submitted their LLHs after the completion of their focus groups. In total, there were 36,411 words of written language learning histories (LLHs). Table 2 indicates the word length of LLHs.

### Selecting Qualitative Thematic Analysis (TA)

Considering the aims of my research, I employed a method of data analysis, offering precise and meaningful accounts of participants' language learning experiences, and highlighting the expressions of L2 identities as well as providing accounts of their autonomous efforts to engage in English-speaking social technologies. In this respect, I explored my data for a primary theme and recurring constructs pertaining to the research question and the theoretical frameworks adopted as well as other relevant literature. As such, I employed a qualitative thematic

analysis to sensibly understand my data, thus better addressing my research question.

The analytical method I used is not only concerned with participants' reported experiences, but is also concerned with the exploration and interpretation of such experiences to comprehend them through the eye of the research participants in their immediate social world. A good thematic analysis tries to make participants' constructions of their social context explicit.

In summary, Clarke and Braun (2017) explain that thematic analysis comprises of six important phases. First of all, the researchers should get familiar with their data. Second, they should identify initial codes. Third, they should further explore recurring themes. Fourth, they should revise themes. Fifth, they should define, describe, and term their themes. Sixth, they should write their reports. Getting familiar with the data requires initially transcribing them, which will be further outlined in the following section. It also entails thorough readings, and then jotting down initial views. Thus, I first transcribed and then coded the data gathered from the focus groups and the language learning histories (LLHs). Data coding and theme development will be further illustrated later.

**Table 2:** The word length of the Language Learning Histories

Participants	Word Length
FP1	1737
FP2	1400
FP3	1418
FP4	1200
FP5	4426
FP6	2515
FP7	4193
FP8	1998
FP9	2648
FP10	1800
FP11	1496
MP12	5685
MP13	1446
MP14	4449

### Transcribing the Focus Group Discussions

After recording the group discussions, it was imperative to carry on data transcription of the verbal records before conducting data interpretation. I decided to do a full transcription of the focus group discussions, since the purpose of my research is to mirror participants' experiences and interpretations of their language learning experiences. It should be

noted that I left participants' quotes intact, including their grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Although data transcription was such a long and arduous process, it was fruitful, as it allowed me to get close to my data. To achieve accurate transcription, I had to listen to each discussion record, at least, three times. In case of low volume or unclear pronunciation, I needed to play back the recording more than three times in order to avoid mishearing or misinterpreting of words, as altering one word can change the meaning of the entire phrase, which leads to missing significant themes or rather including non-existent themes (Easton et al., 2000). Accordingly, I decided to conduct the task of data transcription myself to prevent unnecessary pitfalls of transcription. This was to guarantee that all details of the focus group discussions were included and given sufficient attention. This is in alignment with the suggestion made by Easton et al. (2000) that the investigator should ideally conduct the task of interviewing and transcription themselves. Importantly, too, I decided to conduct data transcription myself because of my ethical commitment towards my participants in terms of confidentiality and anonymity. Another reason for transcribing my data is to be familiar with its content by listening carefully to the recordings and checking the accuracy of the transcripts, thus functioning as an initial stage of my data analysis. By the same token, Gibbs (2007) maintains that by carrying out the task of transcription, researchers get the chance to commence data analysis. Another potential benefit of not assigning the task of transcription to another transcriber is to minimise issues of misunderstanding the Omani-English accent used by some participants, or perhaps misunderstanding the context under study as well as the topic under investigation. In this respect, Al Wahaibi (2019) maintains that transcription entails a robust understanding of the contextual background.

As stated earlier, I fully transcribed my six focus group discussions, making a detailed account of spoken utterances. In total, there were (55,463) words of transcript from all focus group discussions, without the data collected from the language learning histories. I also decided to transcribe the discussions in their chronological order in which they were carried out with the groups, thus providing me with a clear picture of how these discussions progressed over time in their breadth and depth. Besides that, it enabled me to see how similar and different the experiences of my participants are, thus

creating links between such experiences, within each group session and across group discussions. Accordingly, I believe that my transcripts carried unique narratives about each discussion I had with my research participants, hence those stories deserved to be narrated. The following tables summarises the timeline of the discussions held for each focus group, indicating the number of sessions, duration, and word length:

- Group (A)

**Table 3:** The Timeline of the Focus Group Discussions (Group A)

Number of Session	Duration	Word Length
First Session	02:46:21	16567
Second Session	01:28:16	8529

- Group (B)

**Table 4:** The Timeline of the Focus Group discussions (Group B)

Number of Session	Duration	Word Length
First Session	00:52:50	6440
Second Session	01:03:50	7190

- Group (C)

**Table 5:** The Timeline of the Focus Group discussions (Group C)

Number of Session	Duration	Word Length
First Session	02:05:46	9747
Second Session	01:09:11	6990

### Phases of Data Coding and Theme Development

Following data transcription, I undertook a thorough procedure for coding data and developing the main theme to ensure a rigorous approach to thematic data analysis. First of all, I read my transcripts word for word to closely connect with my data and thoroughly understand my participants' views. Second, I summarized my data from both focus group discussions and language learning histories. I summarized each transcript by identifying the ideas stated by the research participants in relation to the questions posed by the researcher during the focus group discussions (for further details on the discussion protocol, see appendix 1). It should be noted that all participants' ideas were considered equally valuable. This process of summarizing each tran-



script helped me to make sense of the raw data, thus jotting down the potential theme. In the third phase, I started breaking down my data, categorising them, and coding them accordingly.

### **Evolution of the Coding Structure: Adopting a Deductive Approach**

In my study, I mainly relied on the deductive approach, in which the coding of themes is informed by the research question and the theoretical frameworks referred to, as well as the pre-defined questions developed as prompts for the focus group discussions (see appendix 1 for the open-ended questions asked during focus group discussions). In this regard, Gibbs (2007) refers to such type of coding as ‘concept/analyst-driven coding’ or ‘conceptual coding’ whereas Wellington (2015) as well as Willis (2010) refer to it as ‘a priori coding’. Hyde (2000) argues that the employment of a deductively theory-driven approach in a qualitative enquiry “can represent an important step towards assuring conviction in qualitative research findings” (p. 84).

As pointed out earlier, the major guiding themes identified in my present study are basically grounded on my research question, thus drawing out the main conceptual code as follows:

#### **Comparing Omani Student-teachers’ Expressions of Identities in Traditional EFL Classrooms and Digital Contexts**

After checking the above listed coding theme and comparing it with my research question, I dived into my data by thoroughly reading the complete data sets. As such, I continued categorizing my data under the relevant category identified earlier. Whilst I was immersed in my data corpus, I started to see how the core theme was branching out into sub-themes. Accordingly, I developed further categories. These sub-categories were driven by the pre-formulated questions developed for the focus group discussions, which were in turn informed by relevant literature. Qualitative data collected from the focus groups and the language learning histories were also mapped onto the theoretical frameworks referred to in my study, namely, Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System (2009) the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and Yashima’s (2009) to investigate their relevance to the context-under-study in Oman. The following sub-themes were listed under the overarching theme:

#### **1. Comparing Omani Student-teachers’ Expressions of Identities in Traditional EFL Classrooms and Digital Contexts**

This Theme was based on the research question, and further divided into the following sub-themes;

1-1 Expression of a Bicultural Identity in Traditional EFL Classrooms: Towards the Progress of Oman through the Medium of English

1-2 Representation of Engaging Omani-Islamic Identities in Virtually Broad-based Communications

- The sub-themes, including 1.1, 1.2 were driven by the theoretical frameworks, Yashima’s (2009) International Posture, and the prompts for focus group discussions, (see appendix 1)

At this stage, both data sets collected from the focus groups and the language learning histories coded under the core theme and its subcategories presented above were readily organized for data analysis. The process of analysis followed systematic stages. First of all, I arranged my entire data sets into a main theme and printed them off. Then, I started to scrutinize each set of data, noting participants’ responses and jotting down any agreements or disagreements in their discussions. I finally reported their answers by a coding system of letters and numbers, which was very helpful for extracting direct quotations during the write up stage.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

Certain measures are to be carefully considered to confirm that the research study is carried out in an ethical manner, beginning from the study design, to data analysis, to the write-up and dissemination of the findings. According to May (2001), ethics is about establishing codes and formulating principles of moral behavior. Similarly, Borg and Gall (1983) emphasize that, while planning a research study, the researcher assumes the responsibility to evaluate its ethical acceptability. Generally, the present research conformed to the key ethical principles in relation to anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent (Burgess, 1989).

#### **Findings and discussions**

##### **Expression of a Bicultural Identity in Traditional EFL Classrooms: Towards the Progress of Oman through the Medium of English**

To address the research question pertinent to Omani EFL student-teachers' expressions of identities through cyberspace in comparison to traditional EFL classrooms, this section aims to examine participants' desire to contribute to the development of Oman via English in traditional EFL classrooms. The findings reported that participants expressed a 'bicultural identity' (Arnett, 2002) to relate to the global culture whilst preserving their local culture. Put simply, the research data showed a recurrent theme pertinent to the influential role of English as it is the medium of burgeoning body of research, and scientific knowledge. The participants reported that they could add valuable contributions to the progress of contemporary Oman through conducting reflective educational studies in English, highlighting the importance of biculturalism. The following conversational discussion further demonstrated that point;

*(FP7) In my role as an EFL learner and future teacher, I see that English is the language of research. And if I want to improve our society, we must take from the English language. Just imagine focusing on research that is done in the Arabic language, I do not think we will get more results than we would get in English because not only English-speaking countries use English, but also other countries as well. So, it is really important to benefit from the other' experiences through research from different cultures not only English culture and apply that in our society, taking what is suitable for us and apply it after examining it and analysing it to shape it according to our society in order for it to advance. So, research conducted in English is so important as it plays a very important role in the developing Oman at different levels.*

*(FP10) if we want to develop our country and develop ourselves as student-teachers, we must seek knowledge through English (Group B, 3FGD).*

Overall, the participants seemed to have a sound understanding of their present and future selves as student-teachers, highlighting the power of English in relation to the development of their country in all its aspects, be it at a domestic level or at an international one. In turn, this may explain the ubiquity of English as an icon of political, economic and social powers in the context under investigation and the international context. This point may be better explained in terms of Bourdieu's (1991) notions of 'capital', including its different forms such as social, economic, linguistic and cultural capital. Bourdieu

(1991) further emphasizes that these types of capital would be considerably treasured provided that they gain 'symbolic capital' in terms of higher social standing and recognition. Also, the wider spread of English as a lingua franca has recently strengthened its symbolic capital in Oman, promising access to enormous economic and social capital (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). For example, proficient speakers of English can get white collar professions and high-paid jobs (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011), and thus gaining membership into elite social communities in Oman. Moreover, Al Wahaibi (2019) refers to De Swaan (2001) to draw on the 'hierarchical global language system theory', maintaining that speakers of different languages worldwide are inclined to learn a higher order language with higher communicative political, economic and social advantages. In my study, participants also appeared to be fully aware of the requirement of their current roles as EFL learners and future EFL teachers to be adequately exposed to different cultures and to be equally involved in intercultural dialogues for the sake of national progress and advancement, realizing the significance of biculturalism. The following conversational discussion highlighted those dimensions;

*(FP6) In my view as a student-teacher, I think the main role of English is to introduce Oman to other countries. So, we can write in English to promote for Oman to another culture. So, English is helpful.*

*(FP6) I think English is an engine especially for jobs. To be able to speak and write in English, it gives you an advantage and it opens job opportunities for you. Even if the job is not related to English, you are supposed to know English in order to survive and get promoted. We also use English in tertiary education in Oman.*

*(FP4) It is a means to meet the world. If English is not being taught or used in Oman, the country will be backwards. It would not be open as now. There is no direct communication between cultures (Group A, 3FGD).*

Moreover, the young Omani participants seemed to realize the status of English in the contemporary Omani society in comparison to its status in the past. Thereby, parents started taking measures to develop the English language skills of their children as it illustrated in the following statements written by a male participant in his language learning history;

*I think, in the past, local people in Oman did not see English language as important. For example, if their children got bad marks in English, they would not care because they expected that and they thought it was not important. Now, we see some awareness among Omani people. They see English language as significant not in Oman itself, but around the world. Even my father and mother try to hire a private English teacher for my sisters to teach them English at home besides their school lessons because they understand that English language is vital and they cannot do anything without English. You will learn English to enrich your future (MP14, LLH).*

Overall, the data uncovered participants' instrumental and integrative orientations behind seeking English language learning to represent their present and future identities to add to the national development, expressing the English cultural identity and the Omani identity that allow them to belong to the global culture, as is evident in the following statements written by a male participant in his language learning history;

*As an EFL learners and a future teacher of English, I can know the culture of other nations. If I can speak this language, I can read a lot of books so that I know the culture. While communicating with others, I can present my English cultural side, along with my Omani background and experience to add to the discussion (MP12, LLH).*

Participants appeared to robustly understand the scientific reservoir of English that can be used for personal and national growth whilst adhering to their local culture, and thus exhibiting strong desires for 'bicultural identities' (Arnett, 2002). In a sense, participants retained future aspirations for their roles at a national level. They also exhibited positive attitudes towards the English language, showing an awareness of English language needs. As such, it seems prudent to comprehensively understand students' global identity (Csizér & Kormos, 2009), along with their national affiliations. These illustrated examples of real-life events, which occurred in traditional contexts, indicate how students direct their online and offline identities in a reciprocally reinforcing manner.

### **Representation of Engaging Omani-Islamic Identities in Virtually Broad-based Communications**

In response to the research question which aims to explore how virtual social spaces facilitate the expression of female and male Omani student-teachers' identities in comparison to traditional EFL classrooms, analysis of the research findings yielded the pressing need for multicultural and multifaith discussions articulated by the participants, which were geared towards developing Oman. For example, a male participant wrote the following statements in his language learning history;

*As a student-teacher, I introduce Twitter to students in my teaching practice to teach them how to communicate with speakers of English, demonstrating that through communications with international speakers of English helps in breaking the stereotypical view they have about us and the one we have about them which is a win to win situation in order to bring about positive interactions, leading to the progress of Oman in all its spheres nationally and internationally (MP12, LLH).*

In the same line, a female participant seemed to have realised the considerable significance of English in bridging diverse nations through multicultural communications (FP8, LLH). As such, she used reflective educational blogs in her teaching practicum to encourage such dialogues so that Oman could be well-integrated with the rest of the world as the following quote illustrated; "I use blogs in my teaching practice to present examples for my students how English helps my country to be connected with other countries in terms of education and technology" (FP8, LLH). Likewise, a male participant viewed his role as a student-teacher as that of an ambassador to effectively engage in multicultural communications for national development; "I would like to be an ambassador to build a bridge between my country and other countries by engaging with each other in order to develop Oman" (MP14, LLH). Besides that, the findings indicated the necessity of being involved in multinational communications to satisfy their thirst for knowledge from the western scientific reservoir as expressed by a male participant; "As a future educator of English, I join the online teachers' community to network with the educated westerners to learn about educational studies and technological advancement" (MP13, LLH).

Interestingly, the results of the research revealed participants' awareness concerning the international affairs and the influential role of the late Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said, in resolving critical political issues due to his English communicative competence and multicultural communicative skills. There

was another influential political Omani leader, Yusuf Bin Alawi, as the following conversational exchange revealed;

*I can see the role model for us is the late Sultan of Oman, Qaboos, as he was able to bring peace through communications with other countries, so one might think how he can do that. It is the English language as a main tool to communicate with other countries and his personality is the main thing that he projects through his communication with these countries. Another figure I could think of is the previous Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Bin Alawi. He was very famous and he communicated with many people from different parts of the world. The main event was his negotiations with atomic nuclear crisis. Eventually, he was successful. The English language is very important here in Oman and its people since they are very sociable so that they can communicate with other people in Oman like visitors and foreigners. So, English is a way of communication (MP13, group C, 3FGD).*

Also, the data showed that the Omani participants were interested in maintaining multifaith communications in their capacities as current English learners and future educators, expressing and exchanging their religious views openly with various nations to lead a tolerant lifestyle as the following conversational exchange illustrated;

*(MP12) As a student and future English instructor, I love the idea of communicating with English speakers all around the world. Also, what has been happening in the world against Islam urges me to tell others that not all Muslims are bad. Those are the minority. They do not express us. I like talking to people and I like getting to know others' religious views and ideas to be able to be tolerant and accept differences.*

*(MP14) I definitely agree with you. As a student-teacher, I want to promote our Islamic cultural identity and Omani culture through social media. I also want to clarify any misunderstanding of Islam and Arabs (Group C, 3FGD).*

Although the Omani participants seemed to hold a simplistic perception of a highly intricate and sophisticated international communications, the topic appeared quite prominently through their focus group discussions and their language learning histories. Also, participants' desire to establish multicultural and multifaith dialogues mirrors their positive affective disposition towards the international com-

munity at large and their aspiration to interact and identify with international people. However, this does not imply in any way the relevance of Gardnerian (1985) Integrative construct as they were not particularly interested in identifying completely with the L2 community, but rather interested in bridging different cultures and religions through insightful communications. Thereby, the notion of integrativeness should be reinterpreted from a self-perspective (Ryan, 2009). According to Ryan (2009), integrativeness and ideal L2 self "may in fact be tapping into the same pool of emotional identification that learners feel toward the values of the language and its speakers" (pp. 131-132). Ryan (2009) further argues that the ideal self provides solid grounds for comprehending the affective aspect of L2 motivation than integrativeness. In fact, my research participants were not only interested in interacting with native speakers of English, but also with diverse international members via social media and traditional modes.

## Conclusion

### Comparative Thoughts

Addressing the research question pertinent to Omani EFL student-teachers' expressions of identities through cyberspace in comparison to traditional EFL classrooms, the findings further support the tripartite motivational model developed by Dörnyei (2009) to function as a platform through which participants engage in the development of their future selves, allowing rooms for context-sensitive motivational forces necessary for comprehending contemporary L2 motivations in a rapidly complex globalising era. As envisioned by the government of Oman, Omani students are encouraged to participate in international exchanges, such as student exchange programmes and international conferences led by students (Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017). Thus, their expressed identities in cyberspace and their cyberlives - which they carefully select to share with the globe - are deemed significant to achieve effective globalised exchanges. What is of particular interest is that the data is topical as it parallels current thinking in the arena of L2 motivation.

Interestingly, the expression of Omani and Islamic identity as a powerful motivation for Omani learners to engage in English social technologies is notable. It also appeared in traditional offline contexts, reflecting that their online identity is congruent with

their offline identity. In other words, what they articulate offline is also expressed via digital modes. Nevertheless, virtual social spaces facilitate the expressions of their identities to a wider extent. These presented links to the influence of the real-world incidents reveal how students figure out the direction of the relationship between their online and offline identities, and thus channelling them in a mutually supporting way.

As pointed out earlier, there is a potentially motivating drive for Omani EFL students to engage in social technologies to eloquently articulate the Omani, Arabic, and Islamic history, culture, and perspectives in the wider international arena. This finding chimes with two Chinese research studies conducted by Lo-Bianco (2009) and Orton (2009), indicating learners' motivation to pursue English language learning so that they can promote the cultural aspect and identity of China to the globe. Clearly, too, my research participants seemed to form a global identity, reflecting 'a feeling of relatedness' to the international community. Thus, participants' international posture could also be explained as a significant constituent of their L2 self-systems as they tend to extend their selves by forming new pictures of themselves related to the international affairs of the modern era (Yashima, 2009). Participants also aspired to promote their own local and religious cultures through offline modes. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to indicate, here, that this is not a surprising finding given the collectivist nature of the Omani society in which collective responsibility is strongly held, stemming fundamentally from their core religious beliefs and cultural values. On the one hand, one would argue that such a claim should be cautiously made and well-thought out as it might mirror their strong internalization of the significant status of English in Oman across the board and its deep penetration into the society. That is to say, such explanation might be supported by the dominant social and political discourses that are heavily emphasised and profoundly infused with its utilitarian worth. On the other hand, I would argue that the qualitative methodology embraced by this study has given us insights into participants' articulations of their affiliations towards their national and religious identities.

In Line with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002), Omani participants clearly exhibited manifestations of autonomy as they initiatively took charge of their cyber-lives to engage in global exchanges through virtual social spaces. They also

demonstrated their burgeoning competence as they identified their digital avenues supported by essential technical and language skills to facilitate their virtual engagement. Besides that, representations of relatedness were evident since they displayed robust understanding of their role and relevance to the digital space they navigated, necessitating new interpretations of the original theoretical notions described by the authors. In other words, social technologies have offered potential affordances for accommodating fresh insights into the previously introduced terminologies, such as 'relatedness' and 'belonging', necessitating future investigations of students' cyber-lives. Likewise, their perceived future selves (Dörnyei, 2009) are palpable, and driven by their intrinsic motivation to change the world's misunderstanding concerning the Islamic religion and culture. However, as argued by Little and Al Wahaibi (2017) in the article based on this study, two additions are to be integrated into Dörnyei's Motivational Self System. They suggest incorporating the imposed and displayed selves, explaining that the imposed self is somewhat different to the ought-other self in L2MSS, which is largely influenced by external obligations put on the individual. They explain that the imposed self does not replace Dörnyei's ought-other self. Instead, it looks at how in more recent years the media has had an ever-increasing impact on how cultures are represented. In some cases, they are misrepresented, in particular, Islamic cultures and traditions to the extent that young people are looking at how they feel represented by the media and feel the urge to go against it to curate their own self in the digital context through how media-representation imposes on their lives and on their cultural identity (see the following quote for further details). Put simply, they propose:

*to incorporate the possibility of future selves being influenced, not as Dörnyei outlines it in his 'ought to' self, by outside demands placed upon the individual, but instead an 'imposed self' which is the result of media-influence perceptions, and which results in a 'displayed self' which aligns with Potter's (2012) notion of curatorship, and is of particular importance in the digital context (Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017, p. 184).*

Little and Al Wahaibi (2017) argue that although their 'displayed self' is largely controlled by the learner, it is potentially affected by society and media. Thereby, the learner himself 'curates' messages to display a particular picture of their religion and culture, resisting necessarily against an imposed self

(Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017). Participants' selection of English words such as 'weapon' is one way to show that English is not basically instrumentally-perceived, but also a way of unsettling deep-rooted prejudices and misconceptions imposed upon particular groups based on their national and religious orientations. They also refer to Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy to further explain how participants relate to the imposed self with regard to the self they would like to display to the world, consciously 'curating' (Potter, 2012) their virtual lives to send their intended messages. Eventually, they recommend future research avenues concerned with the ways in which digital space fundamentally impacts upon our concepts of self as well as our motivations to actively navigate cyberspace (Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017).

Significantly, the findings bring the Gardnerian (1985) concept of Integrativeness into question, suggesting the need to re-frame it, since participants seemed to be yearning to participate in the wider international community rather than Anglophone countries for the sake of meeting national and religious affiliations. Thus, I would take a critical stance, along with other researchers such as Csizér & Kormos (2009), as well as Ryan (2009) regarding the irrelevance of Gardner's integrative motivation to many EFL contexts in an increasingly complex globalising world. It seems, therefore, essential to further explore learners' international posture as well as their national interest behind pursuing English language learning in diverse EFL contexts. I, in line with Yashima (2009), would rather view the concept of international posture as a constituent part of the L2 Motivational Self System.

Finally, I would argue for the necessity to widen and deepen our comprehension of students' selves in social cyberspaces, exploring the link between English social platforms and the religious and cultural interests of students. As is clear, virtual social and cultural technologies present a widely extensive exposure to and participatory engagement in social multicultural spaces, encouraging further explorations of this specific context.

### Limitations

The limitation of the research relates to the study population. That is, the participants did not only demonstrate that they were exceptional language learners, but also, they did diligently invest much effort and time to improve their English competence through their constructive engagement with cyber-

space. If less motivated learners had taken part in this study, different results would have been yielded. Given the fact that the research participants were not representative of the majority population in the context under study, I would propose a future comparative study sets out purposefully to compare learners with high and low motivational profiles, studying in a generally similar context. Again, I must admit that targeting a diverse population drawn from other disciplines could have potentially unfolded resistance to English.

The focus group discussions and the individually composed language learning histories were all communicated in English as greatly demanded by the participants. Notwithstanding that it may signal their high motivation and autonomous L2 identities, it could also be seen as a barrier in articulating their voices and feelings.

### Practical Implications for Language Pedagogy, Curriculum Development, and Policy-Making

#### Promoting Identity Development through Innovative EFL Reform

Drawing on the data of my present research, I would argue that policy makers, curriculum developers, and teaching practitioners should invest considerable efforts into helping Omani students become the persons they would like to be, as an ideal starting point towards an innovative EFL reform in the Omani context. This self-based approach can be justified by the fact that:

*a foreign language is more than a mere communication code that can be learnt similarly to other academic subjects; instead, the knowledge of a language is part of the individual's personal 'core', involved in most mental activities and forming an important part of one's identity (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014, p. 11).*

Referring to Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS, the data revealed that teaching practitioners should facilitate students' expression of their L2 future selves. For instance, language teachers can initially help their students to vocalise their ideal L2 selves, and later to help them consolidate their future images throughout their language learning journeys in order to maintain long-lasting motivational powers. Teaching practitioners can also help their students articulate their future dreams and share their L2 aspirations with their peers in order to encourage other

students who may not be able to visualize their future selves.

Policy makers, curriculum developers, and teaching practitioners in Oman and similar contexts elsewhere should invest on students' short and long-term motivation, promoting positive identity development anchored in the local and global English-speaking community. Engaging examples of identity work that can be practiced in language classrooms are the use of focus group discussions as engaging platforms through which students may discuss local issues in English and their consequences in the international arena. They can also discuss local projects and their advantages at a national and international level. Such performance-targeted speaking activities can help ignite students' envisioned bicultural selves in their language classroom, provided with the supportive presence and encouragement of their peers. These discussions can be extended beyond the classroom through participating in virtual social spaces, and thus communicating with international speakers of English. This could be facilitated through students' exchange programs, or perhaps conducting a shared project between a local university and an overseas university whereby students work collaboratively via cyberspace to complete an academic project. Through these classroom activities, students can also relate to the international English-speaking community through discussing issues of mutual concerns, and thus yielding greater levels of involvement. It can also be argued that such motivational activities directed at identity development would capitalise on the present and future aspects of students' bicultural identities. EFL teachers should create a conducive environment in which they can collaborate with their students to figure out different ways to represent themselves. These speaking activities hold greater social authenticity, mirroring students' own lives in English-speaking versions (Lamb & Budiyanto, 2013). Through focus group discussions, students have to reconcile their local identities with their future global identities, negotiating necessarily the concerns and values of both selves. Another engaging pedagogical activity which revolves around identity work can be the use of reflective language learning histories (LLHs), providing students with invaluable opportunities to reflect on their English-using selves. I would also suggest creating a community of practice inside the classroom and perhaps extending it outside the classroom via cyberspace. I would presume that its success lies in nurturing students' identities through capitalising on their personal interests, thus igniting

their imaginations as future English-mediated selves. In this regard, they are not being positioned as merely language learners in monotonous classrooms, drilling grammatical and lexical exercises. Ultimately, such cultural identification processes may contribute to the development of Ideal L2 selves.

Considering reform efforts into the Omani educational system, teachers are also advised to develop their English-speaking identities through training programmes and professional development. In this respect, Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) argue that quality teaching is derived from identity, not strategies. However, if a teacher permits his identity to lead him toward an efficient pedagogical strategy, that strategy can facilitate the expression of his identity more effectively. This seems to accord with the essence of Wenger's (1998) argument that "being an active practitioner with an authentic form of participation might be one of the most deeply essential requirements for teaching" (p. 277). Lamb (2007) also pointed out that teaching practitioners who did not have robust confidence "in their own English and struggled to view themselves as authentic users of the language who were also failing to convince learners that they were potentially effective users of English" (p. 257).

With regard to the practical implications for educational institutions, it seems imperative to provide periodic training programs by the educational authorities for their language instructors and make them part and parcel of their professional development. This is due to the fact that poor pedagogies may conjure up negative attitudes towards learning English, resulting in unsatisfactory learning outcomes. In terms of practical implications for policy makers, particular emphasis should be given to students' motivation from the self-perspective. This present study proposes that language policy making should emphasise the facilitation and development of students' L2 future selves so as to sustain their motivation to learn English.

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