Exploring International Students' Motivations and Identity Construal With Regard To Learning English in the Canadian Context: A Poststructuralist Account 2019

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the influence of second language (L2) learning on an international student's identity construction and self-conception. Such exploration contributed to poststructuralist discussions vis-à-vis the adequacy of structuralist models to L2 learning motivation, given postmodernist conditions of globalization and English globality. An interdisciplinary framework 'discourse'—'discourse theory' and its methodological tool, critical discourse analysis, in concert with the poststructuralist, sociological construct 'investment' was utilized. Using this framework enabled us toexplore the perception of an L2 learner' smotivation to learn English and his identification with the language, its culture, and speech community. Analysis of data collected through a semi-structured interview revealed that the learner associated learning English with diverse discourses: nationalism, religiosity, interest in travel and world culture, access to global sources of information, communicating and affiliating with people of linguistic and cultural diversity. These findings speak to the complexity of language education, learner's motivation, and identity formation.

Keywords: motivation, identity, investment, globalization, poststructuralism, discourse, construction

1. Introduction

The case study reported in this paper considers one of the most interesting, yet relatively least researched themes in SLA literature—international students' motivation and identification vis-à-vis learning English in an English-speaking context. Precisely, the study concerns an Arab overseas student pursuing education in Canadian universities. Recent years have witnessed an increasing international demand on higher education at English-medium universities in Australia, the UK, the USA, and Canada (Read, 2008; Rienties& Nolan, 2014). In response, host universities have deployed academic literacy programs to support overseas students where needed (Harris, 2013). In effect, applied linguists and SLA scholars also conducted ample research concerning the issue (e.g., Taguchi, 2008; Schauer, 2009; Sasaki, 2009; Kinginger, 2011). In essence, however, the scholarly uptake has focused more on the students' linguistic competence, but less on their motivation (Zhang & Goodson, 2011), with the exception of few studies (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Prazeres, 2013; Yusoff, 2010; Wu & Hammond, 2011; Yang & Noels, 2013 Chirkov,Safdar, De Guzman &Playford, 2008) of which only two were conducted in Canada: Chirkov et al. (2008) and Yang & Noels (2013).To date, no research has studied Arab learners' motivation to learn English in the English-speaking context, neither in Canada nor elsewhere.

Recently, the surge of English as "the global language" (Crystal, 1997, p.1) and as the globalizing and education globalizing tool have preordained that globality, identity, hybridity, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic diversity, and language loss are key leitmotifs for SLA scholarship, especially within the L2 motivation field (Ushida & Dornyei, 2009). This paradigm shift (Sung, 2013) has also been fueled by challenges to traditional motivation theory raised by poststructuralism "an approach that has been at the forefront of new thinking on identity" (Collinson, 2006, p. 180). However, because language-learning motivation rather appeals to learning a second language, the majority of L2 identity- focused motivation research has been more within the English-as-a foreign language (EFL) context (e.g., Gu, 2013; Papi, 2010; Kim, 2012; Prasangani, 2015) while notably less within contexts where English is the predominant language (Gu, 2013). The handful of studies conducted in English-speaking contexts (e.g., Kanno& Norton; 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003) has focused on immigrant learners or teachers, not on international students (Sung, 2014).

The socio-psychological wellbeing of international students is of concern: for their home countries, hosting universities, the research community, and for the students themselves—being vulnerable to cultural shock, frustration, anxiety, and learning a different language in a different culture through different teaching methods (Hotta& Ting-Toomey, 2013).

Motivation is key in L2 learning, upholding achievement (Alderman, 2013); proficiency (Vandergrift, 2005); self-regulation (Pintrich, 2004); self-efficacy (Pajares, 2003); self-confidence (Yashima, 2002); social competence (Zsolnai, 2002), and cultural adaptation (Yu, 2010). Norton (2010) viewed language motivations as trajectories of thelearner's identity repertoire and self-representation in language learning. Ushida and Dornyei (2009, p.4) related Norton's idea; "an investment in a target language is also an investment in learner's identity".

In light of the foregoing introduction, I draw from a poststructuralist theory perspective: from the sociological construct of investment in concert with the interdisciplinary framework 'discourse'— discourse theory and its methodological tool (critical) discourse analysis, to examine perceptions of an Arab overseas student (enrolled in an Ontarian university) regarding his motivation to learn English and identification with the language, its culture and speech community. The aim is to contribute to burgeoning discussions on the relation between language motivation and identification and, further, to acknowledge challenges poststructuralists have raised to structuralist approaches to language motivation, while considering utility of poststructuralist thought in this regard. The following question was attempted in the study: "How does the participant construe his identity amidst his investment in learning English?"

The study, informed by a poststructuralist perspective, recognizes a synergetic relation, of constitution, between language and identity—language shapes its users' identities and, conversely, their identities shape their language use and, hence learning (and motivation to learn) it (Gu, 2013). Thus, "an investment in a target language is also an investment in the learner's identity" (Ushida & Dornyei, 2009,p. 4). Investment in a target language (Norton, 2000) is informed by symbolic (e.g., cultural capital, linguistic knowledge) and material (e.g., job getting, exams passing) gains of which the learner is aware (Byrd Clark, 2010). L2 motivation is therefore influenced by sociological, sociocultural, sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors—all impact L2 identity construction (Norton, 2010). Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Canadian context (and universities), it was assumed that the participant in this study may have developed hybrid identities. Given the context of globalization and English globality, it was also assumed that he may have assumed a cosmopolitan identity, which "gives [him] a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture" (Arnett, 2002, p. 777). Therefore, the there is a need to look at both the status of the language being learned, and the agency of the learner and her ability to develop and balance a manifold of identities.

2. *Literature review: Motivation and identity in L2research*

The relation between language learning motivation and identity has initially been addressed in the socio-educational model to L2 learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), precisely in the theoretical concept 'integrative motive'—defined by Gardner as " a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group" (p. 132). The integrative motive comprises three components: *integrativeness*or desire to assimilate in the L2 community (Gardner, 1985); *attitude* or "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent" (p. 9); and *motivation* or "combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language" (p. 10). The integrative concept understands language acquisition as a process of social identification paralleled to the way the infant acquires language from her caregiver, through imitation and feedback (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The model's tenet is that the process of social identification can be "extended to a whole ethnolinguistic community" (p. 12) and "may sustainlong-term motivation needed to master a second language" (Ushida & Dornyei, 2009, p. 2). So, it is this 'integrative motive' that expresses the relation between *identity* and *motivation*: the former contains the latter. The socio-educational model also includes another aspect, 'instrumental motive'—interest in learning an L2 for utilitarian goals, such as having a job or passing an exam (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The cognitive motive has served as a base for SLA theory and research, for example, for self- determination theory (Deci Ryan, 1985), social acculturation models (Schumann, 1986), immersion studies (Roy, 2008), identity theory and studies (Yashima, 2002; Dornyei & Csizér, 2002; Norton, 2000), and ample studies on L2 motivation within the foreign language (FL) context (Prasangani, 2015; Papi, 2010; Kim, 2012). This literature seem to argue for: utility of the 'integrative motive', interrelatedness of *motivation* and *identity* and the inexorability of treating them as independent research variables —that is, to paraphrase MacIntyre, MacKinnon, & Clément (2009), it is away early to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" (see also Dornyei & Ushida, 2009, p.64). The tenet of the integrative concept is "relating individual difference variables (…) to *proficiency* in a second language" (1988, p.114).

This assumes two things: first, only those learners who are integratively motivated, that is, who exhibit "positive attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers, and its culture can be expected to enhance learning" (Ellis, 1994, p. 200) and, second, the only purpose for learning English is to join the native speaker communities (Jenkins, 2009). So, integrativeness has been linked with the native speaker model, which perceives "a language learner as one who seeks native speaker' competence', 'proficiency' or 'knowledge of the language' as a necessary point of reference" (Stern, 1983, p. 341). Such 'point of reference' (from a poststructuralist perspective) is stigmatizing and divvying (Byrd Clark, 2010) and is opaque in a context of globalization. Many L2 scholars endorse opacity of the notion 'nativespeakerness'. Given the diverse varieties of English or 'Word Englishes', L2 scholars argue, "there is no specific target reference group of speakers" (Ushida & Dornyei, 2009, p. 2). If this is the case, then nativespeakerness (as a linguistic and cultural affiliation) has lost its motivational potential. Instead (from a globalization perspective), affiliation to English has come to be determined by the language status and power in the world, as a "the global language" (Crystal, 1997, p. 1). Kachru's metaphor in *The Alchemy of English* (1986) made it clear, "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin lamp, which permits one to open as it were, the linguistic gate into business, technology, science and trade—in short English provides linguistic power" (p. 1).

While globalization is secular, affiliation with English islicensed religiously and patriotically. Al-Haq and Samadi(1996) found that Saudi Arabian students considered English as neither a threat to their 'religious commitment' nor a disloyalty to their 'national identity'; conversely, they saw learning it as "a religious and national duty" (p. 307).Shamim (2011) reported on Pakistani students who viewed English as "the language for development at both the individual and the national level" [which has] "overtaken issues of class, and identity and fear of cultural invasion from an erstwhile colonial language" (p. 293). English globality also meant demise of nativespeakerness and transformation of authorship over the language to world users, to quote McKay here, "as an international language, English belongs to it users, and as such it is the users cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy" (p. 220).Poststructuralism disrupts linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and claims agency for the L2 learners over language (McKay, 2003). In a study of English in Hong Kong context, Sung (2014) held "L2 learners and speakers are entitled to the right to express their L1 identity when using English in lingua franca contexts" (p. 45; but see Jenkins, 2003; Higgins, 2010; Seidlhofer; 2011). Jenkins (2003)supported that many L2 learners want to keep aspects of their L1 accent—as a trajectory of their lingua- cultural identity when using English, instead of identifying with English native speakers.

In his study of South African high school in Botswana, Magogwe (2007) documented that the students learned English for instrumental reason and because it is an international language. According to Magogwe, these learners were not learning English for integrating with its native speakers because "doing so would be tantamount to denying their identity as Botswana nationals." (p. 322). Meanwhile, McKay and Wong found cases among adolescent immigrants in the USA of "strong Chinese cultural identification and a strong desire to become American existing side by side" (1996, p. 604).

3.Theoretic a perspective

The theoretical frame underpinning the study, guiding its questions and informing its epistemological standpoint, methodological and analytic tool is the poststructuralist framework (Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1997; Burbules & Peters, 2004; Blacklegde, 2004). Poststructuralism is "a movement of thought—a complex skein of thought embodying different forms of critical practice" (Burbules & Peters, 2004, p. 18). It is "well equipped to capture the complexity of identities in postmodern societies, where languages may not only be 'markers of identity' but also sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity, or discrimination" (Pavlenko & Blacklegde, 2004, p. 4). We also used the sociological construct 'investment' (Norton, 2000, 2010; Clark, 2010) to better understand the relation between motivation and identity. Norton (2000) notes that language motivation (and, hence identification) is mediated by investment. Following Norton and Toohey (2011), the poststructuralist perspective here is tripartite, blending theories of *language* (Agger, 2014, 1991), *subjectivity* (Weedon, 1997; Atkinson, 1999) and *positioning* (Bourdieu 1977; Foucault, 1980).

As a perspective on language, poststructuralism views language in terms of its use— as 'discourse' and concerns "revealing how language is used to constitute reality" and "reflect" the self of its user (Agger, 1991, p. 120). According to Agger (2014), language in itself is "aporetic", that is "divested of critical meaning" (p. 145). The aporetic nature of language "blocks attempts to reduce meaning into transparent codes that somehow lie beyond vaguenesses, ambiguities, and omissions of language" (p.102). Language gains meaning in use and, therefore "the meanings of words are largely embedded in language use itself such that how we talk, write, and read largely determines what we end up saying" (p. 93). According to Seidman (1998) language use is both self-reflexive and context dependent, is never neutral, meaning an analysis of language use (because analysis is an act of language use) is subjective.

In poststructuralism, 'subjectivity' refers to how individuals "are constituted within specific practices and discourses, as social subjects" (Atkinson, 1999, p. 107) and is a defining source for identity (Weedon 1997). Identity refers to "the conscious and the unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding the world" (Weedon, 1997, p.32).Identity construction "occurs through the identification by the individual with particular subject positions with discourse" (p. 108). For Weedon, there is a synergetic relation, of constitution between language and identity, meaning "language is [not only] the place where actual and possible forms of socialorganization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested [but also] is the place where our sense of ourselves, or subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21). So, "as we acquire language, we learn to give voice—meaning to our experience, and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking, particular discourses, which pre-date our entry to language" (p. 32). Language "constructs our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity" (p. 19).

A poststructuralist theory on positioning "concerns the relationship between discourse and power and [accepts] that power is everywhere, and not just located centrally" (Cole, 2003, p. 497). Of influence (so of importance in this study) is Foucault's work (e.g., 1979, 11980). Foucault drew on parallels between discourse/construction, institution/constitution, and power of discourse/discourse of power to relate identities, subjectivities, subject positioning, social formation, and rational emancipation. For case, he illumed that subjectivities and identities are formed with discursive practices that constitute the subject, her cognition of self and of others, and that the constitution is within and through social institutions like education (Atkinson, 1999). For Foucault, "discourses are not only about what can be said and thought and how they influence behavior; [but rather the embodiment] of meanings and social relationships, and they constitute both subjectivity and power relationships" (Kanu, 2005, p. 508). "Discourses in turn constitute aspects of society and the people within it" (Taylor, 2001, p. 9). Thus, a poststructuralist perspective views language related issues in terms of discourses and constructions. Indeed, Norton (2010) views poststructuralism itself as "discourse" (p. 349). I also make use of the sociological construct 'investment' (Norton, 1995, 2000, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

In her study of immigrant women learning English in Canada, Norton (1995) noted that Eva (on of the participants) accepted that she was not a legitimate speaker of English, and that such feeling shaped her linguistic behavior at work. Eva soon overcame the feeling, related to the social world and claimed space: when she had a lengthy call in English with her landlord, arguing about her lease. Based on the study, Norton (1995) developed a sociological model to motivation, 'investment', defined as: "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalentdesire to learn and practice it" (2000, p. 10). She emphasized the dialogic relation between language and identity, arguing, that "when language leaners speak, they are not only exchanging information with the target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world (p. 11); that "when learners invest in an L2, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will enhance their 'cultural capital', their conception of themselves (or identity) and their desires for the future (p. 10); that "a person's investment in a language may be mediated by other investments" (p.122); and that investments " may conflict with the desire to speak" (122), causing anxiety. Ushida (2006,p. 155) noted that 'investment' captures learner's autonomy. In her study of youth Italian, immigrants in Canada, Byrd Clark expanded the notion, "language learning is not so much an investment in the target language as it is an investment (and *awareness* of the investment) in ideologies and representations of such a target language and culture" (2010, p. 384). So, investment is both motivation and identification.

4. Methods

4.1. Participants: One international student (Amr, an Arab) participated in this study. He started learning English in his home country when he was 12 years. He moved to Canada to pursue his graduate studies in Education and was chosen for they study because he took English language courses for adjusting international students. He noted that exposure to English in his home country was limited. I approached Amr and explained the research purpose for him. He volunteered to participate in the study.

4.2. Data collection: The data for this study were collected through two methods: an interview and email correspondence. The interview was semi-structured with a range of open questions, lasted for 30 minutes and mainly discussed the participant's English learning experience, with focus on his motives and self- conception regarding learning the language. The interview was piloted in a casual dialogic setting. It was recorded, transcribed and transposed into codes, categories and themes. I also exchanged emails with the participant in order to check and confirm themes continually emerging.

4.3. Data coding: The data were coded using the "qualitative coding", a modified grounded theory technique (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 42-72; Saldana 2009, pp. 1-31). Qualitative coding is "the process of defining what the data are about [and] is the first analytic step" (Charmaz, 2006, p., 43).

The coding process comprises four steps: first, *initial coding*, which is grounded in the data. The raw data collected from the interview transcription and emails scripts were coded by underlining the participant's quotes and comments. The second step is *focused coding*, which deals with code patterns. From the initial codes, I extracted descriptive codes (the student's wording used to describe his English learning experience and views). Third, Axial coding, which relates codes, categories and themes. The descriptive codes were transposed into categories, which constituted themes for analysis. The final step is *theoretical coding*, which deals with gathering further data on certain categories. Theoretical coding is meant to ground the data in the literature (in a poststrutural framework) and is done subsequent to the actual study.

4.4. **Data analysis:** Poststructuralism, "a rejection of any notions of order and coherence, and a refusal to accept binary options" (Cole, 2003, p. 497), is a "discourse", theory, and methodology (Foucault, 1980). The analysis in this study, therefore, is theoretically informed, and discourse-based, drawing from the interdisciplinary framework 'discourse'—discourse theory and its methodological tool (critical) discourse analysis (Kellner, 2003; Thomson & Hirschman 1995). The analysis understands "the importance of context and the social construction of reality that allows constant reconstruction [as well] difference, marginality, heterogeneity, and multiculturalism" (Kellner, 2003, p. 56) and views discourses as embodiment of "meanings and social relationships" [shaping] "both subjectivity and power relationships" (Kanu, 2005, p. 508) and "aspects of society and the people within it" (Taylor, 2001, p. 9).

The analysis is "relative", thus allowing me to view "discourses as 'metanarratives' or 'absolute truths' [while] identity processes as fluid and nonunitary" (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006, p. 77) — "sites of conflicting forms of subjectivity" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). The analysis is also "interpretive" (Inayatullah, 1998, p. 3), viewing "participant reflections as personalized expressions of larger sociocultural discourses", "[my role being to identify] the sociocultural conditions that enable understanding to seem intelligible and/or personally significant to the participants" (Thomson & Hirschman 1995, p. 141). The analysis also understands "the mutually constitutive effect between language and identity" (Gu, 2013, p. 140). Finally, I make use of the poststructuralist construct 'investment (Norton, 1995, 2000, 2010; Byrd Clark; 2010) taking the position, "an investment in a target language is also an investment in the learner's identity" (Ushida & Dornyei, 2009, p. 4). I draw from the method outlined above to explore: why and how international (Arab students in Canada) students invest in English? And, how do they perceive their identities in such investments?

5. *Findings and discussions*

In this section, I outline and discuss the main findings. Emerged from the analysis the following themes: *foreign language learner*, *travel*, *nativespeakerness*, *communication*, *critical learning*, *religiosity*, *nationalism*, *technology*, and *globalization*. Following a poststructuralist tradition, I discuss these themes as *discourses* and show how they constitute or construe the participant's identity formation and self-representation. I show that these discourses and constructions can be better explained using the postructural, sociological concept 'investment' rather than the psychological notion 'integrative motivation'. Emanated from the analysis the following discourses:

5.1. **Early English learning discourse: A foreigner learner of English**

When I asked my participant why he was learning English, he started by talking about his early encounters with the language, where he defined himself as 'a foreigner learner of English'. Here said:

I started learning English as a foreign language learner in Grade 5: I was 12 years. We had only one class a day. The teacher used the traditional classroom organization—abstract learning, no activities. We were sitting in the class listening to the teacher, copying the vocab, and then memorizing them. We were not using English; I didn't find friends I can talk to in English. I watched translated cartoons to learn. Learning a foreign language in a non-English speaking environment is hard and boring. But, it's mandatory at school; everyone has to learn English; this is out of our choice.

The foregoing excerpts suggest that Amr's motives to learn English came rather from external resources (family, friends, teacher, etc.). Thus, his identity is co-constructed by diverse discourses, essentially by discourses of official obligations (mandatory at school) and talks with parents, friends, and teachers (about the vantage and importance of learning English). In other words, Amr's *earliest* investment in English back home is mediated through a process of interaction among a network of actors, including human (teacher, friend, parents, interpersonal relations, etc.) and non-human actors (school, classroom, technical devices, etc.). Amr (though, a young learner at the time) was aware of the investment: he realized the importance communication in language learning (from L1 experience); viewed the experience as 'boring'; and resorted to watch TV programs 'cartoons' in English, to learn. Generally, his motivations are neither integrative nor instrumental; they are rather extrinsic, of little intrinsic nature. Noteworthy here is that in the socio-educational model, it is the integrative model that is argued to motivate (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985). The discrepancy of the model is apparent in the following comments:

At the beginning I didn't care about culture, I was looking for entertainment and fun. I used to match the words with their Arabic translation. Most things I watched on TV were cartoons.

Thus, for Amr, there was no real contact with the English-speakers' culture: 'cartoons' usually address universal themes relevant to the child nature and culture. They barely represent an L2 culture.

5.2. Travel discourse: autonomoustraveler

Among the personal investments for Amr, travel seems to be salient. Here is what he said:

For English, I have several reasons. Thinking about travelling, travel for me is fun. When you travel, you need someone to translate for you. Instead, I can communicate my idea, my message, by myself.

Travel stands out as an interesting discourse and a strong challenge for traditional models of L2 motivation. It is interesting in that it comprises both integrativeness and instrumentality, suggesting a blurry divide proposed in the dichotomous model. Travel includes both pragmatic and utilitarian motivations and, therefore claiming subscription with instrumentality (Sung, 2013). It also claims position under integration, but not under a traditional view of integrativeness, because it relates to a world culture through English. Fotos (1994, p. 50) noted, "the desire for travel and encounter with a global culture represents 'the new instrumental motivation', including a personal orientation towards international experience, for self-actualization in global society". Amr here relates English to (besides world culture discovering) different dimensions for travelling, that is, personal—for fun and of self- dependency (I don't want anybody to translate for me). Here lies a new challenge, for the structura list models, per se an argument for the poststructuralist model of investment. Ushida (2006, p. 155) argued for the amenability of the investment model, especially for autonomy as a major component in critical learning: "The autonomy of the individual as a language learner and language user implicitly underpins Norton's concept of motivation as 'investment', with its focus on identity and human agency".

5.3. Nativespeakerness discourse: I am a person with anaccent

One challenge for Amr was the first encounters with English as a new arrival in Canada. Amr knows English, but the English he had at home country (schooling English) differs from what he found here:

In a situation where there are only non-native speakers of English, I feel more confident. I feel myself confident. I even feel I can talk better than those people. When all speakers are native, I feel a little worried about speaking because 'I am a person with an accent'. My accent distinguishes me from those people; you fear to pronounce some words wrongly, and people may misunderstand—they ask you to repeat and clarify. Sometimes you feel embarrassed.

In the forgoing excerpts, Amr relates his positioning as a learner of English with reference to the native speakers of the language. Nativespeakerness is both a linguistic and cultural identity that speaks to identities constructed in difference. It represents discourses of not belonging, developed within the field of SAL (which is why I blame the field for promoting such discourse) and institutionally through discourses on English education and is lumped on curricular labels such as EFL. Such a positioning reflects a bifurcation or linguistic discrimination, implying that "there are unequal relations of power between the English language learners and native speakers" (Norton, 2010,p.354) where English-speaking people are identified as native speakers, while learners of English as non- native speakers, which subscribes authority to the former group. Amr's positioning, to an extent, represents Eva's experience (a participant in Norton's, 1995 study of immigrant women in Canada). Eva accepted that she was not a legitimate speaker of English, which shaped her linguistic behavior at work. Then she soon recuperated from the feeling, related to the social world and claimed space: when she hada lengthy call in English with her landlord, arguing about her lease. The same happened with Amr. He first relates the discourse of nativespeakerness to discourses of 'embarrassment', 'worry' 'fear' and confidence', but then (in so many other excerpts) to what is quietly the opposite, when he says: *But now I am confident*; *accent is not important; communication is what matters*.

From a poststructuralist perspective, "identity and difference are bound together" (Connolly, 2002,p. 44) in that "identities are constructed through difference" (Gu, 2013, p. 141) on a logic of equivalence where differences and equivalences are "a general characterization of social processes of classification: people in all social practices are continuously dividing and combining, producing (also reproducing) and subverting divisions and differences" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 100).However, such negative discourses: of negative feelings, attitudes and identifications seem to be only temporal. According to Norton (2010) identities are situated discourses and therefore, instable. Amr, though seemed to be constructed by the discourse of nativespeakerness, he reconstructed this discourse in a way that suggests both awareness (Byrd Clark, 2010) and value of investment (Norton, 2000) he was making on learning the language, which ended up in coming to Canada. He said:

In Canada, I joined an English program for adjusting new comers. I found this program interesting. The everyday learning I get: when you go shopping, you learn English; when you go to have coffee, you learn English; chat with friends, you learn English; when you are in a bus… Fear of not being understood helped me keep learning. I wanted to join the university. If you want to do a task you must have the feeling you can do it. Thinking about university, about my children at school… I need to learn more English…now I could communicate my message well. Now I feel confident.

Apparently, Amr was looking ahead for why he is learning English (join the university). It is this investment that kept him going. Interesting also, the internal discourse of fear (of not being understood) contributed to the investment. Then there is the discourse of determination (if you want to do a task, you must have the feeling you can do it). All these discourses (awareness, fear, determination, children's schooling, university, people: in the market, the bus, cafe) link to and subserve learning English and contribute in shaping a new perspective and identification, turning Amr's focus to communication and getting to know people (native and nonnative speakers). As such, learning language is a social activity, an investment (a discourse) mediated and constructed by investments (which in itself) is a discourse, not immutable, but changing over time and across context (Kinginger, 2009).

5.4. Communication is what matters: Socialidentity

As is the case with Eva (in Norton's 1995 study), Amr now has come to feel more connected with the language. He wanted to relate to people, even if he does not know them:

But now I feel confident: I start conversation; I enjoy talking to people, even if I don't know them.

I wanted to identify with a larger group speaking English. I set up a set of procedures to do that, paying attention to how the groups speak, now I can communicate better. Now I like English; I love it.

The text above suggests that Amr was determined to learn the language, and that it is the value of this investment that was fueling his effort in this regard. Interesting also, the investment was shaping his affiliation with language (now he likes the language, loves it). However, he was looking to identify with 'the larger group speaking English'. Amr was developing a sense of belonging to a larger community of English users. This community is arguably the world community, as Amr is referring to that community by the language (larger group speaking English). Indeed, even if the reference here to people in Canada, the globality argument will still be valid—as the Canadian community is a global one, given the linguistic and cultural diversity composing the Canadian populace. Finally, Amr's discourses on fear, confidence, embarrassment, and even 'nativespeakerness' (as not an end for Amr) seemed to work for Amr as investments mediating the sociological goals underpinning learning the language, which argue against the tenet of the integrative model—the claim that proficiency and identifying with the native group are what motivates learning.

5.5. Critical discourse: critical and reflexive poststructuralist learner

Amr related learning English to discourses of awareness, emancipation, critical thinking, world culture, as sources of identity and forms of investment. Here is what he reasoned.

When we learnt English at school at the age of 12, the perspective was that by learning another language, we could create a strong nation: be safe from enemies: understand them. That was the norm dictated by our teachers at schools and Imams in mosques. But when I grew up, I felt another need to learn English internal desire that makes you feel satisfied when you learn English, desire to learn more about other people's perspectives, practices, products through their language as a carrier of culture.

Amr relates L2 learning to self-discovery, which is a new investment in a postmodernist society. He underpins the danger of the 'single story'. That is, via the parallel he has made between the past and the now. In the past he was constructed by simplistic, naïve discourses of learning the language of the other the "enemy other" (to be safe). At later a later stage of self-discovery, he is inclined to question and falsify the taken for-granted realities, to emancipate his mind through 'learning about the 'other', and about 'their perspectives and practices' through their language. It is this single story that he wants to disrupt by learning English. And the complex identity negotiations he went through, while constructing his subjectivities, 'self' and 'other' understanding, then the positioning. To explain this, I include a lengthy quotation here. The quotation is self-reflexive; suffice it therefore to highlight some part of it. I chose to allow the participant pass it in his very words, as the lived experience is what should inform research. Here is what Amr related:

I feel that learning English has a certain amount of influence on my identity as a Muslim or an Arab. This influence ranges between balancing the cost and benefit. Exposing to the language and its cultures made me make a lot of comparisons between our and the native speakers of English perspectives, practices, and products. I found huge discrepancy between what we believe in and do and what they do. When you learn about how they advance knowledge, skills, and experience and how they became creative, I feel like my Muslim and Arab identity to shake up and put my-self down because we did not reach that level of advancement.

When they connect their language with issues of identity, equality and social justice, I feel like, although we have all of these principles in our religion and culture, depressed by the way we deal with each other. At the practical level, I think that English influenced the way I look at our practices and products and thus, makes me embarrassed that we do not exert more efforts and relevance to do well in our life.

Apparently, Amr is making a huge range of comparisons between tow worlds (the Arab and the West). According to Amr, he belongs to an Arab world that does not reflect the true religious beliefs (of justice, equity, peace, respect). Rather this world adheres to the very opposite. It is their practices (of dealing with one another) that construct the inferior identity for Amr (of depression, embarrassment, self-down). Surly, he is referring here to the current situation of civil wars and massive bloodsheds surging in the Arab Muslim world. By contrast he adores the west for embracing these principles (of equity, freedom, equality). Then there is the conflicting self this juxtaposition brings upon him—of balancing the cost and benefit of learning English and delving in the western thought. He is happy about learning English, because it helped him gain new meanings (of freedom, knowledge, equity) as reference points through (and according) which to he developed critical perspective on the world and lens through which to negotiate his identity, to come to terms and to due gratitude for the people (the western culture and community) who enlightened his critical perspective. He said later:

On the other hand, I am happy that learning English is in line with our religion and culture's principles to seek knowledge even if it was in China (faraway). I have a good feeling that a Muslim and an Arab person can speak English fluently (yet not in a native accent). I feel proud of my-self, knowledgeable, and independent. Muslims are required to be on top of knowledge seekers, advancers, and transformers.

It is this logic of comparison, reflexivity, the cultural capital, the bi-cultural, though 'cosmopolitan' identity, and the revenue of knowledge that make the value for Amr to invest in English and the gains he has heaped during his experience with learning the language. Norton in this regard explains, "language is not a linguistic system, but a social practice, in which experiences are organized and identities are reorganized" (Norton, 2010, p. 351). The quotation above argues for our need for a poststructuralist approach to understand, research, and explain the constantly emanating forms of motivations and identity resources or even crises. It is also interesting that Amr is negotiating his identity with a 'Foucaultian' sense of logical thinking and appeal to rational emancipation, starting with cognizing the true picture out there, in the Arab world. Here is how he related this meaning:

At the practical level, I think that English influenced the way I look at our practices and products and thus, makes me embarrassed that we do not exert more efforts and relevance to do well in our life.

To this note (which also speaks to our need for a sociological account of language related issue) Norton says, "if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners will expect or hope to have a good return on that investment, a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources (Norton, 1995, p. 17). And surely, gaining critical perspectives on life and a critical look into our selves and surrounding world is priceless. Here is how Amr has utilized this perspective he gained through language learning to negotiate his religious identity.

5.6. Religiosity discourse: Informedreligious

Amr is a Muslim, yet sees no contradiction between investing in English and his religious self-beliefs and values. Contrawise, he views his investment in English an index of an informed Muslim.

I am happy that learning English is in line with our religion and culture's principles to seek knowledge even if it was in China (faraway). I have a good feeling that a Muslim and an Arab person can speak English fluently (yet not in a native accent). I feel proud of my-self, knowledgeable, and independent. As a Muslim, we are required to be on top of knowledge seekers, advancers, and transformers.

The excerpt above showcases how Amr came to term with learning English, while referencing his religious beliefs. He views learning English as part and parcel of his 'religious commitment' (Al-Haq &Samadi, 1996). Interestingly, by learning English, Amr is fulfilling two religious commitments— commitment to preaching about Islam and commitment to seeking knowledge. And he is 'proud' being knowledgeable, where English is contributing to this feeling and knowledge. Interesting also here is what Amr insinuates about the role of English in spreading Islam: many Muslims in the world are unfamiliar with Arabic (the language of Islam) are learning about Islam through English, making use of its globality and availability. This applies to many countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey and Canada. Could it be that the globality of English is contributing to globalizing Islam or is Islam is contributing to further globality of English? My account is that the globalizing relation is bidirectional. The point here is that language investment could be religiously motivated and so can a religious identity.

Religiosity falls out of the traditional models agenda for language identity (where integration is related to L2 culture) and argues for inadequacy of such models, while conversely for the sociological models, being a symbolic (spiritual) investment. Amr also relates his investment in English with a national identity, where he saw no tension between learning English and being a loyal citizen in Arabic-speaking home country.

5.7. Nationalism discourse: Informed patriot

The religious discourse I discussed in the previous rubric relates to another discourse: nationalism. This discourse constructs that: developing a knowledgeable self, one develops her country and loyalty.

When we learnt English at school at the age of 12, the perspective was that by learning another language, we could create a strong nation through communication across the world, industrial
exchange, and be safe from enemies, as you could understand them. That was the norm dictated by our teachers at schools and Imams in mosques.

The foregoing discourse of investment is interesting, as nationalism essentially connects to the L1, not to the L2. Nationalism and national identity are linked to other discourses: first, development, which is mediated by English, suggesting that a strong and developed state or nation is only so by virtue of including English into its educational system. Second, there is discourse of security, which historically relates to colonial discourse. Yet the discourse of colonialism demises when challenged by discourse of industrial exchange, international communication and globalization, that is, as discourses of national development. According to Norton, "investments may conflict" (2000, p. 122). This argues against the integrative motive, as interest in the cultural dimension is connected to the L1 culture, not to the culture of the L2. Finally, our findings here agree with those of Shamim (2011) who reported on Pakistani students who viewed English as "the language for development at both the individual and the national level" [which had] "overtaken issues of class, and identity and fear of cultural invasion from an erstwhile colonial language" (p. 293). Also they are inline with Al-Haq and Samadi who found Saudi Arabian students viewing English as threat to neither their 'religious commitment' nor 'national identity'; conversely, they saw learning it as "a religious and national duty" (p. 307).

5.8. Technology discourse: a 'digital' identity in a digitizedworld

For Amr, living in a digitized world is impossible without a digitized language, and English has been tool for digitizing our world. He expounds:

This desire in learning English expanded by the time technology became a key element of the modern world's survival through virtual communication, business, entertainment, study…. Technology, I believe, has an influence on the way you present your language and is shaped by the language. Using technology through English is a great motivation to learn the language as you enjoy your independency, autonomy, critical thinking, privacy, security and your choice. Using the language through technology has similar conditions when you identify the way you want in the virtual world you create for your-self. Now you can email, text or record your voice and send it all over the world forseveral

In a digitized world in which, to put it in David Crystal's words, "English is the global language" (Crystal, 1997, p. 1), literacy has come to take on a new meaning, one that borrows its vocabulary from English and, hence the critical need to learn it, that is, to use Kachru's metaphor in *The Alchemy of English* (1986), "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin lamp, which permits one to open as it were, the linguistic gate into business, technology, science and trade—in short English provides linguistic power" (p. 1). Surely, our current world speaks two languages: English and the Internet. This explains why Amr is investing in English—to have the 'Aladdin lamb', and a digitized worldly identity. Amr related this new bilingual self (of computer knowledge and English knowledge) to myriad discourses: of study, knowledge, business, entertainment … and put it this way: "to create yourself" and "survive" in the modern world. Ushida and Dornyei relate how this has been captured in Norton's poststructuralist model (investment) to language learning, motivation, and identification: "an investment in a target language is also an investment in the learner's identity" (Ushida&Dornyei, 2009, p. 4). Such an identity for Amr comprises the knowledgable self, one that speaks the language of today. Amr lumped all discourses discussed above to an umbrella discourse: globalization.

5.9. Globalization discourse: Cosmopolitanidentity

The discourses above argue that Amr is seeking a cosmopolitan identity. In the excerpt below, he puts it crystal-clear— "English is the lingua franca, an access to every thing; it is the language"

English as a Lingua-Franca language is an access to everything every piece of knowledge, skill, and experience. I am happy that I could achieve this degree of knowing and using the language.

The excerpt above is interesting in another way: it argues that integration in the English-speaking or native culture is not a satisfactory explanation for language motivation; rather it is acquiring a 'cosmopolitan' identity or 'world citizenship', as well identifying with the international community (Sung, 2013). Further it is the concept 'investment' rather than 'motivation' that better explains the orientation of the L2er and her personal interest and relation with the target language.

This bears on the 'cultural capital' assumption: knowing and using the language, be part of a world culture. The argument for investment bears also hinges on the arguments of awareness and of interrelated investments: "A person's investment in a language may be mediated by other investments" (Norton, 2000, p. 122).Investment also explains why Amr did not continue in learning other languages. In the interview Ammar mentioned interest in learning French, but he withdrew from learning French:

I started a full time program to learn French; I started from the first level. After a month, I stopped, getting demotivated. French is a language I want to learn But I went over English; I like English best.

Although both English and French are identified as the official language in Canda, and is important, as a merit in the job market, Amr gave up learning French (though he liked to learn it) because English is what he "like best". Finally, the status of language determines the value of investment in learning the language and the awareness of this value (Norton, 2000; Byrd Clark, 2010).

6. Implications

The study attempted to provide meaningful insights into L2 motivation research. First, poststructuralism is "discourse" whose analytic principle is "construction" (Norton, 2010, p. 349-50). I drew from this parallel to show that motivation, identity, learning, and the learner are discourses constructed by other discourses and conditions, which (in themselves) are constructed. The study showed that Amr's perception of identity was constructed by diverse discourses (academic, religious, nationalist, political, personal, social, technical, linguistic, cultural, world culture, etc.). These discourses constructed Amr's learning experience and investment in English, suggesting—contrary to the structuralist view—that language motivation and identification are complex processes: multidimensional, intertwining, and multi- resourced, hence the second implication. Poststructuralism views "identities as fluid, context-dependent, and context-producing, in particular historical and cultural circumstances"(Norton &Toohey, 2011, p. 419). The third inference concerns the tenet of the sociological construct 'investment':"an investment in a target language is also an investment in the learner's identity" (Ushida&Dornyei, 2009, p. 4). Amr viewed investment in learning English as a source for developing himself and his country: a fulfillment of national and religious duties, and an expression of religious and national identity. This argues for "the mutually constitutive effect between language and identity" (Gu, 2013, p. 140). That is, learners preserve a sense of agency and autonomy, as they acquire a second language. According to Ushida (2006, p. 155),"the autonomy of the individual as language learner and language user implicitly underpins Norton's concept of motivation as 'investment', with its focus on identity and human agency". The fourth insight concerns the inextricability of identity resources. Norton noted, "a person's investment in a language may be mediated by other investments" (2000, p. 122). Our findings supported that Amr was rather engaged in learning English for myriad motives (study, knowledge, business, travel, entertainment, etc.) and put it this way: "to create yourself" and "survive" in the modern world". Amr's note here speaks to another implication, that is, to cite Sung (2013) "L2 learner is no longer concerned with 'integration' in the target native English-speaking culture, but with the construction of a 'bi-cultural' or 'world citizen' identity, as well as identification with the international community" (p. 377). Lamb (2004, 3) argues that, "as English loses its association with particular Anglophone cultures and becomes identified with the powerful forces of globalisation, the desire to 'integrate' loses its explanatory power." And my participantputitcrystal-clear:"Englishisthelinguafranca,anaccesstoeverything;itisthelanguage."

7.Conclusion

This paper reported on a case study of an international student vis-à-vis his motivation and identification in learning English in the Canadian university context, the aim being to contribute to discussions concerning the adequacy of traditional structuralist models in explaining L2 identity, that is, as compared to perspectives drawn from poststructuralism, especially, the sociological concept 'investment'. The study asked two questions: why and how do international students invest in English? And, how does their investment impact on their self-perception and identity construction? Drawing from a poststructuralist perspective, from the interdisciplinary framework 'discourse'—discourse theory and its methodological tool (critical) discourse analysis, the study found its participant to relate learning English to myriad motives (joining a world community, religious duties, world culture, national development, self development, pursuing study, gaining digital literacy, facilitating travel, facilitating aboard stay, etc.).

I showed that language motivation is a trajectory of L2 identity; that such motives are discourses constituting the learner experience and, hence identity; and that by analyzing these discourses we may gain understanding on the nature of L2 identity. Findings of the study seemed to argue for the utility of a poststructuralist perspective (while incompatibility of structuralist models) on language related themes.

It should be noted, however, that due to its explanatory orientation, the study has been limited by looking at data collected from one participant. Further research including more participants is needed to better understand how current conditions of globalization and English globality have impacted learning, motivation and identification. Such research, may consider the utility of 'Actor-network theory', which is another poststructuralist tool, to identify more factors impacting L2 self, identity, and motivation.

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