

【論文】

Parental Influences on Possible Selves of Pre-service EFL Teachers

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英語教員を目指す学生の可能自己形成と親の影響

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要旨：理想とする可能自己と避けたい可能自己を詳細にイメージで
きることによって、人は目標に向かって動機づけられると言われて
いる。教員を目指す学生にとって、いかに詳細な可能自己を描くこ
とができるかは、課題の多い教育現場で働き続ける為に重要なこと
である。本論では、教員を目指す英文科の4年生、里子と明子（仮
名）が長期的にどのように可能自己を形成していったのか、そして
教員であった親の影響がどのように彼女らの可能自己の形成に影響
を与えたのかを調査した。手紙形式のテキストと半構造化インタビ
ューによるナラティブデータを分析した結果、キャリア選択や理
想の教師像を描くことに教員であった親の存在が大きく関係してい
ることが分かった。教員であった親は理想的教師の可能自己形成に
も、避けたい教師の可能自己形成にも影響をあたえていた。教員を
目指す学生も教員であった親も、その影響力に自覚的になり客観
的、批判的に関係を見直すことが求められる。今後は可能自己の概
念を使った質的研究を対象者を広げて取り組み、英語教員養成課程
が抱える課題をより深く理解し、養成課程の改善につなげたい。

キーワード：Possible selves, EFL, Parental influences,
Teacher education, Narrative

INTRODUCTION

English education in Japan has always been controversial and it is
still in the midst of chaos, conflicts, changes, and progress. Unfortunately,

circumstances around the teaching profession seem to be frustrating. I wondered how pre-service EFL teachers who were going to move into this changing and demanding English education world would develop their professional identities. I, therefore, conducted a longitudinal qualitative case study that explored how pre-service EFL teachers developed possible selves (i.e., views of themselves as future teachers) as they strived for their goals, how English, the subject they were to teach, might be related to their possible selves, what kinds of experiences and emotions they had during a practicum, and how the experiences affected their possible selves over time. This original study revealed that relationships with parents were one of main factors that affected the participants' possible selves when they decided to become teachers and developed professional identities. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to report how the participants' parents influenced development of participants' possible selves.

Possible Selves Theories

Traditionally, the self-concept was viewed as a static, unitary accumulation of self-knowledge derived from one's past experiences (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 9). However since Markus and Nurius (1986) developed a multifaceted future-oriented self-concept, which they termed possible selves, this view of self-concept has been widely accepted and applied to various fields including general education and teacher education (Hong & Greene, 2011; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Packard & Nguyen, 2003; Pizzolato, 2006; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008).

According to Markus and Nurius (1986), the concept of possible selves includes representation of the self in the past and future. They are different from current selves who even so are closely connected to

past and future selves. Possible selves function as motivators to guide behavior and action toward what one would like to become (hoped-for selves) and away from what one is afraid of becoming (feared selves). The hoped-for selves might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the feared selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self (p. 954). Possible selves are especially important to those who are experiencing a transitional stage of life such as pre-service teachers to develop a new identity that fits a new role (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Rossiter, 2009).

While Markus and Nurius (1986) were developing the concept of possible selves, Higgins and his associates developed a similar self-concept called self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987; Strauman & Higgins, 1987). Unlike Markus and Nurius's possible selves, three domains of self were more clearly identified and termed actual self, ideal self, and ought self. The actual self is the self that one believes he or she actually possesses; the ideal self is the self that one would like to possess; and the ought self is the self that one believes he or she should possess (Higgins, 1987, pp. 320-321). Higgins (1996) later included undesired selves, which are similar to Markus and Nurius's (1986) feared selves, arguing that ought selves could be represented as negative selves (Higgins, 1996, p. 1071).

Possible selves are individualized and personalized, but simultaneously socially constructed in the sense that our beliefs, values, and behaviors are contrasted with those of others, especially significant others such as parents, teachers, and close friends. Interacting with others, people get positive and/or negative feedback about their ideas and behavior through various media and compare their current selves

with others (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). If they find that others are superior, the comparison motivates them to generate a possible self to fill the gap (Higgins, 1987). This implies that finding a role model is important to generate a positive possible self that works as an incentive to push one toward an ideal or hoped-for self.

METHOD

Sampling

In the first sampling stage for the original study, I chose my English major seminar students who were in the fourth year at university as participants, using a typical case sampling strategy. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), typical case sampling is used to select participants “because they represent the norm and are in no way atypical, extreme, or very unusual” (p. 1919). As of January 2012, nine students registered for my seminar course (approximately 21-22 years of age), seven females and two males. One of them was a pre-service high school English teacher and the others were pre-service elementary school teachers. When I met all of them in April 2012, I distributed a consent form to ask for participation in the study. All the students were informed that their decision to participate or not would not affect their grades. The students all agreed to participate in the study and returned the forms to me the following week with their signature.

The second stage of sampling involved a criterion sampling strategy, which was used to select participants who “meet one or more criteria as predetermined by the researcher” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 191). The criterion for the original study was that the participants should teach English during their practicum. Consequently, I had to reduce the sample from nine to four who met this criterion: Satoko,

Yumi, Akiko, and Takashi (all pseudonyms).

For this article, I introduce two cases, Satoko and Akiko, whose parents were or had been teachers when I collected the data. Satoko was studying to take an English teacher license for secondary school. Akiko was studying to become an elementary school teacher. Although they were still students, I call them pre-service teachers in this study because I mainly focus on how they developed their possible teacher selves during their last year at university. They were 22 years old and had had some experience as volunteer teaching assistants at school.

Data Collection

Possible selves stories. Narrative writing was used as one of the primary methods for data collection because this method could potentially elicit elaborated possible selves (Whitty, 2002) and writing gives people time to “rethink and revise ideas over” (Hoover, 1994, p. 84). I adapted instructions in King and Hicks (2006) and Whitty (2002) as follows: “Please write a letter about yourself being a teacher to your friend (can be an imaginary person). How do you see yourself developing professionally? Include what you look forward to as well as what you worry about. Include your hopes as well as your fears. Try to include details to make it as vivid as possible. Start the letter with ‘Dear ○○,’ or ‘Hi ○○,’ referring to the sample letter. Please send it to me as an attached file by your interview day. You are asked to write more than 800 Japanese characters. Thank you.”

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted four times for each participant during their last year at university. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese and recorded in two IC recorders. In the interviews, the participants told me what

they had experienced, how they had felt about experiences in the past, and what possible teacher selves they had developed.

Data analysis. The main purpose of data analysis was to reduce the vast amount of raw data into manageable and meaningful sets so that the data could be interpreted and made sense of (Stake, 1995, p. 72). I decided to adopt a content analysis to extract themes from the qualitative data.

After I had all the printed transcriptions at hand, I read them repeatedly while underlining key words and phrases with colored markers and writing memos about topics and my thoughts. As a final step, I used a card system and a cognitive mapping as strategies to organize, categorize, and relate concepts that had been generated from the data. I found that these strategies were very useful to deal with multiple data sources.

RESULTS

Satoko's Case

Background of Satoko's decision to become a teacher. Satoko had a dream of becoming a teacher when she was an elementary school pupil. With a mother who was an elementary school teacher and a grandfather who had been a principal of an elementary school then, she naturally developed an idea that she would be a teacher in the future. She said that it was not that she wanted to follow this career but rather she felt she would become a teacher as a matter of course. She explained how natural it was for her to decide to become a teacher:

Well, my grandfather was a teacher, too. Because my grandfather and mother were teachers, you know, it was like, 'I will be a teacher', and I've had that idea since I was little.

It was not like, 'I want to,' but it was like, 'I will be'. I had that kind of feeling when I was an elementary school pupil... I am an only child. So I thought if I did not become a teacher, a teacher lineage of my family would end. (Satoko 05/02/2012 Interview)

Despite Satoko's decision, her mother did not want her to be a teacher, knowing how hard the job can be. However, Satoko's family circumstances influenced her decision, too. Her father had his own business, but his income was unstable and not enough to support the family. Satoko knew that she could lead a life without any economical problems thanks to her mother's income. Being a teacher meant a stable income to her. She explained her concern about household economy:

Why I've decided to become a teacher even though my mother did not want me to be one, well, that's because, my father runs his own business, but my mother earns much more than my father. She won't be laid off for sure. So, thanks to my mother, I can enjoy a life now. I started thinking that teachers should be paid well. So with this reason, even though my mother told me that a teaching job was hard, I thought I'd rather go for it, because it's a well-paid job. (Satoko 05/02/2012: Interview)

Satoko also told me that she was confident of handling job-related difficulties much better than her mother, mentioning differences in their personalities.

My mother, she is very, how can I put it, she was an elementary school teacher. She was very fussy. For instance,

when a pupil got injured, she worried so much that she could not eat dinner, kept worrying if the kid was ok. When she had a problem with a pupil's parent, she got very depressed and became very silent. She was a natural worrier, so I thought she was not adequate to the job. I thought if I had been her, I would have not taken the matters that seriously. I thought, even though she said it was a hard job, it might not be such a hard job for me. (Satoko 05/02/2012: Interview)

Becoming a teacher, therefore, had been Satoko's long-held dream. It was not just a yearning. Upon deciding on her future occupation when she was a junior high school student, she had a calm judgment taking into consideration of her family circumstances and her personality.

Although her mother had been an elementary school teacher, Satoko decided to become a secondary school English teacher. When I asked her when she had come to like English and why she had decided to become a secondary school English teacher, she explained as follows:

I could rarely feel 'I can do it' in English activities at elementary school. I was shy about speaking English. I did not like English. But when I became a secondary school student, there were English tests. I think the experience of getting good points in the tests became an incentive for me to study English harder. Furthermore, as far as test scores are concerned, I could get higher points in English than other subjects. I was a third year high school student when I decided to become a secondary school English teacher. I had wanted to become a teacher for a long time. I wanted to coach a club activity, and I felt, through my mother's working

situation, that I did not have an aptitude for an elementary school teacher. I also wanted to teach a subject as my specialty. That's why I decided to become a secondary school teacher. But it took me long to decide English as my specialty. It was the last minute when I had to decide on the course to take after graduation. A reason why I delayed my decision was that although I had believed that English teachers must speak English fluently, I was not confident in speaking English. When I practiced reading English aloud at home, my mother often said, 'Your pronunciation is not so good.' Because of such comments of my mother's, I further lost my confidence. But after all I decided to become an English teacher because I liked English, even though there was something I was weak at. (Satoko 08/08/2013: e-mail)

According to Satoko's story, her fear of speaking English started as early as in elementary school days. She further lost her confidence in speaking English when she heard negative comments from her mother. However because she was confident in grammatical knowledge of English, she at last decided to become an English teacher. This confidence led her to work as a part-time teacher at a cram school while she was a university student. This teaching experience influenced her to develop a new teacher self, which I present more in detail next.

Possible selves in the Spring of 2012. Before Satoko went to a practicum, I asked her to write about her future teacher images in a letter format to elicit her possible teacher selves. I also conducted a follow-up interview to have a deeper understanding of her teacher

possible selves. Satoko's possible teacher selves in the spring of 2012 mostly related to a three-year teaching experience at a cram school. Right after she graduated from high school, she started working as a part time teacher at the cram school where she had been a student before. She had been teaching English five days a week at the cram school and felt it was enjoyable and fulfilling. She admitted that her teaching philosophy and an ideal image of a teacher had generated from her involvement in the cram school teaching job. She said:

Maybe, I've got involved in it [a teaching job at the cram school] too much. To be honest, I had wanted to be a secondary school teacher since I was a junior high school student. But an ideal image of teachers has changed. I had wanted to spend much time with students, enjoy a school life with them, well, how can I say, I had wanted to have fun with students before. But, because I got into the job, totally absorbed in it, I started thinking children can grow through studying for entrance examinations. I've come to think that way. So now, I don't know, I say my idea has been changeable. (Satoko 05/02/2012: Interview)

Furthermore, Satoko was trained not only to be an English teacher but also to be an advisor of entrance examinations, which developed self-efficacy in her. She said in the interview:

I devoted myself to the part time job too much. And then I started feeling that teaching at a cram school was a great job. Now I don't have much knowledge about entrance examinations, but if I gain more experience in giving advice to the students about entrance examinations, then, the

students will really rely on me. Oh, how wonderful it would be. I thought so. (Satoko 05/02/2012: Interview)

She even thought of working for a cram school after she graduated from college. However her mother was against the idea of her becoming a full-time teacher at a cram school. Satoko explained as follows:

I really wanted to get a job at a cram school. But, now I am a student. So my mother told me she did not think it was a good idea to choose a job that even a student could do as a life-long career. (Satoko 05/02/2012: Interview)

Satoko then consulted with full-time teachers at the cram school about her idea of being a teacher of a cram school and learned that the situation was not as appealing as she expected in terms of the salary and workload. She eventually gave up the idea of becoming a full-time teacher at a cram school.

Akiko's Case

Background of Akiko's decision to become a teacher. It was not so simple for Akiko to decide to become a teacher. It seemed like there were at least two contradicting selves in Akiko: One who longed to be an English teacher; and another who disliked the idea of being a teacher. Her story follows. When Akiko was a junior high school student, her English grade was good and she was confident in speaking English. She thought she was a better speaker of English than any other students in class. One day she saw her English teacher speaking with an assistant language teacher (who was a native speaker of English) in English. Akiko was very impressed and admired the teacher, hoping to become like her

in the future.

However, Akiko's mother, who had been an elementary school teacher, suggested that Akiko should become an elementary school teacher because she believed that her daughter was more suited to a job at elementary schools. Akiko followed her mother's suggestion in the end. However, she could not give up a dream of becoming a teacher who can speak English well. Therefore, she looked for universities where she could study English and obtain an elementary school teaching license. Akiko explained how her mother influenced her decision to become a teacher:

Maybe because my mother is an elementary school teacher herself, I guess, from her own experiences, she said to me, 'You are suited more to be an elementary school teacher, aren't you?' Then, I thought, from the inside of me, which is better. When I thought about it, oh, maybe, I thought an elementary school was better. It's better than teaching junior high school students who are at difficult ages. So I thought I would be an elementary school teacher, but still inside me, I wanted to study English. Well, maybe I had a longing for it, I wanted to study English more. That's why I looked for universities where I can obtain both elementary and high school English teaching licenses. (Akiko 04/19/2012: Interview)

Although Akiko decided to become an English teacher when she was a high school student, she was still not happy about the idea. She insisted that she disliked the occupation of a schoolteacher because she thought it meant to be like her mother, who treated a mature person like

a child. In fact her mother treated Akiko like a small child when she scolded or nagged at her.

I really did not like the way my mother nagged at me. I was a junior high school student, but she treated me like an elementary school kid. I, somewhere, inside me, there was a thought that she could not help but nag because she was a teacher. That's why I don't want to be a parent like her, that's why I don't want to be a teacher. I have been thinking that way for a long time. But I long to be an English teacher. That's where I found the contradiction. (Akiko 04/19/2012: Interview)

There was another aspect of her mother that had been annoying Akiko.

According to Akiko, her mother did not apologize even when she did something wrong. Akiko generalized that teachers became the center of homeroom and tended to become more dictatorial as they became more experienced:

Maybe, especially at elementary schools, a teacher is the center. I think a teacher becomes the center. I've thought that way for a long time. Teachers, the more experiences they acquire and add to, the harder it becomes for them to apologize to their pupils when they're wrong. Well, maybe young teachers can say, 'Oh, that's right. I was wrong, sorry,' to the children. But when they reach their 40s and 50s, definitely, they say, 'So what?' and finish the conversation. I really think so because I have seen my mother's attitude. She never admits her own faults. (Akiko

04/19/2012: Interview)

In Akiko's case, her relationship with her mother had a very strong influence on her decision to become an elementary school teacher. Akiko had ambivalent feelings toward her mother: On the one hand, she did not want to become a teacher because she did not want to be like her mother; on the other hand, she respected her mother as an experienced teacher. These feelings hindered her from developing clear and positive possible teacher selves, which are described in the next section.

Possible selves in the Spring of 2012. In April 2012, Akiko still had a negative image of a teaching job and she was not sure whether she really wanted to become a teacher. With such complicated internal conflict, she could not write her future teacher images when I asked her. However, during an interview, Akiko mentioned that she could build up images of teachers from her mother. She said, "Well, you know, the closest teacher is my mother. Maybe there is an influence of my mother. I don't know whether I want to be like her, but I can imagine teachers through my mother best" (Akiko 04/19/2012: Interview).

For Akiko, her mother was one of the closest persons from whom she could obtain information about a teaching job and who she could ask for advice about teaching. In fact Akiko clearly stated that "well, I think my mother is great. I just really think so because she has long teaching experience. No doubt about it" (Akiko 04/19/2012: Interview). However Akiko also added a negative comment about a teaching job:

In general, or my friends, they think a teaching job at an elementary school is joyful, even though there might be some difficulties, they think it should be fun. But having been a

daughter of a teacher, I have seen hardships. So I only have negative images of a teaching job. (Akiko 04/19/2012: Interview)

After all, a teaching job was not so exciting for Akiko and the idea of becoming a teacher continued to be full of contradictory feelings. She was not active in generating ideal possible teacher selves. Instead, she developed an elaborated feared teacher self through the influences of her mother.

DISCUSSION

Having parents who were teachers seems to be significant for the participants' career choice. When I collected data for this study, Akiko's mother was an elementary school teacher, Satoko's mother and grandfather had been elementary school teachers. Under these circumstances, the participants naturally had been exposed to information about a teaching job at home and they were aware of both positive and negative aspects of a teaching job when they decided to become teachers. In other words, the participants generated both ideal teacher selves and feared teacher selves based on information they obtained from their family members.

Haruhara (2010) and Sakurai (1992) also reported parental factors that influenced Japanese students' decision to become teachers. Interestingly, students whose parents were teachers in Sakurai's (1992) study showed less sense of efficacy than those whose parents were not teachers. Haruhara (2010) reported a similar result that Japanese students whose parents were teachers tended to have high "purposeless

conformity” and low teacher efficacy. In fact, Satoko, in my study, took it granted for that she would be a teacher in the future just because her grandfather and mother had been teachers. This, in a sense, indicates that Satoko developed expected teacher selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and had a passive, purposeless reason to become a teacher. However I interpret Satoko’s expected teacher selves as evidence of a firm decision to become a teacher because although she received some negative images of teaching from her mother, she took all things including her own personality and economic situations into consideration to make the decision.

Akiko developed feared teacher selves because of her mother. In fact, her process of generating possible teacher selves was rather complex. For Akiko, her mother was a feared teacher self whom Akiko never wanted to become. Akiko had a firm conviction that the reason her mother had never admitted her own faults and nagged at Akiko for trivial reasons was that she was a teacher. However, her mother was the one whom Akiko consulted and depended on when she faced difficult realities during practice-teaching at school.

As pre-service EFL teachers might face harsh realities in the Japanese education system, they need to be clear-headed about their decisions to become teachers so as to maintain their original enthusiasm. It might also be important for them to be informed of how much they could be influenced by their parents on their career choice and to objectively and critically consider their relationship with their parents. In fact, during my 10-plus-year experience as a teacher educator, I met many students who tried hard to meet their parents’ expectations because they did not want to disappoint their parents. Some of them generated possible ideal selves to become teachers like their parents and

strived to realize their future dream. In contrast, some students decided to become teachers regardless of their inaptness for a teaching job or reluctantly decided to become a teacher, giving up their other future dreams.

Research on goal theory suggests that when people have a social avoidance goal that drives avoidance of negative consequences in interpersonal relationships, they work to avoid disapproval from significant others (Dowson & McInerney, 2001, 2003). Parents should be aware that, even though they do not intentionally try to control their children, they might have a strong influence on their children's possible selves. In this sense, being parents with accumulated experience of teaching, they should have a clear consciousness of their potential and become worthy advisors or mentors of their children.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the possible selves literature depends on survey data to try to understand participants' motivation. However, narrative data that were used in this study successfully depicted complicated and unstable pre-service teachers' possible selves as well as change over time. I would like to accumulate more research experience and improve my data collection skills to collect better data so that I will be able to deepen my understanding of the state of pre-service teachers' motivation in future research.

Possible selves seem to be a promising self-concept to investigate pre-service teachers' experience and their future visions. This concept could be further refined and used to understand other target participants such as cooperating teachers at school and teacher educators at universities who are involved in teacher education so that

we will be able to have a comprehensive understanding of EFL teacher education. Such an understanding might lead to an effective reform of the teacher education system in Japan.

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