



Examining the Effects of L2 Self-Guides on Chinese University EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Classroom Language Choice

L2動機自我指引對中國大學EFL學習者課堂語言選擇態度之影響

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Abstract

Second language (L2) learning motivation has been widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in the success of instructed L2 acquisition. However, the effects of L2 motivation on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' classroom language choice (CLC) are relatively under-explored based on a systematic theoretical framework. Recently, a growing trend towards bi/multilingualism has aroused controversy over the current English-only policy in Chinese EFL higher education. To inform a more motivating classroom language decision, this study, grounded on the framework of the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009), aims to investigate learners' attitudes towards the English-only approach and first language (L1) use in the EFL classroom and examine the effects of L2 self-guides on learners' CLC attitudes. Following a mixed methods approach, an adapted questionnaire was distributed to 252 Chinese first-year undergraduate EFL learners. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted among twenty respondents to seek further explanations for their responses. The descriptive, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the relationship between L2 self-guides and attitudes towards CLC. Through thematic coding, qualitative data were analysed to supplement quantitative results and explore the explanatory power of L2 self-guides on learners' CLC attitudes. The findings reveal students' general preference for the appropriate use of L1 and suggest that ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self were correlated with and could positively predict learners' attitudes towards English immersion as well as L1 use respectively. The different motivational characteristics of ideal and ought-to L2 selves identified in this study may inform education practitioners of a translanguaging pedagogical practice and call for a language policy-making and curriculum-planning process taking students' motivational states along with CLC attitudes into thorough consideration.

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摘要

第二語言 (L2) 學習動機普遍被認為是指導學習者成功掌握L2的關鍵因素。然而，關於L2學習動機對EFL學習者課堂語言選擇 (CLC) 的影響，卻相對鮮少有建基於系統性理論框架的研究。近來，雙語/多語趨勢日趨明顯，這也引發了中國現行高等教育關於全英政策的討論。為了使課堂語言選擇更具激勵性，本研究建基於Dörnyei (2009) 提出的L2動機自我系統理論，旨在探討學習者對於全英教學法及EFL課堂中第一語言 (L1) 的使用態度，並檢視L2動機自我指引對學習者CLC態度的影響。本研究採用混合研究法，針對252名中國大學一年級EFL學習者實問卷調查，後續對20名受試者進行半結構式訪談，進一步對問卷的回應作出解釋。本研究採用描述分析法、皮爾森績差相關分析、多元迴歸分析來檢視L2動機自我指引和對CLC態度之間的關係，也透過主題編碼，對質性數據進行了分析，以補充量化數據的結果，並探討L2動機自我指引對於學習者CLC態度的解釋力。研究結果顯示，學生普遍偏好適度使用L1，並揭示了理想L2自我與應該L2自我分別與學習者對於英語沉浸式學習和使用L1的態度相關，並能正向預測前述之態度。本研究所發現的理想L2自我與應該L2自我的不同動機特徵，可為教育工作者提供超語教學實踐的啟示，並呼籲在制定語言政策和課程規劃的過程中，充分考慮學生的動機狀態和CLC態度。

Keywords Language learning motivation · Ideal L2 self · Ought-to L2 self · EFL classroom language choice · Bi/multilingual practices · Language policy

關鍵詞 語言學習動機 · 理想L2自我 · 應該L2自我 · EFL課堂語言選擇 · 雙/多語實踐 · 語言政策

Introduction

Second language (L2) learning motivation has been conceptualised within various frameworks over the past decades, with the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2009) being the current prevailing framework in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Despite rich literature adopting the L2MSS framework to investigate the important role played by language learning motivation (LLM) in the success of target language learning (e.g., Lamb, 2017; Taguchi et al., 2009; Thompson & Vásquez, 2015), the impact of self-related motivation on English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' and learners' classroom language choice (CLC) has received comparatively insufficient attention (Hennebry & Gao, 2021; Lee & Lo, 2017).

Recently, the amount of CLC studies has increased due to the controversy over the English-only approach and first language (L1) use (Lee, 2018). Applying English as the only or maximally-used language to classroom teaching has enjoyed a favoured status among some EFL education practitioners (Cook, 2010), given that adequate target language exposure might contribute to learners' target language proficiency improvement (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Krulatz et al., 2016). However, since most EFL learners engage on a regular basis in space and time with more than one language in everyday life (May, 2013), the application of a monolingual policy

in university EFL classes cannot always result in positive learning outcomes (Lee, 2018; Tian & Macaro, 2012) and often neglects students' attitudes towards CLC, a crucial yet under-researched aspect constantly interacting with the development of LLM (Hennebry & Gao, 2021). In the field of SLA, in alignment with the bi/multilingual turn that promotes students' multiple linguistic resources for meaning-making and academic learning (Chang, 2019; Henry, 2017; May, 2013), some scholars have revealed the university students' general preference for appropriate use of L1 in the target language classroom (Lee & Lo, 2017; Macaro & Lee, 2013). Under these circumstances, the predicting strength of LLM on learners' attitudes towards utilising their L1 and target language resources deserves special scrutiny (Jang & Lee, 2019; Tian & Hennebry, 2016).

In view of the significance of learners' CLC attitudes and the under-explored status of motivational predictors in CLC research, this paper, based on a clearly defined motivational framework of L2MSS, seeks to examine the effects of two L2 self-guides, namely, ideal and ought-to L2 selves on learners' attitudes towards English-only approach and L1 use in the unique Chinese EFL higher education (HE) context. Through conducting questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, data collected from first-year non-English-major undergraduates could provide empirical evidence for researchers to better understand the relationship between Chinese university EFL learners' motivational characteristics and their classroom language preferences, and engender pedagogical implications for policy-makers together with teachers to make more informed language decisions that motivate EFL classroom learning.

CLC and EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards CLC

CLC, as a crucial factor influencing EFL learners, teachers, and classroom interaction pedagogically and politically (Lee, 2018), has been constantly debated in the field of SLA (Lee & Lo, 2017). Using the target language in classrooms is considered important by many researchers and practitioners to ensure adequate target language input and interaction (e.g., Cook, 2001; Krulatz et al., 2016). The English-only approach refers to the exclusive use of the target language in the EFL classes (Turnbull, 2001), which has been emphasised by mainstream pedagogies including the direct method, audio-lingual method, and communicative language teaching (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Researchers acknowledging the benefits of this monolingual approach contended that maximum exposure to target language input may provide learners with more opportunities to acquire the target language, enhance learners' target language proficiency, and boost students' target language learning motivation (e.g., Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Turnbull, 2001), whereas too much reliance on the L1 could demotivate students and might be stereotyped as a shame owing to the strict prohibition of L1 use in certain educational contexts (e.g., Cook, 2001; Jenkins, 2010).

Recently, CLC research has witnessed an emerging trend in questioning the exclusion of L1 and exploring the effectiveness of bi/multilingual practices in EFL classrooms (Chang, 2019; Cook, 2010; May, 2013). Through bi/multilingual practices, EFL

learners are encouraged to activate their entire linguistic repertoire and draw on their resources “cross-linguistically” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015, p. 4). The meaningful use of translation, code-switching, and code-mixing between the L1 and target language has been understood as a common form of bi/multilingual practices (e.g., Kuteeva, 2020; Pacheco et al., 2019; Song & Lin, 2020), as is the case in this research. Proponents of the L1 use doubted the effectiveness of maximum target language input (Tian & Macaro, 2012) and argued that appropriate inclusion of the L1 could play a contributory role in motivating students by achieving social, communicative, cognitive, and affective goals in target language learning (Lee & Lo, 2017; Li, 2023; Qi & Li, 2023). Integrating L1 into the classroom language has demonstrated pedagogical functions facilitative to both target language learning and teaching (García et al., 2017). It can assist learners in comprehending the target language, reducing language anxiety, and sustaining their engagement in the classroom (Rafi, 2023; Yamagami, 2023; Yuan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, teachers accepting L1 use may find it easier to clarify their instructions, regulate the class, and establish a good rapport with students (Tai, 2023; Tai & Li, 2021).

When discussing language policies, a necessary perspective for researchers and educators to look into is students’ attitudes towards the English-only approach and appropriate L1 use. A review of the relevant literature suggests a subtle division among learners’ CLC attitudes. Some research reported university EFL learners’ generally positive attitudes that a strategic incorporation of L1 would be conducive to their target language learning (e.g., Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Yamagami, 2023), whereas students in other studies show concerns that overuse of L1 would exert a negative impact on their exposure to target language (e.g., Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Tian & Hennebry, 2016). To explain the reasons for such variation, SLA researchers have begun to explore the potential relationship between EFL learners’ attitudes towards CLC and individual difference variables, most of which focus on the role of students’ target language proficiency level (Lee & Lo, 2017). While previous findings commonly reveal a positive relationship between learners’ proficiency level and their preference for target language instruction (Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Macaro & Lee, 2013), it is worth noting that relevant research has yielded conflicting results in the Chinese EFL context. For example, after surveying 401 Chinese EFL university students and observing lessons from eight teachers, Van Der Meij and Zhao (2010) found no correlation between learners’ proficiency and the perceived amount of L1 use in EFL classes. This dilemma indicates the necessity for more variables to be investigated to uncover their potential influences on the variation in Chinese EFL learners’ CLC attitudes. One important yet under-researched factor, according to Hennebry and Gao (2021), is L2 learning motivation.

L2 Learning Motivation and L2 Self-Guides

The motivational variables are very likely to determine and explain EFL students’ attitudes towards CLC and language learning (Lee & Lo, 2017). Language learning motivation (LLM) reflects why individuals begin and sustain learning an L2 (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). With growing concerns over learners’ self-concept (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), a systematic theoretical framework was born when Dörnyei proposed the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) theory (2009)

through an introspective lens of individuals' internal identification. The L2MSS is believed to be an educator-friendly theory (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), the application of which may lead to positive changes in target language classrooms (Lamb, 2017). Because of its theoretical value and pedagogical applicability, the L2MSS has been applied to a wide range of educational contexts (Boo et al., 2015) and is deemed suitable for investigating the interaction between motivation and CLC (Hennebry & Gao, 2021).

The L2MSS framework consists of three components: two future-oriented L2 self-guides (ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self), and the L2 learning experience. The system assumes that the main driving force of language learning is the individuals' future image of themselves as successful users of the target language (Dörnyei, 2009). Given the L2 self-guides are the main motivational constructs associated with possible future self-images whereas the construct of the L2 learning experience is more related to one's actual language learning environment (Papi & Teimouri, 2014) and might oftentimes be too broad and too vague to be incorporated into quantitative research tools (Wu & Liu, 2021), the motivating effect of two self-related constructs becomes the main focus to be measured in this mixed method study.

The two L2 self-guides are not two opposite extremes but are characterised by different features. The ideal L2 self represents the L2-speaking self-image that one wishes to become (Dörnyei, 2009). In this way, target language learning is perceived by EFL learners as a means to well communicate with target language speakers (You & Chan, 2014), and the motivating strength of it concentrates on approaching a desired end-state (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Learners who identify the gap between their ideal L2 selves and actual L2 selves are found to be greatly motivated to reduce such a discrepancy in order to reach their ideal future self-images (Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018; Thompson & Vásquez, 2015). Hence, the ideal L2 self has been demonstrated to be a strong motivator for target language classroom learning (Lamb, 2012; Ushioda, 2017). According to Taguchi et al. (2009), learners with a high intensity of ideal L2 self tend to attend EFL classes more actively and consciously and invest more time and effort in their target language learning.

The ought-to L2 self refers to the self-image containing attributes that individuals believe they are obliged to possess in order to avoid possible negative outcomes (Dörnyei, 2009). In this regard, learning the target language is to meet expectations from others or society out of one's responsibilities and the motivating power originates from preventing a feared end-state (Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018). Some empirical evidence has clarified that students with strong ought-to L2 self are likely to gain target language learning motivation because they are afraid of disappointing significant others such as teachers (Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018; Wu & Liu, 2021). As collectivism and interdependence are deeply rooted in Eastern Culture, this could be particularly true in the Chinese context (Huang & Chen, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to stress the importance of the ought-to L2 self as a contributory factor in Chinese students' target language classroom learning (e.g., Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018; Wang & Fisher, 2021). Employing both ideal and ought-to L2 selves as motivational constructs enables the present study to provide a relatively comprehensive understanding of the role LLM plays in predicting Chinese EFL learners' CLC attitudes.

The Interaction Between Motivational Variables and Attitudes Towards CLC

As a powerful driving force behind target language learning, LLM is frequently involved in the discussion of learners' classroom language preferences. Early research claimed that LLM could serve as a significant predictor for learners' language choices (Levine, 2003). Some argued that students with higher motivation would be more willing to accept target language input and interaction (e.g., Cook, 2001; Turnbull, 2001), whereas others held that motivated learners might also engage themselves by incorporating the pedagogical function of L1 in target language classrooms (e.g., De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Dickson, 1996). However, it should be noted that most early endeavours here have drawn on "motivation" as part of their arguments based largely on anecdotal evidence or intuition without employing a clearly defined theoretical framework of "motivation" (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Therefore, they might not manage to lay solid foundations for conceptualising and operationalising the relationship between motivation and learners' attitudes towards CLC.

To overcome this theoretical obscurity, Dörnyei (2009), after conceptualising the LLM through L2MSS theory, convincingly presumed that when learners with a predominant ideal/ought-to L2 self have strong intentions to pursue their future-oriented self-visions of becoming competent users of English, the motivating power of their L2 self-guides, derived from an intense promotion/prevention focus, can lead to more eager engagements in the learning process. Thus, the interaction between L2 self-guides and CLC attitudes has received increasing attention. For instance, Lee and Lo (2017) surveyed 366 Korean undergraduates' attitudes towards CLC and EFL learning motivation. They found students motivated by the ideal L2 self were more in favour of an English-only learning approach while those who were more oriented towards the ought-to L2 self seemed to be indifferent to CLC. The ideal L2 self was identified to be a strong predictor of learners' CLC attitudes. Jang and Lee (2019) implemented questionnaires and descriptive composition tasks for 68 Korean undergraduates to examine the effects of ideal and ought-to L2 selves on EFL learners' writing quality. Their findings also indicate that the ideal L2 self had a significant positive effect on target language writing outcomes and could be considered a major determinant of English writing quality. By administering motivation measures to 3,854 Hong Kong secondary school EFL learners studying at English, Chinese, and mixed mode of instruction schools, Henneby and Gao (2021) investigated the influence of different CLCs on learners' LLM. Their results demonstrate that English-only instruction contributed prominently to students' higher levels of motivation.

The recent studies above offer resourceful insights into the LLM-CLC relationship and in the meantime call for an in-depth investigation into the effects of L2 self-guides on learners' CLC attitudes, an under-studied topic that can inform EFL teachers and policy-makers of classroom language decision and language policy planning. Although Lee and Lo's (2017) research has provided preliminary evidence concerning such effects, it should be noted that considering their study solely employed the quantitative questionnaire as the research instrument, the validity and reliability could be further increased by a complement of qualitative instruments such as interviews or lesson

observations. Moreover, few studies mentioned above have discovered the LLM-CLC interaction in the unique Chinese HE setting, where all the undergraduates are required to take College English as a compulsory course during their first two academic years to increase their employability and global outlook (Hu, 2003). Chinese non-English majors are found to lack motivation for learning English because they feel the College English classes are test-oriented (Li & Fang, 2017) and their EFL achievement is not optimistic, with the passing rate of College English Test Band 6 being only 16% (Zhang & Shao, 2021). Additionally, in Chinese EFL HE, the official stance towards the medium of instruction (MOI) is undetermined or hazy (Li & Fang, 2017), leading students to great uncertainty about their CLC. This lack of specific language policy might also provide a unique space where bi/multilingual practices could occur (Liu & Fang, 2022). Therefore, Chinese university EFL learners' attitudes towards CLC and whether LLM can make an impact on students' CLC attitudes are worthy of further clarification. To fill this research gap, the current mixed methods inquiry explores the interrelationship between students' classroom language preferences and L2 self-guides and unveils the explanatory power of ideal and ought-to L2 selves on learners' attitudes towards CLC via questionnaires along with semi-structured interviews in a Chinese HE context. Three interrelated research questions (RQs) are addressed as follows:

RQ1. What are the attributes of Chinese university EFL learners' L2 self-guides and their attitudes towards CLC?

RQ2. What is the relationship between Chinese university EFL learners' different types of L2 self-guides and their classroom language preferences?

RQ3. What are the effects of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self on learners' attitudes towards CLC?

The Study

Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a top-ranked public university in southeast China. Through convenience sampling, 252 full-time non-English-major first-year students from five advanced-level College English classes were recruited as research participants, all of whom speak Mandarin as their L1 and have learned EFL for more than 12 years. Some of them are native speakers of other Chinese dialects including Cantonese (23%), Min (11%), Hakka (9%), Wu (7%), Gan (5%), Hui (2%), and Xiang (1%). According to the university's policy, in order to be admitted to the advanced-level classes, students must attend a placement test before each term and achieve a score between 90% and 100%, so it might be assumed that the participants are of comparable English proficiency. All learners in these 18-week mandatory College English classes use the same textbooks, acquire similar language skills corresponding to the scale of B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and are taught by Chinese instructors who are non-native English speakers. While approaching and negotiating access to the advanced-level classes, the authors learned from the dean of the English Department and teachers that despite no explicit requirement for the

English-only policy from the university administration, an English-maximum or even English-only approach is widely adopted and implicitly adhered to among instructors and students at the five focal classes.

Data Collection

The present research employed a mixed methods design in which quantitative and qualitative methods, techniques, and factors are brought together to obtain more generalisable and in-depth conclusions (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Data were collected at the end of the first term of 2020 in the classrooms. After the authors informed participants of the research objectives as well as confidentiality and received their consent out of ethical considerations, participants were invited to spend ten minutes completing a questionnaire that had been piloted. Twenty valid respondents were then selected randomly to attend a 30-minute semi-structured interview individually so that participants' mental process of answering the questionnaire could be deciphered.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire, with the purpose of obtaining data on EFL learners' CLC and their self-related L2 motivation, is composed of three parts (see the Appendix for details). Part One is designed to collect participants' demographic information, such as majors, language proficiency, and English learning history. The second part lists ten question items to measure students' attitudes towards the English-only approach and appropriate L1 use in EFL classrooms. This part was adapted from Lee's questionnaire version (2018) with reference to prior literature about English classroom language preferences (Cook, 2001; Macaro & Lee, 2013). Part Three aims to measure students' ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. A total of ten items are adopted from previous research examining EFL learners' L2 self-guides (Kim, 2012; Lee, 2018; Papi & Teimouri, 2014). All the 20 items are rated by a five-point Likert scale from the levels of (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". The questionnaire was presented to participants in the Chinese version, which had been reviewed and checked by five bilingual professionals in linguistics.

Semi-Structured Interview

Compared to the questionnaire with fixed options, the semi-structured interview allows open, flexible, and interactive exploration of the participants' views on LLM from an emic perspective (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Without any limitation brought by fixedly pre-set questions, the interview in semi-structured form may give participants sufficient freedom to express holistic perceptions of their L2 self-guides (e.g., Du & Jackson, 2018) as well as classroom language preferences (e.g., Sun & Zhang, 2022), and enable researchers to explore aspects of motivation that are not easily accommodated within the quantitative research tools (Thompson & Vásquez, 2015).

It is therefore considered to be a supplementary instrument to clarify participants' motivational traits and elucidate their attitudes towards CLC in the current study.

The semi-structured interview strengthens the accuracy of questionnaire results and allows for methodological triangulation by providing participants' subjective perspectives regarding their L2 self-guides and CLC. Subsequent to pilot studies, twenty randomly selected interviewees were invited to clearly explain their choice in each questionnaire item, such as why they preferred to allow some use of L1 or why they believed the English-only classroom approach could help improve their English learning. All the interviews were recorded and administered in Chinese to avoid any misinterpretation or ambiguity. The responses may contribute to uncovering the factors that lead to interviewees' individual differences in CLC attitudes and motivation.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses returned were screened in terms of invariability, response time, and consistency to identify and remove any invalid answers (Leiner, 2019). The sorted data were put into SPSS for a series of statistical analyses. As Table 1 presents, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is calculated to be 0.824, which is much higher than 0.5, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity was found to be significant with the $p < 0.01$, indicating the data were suitable for exploratory factor analysis.

As shown in Table 2, the factor analysis generated four constructs, namely, attitudes towards L1 use (5 items, $\alpha = 0.681$), attitudes towards English-only (5 items, $\alpha = 0.778$), ideal L2 self (5 items, $\alpha = 0.827$) and ought-to L2 self (5 items, $\alpha = 0.712$). The Cronbach's alpha value (internal consistency reliability coefficient) of each construct falls within the range of 0.681 to 0.827. The Cronbach's alpha value of the entire questionnaire is 0.778, which, according to George & Mallery's classification (2019), should be categorised as "good internal consistency ($0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$)" and thus meets the reliability requirements.

To answer RQ1, descriptive analysis was conducted to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of participants' responses to each item and each construct respectively. With regard to RQ2, Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to examine whether the two self-guides have any relationship with learners' attitudes towards CLC, and to further demonstrate the direction and magnitude of their relationship. After the correlation was confirmed, multiple

Table 1 KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1593.771
	df	190
	Sig	0.000

Table 2 Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Questionnaire Items	N of Items
Attitudes towards L1 use	0.681	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5	5
Attitudes towards English-only	0.778	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10	5
Ideal L2 self	0.827	Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15	5
Ought-to L2 self	0.712	Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20	5
The whole questionnaire	0.778	Q1-Q20	20

regression analysis was implemented to explore the strength of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self in predicting EFL learners' attitudes towards L1 use and English-only instruction so that RQ3 can be addressed.

Interviewees' responses were transcribed verbatim into Chinese. A thematic analysis was performed via NVivo to elaborate on participants' interpretations of L2 self-guides and CLC. Interview data were sorted and coded based on the four constructs generated from the quantitative analysis. All practices in the form of translation, code-switching, and code-mixing where the interviewees deployed their L1 resources strategically were coded by authors as L1 use throughout the qualitative analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the coding of transcripts went through an intercoder reliability check and a member check to strengthen the consistency between emerging themes and interviewees' expressions. Furthermore, a high level of reflexivity on the authors' status in relation to the participants, the actions, and the question formulation was stressed throughout the fieldwork. Some key excerpts from the interview data will be subsequently presented to explain the statistical findings from the questionnaire and further enrich the discussion of RQs.

Results and Discussion

EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards CLC and Their L2 Self-Guides

The overall descriptive statistics of the four variables generated from the questionnaire are presented in Table 3. The mean value of *attitudes towards L1 use* ($M=3.99$) is at a higher level than that of *attitudes towards English-only* ($M=3.39$), which is relatively close to 3 ("Neutral"). This result, in alignment with Macaro and Lee's (2013) finding, indicates that participants seem to be more in favour of judicious L1 use than English-only instruction in EFL classrooms.

As for the motivational scales, the mean score of participants' *ideal L2 self* ($M=3.49$) is higher compared with that of their *ought-to L2 self* ($M=3.28$), which confirms the prominent motivating power of ideal self observed in previous studies (e.g., Lee & Lo, 2017; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009). On the one hand, it suggests that EFL learners in this study are in general more inclined to hold an idealised future self-image during their English learning process. The qualitative interview results embody a similar trend. When talking about why they learned English and

Table 3 Descriptive analysis of four variables

Variables	Valid N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitudes towards L1 use	252	1.80	5.00	3.99	0.612
Attitudes towards English-only	252	1.40	5.00	3.39	0.723
Ideal L2 self	252	1.00	5.00	3.49	0.758
Ought-to L2 self	252	1.00	5.00	3.28	0.764

their English learning goal, more than half of the interviewees revealed intense aspirational future selves studying abroad (see Excerpt 1) or making friends with international students (see Excerpt 2) as competent English users.

Excerpt 1 I plan to go to the UK for further study, so I hope I can study well at a UK university without difficulties in understanding native English-speaking teachers. Besides, I wish I could communicate fluently with my local friends and classmates when I get there. Hence, I'm always willing to work hard on my English.

Excerpt 2 There are four international students in our class. I heard they are from Australia, which is my favourite country. The thought that I might become a competent English speaker and make friends with them just excites me.

On the other hand, the comparatively lower mean value of *ought-to L2 self*, in line with Papi's (2010) and You and Dörnyei's (2016) survey outcome, shows that a sense of responsibility and expectations from the significant others appeared not to play such an essential part as expected in Chinese university students' English learning. According to the interview results, the participants were less influenced by others because in the stage of HE students tend to become more independent and more conscious of their personal development. As demonstrated by an interviewee's account, what Chinese university students consider more is "to get good English grades for themselves (ourselves) rather than meet other people's expectations", because in HE students must learn to "take charge of their (our) own business as adults". Considering the participants are non-English majors, their careers might not be necessarily connected to English learning, which may even lower the effectiveness of the *ought-to L2 self* construct.

To discuss questionnaire respondents' attitudes towards L1 use and English-only preference more specifically, detailed descriptive statistics including the mean score, standard deviation, and proportion of responses to each item can be observed in Table 4. On the whole, students hold positive attitudes towards some degree of L1 use, as over 77% of participants react positively to using some Chinese for help in EFL classes (Q1, Q2). Regarding the possible effects of L1 use in English classes, over 82% of participants assume that the appropriate use of L1 by teachers would be more effective in helping students interpret teaching contents than explaining in English only (Q5). In light of the necessity and possibility of L1 use for teachers and students in EFL classrooms (Q3, Q4), the responses suggest that whether L1

resources are allowed to be drawn on in English class is of vital importance for most students. The participants' inclination to switch to L1 or mix L1 with the target language echoes Tai and Li's (2021) argument that strategic use of L1 appears to facilitate content comprehension and promote meaningful classroom communication, which was further acknowledged by approximately three quarters of the interviewees. As all participants are native speakers of Mandarin and some can also speak other dialects of Chinese as their L1, the interviewees insisted "Mandarin and other kinds of Chinese dialects could be adopted" not only because when they had difficulty "identifying the meaning of teachers' English instructions" they oftentimes need to "match the English expressions with what is actually referred to in Mandarin or other Chinese dialects" but also owing to "the assistance that Chinese explanation could provide in understanding the key knowledge points". This embodies the role of deploying students' bi/multilingual resources in supporting their content learning (Liu & Fang, 2022; Song & Lin, 2020).

In contrast, no overwhelmingly positive or negative inclination to the English-only environment is seen. As shown in Table 4, most participants tend to hold a relatively neutral attitude towards using English as the only MOI in College English classrooms (Q6, Q7). The proportion of those who express neutral attitudes in response to Q6 and Q7 is higher than that of both the positive side ("agree" and "strongly agree") and the negative side ("disagree" and "strongly disagree"). Nevertheless, there are still at least 50% or more participants positively believing that English-only instruction may help improve their English learning (Q8, Q9), and in terms of teachers' emphasis on English use (Q10), a considerably high proportion (above 82%) of participants assume that English-only policy will prompt them to speak more English and thus improve their English learning, with the following interview excerpt fortifying this point.

Excerpt 3 I think adequate input and output are important for successful English learning, but our opportunities to practise English are mainly limited to the EFL classes. We hardly speak English after class. This means we should maximise the opportunities of using English in the classroom.

Table 4 Descriptive analysis of attitudes towards L1 use and English-only

Variables	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)
Attitudes towards L1 use	Q1	1.98%	3.57%	11.90%	51.99%	30.56%	4.06 (0.86)
	Q2	0.79%	4.76%	16.67%	46.43%	31.35%	4.03 (0.86)
	Q3	1.38%	2.14%	7.78%	54.49%	34.21%	4.18 (0.85)
	Q4	1.19%	3.12%	9.05%	46.08%	40.56%	4.29 (0.88)
	Q5	0.40%	7.14%	9.92%	34.92%	47.62%	4.22 (0.92)
Attitudes towards English-only	Q6	8.73%	22.22%	35.32%	23.02%	10.71%	3.05 (1.11)
	Q7	9.13%	23.81%	34.13%	21.43%	11.50%	3.02 (1.13)
	Q8	2.38%	8.33%	34.13%	44.05%	11.11%	3.53 (0.89)
	Q9	3.96%	12.70%	31.75%	38.10%	13.49%	3.44 (1.01)
	Q10	0.40%	7.14%	9.92%	34.92%	47.62%	3.88 (0.79)

According to Lee and Lo (2017), EFL learners' preference for the English-only approach is always connected with their strong desire to study English well. Yuan et al. (2023) also held that overcoming the linguistic barrier to immerse in an English-medium classroom environment might arouse learners' positive emotions such as pride, joy, and satisfaction. Excerpt 3 therefore corroborates that maintaining certain levels of target language exposure in EFL classes could fulfil participants' intentionality, evoke their feelings of positivity, and sustain their LLM. However, the proportional inclusion of target language, as Tian and Hennebray (2016) argued, does not necessarily indicate an extreme exclusion of learners' L1 use, since few participants in the present study possessed an excessive attitude towards "either L1 use or English-only". In this regard, the inclusive use of both L1 and target language appears to be an optimal pedagogical practice given it assists learners in solving linguistic challenges and deepens students' interpretations of EFL content knowledge by validating learning across all of the languages in students' linguistic repertoire (Kuteeva, 2020). This supports Pacheco, Daniel, Pray, and Jiménez's (2019) assertion of bi/multilingual practices where learners could invest their full linguistic, cognitive, and epistemic abilities in learning processes to activate the interdependency among diverse linguistic resources (Tai, 2023), facilitate metalinguistic knowledge transfer through the connections across languages (García et al., 2017), and evoke sustainable motivation for target language learning (Yuan et al., 2023).

The Relationship Between L2 Self-Guides and Attitudes Towards CLC

The Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the correlation between self-related L2 motivation (*ideal L2 self*, *ought-to L2 self*) and attitudes towards CLC (*attitudes towards L1 use*, *attitudes towards English-only*), the outcome of which is displayed in Table 5. With regard to the ideal L2 self, a strong positive correlation is found between ideal L2 self and attitudes towards English-only approach based on the result that the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between these two factors is 0.501 and the coefficient ($p=0.000$) is significant at $p<0.05$ level, while there is a much weaker positive correlation between ideal L2 self and attitudes towards L1 use in the classroom with the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) being 0.149 and $p=0.027$.

The above result manifests that participants with strong ideal L2 self are most likely to accept English-only environments, which complies with Lee and Lo's (2017) assumption. Given the reason for such a correlation is still unknown (Lee & Lo, 2017), Excerpts 4 and 5 from semi-structured interviews in the current study might offer some explanations.

Excerpt 4 I really enjoy watching English movies and often imagine having a talk with my favourite characters. Holding this vision, I don't perceive any pressure or anxiety under the English-only policy. Instead, I am so enchanted by this kind of English immersion that I feel as if I were starring in an English movie. Therefore, I would say my huge enthusiasm for English movies gives me the courage and confidence to embrace more English-only environments.

Table 5 Correlation (Pearson) among attitudes and L2 self-guides

Factors		Ideal L2 self	Ought-to L2 self
Factors			
Attitudes towards L1 use	Pearson Correlation	0.149	0.327
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.027	0.000
Attitudes towards English-only	Pearson Correlation	0.501	-0.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.037

Excerpt 5 My career goal is to work at a global company, so I seize every chance to practise my English. While using English to interact with my teachers and peers in university EFL classes, I can always visualise myself communicating with my future clients and colleagues in English. Thus, I believe English-only classes have already made my self-vision more elaborate and could help me adjust to the future working environment.

When students envisage themselves as competent English speakers, a high degree of ideal L2 self is inclined to reduce their language anxiety in the face of English-only instruction, and their self-confidence in using English might be boosted accordingly (Papi, 2010). These students are therefore willing to immerse themselves in an English environment. In return, through sufficient target language immersion, students tend to react positively to the ideal L2 self by identifying their personal meaning of learning the target language and further reinforcing such perceived relevance in target language practices (Wu & Liu, 2021). Consequently, the fortified ideal L2 self is likely to be positively correlated with learners' attitudes towards the English-only policy. It could thus be argued that for learners with an explicit personal vision, an abundant amount of exposure to the target language could narrow the discrepancy between their actual L2 self-state and ideal self-visualisation, engendering motivating power for EFL classroom learning.

In the aspect of ought-to L2 self, as displayed in Table 5, it presents a moderate positive correlation with students' attitudes towards L1 use ($r=0.327$, $p=0.000$) but merely a negligible negative correlation with attitudes towards English-only ($r=-0.032$, $p=0.037$). This indicates that participants with a disposition to avoid negative learning outcomes are more likely to prefer some use of L1. This result, as explained by a quarter of the interviewees, could be attributed to the fact that using L1 provides learners with "a safer learning environment" to "mitigate the risk" and "avoid frustration brought about by failures" whilst the English-only approach might involve them in "challenging, adventurous, and unpredictable classroom climates". Excerpt 6 reveals Lucy's (an interviewee's) disenchantment with English-only instructions and longing to include the appropriate use of L1 in detail.

Excerpt 6 Knowing classroom performance accounts for 40% of our overall grade, I suddenly realised that in English-only classes I must be very conscientious about every word out of my mouth! Even a tiny grammatical mistake may give the teacher a negative impression of me, not to mention my lack of fluency. Gradually, I don't

dare to engage in English conversation because I worry that my teacher may mark me down. Thus, for me, English-only environments are just too depressing and stressful! On the contrary, if I am allowed to use my mother tongue, things will get much better because at least I can resort to Chinese to express myself fluently. (Lucy).

As demonstrated by Lucy, the assessment criteria have put heavy pressure on her ought-to L2 self. Lucy's sensitivity to external pressures drove her eagerness for a flexible space where she could draw on L1 resources to compensate for the deficiency in L2 competence and avoid classroom underperformance. Interestingly, Lucy's concerns about target language use correspond to You and Dörnyei's (2016) finding that ought-to L2 self might play a limited role in strengthening Chinese students' motivation for target language learning in the EFL lessons. In this case, the assessment criteria for EFL class participation need to not solely evaluate learners' target language performance but also give full consideration to their activeness of utilising bi/multilingual repertoire (Rafi, 2023). With students' engagement in bi/multilingual practices being assessed in the classroom, their boosted ought-to L2 self might potentially contribute more to a well-developed English learning motivation. Different from Lee and Lo's (2017) argument that Korean undergraduates with prominent ought-to L2 self seem to be indifferent to CLC, the moderate positive correlation between ought-to L2 self and attitudes towards L1 use found in this study suggests that integrating students' L1 into language assessment may ease their fear, worry, and reluctance pertaining to the target language so as to create a more motivating and engaging classroom environment.

The Effects of L2 Self-Guides on Attitudes Towards CLC

Based on the correlation confirmed above, multiple regression analysis using the enter method was further performed to explore to what extent the L2 self-guides can contribute to predicting or explaining EFL learners' attitudes towards the English-only approach and L1 use. Assuming the *ideal L2 self* and *ought-to L2 self* as two predictors (independent variables), multiple regressions were implemented with the *attitudes towards English-only* and *attitudes towards L1 use* entered as the criteria variables (dependent variables) in the first and second models respectively. Table 6 presents the result of the first regression model.

As shown in Table 6, the predicting strength of L2 self-guides on respondents' attitudes towards English-only could be identified as being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This regression model can explain 27.3% of the variation in participants' attitudes towards English-only. The ideal L2 self is found to be significantly potent in predicting and explaining learners' preference for the English-only approach, while the ought-to L2 self appears to serve as a rather weak negative predictor. This result confirms the high correlation coefficient between participants' ideal L2 self and attitudes towards English-only as previously mentioned. The multiple regression equation could therefore be formulated as *attitudes towards English-only* = $1.369 + 0.420 \times \text{ideal L2 self} - 0.082 \times \text{ought-to L2 self}$. This equation suggests that visualising one's future self as a competent English speaker makes substantial contributions for a learner to

accept more exposure to English and support English-medium classes. Such finding is in correspondence with previous studies (Jang & Lee, 2019; Lee & Lo, 2017) that the ideal L2 self contributes most to learners' English-only preference and lends support to Liu's (2014) observation that the ought-to L2 self generally does not carry the same predicting strength on CLC attitudes as the ideal L2 self.

As specified by the qualitative data, the significantly contributory role of the ideal L2 self has stimulated more than half of the interviewees' interest and goals in using English as a classroom language, with evidence provided in Excerpts 7 and 8 as follows.

Excerpt 7 In the College English course, the teacher will organise a series of interesting activities such as group presentations, dramas, dubbing, etc. I gradually found the beauty in using this marvellous language. Speaking English in EFL classes has become my interest or, I would say, a source of happiness! I can hardly imagine an EFL classroom activity without the presence of English.

Excerpt 8 I enjoy speaking English though I have to admit that I am still not very good at it. I wish someday I could speak like a native speaker. To obtain more opportunities to practise oral English, I set my goal to communicate in English as much as possible in EFL classes.

Some SLA researchers have found that incorporating appropriate English exposure into classroom activities might be conducive to the cultivation of learners' English-relevant interest and prompt students to establish English learning goals correspondingly (Dörnyei, 2010; Wang & Fisher, 2021). Notably, in Excerpts 7 and 8, the interviewees' EFL learning interest arousal and their linguistic goal-setting form a close liaison with their ideal L2 selves. Mediated by a strong inner aspiration to perform interest-evoking actions and approach the desired goals, individuals may maximise the target language use in the process of learning to reduce the discrepancy between actual and ideal selves (Jang & Lee, 2019).

Regarding the outcome of the second regression model, as can be seen in Table 7, while it accounts for 12.8% of the explanatory power over the variation, both predictors reach statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, the ought-to L2 self turns out to positively predict the criteria variable, while the ideal L2 self is found to act as a relatively weak positive predictor. This result is, in general, consistent with the result from correlation analysis discussed earlier in its direction and magnitude. Therefore, the multiple regression equation could be put forward as *attitudes towards L1*

Table 6 The multiple regression analysis with the attitudes towards English-only as the criteria variable

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.369	0.215		6.366	0.000
Ideal L2 self	0.420	0.055	0.441***	7.696	0.000
Ought-to L2 self	-0.082	0.054	-0.117**	-2.586	0.002

$R^2=0.279$, Adjusted $R^2=0.273$, $F=48.111***$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$

$use = 3.953 + 0.294 \times \text{ought-to L2 self} + 0.129 \times \text{ideal L2 self}$. The equation implies that a high level of ought-to L2 self could predict a preference for more L1 practices. Consequently, EFL learners with intense senses of responsibility, external pressures, and expectations from others are more inclined to allow some L1 use in English classrooms.

This result is slightly against Lee and Lo's (2017) study in which the ought-to L2 self did not point to statistical significance in explaining EFL learners' attitudes towards L1 use. Based on the interview results, the positive predicting strength of ought-to L2 self could be elaborated by students' orientation towards examinations. Many interviewees mentioned that their sense of obligation to "earn a satisfactory grade" drove them to "listen very carefully to contents that might be tested". Had the teacher "imparted these key points with the help of L1", learners "would have understood the contents better and achieved a higher score". The above finding corresponds to Schissel, De Korne, and López-Gopar's (2021) research that learners' motivation for passing standardised EFL tests validates their bi/multilingual repertoire to internalise the key knowledge points along with teachers' instructions. As a result, exam-oriented students tend to be passionate about weaving the strategic use of L1 through classroom contents (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2015).

Moreover, according to the interview data, the synergistic effect of a fluent "multilingual self" was found to potentially mediate between some learners' L2 self-guides and their mixing of L1, as presented by Antony in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9 I am willing to embrace the efficient and appropriate use of my mother tongue because I visualise deploying L1 resources as a catalyst for actualising my L2 self-images. I think I have a 'multilingual self' in my mind. I always want to be a high achiever who can always apply the mother tongue to liven his English expressions up. (Antony).

Grounded in Excerpt 9, Antony's "multilingual self" could be understood as his future self-vision in relation to meaning-making and sense-making through the use of bi/multilingual resources. A robust "multilingual self" appears to act as a reference for Antony's L2 self-concept. To reach the bi/multilingual self-visualisation, Antony seems to possess more vivid L2 self-images correspondingly (Henry, 2017; Yamagami, 2023) so that the discrepancy between his future L2 selves and current learning status is reduced (Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018). As some interviewees' monolingual L2 self-guides were found to be strengthened by their bi/multilingual self-images, learners' deployment of their entire linguistic repertoire might be considered capable of catering for the enhancement of their overall L2 motivation intensity (Henry, 2017; Song & Lin, 2020).

Table 7 The multiple regression analysis with the attitudes towards L1 use as the criteria variable

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	3.953	0.210		18.819	0.000
Ideal L2 self	0.129	0.053	0.160*	2.421	0.016
Ought-to L2 self	0.294	0.052	0.286**	4.820	0.005

$R^2 = 0.160$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.128$, $F = 20.468^{**}$, $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Chinese university EFL learners have a tendency to accept a bi/multilingual CLC that integrates the strategic use of L1 promoting content understanding with appropriate target language exposure fulfilling students' EFL learning intentionality. With clear perceptions of the value of the English language in relation to their personal development, learners in general are found to be more oriented towards an ideal L2 self, whilst the motivating forces of ought-to L2 self seem to be relatively weak owing to undergraduate students' pursuit of autonomy and independence. Learners with stronger ideal self-images tend to possess less target language anxiety but more confidence in facing linguistic challenges, so they are more in favour of immersing themselves in a target language environment, whereas those in avoidance of negative EFL learning outcomes express moderate positive attitudes towards adopting L1 because the English-centred assessment criteria have unnecessarily caused their negative emotions (e.g., fear, worry, and mental tension) in terms of using the target language. Therefore, the ideal L2 self plays an exceptionally significant role in predicting learners' attitudes towards target language use and synergises students' target language learning interest/goal, while the ought-to L2 self reveals stronger predicting strength on learners' attitudes towards L1 practices and stimulates learners' willingness to exploit L1 resources to make more satisfactory academic achievements. The conceptualisation of a "multilingual self" further calls for the construction of flexible bi/multilingual spaces for learners to achieve a motivational harmony between their L2 self-guides and the use of classroom language.

The current research thus offers fruitful pedagogical implications. When designing HE classroom language policy, it is important for educators to seriously consider students' motivational status and perspectives of CLC. A relatively soft and motivating classroom language requirement could be made to stimulate students' use of their entire linguistic repertoire and activate their positive emotions. In light of students' recognition concerning the pedagogical value of L1, the current English-only EFL instruction approach needs to be reformed by allowing appropriate L1 use for learners to ask classmates/instructors for help and for teachers to clarify the incomprehensible academic contents so that students' classroom participation and learning motivation could be ameliorated. Furthermore, the correlation between L2 self-guides and learners' preferences for CLC may inform more reasonable and comprehensive curriculum planning. Given that learners' ideal and ought-to L2 selves exist on a continuum (Dörnyei, 2009), a balance between the motivating power of these two self-guides needs to be attained. Policy-makers and education practitioners are encouraged to devise and implement translanguaging as a principled pedagogical approach (e.g., Tai, 2024) that supports both the ideal and ought-to L2 selves of all students. Translanguaging, with the prefix "trans-" capturing the seamless negotiation "across and between languages" and the verb "languaging" implying learners' understanding and production of communicative activities (Brooks, 2022, p. 130), refers to "multiple discursive practices" in which bi/multilinguals engage to make meaning and

make sense of their bi/multilingual world (García, 2009, p. 45). Considering the ideal L2 self features relatively strongly in boosting participants' English learning engagement, College English teachers are advised to conduct more communicative activities and pay more attention to developing all learners' ideal L2 self by creating an interactive translanguaging space with a predominant proportion of target language exposure. For the teaching of key, difficult, and exam-relevant contents, adequate use of L1 could be made to construct a relatively low-risk, less challenging, and exam-oriented translanguaging classroom where students' ought-to L2 self would get strengthened.

It is worth acknowledging that this study still has several limitations. Firstly, the participants' L2 self-guide intensity is at a relatively moderate level, which to some extent undermined the significance of self-guides' predicting strength on CLC attitudes. In order to recruit participants with stronger motivational intensity, future research could be carried out on a larger scale and seek access to more prestigious focal universities. Moreover, since two regression models could only explain 27.3% and 12.8% of the variation in participants' CLC attitudes, there must be some other influencing factors (e.g., personality traits or teacher-student rapport) awaiting further exploration. Thirdly, although the present study acknowledges the L2 self-guides as a continuum, analysing the ideal and ought-to L2 selves as two segregated variables inevitably suggests a somewhat categorical perception of learners' motivation. Interventions optimising the consistent existence of motivational selves might be effective in supplementing with more detailed pedagogical designs. Lastly, the relatively static data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, though illuminating students' favourable attitude towards the mix or switch between L1 and target language, does not seem to sufficiently capture the fluidity and dynamism of learners' engagement in bi/multilingual practices. Methodological innovations that extend to evidence of translanguaging as a fluid way of communicating through the triangulation among longitudinal datasets may further shed light on the complex interaction between learners' L2 self-guides and CLC.

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Declarations

Ethical Approval Following the ethical guidelines for educational research issued by the British Educational Research Association, this study received ethical approval from the ethical committee and internal review board at the Department of Education, University of Oxford.

Informed Consent for Participation and Publication All adult participants have given their full permission for participating in the current study and for their relevant information to be published in *English Teaching & Learning*.

Competing Interests On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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