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**SELF-PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AS A
PREDICTOR OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' IDEAL L2 SELF: A
PLS-SEM APPROACH**



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Abstract

Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) is a key psychological predictor, as students' perceptions of their communicative capabilities mostly influence classroom participation, confidence, and their desired future language identity. This quantitative cross-sectional study investigated the predictive role of SPCC in shaping university learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), which is theoretically grounded in McCroskey's concept of SPCC and Dörnyei's L2MSS. The SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) of the 180 undergraduate Management Sciences (BBA) students were measured using an established SPCC questionnaire and a five-item adaptation of the Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) questionnaire from Ryan's (2008) Language Learning Motivation Questionnaire (LLMQ). The research data were analyzed through SEM in SmartPLS 4. The structural model indicated that SPCC positively and significantly predicted students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 7.630$, $p < 0.001$). It explained (8.8%) of the variance in learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) ($R^2 = 0.088$) and showed a small-to-medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.098$). Findings from this research suggested that students with strong perceptions of their communication competence are more likely to perceive themselves as efficient English speakers in the future. Moreover, improving their self-perceived communicative confidence may effectively support their English learning and enhance their future L2 identity in the context of higher education.

Keywords: *Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC); Ideal L2 Self (IL2S); Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS); Willingness to communicate (WTC); PLS-SEM.*

1. Introduction

Today, English has become necessary for global communication, professional development, and career advancement (Hidayat, 2024). In a multilingual society such as Pakistan, English language proficiency is related to job opportunities, social mobility, and academic opportunities (Rahman, 2002). For that reason, the learners' psychological factors that improve their English language proficiency and motivation towards English are an important area to explore in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2011).

Contemporary SLA research has shifted its focus from highlighting linguistic knowledge and cognitive abilities to the significant role played by students' identity-related and psychological factors in English language learning. In this regard, the most prominent framework of Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS highlights the theoretical and practical significance of students' future self-image in supporting language learning motivation. The students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is one of the key components of this L2 motivation framework, which explains students' anticipated future image as an efficient second-language speaker.

A resilient Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) has been connected with persistence, motivation, and continuous efforts in language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Among several individual differences and psychological factors, self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) is one of the most important psychological factors that might contribute to the development of the learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), which is defined as learners' image of their capability to effectively communicate in diverse contexts (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

SPCC refers to how an "individual believes his/her communicative competence based on self-awareness rather than actual communication competence" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Moreover, self-perception, as well-defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is "the overall process of self-awareness, self-knowledge acquisition, and self-concept formation; an awareness of the characteristics that constitute one's self." Earlier research has indicated that learners with higher SPCC are usually more than willing to communicate and actively participate in L2 correspondence (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002).

According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, “students who consider themselves capable enough usually develop positive future self-images and follow thought-provoking language-learning objectives, which, in turn, integrate with an individual’s self-awareness”, which is also seen as “a transient and situational state induced by environmental experiences” (Morin, 2017).

Despite several studies and existing literature, empirical evidence investigating the relationship between SPCC and learners’ Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) remains limited, mainly in the context of Pakistani higher education. Numerous previous studies have focused on SPCC relationships with willingness to communicate (WTC), communication behavior, students’ L2 learning experiences, and language anxiety. However, its role in shaping students’ future L2 identity has been marginalized and has received relatively little attention. Students’ perceptions of their communication competence might affect not only their current language proficiency but also how they imagine themselves as proficient English speakers in the future. Therefore, addressing this research gap is necessary.

Methodologically, this quantitative research study contributes significantly by using the SEM approach, “which is more appropriate for predicting the associations among latent psychological variables and to simultaneously evaluating structural relationships and measurement quality” (Hair et al., 2022). So, in the context of Pakistani higher education, this study investigates whether SPCC predicts university students’ Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Moreover, by extending the L2MSS application to communication competence insights, this research contributes both practically and theoretically to a better understanding of the psychological factors that determine students’ L2 identity development, and it offers practical implications for English language teaching.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Explore the predictive relationship between SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) among university English students.
2. Examine the structural model of PLS-SEM.
3. Analyze the contribution of SPCC in explaining variations in students’ Ideal L2 Self (IL2S).

Research Question

RQ1: To what extent does Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) predict university learners’ Ideal L2 Self (IL2S)?

Research Hypothesis

H1: Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) significantly and positively predicts learners’ Ideal L2 Self (IL2S).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Perceived Communication Competence and Second Language Learning

Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) refers to learners’ beliefs about their competence to communicate efficiently across diverse situations (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). It emphasizes communication with friends, acquaintances, and strangers across small-group, interpersonal, and public speaking contexts, and it represents students’ subjective assessments of their communicative abilities. This self-perception is very important in second language acquisition (SLA) contexts because learners’ choices to participate in a communication setting are usually influenced not only by what they actually know but also by how capable they believe themselves to be.

Previous research studies have already established SPCC as a significant predictor of learners’ L2 communication behavior. Additionally, MacIntyre et al. (1998), within the willingness to communicate (WTC) framework, proposed that learners’ communication confidence and perceived competence significantly influence their willingness to use a second language. Likewise, Yashima (2002) suggested that communicative confidence significantly contributes to students’ willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. These research findings recommend that learners who perceive themselves as competent communicators are more likely to be involved in interactional and creative opportunities and improve their positive language learning experiences.

Moreover, existing research studies have mostly analyzed SPCC in relation to communication apprehension (CA) and willingness to communicate (WTC), communication behavior, and language anxiety (LA). However, the

least attention has been given to its potential impact on students' future-related language identities. As perceptions of communicative competence form students' beliefs about what they can achieve through effective language use, SPCC might extend beyond learners' communication behavior and contribute to the development of future L2 selves. For that reason, investigating SPCC as an important variable influencing Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) provides an extensive understanding of how learners' communication-related beliefs may contribute to the development of L2 identity.

2.2 Ideal L2 Self and Second Language Motivation

Students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is one of the essential components of Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 LMSS and theorizes second language motivation (SLA) through students' future-oriented identity. This SLA framework consists of three main dimensions, which include learners' L2 learning background, their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), and their Ought-to L2 self. Among these, students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) acts as the strongest internal source of L2 learning. It refers to their desired future image as an efficient and successful language user (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). "The learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is an important component of Dörnyei's L2 learning theory" (Dörnyei, 2009). It is like a student's dream of their future language fluency. This specific vision of who and what they want to become (Dörnyei, 2009), influenced by their idealization and culture, is a strong motivating force, which pushes them to reach their learning objective (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

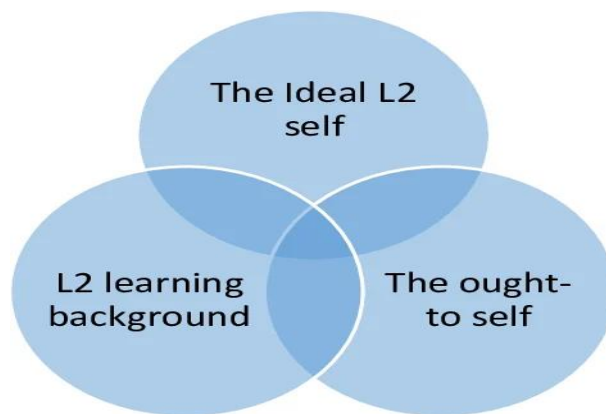


Figure 2.2. "The L2 Motivational Self-System model proposed by Dörnyei" (2009)

According to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2011), students' resilient Ideal L2 Self (IL2S)(IL2S) are more likely to exhibit greater commitment, efforts and persistence, as they are highly motivated to decrease the discrepancy between their anticipated future identities and current competence. Moreover, several empirical studies have suggested that students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S)(IL2S) is positively linked to their L2 motivation intensity, intended learning effort (ILE), and continued involvement in second language learning (SLA). For instance, Taguchi, Papi, and Magid (2009) suggested that learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) considerably contributed to their motivation across Japanese, Iranian, and Chinese contexts, whereas Papi (2010) indicated that students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) was closely associated with their L2 learning motivation among Iranian English learners.

Nevertheless, the expansion and development of learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is not an unconscious process; rather, it is shaped by students' previous self-beliefs, learning experiences, social contexts, and perceived competence. In addition, research indicated that students' competence to maintain a vibrant future language identity usually depends on opportunities for significant involvement with the target language and their personal experiences (Kim, 2010). In the Pakistani context, where English is closely related to academic success, social mobility, and professional advancement, the development of a positive future English identity might play an important role in determining learners' L2 learning.

Moreover, it represents one's self-perception as a proficient L2 learner. It is one of the important types of L2 learning motivation that refers to students' driving force behind learning a second language (L2). Moreover, it is an important part of the L2MSS (Zoltan Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Furthermore, among other L2 motivational

constructs, the Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) represents students' future language objectives and advances their intrinsic motivation when it is strongly visualized (Dörnyei, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Dörnyei (2005), it is simply how a language student visualizes themselves using the new language perfectly. This includes speaking confidently with people who speak English naturally. The learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) strongly motivates them to be committed and work hard when learning a new language. Moreover, contemporary research studies also indicated how important learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is to remain motivated and persistent in language learning (Al-Hoorie, 2018; and Ushioda, 2020).

According to Zimmerman's (1998) framework, the relationship between identity and L2 learning motivation can be recognized in terms of language learner identity. Moreover, identity is considered a socially constructed dynamic process formed by students' learning environments, their interactions, and personal background. Moreover, Zimmerman's three dimensions of identity include "discourse identity, situated identity, and transportable identity", which can also be adapted to language learning as task identity, classroom identity, and transportable identity. In Zimmerman's (1998) framework of learners' identity, task identity refers to the roles students adopt during particular classroom activities, i.e., listener, speaker, or participant. Moreover, classroom identity reflects students' social positions within the L2 learning environment, and learners' transportable identity signifies their cultural backgrounds, personal characteristics, and previous learning experiences that they bring into the classroom.

These identities complement Dörnyei's L2MSS by emphasizing that second language acquisition (SLA), which involves not only the considerable development of linguistic competence but also the development of a student's desired identity as a proficient language user. In particular, learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) signifies the intersection between motivation and their identity because their future-oriented selves also influence their involvement and present learning behaviors.

2.3 Relationship between SPCC and ideal L2 self

The relationship between learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) and their self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) can easily be understood through theories of L2 learning motivation, self-belief, and identity development. Moreover, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory suggests that "learners' beliefs about their competence impact their learning motivation, persistence, and goal orientation in achieving their desired learning outcomes." Moreover, learners who imagine themselves as competent communicators are more likely to engage in thought-provoking language tasks, develop optimistic prospects about their future language use, and maintain confidence during collaboration in an L2 learning context. Therefore, students' stronger perceptions of their communication competence significantly contribute to the development of positive future-oriented L2 identity. Furthermore, this relationship is also reinforced by Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS, which describes the learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) as a "desired future image of a proficient language speaker". According to this framework, learners' future L2 identities are significantly influenced by their beliefs about current experiences and perceptions of their abilities. For that reason, students who have high confidence in their communication skills may find it easier to envision themselves as highly successful English speaker in their social, professional, and academic progress.

Previous research studies also indicate that SPCC significantly influences learners' L2 motivation to learn English. Studies suggested that SPCC is positively associated with learners' willingness to communicate (WTC), engagement in L2 interactions, and communicative competence (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). Moreover, contemporary PLS-SEM-based research has further suggested that Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is strongly connected with learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) and L2 learning motivation, highlighting the significance of students' future L2 learning identities in SLA (Wang & Zeng, 2025; Zhang & Chinokul, 2026). Likewise, Park (2023) suggested that SPCC contributes significantly to students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and other dimensions of L2 learning motivation in L2 communication, indicating that perceptions of communicative ability influence learners' broader motivational outcomes. Furthermore, Qiangfu et al. (2025) and Yang et al. (2026) highlighted that emotional, motivational and competence-based beliefs mostly shape students' communication behaviors in higher education settings.

However, previous studies have mainly investigated SPCC in relation to learners' communication behaviors, specifically their willingness to communicate (WTC); however, insignificant attention has been given to its role in developing students' future L2 identities. This research gap is predominantly relevant in the context of Pakistani higher education, where English proficiency is closely linked to academic success, social development, and employability. For that reason, the present research extends existing research by examining whether SPCC positively and significantly predicts university students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) with a PLS-SEM approach.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This research study is primarily based on Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS and supported by Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and communication competence perspectives. The L2MSS proposes that learners' motivation is influenced by future-oriented self-concepts, particularly the Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), "the desired image of oneself" as a successful second language user. This "future self" image motivates learners to invest effort to achieve their language goals.

Figure 2.1: MAIN COMPONENTS IDEAL L2 SELF

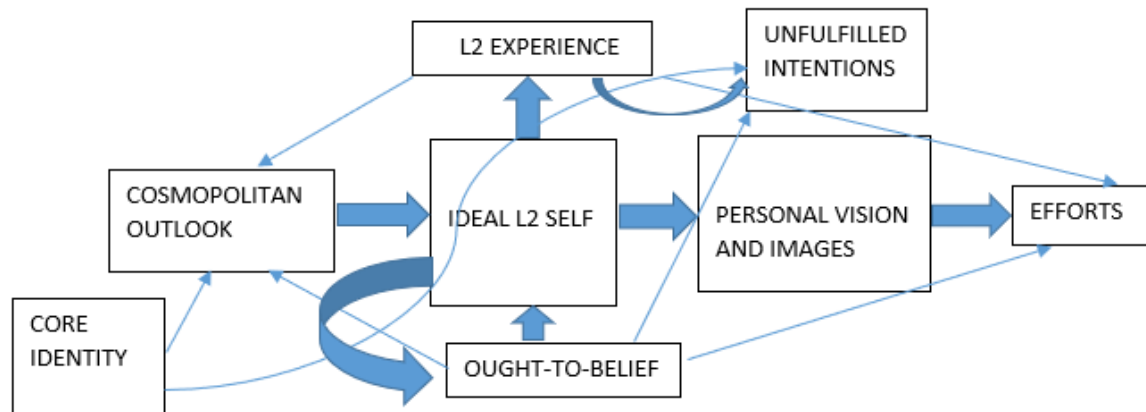


Figure 2.1. "Main components of the ideal L2 self". Adapted from *The Ideal L2 Selves of Japanese Learners of English* (p. 272), by S. Ryan, 2008, University of Nottingham.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Dörnyei, 2009), students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is strongly influenced by factors such as core identity, cosmopolitan outlook, and L2 learning experience. The model suggests that meaningful language experiences and positive self-evaluation enable students to make clear individual visions, which finally drive learning effort. Based on this framework, the research study hypothesizes that SPCC significantly contributes to the development of learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Learners who visualize themselves as competent communicators are more likely to develop positive expectations and confidence about their future L2 performance. Moreover, according to self-efficacy theory, these views about communicative ability may influence learners' achievement-related behaviors and their motivation. For that reason, SPCC is conceptualized as an important psychological factor of the learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Moreover, higher SPCC is expected to significantly and positively predict students' future L2 learning identities.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study suggests a predictive relationship between SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). The framework hypothesizes that students' perceptions of their communication competence might contribute to the development of their future L2 learning identities.

SPCC → Ideal L2 Self (IL2S)(IL2S)

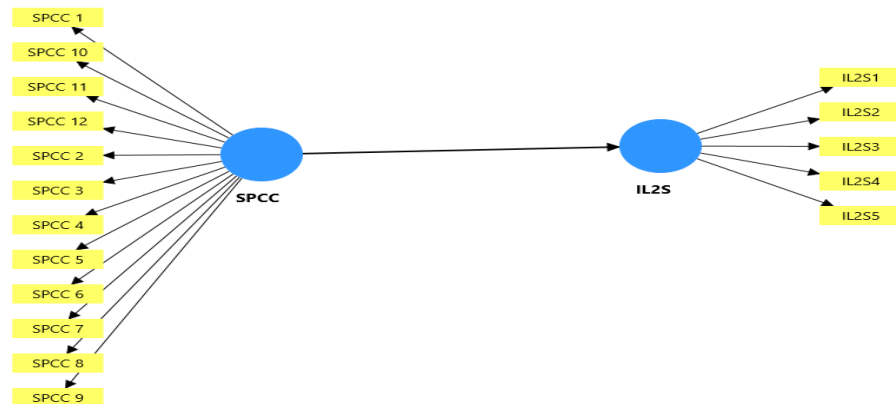


Figure 2.5 illustrates the PLS-SEM model predicting the influence of SPCC as a higher order construct (HOC) on students' ideal L2 self.

2.6 Research Hypothesis

Based on previous empirical findings and theoretical assumptions, the following hypothesis was established:

H1: Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) positively and significantly predicts students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This quantitative research study used a cross-sectional survey design to examine the predictive role of SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) among university English learners. The PLS-SEM approach was used to assess the structural and measurement models, as it is specifically suitable for predictive research involving latent variables (Hair et al., 2022), and the data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.

3.2 Instruments

The data were gathered through a structured research questionnaire with two main constructs: learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) and their self-perceived communication competence (SPCC). Learners' SPCC was assessed with adapted SPCC questionnaire items based on the framework established by McCroskey and McCroskey (1988). The scale measured learners' perceptions of their confidence and capability to communicate efficiently in English across social and academic situations. Moreover, the Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) was measured using adapted items from LLMQ (Ryan, 2008) based on Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS. These items measured learners' desired future image as successful, efficient English users and their ability to imagine themselves communicating in English magnificently. Moreover, the scale for the ideal L2 self, which was adapted from the LLMQ (Ryan 2008), had all questionnaire items rated on a five-point Likert scale from "1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree." The adapted scales were designed to capture students' psychological perceptions allied to future L2 identity and their communication competence.

3.3 Participant Characteristics and Sampling

The research comprised 180 undergraduate management science students from three different private sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan, i.e., Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST), Karachi School of Business and Leadership (KSBL), and Iqra University (IU), with an equal number of participants selected (33.33%) from each university (N=60). Furthermore, this research study sample included 50% males (N=90) and 50% females (N=90). Regarding age, research participants aged 23–25 years constituted the largest age group, accounting for 50% of the total sample (N = 90). The research participants were selected through convenience sampling. These participants represented diverse academic backgrounds, and they already had exposure to academic English instruction within higher education settings.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 180)

Variable	Category	frequency	Percentage %
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Gender	Male / Female	90 / 90	50.0 / 50.0
University	ZABIST– KSBL-IU	60 / 60 / 60	33.3 / 33.3 / 33.3
Age	20–22 years	60	33.3
	23–25 years	90	50
	Above 25 years	30	16.7

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected from undergraduate management science students at three private-sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan. The research participants had already been provided with information about the study's objectives and instructions for completing the questionnaire. The survey was managed in an organized manner, and research participants were motivated to provide honest responses based on their perceptions and personal experiences. Respondents' participation was voluntary. To maintain confidentiality, all their responses were collected anonymously. Finally, the completed questionnaires were organized and prepared for statistical analysis, and the final data of 180 valid research participant responses were examined using SmartPLS 4.

3.5 Data Analysis Using PLS-SEM

The collected data were examined using PLS-SEM. The research analysis procedure followed a two-stage method: structural model assessment and measurement model evaluation on SmartPLS. Firstly, the measurement model was evaluated to determine the validity and reliability of the constructs. The internal consistency reliability was assessed using the values of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Moreover, convergent validity was assessed using AVE, and discriminant validity was assessed through the HTMT. Finally, multicollinearity issues were assessed using VIF values. Secondly, the structural model was assessed to analyze the predictive relationship between SPCC and learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). This structural model analysis included path coefficients (β), bootstrapping results, p-values, t-values, effect size (f^2), and coefficient of determination (R^2).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research carefully followed ethical principles for educational research. Research respondents' participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all the research participants before data collection. Moreover, they were also informed that their responses would remain private and would be used only for academic research. Finally, during the data collection procedure, no personal identification information of participants was collected.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed to find out the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and multicollinearity of the research constructs. The evaluation included two latent variables: SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). The analysis results indicated acceptable measurement quality for both constructs. Moreover, internal consistency reliability was assessed using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The analysis results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha value was above the suggested threshold of 0.70, representing strong internal consistency. Moreover, the composite reliability values also exceeded the satisfactory level, endorsing that the indicators consistently measured their respective constructs. Additionally, convergent validity was evaluated through AVE, and results indicated that both constructs achieved AVE values above the suggested threshold of 0.50, representing that the constructs explained sufficient variance in their measurement indicators. Finally, the value of (HTMT) discriminant validity was below the suggested threshold of 0.85, indicating that SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) are distinct constructs, and all VIF values of the constructs remained under the recommended threshold (5.00), indicating that multicollinearity was not a serious issue in the model.

Table 4.1: Measurement Model Findings

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE	HTMT	VIF Range
Ideal L2 Self	0.915	0.936	0.745	<0.85	2.329–3.191
SPCC	0.928	0.924	0.505	—	2.090–3.328

4.2 Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed using bootstrapping measures in SmartPLS to analyze whether SPCC significantly and positively predicted Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). The results indicated that SPCC had a statistically significant and positive predictive influence on students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). The analysis findings indicated that the path coefficient was $\beta = 0.412$, demonstrating a positive relationship between the two constructs. Moreover, the t-value (7.630) exceeded the critical value of 1.96, and the p-value (0.000) indicated statistical significance of the construct relationship. For that reason, learners with higher levels of SPCC revealed stronger Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Finally, the analysis explained that the research hypothesis is supported:

H1: Self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) positively and significantly predicts learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S).

Table 4.2: Structural Model Findings

Relationship	B	Sample Mean	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Decision
SPCC → IL2S	0.412	0.404	0.054	7.630	0.000	Supported

4.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory power of the structural model was assessed through the coefficient of determination (R^2). The results suggested that SPCC provided 8.8% of the variance in students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) ($R^2 = 0.088$). Even though the explained variance indicated modest predictive power, the final result indicated that students' SPCC significantly contributed to understanding differences in their future L2 learning identities. However, this R^2 finding indicated that students' perception of their own communication competence accounted for only a small percentage of the variance in Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Hence, this R^2 value suggested that additional variables were needed to provide a more comprehensive description of learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S).

Table 4.3: Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Findings

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Explained Variance	Interpretation
Ideal L2 Self	0.088	8.8%	Weak predictive power

4.4 Effect Size (f^2)

The "effect size" of SPCC on learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) was measured using Cohen's f^2 criterion. The analysis indicated that learners' SPCC created an effect size of $f^2 = 0.098$. According to Cohen's (1988) recommendations, the values of "0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represented small, medium, and large effects, respectively". For that reason, the existing result indicated a small but meaningful contribution of SPCC toward learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) variations.

Table 4.4: Effect Size

Relationship	f^2	Interpretation
SPCC → IL2S	0.098	Small effect

4.5 Summary of Findings

In the present study, the measurement model indicated that both constructs show satisfactory validity and reliability, indicating that the measurement instrument was suitable for evaluating SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Moreover, the research structural model indicated that SPCC significantly and positively predicted students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) (" $\beta = 0.412$, $t = 7.630$, $p < 0.001$ "). Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was supported, and indicated that students with higher self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) were more likely to develop a robust Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Furthermore, the research model explained 8.8% of the variance in students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) $R^2 = 0.088$, indicating that SPCC is a meaningful predictor; however, other contextual factors might also have contributed to the development of students' future L2 learning identity. Additionally, the effect size was small ($f^2 = 0.098$), demonstrating that SPCC had a statistically significant influence, though its practical contribution was modest. Finally, the overall findings suggested that students' confidence in their ability to communicate in English played an essential role in shaping their future-oriented self as proficient L2 users,

therefore supporting the proposed theoretical predictive relationship between students' SPCC and their ideal L2 self.

5. Discussion

The present study analyzed the predictive role of SPCC in relation to university learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) through a PLS-SEM approach. The research results indicated that students' SPCC significantly predicted their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) ($\beta = 0.412$), indicated that learners who perceive themselves as competent English communicators were more likely to develop stronger future-oriented identities as proficient English users. These research findings also supported existing research emphasizing the significance of learners' perceived competence in L2 learning. For example, MacIntyre et al. (1998) and Yashima (2002) suggested that "SPCC was closely associated with learners' willingness to communicate (WTC), their active L2 learning activities, and communicative competence". Extending these research findings, the present study indicated that SPCC also significantly contributed to students' future L2 identities. Moreover, some contemporary research studies further support this relationship by highlighting the important roles of learners' self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and L2 learning motivation self-guides in forming their L2 identity development (Park, 2023; Qiangfu et al., 2025; Wang & Zeng, 2025).

Furthermore, the relationship between SPCC and Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) is consistent with Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS, which suggested that students' future language identities are significantly influenced by their experiences and perception of language use. Additionally, it was reinforced by Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which emphasized that "students' beliefs about personal abilities influence their directed actions and motivations". Therefore, students with higher perceived confidence in communication were more likely to imagine themselves as successful future English speakers.

Moreover, the research findings were particularly relevant in Pakistani higher education, where English proficiency is linked to professional and academic development (Mansoor, 2005; Rahman, 2009). However, the model explained 8.8% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.088$) in the analysis, suggesting that students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) was influenced by multiple factors beyond SPCC, including self-efficacy, learning experiences, motivation, and social context. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.098$) indicated that students' SPCC made a small but meaningful contribution in predicting their future L2 identities. Finally, this research study extended earlier research by showing that learners' SPCC was not only related to their immediate communication outcomes but also played an important role in the growth and overall development of their future-oriented L2 identities. Therefore, enhancing learners' self-perceived communication confidence may support stronger Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) perceptions and sustained involvement in learning English.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The present research study contributed to second language motivation (L2) research in numerous ways. Firstly, it extended Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS by suggesting that learners' self-perceptions of their communication competence were closely connected to the development of their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Although previous research highlighted the motivational role of learners' ideal L2 self (IL2S), the present study emphasized the importance of students' perceptions of their present communication capabilities in shaping these future-oriented selves. Secondly, the research findings supported Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory by indicating that learners' perceived abilities played an important role in shaping their future identities. Students who imagine themselves as proficient English speakers may be more likely to construct positive images as successful future language speakers. Thirdly, this research study extended SPCC research by moving beyond its traditional focus on students' willingness to communicate (WTC), their communication behaviors, and L2 interaction. Finally, the research findings suggested that SPCC also had significant implications for identity-related L2 learning motivation outcomes, thus extending its relevance within SLA research, and it also significantly contributed methodologically by applying the PLS-SEM approach to analyze the predictive relationship between SPCC and students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). The research findings also demonstrated the practicality of structural equation modeling (SEM) when investigating complex psychological relationships underlying learners' L2 motivation and their language identity development.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The research findings have significant implications for curriculum design and English language teaching (ELT) for teachers and educators. According to this research, SPCC significantly predicted students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S); therefore, English language teachers and instructors should focus on improving students' confidence in English communication in addition to developing their linguistic proficiency. For instance, a helpful, low-anxiety, and supportive classroom environment, when combined with students' collaborative activities, i.e., presentations, role plays, group discussions, and communication tasks, might strengthen students' communication confidence. Moreover, language teachers and instructors should motivate and encourage students to develop a positive vision of themselves as future proficient English speakers through career-oriented learning goals, communication activities, and above all, meaningful learning opportunities to use English inside and outside the classroom. In this way, by addressing both students' motivational factors and communicative competence, language teachers and educators can foster a stronger learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), which leads to greater students' engagement, motivation, perseverance, and long-term commitment to English language learning.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The present research study has numerous limitations. Firstly, the use of a cross-sectional design limits conclusions about the causal relations between students' SPCC and their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S). Therefore, future research studies should use longitudinal research to analyze how these constructs progress and evolve. Secondly, the use of convenience sampling from selected private sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan, limits the generalizability of the research findings. Therefore, future research studies should include diverse samples from different institutions, regions, and cultural contexts. Thirdly, learners' SPCC significantly predict their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S); the modest explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.088$) suggests that some additional factors might influence students' future L2 identity. Therefore, future research should also investigate other L2 motivational variables such as self-efficacy, language experiences, language anxiety, willingness to communicate (WTC), and students' social context. Finally, the mixed-methods research might also provide a deeper understanding of how students' communication competence shapes their development of future language identities, i.e., Ideal L2 Selves (IL2S).

5.4 Conclusion

This quantitative research study investigated the predictive role of SPCC in university students' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) through PLS-SEM. The results indicated that learners' SPCC positively and significantly predicted their Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) " $\beta = 0.412, t = 7.630, p < 0.001$ ", supporting the proposed hypothesis. Moreover, the research model described 8.8% of the variance in learners' Ideal L2 Self (IL2S) ($R^2 = .088$), whereas SPCC indicated a small but meaningful effect size ($f^2 = 0.098$). These findings indicate that students' perceptions of their communication capabilities represent an essential factor in the development of their future L2 identities. The findings also recommend that learners who perceive themselves as proficient English speakers are more likely to imagine themselves as successful English speakers in the future. Furthermore, in the higher education context, where English proficiency is closely associated with professional advancement and academic success, learners' communication confidence is an important psychological resource. Overall, the findings extend research on L2 learning motivation and students' future identity related to their English communication by suggesting that learners' communication-related self-perceptions significantly contribute to the formation of their successful Ideal L2 Self (IL2S), and emphasize the significance of improving students' communication confidence as an important part of English language education and their L2 motivational development.

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