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## Future L2 Selves of Pakistani Learners of English: A Qualitative Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on exploring various aspects of future L2 selves of Pakistani undergraduate students, which may be the critical components of their L2 motivation. It will also explain the socio-contextual factors which may be essential to shape the Future L2 selves of these Pakistani students. Qualitative method, based on semi-structured interviews as the tool, was used to collect data about the detailed visions of participants' future L2 selves. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed strong motivational influences of future L2 selves on the participants. The presence of bright and plausible ideal selves among the participants was a crucial motivational indicator strengthened by the existence of accompanying action plans to achieve them. The participants also seemed to possess strong ought-to selves wrapped in their future responsibilities, fears of career, social status, personal image, and expectations of significant others. A strong connection between participants' Ideal and Ought-to L2 selves implies their deep internalization of the belief that English is essential to realize their future career dreams and reduce their fears of failure.

**Keywords:** Future L2 Selves, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, qualitative explanation

### Introduction

Most of the studies on L2 motivation in the last decade show that learners' experiences of English language learning do not support the artificial division of L2 motivation – integrative versus instrumental – found in the traditional socio-psychological approaches of analyzing L2 motivation (see Ali, Wyatt, & Laar, 2015; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Similarly, the traditional theorization of L2 motivation, e.g., Integrativeness (presenting a static view of the L2 community and motivation), and its inquiry methods did not seem to match the dynamic and diverse motives reported by Pakistani students (Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013). This might also not account well for the global spread of English and expanding the L2

community of its speakers outside Anglophone countries in recent times. To elaborate on this point, Islam (2013) shared Pakistani students' motives for L2 learning as they wanted to learn English to pass exams, compete with peers, get teachers' appreciation, please their parents, secure good jobs, be able to interact with socially influential/inspiring people and, more importantly, to feel a sense of achievement because English was/is a marker of success in itself. Looking at the theoretical orientations of these factors, it may be argued that these include instrumental, integrative, extrinsic and intrinsic reasons simultaneously, which brings us ideologically close to the contemporary approaches that focus on the need to investigate dynamic and complex aspects of L2 motivation in line with learners' self-identification processes while also taking into account various socio-cultural and global factors affecting their identities (Dörnyei, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Lamb, 2012). Especially how they relate the language to their imagined futures, whether in their home country or abroad (Dörnyei, 2019; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011).

Therefore, many studies in recent times (see Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) have investigated L2 motivation of EFL learners from future selves' perspectives, primarily using the 'L2 Motivational Self System' (Dörnyei, 2009) as the main theoretical framework. Future L2 selves have also been found useful in understanding and investigating the L2 motivation of Pakistani EFL learners in various studies (e.g., Ali, Wyatt, & Laar, 2015; Islam et al., 2013; Shahbaz & Liu, 2012). However, there has been a severe lack of qualitative studies that may explore in detail the dimensions and making/working of Pakistani learners' future L2 selves. Therefore, this study aims to develop an in-depth understanding of various aspects of Pakistani EFL learners' future L2 selves. This may also uncover the factors that possibly shape these future selves of Pakistani undergraduate students from various Public universities situated in the urban centers of central Punjab. The study has used the Dörnyei's theorization of Future L2 Selves (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) as the theoretical basis for this study.

Dörnyei, et al. (2006) explain that motivation deals with 'the direction and magnitude of human action, that is, the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it.' In short, it arises from a purpose and then guides human actions. The multi-dimensional nature and wide range of motives for human behavior make it impossible to develop a comprehensive and 'an integrative 'super-theory' of motivation' and, therefore, researchers have to narrow down their focus on its certain aspects while theorizing it (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011: 4). Williams and Burden (1997) maintain that motivation is a kind of cognitive stimulation that encourages somebody to make a 'sustained intellectual and physical effort' to achieve a goal. L2 motivation influences learners' language behaviors and efforts to learn the target language that result in successful learning. Although this process indicates an indirect relationship between motivation and successful learning, motivation is not an immediate 'precursor to successful learning,' Yet, this relationship is of great importance (Ryan, 2008 ). In this regard, Schmitt (2002) states that '[i]f only we could get the students to be motivated, then they learn successfully.' Therefore, this study may provide teachers and policymakers necessary insights

into Pakistani learners' L2 motivation and future L2 self systems. Simultaneously, it may enrich the already available theory about future selves of L2 learners in various national contexts.

## Literature Review

Traditionally, the research in L2 motivation has mostly been influenced by Gardner's socio-educational model (1985), where integrative motivation holds the central position as the most influential factor in L2 achievement (MacIntyre, MacKinnon, & Clément, 2009; Ryan, 2009). As mentioned previously, the notion of Integrativeness, as proposed by Gardner (1985), manifests not only a learner's positive attitude toward the L2 community but also his/her desire to participate in and identify with that L2 community and culture (MacIntyre et al., 2009; Yashima, 2009). Many researchers (see Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Lamb, 2016; Mackay, 2019; Ryan, 2009; Yashima, 2009) have argued, so far, that the Gardnerian concept of Integrativeness may not be a suitable construct to present a complete and clear picture of L2 motivation of learners in many EFL contexts. The studies also reported that the 'lack of identification with native speakers of English' had emerged as a significant motivating factor in a variety of settings (see Lamb, 2004; Warden & Lin, 2000; Yashima, 2009). Ryan (2009) adds that learners may have a positive attitude towards the L2 community, but they do not have the particular desire to identify with the specific target language community and its culture.

The researchers (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009) have further argued that the particular L2 community of native speakers (Anglo-American) adopted by Gardner in his model does not reflect the changing nature of English-speaking people in the contemporary globalizing world. The increasing roles and uses of English in the rapidly globalizing EFL contexts have led many researchers in the field of L2 motivation (see Dörnyei, 2010; Lamb, 2016; Mackay, 2019) to support the argument that the traditional concept of integrativeness should be altered or redefined to make it useful for measuring L2 motivation in varied EFL contexts. In a similar vein, many applied linguists have recently suggested investigating L2 motivation from the perspectives of learners' psychological L2 selves and identities (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Ushioda, 2009 & Yashima, 2009).

## Theories of Possible Selves

Markus and Nurius' (1986) 'Possible selves,' is one of the pioneering works explaining the relationship between one's cognitive future images and motivation. It elaborates how human beings' possible selves determine their mental pictures of the future (goals, dreams, and aspirations) and, thereby, shape their conduct. Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that possible selves reflect individuals' thoughts of '*what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming.*' According to this distinction of possible selves, the first type of possible selves 'what they might become' refers to 'expected' or 'likely' selves (Carver, Reynolds, & Scheier, 1994). The second type 'what they would like to become' represents 'ideal or hoped-for' selves that may include 'the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the rich and admired self.' The third type 'what they are afraid of becoming' indicates

'feared selves' that one would not like to become and may include 'the alone self, the depressed self,... or the bag lady self' (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In this way, the second and third types constitute the best and worst cases, respectively, while the first type is the default option for individuals (Dörnyei, 2009).

Although possible selves are an individual's future images based on his/her desires, fantasies, and fears, they are strongly influenced by his/her socio-cultural and historical contexts, life-time experiences, role models, and significant others (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Similarly, Oyserman and James (2009) maintain that an individual may have many desired and feared selves that are closely associated with his/her social roles and identities. Hamman et al., (2010) add that 'because possible selves are thought to be created within the parameters of an individual's social context, projections of the self are likely derived from what is valued, or perceived to be valued, within an individual's specific social experiences' (p. 1349). Because of their primary role of guiding human behavior, possible selves are also known as future self-guides.

Besides, Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) maintains that human beings become motivated to achieve their future self-guides (ideal, ought) or, in other words, to find a condition where they are now, or actual-selves are transformed into their possible selves. Therefore, 'motivation in this sense involves the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's actual self and the projected behavioral standards of the ideal/ought selves' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011: 82). While revisiting this theory, Lanvers (2016) proposed a self-discrepancy model for language learners focusing on a dynamic interaction between L2 selves.

### **Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves**

Dörnyei's (2009: 9) L2 Motivational Self System – so far validated in various L2 contexts (see Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Islam et al., 2013; Mackay, 2019; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) - includes two self-related components, Ideal L2 self and Ought-to L2 self, to explain the motivation of L2 learners in various contemporary contexts. Dörnyei's (2005) concept of 'L2 Ideal self' emerges from the notion of 'ideal self' that portrays a range of qualities and aspirations one would like to own. He asserts that the ideal self can be an influential motivating factor provided the person one inspires to become is proficient in L2. It presents 'the promotion of a hoped-for future self' (MacIntyre et al., 2009) and includes both 'integrative and internalized instrumental motives' (Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei (2009) has also proposed that the traditional concept of integrativeness can also be reinterpreted as 'the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self. This presents the Ideal L2 self as a more comprehensive and explanatory concept, which may also include other factors, e.g., internalized instrumental motives, possibly transforming into integratively motivated behavior.

'Ought-to self' manifests one's inclination to develop certain qualities or skills to prevent adverse outcomes (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). In the domain of L2 motivation, it may be understood as one's decision to learn an L2 to save oneself from any adverse consequences resulting from the lack of L2 knowledge in the future. It also incorporates those aspects of an individual's future

self, which other people (such as parents, family, friends) are perceived to desire for her/him. Therefore, it 'bears little resemblance to the person's desires and wishes' (Dörnyei et al., 2006). This kind of motivational aspect is primarily extrinsic and preventional in nature (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Some researchers (Islam et al., 2013; Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011; Taguchi et al., 2009) have argued that Ought-to L2 self may play a more prominent role in Asian L2 contexts owing to the crucial impact of family and significant others in Asian cultures.

Certain conditions are considered to be necessary to exploit future selves' motivational potential (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Oyserman & James, 2009). Dörnyei (2009) and Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have identified specific conditions that may be useful. First, a productive future self should be developed/elaborated and clear because insufficient details or a blurred mental picture of a future self may curtail its motivational capacity. Secondly, future selves can only generate a desired motivational impact if they are really in line with an individual's given circumstances. An impractical or unreasonable image of a future self may not inspire people to take practical steps to achieve it. Thirdly, a future self that is *too likely* to be achieved may lead to limited efforts.

Fourthly, future selves should not be dormant, and instead, they need to be activated adequately within the *working memory* of an individual. Fifthly, the future vision of self may work more effectively if accompanied by appropriate plans and *self-regulatory strategies*. Finally, there should not be a clash between an ideal and ought-to self of an individual. The idealized image of an individual must be in harmony with her/his social responsibilities and identities to achieve their combined motivational effect.

The in-depth scrutiny of the limited available literature shows that Pakistani learners' motivational orientations are multi-faceted, complex. There are also multiple geo-political, socio-economic, and global influences that shape Pakistani learners' L2 motivation. Overall, there is a stable co-existence of both instrumental and integrative orientations among Pakistani learners. However, the distinction between these orientations is quite obscure (Shahbaz and Liu, 2012; Islam et al., 2013) that questions the traditional notion of instrumental-Integrative dichotomy proposed by Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985). This led Shahbaz and Liu (2012) and Islam et al. (2013) to argue that the concept of integrativeness may not be useful to understand the L2 motivation of Pakistani multilingual people. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring and explaining the L2 motivation of Pakistani learners from the perspective of future selves. For this purpose, the survey primarily aims to answer the following questions:

### **Research Questions**

- What are the aspects/dimensions of Future L2 Selves of Pakistani undergraduate students from Central Punjab?
- What are socio-contextual factors that shape the Future L2 selves of Pakistani students?

## **Methodology**

As this study aims to explore in detail various aspects of Future L2 Selves of Pakistani students, the qualitative method seemed to be an appropriate choice because of its capacity to render in-depth information about an issue. This may also uncover various socio-contextual factors that shape these learners' future selves. The qualitative method may also be useful as it may help us to analyze the students' multiple and dynamic identities (Ushioda, 2009), which may be crucial to the development of their future L2 selves. The selection of semi-structured interviews as a tool for this study was based on the belief that it may provide the researchers with the necessary space to seek detailed views of the participants in a flexible manner.

Following Zentner and Renaud's (2007) claim that sound visions of a future self do not develop before adolescence, Dörnyei (2009) suggested that 'the self approach may not be appropriate for pre-secondary students'. Therefore, we decided to take a sample of undergraduate students from public sector universities of central Punjab for this study, as these students may be considered mature enough to formulate and express their future selves. Their long-term English language learning experience (at least eight years) at various stages and contexts (Primary and secondary schools, universities), and the needs of future career may put them in a better position to explain their desires and attitudes to learn English. These grown-up learners were also assumed to have a better understanding of complex socio-cultural and family influences/pressure affecting their L2 motivation and future selves compared to younger students (Zentner & Renaud, 2007).

Initially, the first author telephoned 35 students who had showed their willingness to be interviewed during a previous study based on the survey. Among them, twenty students, both male and female, were interviewed after ensuring their consent and early availability. The interview guide was prepared and piloted to ensure that its questions were easy to understand for the target sample; convey the meanings intended; 'elicit sufficiently rich data'; and 'do not dominate the flow of the conversation' (Dörnyei, 2007) or challenge the interviewee in any other way. Thematic analysis procedures (Codes – categories - themes) were used to examine the data in detail.

## **Data analysis and findings**

The findings here present not only various aspects of participants' future L2 selves but also the possible socio-economic details which shape these selves. The data revealed a strong presence among participants of the idealized personal visions of their future lives as well as a realization of future obligations towards significant others and society.

## **Ideal L2 Self Related Future Visions**

The interviewees seemed to possess sharp and bright visions of ideal selves. Most of them had more than one choice of a future career in line with their current educational achievements. Among the most cherished dreams of these students were appearing in different competitive

examinations to get hold of prestigious civil services, working as a university teacher, engineer, lawyer, journalist, TV presenter, psychologist, and securing some executive position in esteemed national and multinational organizations. Also, thirteen out of twenty participants wished to pursue higher/research studies (MPhil and Ph.D.) before or after joining their dream future career/s, and most of them wanted to go abroad for this purpose. Overall, the participants also had fair ideas of their second or third choices if they fail to achieve their first choice of career. As interviewee (J) said:

*I want to be a lawyer [of International Law] of International Law. If, for some reason, I fail to achieve that, then I will go for civil service. Failure of that will leave me with no option but to go for journalism.*

The participants were fully aware of the fact that access to their future ideal careers is also dependent on their knowledge of English. For example, interviewee (G), while commenting about the role of English in becoming a successful professional in any of his ideal careers, said:

*I would say that even if I go for any job, I believe because of my English's excellent communication skills, I would be closer to my boss. My boss would give me much exposure, ok you give the presentation, ok you should handle this because English has given me the confidence and English matters a lot in our country. For example, let's talk about jobs generally, nowadays, in employment, we do give presentations on PowerPoint. They are all in English. I believe my boss would prefer a person who can better communicate in English.*

Another prominent feature of students' future vision was the idealizations portrayed by female interviewees. Their aspirations for future career and life, in general, were identical to those of male participants, reflecting the changing social norms in Pakistan society. The following three statements expressed by female participants from different academic fields reflect this point:

*At first, I will go for MPhil . . . then even Ph.D. After that, I want to be a professional lady till the end of my life. (Interviewee E)*

*After ten years, I would like to see myself as a working woman. Perhaps I would be in civil service. (Interviewee F)*

*In the next ten years, I see myself in an executive position in a multinational company... [want to go on a] world tour and enjoying sites of historical places, especially Egypt. (Interviewee I)*

Their desire to seek higher education, lead a thorough professional life, or travel around the world is an indication of their effort to enter into the male-dominated lifestyles in Pakistani society and reflective of their contemporary empowerment. It is a clear break from the past where most Pakistani women, even educated ones, were expected to restrict themselves to household or less mobile local jobs primarily.



Adding to these future career aspirations, some dreams related to personality and outlook lead both male and female students to learn English as an essential trait of their ideal future selves. English is, they believe, a passport to professional supremacy and helps them acquire essential personality traits that would make their perfect self-well-groomed in social communication and manners. They see English as an important tool for 'shaping up [their] personality,' or acquire vital 'social learning' (Interviewee J). Their personality-related future aspirations involve improvements in personal outlook, communication methods, confidence level, amicability, or popularity. Interviewee (H) expressed that 'the biggest benefit [of knowing English] is that confidence level is boosted.' Similarly, interviewee (E) further illustrated this point and talked about various advantages of English:

*It adds to your confidence a lot. Like, at first, people have a view [outer impression], is she impressive? Confidence is [the] basic requirement to get it... You go even in a restaurant you meet those people who are always speaking English. You will have a menu in English. You have cards in English, invitations, messages, everything. It's overwhelming in our life.*

### **Concreteness and Practicality of the Ideal Visions of Future**

Most of the interviewees seem to have clear visions of their future L2 selves and have fair ideas about how to achieve them. They even had action plans or strategies to reach their future goals, which indicates the realistic nature of future aspirations. For example, an aspiring candidate of civil service (Interviewee J) reveals a general idea about the skills and knowledge he needs to get through the entrance examination, written and oral, and become an officer:

*You need not only English but also a comprehensive knowledge of world affairs, current affairs, and local affairs in your country. ... and you also need to have perfect English for the interview.*

We can see that the interviewees' ideal future selves are not disorderly ideas or aimless fantasies; instead, these are purposeful and passionate pursuits. An interviewee who is planning to become a researcher explains his quest thus:

*I am going to research the production of Bio-diesel. It has higher applications and higher support in Europe. So, that's why I prefer to go to these countries...I am looking for the scholarships currently, I am preparing for GRE, IELTS, and TOEFL. (Interviewee N)*

Similarly, a student who wishes to be a university teacher had already identified the places where his future profession can bring in maximum economic benefits. As he mentioned that 'I would teach English, and I would try to get a good job in Middle East Asian countries because they give good money' (Interviewee G).

## **Ideal L2 Selves and National Interest**

During interviews, there were various instances when a strong sense of national interest became evident concerning the participants' ideal L2 selves. Prominent among these instances was to find some interviewees relating their future career choices to some national or collective aspiration. For example, the interviewee's (J) choice to become an international lawyer was closely related to his desire to present his country's case on international forums and safeguard collective national interests:

*I was told about International law and how Pakistan needs international lawyers to represent Pakistan or the case of Pakistan in the UN.... So there is a need. I want to be a successful lawyer, and country need[s] that too.*

Similarly, another interviewee's (H) desire to go abroad for higher studies is coupled with his aim to engage in cultural dialogue and knowledge sharing with the natives. On his return from abroad, he proposes to share his experience and knowledge with his people so that they may benefit from it and contribute to the more substantial interest of the society. He described his plans this way:

*I will go abroad for further studies and want to know the difference between them and our culture. I will prefer to come back and educate our people so that we can flourish also. (Interviewee H)*

The future aspirations of another participant (B) also involve personal and collective reasons as he wishes to go abroad not only for higher education but also to promote his local culture and to become an ambassador of peace between Pakistani people and the rest of world:

*I want to be a sort of bridge between Pakistani people and those foreigners. I want to shun their doubts. I want to be a peace promoter.... There are everyday things we can share. We should come on those points.*

The statements mentioned above present a potent combination of personal and collective goals.

## **Ought-to L2 Self Related Beliefs**

The analysis revealed that all participants seemed to possess strong ought-to selves framed by their future responsibilities, fears of career, social status, personal image, and expectations of significant others. Both male and female interviewees displayed a general sense of urgency for learning English owing to the understanding of the negative consequences of not absorbing it properly. For example, the following statement shows us this mindset; 'I think English is the first and foremost thing to learn. It is binding on everybody to learn English to survive in the current scenario. This is what I believe' (Interviewee H).

Likewise, a female interviewee (F) said, 'It is important to know the language in which all the things are being provided to you and by which you are given the label of a good status.' She further added, 'if you have to be something, if you want to be something, if you have to gain some status, you have to learn English, know English, and without this, you are nowhere.' Here is another participant's account of fears and predicted future loss, if she fails to acquire necessary communicative skills in English:

*I think I don't have any future. I don't go anywhere. I can't do anything. I can't survive. I can't have my dreams. There won't be any fulfillment of them because it is a mode of communication that is necessarily required everywhere, whether you are in Pakistan or anywhere. (Interviewee E)*

Similarly, participant (H) expressed his fear related to success in future career; 'I will [be] left far behind from my other partners or colleagues.' These statements provide strong evidence of the prevention-orientation of the ought-to self, e.g., the fear of failure, thinking of the possible consequences, and stopping bad things.

Their answers to my probes helped us understand the nature and specific aspects of their ought-to selves, which were based on expectations of significant others, fears of a future career, self-image, and broader social pressures. In this regard, most of the participants expressed that they would not be considered as educated/learned by others if they fail to learn and speak English. For example, Interviewee (A) said, 'Much knowledge is produced in the English language, and if a person is unable to understand English, how can he be a learned man.' The views of other participants strongly endorsed this view as they believed that the people speaking English grab more public attention, and their words are thought more valuable and severe than those speaking other languages:

*There is a difference because when some people speak English, we take them as intellectuals while others speak [local languages], make fun of them, or don't take them seriously. (Interviewee I)*

This broader social attitude drives young students to learn English to see themselves counted as educated and well-respected members of Pakistani society. The Pakistani education system itself makes English an essential pre-requisite for becoming an educated person because most of the higher education in Pakistan is dispensed in this language, as the interviewee (I) suggested, 'intellectuals do communicate in English. See all our work on a high level. Our project and thesis are in English. If you know English only then you can do it'. However, a couple of participants questioned (while also endorsing its importance indirectly) the appropriateness of this broader social behavior of seeing English as a criterion for somebody's erudition and social standing. For example, interviewee (N) said:

*They [English speaking people of Pakistan] are getting more importance. There is a trend, but I don't prefer English being a standard to categorize people for their educational purposes or their social respect.*

All participants, except one (Interviewee P), also feared that the lack of English language knowledge would affect their social image, personal growth, and outlook and lead to social neglect. They believe that excellent communication skills, especially in English, are essential to present their point of view and image. A strong presence of ought-to self-related beliefs echoed in the following words of a participant uttered while expressing his views regarding the disadvantages of not learning English:

*I think the first disadvantage is that your personality doesn't groom. You are deteriorated in the class, in the society, and you are not good enough to communicate better, and you are not quite expressive and the other things. Another person will think that he doesn't know anything. (Interviewee H)*

The statement reveals that English language skills are essential traits of these students' perceived future personalities, which they wish to see more successful and likable in the broader social context. Another participant (A) reinforced this point in the following words:

*If you are living with the people who are very much qualified [and], you are not communicating in English. You see [an] inferiority complex in your personality that they are speaking very fluently and look at me not able to converse even a single thing.*

The statement reveals an intense fear that a lack of English skills may develop an inferiority complex or flaw in his future personality. As mentioned above, the findings show those social pressures and realities which affect or even control the making of these students' ought-to beliefs. Most of the participants acknowledged that these social factors are mediated by significant others - parents, family, and friends. This paternalistic intervention by significant others was noticed more prominently among those who were more expressive about the presence of broader external social factors. For example, a student (Interviewee F) informed what her father usually advises her regarding the learning of English:

*He says that if you want to be a right and successful person, you should know the English. If you're going to interact with people, if you're going to be something, if you want status in society, you have to know English.*

The statement shows how parents transfer the awareness of social needs and pressures to the children. Similarly, when asked whether people/acquaintances/colleagues inspired him to learn English, an interviewee (R) said, 'I don't think so that they inspire, but they realize me that it is important.' His efforts to learn English are indeed directed towards seeking some kind of social validation. In some cases, students' future obligations and social fears are intermixed and reflect each other. Another student's (Interviewee E) account of possible disadvantages of not learning English showed this combination:

*At first, inferiority complex because we are, I think, mentally impressed by this. It is all-encompassing in all fields of life. Then my parents even they will not regard me anything. They will not consider me.*

When asked, all participants agreed to the point that their family members would be disappointed with them if they fail to acquire enough English language skills. As interviewee (I) said, 'My parents, my family, will be disappointed if I fail to learn English and suffer in my future career. Some of them also added that people other than immediate family members, e.g., friends and uncles might also be disappointed in such a situation. Overall, we have seen that participants appeared afraid of letting down their families, which implies that future responsibilities also influenced their future selves.

### **The Combination of Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves**

The image of a professionally successful and socially respectable person seems to be these participants' own ideal and social necessity, which would be impossible to achieve without the knowledge of English. As interviewee (J) opined in answer to an inquiry regarding his fears about any student who fails to learn English in the coming years, 'I don't think then you can be respectable enough in your society because respect comes with knowledge and that knowledge is mostly in English.' We have seen that the notions of 'respect' and 'knowledge' are a part of their ideal as well as of their ought-to selves mediated by external factors. Similar to this statement, there are numerous examples, among participants' comments, which illustrate their ought-to L2 selves supporting ideal L2 selves. On certain occasions, these future selves become so intermixed that it appears extremely difficult to present a cut and dried distinction between them. When I asked some students about the relevance of English in their life beyond career aspirations, in this hypothetical situation, their answers were blended with both ideal and socially fueled motivations, as the following statement indicates:

*Even if I cannot get any of these aims, I am existing, confidence will be there, self-respect will be there and with that outlook of life, that mode of communication, that level of frankness with others, it will be myself nobody can snatch it.*

(Interviewee E)

The factors of confidence, self-respect, the outlook of life and mode of communication in this statement may be driven internally but are governed by social and external elements. Even if we remove the motive of participants' future career aspirations, their relation to English is still strong and full of internal and external references.

### **Discussion**

Their idealized versions of self were quite clear and realistic, keeping in mind their current educational status and career planning. They showed a detailed understanding of the means (e.g., tests, interviews, public and interpersonal relations, scholarships) and skills (e.g., English language communication skills) necessary to achieve their dreamed career positions and future progress. They were also apparently aware of the traits that can make their future personalities confident, socially amicable, and professionally successful. This leads us to argue that these participants are highly motivated to learn English since the construction of elaborated and plausible (likely) ideal selves is a necessary precondition to achieve maximum motivational

effectiveness (Dörnyei, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 2009). The finding that some participants had action plans and were already working on them to materialize their ideal visions also confirmed their ideal L2 selves. This is in line with Dörnyei's (2009, also see Oyseman et al., 2006) argument that 'effective future self-guides need to come as part of a 'package,' consisting of an imagery component and a repertoire of appropriate plans, scripts, and self-regulatory strategies). Some participants had even identified the contexts (local and international) where their future selves would be quickly realized because of the enabling environment.

The data reflected that ought-to L2 beliefs (e.g., personal fears, future obligations, expectations of significant others, social pressures, and needs) might be a powerful motivational force for these learners. The participants showed an overwhelming sense of urgency to learn English to avoid any loss and fulfill future responsibilities. The role of significant others in the making of participants' ought-to L2 self is similar to the findings of some quantitative studies (e.g., Kormos, et al., 2011, Csizér & Kormos, 2009, Taguchi, et al., 2009, Islam, et al., 2013). From a contextual perspective, this may be explained by the fact that most of these Pakistani students rely heavily on their families for moral and economic support. Because of a robust conventional family system in Pakistani society, these English learners also remain well-connected to their families and cherish their value systems and norms. Therefore, they feel a sense of responsibility to meet the expectations of their families. This is in line with Kormos et al. 's (2011) argument that '[f]or the majority of language learners, and even for young adults, parents and the family are the mediators of the societal and cultural values and norms' and may affect their self-concepts. Overall, it also supports the view that Ought-to L2 self may be a more congruent factor in Asian societies where the influence of families and significant others in the lives of young people is greater than western nations (Kormos et al., 2011).

The details of the data also revealed that participants' ideal L2 selves were strongly related to and supported by their ought-to selves. There were many instances where their desire to learn English for perfect visions of the future seemed to be integrated with a need to find social status and validation and a strong realization of social responsibilities. These details reinforce the findings of Islam et al. (2013) about the mutual relation of ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The interrelation of Ideal and Ought-to selves is a positive indicator, because previous studies have suggested that 'harmony between the ideal and ought selves' is an essential condition for maximizing their 'motivational impact' and to induce people to make desired efforts to achieve their goals (Dörnyei, 2009). The result is also in line with Oyserman et al. 's (2006) argument that the idealized and ought-to future selves are not necessarily in opposition. This suggests that these Pakistani students have internalized the fears of any adverse consequences resulting from the failure to learn English as well as the expectations of significant others, which seems to have contributed to the making of their ideal L2 selves. This finding is similar to the one found in Iran (Papi, 2010). It leads us to believe that societies where social pressures, family, or significant others play a critical role in learners' academic choices and achievements, L2 learners 'may internalize the social standards and ideals endorsed by their society or significant others as their ideal selves.'

The study also supports the argument that English related personal and national motives of the participants may be closely related to each other (see Islam et al., 2013) owing to their idealistic nature. However, further investigations, both quantitative and qualitative, may be needed in other global contexts to analyze the relationship between National Interest and Ideal L2 self.

## **Conclusion**

The study shows that the participants have clear and realistic future L2 selves keeping in mind

the strength of their visions and action plans to achieve these selves. Such future selves may generate greater motivational intensity and impact. English is, they believe, not only a passport to professional supremacy but may also help them to acquire essential personality traits that would make their ideal self complete and socially groomed. Interestingly, the motivational influences of Ought-to L2 selves also appeared to be reliable. Their ought-to selves were primarily based on the expectations of significant others, fears of future career, self-image, and broader social pressures.

The intensity and range of ought-to beliefs that emerged in the data were much higher than those usually included in the questionnaire items related to the construct of Ought-to L2 self (see Islam et al., 2013). There was enough evidence in the data to conclude that students were fully aware of the negative consequences that may accrue to them if they fail to learn English. There were also various personal fears (e.g., psychological states of inferiority complex, loss of self-respect, self-confidence, and personality image) and broader social pressures, compelling them to do what society approves of (e.g., search for social validation), not included in questionnaire items. It can be proposed that the scope of the Ought-to L2 self scale is broadened in future studies in the Pakistani context and perhaps in other societies sharing some of these collectivist social features. Such a reformulation of Ought-to L2 self may make it more suitable for various L2 backgrounds and reveal its improved contribution to L2 learners' motivated behavior. The need to reformulate Ought-to L2 self items also came forward in other studies (Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Lamb, 2012).

Language teachers may understand and develop classroom techniques and activities for strengthening the motivational effects of their pupils' visions of the future. For example, they may formulate a 'cohesive learner group[s]' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) of the students with similar visions of future to create a motivational atmosphere in classrooms and set particular learning goals for each group. Even strong future selves may not always be active in people's consciousness (Dörnyei, 2009; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992), the teachers may always remind their pupils about their future aspirations to activate their future L2 selves in their working memories.

Besides, Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2013) suggested that teachers may develop intervention or training programs for their pupils to know about, construct and strengthen their future selves. These intervention programs may involve complex activities, e.g., pupils' interviews, or simple activities, e.g., asking pupils to draw a future self's tree or write a narrative about their possible future selves and their role in pupils' lives. The use of 'guided imagery' may

also be an important instrument for 'establishing new desired future selves' and 'strengthening the already existing vision' (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2013). Teachers may also introduce the motivational strategy of near-peer role models (NPRMs) - 'peers who are close to our social, professional and age level which we may respect and admire' for some reason' (Murphey, 1998) - to motivate L2 learners in their classrooms. The NPRMs may increase learners' L2 confidence because of their great psychological attraction. This is based mainly on the argument that NPRMs have similarities (e.g., age, context, career choice) with learners, who may find it easy to understand and imitate their nearest role model's ways of success (ibid). This is also in line with an essential proposition of social learning that 'imitation is more likely when we see the similarity between the model and ourselves' (Weiten, Lloyd, Dunn, & Hammer, 2008).

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