

## **Transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves and their impacts on L2 writing enjoyment and integrated writing performance**

### **Abstract**

Second language (L2) writers' motivation and emotion is a flourishing area in L2 writing education research; however, there is a dearth of literature on L2 writers' motivational and emotional responses to integrated writing (IW) tasks, particularly in a bilingual context. With a sample of 239 first-year English major students at a Chinese university, the present study investigates the relationship between ideal first language (L1) and L2 writing selves and how they may contribute to L2 IW enjoyment and task performance. Path analysis results report a relationship of transfer between ideal L1 and L2 writing selves, as well as their positive associations with L2 writing enjoyment and L2 IW performance. Further, the indirect path from ideal L1 writing self to L2 IW performance via ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment was evident. This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, we include IW tasks in the existing research on ideal self and L2 writing. Second, we affirm that the transfer between L1 and L2 may concern not only linguistic capabilities and learning strategies, but also students' personal beliefs about language learning. Pedagogical suggestions are made based on the findings.

**Keywords:** ideal L1 writing self; ideal L2 writing self; L2 writing enjoyment; L2 integrated writing performance

## 1. Introduction

Motivation plays a crucial role in second language (L2) writing education. Students with a high level of motivation are inclined to spend more time on and hold more positive attitudes to studying L2 writing (Yu & Jiang, 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Emotion is another affective and psychological variable related to L2 writing, which can cognitively motivate students, guide their attention, and determine the amount of effort and perseverance they put into writing exercises (Han & Hiver, 2018). Ideal L2 self is a motivational factor that has received extensive research attention in L2 education. In the area of L2 writing, students' ideal L2 writing selves may significantly shape their learning processes and outcomes (e.g., Jang & Lee, 2019; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). A prominent feature of ideal L2 self is its close relationship with positive emotions in L2 learning, such as enjoyment (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Students with positive ideal L2 selves are more likely to enjoy learning a language (Teimouri, 2017), and this finding has been confirmed in the L2 independent writing learning context (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021).

Integrated writing (IW) is a hybrid task that requires students to combine different language skills and compose an essay based on diverse source materials. IW has been widely used in large-scale language assessment programs, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) Assessment, as well as various school-based language assessment programs (Author, 2021a; Author, 2021b). Although research on motivation and emotion in L2 writing learning has proliferated over the past decade, the IW task has not received enough attention in this connection. Given the increasing popularity of IW tasks in various language assessment programs around the globe, it is warranted to examine students' motivational and emotional factors, as well as their impacts on IW

performance, because the influences of motivational factors may vary on different writing activities (Kim & Kim, 2021). It is necessary to investigate whether ideal L2 writing selves may also lead to joyful learning experiences and better IW writing performance.

In addition, we are interested in whether students' ideal first language (L1) writing selves may transfer to ideal L2 writing selves, as L2 writing is an activity that is interwoven with students' social, cultural, and educational contexts (Kormos, 2012). It is highly possible that students' inherent L1 sociocultural environment may exert influences on their beliefs towards L2 writing learning. While existing research has established that L1 linguistic competence and learning strategies may transfer to L2 learning contexts (Cumming et al., 2016; Cummins, 2016), research on the transfer of students' personal beliefs regarding language learning is extremely limited. Therefore, in the context of tertiary level education in China, the present study aims to examine the transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves, as well as their impacts on L2 writing enjoyment and L2 IW performance.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1 Ideal L2 self and enjoyment in L2 education*

The notion of ideal self is grounded in the possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) frameworks. Ideal L2 self is the learner's ideal image of the type of L2 user they aspire to become in the future (Dörnyei, 2009). It is assumed that a discrepancy between language learners' actual selves and desired future selves will lead to a sense of discomfort which, in turn, motivates students to minimize the psychological gap (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Teimouri, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2021). Over the past decade, ideal L2 self has been found to be a strong predictor of L2 achievement (e.g., Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Papi & Teimouri, 2014) and positive emotions in L2 learning, for instance, L2 enjoyment (e.g.,

Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Teimouri, 2017).

L2 enjoyment has been theorized as the individual state of experiencing the feeling of joy in language learning (Khajavy et al., 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Teimouri (2017) added that L2 enjoyment can refer to “positive emotions that language learners experience in the process of learning or using the target language either within the boundary of a specific instructional context or in authentic real-life situations” (p. 9). The close relationships between ideal L2 self, enjoyment, and L2 achievement have been well documented in the literature. For instance, Papi and Khajavy (2021) carried out an investigation into the hypothesized relationships among ideal L2 self, enjoyment, eager L2 use, and L2 achievement with a sample of 324 Iranian university L2 English learners. Their structural equation modeling results illustrated that ideal L2 self positively predicted L2 enjoyment, which resulted in eager L2 use; in addition, more eager L2 use contributed to higher L2 achievement. In another study conducted with 161 English-major students at a prestigious university in China, Jiang and Papi (2022) observed that focusing on one’s aims or desires (ideal L2 self) can naturally lead to less attention being paid to fears of negative outcomes and more attention to promotion-focused emotion, such as enjoyment.

Despite the abundant literature on ideal L2 self and enjoyment in general L2 education, research concerning specific language skills, such as writing, is still sparse. To the best of our knowledge, only one published study systematically examines the relationship between ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment, and their effects on L2 writing achievement. With a sample of 85 Iranian university-level English major students, Tahmouresi and Papi (2021) observed positive associations between ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment and achievement; however, L2 writing enjoyment was not related to L2 writing achievement. Their findings “suggest that the motivational strength of the future L2 selves can also be extended to

the L2 writing context” (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021, p. 10).

Note that the writing task used by Tahmouresi and Papi (2021) was the traditional independent writing task. It is necessary to investigate whether the findings can be replicated in the context of IW, a writing task that has been gaining popularity in language assessment and education. When completing IW tasks, students must first read several passages and decide on their relevance to the writing topic, based on which they can develop their own ideas. During the writing process, students must also constantly go back to the reading materials to retrieve useful information. IW is thus an extremely burdensome task that imposes high demands on students’ comprehensive linguistic and cognitive competence. It is highly likely that students may be troubled by various negative feelings and emotions in the writing process. Therefore, it is necessary to identify potential motivational factors and positive emotions that may support students’ IW learning.

## *2.2 Integrated writing task*

Originating from communicative language teaching, IW often deploys writing in collaboration with other language modalities, including reading and/or listening (Author, 2021b; Cumming, 2013). In completing IW tasks, students are required to identify, select, and synthesize information from source materials, transforming the language used in the sources and following stylistic criteria for source citation (Knoch & Sitajalabhorn, 2013; Payant et al., 2019). Notably, IW goes beyond the simple combination of independent language skills; rather, different skills exert a diverse range of influences on writing performance. Authors (2018) reported that reading played a more important role than listening in predicting IW performance. As such, the present study centers on the reading-to-write IW task, mirroring high-stakes international tests and authentic university writing assessment, where students are expected to

comprehend information from reading materials and integrate it into compositions (Payant et al., 2019).

Existing research on IW focuses primarily on students' language skills and source use in the completion of IW tasks (e.g., Author, 2021a, 2021b; Plakans & Gebriel, 2012). Only a few studies have explored the role of individual differences in IW performance ( e.g., Teng & Zhang, 2018; Wilby, 2020). For example, Teng and Zhang (2018) examined the effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance with data collected from 512 Chinese undergraduate students, and confirmed the positive effects of motivational self-regulation strategies in IW learning. Beyond motivational constructs, emotion is another learner-related factor that has been found to influence students' IW performance. Interestingly, researchers seem to focus on negative emotions, probably because IW is a highly demanding writing task that may provoke negative emotional reactions in students, for instance, anxiety. With a sample of 111 undergraduate EFL students at a public, English-medium university in Canada, Payant et al. (2019) investigated the impacts of individual differences on L2 English writers' performance on a CAEL Assessment IW task and found that writing anxiety was a significant, negative predictor of CAEL writing band scores.

Despite the insightful findings cited above, research on the influence of individual differences on L2 IW performance is still limited. As IW is a more challenging writing task that tests students' comprehensive cognitive and linguistic competences (Author, 2021a; Author, 2021b), it is necessary to explore possible motivational factors (e.g., ideal self) and positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment) that can inspire students to make strong efforts in IW learning. In particular, it would be interesting to investigate the role played by ideal L1 self in motivating students to study L2 IW, as L1 sociocultural constructs may transfer to L2 writing learning.

### *2.3 The possible transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves*

Cummins' (1979) linguistic interdependence and linguistic threshold theory has sparked growing interest in the link between L1 and L2 skills. According to the theory, cognitive and academic improvement of L2 skills can be achieved only on the basis of well-developed L1 skills, known as L1 and L2 transfer. In the field of L2 writing, the literature reports positive transfers from L1 to L2 in composing strategies and linguistic knowledge (Author, 2021a; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Savage et al., 2017; Shum et al., 2016). For instance, Mu and Carrington (2007) investigated the writing process and strategies of three Chinese postgraduate students at an Australian higher education institution and pointed out that L2 writers transferred metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies between languages positively. With a sample of 322 Chinese secondary school students, Author (2021a) observed that L1 reading competence was positively associated with L1 and L2 IW performance, and that there was also cross-language transfer from L1 IW to L2 IW. In addition to composing strategies and linguistic knowledge, psychological factors may also play a part in L1 and L2 transfer (Karim & Nassaji, 2013); however, research in this area is extremely limited, particularly in IW education.

According to Kormos (2012), L2 writing is an activity that constantly interacts with social, cultural, and educational contexts, leading to different values reflected in students' compositions. Thus, learners' beliefs regarding L2 writing, such as ideal L2 writing self, may be shaped by their inherent L1 linguistic, cultural, and social environment. As an early attempt, Yu and Jiang (2021) analyzed the influence of L1 sociocultural environment on 27 Chinese university students' ideal L2 writing selves through individual interviews and written reflections. Students in this study did not dream about writing like a native English speaker; rather, they wished to keep their "Chinglish" as long as their writing met the objective of effective

communication. The authors attributed this discouraging finding to the examination-oriented culture in China and indicated that Chinese university students seemed to be reluctant to accept their “identity as a multilingual writer” (Yu & Jiang, 2021, p. 1). Note that the L1 sociocultural context in Yu and Jiang (2021) centered on the contemporary learning environment, while students’ ideal selves concern their imagined images of successful language users in the future. In the modern globalized multilingual world, L2 learners’ ideal selves are likely shaped by their bicultural identities (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). In an early, exploratory study with a sample of 219 Indonesian junior high school L2 English learners, Lamb (2004) observed that certain bicultural students may aspire to “a vision of an English-speaking globally-involved but nationally responsible future self” (p. 16). As such, we expect that students’ image of themselves as a future expert L1 writer may contribute, or transfer, to their aspiration to be a fluent L2 writer. Empirical research is warranted to provide evidence for this argument. Research results could contribute to the literature on L1 and L2 transfer and provide new perspectives for motivating students in L2 learning.

#### *2.4 The present study*

The present study focuses on the relationships among ideal L1 and L2 writing selves, L2 writing enjoyment, and L2 IW performance, investigating how the transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves may influence L2 writing enjoyment and L2 IW performance. Specifically, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How do students' L1 and L2 ideal writing selves predict their L2 IW enjoyment and performance?
2. How does L2 IW enjoyment mediate the relationships between L1 and L2 ideal writing selves and L2 IW performance?



### 3. Research method

#### 3.1 Context and participants

As part of a larger project investigating Chinese university students' L1 Chinese and L2 English IW performance, we recruited 239 first-year English major students (Mean<sub>age</sub> = 19.15, SD = 0.79; 88.3% female) from a regular university in southeast China. The average English learning experience for these students was 10.9 (SD = 1.69) years, and their mean score of English test on the national College Entrance Examination was 120.77 (SD = 8.67) out of 150, indicating that they had a high intermediate or above level of general English proficiency. Chinese language was included in their curriculum as a required course for the whole academic year. In each semester, students had 16 Chinese classes (90 minutes per each class) where they learned advanced Chinese reading and writing skills. Participation in this study was voluntary and was not compensated. Procedures for the study were approved by the institutional review board of our university.

#### 3.2 Instruments

The questionnaire used in the present study consisted of two sections. The first section collected data on demographic variables, such as gender and age; the second section measured students' opinions regarding their L1 and L2 writing on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (see Appendix A for a review). Based on Teimouri (2017) and Wong (2018), we created two parallel scales for ideal L1 and L2 writing selves. Example statements included: "I can imagine myself writing a Chinese essay very well (L1 scale, five items,  $\alpha = 0.83$  in this study)" and "I can imagine myself writing an English essay very well (L2 scale, five items,  $\alpha = 0.89$ )." The L2 writing enjoyment scale was adapted from Saito et al. (2018) and Teimouri (2017). Example statements included: "I feel very happy when I

am writing English” (five items,  $\alpha = 0.75$ ).

We developed the L2 English IW task (Appendix B) based on the Four Traits of Integrated Writing Competence developed by Author (2015). The topic of the task is the purity of the native language against the background of globalization. **We chose this writing topic as it is related to participants’ major.** The writing task consisted of four reading materials of approximately 502 words in total (including relevant and irrelevant passages on the topic) and a writing prompt. The four reading materials were: (a) a newspaper article introducing the current situation and stating that Chinese language is losing its purity; (b) a newspaper article presenting a conflicting stand that the use of foreign languages represents cultural exchange rather than cultural invasion; (c) a magazine article that provides a brief overview of language families around the world; and (d) an essay from a school textbook stating that the use of foreign words has emerged as an unstoppable trend in the modern age. The participants were required to compose an argumentative essay of approximately 200 words based on the provided reading materials. The scoring rubrics for the four traits of the writing task were adapted from Author (2015): contextual awareness, citation and synthesis, opinion and argument, and organization and expression (10 marks for each of the four traits, with six grades: 9–10, 7–8, 5–6, 3–4, 1–2, and 0). The scoring rubrics have been adopted in the IW literature (e.g., Authors, 2019; Author, 2021b). **The contents and difficulty level of the IW task were validated by one language assessment expert and two experienced lecturers including one who was the English teacher for the participants.**

The L2 English reading task contained three passages. The first, 447 words long, was on the topic of being “Academically Adrift in American Colleges and Universities.” The second contained 446 English words on the topic of “Deep Reading.” The third contained 449 English words discussing “Immigrants in America.” These topics and lengths were validated as

appropriate by experienced university lecturers during focus group meetings. Each passage was followed by four to six multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The items were developed based on the Six Reading Types framework (Author, 2005; Authors, 2019): *Retrieving* (R1), recalling explicitly stated information (3 items, 6 marks); *Explaining* (R2), paraphrasing specific words and sentences (3 items, 6 marks); *Summarizing* (R3), summarizing the main idea of the text and unraveling the interrelationships of the content (3 items, 8 marks); *Elaborating* (R4), inferring implicit meanings (3 items, 8 marks); *Evaluating* (R5), appraising and critiquing content, language form, and textual elements (2 items, 8 marks); and *Creating* (R6), generating new solutions to problems in the text (2 items, 8 marks).

### *3.3 Data collection*

The IW task and questionnaires were administered to the participants with the assistance of their classroom teachers. Students first finished the IW task (one hour), and then responded to the questionnaire (10 minutes) and completed the reading task (45 minutes). They had a 10-minute interval between completing each task and the questionnaire.

Two experienced raters provided analytic ratings based on the IW scoring rubric. Prior to scoring, two meetings were organized to familiarize the raters with the rubrics. We then provided 30 examples of writing of different quality for discussion and trial marking. Before formal rating, one additional meeting was organized to address the disagreements and uncertainties between the two raters. The inter-rater reliability of the four traits ranged from .77 to .87.

### *3.4 Data analysis*

We used SPSS version 22.0 to conduct preliminary analyses, including descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and bivariate correlations. We then used Mplus version 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to perform subsequent analyses. We first examined the construct

validity of the questionnaire using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Specifically, the items for ideal L1 writing self, ideal L2 writing self, and L2 writing enjoyment were loaded onto their respective factors. To rule out the possibility that ideal L1 and L2 writing selves may be one construct, we also tested an alternative model with items for ideal L1 and L2 writing selves loading onto the same factor.

Next, we created a theoretical path model (Figure 1) based on the literature. We took the sum of students' ideal L1 and L2 writing selves and L2 writing enjoyment for the analysis. As L2 writers' ideal selves were found to impact their L2 writing enjoyment that might in turn influence their L2 writing performance (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021), ideal L2 writing self was taken as the exogenous variable and L2 IW performance the endogenous variable, with L2 writing enjoyment as the mediator. In addition, owing to the potential transfer of opinions towards L1 and L2 ability and learning experiences (Author, 2021a; Savage et al., 2017; Shum et al., 2016), we added ideal L1 writing self to the model as another exogenous variable. We intended to examine whether the indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 IW performance via ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment was evident among Chinese university EFL writers. Finally, as reading competence plays an important role in IW performance, students' L2 reading competence was treated as the control variable in the model.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

Maximum likelihood estimators were used for all analyses. Several fit indices were checked, including the Chi-squared statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), comparative fit index (CFI; acceptable  $> .90$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; good  $< .06$ , acceptable  $< .08$ ), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR; acceptable  $< .08$ ) (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2016). The bootstrap approach was used with 5,000 samples to examine the mediating effect in

the model, and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) not including zero indicated a significant mediation effect.

#### 4. Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between primary variables are displayed in Table 1. The skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the data set for the present study reached acceptable levels of normality (Meyers et al., 2016).

[Insert Table 1 Here]

##### 4.1 CFA results

In the CFA model (Figure 2), the items measuring students' ideal L1 and L2 writing selves and L2 writing enjoyment were loaded onto their respective factors. Fit indices showed that this model was an acceptable fit for the data:  $\chi^2(87) = 253.936, p < .01$ , CFI = .909, RMSEA [90% CI] = .080[.077, .099], and SRMR = .071. Factor loadings for the 15 items ranged from .304 to .889, with most hovering around .80. Ideal L1 writing self was positively associated with ideal L2 writing self:  $r = .71, p < .001$ , and L2 writing enjoyment:  $r = .45, p < .001$ . Ideal L2 writing self was also positively related to L2 writing enjoyment,  $r = .60, p < .001$ .

[Insert Figure 2 Here]

We also examined an alternative model with ideal L1 and L2 writing selves items loading onto the same factor, which did not fit the data:  $\chi^2(89) = 443.989, p < .01$ , CFI = .806, RMSEA [90% CI] = .129[.117, .141], and SRMR = .082. In addition, the changes in Chi-squared values were significant between the two models:  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 190.053, p < .001$ , suggesting that loading ideal L1 and L2 writing selves items onto the same factor significantly changed model-data fit. These results confirm the construct validity of the three constructs of Chinese university EFL writers' ideal L1 and L2 writing selves and L2 writing enjoyment.

#### 4.2 Path analysis results

We finally examined the relationships between students' ideal L1 and L2 writing selves, L2 writing enjoyment, and L2 IW performance. While the RMSEA index for our path model was .116, higher than the .08 threshold, both the CFI (.973) and the SRMR (.045) indices indicated good model-data fit. The squared multiple correlations of ideal L2 writing self, L2 writing enjoyment, and L2 IW performance were .384, .362, and .045 (all  $ps < .05$ ), respectively. This indicated that the model explained approximately 38.4%, 36.2%, and 4.5% of the variance of the three variables. The standardized estimations for the path coefficients are shown in Figure 3. With the exceptions of the direct paths from ideal L1 and L2 writing selves to L2 IW performance, all the direct paths were significant (all  $ps < .05$ ). As expected, positive associations were evident among ideal L2 writing self, L2 writing enjoyment, and L2 IW performance. L2 reading competence also significantly determined students' L2 IW performance. Notably, ideal L1 writing self moderately determined L2 IW enjoyment ( $\beta = .16$ ) and substantially shaped ideal L2 writing self ( $\beta = .62$ ), providing evidence for the transfer of students' individual beliefs regarding their L1 and L2 ability and learning experiences.

[Insert Figure 3 Here]

We then proceeded to analyze the indirect effect in the model, and the standardized estimations and 95% CIs for each indirect path are displayed in Table 2. All four indirect paths were significant, as the 95% CIs did not include zero. The large indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 writing enjoyment via ideal L2 writing self ( $\beta = .304$ ) indicated that students' positive expectations of themselves as successful L1 and L2 writers were an important mechanism leading to their enjoyable L2 writing experiences. Further, ideal L2 writing self influenced L2 IW performance through L2 writing enjoyment ( $\beta = .075$ ), and an approximately

equal indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 IW performance was identified ( $\beta = .070$ ). Specifically, the indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 IW performance via ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment was .046, accounting for 65.7% (.046/.070) of the total indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 IW performance, whereas the indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 IW performance via L2 writing enjoyment was .024, accounting for 34.3% (.024/.070) of the total indirect effect.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

## **5. Discussion**

The present study examines a theoretical model involving ideal L1 writing self, ideal L2 writing self, L2 writing enjoyment, and L2 IW performance. Data analysis has confirmed the transfer between ideal L1 and L2 writing selves and reported significant, positive associations between the key variables.

### *5.1 Transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves*

Our path model reports that ideal L1 writing self significantly shaped ideal L2 writing self, suggesting that students' enthusiastic self-images relating to their L1 language have a constructive effect on the development of ideal L2 writing self. This result corroborates the argument that the modern globalized and multilingual world may lead to L2 learners' bicultural identities and the possible transfer between ideal L1 and L2 selves (Lamb, 2004; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009).

One possible explanation for this finding is that the participants in the present study were English major students from a Chinese university. Because their future professions tend to involve the use of both Chinese and English, such as working in a multinational enterprise, they may have dreamed about using both languages frequently in the future. Thus, they might have

made great efforts to improve bilingual writing skills, valuing both Chinese and English writing learning. Additionally, the present study adopted IW tasks to examine the students' writing performance, which have been proven to involve potential positive cross-language transfer of writing skills and knowledge (Cumming et al., 2016). Both Authors (2019) and Author (2021a) observed linguistic transfer of L1 and L2 in IW and confirmed the significance of L1 IW to the shape of L2 IW. Author (2021a) further pointed out that read-to-write skills in L2 can make use of the skills that have already been acquired in L1. Although ideal writing selves represent ideal writing abilities that learners aspire to attain in the future, rather than the actual competence and knowledge they have mastered, the facilitating effect of learners' ideal L1 writing self on its L2 counterpart, to some extent, corroborates and enriches Cummins' (1979) linguistic interdependence hypothesis from a psychological perspective. Besides a "common underlying proficiency construct" between L1 and L2, which led to "possible transfer of concepts, skills, and learning strategies across languages" (Cummins, 2016, p. 940), there may be a common future image between L1 and L2 that results in the transfer of vision and desire in language learning. More research is warranted to examine whether this finding can be replicated with students from diverse educational programs and sociocultural backgrounds.

### *5.2 Relationship between ideal writing selves and L2 writing enjoyment*

The connection between ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment found in the present study substantiates the self-discrepancy theory and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997). Higgins et al. (1997) maintained that the ideal self creates elation-related emotions, which are extended to promotion goals and desirable outcomes. The results of the study demonstrate that ideal L2 writing self is positively associated with L2 writing enjoyment, in line with existing findings that ideal L2 self is a significant source of



joyful experiences in L2 learning (Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Teimouri, 2017).

In addition, ideal L1 writing self is also moderately related to L2 writing enjoyment, suggesting that students' positive anticipation of L1 IW competence can lead to an enjoyable L2 writing experience. From what we know, this unique finding has not been documented in other research. Author (2021a) observed that students' writing ability acquired in L1 can be transferred to improve their L2 writing. Therefore, for certain students in the present research, possessing an optimistic ideal L1 writing self may be coupled with joyful experiences in L2 writing learning, as they have realized the importance of L1 in their L2 ability development. In addition, the indirect effect of ideal L1 writing self on L2 writing enjoyment via ideal L2 writing self was evident. These results further confirm the transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves in L2 enjoyment and suggest that a positive self-image as an expert L1 writer may contribute to students' joyful experiences in L2 writing learning.

### *5.3 The mediating role of L2 writing enjoyment in the relationships between ideal writing selves and L2 writing performance*

Existing literature has documented that L2 learning enjoyment could only influence L2 achievement through other factors, such as motivation (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021) and eager L2 use (Papi & Khajavy, 2021). However, in the present study, we observed that L2 writing enjoyment was directly related to students' IW performance, although the direct effect was only moderate ( $\beta = .15$ ). Concerning the indirect effect, the path model reveals that enjoyment was a significant mediator of the effect of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves on L2 writing performance. Moreover, the indirect path from ideal L1 writing self to L2 IW performance through ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment was also evident.

The significant mediating effect of L2 enjoyment might be attributed to the fact that most Chinese students are socialized in a high-stakes testing culture and that the test-oriented ideology takes a toll on their writing enjoyment in writing activities (Jiang, 2018). Chinese students have taken countless examinations during their years of English learning. They may have experienced the elation produced by good academic achievement, leading to a positive relationship between L2 enjoyment and IW performance. In addition, given the association between ideal selves and L2 enjoyment discussed in the previous sections, L2 writing enjoyment significantly mediated the effect of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves on L2 IW performance. However, academic achievement only accounts partially for students' emotional reactions; other factors, such as feedback from teachers and peers, may also significantly influence students' perceptions of L2 writing learning (Co-author, 2021; Yu et al., 2020). This might explain why the direct path between L2 writing enjoyment and IW performance and the indirect path from ideal L1 and L2 writing selves to IW performance were moderate in the present study. Future research is warranted to further examine the effect of L2 enjoyment on academic achievement when other variables are involved.

#### *5.4 Pedagogical implications*

Several pedagogical implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. The significant contribution of ideal L2 writing self to L2 writing enjoyment and L2 IW performance provides a good foundation for L2 writing instructors to consider the formation of ideal L2 self as an effective means to improve students' IW learning experiences and outcomes. Teachers can adopt certain strategies to help students construct their successful ideal L2 selves in IW learning. For example, they can guide students to create their visions of themselves as proficient L2 writers through reflection, discussion, and scripted imagery. Different techniques can be used to

strengthen students' visions, such as creating autobiographies of their future selves, interviewing successful English learners, and mini-projects (Dörnyei, 2009; Safdari, 2021). Considering the transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves in IW, L1 teachers and L2 teachers are encouraged to collaborate in designing the IW curriculum, with tasks and topics centering on the descriptions of what students have in mind for their ideal images of IW in L1 and L2.

The moderate impact of L2 writing enjoyment on IW in the present study also has implications for teachers' IW instruction in the classroom. Many educators are aware of the necessity of developing and maintaining learners' motivations and positive emotions for the long-term undertaking of language learning (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Studies have shown that a promotion-oriented teaching style can optimize students' positive engagement in L2 learning. For instance, teachers can frame writing instructions in the gain condition (Papi, 2018) and develop writing assignments that encourage subjectivity, creativity, risk-taking, and imagination (Jeffery & Wilcox, 2014). Teachers can also give motivating feedback and arrange peer feedback on writing assignments to promote interactions among students in language learning, creating a joyful learning environment (Co-author, 2021; Zumbunn et al., 2019).

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that ideal L2 writing self can positively predict L2 writing enjoyment in the context of a Chinese university, which resonates with the study conducted by Tahmouresi and Papi (2021) at a university in Iran and supports the idea that the correlation between ideal L2 writing self and enjoyment can be extended to different learning contexts. This study also fills a gap in L2 writing motivation and emotion research by investigating the effects of ideal self and enjoyment on L2 IW performance. Most importantly, this study demonstrates the transfer of ideal L1 and L2 writing selves, as well as their impacts on

L2 writing enjoyment and IW performance, providing support for the integrative teaching strategies in L1 and L2 to generate an enjoyable L2 writing experience and improved L2 IW performance.

Despite the meaningful findings, this study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, the data were drawn from a group of English-major students at a single university in China. To generalize the findings to other populations, further research should involve participants with diverse levels of English proficiency and from different educational and sociocultural contexts. Secondly, the study only examined the motivating role of ideal writing self; as the other important variable in the L2 motivational self system, ought-to writing self should be included to provide a more granular and comprehensive view of the complicated motivational mechanism in L2 writing learning. Further, enjoyment is also correlated with extrinsic motivation and self-regulation, which contribute to students' engagement and subsequent performance. Future research may include these variables to provide a more rounded view of students' psychology issues and behavioral responses in L2 writing learning. Lastly, we relied on students' self-reported survey responses for data collection. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews and classroom observation, can shed light on what students think about themselves as well as the potential causes of their performance (Dewaele et al., 2021). Thus, a mixed methods approach is necessary in future studies.

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**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between primary variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. L2 reading competence	–				
2. Ideal L1 writing self	.00	–			
3. Ideal L2 writing self	.14*	.62**	–		
4. L2 writing enjoyment	.10	.46**	.59**	–	
5. L2 integrated writing performance	.17**	-.00	.00	.10	–
Mean (SD)	15.80 (5.83)	16.40 (3.48)	15.75 (3.82)	15.91 (2.95)	18.08 (3.35)
Minimum	2.0	5	5	9	7
Maximum	30.5	25	25	25	28.5
Skewness	.03	-.17	.06	.23	-.24
Kurtosis	-.49	-.05	-.12	.09	.99

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

**Table 2.** Standardized estimations, standardized errors, and 95% confidence intervals of indirect paths

Indirect path	$\beta$	S.E.	95% CI
Ideal L1 writing self–ideal L2 writing self–L2 writing enjoyment	.304	.052	[.206, .408]
Ideal L2 writing self–ideal L2 writing enjoyment–L2 writing performance	.075	.038	[.010, .163]
Ideal L1 writing self–ideal L2 writing self–L2 writing enjoyment–L2 writing performance	.046	.024	[.006, .102]
Ideal L1 writing self–L2 writing enjoyment–L2 writing performance	.024	.017	[.001, .072]

*Note.*  $\beta$  = standardized estimation, S.E. = standardized error, CI = confidence interval