Recently, many studies have examined an important role of the ideal L2 self in language learning motivation (see Csizér & Magid, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Yet, less is known about the relationships between the ideal L2 self with current self-constructs, even though Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) assert that it is the gap between the ideal L2 self and the current selves that is the source of motivational power of the ideal L2 self. Moreover, there have been few attempts to examine antecedents of self-related beliefs (for exceptions, see Mercer, 2011).

The aim of the current study is to examine the relationship between ideal L2 self, self-efficacy beliefs and the English self-concept and identify the sources of self-related beliefs. 236 Polish learners of English aged 15-16 completed a motivational questionnaire, and 20 participated in semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data was analysed in SPSS, whereas the interviews were transcribed and coded.

The results of regression analysis revealed that the ideal L2 self is more closely related to learners’ self-efficacy beliefs than to their English self-concept, although the latter was also found to significantly contribute to the ideal L2 self. The interviewees reported six antecedents of self-related beliefs. These were: mastery experiences, grades, peer comparison, teachers, comparison across different domains, and other sources. The results suggest that the English self-concept and self-efficacy beliefs are socially co-constructed. The two constructs are also a basis on which students draw when creating positive visions of oneself as successful language learners. This finding is in line with Dörnyei’s (2009, p.11) assertion that the ideal L2 self is a possible self that one day can become reality.

Keywords: self-concept, motivation.