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L2 POSSIBLE SELVES AND COMMUNICATION READINESS IN PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

EVIDENCE FROM BANGLADESHI UNDERGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System has become a standard lens for explaining why learners differ in motivation and in their readiness to use a second language, yet its three components are rarely examined together against communicative readiness, and almost never in South Asian settings. This study asks how the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience relate to willingness to communicate (WTC) in two contexts that have come to coexist in learners' lives, the physical classroom and digital platforms. Survey data came from 233 first-year undergraduates at a private university in Bangladesh, all learning English as a foreign language across a range of disciplines. Pearson correlations and multiple regression estimated how far each motivational construct accounted for WTC in the two settings. The L2 learning experience proved the most dependable predictor: classroom learning experience predicted classroom WTC most strongly, and the classroom and digital learning experiences together predicted digital WTC. The ideal L2 self predicted WTC online but not in the classroom, which points to the greater room digital spaces give learners to act on a future-oriented self-image. The ought-to L2 self correlated only weakly with WTC and lost what little predictive power it had once learning experience entered the model. Explanation rests, then, with learners' lived experience of learning rather than with their future self-guides, and the results favour pedagogy that improves the quality of classroom and online interaction over pedagogy built on external pressure.

Keywords: L2 motivational self system, L2 learning experience, willingness to communicate, digital learning, English as a foreign language

1. INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has proven one of the more durable constructs in second language (L2) research, largely because it sits so close to the outcome teaching ultimately cares about, whether a learner speaks. MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) defined it as a learner's readiness to enter discourse at a given moment with a particular interlocutor, and treated it as the most immediate psychological antecedent of L2 use. Two commitments from that account have stayed with the field. WTC is a state rather than a fixed trait, rising and falling with the person, the topic, and the setting, and it emerges where stable individual differences meet the conditions of the moment. As English has settled into the role of default language for international and online communication (Matsuda, 2017), attention has turned to the motivational and affective sources that leave some learners ready to speak and others reluctant.

Much of this work draws on Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which sorts L2 motivation into three components. The ideal L2 self is the image of the competent user a learner hopes to become, and it motivates by opening a gap between the present and the desired self that the learner then works to close. The ought-to L2 self gathers the attributes a learner believes they should have in order to meet others' expectations and head off negative outcomes; its pull is external rather than internalised. The third component, the L2 learning experience, concerns how learners respond to the situation in front of them: the teacher, the tasks, the peer group, the classroom or the online environment. Dörnyei (2009) tied it to Gardner's notion of attitudes toward the learning situation and later judged it the least theorised and least researched part of the system (Dörnyei, 2019). Where evidence exists, the ideal L2 self and the learning experience tend to be the strongest correlates of motivated behaviour, and the ought-to L2 self the weakest and least stable (Al-Hoorie, 2018).

Research on WTC has reached a parallel conclusion from the situational side. Readiness to communicate depends jointly on internal motivation and on the conditions of the immediate context. Learners who report enjoyment and engagement also report higher WTC, and supportive teaching, constructive feedback, and well-designed tasks improve the emotional conditions under which learners speak up (Wang, Wu, & Wang, 2025). The settings in which learners use English have meanwhile multiplied. Young learners now communicate in English on social media, in online games, through video tools, and in messaging apps, often more freely than they do in class (Reinders & Benson, 2017), and work in Korean and Taiwanese contexts shows that such out-of-class digital activity strengthens learners' L2 self-images and raises their readiness to communicate online (Lee, 2019; Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Lee & Lu, 2023).

Two gaps persist. The three components of the L2MSS are rarely modelled together as predictors of WTC; most studies keep the two self-guides and set the learning experience aside, usually on the view that it overlaps with intended effort (Al-Hoorie, 2018). How much of a learner's readiness to communicate rests on a future self-image, and how much on the experience of learning, therefore remains unsettled. Classroom and digital WTC are also seldom compared within one sample, even though learners now cross between the two daily. This study takes up both gaps in a setting the literature has largely overlooked, Bangladeshi undergraduate EFL learners, and asks how the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience relate to communicative readiness in the physical classroom and on digital platforms used for English communication. Holding the two settings side by side shows whether the same motivational sources drive readiness in both, or whether each context calls on a different mix. Three questions guide the study:

- (1) How do the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience relate to Bangladeshi undergraduates' WTC inside the classroom?
- (2) How do these three components relate to their WTC on digital platforms?
- (3) Which component most strongly predicts WTC in each setting, and does the pattern differ between the classroom and digital platforms?

The design also answers two limitations in the work it builds on. Lee and Lu (2023) tested the ideal and ought-to L2 selves as predictors of WTC in classroom and extramural digital contexts but left out the L2 learning experience, citing the discriminant-validity concern Al-Hoorie (2018) raised about its overlap with intended effort. That omission has a cost, because a growing line of WTC research reads communicative readiness as the joint product of individual differences and situational conditions (Zhang, Beckmann, & Beckmann, 2018), and the learning experience is the one component of the L2MSS that

registers those moment-to-moment conditions. The present study restores it as a separate predictor and measures it in both physical and digital form, so that the experiential quality of each setting can be matched to readiness in that setting. It also widens the measurement of digital WTC beyond the few generic items used in earlier instruments to take in online study groups, gaming communities, social media, live-streaming, and AI-based speaking tools, channels that differ in audience, formality, and the control they hand the learner.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 From Social-Psychological to Self-Based Accounts of L2 Motivation

Motivation explains why learners of similar aptitude differ in how readily they take up, sustain, and persist in language tasks, and it has long counted as a central predictor of attainment (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 2001). The first influential framework was Gardner and Lambert's (1959) socio-educational model, which separated integrative motivation, a wish to identify with the target-language community, from instrumental motivation, the pursuit of practical ends such as work or academic success, and put attitudes toward the target language and its speakers at the centre of learning. The model lost reach in foreign-language settings, where learners meet few native speakers and where identifying with a target community is not a realistic motive. That mismatch sent researchers looking for an account of motivation that did not depend on contact with, or entry into, a target-language community.

The reorientation borrowed from two psychological theories. Markus and Nurius (1986) argued that people are moved by images of what they might, would like to, or fear to become, while Higgins (1987) held that the perceived distance between an actual and a desired self generates pressure to close it. Carried into language learning, these ideas shifted the source of motivation from attitudes toward an outside community to learners' own future identities as L2 users. Motivation, on this account, is neither fixed nor purely external; it is woven into learners' self-images, their personal goals, and the emotional grain of their learning over time (Dörnyei, 2019).

2.2 The L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei (2005, 2009) drew these strands together into the L2 Motivational Self System, now the field's dominant framework. Its strength is the way it marries familiar motivational concepts to a self-based psychology, and it specifies three components, each a distinct route to motivation. The ideal L2 self is the desired future image of oneself as a capable speaker; because it comes from within, it goes with sustained effort and engagement, especially when the image is vivid and personally meaningful (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). The ought-to L2 self holds the obligations and expectations pressed from outside, by parents, institutions, or society, and points toward avoiding negative outcomes; it can drive effort, but being extrinsic it supports engagement less reliably (Dörnyei, 2009). The L2 learning experience captures how learners react to the conditions of learning, among them classroom climate, teacher support, peer relations, and, more and more, digital environments.

Across primary studies and in meta-analysis, the ideal L2 self and the learning experience surface as the strongest predictors of motivated behaviour, and the ought-to L2 self as the weakest (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Csizér, 2019). The learning experience has nonetheless been the least examined of the three, the component Dörnyei (2019) called the system's "Cinderella," partly because of doubt about whether it can be told apart from intended effort. That doubt has had practical consequences: several WTC studies built on the L2MSS have dropped the learning experience and kept only the two self-guides (e.g., Lee & Lu, 2023). The present study treats the matter as something to test rather than a reason to omit.

2.3 Willingness to Communicate

MacIntyre et al. (1998) recast WTC, first studied as a first-language personality trait (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), as a situated L2 construct and laid it out in a six-layer pyramid. The lower layers hold enduring influences such as personality, intergroup attitudes, and social context, and the upper layers the situational state just before speech, the desire to communicate with a particular person and the self-confidence of the moment. The model's central claim is that WTC shifts from one occasion to the next: a learner may speak readily in pair work yet hold back before the whole class. Of its many antecedents, perceived communicative competence and low anxiety draw the most consistent support (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002).

In East Asian EFL settings, where learners often stay reticent even when they value English, WTC has been tied to motivation, self-confidence, and the quality of classroom experience (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Yashima, 2009). Newer work reads it as the joint product of self-related variables, emotions such as enjoyment and anxiety, and contextual support from the teacher and the platform (Wei & Xu, 2022; Lee & Lu, 2023). This situated-and-dynamic view, in which trait-like and state-like factors work in concert, is now the prevailing stance (Zhang et al., 2018), and the present study adopts it.

2.4 Linking the L2MSS to Willingness to Communicate

The two frameworks meet where motivation turns into behaviour. The ideal L2 self supplies the long-term energy, and WTC registers whether that energy becomes actual communication. Of the two self-guides, the ideal L2 self is the more reliably tied to readiness to speak. Learners who picture themselves as confident users of English work to narrow the gap between their present and future selves, and that impulse shows up as a greater readiness to communicate, a link confirmed repeatedly in classroom research (Bursalı & Öz, 2017; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Lee & Lu, 2023).

The two self-guides behave differently. The ideal L2 self, grounded in personal aspiration, is generally the stronger and more positive predictor of WTC, whereas the ought-to L2 self, grounded in outside obligation, is weaker and can even suppress genuine willingness by raising anxiety (Wei & Xu, 2022). The learning experience counts in its own right and may also work at one remove. A supportive, well-designed environment lifts WTC directly, by making learners feel secure enough to take communicative risks, and indirectly, by reinforcing the ideal L2 self; emotionally supportive teaching and engaging tasks have each been associated with greater confidence and willingness to speak (Wang et al., 2025). The ideal self generates the desire to communicate, and the learning experience supplies the conditions that let the desire become action.

None of this is confined to the classroom. Digital platforms such as social media, forums, games, messaging, and video chat offer comparatively low-pressure spaces where learners use English on their own terms (Lee & Lu, 2023). The ideal L2 self keeps drawing learners toward these openings, and digital settings may be especially good at narrowing the distance between present ability and the imagined future self. The digital learning experience also carries features of its own: encounters feel more natural, the language is informal, tasks take a performance shape such as posting or streaming, and learners hold more control over topic and timing (Lee & Lee, 2019). Given support, these features can raise WTC. Yet the relationship between digital learning experience and WTC remains far less studied than its classroom counterpart, and it is the relationship this study sets out to examine.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to estimate how L2 possible selves relate to communicative readiness across two learning settings. A survey fit the task on two counts. The constructs at issue, the motivational self-guides, the learning experience, and WTC, are latent dispositions best captured through validated self-report scales, and the goal was to estimate associations across a sizeable sample rather than to trace processes in depth. The approach follows standard practice in L2 motivation and WTC research (Dörnyei, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Lee & Lu, 2023).

3.2 Participants and Setting

The sample comprised 233 first-year undergraduates (119 male, 51.1%; 114 female, 48.9%) at a private university in Bangladesh, recruited by convenience from intact classes whose instructors agreed to take part. They came from six disciplines (BA in English, Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, Computing and Information Systems, Information Technology and Management, and Nutrition and Food Engineering), so the sample represents undergraduate EFL learners at large rather than language majors alone. Ages ran from 18 to 24 ($M = 20.27$, $SD = 1.01$), placing the cohort at a comparable educational stage. Most participants lived in urban areas (163; 70.0%) and the rest in rural areas (70; 30.0%). That imbalance bears on interpretation, since access to English resources and to digital platforms tends to be greater in cities. The questionnaire also recorded home district and residence type to situate participants sociolinguistically.

3.3 Instrument

A 36-item questionnaire in two parts gathered the data. Part A recorded demographic information (age, gender, discipline, year of study, residence type, and district). Part B held 30 Likert items measuring six constructs, six items each: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience in the classroom, the L2 learning experience on digital platforms, WTC in the classroom, and WTC on digital platforms. Every Part B item appeared in English and Bengali, the latter supplied by the second author, so that comprehension did not hinge on English proficiency.

Items for the ideal and ought-to L2 selves were adapted from Lee and Lu (2023) and grounded in Taguchi et al. (2009). The learning-experience items were adapted from Moskovsky, Assulaimani, Racheva, and Harkins (2016) and written in two parallel sets, one for the classroom and one for digital platforms, so that the experiential quality of each setting could be assessed on its own. Classroom WTC items were adapted from Wei and Xu (2022). The digital WTC items drew on Lee and Lu (2023) and were broadened to take in online study groups, gaming and international gaming communities, talking with native speakers about one's own culture, AI-based speaking tools, and English-speaking tasks on digital platforms. The full item set appears in the Appendix.

Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored at strongly agree and strongly disagree. In the administered form the scale ran from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), so lower scores mark stronger agreement; the direction matters for reading the descriptive statistics, where the construct means cluster toward the agreement end of the scale. Internal consistency was acceptable for all six scales: ideal L2 self, $\alpha = .78$; ought-to L2 self, $\alpha = .73$; classroom learning experience, $\alpha = .72$; digital learning experience, $\alpha = .69$; classroom WTC, $\alpha = .75$; digital WTC, $\alpha = .72$. The composite scores fell within conventional limits for skewness and kurtosis, which supported the use of parametric analyses.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethics

The university and the participating instructors granted permission for the study. Students were told its purpose, what information would be collected, and that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and they could withdraw at any point. No identifying information was recorded. Before responding, students were given brief examples of the two communicative settings (speaking during class activities and group discussions for the classroom; writing online messages or interacting through digital tools for the digital context) so the distinction was clear (Lee, 2019). Most questionnaires were completed on paper during class; a smaller number came through Google Forms to widen participation.

3.5 Data Preparation and Analysis

Responses were screened first. One out-of-range value (a 24 entered for a five-point item) was treated as a keying error and removed, after which composite scores were computed as the mean of each construct's six items. Analysis then ran in three stages. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) summarised the sample and the construct scores. Pearson product-moment correlations estimated the strength and direction of the associations among the six constructs, with r ranging from -1 to $+1$ and values near zero indicating no linear association (Obilor & Amadi, 2018). Two multiple linear regressions then estimated the unique contribution of the four motivational predictors (ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, classroom learning experience, and digital learning experience) to each outcome, WTC in the classroom and WTC on digital platforms (Uyanık & Güler, 2013). Entering the predictors together shows which keep an independent effect once the others are held constant. Analyses were run in standard statistical software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarises the sample. Of the 233 participants, 119 (51.1%) were male and 114 (48.9%) female, a near-even split that limits the risk of gender bias. Most lived in urban areas (163; 70.0%) and the rest in rural areas (70; 30.0%).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of participants (N = 233)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	119	51.1
	Female	114	48.9
Residence	Urban	163	70.0
	Rural	70	30.0

Note. Mean age = 20.27 years (SD = 1.01); range 18–24.

Table 2 reports the means and standard deviations of the six composite scores. Because the scale runs from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), the values, between roughly 2.0 and 2.5, show that participants agreed with the items on average across every construct, with lower means marking stronger endorsement. The small standard deviations (.56 to .71) indicate fairly homogeneous responses. Among the motivational constructs, the ideal L2 self ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 0.65$) and the two learning-experience scales (classroom $M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.59$; digital $M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.56$) drew the strongest agreement, and the ought-to L2 self the weakest ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.71$). WTC sat somewhat below the motivational constructs in both settings, and digital WTC ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.63$) was marginally lower than classroom WTC ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.63$).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for composite constructs (N = 233)

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ideal L2 Self	2.09	0.65
Ought-to L2 Self	2.36	0.71
L2 Learning Experience – Classroom	2.15	0.59
L2 Learning Experience – Digital	2.06	0.56
WTC – Classroom	2.31	0.63
WTC – Digital	2.44	0.63

Note. Items scored 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree; lower means indicate stronger agreement.

4.2 Correlations

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlations. The ideal L2 self was positively and significantly associated with WTC in both settings, moderately with classroom WTC ($r = .55$, $p < .01$) and a little more strongly with digital WTC ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), so learners with a clearer image of themselves as future English users reported greater readiness to communicate in each. The ought-to L2 self showed weak but significant associations in the classroom ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and online ($r = .28$, $p < .01$); external expectations were related to readiness, but far less than the other constructs. The learning-experience scales showed the strongest associations of all. Classroom learning experience correlated highly with classroom WTC ($r = .67$, $p < .01$) and substantially with digital WTC ($r = .60$, $p < .01$), and digital learning experience correlated comparably with WTC in the classroom ($r = .57$, $p < .01$) and online ($r = .58$, $p < .01$). The two WTC outcomes were themselves strongly correlated ($r = .73$, $p < .01$), so learners willing to speak in one setting tended to be willing in the other.

Table 3*Pearson correlations among study variables (N = 233)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ideal L2 Self	—					
2. Ought-to L2 Self	.27**	—				
3. L2LE – Classroom	.64**	.24**	—			
4. L2LE – Digital	.60**	.27**	.60**	—		
5. WTC – Classroom	.55**	.29**	.67**	.58**	—	
6. WTC – Digital	.59**	.28**	.60**	.58**	.73**	—

Note. L2LE = L2 learning experience; WTC = willingness to communicate. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

4.3 Regression Analyses

Two multiple regressions estimated the unique contribution of the four predictors to each outcome (Table 4). The models accounted for similar shares of variance, about 51% for classroom WTC and 48% for digital WTC, so both had substantial explanatory power. For classroom WTC, classroom learning experience was the strongest predictor ($B = 0.49$, $p < .001$), and digital learning experience contributed independently ($B = 0.24$, $p < .001$). Neither self-guide reached significance: the ideal L2 self ($B = 0.10$, $p = .12$) and the ought-to L2 self ($B = 0.08$, $p = .07$) added nothing detectable once the learning-experience scales were in the model. For digital WTC the picture changed: the ideal L2 self became a significant predictor ($B = 0.23$, $p = .001$), alongside classroom learning experience ($B = 0.30$, $p < .001$) and digital learning experience ($B = 0.28$, $p < .001$), while the ought-to L2 self again did not predict the outcome ($B = 0.07$, $p = .11$).

Table 4*Multiple regression predicting WTC in the classroom and on digital platforms*

Predictor	WTC – Classroom			WTC – Digital		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	0.38	0.14	.007	0.58	0.14	< .001
Ideal L2 Self	0.10	0.06	.121	0.23	0.07	.001
Ought-to L2 Self	0.08	0.04	.065	0.07	0.04	.111
L2LE – Classroom	0.49	0.07	< .001	0.30	0.07	< .001
L2LE – Digital	0.24	0.07	.001	0.28	0.07	< .001

Note. L2LE = L2 learning experience. Model $R^2 = .51$ (classroom WTC) and .48 (digital WTC). *B* = unstandardised coefficient.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One result runs through both models: learning experience carries the explanatory weight. Classroom learning experience was the strongest predictor of classroom WTC, and both learning-experience scales predicted digital WTC. These findings put the immediate conditions of learning at the centre of communicative readiness, in line with the situated-and-dynamic view of WTC, where the qualities of the moment, supportive teaching, engaging tasks, and a secure peer climate, decide whether learners speak (Zhang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2025). They also bear on the long-running question of where the L2 learning experience stands within the L2MSS. The component is often dropped on the grounds that it overlaps with intended effort (Al-Hoorie, 2018), and Dörnyei (2019) has remarked on how little it has been studied. In this sample it behaved as a construct in its own right and outperformed both self-guides, which argues for keeping it in the model rather than setting it aside.

The cross-over effects deserve attention. Digital learning experience predicted classroom WTC, and classroom learning experience predicted digital WTC, so readiness does not appear sealed within the setting that produced it; confidence and habits formed in one environment seem to travel to the other. The

strong correlation between the two outcomes ($r = .73$) points the same way. For learners who move continually between physical and online English use, the two settings may work less as separate domains than as one communicative space reached through different channels.

Once learning experience was controlled, the ideal L2 self predicted digital WTC but not classroom WTC. This is the study's most interesting result theoretically, and it qualifies the familiar claim that the ideal L2 self is a general engine of WTC (Bursalı & Öz, 2017; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009). The qualification is one of setting. Digital platforms grant more autonomy, lower the cost of error, and let learners choose when and about what to speak (Lee & Lee, 2019; Lee & Lu, 2023). A future self-image then has room to express itself: a learner who imagines using English with people abroad can act on that image at once in an online community or game. The classroom allows less of this; participation there answers to the teacher, the task, and a watching peer group, and these near-at-hand conditions seem to outweigh the more distant pull of the future self. The finding fits Lee and Lu (2023), who found the ideal L2 self predicting WTC in extramural digital contexts among Chinese learners, and extends their account by showing, within a single sample, that the same self-guide can predict online readiness yet fail to predict classroom readiness once experiential conditions enter the model.

The ought-to L2 self, by contrast, correlated only weakly with WTC and predicted it in neither model. This matches the wider pattern in which the ought-to self is the weakest element of the L2MSS (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Csizér, 2019) and supports the argument that obligation-based motivation does little to produce genuine communicative engagement (Wei & Xu, 2022). Pressure to study English in order to meet others' expectations may keep learners studying, but it does not appear to make them readier to speak, plausibly because external pressure raises anxiety, which works against WTC. Read side by side, the two models reveal a constant and a difference: the L2 learning experience predicted readiness in both settings and stands out as the most dependable lever on WTC, while the self-guides diverged, the ideal L2 self operating only online and the ought-to L2 self in neither context. Readiness in this sample owed more to how learning felt than to who learners imagined becoming, except online, where the future self also found a footing.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience relate to undergraduate EFL learners' readiness to communicate in physical and digital settings in Bangladesh, a context the literature has largely passed over. Restoring the L2 learning experience to the model, and measuring it in both classroom and digital form, showed that learners' experience of learning, not their future or obligated selves, is the most consistent predictor of WTC. The ideal L2 self mattered, but online, where the conditions of communication let a future self-image become action; the ought-to L2 self mattered little anywhere. Two contributions follow. Empirically, the study brings a South Asian cohort into a literature dominated by East Asian samples. Conceptually, it gives the often-sidelined L2 learning experience a central place in explaining communicative readiness, and shows that the predictive role of the ideal L2 self depends on the setting.

The results carry clear priorities for practice. Classroom learning experience predicted classroom WTC most strongly, so teachers have the greatest leverage in the quality of classroom interaction itself, through pair and group work, meaningful communicative tasks, and a supportive, low-threat climate. Digital learning experience predicted readiness in both settings, so building in well-designed technology-mediated activity, such as online discussion and collaborative tools, can extend those gains and add low-anxiety practice. The ideal L2 self deserves attention too, above all for online communication: goal-setting and contact with successful L2 users help learners form vivid future self-images. The weak showing of the ought-to L2 self sounds a caution, since leaning on external pressure is unlikely to make learners readier to speak; curricula are better served by learner-centred, experience-based approaches than by obligation-driven ones.

Three limitations bound these conclusions. The data came from a single private university, where participants likely share academic, social, and instructional backgrounds, so the findings may not carry to Bangladeshi EFL learners across institutions and regions; that all respondents were first-year students narrows the cohort further. The design was cross-sectional and correlational, so the analyses describe associations, not causes, and the regression coefficients indicate prediction rather than influence. The study also rested entirely on self-report gathered at one point in time, which cannot register the moment-to-moment swings of WTC or the reasons learners give for their readiness to speak.

These limitations mark out the next steps. Broadening the sample across universities, disciplines, year groups, and regions would test how far the present pattern holds. A mixed-methods design would ease the interpretive limits of self-report, since pairing the survey with interviews or focus groups would show how learners experience classroom and digital settings and why those experiences shape their readiness to speak. Longitudinal or intervention designs would license stronger causal claims, particularly about whether improving the learning experience lifts WTC over time. And because digital WTC here spanned several platforms, future work could test whether different channels, gaming, social media, and AI-based speaking tools, relate to readiness in distinct ways.

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9. APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Note. Items were rated from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and presented to participants in both English and Bengali. Item numbers follow their position in the administered questionnaire.

Ideal L2 Self

1. I can imagine myself speaking English confidently with foreign speakers in real-life situations.
8. I imagine myself studying or working in an environment where English is the main language of communication.
12. I imagine myself expressing my thoughts fluently in English during class discussions or presentations.
15. I can see myself using English naturally to build connections with people from different cultures.
20. I can imagine myself using English confidently to achieve my academic and professional goals.
22. I can imagine myself hanging out with many English-speaking friends.

Ought-to L2 Self

4. I need to learn English because I feel embarrassed if I cannot answer questions in English during class.
6. I have to do well in English because people see it as a sign of being educated.
9. I have to perform well in English because my parents expect me to.
11. I have to learn English skills because it is something our society values highly.
14. I have to speak English properly because I want to maintain a good image among my teachers and peers.
18. I have to keep improving my English because people often judge my ability based on how well I speak it.

L2 Learning Experience – Classroom

2. I enjoy speaking English during group or pair activities in class.
7. My classmates' cooperation helps me feel more confident using English.
10. I feel more confident communicating in English in a supportive classroom environment.
13. My teacher's feedback motivates me to improve in English communication.
17. My classroom environment encourages me to use English confidently.
24. I feel more motivated when the teacher uses interactive techniques (e.g., debates, role plays).

L2 Learning Experience – Digital Platforms

3. I think my online academic English courses meet my expectations of speaking English.
5. I like that online English learning allows me to review lessons or materials anytime to practice.
16. I feel more comfortable speaking English through digital learning tools (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom).
19. Online interactions with people from other countries make me more motivated to use English.
21. Participating in English-based online activities (e.g., games, discussions, live streams, or communities) helps me practice real communication.
23. Voice-based speaking and pronunciation tools make English learning more enjoyable and engaging.

Willingness to Communicate – Classroom

26. I explain my point of view when my teacher encourages me and gives positive feedback.
28. I take the initiative to speak English when I know I won't be criticized for making mistakes.
30. I willingly share my ideas in English when classroom discussions relate to real-life topics or my personal interests.
33. I argue a point when I feel my opinion doesn't match my teacher's.
34. I participate in pair work in English in a friendly and supportive classroom environment.
36. I engage in communicating in English when classroom activities are interactive and enjoyable.

Willingness to Communicate – Digital Platforms

- 25. I answer others in English when I interact through online academic platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet).
- 27. I comfortably participate in English communication with my friends in online study groups.
- 29. I take part in English discussions when I play online games or join international gaming communities.
- 31. I talk to native speakers about features of my country and its culture through online platforms.
- 32. I share ideas in English when I use AI-based or digital learning tools that help me practice speaking and receive feedback.
- 35. I volunteer to speak in English-speaking tasks on digital platforms when people respond positively to my ideas.

