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Foreign Language Enjoyment and Ideal L2 Self as Predictors of Willingness to Speak among Afghan EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The concept of positive psychology and L2 Motivational Self-system (L2MSS) are widely explored areas in recent English Language teaching and learning research. Yet, more is needed to understand how individual-specific personality traits affect English language learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) inside the classroom. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the impact of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and ideal L2 self on WTC among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students of Afghanistan. To this end, 165 Afghan EFL undergraduate students from four distinct public universities were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique. All of the participants of the study have filled out the three questionnaires. Subsequently, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 26) software was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression were used to test the hypothesized relationships. Results of descriptive statistics indicated that all the respondents showed a moderate to high level of FLE, ideal L2 self, and WTS. Moreover, the correlational analysis found a significant positive association between FLE, ideal L2 self, and WTS. Results of multiple regression revealed that both FLE and ideal L2 self significantly predicted EFL learners' WTS; however, ideal L2 self appeared to be the strongest predictor in this model. Consequently, the findings provide empirical support for the broaden-and-

build and L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MSS) theories, highlighting the importance of integrating emotional and motivational variables in language learning. EFL educators are suggested to concentrate on creating a positive and playful classroom environment to encourage students' willingness to engage in speaking. Besides, making group and pair work based on students' interests further scaffold enjoyment of collaboration and interaction among classmates, which in turn increases the WTS. Additionally, constructive feedback (written and oral) is key to a positive relationship between the teacher and students and further provides an encouraging floor for students to seek support when using English, especially in a socio-culturally constrained EFL setting.

KEYWORDS: Foreign language enjoyment, ideal L2 self, willingness to speak, Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

Achieving communicative competence is a primary goal of foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) learning, and to accomplish this, students need to contribute actively in classroom dialogues and activities. Research has demonstrated a significant shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. Similarly, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is also shifting to student-centered learning (Emaliana, 2017), exploring how EFL students learn and what factors augment their learning process (Mese & Sevilen, 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2021). In line with the growing interest in the potential role of learners in language learning, several variables have been identified that are believed to impact FL/L2 achievement. These factors include, but are not limited to, enjoyment (Wang et al, 2021; Li & Wei, 2023), Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Zhang et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2021), motivation (Liu et al., 2021; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2021; Alamer, 2022), ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2010), anxiety (Luo & Xiong, 2025), and classroom environment (Amiri & Karfa, 2022).

A prevalent issue among FL/L2 learners is their reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, which often results in limited meaningful use of the target language, leading to low FL/L2 achievements. This unwillingness stems from affective variables and largely attributed to WTC. In L2 learning, WTC refers to a psychological readiness to speak during L2 learning when an opportunity is provided or exists (Henry & MacIntyre, 2024). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, WTC is considered a crucial element of language learning and fluency development. MacIntyre et al. (1998) emphasize that enhancing learners' WTC should be a central aim of English language teaching. Previous studies reported that WTC is augmented by a range of psychological, social, and contextual variables (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2019; Elahi et al., 2019; Li et al., 2022; Salbaş & Ekmekçi, 2025).

Furthermore, a recent approach for motivation in L2 learning is the L2 motivational Self System (L2MMS) proposed by Dörnyei (2005) engrained in the “selves theory” by Markus and Nurius (1986). The idea of “possible selves” was suggested to explain how an individual perceive his/her present potential which is considered as self, could positively affect the intended future actions. With respect to the theory Markus and Nurius “possible selves” (1986) Higgins (1987) theory of “self-discrepancy”, Dörnyei (2005) presented a new framework having three components namely, ideal L2 self, ought to L2 self and learning experiences. Among the three elements, ideal L2 self has received significant attention as a motivational factor to find out whether the visions of EFL students scaffold their willingness in classroom communication. The ideal L2 self the individual wishes and hops one would ideally like to reach. It is L2-specific aspects and encompasses all the characteristics that an individual would wish to have in that respect. It aligns with internalized influential motives where learners are assumed to be motivated by the gap between their current selves and their future ideal L2 selves. Additionally, there is

empirical support for the hypothesis that L2/FL learners' WTC is significantly positively influenced by the ideal L2 self, either directly or indirectly (Lee & Lee, 2020; Lan et al., 2021), and further enhance EFL students level of WTC (Sak, 2020).

On the other hand, the incorporation of positive psychology (PP) into the realm of language learning has led to numerous innovative theoretical and empirical investigations. Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) has been the keystone of PP in L2/FL learning and assumed as a vital element of the emotions surrounding the central emotion of joy (MacIntyre et al., 2019). It is introduced by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and defined as an extensive positive emotion experienced by language learners when their psychological needs are fulfilled in the language classroom. FLE is viewed as a response to the extensively studied phenomenon of classroom anxiety. It is a crucial field of study due to its capacity to make language learning more enjoyable and enhance learner performance in the classroom. Theoretically, enjoyment is an emotion; it is not about what we think, but how we feel. It can help protect against negative emotions and boost engagement in the learning process (Boudreau et al., 2018). Additionally, Li and Wei (2023) assert that enjoyment refers to "joy, interest, fun, and lack of boredom," and is a significant positive predictor of L2 achievement. Pan and Henan (2022) defined FLE as a feeling of joy toward the teacher, the environment, and the learning process in the context of language education.

A review of the current literature shows that previous research suffers from several limitations. Even though with an adequate body of research in these areas, several questions are still remained unanswered, mainly concerning East Asian EFL learners who are often characterized by classroom reticence (King & Harumi, 2020). Riasati and Rahimi (2018) reported that Asian students are less communicative and unwilling to speak in the language classroom. In the context of Afghanistan (Herat province), Sarwari (2024) explored the role of WTC in FL achievement and revealed that a supportive learning environment, group-based activities, and authentic teaching materials had a positive influence on students' WTC. Moreover, previous research studied WTC in general way which represents both written and spoken forms of communication. Several other studies investigated examining or comparing the association of FLE and ideal L2 self with various learners' related factors.

After the regime change in Afghanistan, a growing number of students are learning English and this number increases steadily. The current study is unique and novel in the sense that it has considered one form of communication or a narrow definition of WTC which is spoken and referred as willingness to speak (WTS). It is introduced by Riasati and Rahimi (2018) in their study on Iranian EFL learners. WTS is a classroom-specific operationalization of the broader WTC framework. It corresponds to Layer 2 of MacIntyre et al. (1998) pyramid model, emphasizing learners' behavioral intention in structured communicative contexts. This construct reflects learners' situational readiness to engage in oral communication during various in-class activities. Therefore, it is crucial for EFL teachers to understand what factors significantly contribute in scaffolding the EFL learners' FLE, ideal L2 self and WTS and further how FLE and ideal L2 self jointly augment WTS in the EFL classroom setting especially in East Asian EFL tertiary education context.

1. What are the levels of FLE, ideal L2 self and WTS among EFL university students of Afghanistan?
2. What is the relationship between FLE, ideal L2 self and WTS among EFL university students of Afghanistan?

3. What are the effects of FLE and ideal L2 self on WTS among EFL university students of Afghanistan?

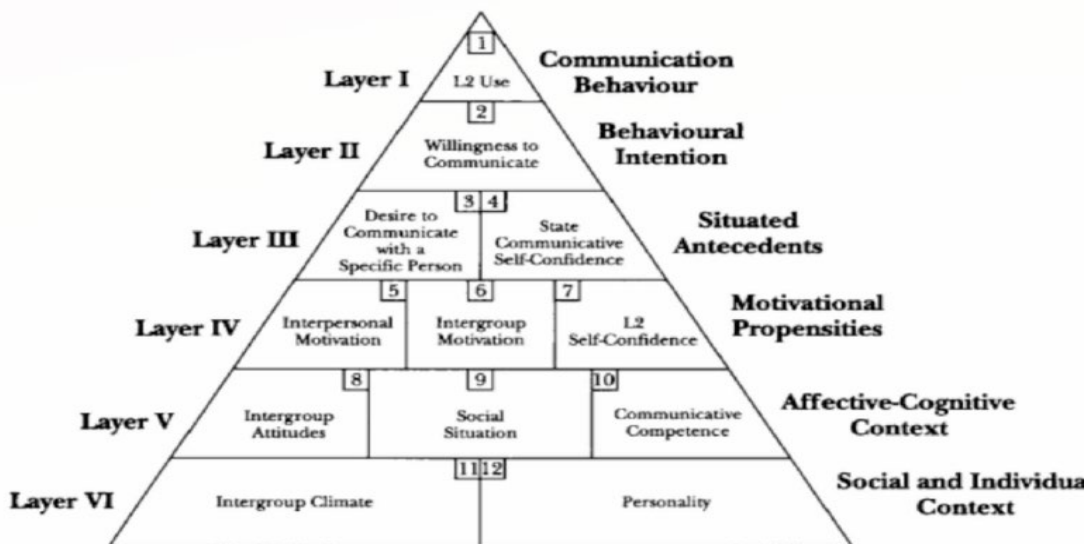
LITERATURE REVIEW

Afghanistan is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country of having more than 40 languages with various dialects. There are two official languages, Pashto and Dari. Two languages are taught, English and Arabic, as compulsory subjects at secondary-level schools. But, due to internationalization, English is preferred over Arabic in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, English is neither the first language nor commonly taught as a second language. English comes under primarily as a performance variety and is categorized as an EFL. As an EFL country, Afghanistan falls within Kachru's third circle, known as the "expanding circle countries" (Braj Kachru, 1992). In this context, EFL is pursued either to fulfill examination requirements essential for educational advancement, for travel purposes, diplomacy, business, or for professional development in organizations with an international orientation.

Kachru (1992) categorized English within a three-circle model, which includes the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle encompasses countries where English is spoken as a mother tongue or native language, such as the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle includes nations from the former British Empire where English functions as a second language (ESL) or an official language alongside other national languages, including Pakistan, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Nigeria. Lastly, the Expanding Circle refers to countries where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL) or an additional language, such as Afghanistan, Brazil, Iran, Thailand, China, and Japan.

Willingness to Communicate

The construct of WTC was initially introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in the context of first-language, where it was described as a personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to initiate conversation when they feel confident and at ease. This idea was inspired by earlier work on communication avoidance and oral performance behavior (Burgoon, 1976; Mortensen et al., 1977) as cited in McCroskey and Baer (1985). Later, they redefined this personality-based concept as WTC, demonstrating notable consistency across several contexts and people. Expanding upon this trait-oriented view, MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualized WTC in L2 setting as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a second language" (p. 547). This definition highlights the multifaceted and dynamic nature of L2 WTC, which encompasses both situational and enduring influences as supported by various empirical studies (Kun et al., 2020; Bensalem, 2022; Guo et al., 2023).

Figure 1*Heuristic Model of WTC in L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998)*

As illustrated in Figure 1, MacIntyre et al. (1998) hypothesized L2 WTC using a six-layered pyramid divided into two sections based on the immediacy and stability of influence. The upper three layers (1-3) represent immediate, transient, and situation-specific influence on WTC at a given moment. In contrast, layers (4-6) reflect more stable, enduring individual differences. Across all six layers, learners' L2WTC is influenced by several factors including emotional factors (Pavelescu, 2023), motivation (Lee & Lee, 2020; Arabai, 2022), classroom environment (Lee et al., 2019; Li et al., 2022), Ideal L2 self (Fathi et al., 2023), instructional contents and strategies (Aksak & Çubukçu, 2020), cooperative and conducive classroom setting (Lee et al., 2019; Alam et al., 2022), feedback (Alavi et al., 2021), self-confidence (Ma et al., 2025), gender, (Alitner, 2018; Mulyono & Saskia, 2020; Cheng & Xu, 2022), foreign language anxiety (Barabadi et al., 2023). These findings suggest that situational factors influence willingness to communicate in varying degrees. Relatively, Triyana et al. (2023) examined the effect of influencing factors on EFL learners' willingness to speak (WTS). Data were collected from English department students of Jambi University through online interviews and classroom observations. The results indicated that situational factors such as unfamiliar and difficult topics, tasks and teacher characteristics were demotivating factors affecting EFL learners' WTS.

Foreign Language Enjoyment

Recent research highlights FLE as a key element in language learning. (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Defined by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), FLE refers to learners' positive emotions arising when their psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are met in the classroom. Since its introduction, FLE has become a central focus in second language (L2) research (Botes et al., 2020; Li et al., 2024), emphasizing students' active efforts to overcome challenges and improve proficiency (MacIntyre, 2016). FLE is composed of two dimensions: a social dimension, reflected in supportive classroom relationships, and a private dimension, linked to personal achievement and resilience (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Previous research has studied FLE in conjunction with various other factors, including motivation (Dewaele et al., 2023), classroom environment (Dewaele et al., 2025), anxiety and emotion regulation

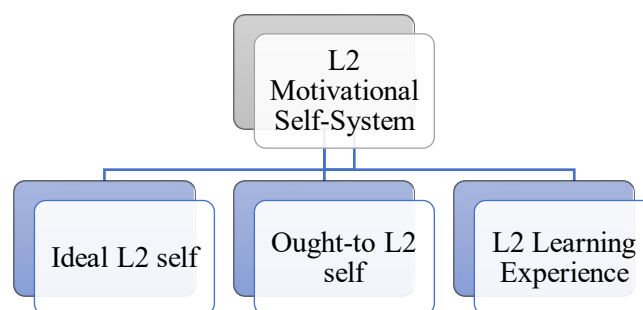
(Dewaele & Saito, 2024), and teacher influence (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). FLE promotes active engagement and perseverance in learning (Meirzwa, 2018). Higher FLE levels are also associated with increased WTC (Khajavy et al., 2018) and academic success (Zhang et al., 2020; Jin & Zhang, 2021), signifying its critical role in fostering effective and enjoyable language learning environments. Earlier studies found that greater FLE reduced foreign language classroom anxiety (Botes et al., 2022), enhanced willingness to communicate (WTC) in the target language (Dewaele, 2022), and supported foreign language academic achievements in the classroom (Zhang et al., 2020; Jin & Zhang, 2021).

Botes et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between FLE and four other variables, namely foreign language anxiety (FLA), WTC, academic achievement, and self-perceived achievement. The results found a moderate negative association between FLE and FLA. On the other hand, a moderate positive correlation was also found among FLE and WTC, FLE and academic success, and FLE and self-perceived achievements. Moreover, scholars also investigated the relationship of FLE with various demographic variables such as gender (Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2021; Jiang et al., 2024) and age (Li, 2022). Alshahrani (2025) conducted a study to examine the connection between attitude, foreign language anxiety, and FLE while also studying the impact of gender and age. The study found youngest students were least anxious and more satisfied compared to older participants. With regards to gender difference, female students outperformed on both the FLE and the anxiety scales. Other studies argued that there is no significant difference found between the two genders (Alenezi, 2020; Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2021; Li, 2022).

Ideal L2 Self

The ideal L2 self is a construct associated with L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) theory initially proposed by Dörnyei (2005). It is a principal construct in understanding the motivational dynamics that influence second language learners' classroom behavior and academic performance. Within this framework, the vision of oneself as a successful L2 user plays a key role in guiding behavior, particularly when current realities align with this envisioned identity (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS conceptualizes this vision through the lens of possible selves and self-discrepancy theory, positing the ideal L2 self as its core part. The L2MSS theory integrates cognition, imagination, and motivation, examining how learners' aspirations and fears as future L2 users interact with perceived gaps between current and ideal selves. The theory comprises three components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 Self, and L2 learning experiences. Dörnyei (2005) argued that the ideal L2 self signifies the ideal self-image that is connected to L2 learners' desires to achieve. The envisioned image has a motivational capability to boost students' performance (Dörnyei, 2020).

Figure 2
Dörnyei's L2MSS Model



The ideal L2 self represents a learner's envisioned future self using the language, shaped by personal goals and aspirations (Williams & Mercer, 2016) such as a student may imagine delivering a presentation at an international conference. Unlike, the ought-to L2 self reflects the traits one believes they should possess to meet external expectations and avoid negative consequences, aligning with Higgins' concept of the "ought self." The third component, the L2 learning experience, relates to immediate, situational factors such as classroom environment, teacher behavior, and peer interaction. Together, these dimensions influence learners' motivation by highlighting the gap between their present abilities and their projected language identity. Learners with a strong vision of their ideal L2 self and confidence in their progress are more likely to take part in communication and seek out learning opportunities. Furthermore, empirical research also suggests that the ideal L2 self significantly influences WTC, both directly and indirectly in classroom contexts (Papi et al., 2019; Sak, 2020; Lee & Lee, 2020; Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021; Fathi et al., 2023; Ebn-Abbasi et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

This study employed a correlational quantitative design to examine FLE and ideal L2 self as predictors of WTS among EFL university learners in Afghanistan. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participants. However, it is important to note that the absence of female students affected the sampling due to the current government policies toward female education in Afghanistan, which reflects a gender imbalance and current restrictions in Afghanistan, but it also presents a notable limitation. Data collection was conducted during the academic year 2025. First, the researcher approached the research and development department and shared the research aims and objectives. Then, a formal permission is granted from the directorate and the head of the English department. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and assured that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Moreover, the researcher provided a written informed consent, signifying their voluntary involvement and acknowledging their right to withdraw from the study at any point during data collection. All three questionnaires were administered in a classroom setting, and participants completed them anonymously.

Participants and Context

The study involved 160 university-level EFL learners of first and second year' learners aged 20 to 39 years, and all sharing a common cultural background. The sample of the study has drawn from public universities, namely Kabul Education University, Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman Universities. The selection of these students was influenced by the fact that they are in their early phase of the improvement their academic engagement in FL/L2 classes during which motivational and affective factors are in developing stage. In this stage, students are primarily transitioning from secondary education to higher education and expected to be more communicative in the classroom hence making them relatively relevant to select. Additionally, limiting the sample to these students further prevent the possible confounding impact of several variables namely advanced academic experience, exposure to various instructional methodologies and their interaction with teachers which are prevalent among senior students. Furthermore, public universities were selected due to their pertinent standardized curriculum across all universities ensuring consistency in instructional setting.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using three standardized scales: FLE, the ideal L2 self, and WTS. FLE was assessed using the 21-item scale by Dewaele (2014). The ideal L2 self was measured with a 10-item scale from Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) originally based on a 6-point Likert format. To improve clarity and response accuracy, the scale was adapted to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), removing the “slightly agree/disagree” options and adding a neutral midpoint which is especially useful for respondents who may struggle with distinctions like “slightly agree.” Simplifying the response options in this way enhances clarity and help reduce inconsistent or confused answers in cross-cultural settings. (e.g., Dawes, 2008; Matell & Jacoby, 1972).

WTS was measured using a 27-item scale developed by Riasati and Rahimi (2018), originally titled willingness to speak (WTS). This adapted scale is based on instruments by Cao & Philp (2006), McCroskey (1992), and Lisa (2006), the scale covers various classroom speaking scenarios, including topic familiarity, interlocutor type, and situational context. Though named WTS, it effectively captures the oral communication aspect of WTC. This aligns with MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) framework, which views WTC as a dynamic construct shaped by emotional, cognitive, and contextual factors. Also, the reliability analyses of the three scales were administered using Cronbach’s alpha. As shown in Table 1, the findings confirmed that all three scales demonstrated satisfactory reliability, reflecting a strong internal coherence among the items within each construct.

Table 1
Scales reliability with the Alpha coefficient

Scale	N	Alpha
FLE	21	0.84
Ideal L2 Self	10	0.80
WTS	27	0.90

Data Analysis

IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 26) is used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, minimum, maximum, kurtosis, and skewness were computed to summarize the central tendency and distribution of the data. The reliability of the scales was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha to assess internal consistency. After confirming the related assumptions, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression techniques were performed. An ANOVA test was also deployed to assess the overall significance of the regression model. The researcher also checked the multicollinearity and independence of residuals (Durbin-Watson statistic) to validate the model.

FINDINGS

Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

The demographic profile of the sample indicated a homogenous group of 165 male university students with a mean age of 22.69 years (SD = 3.85), ranging from 17 to 39 years, suggesting a predominantly young adult population in the English language department of these universities. It is worth mentioning that the sample in this study consisted exclusively of male university students. This was not due to a sampling bias but rather reflects the current educational policies in Afghanistan, where, as of the time of data collection, access to secondary and higher education for females has been suspended under the

prevailing government directions. According to recent reports, girls' schooling is allowed only up to grade six, and all forms of higher education for women remain closed until the second order from the government authorities. Thus, female participation at the university level is currently not possible to collect data. In addition, although online data collection is often considered a practical alternative in such restricted contexts, it was not culturally or practically appropriate in the Afghan context for two main reasons. First, many regions in Afghanistan face limited internet access and digital literacy, and second, cultural norms restrict communication, particularly between male and female participants.

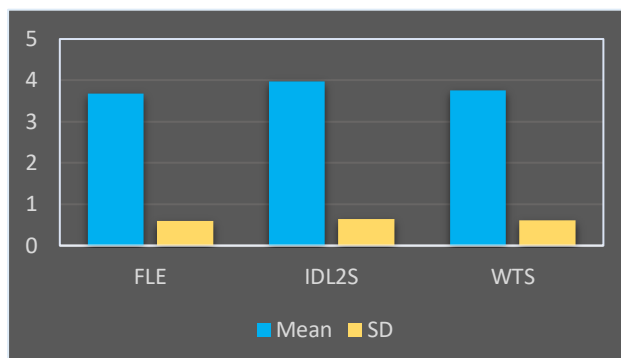
Furthermore, the majority of the study participants, 63%, were residents of rural areas. Notably, most of them had studied English for a period of one to two years through local or central language institutes within their respective provinces. Additionally, participants reported moderate to high levels of FLE, ideal L2 self, and WTS, as shown in Table 2. The mean score for FLE was $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.59$, indicating that learners enjoyed their English language learning experiences but not highly enjoyed. The distribution was moderately negatively skewed ($skewness = -0.86$), suggesting a tendency toward higher enjoyment levels. The ideal L2 self had the highest mean score among the three variables ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.64$), reflecting that learners maintained a vivid and positive self-concept as future English speakers. The distribution was also slightly negatively skewed, indicating a general tendency toward agreement with the ideal self statements. For WTS, the mean score was 3.75 ($SD = 0.62$), suggesting that learners demonstrated a moderate level of willingness to speak in classroom-based English communication tasks.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
FLE	1.67	4.76	3.68	0.59	-0.86	0.40
Ideal L2 Self	2.30	5.00	3.97	0.64	-0.64	-0.10
Willingness to Speak (WTS)	1.89	4.96	3.75	0.62	-0.34	-0.20

Figure 3 below also supports the findings presented in table 2 above. The figure demonstrates that respondents possess a high level of ideal L2 self compared to other variables of the study.

Figure 3
Levels of FLE, ideal L2 self and WTS of the Respondents



Correlation Analysis

The correlation results revealed a statistically significant and positive connection between the studied variables. FLE demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with both the ideal L2 self ($r = .329$, $p < .01$) and WTS ($r = .317$, $p < .01$). This suggests that learners who gain greater enjoyment from language learning are more likely to form a vivid image of their ideal L2 self and show stronger tendency to speak in the target language. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation was found between ideal L2 self and WTS ($r = .595$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with a more clearly defined and motivating future L2 self-concept are significantly more likely to engage in communication tasks. The present results are in line with previous research by Fan and Wang (2025) whereas they revealed that ideal L2 self is significantly and positively linked with L2 WTC among Chinese students.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	1	2	3
1. FLE	—		
2. Ideal L2 Self	.329**	—	
3. WTS	.317**	.595**	—

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

The Results of multiple regression analysis revealed that ideal L2 self and FLE positively influenced the dependent variable, WTS. The model summary is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.609	.370	.363	.49212	1.915

Note: Predictors – Ideal L2 Self, Foreign Language Enjoyment; Dependent Variable – Willingness to Speak.

The model summary indicated that the correlation coefficient (R) of .609, showing a moderate to strong positive association between the combined predictors and the outcome variable. The model accounted for 37% of the variance in learners' WTS ($R^2 = .370$), meaning that the predictors together explained 37% of the variability in WTS. After adjusting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R² was .363, supporting the stability and generalizability of the model. The model showed statistical significance, $F(2, 162) = 47.643$, $p < .001$, which means that including ideal L2 self and FLE as predictors significantly improves the model's capacity to explain WTS. Furthermore, the Std error of the estimate was 0.492, suggesting that, on average, the observed values deviated moderately from the predicted values in the model. This relatively low standard error suggests a best fit of the model to the data.

Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.915, which falls within the generally accepted range of 1.5 to 2.5, which implies that the residuals are nearly independent and that there is no indication of first-order autocorrelation. This finding supports the independence of errors assumption, which is critical for linear regression. Overall, these findings conclude that learners' idea and understanding of their ideal L2 self and enjoyment in the English classroom are significant predictors of willingness to engage in spoken communication.

Table 5
ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Regression	23.077	2	11.538	47.643	.000
Residual	39.234	162	0.242		
Total	62.311	164			

The results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) reported statistical significance, $F(2, 162) = 47.643$, $p < .001$, indicating that the combined influence of independent variables accounts for a significant proportion of variance in learners' WTS. The regression model accounted for 23.077 units of the total 62.311 units of variance, with the remaining 39.234 units attributed to unexplained error as shown in Table 5. This provides significant support for the mentioned hypotheses that both motivational and affective factors play a significant role in shaping learners' willingness to speak in the classroom.

Table 6 also demonstrates that ideal L2 self stands the most powerful predictor ($\beta = .550$, $p < .001$) in the model. This implies that learners who have a clearer, more motivating vision of themselves as effective L2 users show a distinctly greater readiness to participate in spoken communication in the class. The FLE predictor also contributes notably to the model ($\beta = .136$, $p = .041$), but to a lesser extent, suggesting that emotional engagement in the classroom, while important, plays a secondary role in fostering communicative willingness. Additionally, the absence of multicollinearity (VIFs = 1.121) confirms the independence of these two predictors. These results provide empirical support for second language motivation models that emphasize the dual roles of motivational vision (Dörnyei, 2009) and positive emotion (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) in promoting language achievements.

Table 6
Regression Model

Predictor	B	SE	β (Beta)	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.133	.295	—	3.835	.000	—	—
FLE_1	.142	.069	.136	2.714	.000	.892	1.121
Ideal_2	.528	.063	.550	8.336	.000	.892	1.121

As shown in Figure 4, the regression model whereas scatterplots demonstrating the predictive relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The left panel shows a

positive but moderate association between FLE and WTS, while the right panel shows a stronger, more linear relationship between ideal L2 self and WTS. These patterns shows that ideal L2 self is the stronger predictor in the model, consistent with the standardized regression coefficients reported above.

Figure 4

Scatter plot of regression model



This study examined the impact of ideal L2 self and FLE on WTS among Afghan EFL learners. Pearson correlation analyses revealed significant positive associations between the three variables, and multiple regression results showed that FLE significantly predicted WTS. These findings align with Positive Psychology (PP), which emphasizes the role of positive emotions in enhancing language acquisition. Drawing on Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, the results suggest that enjoyment helps learners reframe communication from a threat to an opportunity, particularly relevant in socio-culturally reserved contexts like Afghanistan. This supports the idea that fostering positive classroom experiences can enhance communicative engagement. These findings are consistent and supportive to the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), that suggests positive emotions like enjoyment expand learners' thought action repertoires and build enduring resources. It also scaffolds Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS, in which a vivid Ideal L2 Self motivates learners to engage actively in communication tasks.

The results about first hypothesis further support previous research by Dewaele (2019), Bensalem (2022), Bensalem et al. (2023), and Barrios and Acosta-Manzano (2021), all of whom emphasized the role of FLE in increasing learners' willingness to participate. Further, findings of the present study are also aligned with Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021), Peng and Wang (2024), and Zhang et al. (2020), who demonstrated that FLE significantly influences L2 WTC over time. The findings regarding hypothesis two indicated that the ideal L2 self significantly augmented learners' WTS, suggesting that learners with an envisioned and motivating image of themselves as proficient English language users are more likely to participate in conversation and classroom discussion. This finding supports Dörnyei's (2009) L2MSS, which highlights the role of future self-guides in driving language learning behavior. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2024) asserted that ideal L2 self positively influenced the L2 WTC of EFL

learners. Similarly, Fathi et al. (2023) found that FLE considerably affected EFL learners' WTC. Such findings confirm the important role of positive emotions and motivational factors in facilitating communicative engagement in the English language classroom.

The results align with prior studies by Sadoughi and Hejazi (2024), Zhang et al. (2024), and Sak (2020), all of which reported a strong positive association between ideal L2 self and WTC. These findings underline the value of cultivating future-oriented motivation among EFL learners to enhance their communicative willingness and overall language development.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study examined ideal L2 self and FLE as predictors of WTS among EFL university learners in Afghanistan. The descriptive statistics indicated that all respondents had moderate to high levels of FLE, ideal L2 self, and WTS in EFL class. Comparatively, correlational analyses showed that all three variables are significantly and positively correlated, suggesting that learners' communicative engagement is closely related to both emotional and motivational aspects. More importantly, the multiple regression analysis has shown that FLE and IDL2s positively affected the WTS, whereas ideal L2 self emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that learners with a clear and positive envisaged image of the future FL/L2 user are more likely to communicate and actively participate inside the classroom.

Furthermore, the results have various practical implications for English instructors, administrators and also for curriculum developers: First, as found, FLE encourages enjoyable learning conditions as it substantially predicts WTC; teachers should create classroom conditions that are supportive, engaging, and emotionally pleasant, reducing anxiety and escalating enjoyment in EFL classes. Moreover, teachers should deploy motivational strategies that foster both self-confidence and a supportive classroom setting/learning dynamics. Such strategies can enhance EFL learners' intrinsic motivation, leading to a greater enjoyment during the learning process and better academic accomplishments.

Second, to strengthen the ideal L2 self, teachers should incorporate future-oriented and reflective activities such as vision-building exercises, mental imagery, and goal-setting to help learners develop a vivid sense of their future language identity. These strategies can significantly boost long-term motivation. As Ruvolo and Markus (1992, cited in MacIntyre, 2019) noted that vivid self-relevant imagery allows individuals to mentally experience their possible selves, supporting the connection between imagination and motivated behavior which is a key principle in Dörnyei's L2 motivation theory. Supporting this, Mackay (2019) emphasized that mental imagery involves creating detailed, sensory-rich internal representations. In addition, teachers should promote interactive classroom practices that encourage real communication. Activities such as role-plays, simulations, debates, short presentations, task-based learning, and small group discussions can build students' confidence to speak in English. This is particularly valuable in culturally constrained contexts where classroom participation is often limited. Though the present study achieved its results, but it is not without limitations mainly the single-gender participants and the use of self-report questionnaires limit the chance of generalizability. Future studies could investigate longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to study how FLE and ideal L2 self change over time and across various learner groups.

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