

Exploring Motivated Participation in Spoken English Learning among Tertiary English Majors

Zhenzhen Ma, Chili Li*

School of Foreign Languages, Hubei University of Technology, Wuhan, China

*Corresponding Author: lichili@hbut.edu.cn

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Abstract: This study investigated the motivated participation in spoken English learning among 148 Chinese tertiary English majors through a questionnaire survey grounded in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System framework. Descriptive statistics revealed two key dimensions of motivation: 1) the oral motivated self system, where participants demonstrated a high level of Ideal Oral Self, Group, and Peer, alongside a medium level of Ought-to Oral Self, Oral Learning Experience, and Class; and 2) motivated classroom participation, marked by a high level of Group and Peer and a medium level of Class. Independent samples t-tests identified no significant differences across six motivational factors between freshmen-sophomores or sophomores-juniors, but freshmen exhibited significantly stronger Class Environment engagement than juniors, indicating a decline in structured classroom motivation with academic progression. These findings emphasize the centrality of peer collaboration and ideal self-imagery in sustaining motivation while advocating for curriculum reforms to address declining classroom engagement in advanced cohorts. The study provides actionable insights for educators to design peer-driven activities and adaptive pedagogical strategies, ultimately enhancing oral proficiency and overall language competence among English majors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Second language motivation has a significant impact on learners' self-directed learning behavior (Wei, 2013). Foreign scholars have a rich definition of second language motivation, which is dominated by the following three types: From the perspective of social psychology, Gardner et al. (1985) proposed that L2 motivation consists of three parts: motivational intensity, desire to learn the target language, and attitude toward the target language. This definition has a profound influence on the study of L2 motivation. From a cognitive point of view, Burden & Williams (1997) defined L2 motivation as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which results in a conscious resolution to act as well as triggers intellectual or physical efforts which last for a certain period of time to achieve goals. Dörnyei and Otto (1998) emphasized that learner motivation is dynamic and influenced by context. They defined L2 motivation as a constantly changing force that drives individuals. This force initiates, guides, and enhances cognitive and physical actions. It also evaluates these actions, which involve selecting, prioritizing, and putting initial wishes and desires into practice. The outcome of these actions can be either successful or unsuccessful.

As the most widely learned second language globally, English exhibits distinctive characteristics in terms of learning motivation and autonomous behaviors. From a motivational typology perspective, English learners frequently demonstrate strong instrumental motivation (Dörnyei, 2005), such as the need to pass standardized tests or for career advancement, which contrasts markedly with the integrative motivation proposed by Gardner (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Meanwhile, globalization has enriched English learning resources, like films, social media, providing diverse avenues for self-directed learning and reinforcing the dynamic nature of motivation emphasized by Dörnyei—where learners' driving forces may fluctuate with learning phases and contextual changes (Dörnyei, 2009).

Furthermore, significant variations emerge across sociocultural contexts: in English-speaking countries, immigrant learners' motivation often involves cultural integration and identity formation, whereas in non-English-speaking contexts like China, exam-oriented pressures may divert autonomous learning behaviors away from authentic language use (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Notably, while technological tools (e.g., language learning apps) can enhance short-term motivation through gamification (Reinders & Wattana, 2015), their long-term impact on deep cognitive engagement requires further investigation. Current research predominantly focuses on Western contexts, leaving a gap in empirical evidence regarding how Asian learners sustain autonomous learning under predominantly instrumental motivation.

1.2 Review of Literature

1.2.1 Research of L2 Motivational Self System

1.2.1.1 Defining L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei's (2014) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) conceptualizes motivation through three dimensions: the ideal L2 self (aspirational identity), the ought-to L2 self (external obligations), and L2 learning experience (contextual engagement). While these constructs have been widely validated across diverse learner populations (Chen et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2012; Papi, 2010; Wei, 2020; Xu et al., 2013), their operationalization in oral skill development remains underexplored.

According to the frameworks established by Taguchi et al (2009), Peng & Woodrow (2010), and Chen (2019), this study adapts the L2MSS framework to define an oral motivational self system, comprising Ideal Oral Self (aspirations for spoken proficiency),

Ought-to Oral Self (perceived societal/academic demands), and Oral Learning Experience (class/peer interactions), to specifically address the motivational dynamics of spoken English learning. Unlike the broader L2MSS, which encompasses general language skills (e.g., reading, writing), this adapted model prioritizes the unique socio-cognitive demands of oral communication, such as spontaneity, negotiation of meaning, and identity performance in real-time interactions.

1.2.1.2 Research on L2MSS Outside China

International research on L2MSS has progressed through three thematic phases: 1) theoretical validation, 2) contextual influencing factors, and 3) skill-specific correlations. Initial validation studies confirmed the framework's universality across 13000 Hungarian pupils, though predominantly in European EFL contexts (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei & Németh, 2006; Lamb, 2012; Kim, 2013; Moskovsky et al., 2016). Subsequent work identified cultural and experiential moderators. For instance, Isam et al. (2013) demonstrated that multilingual Pakistani learners' motivation is shaped by cross-cultural exposure, while Huang et al. (2015) highlighted the role of multilingual identities in reconfiguring ideal/ought-to selves.

A growing yet limited body of research examines L2MSS's relationship with specific language skills. While Takase (2007) found no link between motivation and reading achievement among Japanese high schoolers, Juhee (2015) and Wong (2018) reported contradictory results in Korean and Hong Kong cohorts, suggesting cultural or curricular moderators. Similarly, studies linking L2MSS to writing (Huang et al., 2021; Moskovsky et al., 2016) and reading (Takase, 2007) emphasize methodological variability—e.g., longitudinal vs. cross-sectional designs—as a key limitation. Notably, no studies explicitly investigate L2MSS's applicability to spoken English learning, particularly among advanced learners like tertiary English majors, whose oral proficiency is central to their academic identity.

1.2.1.3 Research on L2MSS in China

Domestic scholarship mirrors international trends but with a pronounced focus on non-English majors and general proficiency outcomes. Wang & Dai (2015) validated L2MSS's utility in enhancing motivation among Chinese non-English majors, while Zhan & Hong (2015) and Yang et al. (2017) identified socio-contextual moderators (family background and teacher support) shaping learners' self-concepts. Recent work has tentatively linked L2MSS to specific skills. Hu & Ma (2019) found indirect effects of the ideal/ought-to self on oral proficiency, and Yu & Jiang (2021) established predictive relationships with writing achievement. (Zhan et al., 2023)

However, critical gaps persist: 1) Existing studies disproportionately target non-English majors, neglecting the disciplinary-specific motivations of English majors, for whom oral competence is both an academic benchmark and a professional prerequisite; 2) Skill-specific research prioritizes reading/writing, overlooking the affective and interactive demands of spoken English; 3) Methodologies often rely on self-report surveys, lacking observational or qualitative insights into classroom participation dynamics.

1.2.2 Research on Motivated L2 Behavior

1.2.2.1 Motivated Behavior

Motivated behavior is defined differently in psychology and second language acquisition. In psychology, motivated behavior is a term used to describe a collection of behaviors that occur in a person, focused on completing a certain task. Salamone & Correa (2018) claimed that motivated behavior is marked by significant activity, energy, tenacity, and exertion of effort in both the onset and maintenance of behavior and is

directed toward or away from certain stimuli. In L2 acquisition, this construct bridges motivation and proficiency, mediating outcomes through behavioral engagement. Csizér & Kormos's (2009) defined motivated behavior as the effort to achieve the goal, the willingness to learn the language, and the degree of emphasis on the task of language learning, which is an important factor affecting academic performance. Papi (2010) claimed that motivated behavior is learners' effort to learn English, which serves as a mediating bridge between motivation and success. Kim (2014) proposed that motivated behavior refers to the degree and mode of effort that students are willing to put out in their English-learning efforts.

Thus, this study reconceptualizes motivated behavior as motivated participation in spoken English learning, which is defined as the learners' active and purposeful engagement in oral language activities driven by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. According to Oxford's criteria, there are six factors influencing learners' motivated participation in oral English class, including Ideal Oral Self, Ought-to Oral Self, Oral Learning Experience, Class, Group, and Peer. Therefore, the study will use Oxford's criteria to assess the influence of these six factors on learners' motivated participation in spoken English learning, aiming to explore the overall features of motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors. Here, the overall features refer to the key characteristics that define how learners actively and purposefully engage in oral language activities. This concept emphasizes learners' willingness to practice, collaborate, and persist despite challenges and addresses the actional phase of motivation, emphasizing how self-concepts and environments coalesce to sustain oral participation (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013).

1.2.2.2 Research on Motivated L2 Behavior Outside China

Motivated L2 behavior has been a significant factor that scholars have considered in the motivation research field for a long time (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Kim, 2009). International studies underscore the ideal L2 self as the primary predictor of motivated behavior (Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Papi, 2010), though findings vary by context. For example, Lamb's (2012) Indonesian study prioritized positive learning experiences over self-concepts, while Kim & Kim (2011) identified skill-specific mediators (reading/writing proficiency) in Korean learners. These discrepancies suggest that cultural-educational values (e.g., exam-oriented vs. communicative curricula) moderate motivation-behavior linkages.

Crucially, none of these studies disaggregate motivated behavior by language skill, treating L2 proficiency as a monolithic construct rather than examining oral participation as a distinct behavioral domain.

1.2.2.3 Research on Motivated L2 Behavior in China

The development of motivated L2 behavior has attracted many domestic scholars. Qin & Wen (2002) found that the motivated L2 behavior of non-English major college students can be affected by controllable attribution and learning interest. To find out the influencing factors of college students' motivated L2 behavior, Long (2010) conducted an analysis and the results show that the most powerful influencing factors are their weak self-efficacy, poor language foundation, low interest, high anxiety, and low self-concept in English learning. Liu (2012) and his colleague conducted a survey on non-English major students and found that L2MSS and English anxiety greatly influences their motivated L2 behavior. He also confirmed that the positive L2 learning experience can help students to reduce anxiety and boost their motivated L2 behavior. Xu (2014) claimed that the motivational strategy is the most important factor in stimulating motivated L2 behavior of non-English major undergraduates. Wei (2014) made a structural analysis to discuss

college students' perception of L2 class goals, L2 selves, and motivational learning behavior. Hong (2018) found that motivated L2 behavior of non-English major students has mediating effects among their ideal L2 self, L2 learning experience, and reading skills.

To sum up, domestic research has focused on non-English majors and deficit-oriented analyses, attributing low motivated behavior to anxiety, weak self-efficacy, or poor language foundations (Long, 2010; Liu, 2012). While Hong (2018) and Wei (2014) advanced structural models linking L2MSS to reading/writing behaviors, only Chen (2019) explored spoken English participation, finding peer collaboration critical for sustaining engagement—a finding yet to be replicated in English major populations. Therefore, persistent limitations still exist: 1) Overreliance on quantitative surveys that overlook the situated, interactive nature of oral participation; 2) A skill-agnostic approach that conflates reading/writing behaviors with spoken engagement; 3) Sample homogeneity, with English majors, who face unique motivational pressures (e.g., near-native oral benchmarks), remaining underrepresented.

2. METHOD

3.1 Research Questions

This study was designed to investigate the motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors. It was to address the following research questions:

Question 1: What are the overall features of motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors?

Question 2: What are the differences in motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors in different grades?

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study comprised undergraduate students majoring in English from freshman to junior at a science and engineering-oriented university. Drawing on Dörnyei (2009), motivational fluctuations become particularly pronounced at critical learning junctures, such as transitional decision-making phases. For instance, third-year students—facing standardized proficiency assessments (e.g., TEM-4/TEM-8), internship commitments, or study abroad planning—exhibit declining motivation in structured classroom settings. Concurrently, second-year students transition into discipline-specific coursework, while freshmen remain in academic adaptation phases, resulting in heightened salience of classroom environment engagement. Consequently, cross-grade comparisons reveal distinct motivational trajectories across developmental stages. To ensure sample representativeness, we conducted a questionnaire survey at the Self-Access Language Learning Center during mid-semester of the second term in the 2023-2024 academic year, employing random sampling for participant recruitment. The survey adhered strictly to voluntary participation principles and was administered anonymously, with a completion time within 20 minutes. A total of 190 questionnaires were distributed, and after excluding incomplete responses and invalid entries, 148 valid questionnaires were retained for subsequent analysis to ensure data reliability. Although the sample size was relatively limited, the parametric assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were satisfied, thereby substantiating the validity of the t-test results. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Background Information of the Participants

Category (Grade)		Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Total
Gender	Male	13	5	8	26
	Female	36	44	42	122
	Total	49	49	50	148
Hometown	City	Town	Countryside	Total	
	63	59	26	148	
English Score in the College Entrance Examination	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
	148	92	143	127.4	8.17881
Self-evaluated English Language Proficiency	Number	Min	Max	Mean	SD
	148	1	7	4.0	1.24176

3.3 Instrument

The L2 Motivational Self System Questionnaire (see Appendix) used in this study, which was adapted from the frameworks established by Taguchi et al (2009), Peng & Woodrow (2010), and Chen (2019), was utilized for data collection. It encompassed two sections. The initial section captured the student's background details, including their gender, grade, hometown, and self-assessed English language proficiency. The subsequent section comprised 28 items, designed to assess the student's initiative in the following six categories: Ideal Oral Self (Items 2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18), Ought-to Oral Self (Items 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 17, 19), Oral Learning Experience (Items 2, 6, 9, 10, 15), Class (Items 20, 21, 22), Group (Items 23, 24, 25), and Peer (Items 26, 27, 28).

For each item, the student chose the answers in the form of a 5-point scale, namely, strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1). The students answered the questions based on their own situations. Here, it's worth noting that this study uses Oxford's (1990) criteria to assess the influence of these six factors on participants' motivated participation in oral English class. The average of each category, according to Oxford (1990), represents the extent to which this factor affected the participants' motivated participation in oral English class: Factors are considered to demonstrate a high degree of influence if the mean values of each category fall between 3.5 and 5.0, a medium level between 2.5 and 3.4, and a low level between 1.0 and 2.4. These just emphasize the extent of the factors' object influence on the participants' motivated participation in oral English class, while the 5-point Likert Scale is aimed to measure the tendency of the participants' subjective attitudes toward the factors' influence on the participants' motivated participation in oral English class. Table 2 shows the description and item distribution of the L2MSS questionnaire.

Table 2. Description and Item Distribution of the L2MSS Questionnaire

Categories	Definition	Items
Ideal oral self	Reflects the student's aspirational goals for oral communication.	2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18
Ought-to oral self	Captures the student's perceived obligations or external pressures related to oral performance	1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 17, 19
Oral learning experience	Assesses the student's subjective experiences and attitudes toward oral learning.	2, 6, 9, 10, 15
Class	Focuses on the student's engagement and initiative within formal classroom settings.	20, 21, 22
Group	Evaluates the student's collaborative behaviors and contributions in group activities.	23, 24, 25
Peer	Definition: Examines peer influence and interactions in shaping oral initiative.	26, 27, 28

3.4 Data Collection

The data were collected in the spring semester of the 2024 academic year. The author first obtained consent from the English language teachers of the participants before formally administering the questionnaire survey. Then, during the break of the class, 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the author to the participants. Objectives of this survey were briefed to the participants before they answered the questionnaire items. They were also guaranteed that this survey would not exert any detrimental effect on their final exam scores, and their information would definitely be kept confidential. Finally, 180 copies of the questionnaire were returned, 148 of them valid after the incomplete and wrongly answered ones were removed.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were processed by means of the Statistic Package for Social Science 27.0 (SPSS 27.0). Descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the overall features of motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors (Research Question 1). Then, inferential statistics procedures were employed through the Independent T-Test. Compared with ANOVA, the Independent T-Test can directly verify the specific hypothesis, that is, the attenuation of motivation may manifest in large-span grade levels (such as between lower and higher grades with an interval of two years), rather than between adjacent grade levels (such as between freshmen and sophomores). This avoids the redundancy of having to conduct additional post-hoc analyses after an overall ANOVA test. Therefore, this study mainly employed the Independent T-Test to explore the differences in motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors in different grades (Research Question 2).

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overall Features of Motivated Participation in Spoken English Learning among Tertiary English Majors

To answer Research Question 1, we investigated the overall features of motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors. We found that the overall descending order of the mean values of each category of L2MSS and motivated participation in spoken English learning is as follows: Peer, Group, Ideal Oral Self, Class, Oral learning Experience, and Ought-to Oral Self. Among them, Ideal Oral Self, Group, and Peer have a high level of motivated participation in spoken English learning, while Ought-to Oral Self, Oral Learning Experience, and Class have a medium level.

According to Oxford (1990), the average of each category represents the extent to which this factor affected the participants' motivated participation in oral English class: Factors are considered to demonstrate a high degree of influence if the mean values of each category fall between 3.5 and 5.0, a medium level between 2.5 and 3.4, and a low level between 1.0 and 2.4.

Table 3. Overall Features of Motivated Participation among Tertiary English Majors

Category	NO.	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Ideal oral self	148	2.00	4.71	3.5	.56597
Ought-to oral self	148	1.43	4.57	3.0	.67801
Oral learning experience	148	1.60	4.80	3.3	.62454
Class	148	1.00	5.00	3.4	.84135
Group	148	1.67	5.00	3.6	.67073
Peer	148	2.00	5.00	3.7	.65136

Table 3 presents the results of the overall features of tertiary English majors' motivated participation in oral English class. The descending order of the means for each category of oral motivated self system and motivated oral participation in class is presented as follows: Peer (Mean=3.7), Group (Mean=3.6), Ideal Oral Self (Mean=3.5), Class (Mean=3.4), Oral Learning Experience (Mean=3.3), Ought-to Oral Self (Mean=3.0).

Among the six factors affecting motivated participation in oral English class, the mean value of Ideal Oral Self, Group, and Peer is all above 3.5, which means that the participants have a high level of motivated participation in spoken English learning in these three categories. Although the mean score of 3.5 is close to the neutral midpoint (3 points) of the Likert scale, it has attained the high level according to Oxford's (1990) scale (3.5-5.0). Kormos & Csizér (2008) also pointed out the main factors affecting students' L2 motivation, which were language learning attitudes and the Ideal L2 self. This provides empirical support for the main construct of the theory of the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005). The mean value of the Ought-to Oral Self, Oral Learning Experience, and Class is within the range from 2.5 to 3.4, indicating that the participants have a medium level in their participation in these three categories. These results are partially in accordance with the findings of Cao (2006), Kormos & Csizér (2008), Liu (2013), Xiong (2016), and Chen (2019).

4.2 Differences of Motivated Participation in Spoken English Learning among Tertiary English Majors in Different Grades

For the differences in motivated participation in spoken English learning among tertiary English majors in different grades (Research Question 2), an Independent T-test is carried out. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in the six categories of factors between the Freshmen and Sophomores, Sophomores and Juniors. However, some significant differences do exist between Freshmen and Juniors.

Table 4 reports the differences in motivated participation in oral English class between Freshman and Sophomore English majors. The Independent sample T-test results show that the P values (sig.) of the six factors are respectively 0.692, 0.745, 0.480, 0.153, 0.806, 0.215, indicating that there exists no statistically significant difference in the six categories of factors between Freshmen and Sophomores.

Table 4. Differences between Freshmen and Sophomores

Category	Grade	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Ideal oral self	Freshman	49	3.6	.53293	.397	96	.692
	Sophomore	49	3.5	.62774	.397	93.559	.692
Ought-to oral self	Freshman	49	3.0	.69680	.326	96	.745
	Sophomore	49	3.0	.72118	.326	95.887	.745
Oral learning experience	Freshman	49	3.4	.65223	.709	96	.480
	Sophomore	49	3.3	.65789	.709	95.993	.480
Class	Freshman	49	3.6	.71890	1.440	96	.153
	Sophomore	49	3.4	.77658	1.440	95.434	.153
Group	Freshman	49	3.6	.68595	.247	96	.806
	Sophomore	49	3.6	.67791	.247	95.987	.806
Peer	Freshman	49	3.6	.65386	-1.247	96	.215
	Sophomore	49	3.8	.69572	-1.247	95.633	.215

Table 5 reports the differences in motivated participation in oral English class between Sophomore and Junior English majors. Independent sample T-test results show that the P values (sig.) of the six factors are respectively 0.547, 0.475, 0.524, 0.198, 0.560, 0.892, indicating that there exists no statistically significant difference in the six categories of factors between Sophomores and Juniors. The finding is in accordance with Gao et al. (2003) and Chang (2018). Both studies reveal the stability of motivational factors between adjacent grades, namely that differences are not significant due to similar learning phases, such as the need to prepare for the CET-4 exam and motivational fluctuation cycles.

Table 5. Differences between Sophomores and Juniors

Category	Grade	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Ideal oral self	Sophomore	49	3.5	.62724	.604	97	.547
	Junior	50	3.5	.53874	.603	94.241	.548
Ought-to oral self	Sophomore	49	3.0	.72118	.717	97	.475
	Junior	50	2.9	.61901	.716	94.220	.476
Oral learning experience	Sophomore	49	3.3	.65789	.640	97	.524
	Junior	50	3.2	.56070	.639	94.000	.525
Class	Sophomore	49	3.4	.77658	1.297	97	.198
	Junior	50	3.1	.96235	1.299	93.576	.197
Group	Sophomore	49	3.6	.67791	.585	97	.560
	Junior	50	3.5	.65711	.585	96.743	.560
Peer	Sophomore	49	3.8	.69572	-1.36	97	.892
	Junior	50	3.8	.59856	-1.35	94.292	.893

Table 6 reports the differences in motivated participation in oral English class between Freshman and Junior English majors. According to Table 5, the two groups of participants were significantly distinguished from each other in one of the six dimensions.

Specifically, the Freshmen (mean=3.6) significantly differ from the Juniors (mean=3.1) in Class ($P=0.011$, <0.05). This result means that the Freshmen have a significantly stronger Class than the Juniors. This result is partially in accordance with Chang (2019). The reasons for this may be that the school set up oral classes in the Freshman year, but not in the Junior year. In addition, because Freshmen are new to college, they are usually more likely to be interested and curious about new things than Juniors, and more likely

to be interested in class content, and therefore more engaged in class. Junior students may feel more academic and competitive pressures, and they may be more focused on grades and evaluations, and therefore less engaged and motivated in class. The finding is also in accordance with Gao et al. (2003) and Chang (2018). They uncover the essence of cross-grade motivational differences: these arise from transitions in learning phases (from exam-oriented to professional deepening), the evolution of motivational types (from instrumental to cultural), and dynamic adaptation (from passivity to initiative).

Table 6. Differences between Freshmen and Juniors

Category	Grade	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Ideal oral self	Freshman	49	3.6	.53293	1.091	97	.278
	Junior	50	3.5	.53874	1.091	96.991	.278
Ought-to oral self	Freshman	49	3.0	.69680	1.083	97	.281
	Junior	50	2.9	.61901	1.082	95.185	.282
Oral learning experience	Freshman	49	3.4	.65223	1.411	97	.161
	Junior	50	3.2	.56070	1.409	94.268	.162
Class	Freshman	49	3.6	.71890	2.607	97	.011
	Junior	50	3.2	.96235	2.615	90.678	.010
Group	Freshman	49	3.6	.68595	.834	97	.407
	Junior	50	3.5	.65711	.833	96.613	.407
Peer	Freshman	49	3.6	.65386	-1.491	97	.139
	Junior	50	3.8	.59856	-1.489	95.872	.140

The research findings indicate that the three dimensions of the L2 Motivational Self System and class interaction have a direct, positive, and significant impact on motivated participation in Spoken English learning. Among them, the ideal oral self exerts the greatest influence, while the oral learning experience plays the smallest role. On the one hand, this corroborates domestic and international research findings on the influence of the ideal oral self and learning experience on motivated participation (Papi, 2010; Liu et al. 2012; Wei, 2013, 2014). The ideal oral self represents learners' aspirations for a better future self, motivating them to invest more enthusiasm in learning and strive to bridge the gap between their actual self and their possible self. Simultaneously, this further validates the notion that "the more inherent and internally motivated one is, the stronger the promotive effect will be" (Ge & Jin, 2016). The positive predictive effect of learning experience on motivational behavior suggests that when the classroom atmosphere is relaxed and lively, the teacher-student relationship is close, and the learning process is enjoyable, students will be more proactive in their learning and willing to exert greater effort in oral participation.

In summary, The study revealed stratified motivational participation patterns in spoken English learning among Tertiary English: The Ideal Oral Self (aspirations for spoken proficiency), Peer and Group interactions maintained high activation levels, whereas the Ought-to Oral Self (perceived societal/academic demands) and Oral Learning Experience reached moderate thresholds. In class participation dynamics, peer collaboration and group interactions demonstrated significantly stronger efficacy than traditional class engagement. Cross-grade analyses identified generational disparities in class participation between freshmen and juniors ($p < 0.05$), with no statistically significant differentiation in motivational factors between adjacent cohorts. These findings underscore peer synergy networks and future self-imagery as dual-core mechanisms for sustaining motivation, while highlighting the imperative for dynamic curricular restructuring—such as integrating career-academic transitional modules—to address participation attrition in advanced academic stages.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer significant pedagogical implications for optimizing spoken English instruction and enhancing students' metacognitive understanding of language learning processes. First, given the strong correlation between the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2009) and oral proficiency development, educators should implement future self-continuity interventions to strengthen learners' Ideal L2 Self, thereby maximizing motivational impacts on classroom engagement (Chen, 2019). Simultaneously, to elevate learning experiences and class participation, teachers ought to cultivate low-anxiety ecosystems through structured peer-assessment frameworks—such as cross-grade collaborative evaluations—to activate group synergies (Wang & Dai, 2015). Furthermore, pedagogical innovation necessitates a paradigm shift from traditional methodologies toward technology-integrated designs. This includes: (a) developing gamified learning architectures, such as AI-driven adaptive badge systems. It unlocks personalized achievements upon reaching task thresholds like 80% completion rates. to align with student interests (Gan & He, 2020), and (b) advancing blended learning models that synergize language instruction with learning sciences, exemplified by blockchain-based micro-credentials for authenticating collaborative outcomes (Shen, 2018). Collectively, these strategies foster balanced Ideal Oral Self development while addressing evolving educational demands in the digital era.

This study has some shortcomings in terms of the size of the sample population, methodology, and sources of data. Specifically, cross-sectional designs inherently fail to capture intra-individual trajectories of motivational development, thereby constraining the analysis of dynamic interactions within motivational systems. To address this methodological limitation, future investigations should adopt longitudinal paradigms grounded in Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) to model the temporal fluctuations and reciprocal causality underlying motivational processes. A larger population and triangulated methods like interviews and classroom observation should also be conducted in future research. While ANOVA could assess overall grade-level effects, our sample size (N=148) and research aims justified a pairwise approach. We acknowledge this choice limits inferences about broader trends across all three grades. Future work may integrate ANOVA with longitudinal designs so as to further verify the findings of this present study. In addition to the above shortcomings, there is a limitation in exploring the individual factors leading to the differences in motivated participation in spoken English learning. Therefore, the future study will be conducted to validate the differences in motivated participation in spoken English learning that are attributable to age, gender, grade, or other individual factors.

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