

## **A Study of Motivational Facet of Language Use in the Light of Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self-system**

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### **Abstract**

A plethora of recent studies in foreign language learning pivots around the interplay among individual difference factors, such as attitudes, motivation, anxiety, and emotional states. Although many studies deemed motivational variables as predictors of L2 proficiency, there is a dearth of research on the interface among these variables as the causes of L2 use among Iranian university students. In this study, willingness to communicate in second language (WTC in L2) is explored in association with a number of motivational factors: Ideal L2 self, attitudes to learning English, and L2 anxiety. This study seeks to study these factors in a single framework in the light of Dornyei's model of L2 motivation. Our study was based on a sample of 180 Iranian EFL university students. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was selected for data analysis. The results demonstrated that ideal L2 self and attitudes to English learning were positive and significant predictors of WTC. In contrast, it was found that L2 anxiety negatively and significantly predicted WTC. A cross-comparison of the findings revealed that among these three predictors (ideal L2 self, L2 attitudes, and L2 anxiety), L2 anxiety had the highest role in WTC. The results demonstrated the positive and significant impact of L2 attitudes on ideal L2 self and the negative association between L2 attitudes and L2 anxiety. The present study also explored the association between the four subscales of WTC (WTC in reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and the three motivational variables which led to mixed results.

**Keywords:** Attitudes to L2 learning, Ideal L2 self, L2 anxiety, Willingness to communicate

### **INTRODUCTION**

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was originally conceptualized with reference to first or native language (L1) verbal communication. It was initiated to un-willingness to communicate by Burgoon's (1976), based on McCroskey and Richmond's (1987) work

on the communication literature, that of Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig (1977) on tendency toward verbal behavior, and shyness by McCroskey and Richmond (1982). WTC was initially alluded to as a predisposition of individual's general personality towards talking by McCroskey and Richmond (1987). Given the personality direction of WTC, McCroskey and his associates suggested that WTC reflected a stable propensity to talk, which was relatively constant across a diversity of communication contexts and kinds of receivers.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) stated that "it is highly unlikely that WTC in the second language is a simple expression of WTC in the L1" (p. 546). WTC in second language (L2 WTC) was, then, described as a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a second language. MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed a heuristic model of the WTC construct with a linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables' description that might have an effect on one's WTC in a second language communication context. WTC was no longer considered as just a trait-like construct advanced by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) in L1 communication but was extended as a situational variable (dynamic) with both transient and enduring influences in an L2 setting in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) study.

Although WTC is a relatively new concept, there have been some studies allocated to inquiring its conceptual components and empirical outcomes in L2 communication. Some research for the purpose of understanding WTC considered personality variables, communication variables, affective variables, and social psychological variables in terms of its relationships with different overriding components (e.g., Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre & Chaos, 1996; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Wen & Clément, 2003; Yashima, 2002).

The communicative language teaching approach plays a crucial role in second and foreign language teaching pedagogy in that it reflects an emphasis on the use of language for meaningful communication in the second language acquisition (SLA). Language was suggested to be learned through interactive meaningful communication in a pragmatic and practical setting (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). Language use and language learning co-occur, and it is language use that intercedes language learning (Swain, 2000). Therefore, it is appropriate to understand the variables that enhance language learners' opportunities to use language to communicate and to acquire a language through communication.

Nevertheless, by observing situations in which one doesn't make any attempt to communicate in spite of having sufficient knowledge, the construct was regarded as comprising both individual and contextual variables (MacIntyre, et al., 1998). WTC is influenced by various factors; this study considers WTC with different motivational factors: Ideal I2 self, attitudes, and anxiety. It seeks to study these factors in a single framework among Iranian EFL learner' studying in universities. Although many studies have considered the affective and motivational variables as predictors of proficiency, there are few studies investigating these variables as the causes of L2 use in Iranian context.

## **Rationale of the study**

Dörnyei (2005) applied a new psychological and theoretical approach to L2 motivation: the conceptualization of possible selves. The concept of the possible self represents an individual's ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. That is, possible selves are particular representations of one's self in future occasions, such as thoughts, pictures and feelings, and are the manifestations of one's goals and desires. From a motivational viewpoint, it appeared to be dependent on two types of possible selves (the ideal self and the ought to self) (Higgins, 1987). The former refers to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e. representation of hopes, goals or wishes), whereas the latter refers to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e. a representation of someone's sense of duty, assignments or responsibilities) and which therefore may carry little analogy to desires or wishes. The motivational aspect of these self-guides was explained by Higgins's (1987, 1998) self-discrepancy theory. According to this theory, it was assumed that motivation involves the wishes for people to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal/ought selves.

In this study, it is hypothesized that if learners have a strong ideal L2 self, this will be reflected in their positive attitudes toward language learning and they will exhibit greater efforts toward that end as well. Furthermore, the more positive the attitude toward L2 leaning, the higher the tendency towards L2 use would be. By including questions about the participants' attitudes toward learning English, their ideal L2 self, and their L2 anxiety, our specific goal is to examine three dimensions of the L2 Motivational Self System in association with WTC and produce empirical evidence of the crucial roles of these constructs in our proposed model. Meanwhile, a distinguishing feature of present study is that the instruments are specifically designed for EFL contexts and for classroom use.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Willingness to Communicate**

The notion of WTC was originally introduced based on L1 communication (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989). It was based on the previous works on unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), predisposition toward verbal behavior (Mortensen, Arntson, & Lustig, 1977), and shyness (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). When it comes to L2 communication, it is required that a more general and multidimensional construct be defined due to the great difference in L2 users' communicative competence and social factors influencing L2 use context (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Cao & Philip, 2006). Dual characteristics including both trait and state factors affect individuals' L2WTC, which is different from the trait feature of willingness to communicate in L1 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Trait L2 WTC reflects a stable and enduring predisposition toward communication, whereas state L2 WTC is located in specific context and depends on it (Peng & Woodrow, 2010).

Therefore, the pyramid model of WTC was proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). This six layer model synthesizes social and individual context, affective cognitive context, motivational propensities, situated antecedents, and communication behavior; with the first three layers representing situation-specific influences on WTC at a given moment in time and the other three layers demonstrating stable influences on WTC. L2 use is at the top of the pyramid as the first layer and WTC as the most immediate determinant of L2 use (Clément et al., 2003; MacIntyre et al., 1999) is situated at the second layer. This layer followed by tendency to communicate with a particular person and definitely express communicative self-confidence as the third layer. The fourth layer contains the motivational orientations consisting of interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and L2 self-confidence. The two final layers are intergroup attitudes, social situation and communicative competence (fifth layer) and intergroup climate and personality (sixth layer). The essential and vital role of context is very obvious in this model and is considered as the immediate factors that drive someone to commence the communication, however; one cannot deny the influence of individual variables since they are regarded as a basis or foundation for the rest of the variables.

### **The L2 Motivational Self-system**

L2 motivation theories are highly influenced by Gardner's model of integrative motive as a motivational model that was named the socioeducational model (1985). This model had been the paramount theory for several decades in L2 motivational studies. It originated from studies with a Canadian background (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972). The tenet underlying this model was that sociocultural environment influences learners' attitudes toward the target language and target community and culture, which in return impact L2 motivation. Others have suggested that integrative motivation is more important in ESL settings like Canada than in many EFL contexts around the world, where learners have limited contact with L2 speakers or their culture (e.g. Dörnyei, 1990). Dörnyei (2005) formulated the L2 motivational self-system. This system attempts to solve the limitations of the socioeducational model. It consists of three components: the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and learning experiences. While the ideal self refers to what learners want to become through learning another language, ought-to L2 self is what they think they should become or avoid becoming through learning the language. L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience. The English learning experience concerns learner's attitudes toward learning English and can be affected by several situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience.

### **Language anxiety**

For decades, language anxiety has been one of the most tempting areas in second language acquisition (SLA) research. Early research used broad definitions of language anxiety, resulting in ineffective findings with some studies reporting a negative relationship between language anxiety and achievement (Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977, 1980) and others reporting little or a positive relationship (Chastain, 1975;

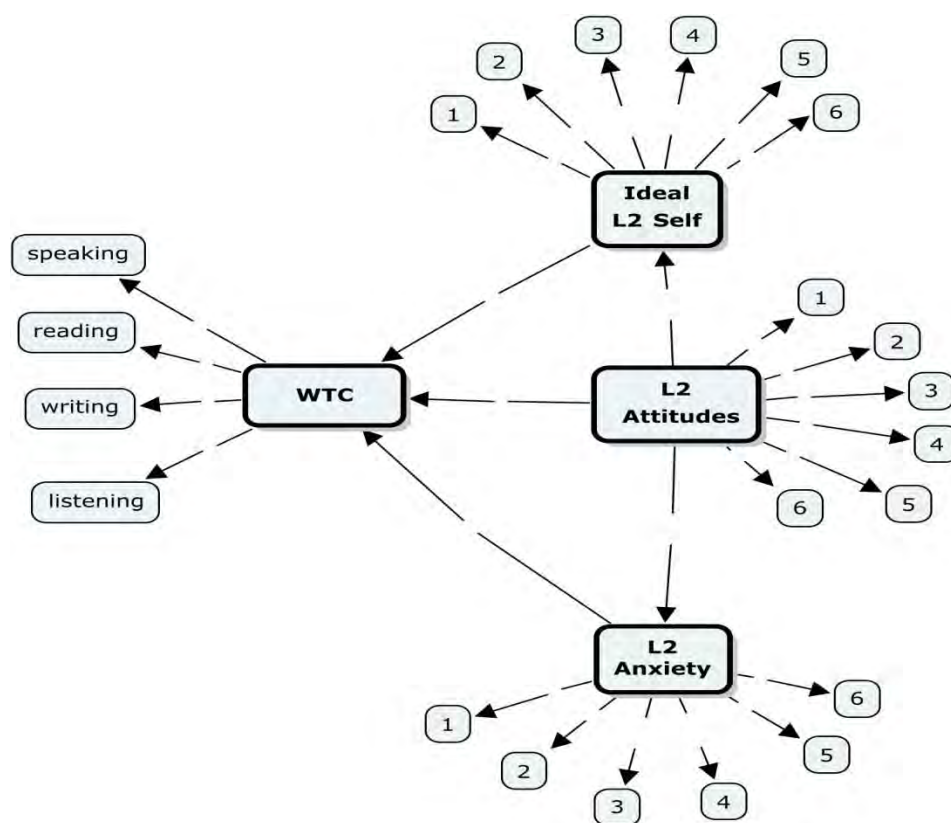
Scovel, 1978). To address this issue, many researchers have been exploring the construct of language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). For example, Horwitz, et al. (1986) found language anxiety only associated weakly with common trait anxiety and identified language anxiety as “a separate complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process” (p. 128). Later, MacIntyre (1999) conceptualized foreign language anxiety as “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (p. 27). By now there is a broad agreement that language anxiety has a negative and strong effect on all areas of language achievement (Aida, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Phillips, 1992).

## **THIS STUDY**

This study examines motivational variables influencing WTC in L2. Using the L2 motivational self-system model (Dornyei, 2005) and the WTC model (Macintyre, 1994) as the basis for a conceptual framework, motivation and willingness to communicate were hypothesized to be the main causes of the frequency of L2 use. In the model proposed in the present study, L2 WTC measuring four areas willingness in L2 speaking, listening, reading, and writing constitute the core of the study. The influence of three motivation-associated variables, i.e., Ideal L2 self, attitude, anxiety on WTC is investigated. Exploring the relationship of WTC with other motivational factors creates a picture of EFL learner motivation and accordingly effectiveness. In the present study, this has been accomplished by utilizing a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach targeting at building a causal structural model by which the contribution of each of the aforementioned constructs could be estimated. Figure 1 represents our proposed model.

To attain the goals of the present study, the following research questions were investigated:

1. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' Ideal L2 self and their WTC?
2. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' attitudes to language learning and their WTC?
3. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' L2 anxiety and their WTC?
4. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' attitudes to language learning and Ideal L2 self?
5. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' attitudes to language learning and L2 anxiety?



**Figure 1.** Hypothetical model of learners' willingness to communicate in L2, Ideal L2 self, attitudes to language learning, and anxiety

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants comprised 180 undergraduate and graduate students from Imam Reza and Tabaran universities, two universities in Mashhad, a city in Northeast of Iran. All of them were studying English language as an academic major. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, all participants were asked to fill the questionnaires. Participants did not require writing their names. The motivation questionnaire was written in simple Persian. One of the researchers was present to explain any possible questions. The WTC questionnaire was in English. The questionnaires took about 15 minutes to complete.

### Instruments

#### *WTC in English inside the classroom*

L2 WTC was measured with the WTC scale designed by Peng (2010). It was adapted from MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conrod (2001). The scale operationalizes L2 WTC in four basic skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), measuring students' willingness to engage in L2 communication inside and outside the classroom. The 'Inside the Classroom Scale' was adapted slightly to include communication tasks more common to the EFL class. 27 items adapted from MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Conrod (2001) assessed the frequency of time that students would choose during which to

communicate in English in their classroom. Responses to the items on a 5-point Likert scale were anchored at one end by "Almost never willing" and at the other end by "Almost always willing." Higher scores indicate higher levels of WTC in English. The respondents are asked to indicate the frequency of time they choose to speak in English in each classroom situation. Sample items for this scale are: how often do you choose to do the followings in each classroom situation? 1) Speak in a group about your summer vacation, and 2) Speak to your teacher about your homework assignment. Items 1-8 measure 'speaking' module, items 9- 14 asses 'reading' dimension, items 15-22 concern 'writing' aspect, and items 23- measure 'listening' facet. The reliability of the scale in the original study was found to be (.92) and in the present study, it was (.86).

### ***Ideal L2 self***

Seven items out of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005) translated to Persian and validated in Iranian context by Papi (2009) constituted this questionnaire. These items measure Ideal L2 Self referring to "L2-specific facet of one's ideal self"(Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106). The Cranach's alpha for these items computed in Iranian context is 0.79. In this study, reliability was 0.77. Sample items for this scale are: 1) I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English. 2) I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.

### ***Attitudes toward Learning English***

Six items out of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005) translated to Persian and validated in Iranian context by Papi (2009) formed this questionnaire. These items measure situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience "(Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106). The Cranach's alpha for these items computed in Iranian context is 0.82. The reliability of these items in this study was found to be 0.84.

Sample items for this scale are: 1) Do you like the atmosphere of your English classes? 2) Do you find learning English really interesting?

### ***L2 anxiety in English***

Ten items out of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005) translated to Persian and validated in Iranian context by Papi (2009) constituted this questionnaire. The Cranach's alpha for these items computed in Iranian context is 0.74. In this study, reliability was 0.69. Sample items for this scale are: 1) How worried are you that other speakers of English would find your English strange? 2) How tense would you get if a foreigner asked you for directions in English?

### **Procedure**

Data was collected in December 2014. To make it user- friendly, the final version of the questionnaires comprised three pages. First and second part contained the questions regarding Ideal L2 self, attitude to language learning, L2 anxiety while there was Willingness to communicate questions at the last page making the third part of the

questionnaire. Students were first told about the purposes of research and they were allowed to ask questions if any. Then, one of the researchers read aloud all instructions at the beginning of questionnaire and special instructions were made to complete the measures. After clear understanding, students completed the questionnaires while one of the researchers remained in classroom to answer questions. This procedure took almost 15 to 20 minutes. We thanked students for their participation.

## RESULTS

In order to analyze the data extracted from the responses to the questionnaires, we tabulated and analyzed the data using SPSS (20) software data. To examine the causal associations among the variables under study, a structural equation modeling (SEM) via Lisrel (8.5) statistical package was performed. To explore the relationship between the sub-scales of WTC and motivational factors, multiple correlations were run. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of EFL learners' ideal L2 self, L2 attitude, and L2 anxiety.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Ideal L2 Self, L2 Attitude, and L2 Anxiety

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Ideal L2 Self      | 142 | 6.00    | 36.00   | 28.5845 | 7.23981        |
| L2 Attitude        | 142 | 10.00   | 36.00   | 27.3873 | 6.65337        |
| L2 Anxiety         | 142 | 6.00    | 33.00   | 19.7254 | 7.77625        |
| Valid N (listwise) | 142 |         |         |         |                |

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of WTC and its comprising factors (speaking, reading, writing, and listening).

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of WTC in L2 and its Comprising Factors

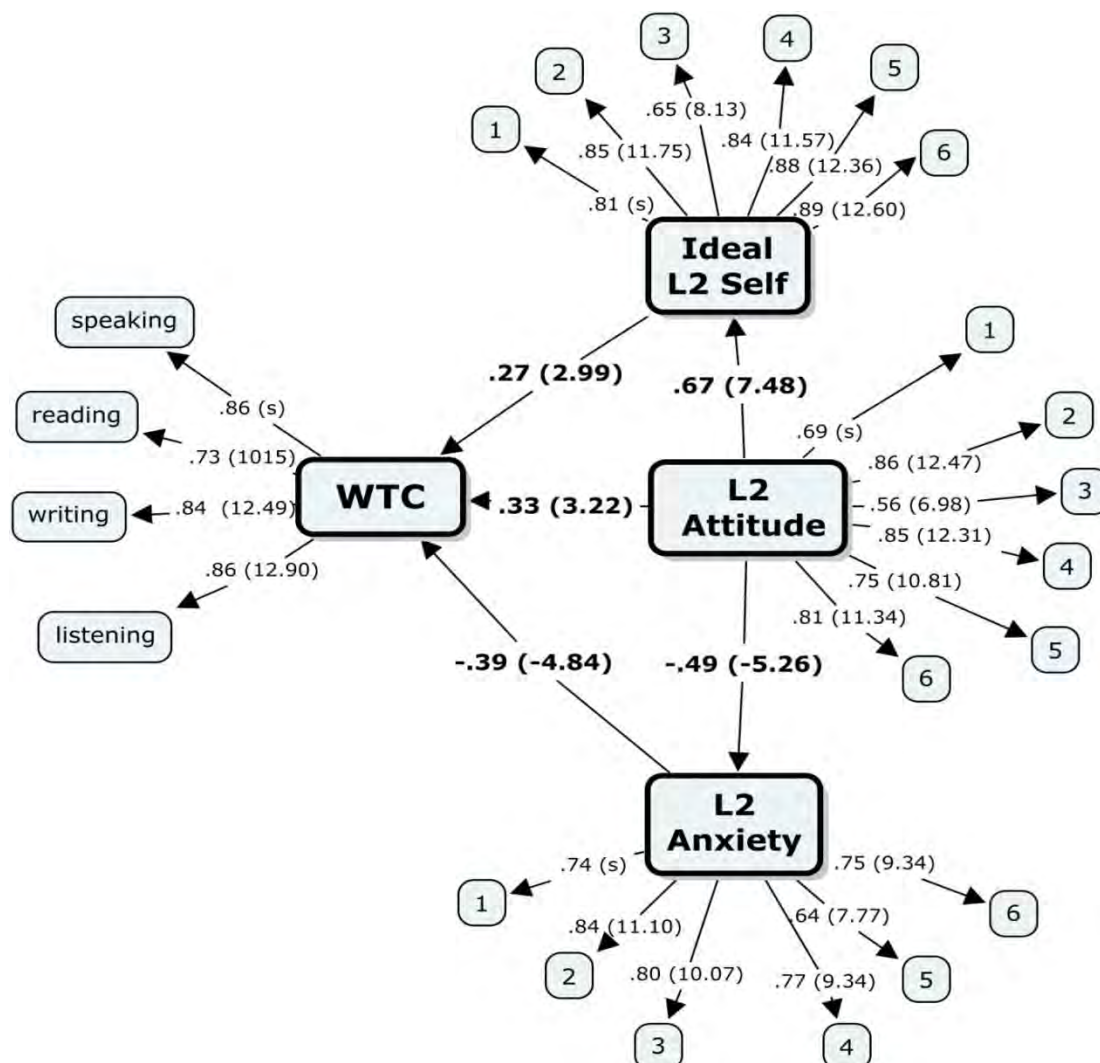
|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| WTC in L2          | 142 | 49.00   | 135.00  | 95.1690 | 22.42813       |
| WTC in Speaking    | 142 | 13.00   | 40.00   | 27.7535 | 6.94577        |
| WTC in Reading     | 142 | 7.00    | 30.00   | 22.5704 | 5.32277        |
| WTC in Writing     | 142 | 9.00    | 40.00   | 26.5563 | 8.28442        |
| WTC in Listening   | 142 | 6.00    | 25.00   | 18.1972 | 4.84401        |
| Valid N (listwise) | 142 |         |         |         |                |

To examine the structural relations, the proposed model was tested using the LISREL 8.50 statistical package. A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit: the chi-square magnitude which shouldn't be significant, the normed fit index (NFI) and the good fit index (GFI) with the cut value greater than .90 or .95, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .07 (Schreiber, et al., 2006).

As demonstrated by Figure 2, the chi-square value (529.57), the chi-square/*df* ratio (2.59), reached the acceptable fit thresholds. The RMSEA is .106 which is slightly higher than the acceptable criterion. The other two fit indices (GFI=.85 and NFI=.87) did not meet the acceptable fit thresholds but are slightly below those thresholds. According to Tseng, Dornyei, and Schmitt (2006), in SEM it is normal for some indices to not conform to the majority trend (as cited in Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014). Overall, it can be concluded that the proposed model had a moderately good fit with the empirical data.



To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the variables, the  $t$ -values and standardized estimates were examined. As indicated in Figure 2, two estimates were displayed on the paths. The first one is the standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) which presents the predictive power of the independent variable. The second measure is the  $t$ -value ( $t$ ); the  $t$ -value higher than 2 is an indication of significance of association.



$$\chi^2=529.82, df= 204, RMSEA=. 106, GFI=.85, NFI=.87$$

**Figure 2.** The schematic representation of the relationships among WTC ideal L2 self, L2 attitude, and L2 anxiety

The results demonstrated that ideal L2 self ( $\beta= .27, t= 2.99$ ) and attitude to English learning ( $\beta= .33, t= 3.22$ ) are positive and significant predictors of WTC. In contrast, it was found that L2 anxiety negatively and significantly predicted WTC ( $\beta= -.39, t= -4.84$ ). A cross comparison of the findings revealed that among these three predictors (ideal L2 self, L2 attitude, and L2 anxiety), L2 anxiety had the highest role in WTC. The results demonstrated the positive and significant impact of L2 attitude on ideal L2 self ( $\beta= .67, t= 7.48$ ) and the negative association between L2 attitude and L2 anxiety ( $\beta= -.49, t= -5.26$ ).

The correlation coefficients among WTC, ideal L2 self, attitude, and anxiety are presented in Table 3. As it can be seen, the highest correlation is observed between WTC and L2 attitude ( $r = 0.629$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The second higher correlation was found between ideal L2 self and L2 attitude ( $r = 0.610$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This is followed by the correlation between WTC and L2 anxiety ( $r = -0.608$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). It was also found that WTC correlated positively and significantly with ideal L2 self ( $r = 0.566$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). L2 anxiety was found to have negative and significant correlations with L2 attitude ( $r = -0.451$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) as well as ideal L2 self ( $r = -0.410$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3.** The Correlation Coefficients among WTC, Ideal L2 Self, Attitudes, and Anxiety

|                  | 1       | 2       | 3     | 4    |
|------------------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| 1. WTC           | 1.00    |         |       |      |
| 2. Ideal L2 self | .566**  | 1.00    |       |      |
| 3. L2 attitude   | .629**  | .610**  | 1.00  |      |
| 4. L2 anxiety    | -.608** | -.410** | -.451 | 1.00 |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

The present study also aimed at exploring the association between subscales of WTC and the three variables, i.e., ideal L2 self, L2 attitude, and L2 anxiety. The results for ideal L2 self are displayed in Table 4. As it can be seen, the highest correlations were found between ideal L2 self and WTC in listening ( $r = 0.617$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and ideal L2 self and WTC in speaking ( $r = 0.591$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.** The Results of Correlation between Subscales of WTC and Idea L2 Self

|                     | Ideal L2 Self |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. WTC in Speaking  | 0.591**       |
| 2. WTC in Reading   | 0.393**       |
| 3. WTC in Writing   | 0.496**       |
| 4. WTC in Listening | 0.617**       |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

Identical analysis was performed for L2 attitude and the subscales of WTC. The results are presented in Table 5. As the table demonstrates, WTC in listening ( $r = 0.625$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and WTC in speaking ( $r = 0.593$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) have the highest associations with L2 attitude.

**Table 5.** The Results of Correlation between Subscales of WTC and L2 Attitudes

|                     | L2 Attitude |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. WTC in Speaking  | 0.593**     |
| 2. WTC in Reading   | 0.477**     |
| 3. WTC in Writing   | 0.543**     |
| 4. WTC in Listening | 0.625**     |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

Correlation analysis between the subscales of WTC and L2 anxiety revealed that the highest correlation is observed between WTC in speaking and L2 anxiety ( $r = -0.630$ ,  $p$

< 0.05) while the lowest association was obtained with WTC in reading ( $r = - 0.470$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )

**Table 6.** The Results of Correlation between Subscales of WTC and L2 Anxiety

|                     | L2 Anxiety |
|---------------------|------------|
| 1. WTC in Speaking  | -0.630**   |
| 2. WTC in Reading   | -0.470**   |
| 3. WTC in Writing   | -0.524**   |
| 4. WTC in Listening | -0.505**   |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

## DISCUSSION

In this section, based on the results of the casual relationships among the variables, – Ideal L2 Self, Willingness to Communicate in L2, L2 Learning attitudes and L2 Anxiety– the findings are discussed in terms of Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self system.

As stated earlier, previous research on L2 motivation has mainly relied on Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model of L2 learning, more specifically, the integrative motivation construct. Integrativeness refers to the desire to learn an L2 of a valued community so that one can communicate with the members of the community and sometimes even to become like them (Gardener, 2001). In foreign language learning context, lack of a specific L2 community undermines Gardner's theoretical concept of integrativeness. In this study, we have used a recently developed motivational self-system framework to find out if motivational variables can affect individual's L2WTC in the context of Iran. In particular, it was assumed that Ideal L2 self, L2 anxiety, and attitudes to L2 learning influence L2 WTC. The results of SEM substantiated the hypothesis.

The structural model demonstrated three strong direct effects on L2 WTC; one of which was negative, and the others were positive. The first positive effect on the participants' WTC arose from L2 attitude, and the other positive effect was from Ideal L2 self. Negative effect on WTC resulted from anxiety. It was also found that attitudes to L2 learning positively predicted ideal L2 self and negatively L2 anxiety.

According to the findings, attitudes towards learning English had the highest correlation with WTC and were a positive predictor of it. This once again points to the importance of English as an international language where English is helping learners to develop their global and local identities at the same time. A positive attitude towards English as a language, and not as a trait of target community, might work well to motivate students to learn English. This might be explained with reference to the compulsory or optional nature of learning English. This research done on university students whose field of study was English. Students might have a choice of what language they would like to learn at the onset of their studies or careers. For this group, there is an optional factor in language learning, most of whom attend to a foreign language course in Iran whether because they like it or need it for future. However, they might learn English in their free

time for their own pleasure, they might also experience pressure from job market. Our research indicated that students who show considerably more positive attitudes toward and set more energy in studying English are more willing to communicate in various situations in the L2.

The second high correlation between the two variables (Ideal L2 self and WTC) show that the two constructs are closely related. Hypothesis model stated that the Ideal L2 Self items positively influenced WTC. This finding supports Dörnyei's (2005) theory of an Ideal L2 Self as a basis for language learning. It is also in line with Dörnyei's advice on supporting student Ideal L2 Selves to help lower anxiety and thereby improve student EFL WTC (Dörnyei, 2014). In this study, we were able to replicate the findings of the previous work; meanwhile, we extended them through using a recently developed motivational self-system framework to find out if the ideal L2 self as a motivational variable can affect an individual's L2WTC in the context of Iran. Based on this finding, it seems higher levels of ideal L2 self contributes to promoting learners' personal hopes, aspirations, wishes and any other attributes related to their ideal L2 self. This suggests that higher degrees of motivation may help them to lower their communication apprehension (anxiety) which also indirectly contributes to their communication competence and willingness to communicate in English. These results were similar to the two findings of other studies (Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Kim, 2009; Yashima, 2002; Yu, 2008). Therefore, it can be stated that motivation to learn English is a tendency for WTC in English by itself directly and indirectly. However, it can serve as a mediator between various factors contributing to L2WTC. The findings emphasize that the degree to which a person shows willingness to be identified with his/her ideal L2 self greatly affect his/her learning L2. This may increase a feeling of trust in one's abilities in language learning and decrease communication apprehension (anxiety), leading to successful communication. According to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009, p. 4), "if proficiency in the target language is part and parcel of one's ideal or ought-to self, this will serve as a powerful motivator to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves".

According to the findings, anxiety and WTC have a negative relationship which means that with lower anxiety willingness to communicate increases. In our research the influence of anxiety on WTC was estimated high. This shows that in the present sample anxiety would affect the way learners might decide to participate in communication (WTC). This finding is interesting because in previous research, MacIntyre et al. (2003), as well as Yashima et al. (2004) found that there are correlational relationship between perceived competence, language anxiety, and WTC. Considering its interaction with willingness to communicate (e.g., MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre, Baker, et al., 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Papi, 2010), a negative association between these two variables has been confirmed. This finding demonstrates that anxious people are generally less communicative in comparison to non-anxious ones. This might be due to the fact that they are not able to communicate well in terms of output modality. The unpredictable and variable nature of WTC inside and outside the classroom is associated with a number of affective variables, i.e. motivation, attitude, and anxiety,

influencing verbal behavior of communication. An individual's fear or anxiety about communicating due to limited source of knowledge is frequently occurring in the foreign language learning process. The newness, formality, and unfamiliarity of the situation are of some causal factors attributed to fear of communication (Blood, Blood, Tellis, & Gabel, 2001). The Skehan's (1989) notion of talking in order to learn is reflective of the fact that L2 learners need to communicate with L2 group to enhance their communicative competence and gain confidence in using the L2. But they disappoint from participating in communication due to language anxiety and lack of L2 confidence. Contextual factors, such as when and where the interaction takes place and who the interlocutor is, inevitably play a dominant role to affect students' WTC. All in all, the negative effect of L2 anxiety on in-class L2 WTC was expected and conforms to the previous studies (Horwitz et al. 1986; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). It is undeniable that speaking English in class is challenging due to, for instance, fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al. 1986), risks of being laughed at (Peng, 2007), and lack of perceived L2 competence (MacIntyre et al. 1997).

An important and significant result of this study, though in opposite and negative directions, showed the impact of attitude on anxiety. The finding suggests that the more developed the students' attitude to L2 learning, the less anxious they become in using and learning it. In other words, the more positive attitudes to L2 are, the lower the anxiety will be. For efficient English learning outcomes, the measure of English language anxiety had negative loadings suggesting that highly motivated students tend to the use of English and tend also not to experience anxiety in the classroom.

The last and the highest correlation was obtained between L2 learning attitudes and Ideal L2 self. It shows students who have positive attitudes towards learning English tend to develop positive L2 self-image as well. Dörnyei (2009, p. 32) stated that students who learn English to have an ideal self-image expressing the wish to become a competent L2 speaker and students who learn English for intrinsic reasons, like enjoying and positive attitudes toward learning English, are more proficient than those students who learn English due to the "duties and obligations imposed by friends, parents and other authoritative figures".

The relationship between subscales L2 WTC and ideal L2 self was also detected; Further exploration of the four types of WTC (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) revealed that significant correlations existed between all of the subscales with ideal L2 self and attitudes. Surprisingly, a willingness to listen in English had the highest correlation ( $r=.617$ ) with ideal L2 self, and the second highly correlation was detected between speaking ( $r=.591$ ) and Ideal L2 self. Concerning attitudes, WTC to listen had the highest correlation ( $r=.625$ ) followed by WTC in speaking ( $r=.593$ ). Apparently, students are not only advantaged in aural communication, but their speaking skills may also improve as a result of the association between oral language comprehension and aural language comprehension. Classroom instruction which emphasizes oral interaction seems to contribute to student's development of L2-specific facet of one's ideal self and L2 attitudes. On the other hand, when students develop a high level of ideal L2 self and L2

attitudes they would be more inclined to participate in listening and speaking activities. This is not surprising given that these two communicative skills are highly dependent on one's ideal and L2 attitudes image of L2 user one aspires to be. If one desires to be a proficient L2 user, s/he strives to develop oral skills (listening and speaking) to fulfill successful communicative undertakings encountered in the future.

Another connection between subscales of L2 WTC and L2 anxiety was also examined. Anxiety had the highest negative correlation with WTC to speak in English ( $r=-.630$ ) and after that with writing ( $r=-.524$ ). One cause of language anxiety in Iran is learners' concern about the evaluation others will have of their performance and the corresponding impression it conveys. It seems their fear of making mistakes is regarded as the greatest cause of their anxiety in the language classroom. This may help explain Iranian learners' reluctance to speak and their reactions to error correction especially in mixed classes. Taheryan and Ghonsooly (2014) discussed some students' cessation from speaking and talking out their ideas was because of the fear of being laughed at or ignored by the other sex. They asserted that these reasons prevented and prohibited them from mastering language skills especially speaking. This kind of classroom anxiety and fear can lower the students' self-efficacy. Our research confirms that anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon, with a high degree in speaking (i.e. communication apprehension) and failure of failing the class. This skill-specific anxiety may stem from some personal factors such as lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and negative background experiences; the features of speaking class such as uninteresting topics; and the nature of English class such as the classroom environment, fear of evaluation, and the teacher. According to Oxford (1999), the sources of foreign language anxiety may also include concepts such as low self-esteem, low tolerance of ambiguity, problems with identity, competitiveness, fear of risk-taking, shyness, and classroom activities and methods. A high significant negative correlation between language anxiety and speaking/writing achievement and, additionally, an association between students' negative self-perception of their language competence and their high level of writing and speaking anxiety were confirmed in Cheng et al.'s (1999) study carried out among Taiwanese college students. Recently, MacIntyre (2007) and MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) focused on the willingness of those individuals who speak the language but remain silent for any of a number of reasons of affective reactions, such as being disinterested, distressed, and anxious. So, we can assume these oppressive situations and events cause anxiety to intensify and consequently diminish willingness to communicate in the classroom.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated a model that contains the components of Dornyei's L2 motivational self-system in relation to willingness to communicate. Totally, the results showed that all the constituent elements of the L2 motivational self-system inspired language learners to put more effort into learning through willingness to communicate in EFL context. However, the impact of language anxiety overrode other constituents. This finding points to the conclusion that without considering the anxiety impact in

motivational self-system on language use in the classroom we cannot achieve a full picture of students' emotional and motivational states. The motivation of Iranian learners of English seems to be dependent on their attitudes toward English learning. It is necessary for teachers to provide positive classroom atmosphere. It is also recommended that teachers assist learners in envisaging a realistic image of themselves, their capabilities, and their wishes.

The present study is limited in a number of ways. First, due to facility considerations, the participants were chosen according to convenience sampling. Second, the participants of the present study comprise EFL students in the universities of Mashhad in Iran. So this study should be replicated with samples from other universities in different parts of the country and use procedures that confirm a higher degree of randomization and ultimately more generalizability. This can also set the ground for the cross comparison of the findings. Third, in this research, the variables in question were evaluated via questionnaires. Using qualitative approaches such as interviews, case studies, and observations to investigate these constructs is recommended.

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