Willingness to Communicate: The Predictive Roles of the L2 Motivational Self-System and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Research on communication emphasizes the psychological variables that play a great role in predicting a predisposition for engaging or avoiding communicative behavior. As a quantitative correlational study, this research was conducted with a convenient sample of 94 Iranian EFL learners to investigate to what degree the L2 motivational self-system and self-efficacy beliefs of language learners could predict second language willingness to communicate (WTC). A Likert scale highly reliable questionnaire containing 35 items was put to use to collect data on dimensions of the L2 motivational self-system, self-efficacy beliefs and L2 WTC. After the combined predictive ability of these variables, as a model, on WTC was measured, the study aimed at finding the unique contribution of each variable on WTC. Also, the researcher aimed at investigating whether gender would moderate each of the relationships between the explanatory variables and WTC. A set of multiple regression analyses indicated that the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience, and self-efficacy, as a whole model, was able to predict 41.6% of the variation in WTC. It was found that the ideal L2 self was the strongest predictor of WTC, followed by self-efficacy beliefs, which uniquely explained 38.7% and 16.8% of the variation in WTC scores, respectively. Additionally, it was observed that gender did not have the ability to statistically moderate any of the aforementioned relationships. The findings of this academic endeavor are discussed in relation to the potential theoretical and practical implications it has for the field of English language teaching.

Keywords*: Ideal L2 self, L2 learning experience, L2 motivational self-system, ought-to L2 self, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate*

1. INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate (WTC) in the second language (L2) as the readiness of language learners to enter communication at a specific time with specific people while using a second language (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) is a crucial factor in determining actual communication in the L2. Considering the fact that modern language pedagogy puts an increasing emphasis on communication and communicative based activities in the language classroom, this concept and the variables which might affect WTC, namely, motivational self-system and self-efficacy, among many other individual variables, become of utmost importance. This can be seen in many studies probing the linguistic roles (e.g., Swain, 1995; Wagner-Gough & Hatch, 1975) and sociocultural roles (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978) that emphasize the significant part played by interaction in the development of language communication. Considering the fact that interaction plays a crucial role in language learning, and under the assumption that interaction is heavily influenced by one's WTC (Clément, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003), it is safe to argue that pinpointing those constructs responsible for increasing an individual's WTC, will contribute to more fruitful second language pedagogy. Relevant studies have focused on many individual variables that may affect WTC. The main theme in these studies is that the poor academic achievement and the willingness to communicate in English could be partially attributed to students' motivation, self-efficacy, and mindsets (Kho-Yar, Rafik Galea, & Kho, 2018).

In a qualitative study, Wijaya and Mbato (2020) collected data on learners' perceptions of self-efficacy in Sanata Dharma University. They considered self-efficacy as a significant factor contributing to EFL learners' achievement in the target language; and believed that efficient use of learning strategies and enjoyable learning environments are necessary ingredients to train proficient communicators in the target language. Their content analysis of the data collected through surveys, students' reflections on their speaking/learning, and interviews revealed that if EFL learners feel confident about their speaking competences, they will be willing to communicate in the target language.

In line with Wijaya et al. (2020), Karbakhsh and Ahmadi Safa (2020) recommend learners to believe in their capabilities (e.g., self-efficacy). They expounded satisfaction of learners' basic psychological needs in relation to willingness to communicate, and self-efficacy, which they believed may play important roles in predicting success in second language through modeling such relation. By means of AMOS Structural Equations, Karbakhsh et.al. investigated the direct and indirect interrelationship among 506 EFL learners' basic psychological needs, satisfaction, goal-orientation, willingness to communicate, learning strategy use, self-efficacy and second language achievement. Self-efficacy, according to the final path analytic model, predicted L2 achievement. They also concluded that satisfaction of basic psychological needs leads to the increased WTC among EFL learners.

In a similar vein, through SEM, Karimi and Abaszadeh (2017) modeled the potential connections between Iranian EFL learners WTC in English and two individual variables, namely, motivation and English speaking self-efficacy. They reported meaningfully significant paths from motivation to WTC and from English speaking self- efficacy to motivation. Confirmation for such connections comes from Kho-Yar, Rafik-Galea, and Kho

(2018) who, in a Malaysian context, probed ESL undergraduate students' Willingness to Communicate. Similar to Karimi et al., they tested their hypothesized model that integrated WTC in English, motivation, self-efficacy, mindset, and performance. They found that self-efficacy indirectly affected motivation and academic achievement, which in turn, exerted positive influence in achievement. Furthermore, they found a direct path between learners' personality traits and motivation as well as WTC in English. Their final model approved that academic achievement can contribute to ESL communication. Similar results were obtained by Bursalı and Öz (2017) in the Turkish context. They reported a significant relationship between ideal L2 self and WTC of 56 EFL university students in Ankara, Turkey.

Eddy (2015) who puts an emphasis on creating a model of task-situated WTC, did a focus group-based study and explored the motivating factors in learners' participation or non-participation in task situated WTC from a dynamic systems perspective. She relates effective performance in L2 to learners' WTC during the duration of the task. According to Eddy, social and task related factors including interest, perceived effectiveness, good groupmates, good classroom social situation, personal vision and self-confidence (p.43) were identified as the motivating factors contributing to WTC in the classroom.

In a large-scale research into the realm of motivation in the Chinese context, Peng and Woodrow (2010) sought the relationship between WTC and five different variables. These variables included WTC in English, communication confidence in English, motivation to learn English, learner beliefs, and classroom environment. Among the various hypothesized paths, they proposed a relationship between confidence, motivation and WTC. The results of the SEM analysis indicated that confidence and belief in one's own abilities was the most significant predictor of L2 WTC. They concluded that those students who had a higher belief about their own abilities in the L2 were less anxious and more willing to enter communication. In their SEM model, motivation was also found to have a significant relationship with WTC. They found that motivation directly influenced communication confidence and indirectly influenced WTC. In other words, their study provided strong evidence that motivation affected WTC indirectly through the mediation of confidence.

In a Chinese context, based on a hybrid framework of the WTC model and the socio-educational model, Peng (2007) investigated 174 college students' willingness to communicate in relation to their motivation. In other words, he examined the perceived role of motivation in L2 WTC, which proved a strong factor at the end. He suggests that to facilitate language learning, pedagogical goals should be oriented towards increasing learners' L2 WTC.

Based on the aforementioned claims, and basing the framework of the study on previous models of WTC which point to the possibility of motivation and a belief in one's own abilities contributing to WTC, and ultimately to the actual act of communication (Karbakhsh and Ahmadi Safa, 2020; Wijaya and Mbato, 2020; Kho-Yar, Rafik-Galea, & Kho, 2018; Kho-Yar, Rafik-Galea, and Kho, 2018; Karimi & Abaszadeh;2017), the researcher set out to report how the L2 motivational self-system and self-efficacy beliefs were able to predict L2 WTC. Such studies are thought as significantly contributing to EFL pedagogy since, as Karbakhsh and Ahmadi Safa (2020, p 13), who focus on psychological needs, mention, "a major concern regarding L2 learning has always been why many learners fail to master the language".

As the reviews indicate the important role of WTC in the second language becomes evident. Over the years many scholars have focused their attention on this variable and have sought out ways to enhance their learner's WTC, nevertheless the focal role of WTC in the explanation of the variability in communication warrants further research in the area. Motivation and self-efficacy beliefs, on the other hand, have been identified as affecting almost every aspect of an individual's life. This influence becomes more important in second language learning, and much attention has been channeled toward finding the relationship between these variables and the process of language learning. However, reviewing the literature reveals an existing gap regarding research that focuses particularly on the connection between these three variables. Due to the scarcity of knowledge in this area, and due to their relevantly new conceptualization, the researcher saw fit to focus on the roles played by self-efficacy beliefs and the L2 motivational self system on L2 WTC. Accordingly, the two variables of the L2 motivational self system and self-efficacy were integrated with L2 WTC and this gap was aimed to be filled.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 The origins of willingness to communicate

Due to its vital role in human interaction, the concept of WTC has drawn the attention of researchers and those working in the field of second language teaching. *Willingness to communicate* (WTC) is a strong determinant of why an individual will talk while another individual will remain silent in identical communicative situations (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Research in the past, into the realm of communication has pointed to certain psychological and sociological variables that seem to predict a predisposition for engaging or avoiding communicative behavior. Burgoon (1976), who was among the first in the literature to come to such a conclusion, stated that some of these variables pointed to a predisposition for avoiding communication which she named *Unwillingness-to-Communicate*. Burgoon assumed this newly conceptualized construct to be a predisposition and defined it as representing "a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication" (P. 60).

McCroskey and Baer (1985) later attempted to define the construct in a positive light and named it *Willingness to Communicate (WTC)*. McCroskey and Baer, maintain that WTC is the intention to engage in and initiate a communicative act when the individual has complete free choice to do so. Both Burgoon (1976) and McCroskey and Baer (1985) first conceptualized the construct of unwillingness-to-communicate and later its positive counterpart, willingness to communicate, to relate to engagement or avoidance of 'oral' communication in the 'native language'. However, as studies such as that of Charos (1994) show, there exists a negative correlation between individuals' willingness to communicate in the first language and their willingness to communicate in the second language. Thus, it is irrelevant to assume that the results of WTC in the native language can be transferred to WTC in the second language. WTC in an individual's first language is a stable personality trait which has been developing over the years from the early stages of speech. (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003). With regards to L2 WTC, however, the individual's L2 proficiency and communicative competence becomes an additional modifying variable (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998).

Extending the conceptualization of WTC into the second language learning domain, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) defined willingness to communicate as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (p. 547). MacIntyre et al. treated WTC as a construct that had both temporary and lasting influences, and proposed a heuristic model of the variables influencing WTC in the second language. This pyramid model, which has six layers, shows the potential variables that have situation-specific influences on WTC (layers 1, 2, and 3) and enduring influences on WTC (layers 4, 5, and 6).

2.2 A shift of paradigm towards the L2 motivational self-system

Within the domain of SLA studies, research into EFL motivation is considered as a dominant domain (Dörnyei, 2005). However, before the introduction of motivation as an important factor in second language acquisition, many of the studies conducted in this area focused their attention on a specific ability for language learning, namely, language aptitude (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). However, they put forward the argument that although language aptitude significantly predicts success in L2, motivational factors override the effect of language aptitude.

Raharja and Ashadi (2019) consider motivation as a generator of certain accomplishment in learning a language, as it provides individuals with the primary impetus to initiate second language learning; it also offers the driving force for helping individuals in sustaining the long and tedious process of language learning (Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei (2005, 2009) argues that without a good enough level of motivation, even those individuals that have the most remarkable abilities will not be able to reach their long-term goals. Moreover, he postulates, without sufficient motivation, good teaching and an appropriately designed curriculum will not be sufficient to ensure that students receive their desired achievements. But a high enough level of motivation, according to Dörnyei, will be sufficient to make up for the deficiencies that might exist in the language learners' learning conditions and also their language aptitude.

Motivational studies have undergone major shifts in their theoretical paradigms and how they have defined and approached motivation. In this regard, Dörnyei (2005) divides L2 motivation research into three phases; (a) the *social-psychological period* (1959-1990); (b) the *cognitive-situated period* (during the 1990s); and (3) the *process-oriented period* (the past fifteen years).

In the process oriented period, there is a shift towards including the relationship between motivation and identity and motivation is viewed as "a dynamic, ever-changing process" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 66). One of the well-known concepts that has emerged during the process-oriented period is that of the *L2 motivational self-system.*

Drawing on the results gained through Csizér and Dörnyei's (2005) analysis of Hungarian school children's motivation dispositions and based on the conclusions of previous studies carried out by Clément and Kruidenier (1983), McClelland (2000), and Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000), Dörnyei (2005) came to the conclusion that the concept of integrativeness defined in the social-psychological period had to be re-conceptualized. In this vein, Dörnyei (2005) argues that the notion of integrative motivation is only applicable to second language learning contexts where learners are in direct contact

with native speakers and cannot be generalized to learning English in a foreign context. For Dörnyei (2005), an integrative disposition is a positive affective and interpersonal disposition toward the members of the L2 community and a wish to affiliate with its members. So, he adds, in the core of integrative disposition lies a sort of emotional *identification*. For Gardner (2001), this process of identification is about identifying directly with speakers of the L2 community, but Dörnyei argues that in a foreign language context where there exist perhaps no face-to-face encounters with the L2 community, this emotional and psychological identification concerns not only the L2 language but also the intellectual and cultural values associated with the L2.

In order to account for the new concept of integrativeness, Dörnyei (2005) proposes a new model which he names the *L2 Motivational Self-System*. The L2 Motivational Self-system is based on Markus and Nurius' (1986) *Possible Selves Theory* and Higgins' (1987) *Self-Discrepancy Theory*. Markus and Nurius put forth the concept of possible selves as a representation of an individual's ideas of what they *would like to* become, what they *might* become, and what they are *afraid of* becoming. Higgins' self-discrepancy theory discusses how the incompatible beliefs that people hold about themselves or how the discrepancies that exist between the domains of the self may lead to an experience of psychological/emotional discomfort. Higgins identifies three domains of the self; (a) *The actual self*; (b) *The ideal self*; and (c) *The ought self*.

Synthesizing the motivational paradigms of the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), Dörnyei (2005) states that the L2 motivational self-system is made up of three dimensions. This tripartite model, according to Dörnyei (2009), states that there exist three main sources of motivation in learning a second language: (a) the L2 learner's vision of herself as a successful L2 user (b) the societal pressure coming from the L2 learner's immediate environment, and (c) positive L2 learning experiences. Dörnyei, (2009, p. 18) expounds these three sources as follows:

(1) *Ideal L2 Self* which concerns the L2-specific facet of one's *ideal self,* if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because we would like to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.

(2) *Ought-to L2 Self* which concerns the attributes that one believes one *ought to* possess (i.e., various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to *avoid* possible negative outcomes.

(3) *L2 Learning Experience,* which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the positive impact of success or the enjoyable quality of a language course)

2.3 Self-efficacy beliefs as a predictor of behavior

Of the various types of beliefs individuals hold about themselves which affect their day to day actions, none is more central than *Self-Efficacy* beliefs. At the heart of Bandura's (1977b) *Social Learning Theory* which is a framework for the analysis of human thought and behavior, lies self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs according to Bandura (1984) concern people's perceptions of their capabilities to perform given levels of performance, and have a

role in most of the things individuals do on a day-to-day basis. As regards language learning, Wijaya and Embato (2020) maintain that self-efficacy must be nurtured in the classroom as it nourishes confidence in the individuals that they perform language tasks efficiently. Bandura (1984) argues that individuals' judgments of their self-efficacy predict and explain their level and degree of psychological functioning in specific situations. He postulates that while optimistic judgments of self-efficacy are advantageous in that they will push the individual to optimize her effort in order to reach the desired goal, veridical judgments of self-efficacy are self-limiting in that they will hamper the needed effort for progress. Thus, an optimistic judgment of self-efficacy raises motivation and aspiration in ways that help individuals use the maximum fruit of their talents (Bandura, 1989). However, regardless of their power, self-efficacy beliefs are not enough for the accomplishments of goals. Bandura (1977a) argues that even a high level of self-efficacy will not lead to the performing of an action, since there are individuals who perceive themselves as highly capable of performing an act but lack the incentive and motivation to do so. So, he argues, self-efficacy beliefs are a focal determinant of individuals' choice of actions only in the presence of the adequate incentive and appropriate skills (Bandura, 1977a).

Extending the work of Bandura (1977a) to the academic context, Zimmerman (1995) concludes that self-efficacy beliefs are an influencing factor in the choice of activities students make, their persistence in the activity, and their effort to reach their academic goals. He further adds that students with a high sense of self-efficacy are willing to participate more readily in educational tasks, work harder, and persist longer when faced with difficulties in the academic context. Self-efficacy predicts students' cognitive engagement in activities as well as their academic accomplishments (Zimmerman, 1995). A strong sense of perceived self-efficacy leads to engagement in activities that push students towards their standard which in turn promotes educational competencies that ultimately lead to scholastic achievement (Zimmerman, 1995).

Motivation which, as maintained by Bandura (1977b0, is related to how behavior is activated and maintained is influenced by self-efficacy beliefs in several ways. Based on beliefs of self-efficacy, individuals set goals and challenges for themselves, decide on the amount of effort to expand in order to reach their goals, decide how long to persevere in difficulties, and their resilience to failures (Bandura, 1995). Henry (2014) also argues that self-efficacy is the foundation for motivation in that it is deeply rooted in beliefs about an individual's agency, i.e. the ability to bring about change with one's actions. This motivational dimension of self-efficacy can be explained through the fact that unless individuals have a firm belief that their actions can result in desired outcomes, they will generally not have the needed incentive in order to pursue specific behaviors and to persevere in the face of difficulty (Pajares, 2008).

A look at past research makes evident that individuals who regard themselves as highly efficacious will tend to set challenges for themselves (Bandura, 1977a); will intensify their willpower and effort when they view their personal performance falling short of their desired goals (Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1984); and will persevere despite encountering repeated failures (Brown & Inouye, 1978; Schunk, 1981). The stronger the sense of self-efficacy the higher the goals individuals will tend to set for themselves and the more they will be committed to their attainment (Bandura & Wood, 1989; Taylor, Locke, Lee, & Gist, 1984).

2.4 The possible link between the L2 motivational self-system, self-efficacy beliefs and willingness to communicate

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels' (1998) heuristic model of the variables influencing WTC include variables which closely resemble the L2 motivational self-system and self-efficacy. One such variable is *state self-confidence*. Based on the MacIntyre et al., state-self confidence is the most immediate variable that determines WTC and closely resembles the construct of self-efficacy. Layer 4 in MacIntyre et al.'s model includes motivational propensities which closely resemble the L2 motivational self-system. These motivational propensities include variables such as interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and L2 confidence. Among these three variables, intergroup motivation and L2 confidence are the two variables which are of immediate application to the aim of this study. Intergroup motivation, MacIntyre et al. maintain, rises from a feeling of being attached to an L2 group and the feelings the language learner has towards the L2 community, a variable which closely resembles the ideal L2 self. Moreover, MacIntyre et al. argue that L2 confidence is related to the belief an individual has of being able to engage in L2 communication, a component of the model which resembles self-efficacy beliefs.

Another variable in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model which resembles the ideal l2 self is intergroup attitudes. According to MacIntyre et al., a construct that underlies intergroup attitudes is integrativeness. Integrativeness,

Other studies which point to the possible relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and WTC are that of McCroskey and Richmond (1991) and MacIntyre (1994). McCroskey and Richmond (1991) argue that WTC is more a function of how individuals perceive their degree of competence than what their communicative competence objectively is. They go on to argue that there exist many incompetent communicators in an objective sense but who believe subjectively in their own competence and show a high level of WTC. And others who because of their low subjective view of their own competence are unable to achieve their full potential with regards to WTC. In his WTC model, MacIntyre (1994) also found that language learners are willing to communicate to the extent that they see themselves capable of engaging in communication.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to pave the way towards a better understanding of the concept of WTC and the variables affecting WTC, this survey-based quantitative study examined the following questions:
1. How much of the variance in WTC scores can be explained by the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience, and self-efficacy?
2. How much of the variance in WTC scores can be uniquely explained by the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience, and self-efficacy?
3. Does gender moderate the relationship between the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience, self-efficacy and WTC?

4. RESEARCH METHODS
4.1 Design of the Study

This descriptive (quantitative) study was of a correlational nature. The researcher made use of a survey as the data gathering tool and tailored the study to investigate the relationship between the three elements of motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, and L2 WTC. Three questionnaires (see section 4.3) were combined and were distributed among English students at Urmia University. The gathered data was then analyzed using standard multiple regression and hierarchical multiple regression.

4.2 Participants

The researchers conveniently sampled Iranian students of English Language Teaching and English Language and Literature in Urmia University. This primary sample included 103 participants (64 female, 39 male) with an age range of 18-41 years. In order to arrive at a more homogeneous sample and normalize the dataset, the researchers put aside a total number of nine outliers from the primary sample. The final sample included a total of 94 participants (59 female, 35 male) with the age range of 18-26 years (Mean=21.4) and a self-reported proficiency of intermediate level. Out of these 94 respondents, a total of 10 had been directly exposed to native English speakers. Their reported duration of exposure to native English speakers ranged from a few minutes to one year, which was judged by the researchers not to pose a problem to the foreign language context of the study; thus, the researchers decided to include them in the main sample. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), a rule of thumb for determining the number of participants needed in order to arrive at a meaningful result in a multiple regression study is "N $\geq$ 50 + 8m (where m is the number of independent variables)" (p.123). Accordingly, the total number of participants needed would be N $\geq$ 50 + 8(4) = 82. In view of the fact that the final sample of this investigation included 94 participants, the sample was fit to carry out a multiple regression.

4.3 Instruments

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire which contained 35 items measuring five variables was put to use for gathering the quantitative data. The utilized questionnaire was itself a combination of five different questionnaires. The items used for the dimensions of the L2 motivational self-system, namely the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience were adopted from Dörnyei (2010), while the items used for self-efficacy beliefs and L2 WTC were adopted from Piniel and Csizér (2013) and Yashima (2009), respectively. The obtained reliability coefficient for each of the variables were as follows: .76 for WTC items, .77 for ideal L2 self items, .72 for ought-to L2 self items, .74 for L2 learning experience items, and .85 for self-efficacy items. Two item formats were utilized in the questionnaire. Twenty-nine items were in the format of a statement while six items related to the L2 learning experience were in the format of a question. The items were divided into three different parts (A, B, and C) and included different Likert response formats for each part. Every effort was made in order to take into consideration the ethical aspects related to research.

4.3 Data Analysis

The use of a 5-point Likert scale for all the survey items produced quantitative data which was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 19 at the probability level of 0.05. As is apparent from the nature of the research questions, there exist two parts to the data analysis. In order to find meaningful answers to these questions, standard multiple regression was put to use for the first and second questions and hierarchical multiple regression was used for the third question. Aside from the assumption of sample size addressed in the previous section, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) state a few preliminaries which have to be met before a multiple regression can be run. These include: outliers, multicollinearity, singularity, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. These assumptions were all met through examining Q-Q plots, examining the Loess line, looking at scatter plots of residuals, and checking the VIF values.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 The combined ability of the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, the L2 learning experience, and self-efficacy in predicting WTC

The results of the standard multiple regression are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: *Standard Multiple Regression Model Summary for Predictors of WTC*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Chang
1	.645	.416	.390	3.96415	.000

Note. Predictors: Ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience, self-efficacy
Response variable: WTC

As Table 1 shows, the multiple regression coefficient of the model was close to .65 ($p<.05$). This amount of correlation shows that the explanatory variables in combination were strongly correlated with WTC. The R square showed that a combination of the three realms of motivation, and self-efficacy was able to predict 41.6% of the variance in WTC scores. Cohen (1992) interprets this value as a large effect size.

5.2 The strongest predictor of WTC

After understanding the contribution of the model as a whole in explaining WTC, the researchers set out to investigate which of the explanatory variables had the most power in predicting WTC. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *The Unique Contribution of Each Predictor Variable in the Regression Model (N=94)*

Variable	*B*	Standardized Beta	Std. Error	Sig.	Partial correlation	VIF
Ideal L2 Self	.687	.454	.174	.000	.387	2.009
Ought-to L2 self	-.030	-.027	.090	.744	-.035	1.018
L2 learning experience	.155	.122	.114	.177	.143	1.223
Self-efficacy	.193	.174	.120	.011	.168	1.784

Note. Dependent variable: WTC

As summarized in Table 2, only the ideal L2 self, and self-efficacy made a statistically significant unique contribution to the model (sig<.05). Comparing the standardized beta (β) values for the ideal L2 self (β=.46) and self-efficacy (β=.17) indicates that the ideal L2 self strongly predicts WTC, tough the role of self-efficacy was also significant but made a less unique contribution to the model. The ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience did not make any unique contribution to the whole model (sig>.05). Table 2 also shows that the ideal L2 self uniquely contributed to 38.7% of the variance in the model, while self-efficacy contributed 16.8% to the total variance.

5.3 The role of gender as a moderator

In order to find logical answers to whether gender had the power to moderate the relationship between each of the predictor variables and WTC, four 3-level hierarchical multiple regressions were performed. The results of these analyses are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: *Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model for Gender as Moderator of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, the L2 Learning Experience, Self-Efficacy, and WTC*

Model	Variables included in the model	R	R^2	ΔR^2	Sig. Change
1	Ideal L2 self	.621	.385	.385	.000
2	Ideal L2 self, Gender	.627	.393	.008	.277
3	Ideal L2 self, Gender, Ideal L2 self x Gender	.645	.416	.023	.061
1	Ought-to L2 self	.055	.003	.003	.597
2	Ought-to L2 self, Gender	.176	.031	.028	.109
3	Ought-to L2 self, Gender, Ought-to L2 self x Gender	.181	.033	.002	.674
1	L2 learning experience	.361	.131	.131	.000
2	L2 learning experience, Gender	.383	.147	.016	.191
3	L2 learning experience, Gender, L2 learning experience x Gender	.386	.149	.002	.651
1	Self-efficacy	.507	.257	.257	.000
2	Self-efficacy, Gender	.524	.274	.017	.145
3	Self-efficacy, Gender, Self-efficacy x Gender	.534	.285	.011	.244

Note. Dependent variable: WTC; N=94

As Table 3, indicates the addition of gender and the interaction between gender and each of the explanatory variables, results in a trivial increase in the predictive power of the models. However, all of these increases are statistically insignificant (Sig.>.05), meaning that models 2 and 3 of each explanatory variable are not statistically different from their first model. What this means is that gender did not moderate the relationship between any of the explanatory variables and WTC.

6. DISCUSSION

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the four predictor variables were highly correlated with WTC (r=.65) and were able to predict 41.6% of the variance in WTC scores (Sig.<.05). Taking this analysis a step further, the multiple regression revealed that the strongest predictors of WTC, in order of their predictive power, were the ideal L2 self and self-efficacy.

Overall, the findings indicated a strong connection between motivation and WTC. This corroborates with findings of studies by Peng (2017), Kho-yar et al. (2018), and Karimi and Abaszadeh (2017) who approved the potentially meaningful path between motivation and WTC.

In the current study, the ideal L2 self was able to uniquely predict 38.7% (a high figure) of the variance in WTC scores. Overall, the results gained through this study showed the ideal L2 self to be a better predictor when it comes to the effort of students in communication, which gives evidence to previous studies (e.g. Bursalı and Öz, 2017;Kormos & Csizér, 2008; and Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). A reasonable explanation for this might be that motivation led out of an integrative incentive is much more powerful in predicting outcome than the ought-to self and the L2 learning experience, which proved insignificant in predicting L2 WTC. Generally speaking, research into motivational self-system has found that the ideal L2 self is the strongest among the three dimensions of the L2 motivational self-system in predicting language learners' motivated behavior (Csizér, & Kormos, 2009).

The findings of this study proved self-efficacy to be another strong predictor of L2 WTC. Self-efficacy had the ability to uniquely explain 16.8% of the variance in WTC scores. This finding is in line with Karbakhsh and Ahmadi Safa (2020), Wijaya and Mbato (2020), Kho-Yar, Rafik-Galea, and Kho (2018), Karimi and Abaszadeh (2017) , who reported self-efficacy beliefs as the strongest variable among a set of variables to be able to predict WTC. The findings gained through this research resemble those studies that have found self-confidence, which is closely related to self-efficacy, to be the most immediate antecedent of L2 WTC (Eddy, 2015; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996).

It was also found that gender did not have the statistical power to moderate any of the relationships. Studies in second language acquisition concerning the difference between females and males on different matters, is inconclusive. Some have pointed to the fact that gender plays a role while others underscore the neutral effect of gender in language learning in general. Some studies have shown that females are more motivated to learn a new language than are males (e.g., Carreira, 2006; Sung & Padilla, 1998). However, the results of the current academic endeavor supported the findings of Canary and Hause's (1993) research that showed gender differences in communication are small. The results are also in line with that of Baker & MacIntyre (2000) and MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002) who studied WTC with regards to immersion and non-immersion students and found a non-significant difference between females and males with regards to their WTC.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

The most immediate determinant of L2 use is WTC (Clément, Baker, and MacIntyre, 2003). Having in mind the crucial role played by L2 use in the language classroom, this query was designed to bring together L2 WTC, the L2 motivational self-system, and self-efficacy theories. First and foremost, the findings lend support to the well documented fact that motivation plays a crucial role in all human endeavors. The results suggest that the variable which is most immediately responsible for L2 WTC is the ideal L2 self. It follows that enhancing language learners' image of their ideal L2 selves might act as a trigger for communicating in English. The findings of this study underscore Dörnyei's (2009) call for the promotion of motivation in academic settings. This, according to Dörnyei, can be achieved by enhancing what he calls *learner's vision.* In an explanation of how this can be done, he puts emphasis on the crucial role of the language teacher. According to Dörnyei, teachers can help enhance student's ideal L2 selves through helping learners construct a vision of their ideal L2 selves which can be done through making them realize their dreams, desires and aspirations. Teachers, according to him, can also set out to illustrate powerful role models in order to set an example for potential future L2 selves. After creating and igniting this future vision, they need to strengthen that vision through various methods of imagery enhancement. Teachers are advised to take part in imagery manipulations by asking their students to view themselves as successful users of the L2 in order to increase their performance. The second strongest variable that had the most power in predicting WTC was self-efficacy beliefs. The study suggests that those language learners with a stronger belief in their own abilities in the second language domain will be more willing to take part in communication. This finding proves evidence to the claim that behavior corresponds to perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1984). It follows that increasing one's belief in her capabilities might lead to an increase in the amount of involvement in second language communication. Self-efficacy can be manipulated in the language classroom. Bandura (1995) argues that building self-efficacy can aid in building the needed belief that will ultimately lead to overriding the impediments in the way of the utilization of learned skills. The strongest and most effective way of building a strong sense of self-efficacy, Bandura maintains, is through *mastery experiences*. Success in performances helps build a strong belief in an individual's personal efficacy while failures which occur before a strong sense of self-efficacy is established, undermine it. As a final note, while this study is by no means exhaustive, and the results gained are not a comprehensive answer to all the questions surrounding the issue, nevertheless this investigation has shown that both the ideal L2 self and self-efficacy beliefs offer great milestones for enhancing the thought patterns of students in the L2 classroom. In order to make up for the limitations of this study, the researchers propose utilizing other complementary data gathering tools, such as one-on-one interviews. It would also be beneficial to replicate this study by hypothesizing a structural equation model (SEM). This model could include the L2 motivation self-system and self-efficacy as its latent variables and WTC as its dependent variable. Also, since WTC is only a measure of the tendency to communicate and does not show actual communication in the real world, it is advised that qualitative data measuring actual language use be added to the hypothesized SEM model.

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