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Predictors of willingness to read in English: testing a model based on possible selves and self-confidence

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is twofold. First, it tests a model of willingness to read (WTR) based on L2 motivation and communication confidence (communication anxiety and perceived communicative competence). Second, it applies the recent theory of L2 motivation proposed by Dörnyei [2005. *The Psychology of Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; Dörnyei, Z. 2009. "The L2 Motivational Self System." In *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, edited by Z. Dörnyei and E. Ushioda, 9–42. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.], L2 motivational self-system (*ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience*), in willingness to communicate (WTC) and WTR construct. For this purpose, 180 Iranian university students who were taking general English courses completed the survey questionnaire. Structural equation modelling was utilised to analyse the proposed model of WTR. Results of the analysis indicated that L2 learning experience, ideal L2 self, and communication confidence positively and significantly predicted WTR, and L2 learning experience was the strongest predictor of WTR. Moreover, among the three measures of L2 motivational self-system, ideal L2 self was the strongest positive predictor of communication confidence, and ought-to L2 self-contributed to communication confidence negatively. The results suggest that L2 motivational self-system framework can adequately account for WTC. Also, in contrast to previous studies, it has a higher explanatory power than communication confidence in predicting L2 WTR.

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KEYWORDS

L2 motivational self-system; willingness to communicate; self-confidence; structural equation modelling; willingness to read

Introduction

Non-English major university students in Iran have to pass a three-credit course of general English and a two-credit course of special English (Khajavy et al. 2016). Students are expected to read and translate semi-technical texts. In these courses, students read texts, translate them, and related vocabulary and grammar are taught (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012). No or very little emphasis is given to speaking, writing, and listening, while reading is the most important skill worked and taught for non-English major university students. Moreover, due to transition from high school to university, most students find comprehending these technical texts difficult and they may not be willing to read the texts. University students also have to read a lot of English technical books and articles related to their major. As learning highly relies on text materials, reading skill and competence seems to be a very crucial precondition for academic achievement (Schiefele et al. 2012). Therefore, understanding the factors that affect learners' willingness to read (WTR) an English

text can help researchers and university instructors to have a more comprehensive picture of the underlying factors of WTR.

WTR can be related to the well-established construct of willingness to communicate (WTC), proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), which examines the contribution of different linguistic, contextual, and motivational factors in communication. Most studies on WTC have focused on speaking (Hashimoto 2002; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Khajavy et al. 2016; Öz, Demirezen, and Pourfeiz 2015; Peng 2015; Peng and Woodrow 2010). However, WTC is not limited only to speaking, and it includes other skills as well (MacIntyre et al. 1998; MacIntyre et al. 2001). It is possible that a student might be willing to speak in English but not to read in English. Considering the lack of research on WTR, the present study attempts to examine factors underlying WTR.

Consistent with the WTC theory and based on a meta-analytic review of WTC (Elahi et al. 2016), the three most influential correlates of WTC are motivation, anxiety, and perceived communicative competence. Therefore, these variables were also used in this study to examine their relations with WTR. Purpose of the present research is to test a model of WTR based on self-confidence (communication anxiety and perceived communicative competence) and L2 motivation.

Review of the literature

Willingness to communicate

Recently, WTC has been investigated by many second/foreign language researchers (Cao 2011, 2014; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Hosseini Fatemi, Khajavy, and Choi 2016; Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng 2015; Peng and Woodrow 2010). It is defined as a person's readiness to start a communication when he is ready to do so (MacIntyre et al. 1998). WTC is so important that, as MacIntyre et al. (1998) mention, it should be the main goal of language teaching. However, language learners are not always willing to communicate in L2 inside the classroom. Some use every opportunity to communicate, while others avoid it (MacIntyre and Blackie 2012). These fluctuations in communication have been the topic of many studies conducted in different settings (Cameron 2015; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng 2015; Peng and Woodrow 2010; Zarrinabadi 2014). Many variables have been identified to influence WTC, among them motivation (Khajavy et al. 2016; MacIntyre and Charos 1996; Peng 2015; Yashima 2002), communication self-confidence (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012), classroom environment (Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010), attitudes (Khajavy et al. 2016; Yashima 2002), and personality (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; MacIntyre and Charos 1996).

WTC was originally conceptualised with regard to the first language (McCroskey and Richmond 1987). In L1, it is considered as a personality trait which is relatively stable (McCroskey and Richmond 1987). It means that a person who is highly willing to communicate with acquaintances would also be expected to be highly willing to communicate with strangers, though their WTC level might decrease from acquaintances to strangers. However, interpretation of WTC in L2 is different (MacIntyre et al. 1998). L2 WTC is considered as a situational variable which varies from situation to situation (MacIntyre et al. 1998). Higher levels of WTC increase language learners' tendency to use the language authentically in the classroom (MacIntyre and Charos 1996). MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed a pyramid model of L2 WTC that includes both trait and situational factors. These factors integrate different psychological, situational, and linguistic variables.

Relationship between WTC and WTR

As we have applied the theory of WTC to WTR, the relationship between these two constructs should be examined. In MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) study, WTC refers to all four language skills. Therefore, the same theoretical model used in WTC theory is also applied to WTR. In the previous empirical studies that have focused on speaking module of communication, they never used the term willingness to speak. To make our findings regarding WTR distinct from previous studies, we use

the term ‘willingness to read’. Therefore, WTR is part of WTC construct which concentrates on reading. Considering the definitions of WTC by MacIntyre and his colleagues, WTR is defined as readiness to read a text given the choice and opportunity.

Although WTR and WTC (here we refer to speaking) share some characteristics, they are also different. For example, both WTR and WTC emphasise the readiness to start a behaviour (i.e. speaking or reading). However, it should be mentioned that speaking is a productive oral skill, while reading is a receptive written skill. Accordingly, underlying sources of confidence (anxiety and perceived competence) and motivation might be different in WTR and WTC. Anxiety in WTC research refers to situations which are related to communication in English (e.g. I fill anxious, when giving an oral presentation to the rest of the class). It should be mentioned that oral communication anxiety cannot be a source of reading anxiety (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999). In other words, reading anxiety is specific and distinct from oral communication anxiety (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999; Sellers 2000). Factors such as unfamiliar orthography and background culture can be specific sources of reading anxiety. More theoretical explanations of reading anxiety can be found in the next section. This is also true for perceived communicative competence. Considering motivation, it is very probable that individuals’ reasons for speaking and reading an L2 might be different. In other words, one might be motivated to speak in English, but not motivated to read in English. Therefore, though factors underlying WTR might be similar to WTC, their operationalisations are different from WTC.

L2 self-confidence

Most studies have found that L2 self-confidence is the strongest predictor of L2 WTC (Fallah 2014; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Peng and Woodrow 2010). L2 self-confidence is a construct proposed by Clément (1980, 1986) and is a combination of perceived communicative competence and lack of anxiety. Research has indicated that the higher levels of perceived communicative competence and lower levels of anxiety increase L2 WTC (see Zarrinabadi and Tanbakooei 2016). Perceived communicative competence refers to learners’ self-evaluation of their L2 skills (Peng 2015). In this study, perceived communicative competence refers to the students’ self-evaluation of their ability to read English texts.

Anxiety is also considered as a negative correlate of WTC (e.g. Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng 2015). It is defined as ‘worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language’ (MacIntyre 1999, 27). When students do not feel anxious in the classroom and perceive themselves competent to communicate, they are more willing to communicate in English.

Foreign language anxiety is common among foreign language learners and is an obstacle for language learning (Young 1991). However, when foreign language anxiety is examined, most researchers associate it with oral aspects of language anxiety, namely speaking and listening (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999). As reading anxiety is not easily discoverable in interpersonal relationships, it has been mostly neglected (Joo and Darmon 2015). Reading can also be stressful when factors such as unfamiliar writing systems, cultural materials, graphemic-phonetic decoding, and discourse features are used (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999; Zhao, Guo, and Dynia 2013), or when language ability and learning motivations are taken into account (Sellers 2000). Moreover, previous research has consistently found that reading anxiety is different and distinguishable from general language anxiety (Sellers 2000; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999). For instance, Zhang and Kim (2014) found that reading anxiety is consisted of four constructs, fear of unfamiliar topics and language forms, fear of reading, fear of unfamiliar culture, and fear of negative attitude towards reading (as cited in Joo and Darmon 2015).

In L2 WTC research, perceived communicative competence and language anxiety have been either examined as separate variables (MacIntyre et al. 2001; MacIntyre and Charos 1996; Peng 2015) or as components of self-confidence (Cetinkaya 2005; Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010; Yashima 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Neshide, and Shimizu 2004). These studies have consistently

found that L2 self-confidence is a direct predictor of L2 WTC. The same positive relation is hypothesised between L2 self-confidence and WTR.

Motivation

Motivation has been found to be closely related to self-confidence and L2 WTC (Elahi et al. 2016). Research on L2 motivation started with the work of Gardner (1985). He proposed the socio-educational model of second language acquisition in which integrativeness (attitudes toward L2 community, integrative orientation, and interest in foreign languages) affects students' motivation to learn that language. Early studies of L2 WTC used this model for examining the relationships between L2 motivation and L2 WTC (Cetinkaya 2005; Hashimoto 2002; Yashima 2002). Cetinkaya (2005) and Yashima (2002) found that motivation is indirectly related to WTC through communication confidence, and Hashimoto (2002) found that WTC is related to motivation which in turn is related to frequency of L2 communication. More recently, consistent with Cetinkaya (2005) and Yashima (2002), Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour (2012) also found that motivation, conceptualised based on Gardner's socio-educational model, is indirectly related to WTC through self-confidence. However, Gardner's socio-educational model has some limitations in the foreign language contexts such as Iran (Khajavy et al. 2016) and China (Peng and Woodrow 2010) because formation of attitudes towards the target language community does not occur in these contexts due to lack of interaction with foreigners, and language learners learn English to pass their exams or to read specialised texts not for the purpose of real communication.

During 1990s, the focus of motivational research shifted to cognitive aspects (Dörnyei 2005). Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) became the popular method of analysing people's motivation. This theory was applied to language learning literature by Noels et al. (2000). SDT explains human's motivation from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. Researchers such as Peng and Woodrow (2010) and Khajavy et al. (2016) used this motivational framework in WTC research and found that motivation is indirectly related to WTC through communication confidence.

The most recent theory of L2 motivation, L2 Motivational Self-System, was proposed by Dörnyei (2005) which is based on Higgins's (1987) Self-Discrepancy Theory, and Markus and Nurius's (1986) Possible Selves Theory. L2 motivational self-system explains that learners' ideas of what they would like to become in the future (future L2 selves) affect their behaviours as they try to reduce the discrepancies between their actual selves and their future desired selves (Dörnyei 2005, 2009). Therefore, these future selves provide learners with impetus and motivation to achieve them. Accordingly, L2 motivational self-system is composed of three components, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. Ideal L2 self refers to an individual's desirable self-image of an L2 user they would like to become in the future (You and Dörnyei 2016). The discrepancy that exists between the current and ideal selves motivates the person to move towards their ideal self and to reduce the gap between these two selves. According to Lamb (2012), a precondition for development of ideal L2 self is contact with respected others who have learnt the L2 in similar conditions. Ought-to L2 self is concerned with the attributes one ought to possess due to obligations and responsibilities to avoid possible negative outcomes (Dörnyei 2009). Here, the role of parents, teachers, significant others, and external factors is highlighted, and, in contrast to ideal L2 self, it is not much related to one's wishes, aspirations, and desires (Papi and Teimouri 2014). It has been argued that ought-to L2 self may be more relevant in Asian cultures and collectivist societies where individuals are more under the influence of others (Kormos and Csizér 2008; Lamb 2012; Taguchi, Magid, and Papi 2009). This component corresponds to the extrinsic category of Noels et al.'s (2000) taxonomy. In both ideal and ought-to selves, an imagined self-state of person in the future is represented. The third dimension, L2 learning experience, refers to 'situation-specific motives related to the immediate environment and experiences' (Dörnyei 2005, 106). The classroom environment including teacher, peers, grades, testing system and the curriculum impact the L2 learners' motivation. Among the

three components of the L2 motivational self-system, it has been found that L2 learning experience has the strongest relation with motivated learning behaviour (Csizér and Kormos 2009; Papi 2010).

The L2 motivational self-system has been examined empirically in different contexts such as Chile (Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizér 2011), Japan, China, and Iran (Taguchi, Magid, and Papi 2009), Hungary (Csizér and Kormos 2009), Pakistan (Islam, Lamb, and Chambers 2013), and Indonesia (Lamb 2012), and the tripartite model of motivation has been confirmed as a valid measure of motivation.

L2 motivational self-system and WTC

Considering the above-mentioned literature, motivation is an important factor related to WTC. It is assumed that those learners who 'envision their ideal selves pursuing an international career, working in a foreign country, or conducting business negotiations in English' might be more motivated to communicate in English (Yashima 2009, 147). Therefore, ideal self can be directly related to WTC. Moreover, ought-to self can be anxiety-provoking (Papi 2010), as the discrepancy between actual self and ought-to self might engender anxiety. Moreover, anxiety (as a separate construct or as a component of L2 confidence) has been found to be strongly related to WTC (see Elahi et al. 2016). Consequently, it can be inferred that ought-to self can indirectly affect WTC through anxiety (or L2 confidence). Finally, language learning experience is assumed to be directly related to WTC. As mentioned before, language learning experience refers to the classroom environmental factors such as teacher, peers, and tasks. Previous studies have consistently found that classroom environment is positively related to WTC (Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010).

Several empirical studies have examined the relation between L2 motivational self-system and WTC. Peng (2015) proposed a model of L2WTC based on L2 motivational self-system, anxiety, and international posture. Results of her study among Chinese university students showed that among the three components of L2 motivational self-system, learning experience predicted WTC inside the classroom, while ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self indirectly affected WTC inside the classroom through anxiety. Moreover, Munezane (2013, 2016) found that ideal L2 self was positively related to WTC among Japanese university students (other two components were not examined in this study).

Applying L2 motivational self-system framework in WTR research, it can be hypothesised that those who imagine their ideal self as a competent person who can read English texts easily are more willing to read English texts. Moreover, it is posited that those who learn English for external factors to avoid negative outcomes might feel more anxiety while reading an English text. This feeling of anxiety in turn would affect individuals' WTR, and they might not be much willing to read English texts. In regard to language learning experience, we state that positive classroom activities and a supportive environment make students more interested and willing to read English texts.

The hypothesised model

Following the theoretical framework of L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al. 1998) and previous empirical studies, a model of L2 WTR based on L2 motivational self-system and communication confidence was hypothesised. The model consists of five latent variables: L2 WTR, communication confidence, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and language learning experience.

Based on Csizér and Kormos (2009) and Peng (2015), ought-to L2 self and language learning experience were hypothesised to positively influence ideal L2 self. Previous studies (e.g. Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010; Yashima 2002) consistently found that motivation positively was related to communication confidence; therefore, three paths were drawn from the three components of L2 motivational self-system to communication confidence. It should be noted that communication confidence is composed of lack of anxiety and perceived communicative competence (Clément 1980, 1986). Following Peng's (2015) model and previous studies (Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010) that students' pleasant experiences

of the language classroom positively were related to L2 WTC, a path was postulated from language learning experience to L2 WTR. Moreover, a path from ideal L2 self to L2 WTR was hypothesised based on Munezane's (2013, 2016) models. The proposed model with hypothesised positive and negative paths can be seen in [Figure 1](#).

Based on this model, the following hypotheses are postulated:

H1: Ought-to L2 self positively predicts idea L2 self and negatively predicts self-confidence.

H2: Ideal L2 self positively predicts L2 self-confidence and WTR.

H3: Language learning experience positively predicts ideal L2 self, L2 self-confidence, and WTR.

H4: L2 self-confidence is a positive predictor of WTR.

Methodology

Participants

The sample included 180 first-year university students from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in Iran. Students' majors were management, economics, and accounting and they were all taking general English as a compulsory three-credit course at the first semester of the university. In these classes, students read semi-technical texts related to their academic major, and the main activities used in the classrooms are translation of the texts into Persian, teaching semi-technical vocabularies and grammatical points. The first language of all participants was Persian and all of them had passed English at junior high school and high school. Participants consisted of 136 females and 40 males (4 people with missing gender data) and their ages ranged from 18 to 26 ($M = 19.13$, $SD = 1.70$).

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study included a self-report questionnaire developed for measuring L2 motivational self-system, L2 WTR, and self-confidence. The instrument was given in Persian language to increase the return rate. A brief description of the scales examined in this study is given as the following.

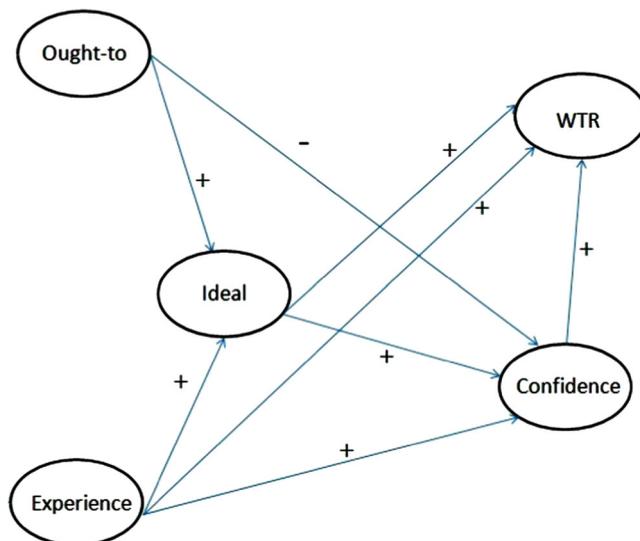


Figure 1. The proposed model of L2 WTR, L2 motivational self-system, and L2 self-confidence.

1-L2 motivational self-system: It was measured using 18 items from Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). It includes three subscales based on Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) guidelines: (a) ideal L2 self; (b) ought-to L2 self; and (c) L2 learning experience. Each subscale includes six items. The internal consistency of the subscales for ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience were $\alpha = .87$, $\alpha = .85$, and $\alpha = .87$, respectively.

2-L2 WTR: Six items were utilised from MacIntyre et al. (2001) on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always) to measure participants' WTR. The internal consistency of the scale was .86.

3-L2 self-confidence: This measure is consisted of two variables, L2 anxiety and perceived communicative competence (Clément 1986). As the focus of this study was on reading, items were aimed at measuring anxiety and perceived communicative competence related to reading. Ten items from Saito, Garza, and Horwitz's (1999) Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale were utilised to measure L2 reading anxiety. The items were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The internal consistency of the scale was .87. Moreover, to assess perceived communicative competence, as it is common in WTC research, the same items which were used for measuring WTC were used for assessing perceived communicative competence. Therefore, six items were used on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always). The internal consistency of the scale was .86.

Procedure

Convenient sampling was used as the sampling procedure in the present study (Dörnyei 2007). In order to collect the data, one of the researchers asked four university instructors to allow him use their class time for administrating the questionnaires. After gaining their permission, the researcher distributed the instrument in six classes which were taking English as a general course. It took about 15 minutes for participants to fill in the questionnaires. Researcher was present in all data gathering sessions to give them the instructions. Data gathering was completed in one session.

Data analysis

In order to test the proposed model, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. SEM is a robust statistical procedure which combines factor analysis with regression. One of the main advantages of SEM over multiple regression analysis is that latent variables can be used. Then, each latent variable is identified by several observed variables. For example, in this study, WTR is a latent variable which is identified by six items. These six items are indicators of WTR. Each SEM model consists of two parts, measurement model and structural model. Measurement model refers to the relation between a latent variable and its indicators. Structural model refers to the relation between latent variables (Kline 2011). For example, in this study, the relation between L2 self-confidence and WTR is a structural model. Before running SEM, it is necessary to check the measurement model which is also called confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA is used to assure the construct validity of the scales. Another feature of SEM is that after running each model (either CFA or SEM), goodness-of-fit indices should be checked. There are different goodness-of-fit indices used in SEM analysis. The most common indices are Chi-square divided by degree of freedom (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). In order to have a fit model, χ^2/df should be less than 3, CFI and TLI above .90, and RMSEA less than .08 (Tseng and Schmitt 2008).

Table 1. Cases with outliers, missing data, and valid cases.

| | No of original cases | No of outliers | No of missing cases | No of valid cases |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| (1) WTR | 180 | 1 | 1 | 178 |
| (2) Reading anxiety | 180 | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| (3) Perceived competence | 180 | 0 | 1 | 179 |
| (4) Ideal L2 self | 180 | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| (5) Ought-to L2 self | 180 | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| (6) Learning experience | 180 | 0 | 0 | 180 |

Results

Preliminary analyses

Before testing the proposed model of L2 WTR, data screening was performed on the data with SPSS 17. Missing data, normality, and outliers were examined (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). There are different techniques to deal with missing data such as list-wise deletion, pair-wise deletion, and Expectation-Maximisation (EM) algorithm. The first two techniques are not appropriate for studies with small sample size, especially if the number of missing data is high. In the present study, EM was used to deal with missing data (Kline 2011). EM is an imputation technique that missing data are replaced with values. Normality of the items was checked using skewness and kurtosis indices. Values exceeding ± 2.0 indicate non-normal distribution. They were identified and removed in this study. Finally, both univariate and multivariate outliers were examined. *Z*-Standardised scores and Mahalanobis D^2 were used for detecting univariate and multivariate outliers, respectively (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Then, all of them were removed. A summary of missing data and outliers is given in Table 1.

Construct validity of the scales

After data screening, CFA was used to investigate the construct validity of the measurement models. To examine the acceptability of the models, goodness of fit indices were utilised. Measurement models for L2 WTR, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, language learning experience, and communication confidence were tested. Some initial measurement models did not show a good fit to the data. Therefore, modifications were made to make them fit to the data. For this purpose, three items (one item from ought-to self, one item from ideal self, and one item from language learning experience) were removed (due to factor loadings less than .40) and two correlational paths were drawn between error terms of ought-to L2 self-items and language learning experience¹ (see Figure 2 for factor loadings). The final measurement models showed acceptable fit to the data (see Table 2). Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables are given in Table 3. Moreover, to see the effect of gender on the variables, six separate independent-samples *t*-tests were run. No significant difference was found between males' and females' WTR, reading anxiety, perceived communicative competence, and L2 motivational self-system components.

SEM analyses

The initial model (Figure 1) was submitted to AMOS 16 for evaluation with the maximum likelihood procedure and variance-covariance matrices as input. Regression coefficients for all paths, except for ought-to L2 self \rightarrow ideal L2 self, were significant at the level of .05 or below. This non-significant path was removed from the model and SEM was re-run again for the revised model. The model fitted the data adequately (see Table 4). Findings of the study supported H2, H3, and H4, while H1 was partially supported. The final model can be seen in Figure 2.

In order to have a more practical and meaningful interpretation of the data, effect size (ES) was calculated for all latent endogenous variables (Table 5). Cohen's f^2 was used for calculating ES. The

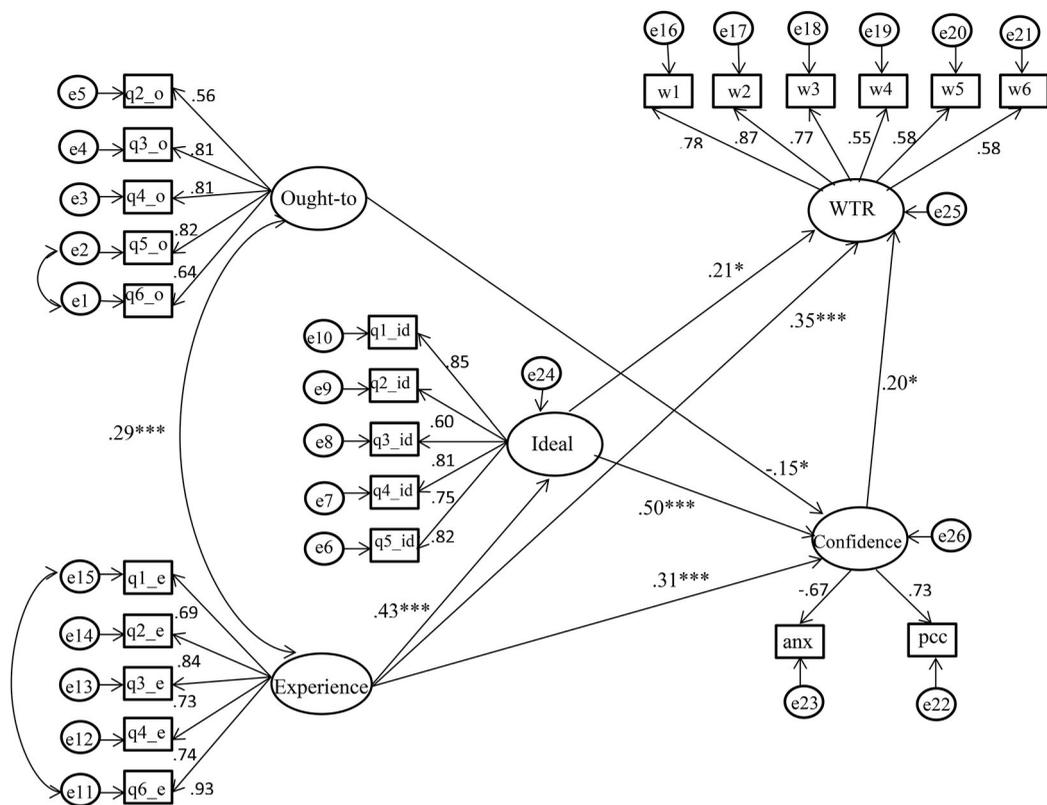


Figure 2. The final model of L2 WTR, L2 motivational self-system, and L2 self-confidence. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2. Measurement model of the latent variables.

| | χ^2 | df | χ^2/df | CFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Ideal L2 self | 5.29 | 2 | 2.64 | .99 | .96 | .07 |
| Ought-to L2 self | 2.55 | 4 | 0.63 | .98 | .99 | .01 |
| Learning experience | 3.36 | 4 | 0.84 | .99 | .99 | .00 |
| Communication confidence | 338.24 | 203 | 1.66 | .93 | .92 | .06 |
| WTR | 17.78 | 6 | 2.96 | .97 | .93 | .07 |

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables.

| | M (SD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| (1) WTR | 3.79 (1.20) | 1.00 | | | | | |
| (2) Reading anxiety | 3.28 (0.75) | -.033** | 1.00 | | | | |
| (3) Perceived competence | 3.57 (1.80) | 0.43** | -.054** | 1.00 | | | |
| (4) Ideal L2 self | 4.11 (1.23) | 0.47** | -.040** | 0.47** | 1.00 | | |
| (5) Ought-to L2 self | 3.53 (1.13) | 0.25** | 0.14* | -.016* | 0.15* | 1.00 | |
| (6) Learning experience | 4.27 (1.16) | 0.48** | -.037** | 0.40** | 0.49** | 0.25** | 1.00 |

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Goodness of fit indices for the initial and final models.

| | χ^2 | df | χ^2/df | CFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|--|----------|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Initial model | 349.29 | 211 | 1.65 | .94 | .93 | .06 |
| Final model after removing the path from ought-to self to ideal self | 349.29 | 212 | 1.64 | .94 | .93 | .06 |

Table 5. Standardised parameter estimates for the structural model.

| | R^2 | f^2 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| WTR | .43 | .75 |
| Ideal L2 self | .21 | .26 |
| Communication confidence | .44 | .78 |

equation for computing f^2 is $f^2 = R^2/1 - R^2$. Interpretation of f^2 is as the following, $f^2 = 0.02$ small effect; $f^2 = 0.15$ medium effect; and $f^2 = 0.35$ large effect (Cohen 1992).

The proposed model accounted for 43% of the variance in L2 WTR ($f^2 = .75$, large ES), 21% of the variance in ideal L2 self ($f^2 = .26$, medium ES), and 44% of the variance in communication confidence ($f^2 = .78$, large ES). This shows that the model accounts for a meaningful explanatory variance of the L2 WTR, ideal L2 self, and communication confidence.

As shown in Figure 2, language learning experience is the strongest predictor of L2 WTR ($\beta = .35$, $R^2 = .12$, $f^2 = .13$, small ES). Ideal L2 self ($\beta = .21$, $R^2 = .04$, $f^2 = .04$, small ES) and communication confidence ($\beta = .20$, $R^2 = .04$, $f^2 = .04$, small ES) are also predictors of L2 WTR. Therefore, the predictive power of these variables for L2 WTR can be shown as the following: L2 experience > ideal L2 self > communication confidence.

All the L2 motivational self-system variables were also significant predictors of the communication confidence (see Figure 2). Ideal L2 self was the strongest predictor of the communication confidence ($\beta = .50$, $R^2 = .25$, $f^2 = .33$, medium ES), with language learning experience ($\beta = .31$, $R^2 = .09$, $f^2 = .09$, small ES) and ought-to L2 self ($\beta = -.15$, $R^2 = .02$, $f^2 = .02$, small ES) as other predictors of communication confidence.

With regard to the paths among the motivational factors themselves, the path ought-to L2 self \rightarrow ideal L2 self was not significant ($\beta = .01$, $p > .05$) and was removed. However, the path language learning experience \rightarrow ideal L2 self was significant ($\beta = .43$, $R^2 = .18$, $f^2 = .21$, medium ES). Moreover, the data-driven correlational path between language learning experience and ought-to L2 self was significant ($r = .29$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to test a model of WTR based on the three components of L2 motivational self-system (ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and language learning experience) and communication confidence (reading anxiety and perceived communicative competence). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first attempt which investigates the factors contributing to WTR. To this end, first, the measurement model of all latent variables was examined and their construct validity was confirmed. Following this, the structural model was tested.

The impact of L2 motivational self-system and communication confidence on L2 WTR

Results of the study indicated that language learning experience was the strongest predictor of L2 WTR in a positive direction. This result implies that students' positive experiences in the classroom have a considerable effect on their WTR a text in English. This finding is consistent with previous studies where language learning experience was strongly related to motivated learning behaviour or intended effort (e.g. Csizér and Kormos 2009; Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizér 2011; Papi 2010; You and Dörnyei 2016). Therefore, the immediate learning environment/experience has the strongest impact on L2 WTR. The immediate learning environment refers to the teachers, classmates, tasks, and other factors in the context of the classroom. This finding confirms previous studies where the significant contribution of the classroom environment in L2 WTC was found (Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng and Woodrow 2010). Khajavy et al. (2016) also found that classroom environment was the strongest predictor of L2 WTC. In regard to teachers' role, it has been found that teachers' topic selection and

support influence learners' WTC (Zarrinabadi 2014). Applying the same findings in WTR, teachers can affect learners' WTR by selecting interesting reading topics and helping learners to understand the reading more easily.

Ideal L2 self positively predicted L2 WTR. When students imagine themselves as competent users of English who can read English texts, they would be more willing to read English texts. In other words, their imaginary picture of a competent reader of English texts acts as a strong motivator to reduce the discrepancy between their current and ideal selves (Papi and Teimouri 2012). This finding also confirms previous studies which found ideal L2 self had an influential positive impact on motivated learning behaviour or intended effort (Csizér and Kormos 2009; Gu and Cheung 2016; Islam, Lamb, and Chambers 2013; Papi 2010), and L2 WTC (Munezane 2013, 2016). Although international posture was not measured in this study, it can be linked to ideal self to explain the relation between ideal self and L2 WTR (Yashima 2009). Previous studies found significant relations between international posture and WTC (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Peng 2015; Yashima 2002). International posture and ideal self are closely related as both involve characteristics such as readiness to go overseas and work with international partners (Munezane 2013). Therefore, when language learners imagine their ideal selves seeking an international job, working or studying in a foreign country, and conducting business in English, they become motivated to learn and communicate in English (Yashima 2009). Considering reading, when language learners imagine their ideal selves as someone who can read different English newspapers, journals, and books, they become more motivated to read English texts.

Finally, as it was hypothesised and a vast number of empirical studies confirmed it, communication confidence was a predictor of L2 WTR. In other words, when language learners do not feel anxious to read English texts and perceive themselves as competent readers of English, they would be willing to read in English. This result is in line with many similar WTC studies (Cetinkaya 2005; Fallah 2014; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour 2012; Peng and Woodrow 2010; Yashima 2002). However, it should be mentioned that in the above-mentioned studies, communication confidence was the strongest predictor of L2 WTC; while in this study, language learning experience was the strongest predictor. This finding can be more explained with regard to the role of other variables. In studies that language learning experience or classroom environment was included in the L2 WTC model (Khajavy et al. 2016; Peng 2015), the role of communication confidence as a predictor of L2 WTC decreased (Peng and Woodrow 2010 as an exception). This finding is also the same in studies that motivated learning behaviour or intended effort was used. Papi (2010) found that language learning experience has the strongest impact on intended effort. Therefore, it can be concluded that the classroom context including teacher, tasks, and students and their experience in the class might have a more influential effect on their L2 WTR than communication confidence has.

The impact of L2 motivational self-system on communication confidence

After examining the role of L2 motivational self-system and communication confidence in L2 WTR, the impact of L2 motivational self-system on communication confidence was investigated. Ideal L2 self had the strongest positive effect on communication confidence. When language learners want to achieve their ideal self, for example, to read different English materials such as books and newspapers, they are motivated to decrease their current and ideal selves, and as a result, their communication confidence increases. In other words, their anxiety decreases and their perceived competence increases. Previous studies only took into account L2 anxiety while examining components of motivational self-system. Therefore, comparison with other studies is just based on L2 anxiety. For example, some researchers found (Papi 2010; Peng 2015) a negative relation between ideal self and L2 anxiety.

Language learning experience had a positive effect on communication confidence. The positive classroom environment and experiences increase language learners' communication confidence. It implies that teachers and classmates as important constituents of the classroom environment can

have substantial effect on reducing stress and also improving the perceived competence. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Aida 1994; Kang 2005; Khajavy et al. 2016; Zarrinabadi 2014) where positive language learning experiences decrease anxiety. It means a supportive and friendly teacher reduces anxiety in the class. Moreover, interesting and challenging reading topics and also encouraging and cooperative peers can enhance students' self-confidence to read English texts.

However, the role of ought-to self on communication confidence was negative. It means those who read English for external factors, for example to avoid negative outcomes, feel more anxious and have a lower level of perceived competence. According to Papi (2010), 'fear of negative evaluation' is part of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986, 127) conceptualisation of foreign language classroom anxiety where the role of others (teacher and classmates) as sources of anxiety in the class is emphasised.

Finally, the relations between the three components of motivational self-system were investigated. Following Csizér and Kormos (2009) and Peng (2015) who hypothesised paths from ought-to self and language learning experience to ideal L2 self, the same paths were examined in this study. The impact of language learning experience on ideal self was significant which is consistent with Csizér and Kormos (2009) and Peng (2015). According to Peng (2015), this finding can be explained considering the intrinsic characteristics of ideal L2 self. Peng (2015) states that 'ideal L2 self concerns one's internalised aspiration to become a competent L2 user, which presumably can be induced or enhanced by successful or enjoyable personal experience' (440). However, the impact of ought-to self on ideal self was not significant. This finding can also be explained with regard to the age and context of the study. Csizér and Kormos (2009) found that the impact of ought-to self on ideal self was significant for secondary school students, while the same path was not significant for university students in Hungary. Moreover, Papi (2010) found a significant correlational path between ought-to self and ideal self among high school students in Iran. It can be inferred that ought-to self can influence ideal self more on high school and younger students than on university students. Teenagers may have not yet fully established a clear image of what they desire to become in the future (i.e. ideal self), and this self-internalised image may not be separate from what they ought-to become (Papi 2010). However, this explanation may be violated when the results of Peng's (2015) study are examined. She found the significant effect of ought-to self on ideal self among university students in China. Therefore, although they were not adolescents, their ought-to self influenced their ideal self. This finding can be explained with reference to the culture and context of China. Based on Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, China is a highly collectivist society, while Hungary is a highly individualistic society and Iran is a less collectivist society than China. One of the main features of collectivist societies is the role of significant others in shaping the identity and motivation of individuals. Hence, students internalise their society's ideals as their own ideals (Papi 2010).

Pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research

Results of this study provide some pedagogical implication for English language teachers. As language learning experience had considerable effect on L2 WTR and communication confidence, teachers should provide a very positive classroom context for students. This positive context is related to the role of teachers in supporting their students and providing them with feedback, using challenging and motivating reading comprehension texts, and fostering cooperation among students while reading (Khajavy et al. 2016). Ideal L2 self also predicted L2 WTR and communication confidence. Activating language learners' ideal self in reading can be achieved through reading texts with diverse cultural aspects of the target community (Dörnyei 2009; Peng 2015). This can include reading authentic English newspapers, magazines, books, stories, and Internet websites. Students can be asked to bring their own favourite reading materials to the class and share them with their classmates. Moreover, research has shown that teaching strategies is related to intrinsic reading motivation (Schiefele et al. 2012). Considering the similarity between intrinsic motivation and ideal self (Dörnyei 2005, 2009), teachers can use these strategies to motivate students intrinsically to read

(see Schiefele et al. 2012). Another finding was that communication confidence was positively related to L2 WTR. Teachers should provide a stress-free and relaxing environment for their students where students feel secure to read texts and share their information and understanding of the text with their classmates and teachers. For example, when students read a text aloud for the whole class and make pronunciation mistakes, it is better that the teachers correct the mistakes after the students' reading is finished in order not to interrupt them (Zarrinabadi 2014).

There were some limitations in this study which could be addressed in future research. In this study, students were participating from different classes. Therefore, the class variables such as class size and teacher characteristics could affect the relations. This is a potential problem in all first-level SEMs and regression analyses which are very dominant in second language research. To address this issue, advanced statistical procedures such as multilevel modelling can be used to examine the effect of variables from other levels such as class, school/university, and district. Moreover, this study only used quantitative data for examining the relations. Further research using qualitative methods and complex-dynamic system (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, and Henry 2015) could shed more light on L2 WTR.

In spite of these limitations, this study provided empirical support for the role of L2 motivational self-system and L2 self-confidence as influential factors in WTR English texts. Moreover, WTR as a sub-component of WTC was examined in an EFL context.

Note. The error terms of items q5 and q6 related to ought-to self, and also those of items q1 and q6 related to language learning experience were allowed to covary. The reason for correlating the errors of items is to compensate for possible error covariance called 'common practice method' (Kline 2011). This happens when the items share a similar content. In our study, items q5 and q6 of ought to self are related to learning English because of others' expectations of the learners. Moreover, items q1 and q6 of language learning experience are related to enjoyment of learning English.

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