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AN INVESTIGATION OF INTERACTION AMONG WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND L2- SELF GUIDES

Case Study

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Abstract

In this quantitative study, which utilized focus group survey method, the relationship among anxiety (specifically speaking anxiety in classroom), ideal L2-self and willingness to communicate was explored. The participants of the study were selected using convenience sampling model, and were composed of 81 volunteer students in total (26 females, 55 males) at a state university in Turkey in 2017-2018 academic year. The data were collected via; a) Ideal L2-self Scale (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The internal consistency of the scale was $\alpha = .90$; b) Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC) (McCroskey, 1992) The internal consistency of the scale was $A = .94$; and c) Foreign language speaking anxiety scale (FLSAS) by Huang (2004). The data were analyzed using the SPSS 21.00 software, and Pearson Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis were conducted to find out whether Speaking Anxiety, Ideal L2-Self and Participants' GPA predict WTC. The results revealed that Ideal L2-Self didn't really affect students WTC ($Beta=0.192$, $t=1.648$; $p=0.104>0.05$). However, students' GPA significantly affected their WTC ($Beta=0.243$, $t=2.087$; $p=0.040<0.05$).

Key words: L2 learners, ideal L2-self, willingness to communicate, foreign language speaking anxiety

1. Introduction

Studies on self or affective factors in L2 contexts have gained importance in recent years, and the most outstanding ones seem to be attitudes, motivation, anxiety, willingness to communicate in real L2 context, and the concepts of self. Majority of the related studied focus on the relationship among these factors and how it effects students' learning of foreign/second language(s). Of those relevant to this study are WTC defined by (Mc Croskey, 1992), Ideal L2-Self indicated by (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010) and speaking anxiety by (Huang, 2004) are the main focus.

1.1. Willingness to Communicate

The rapid progress of Information Technology (IT) and high speed Internet has significantly increased the need for communication among people who speak diverse languages. This means that without being physically present in a foreign country, we can still communicate with speakers of other languages in English as an international language and join in them. Given this situation, it is not tough to assume that L2 learners may not wish to be integrated into or to be physically open to an L2 speech community while still desiring to learn an L2. That is why the term Willingness to Communicate has gained importance in recent years. As studies implied WTC was expressed by Macintyre et al. (1998) as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person, using L2” (p. 547). Macintyre and Legatto (2011) signify the intent to speak or to be quiet that may be thought as the closest basis of L2 use (Macintyre and Charos 1996; Macintyre et al. 1998; Clement et al. 2003).

Burgoon (1976) presented “unwillingness-to-communicate” (UWTC) as a tendency to evade verbal interaction in the challenge to describe the variety in language behaviors. Burgoon tried to rationalize UWTC, as a habitual tendency to avoid or decrease verbal interaction. An individual with low self-confidence may feel unenthusiastic to communicate because of the thought that others may negatively evaluate his/her struggles for interaction (Burgoon, 1976). By reversing the negative orientation of Burgoon’s UWTC (1976) into a positive orientation, McCroskey and Baer (1985) theorized and introduced WTC to L1 language education in order to enlighten individual differences in L1 oral interaction. Finally, Macintyre et al. (1998) adjusted the theoretical concept of WTC to investigate the diversity in L2 communication behaviors.

1.2. Ideal L2-Self

The Ideal L2-Self was clarified by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009: 3-4) as "the representation of the attributes that somebody would ideally like to possess and a representation of personal hopes, ambitions, or wishes" and Dörnyei (2009: 29) emphasized that "traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives" naturally belong to an Ideal L2-Self. Dörnyei (2009) recommended the concept of the L2 motivational self-system to be composed of the Ideal L2-Self, the ought-to self, and the L2 learning experience. Dörnyei (2005: 106) explains the Ideal L2-Self as the “L2-specific facet of one's ideal self.” L2 learner's ought-to self mostly initiated by the learner's sense of duty or obligation can be transformed into an Ideal L2-Self if the learner completely understands the necessity of learning L2 and relates the meaning of L2 learning to his or her personal life in future (Kim, 2009). Contrariwise, even if a learner has an Ideal L2-Self, his or her life conditions can sometimes function as debilitating factors.

1.3. Speaking Anxiety

Students in foreign language classes usually state that the most anxiety creating experience is speaking in the target language. Moreover, producing the uppermost level of anxiety, speaking is mentioned as the most anxiety provoking skill in the foreign language classes. As said by Young (1990), from the students’ perspective the most anxiety creating activities are speaking activities requiring in front of class and on spot performances. Horwitz et al. (1986) revealed that language learners feel more anxious while speaking than other language skills.

2. Related Researches

WTC has been found to be in relation with many factors that directly and indirectly influence students' WTC in target language including self-absorption, self-concepts, communication proficiency (skills), communication apprehension, cultural diversity and anxiety (Oz et al., 2014), 'teachers' wait time, error correction, decision on the topic, and support influence learners' WTC in English' (Zarrinabadi, 2014), the intention to start communication when the opportunity to do so is given to the child (MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Yashima, 2002). These factors, or forerunners of WTC, are believed to be the key to successful language learning (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Moreover; Ely (1986) developed a questionnaire packet including 'Language Class Risktaking, Language Class Sociability, Language Class Discomfort, and Motivation strengths'. Other instruments measuring the participants' attitudes, concern for grades, L2 learning backgrounds, and aptitude that effect their speaking anxiety were also included in this study.

Although each term is important specifically by its own Researchers now aim to reveal the relationship between relevant concepts, which affect Willingness to communicate highly. For Example, Oz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz (2015) aimed to explore perceptions of L2 WTC among EFL learners majoring in English as a foreign language in the Turkish context. The second goal of the study was to examine the differences between male and female students in terms of all variables measured in the study. The final goal of the study was to examine the interrelated relationship among communication and affective variables and L2 WTC. The results revealed statistically a significant gender difference only in PRCA (Perceived communication Apprehension). The structural equation modelling (SEM) showed a positive direct path from SPCC Self-perceived communication (communicative) competence to WTC and a significant negative path was found from PRCA (Perceived communication Apprehension) to WTC. Moreover, a negative path was obtained from PRCA SPCC. There was a positive significant relationship between integrativeness and the Ideal L2-Self and SPCC. A strong correlation was also found between integrativeness and the Ideal L2-Self (MS1) and instrumental orientation and attitudes towards learning situation (MS2) as motivational factors.

Teachers' attitude, support, and teaching style can influence learners' WTC (Zarrinabadi, 2014). In his study he tried to report on a qualitative study that utilized a focused essay technique to explore how teachers can affect learners' tendency to talk in class. Study participants were asked to describe those situations in which teachers influenced their willingness to communicate in English. A total of 97 entries were received for situations in which the students were most willing to communicate and 84 entries for situations in which the students were least willing to communicate. The findings indicated that teachers' wait time, error correction, decision on the topic, and support exerts influence on learners' WTC.

In this study, the research questions were formulated as in the following:

Main research question:

Do speaking anxiety, ideal L2-self and participants' GPA predict WTC?

Sub-research questions:

1. *What is the relationship among WTC, GPA, ideal L2-self and speaking anxiety?*
2. *Do GPA and ideal L2-self predict WTC?*

3. Method

The study utilized focus group survey method based on quantitative data. The details about the method of the study are given below.

3.1. Setting and participants

This study was conducted in the Logistics Department of a Vocational College in a state university in Turkey in 2017-2018 academic year. The college offers a two- year program in different fields of the Social Sciences. Students were enrolled in the program after a centralized governmental university entrance examination. The participants were selected via convenience sampling model, and they were composed of 81 volunteer students in total; 26 females (%32.50) and 55 males (%67.50).

3.2. Instruments

The data of the study were collected using the following data collection tools:

3.2.1. Ideal L2-self Scale: The 10-item Ideal L2-Self -measure (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010) with responses to the statements on a 5-point scale was used to assess the contributors' desired L2 self-images or their opinions of themselves as successful L2 learners in the future. The internal consistency of the scale was $\alpha = .90$.

3.2.2. Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC): The willingness to communicate (WTC) scale (McCroskey, 1992) was used to assess the participants' WTC. It is a 20-item probability estimate scale. The contributors were to specify the percentage of times in each type of condition they would choose to communicate, from 0 (never) to 100 (always). The internal consistency of the scale was $A = .94$.

3.2.3. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS): So as to measure the level of speaking anxiety, developed by Huang (2004), the foreign language speaking anxiety scale (FLSAS), was adapted to be in harmony with the aims and objectives of the present study. The original scale consisted of two parts. In the first part, you could find items about the contributors' personal information. The contributors were asked to respond to five items on their age, gender, time of starting to learn English, willingness to study English and experience of traveling abroad. The second part of the scale consisted of 24 statements on speaking anxiety. The contributors had to respond the items within the form of a five point Likert scale which ranged from one "strongly disagree" to five "strongly agree".

The adapted scale also consisted of two parts. In the first part, you could find six items about the contributors' name, department, gender, time of starting to learn English, willingness to study English in general and willingness to study English after class. The second part consisted of 28 statements about foreign language speaking anxiety. As Şener (2014) stated in the original scale, some items were not directly related to speaking or speaking anxiety so they were partly changed, and some items were completely changed to get more specific data on the sources of speaking anxiety. The scale was form of a five point Likert scale which ranged from one "strongly disagree" to five "strongly agree". Some of the items were negatively worded and were therefore reverse scored. The higher the score obtained from the scale, the higher the foreign language speaking anxiety occurred. Firstly, the scale was translated into Turkish by the researcher to prevent misunderstandings, which may occur while responding for the sake of the contributors. A proficient English language teacher back translated the Turkish version,

and this version was compared to the original one by a native English speaker, and some items were revised.

3. Data Analysis and Findings

The data for the present study were collected utilizing the scales of Ideal L2-self, Willingness to Communicate, and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. The SPSS 21.00 software was used to analyze the obtained data. Pearson Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis were conducted to find out whether Speaking Anxiety, Ideal L2-Self and Participants' GPA predict WTC.

The findings of the study can be presented as in the following:

Table 1. Scales' descriptive Statistics and Reliability Cronbach Alpha

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>
Speaking Anxiety Scale	3.18	0.61	0.75
Willingness to Communicate Scale	62.75	21.78	0.95
Ideal I2 Self Scale	4.20	1.31	0.94

Scales Cronbach Alpha values were found to be $\alpha=0.75$ for Speaking Anxiety Scale, $\alpha=0.95$ for Willingness to Communicate scale and $\alpha=0.94$ for Ideal L2-Self scale .

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test Results of the relationship between students' willingness to communicate GPA Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and Ideal L2-Self

	Willingness to Communicate	Term GPA	Ideal L2-Self	Speaking Anxiety
Willingness to Communicate	1.000	0.32**	0.29*	0.160
Term GPA	0.32**	1.000	0.38**	0.27*
Ideal L2-Self	0.29*	0.38**	1.000	0.077
Speaking Anxiety	0.16	0.27*	0.077	1.000

To see the relationship between the terms GPA, Ideal L2-Self and Speaking Anxiety correlation analysis were conducted and according to the results there was a significant relationship between students WTC and their GPA ($r=0.32$, $p=0.004<0.05$), and between students WTC and their Ideal L2-Self ($r=0.29$, $p=0.011<0.05$) but it was seen that there was no significant relationship between students WTC and their Speaking Anxiety ($r=0.16$, $p=0.160>0.05$) which is a good result for us.

When Ideal L2-Self kept constant there was a statistically significant relationship between students' Willingness to Communicate and GPA with $r=0.234$, $p=0.040 < 0.05$) and when the effect of GPA kept constant there was no statistically significant relationship between WTC and Ideal L2-Self ($r=0.187$, $p=0.104 > 0.05$).

Table 3. *Multiple Regression Analysis*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F (p)</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R-Square</i>
Constant	448.825	244.175		1.838	0.070	5.688 (0.005)	0.363	0.132
Ideal L2-Self	112.976	3.979	0.19	1.648	0.104			
Term GPA	6.558	54.128	0.24	2.087	0.040			

To further confirm the results of Pearson Correlation and Partial Correlation Analysis and to find out whether GPA and Ideal L2-Self of the students effect their WTC multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results revealed that Ideal L2-Self doesn't really affected students WTC (Beta=0.192, $t=1.648$; $p=0.104 > 0.05$)

However, students' GPA significantly affected students WTC (Beta=0.243, $t=2.087$; $p=0.040 < 0.05$).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Understanding the relationship between affective/emotional factors may help conceptualize their role in the process of learning L2 better. High level of importance is given to communication in second language teaching and learning and the main objective of the second/foreign language teaching/learning process is to promote learners' participation in communication opportunities and their willingness to communicate using the target language (Macintyre et al., 1998). The lack of studies that are related with students' willingness to communicate in a real Turkish education context guided us to carry out a study that concentrates on the relationships among the variables which are believed to affect students' willingness to communicate in English. It is seen that GPA is the most effective factor of WTC and it has an interact with Ideal L2-Self. Perhaps the Shortcoming of the research could be that no Path Analysis or Structural Equation Model were conducted to find out the relationships between other variables. GPA may also have a mediating role because when it was kept constant the interaction was lost. To conclude, it is safe to state that participants are willing to communicate in English, and they have positive attitudes towards English language in general. GPA is the most effective factor of Willingness to Communicate in this study. This means that all over points of students determine their motivation and thus WTC in a real classroom context. Moreover, for some learners, their willingness to communicate L2 learning motivation is closely related to their future aspirations (e.g., getting a dream job) and their desire to enhance their sense of well-being; for others, it may be externally imposed by their family, by their friends, or by social pressure.

Similar studies to the present one may help language teachers improve their communicative language teaching methods and curriculum design, to find a better way to develop language learners' communication willingness in the target language, and increase their engagement in communication.

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