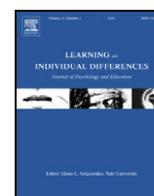




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Willingness to communicate in English, communication self-confidence, motivation, shyness and teacher immediacy among Iranian English-major undergraduates: A structural equation modeling approach

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ABSTRACT

This study takes the initiative to test a model of L2 communication that examines the potential connections among willingness to communicate in English (L2WTC), three individual differences (shyness, motivation, communication self-confidence) and one situational variable (teacher immediacy). A number of 252 Iranian English-major university students filled in a questionnaire survey. The collected data were then tabulated and analyzed via SPSS and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings revealed significant positive paths from motivation and communication self-confidence to L2WTC, from immediacy to motivation and from motivation to self-confidence and negative paths from shyness to self-confidence and motivation and from teacher immediacy to shyness. Further, it was shown that shyness and teacher immediacy could indirectly affect L2WTC through the mediation of self-confidence and motivation. The implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Since the advent of communicative and conversational approaches to second language pedagogy, communication has been accentuated not only as an indispensable process but also as goal of second/foreign language education. For many learners language learning means being able to speak the language. This is apparent in Dörnyei's (2005, p. 207) argument that the aim of language learning is to enhance "the learners' communicative competence in the target language". Moreover, in second/foreign language education programs learners' academic achievement is judged based on their ability to communicate effectively in the target language (Riggenbach & Lazaraton, 1991).

Apropos of this issue, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) advanced a heuristic model of communication to delineate the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 context and its potential causes and anticipants. Based on its original conceptualization (see McCroskey & Baer, 1985), they defined WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse, at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using L2" (p. 547). In this model WTC was deemed a situational variable which could be affected by various linguistic, communicative,

and social variables. Further, MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) proposed that the main objective of second/foreign language learning should be to "engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them". Since this pioneering work of MacIntyre, et al., L2WTC has been studied extensively in different ESL (English as a second language) contexts (e.g., Cao & Philp, 2006; Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre, Babin, & Clément, 1999; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002, 2003; Peng, 2007, to name a few).

However, despite the emphasis put on communication and the importance of willingness to communicate as a key concept in L2 education, a review of the related literature shows that L2WTC has not been studied sufficiently in EFL (English as a foreign language) setting (see Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Nagy, 2007; Yashima, 2002). Therefore, in order to shed further light on L2WTC and its potential association with other factors, this study set out to test a model of L2 communication by examining the interrelationship among L2WTC and a few individual and situational variables (communication self-confidence, motivation, shyness and teacher immediacy) among Iranian EFL learners majoring English.

It is hoped that this quest, at least to some extent, would answer the question prevalent among practitioners and researchers alike as to why many learners in EFL context lack the intention to initiate communication in English and tend to remain uncommunicative even if there are opportunities to use English in or outside of the classroom.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Communication self-confidence

L2 communication self-confidence is defined as a combination of perceived communication competence in L2 and lack of anxiety over learning or using the language (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985). Self-confidence can inspire and enhance one's desire to communicate (Jeffrey & Peterson, 1983) and the capacity to achieve goals via communication (DeVito, 1986). Perception of self-confidence has been found to affect second language learning (see Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994). Clément (1980) noted that, in comparison with their self-confident peers, learners with low levels of self-confidence tend to be less motivated to learn a foreign language. Further, research has shown that self-confidence is positively related to L2 proficiency, communication frequency, L2 motivation, willingness to communicate, extraversion, and openness to experience and negatively to communication anxiety in EFL context (e.g., Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002).

2.2. Motivation

Motivation, as a major individual factor, incontrovertibly plays a key role in second/foreign language learning, and has therefore become a popular subject pool for scholarly research worldwide (e.g., Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

Gardner (1985) conceptualized motivation as a “combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (p. 10). In his socio-educational model of L2 acquisition Gardner postulated that when we discuss the motivation to learn a second language, we should take into account both cultural context and educational context, which are named as integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, respectively. The integrative motive as a key element of Gardner's model accordingly covered both of these concepts along with motivation. He defined integrativeness as “a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer psychologically to the other language community” (p. 7). Attitudes toward the learning situation then referred to people's reactions to anything related to the immediate context where learning takes place. Finally, motivation as the focal point of the integrative motive was further broken down to three constituents, namely desire to learn the language, motivational intensity (the amount of effort put into learning the language) and attitudes toward learning the language (Gardner, 1985).

Research has shown that higher levels of integrative motive facilitate interaction among learners (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Motivation has also proved to be a significant predictor of different variables such as communication self-confidence, L2 communication frequency, L2 proficiency, perceived communication competence, and L2WTC in EFL context (Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002).

2.3. Teacher immediacy

The immediacy construct, as communication behaviors which improve psychological and physical closeness with others, was introduced by Mehrabian (1971). Inspired by approach-avoidance theory suggesting that “people approach what they like and avoid what they don't like” (Mehrabian, 1981, p.22), he noted that immediacy and liking are bilaterally connected with one another in that liking engender greater immediacy and immediacy enhances liking. Further, Andersen (1979) stated that immediacy behaviors play an important functional role in communication by conveying positive attitudes of the sender to the receiver.

Christophel and Gorham (1995) then conceptualized teacher immediacy as “nonverbal and verbal behaviors, which reduce psychological and/or physical distance between teachers and students” (p. 292).

Verbal immediacy behaviors include praise, self-disclosure, humor, continuing student initiated topics, speaking with learners outside of class, raising questions that encourage them to talk and ask for different viewpoints, encouraging communication through phone calls (Gorham, 1988) and using “we” and “our” in class (Frymier, 1993). Nonverbal immediacy then includes behaviors such as gestures, smiling, proximity, eye contact, directing a body position toward students, relaxed body position, movement and vocal expressiveness (Andersen, 1979).

The findings of previous research have revealed positive relationships between teacher immediacy and classroom variables such as student motivation (Christophel, 1990) cognitive learning (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Christophel, 1990), student affect (Gorham, 1988), positive student evaluations (Moore, Masterson, Christophel, & Shea, 1996), perceived teacher competence, trustworthiness and caring (Thweatt, 1999), interpersonal attraction (Rocca & McCroskey, 1999) and student attendance in class (Rocca, 2004). Immediacy behaviors were also viewed as a means of developing affinity, liking, and control with learners (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000).

Notwithstanding, research on teacher immediacy is extremely scarce in the TESOL field. A library search for this subject yielded only a few studies.

Examining a model of L2 communication among Chinese EFL learners, Yu (2009), for instance, found that teacher immediacy could significantly and directly affect communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence. The findings also showed that teacher immediacy could exert indirect effect on L2WTC through the mediation of these two constructs.

In another study, Hsu (2005) explored Thai EFL learners' perception of how the immediate relationship influences their WTC. The findings showed significant relationships between immediacy behaviors and the learners' WTC in English.

Therefore, given the importance of classroom atmosphere in EFL/ESL context (Krashen, 1982) and the potential role of teachers in establishing classroom climate conducive to learning and interpersonal communication (Witt & Wheelless, 2001), further research is warranted to investigate teacher immediacy behaviors in Iranian EFL context.

2.4. Shyness

Shyness as an inclination for eschewing social interactions and not being able to take part appropriately in social situations (Pilkonis, 1977) has been widely researched and discussed in the literature (e.g., Buss, 1980; Carducci, 1995; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Pilkonis, 1977; Zimbardo, 1977).

Shyness has been studied in relation to several individual and socio-emotional variables. Buss (1980), for example, argued that shy people are always preoccupied with other people's evaluations, and fear rejection. They tend to have less self-confidence, low self-esteem, and too much self-focused attention. This excessive self-consciousness, and being irresistibly preoccupied with negative opinions from others, will make shy individuals lose confidence and be timid about attending social functions (Crozier, 2001; Woody, Chambless, & Glass, 1997). Their lives, as Carducci (1995, p.35) noted, are entrapped between two fears: “being invisible and insignificant to others, and being visible but worthless”. Furthermore, shy people tend to be excessively aware of themselves as social objects (Cheek & Buss, 1981). This may lead to strong criticism of the self, which in turn results in lower self-esteem. Further, shyness can be a hindrance for shy individuals on their interpersonal relationships (Prisbell, 1991) and makes them feel discontented with their social lives (Neto, 1993). Unlike their less-shy peers, shy individuals disclose themselves less, and are more reluctant to make

the first contribution to a conversation (Leary, Knight, & Johnson, 1987; Pilkonis, 1977). Painfully shy persons find it difficult to show warmth and empathy with other people due to having poorer interpersonal skills (Prisbell, 1991). They may believe that they are less liked and accepted by their peers than those who are not shy (Leary, Kowalski, & Campbell, 1988).

When it comes to EFL/ESL context, the problem could become more serious and complicated for shy individuals. Due to the worldwide importance of developing communication competence in today's language education, speaking and listening components are increasingly underscored in language assessment. Besides, learners' performance is constantly appraised by the teacher and peers. Such a situation can be daunting and disconcerting for language learners, particularly shy ones who could be at a disadvantage due to their poor interpersonal skills, high desire for social approval and fear of disapproval and negative evaluation.

However, the potential effect of shyness in language learning achievement particularly communication skills has not received adequate scholarly attention in the TESOL context. There are only a few studies reported. Mirhasani, Akbari, and Allvar (2004), for example, investigated the relationship between shyness and communication strategies among Iranian college EFL learners. The results showed that, in comparison with their non-shy peers, shy students used less communication strategies. As for the types of strategies, it was found that while non-shy learners preferred achievement strategies, their shy peers opted more for avoidance strategies. In another study, Liao (2006) explored the effects of communication apprehension and shyness on Thai university EFL learners' English learning. The author found that these two variables could not significantly affect language skills. However, it was found that shyness could slightly predict communication apprehension. Chu (2008), also found a moderate positive correlation between shyness and foreign language anxiety among the Chinese EFL learners.

3. The hypothesized model

Based on the literature reviewed up to this point and earlier analysis of the data, the initial model was developed by integrating five variables: three latent variables (L2 communication self-confidence, motivation and teacher immediacy) and two observed variables (shyness and L2WTC). The hypothesized causal paths among these variables are depicted in Fig. 1.

Based on previous research (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002), a path from self-confidence to L2WTC and another path from motivation to L2 self-confidence were anticipated. The hypothesized path leading from motivation to L2WTC is also confirmed by MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) pyramid model of L2WTC and Dörnyei and Kormos (2000).

Following Christophel (1990), Christophel and Gorham (1995), Frymier (1993), and Frymier and Houser (2000), a direct positive path from teacher immediacy to EFL learners' motivation was drawn.

Further, a negative path from teacher immediacy to shyness was hypothesized. Research has shown that immediacy behaviors improve teacher–student relationships (Andersen, 1979; Gorham, 1988; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987). On the other hand, there is evidence that supportive and strong relationships between instructors and learners are essential not only to student academic success but also to better social, emotional, and behavioral functioning at all levels (kindergarten–college, e.g., Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010; Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Vulcano, 2007). Such relationships “allows students to feel safer and more secure in the school setting, feel more competent, make more positive connections with peers, and make greater academic gains” (Hamre & Pianta, 2006, p. 57). The importance of these relationships is magnified particularly for learners at risk for dropout, academic failure and social–behavioral problems (Baker, 1999; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Lan & Lanthier, 2003). Arbeau et al. (2010), for example, found that supportive teacher–

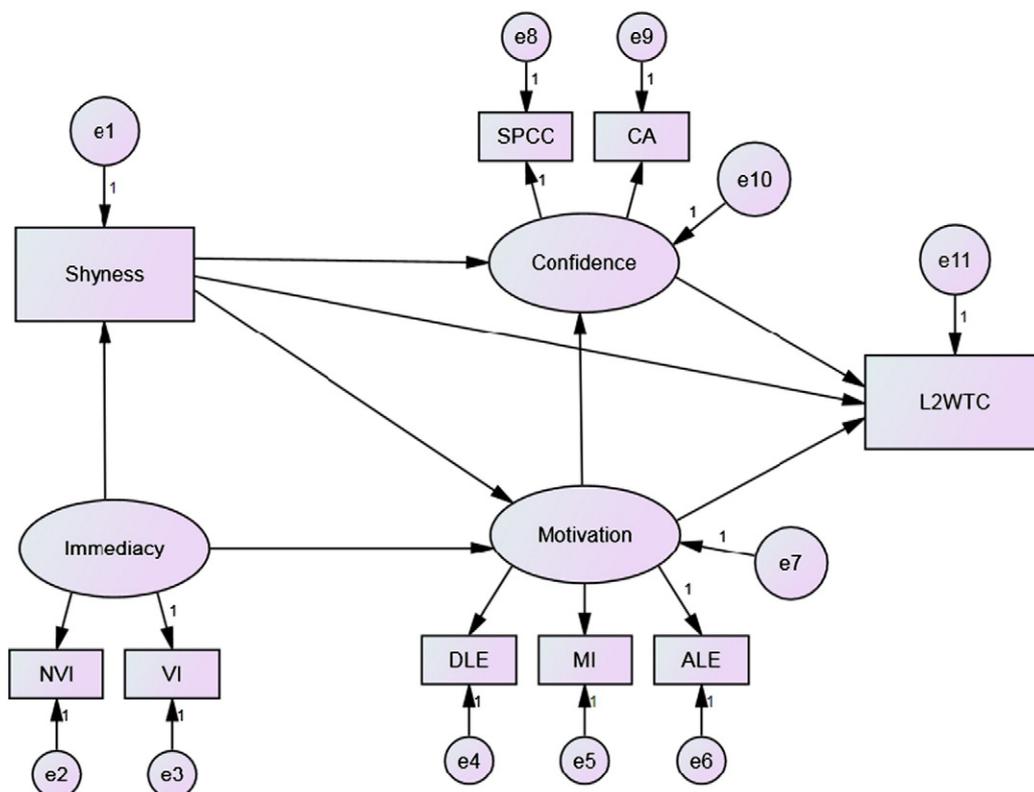


Fig. 1. The hypothesized model. Note: L2WTC = willingness to communicate in L2; SPCC = self-perceived communicative competence; CA = communication anxiety; ALE: attitude toward learning English; MI: motivation intensity; DLE: desire to learn English; VI: verbal immediacy; NVI: non-verbal immediacy.

student relationships result in better socio-emotional adjustment and serve a protective role for shy students at school. Similarly, Van Ryzin, Gravely, and Roseth (2009) found that teacher support was related to more engagement in learning and subsequently better psychological adjustment for students. To follow this logic, the anticipated connection between teacher immediacy and shyness gains plausibility, though has not been explicitly tested yet.

The hypothesis concerning the impact of shyness on L2 communication self-confidence is supported by the general assumption that shy individuals' undue self-consciousness and obsession with negative opinions from others, will make them lose self-confidence and be afraid of attending social functions (e.g., Crozier, 2001; Woody et al., 1997).

The path from shyness to L2WTC is confirmed by a number of studies (Carducci, 1995; Leary et al., 1987; Pilkonis, 1977) suggesting that, compared with their non-shy peers, shy individuals tend to disclose themselves less, and remain reticent in social communications.

Finally, the negative path leading from shyness to motivation is based on Paulhus and Morgan (1997) who argued that, compared to their verbal fellows, shy students could be at a disadvantage in the learning environment. The researchers found that shy students are usually perceived as incapable and less intelligent by their peers. Besides, due to their reticence and remoteness in classroom, they are often left unnoticed in the class. As a result, they achieve less and have less motivation. This hypothesized path is also in line with previous research indicating that high public self consciousness, as one of the main components of shyness, appears to undermine motivation (Plant & Ryan, 1985).

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants, research setting and procedure

The participants in this study included 252 Iranian EFL learners from three state universities in Iran. Their ages ranged from 18 to 43 years ($M = 20.71$, $SD = 2.67$). One hundred fifty one students were female (60%), and 101 (40%) were male. They were majoring one of the sub-fields of English language education, namely Literature (20.23%), Translation (44.84%) and Teaching (34.92%). As freshmen (second semester, 60.71%) and sophomores (third semester, 39.28%) they were taking English Conversation (or Listening & Speaking) II and III courses, respectively. Each of these courses had 4 credits and was held twice a week in language laboratory. Along with Reading Comprehension (I–III), Grammar (I–II), Language Learning Skills, Advanced Writing, and Phonology, these courses are considered as basic courses for all English majors and are offered and taught almost completely in English within the first two years of the B.A. course. In addition to these courses, extracurricular programs such as film sessions and free discussions are held to help the EFL learners further improve their speaking skills mainly with respect to their capability to participate in argumentative conversations and to express complex ideas. Within this period, the learners are supposed to have an active participation and develop their language proficiency up to an advanced level so that they can continue through their specialty courses (e.g. English Language Teaching Methodology) offered particularly in the last two years of the B.A. course.

The reason for choosing the participants among college students was that prior to entering college they had studied English as a foreign language for 6 consecutive years in junior high school and high school. Also, in comparison with junior high school and high school students who mainly pursue English education to get higher scores in schools or in the university entrance examination, they might be more cognizant of their language learning motivation and attitudes toward communication in English. Also, as English-major learners, they could receive the maximum amount of available English instruction in Iran. Further, before participating in this study, they had just passed at least three basic courses of Conversation (I), Grammar (I) and Reading comprehension (I), and had adequate exposure to both written and spoken

English input in almost all of their classes. As such, it is safe to say that the participants' language proficiency especially their oral skills could range from intermediate to advance level. Moreover, since students from different parts of the country are admitted into each university in Iran, the participants of this study could be deemed an appropriate representation of the Iranian English-major learners.

Before the data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the related language departments and English professors/instructors. Ten classes were then administered the questionnaires within 2 weeks at the middle of the second semester in 2012–2013 academic year. Participants filled in the Persian version of the questionnaires in the classroom.

Prior to distributing the questionnaires, students were all informed of the objective of the study, and the time needed to fill in the questionnaires (about 25 min). They were assured that their participation would be voluntary, anonymous and at no cost to their academic assessment.

4.2. Instrumentation

The required data were collected through the following scales: Willingness to Communicate, Teacher Immediacy, Self-Perceived Communicative Competence, Communication Anxiety, Motivation and Shyness. The scales had been utilized previously in EFL context (e.g., Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Chu, 2008; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Yashima, 2002; Yu, 2009). Persian versions of the scales were developed by translation and back translation in the present study. Mean, standard deviation and reliability estimate (Cronbach's α) of each variable and scale are given in Table 1.

4.2.1. Willingness to Communicate

L2WTC in English was tested through twelve items from McCroskey (1992) in terms of contexts of communication (talking in meetings, public speaking, interpersonal conversations and group discussions) and types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends). The participants indicated the rate (0%–100%) that they would be inclined to communicate in each situation. Scores were the sum of the points that the respondents achieved based on the WTC scale.

4.2.2. Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC)

McCroskey and McCroskey's (1988) 12-item questionnaire was utilized to measure the learners' SPCC. Like the WTC scale, the items in the SPCC scale indicated 4 common communication settings and 3 types of receivers. Participants appraised their communication competence on a 0–100 scale.

4.2.3. Communication Anxiety (CA)

CA was measured by twelve items used by Yashima (2002). The respondents recorded the rate (0%–100%) that they would feel anxious engaging in a special activity. Similar to the WTC and SPCC scales, it includes 12 permutations (four situations, three receiver groups).

4.2.4. Teacher Immediacy

The Immediacy Behavior scale comprised statements describing teacher verbal (20 items, Gorham, 1988) and nonverbal (14 items, Richmond et al., 1987) immediacy behaviors. Respondents indicated whether or not their instructors exhibit these immediacy behaviors and their frequency of use on a measure varying from "one" (rarely) to "four" (very often).

4.2.5. Motivation

The 30-item Motivation scale with three components (desire to learn English, motivational intensity, and attitudes toward learning English) was originally developed by Gardner (1985) as part of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. Each component was measured by 10 multiple items.

Table 1
Correlation matrix (n = 252).

Variables	M/SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. L2WTC	53.66/30.10	.90	1.00								
2. Shyness	31.59/10.52	.86	-.28**	1.00							
3. NVTI	47.83/6.73	.84	.09	-.13*	1.00						
4. VTI	63.03/7.41	.87	.12*	-.21**	.31**	1.00					
5. CA	46.46/25.41	.90	-.28**	.33**	-.07	-.19**	1.00				
6. SPCC	56.89/28.79	.93	.57**	-.29**	.10	.10	-.46**	1.00			
7. MI	23.05/5.31	.88	.34**	-.24**	.21**	.24**	-.20**	.34**	1.00		
8. ALE	50.11/10.01	.87	.28**	-.25**	.19**	.14*	-.15*	.25**	.47**	1.00	
9. DTLE	22.35/4.70	.85	.39**	-.20**	.19**	.15*	-.20**	.36**	.52**	.71**	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2.6. Shyness

Shyness was measured through the 13-item Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness (RCBS) scale (Cheek, 1983). The scale taps into behavioral and affective aspects of shyness, and its items are answered on a scale varying from 1 (very uncharacteristic or untrue) to 5 (very characteristic or true).

4.3. Data analysis

To conduct descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and percentage), reliability analyses of the scales, and inter-correlations between the variables under investigation, SPSS 18 was utilized. Furthermore, structural equation model (SEM) analysis was run using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software (version 20). By referring to Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen (2008), among all of the model fit indices that AMOS provides, the following indices were taken into account in the present study: goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and χ^2/df . Also, all model estimation was conducted using Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation.

5. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's α and correlation matrix. The hypothesized model was tested and the following goodness-of-fit measures for the base model were obtained: goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .96, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .92, comparative fit index (CFI) = .96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06, and $\chi^2/df = 2.05$ showing an acceptable good fit for the base model except for χ^2/df whose value should be smaller than 2 (see Hooper et al., 2008; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, model modification was conducted to improve the model. To this end, the only non-significant path (shyness \rightarrow L2WTC) was deleted. The goodness-of-fit measures were reanalyzed for the revised model. As shown in Table 2, the final measurement model exhibited a very good fit: GFI = .96, AGFI = .92, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, and $\chi^2/df = 1.95$. The schematic representation of the final structural model with standardized path coefficients is given in Fig. 2.

In the structural equation model, significant paths were obtained leading from communication self-confidence and motivation to their hypothesized destination of L2WTC. Motivation had a positive effect on self-confidence. Teacher immediacy also exerted significant positive effect on motivation and negative effect on shyness. Finally, direct

negative paths were found from shyness to motivation and self-confidence. The paths were all found to be significant at least at the level of .05.

The significant path from L2 communication self-confidence to L2WTC is in line with previous research (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002) indicating positive effect of self-confidence on L2WTC. As a latent variable, L2 self confidence is affected by two constructs, namely lack of anxiety and perceived competence (Clément, 1986). Thus, learners with high self-perceived communication competence and low communication anxiety have more self-confidence in L2 communication.

The path showing the effect of motivation on L2WTC is in agreement with MacIntyre and Clément (1996, as cited in Peng, 2007), MacIntyre et al. (2003) and Peng (2007) indicating that motivation could significantly predict L2WTC. However, this finding was in contrast with those reported by Ghonsooly et al. (2012), Yashima (2002), and Yu (2009), who did not find a significant path leading from motivation to L2WTC. The finding of this study might be explained in the light of Peng (2007) argument that "in an EFL context, motivation is an important impetus in stimulating learners to persevere in both L2 learning and possibly L2 communication" (p. 48). Yashima (2002) also opined that high levels of motivation encourage perseverance among L2 learners, which can in turn boost their proficiency, confidence and eventually their willingness to communicate.

Interestingly, the role that motivation played in the model was two-dimensional as it also contributed to L2WTC indirectly through impacting the learners' L2 communication self-confidence. In other words, the role of Iranian EFL learners' motivation in increasing learners' L2WTC in English can be mediated by their communication self-confidence.

The significant path from motivation to L2 communication self-confidence is similar to the findings obtained in Turkey (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009) and Japan (Yashima, 2002) suggesting that the more EFL learners are motivated to learn English and enthusiastically and actively try to achieve the goals set by themselves and the curriculum, the more they trust their own ability to communicate in English.

The significant path from teacher immediacy to motivation is confirmed by previous research (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993) arguing that the extent of psychological and physical closeness instructors build with learners is vital and positively related to learners' motivation level. It seems that by exhibiting immediacy behaviors, teachers can make the classroom environment engaging, supportive and conducive to learning, thereby drawing the EFL learners into the learning process and boosting their motivation to learn English.

The results of the present study also showed that teacher immediacy had a significant negative effect on the learners' shyness. In other words, the more the teachers used immediacy behaviors, the less likely the learners were to feel shy in classroom. According to Frymier and Houser (2000), immediacy behaviors develop a trusting and caring relationship between teachers and students. This might serve to help

Table 2
Modification process of the structural model.

Model	df	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Base model	21	2.05	.96	.92	.96	.06
Revision: Deleting the insignificant path	22	1.95	.94	.91	.92	.06

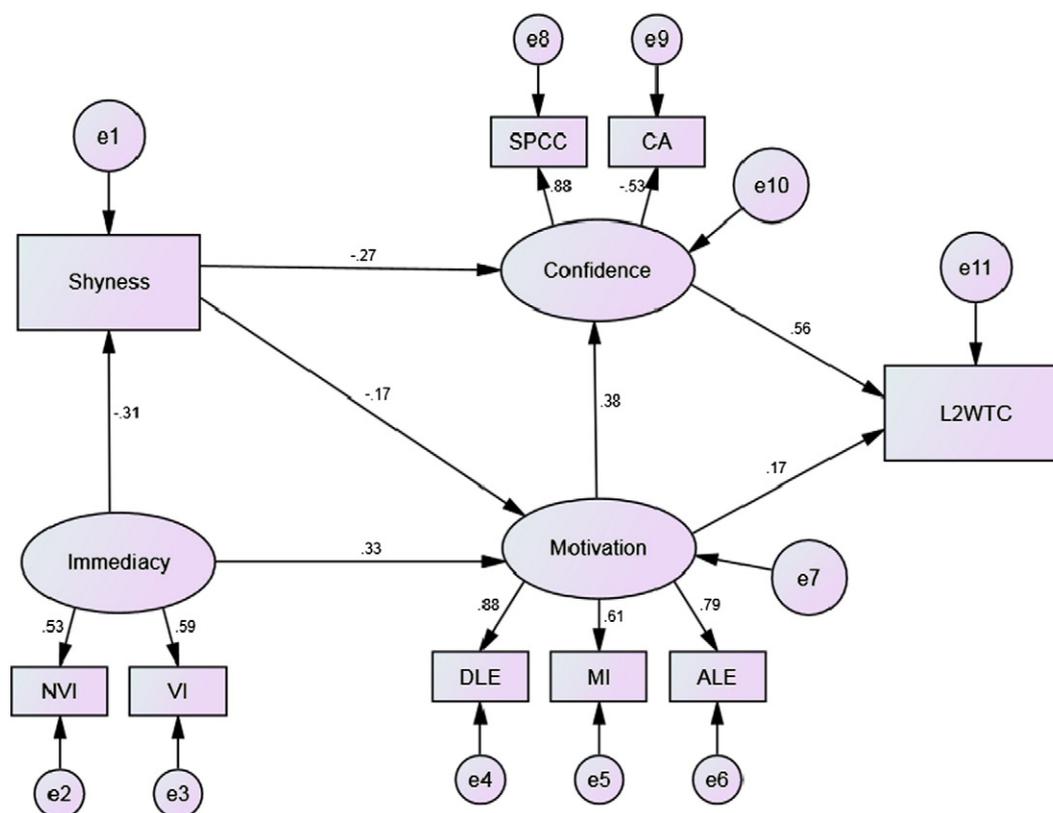


Fig. 2. Revised model.

establish a supportive and safe learning environment in which teacher can create an atmosphere of warmth, acceptance, and genuineness with learners (Rogers, 1983). In such a climate the teacher can provide learners especially highly shy ones with a secured base to help them explore the classroom environment, which could enhance opportunities for social interaction (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This might in turn mitigate shy EFL learners' social anxiety and make them feel encouraged, accepted and consequently less withdrawn in the classroom (Li, 2003).

The significant paths from shyness to L2 communication self-confidence and motivation are in accordance with previous empirical and theoretical studies. Liao (2006) argued that due to the frustration from the difficulty in expressing themselves in public and the excessive preoccupation with others' evaluation or impressions of them, shy people have a poor self-image and may disparage their own worth and think that what they have to present is not interesting and important to others. Consequently, they tend to have too much self-focused attention, less self-confidence and low self-esteem (Carducci, 1995; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Crozier, 2001). Similarly, shy EFL learners' failure in taking part efficiently and actively in class conversations and discussions, despite their importance to the development of L2 communication competence, causes them to worry about inadequate academic achievement and being uncompetitive with their non-shy peers, thereby developing criticism of the self and poor academic self-image, and losing self-confidence. The same can go for the negative effect of shyness on the EFL learners' motivation. Due to high self consciousness and concern over being negatively judged for strange and nonnative pronunciation and accent, and potential speech mistakes or errors, shy EFL learners may opt to eschew class discussions and conversations. Then missed opportunities for learning particularly practicing speaking could ensue, thereby causing frustration and low motivation for learning English.

Finally, given the significant effects of shyness on communication self-confidence and motivation and the positive paths leading from

these two constructs to L2WTC, it appears that shyness exerts significant indirect effects on learners' L2WTC. In other words, shy learners are less motivated and have low communication self-confidence. This, in turn, makes them less willing to communicate in English.

6. Conclusion and implications

This study tested a model of L2 communication by exploring the causal paths among L2WTC and a series of individual and situational variables among Iranian EFL learners. The model showed good fit to the dataset regarding the evaluated variables, and supported the MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) conceptual model. Despite some limitations, this study extends the literature on L2 communication considering that, to the author's best knowledge, it was for the first time that three paths, namely, *shyness* → *communication self-confidence*, *teacher immediacy* → *shyness*, and *shyness* → *L2WTC* were examined.

The findings revealed that L2WTC, as a complex concept, can be affected by other variables in different ways. Among the variables tested, L2 communication self-confidence and motivation proved to be significant predictors of L2WTC. However, teacher immediacy and shyness indirectly affected L2WTC through the mediation of motivation and self-confidence. Another line of findings showed that shyness can exert significant direct impact on EFL learners' motivation and confidence. Further, the strength of teacher immediacy in predicting the levels of motivation and shyness among the EFL learners reached the statistical significance.

Following these findings, it can be said that for inspiring and improving EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English, teachers, learners and administrators alike should be cognizant of individual and situational factors affecting second/foreign language learning particularly speaking which is deemed the most demanding of the four language skills (Bailey & Savage, 1994).

They should try to enhance EFL learners' motivation and their communication self-confidence, and reduce amount of anxiety in them.

Perhaps one way to increase EFL learners especially shy ones' willingness to communicate in English is online conversation. Through this channel shy students might be more capable of controlling the way they present and express themselves i.e. they have sufficient time to organize their opinions and thought and communicate them (Baker & Oswald, 2010). Therefore, unlike face-to-face communication, in this interaction mode they can tackle and subdue the fear of making mistakes, consequently feeling more motivated and confident to communicate in English.

Further, given the impact of immediacy on shyness, motivation and L2WTC, EFL instructors are advised to exhibit immediacy behaviors. Through these behaviors they can establish a stress-free and supportive classroom climate where the students are encouraged to enter into communication with their teacher and peers. According to Swenddal (2011), immediacy is an invaluable asset for language teachers in lowering learners' affective filters. It has been also argued that immediacy can be modified and improved through training and practice (see Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). In-service and pre-service training courses would thus appear to be beneficial. As Ozmen (2010) noted, through these courses teachers can develop immediacy behaviors and enhance their consciousness and control over these behaviors.

As for the limitations of the present study, since the participants were a group of university EFL learners, any generalization of the findings to other contexts such as private language institutes and high schools should be done with caution. The data collection was done only through self-reported questionnaires. In order to obtain a more precise estimate of the variables, future research should utilize qualitative methods such as interview and observation, too. It is also recommended that this study be replicated in different EFL contexts among learners with diverse cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) stated that affective variables are expected a priori to vary not only across individuals but also among societies.

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