



The Influence of Ideal L2 self, Academic Self-Concept and Intercultural Communicative Competence on Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The intriguing nature of willingness to communicate in a second/foreign language (L2 WTC) inspires researchers to explore the concepts affecting the development of L2 WTC. In line with this tendency, the current study aimed to find out the predicting effect of three self-guided motivational units, namely, ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and levels of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) on L2 WTC. 173 university-level learners of English, who enrolled in an intensive English language program, participated in this quantitative study. The concern of participants related to their own ideal L2 self was measured by means of Ideal L2 Self Measurement while academic self-concept and ICC levels were elicited through specifically developed questionnaires. L2 WTC was measured by a WTC scale. Through the statistical analysis of data, it was discovered that each of the self-guided motivational units had positive correlations with each other. Moreover, multiple regression analysis indicated that ideal L2 self was the best predictor of L2 WTC while academic self-concept also had a significant predicting effect on L2 WTC. The study concludes that the knowledge of learners' ideal L2 self and academic self-concept would enable teachers to have a clearer idea of learners' L2 WTC and to take necessary precautions in order to increase learners' willingness.

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1. Introduction

Individual differences, having a personal-trait feature, could be related to predispositions of second or foreign language (L2) learning differences among learners of a specific language who share similar characteristics in terms of their demographic background such as gender, nationality, and age. Of all the individual differences related to L2 learning, motivation is regarded as one of the most important elements with a role in achievement (Lanvers, 2016). It is not surprising, therefore, to observe the attention that many researchers have paid to revealing some individual motivational constructs, referred to as “motivational self-guides” (Dörnyei, 2014, p.

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525). The concept of self (Dörnyei, 2005), intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), academic self-concept (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), attributions (Weiner, 1992), willingness to communicate (McCroskey and Baer, 1985) and other related terms are recently developed constructs to indicate the role of individual differences related to motivation as experienced during the process of L2 learning. A consensus has been reached for the effects of these motivational self-guided units on L2 achievement.

Apart from their confirmed contribution to L2 learning, these motivational self-guided units have an intricate relationship referring to their influence on existence of one another. Jonkmann et. al (2012), for instance, reflected that personality traits are moderators of students' academic self-concept. Additionally, in two individual studies, Öz (2015; 2016) established the predicting effects of ideal L2 self on L2 learners' ICC levels and on their L2 WTC. In a recent study that Gu and Cheung (2016) conducted, ideal L2 self was found to have a constructive effect on students' acculturation process, which was related to their ICC levels. Despite the contribution of such studies in illustrating the intricate relationship between these units, this research area is still in its infancy. There is a clear gap in the research studies investigating this elaborate relationship according to the review of relevant literature.

The present study, accordingly, explores how these self-guided motivational units interrelate with each other in an attempt to fill this gap. The study primarily seeks to find out whether an individual's motivational units, namely the ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and ICC, predict one's L2 WTC. It initially focuses on reviewing the relevant literature related to ideal L2 self, academic self-concept, ICC and WTC along with related studies concerning L2 WTC by introducing the research questions of the study. Then, the methodology applied in order to examine the relationships among the selected motivational units is described in a separate section. The findings of the study related to the relationship of ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and ICC and the predicting effect of these three motivational units on L2 WTC are presented and a discussion of the findings are addressed in successive sections. Finally, conclusions are presented and suggestions for further studies concerning the same issues are raised with some implications for foreign language teaching.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ideal L2 self

The "self" as a concept having an intricate relationship with individual differences has emerged as one of the crucial aspects of motivation towards L2 learning in recent years. Dweck (2000, p. xi) describes the "self" as "meaning systems" that people use to "organize their world and give meaning to their experiences". Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 954) classified self into three main types: "(1) ideal selves that we would very much like to become, (2) selves that we could become, and (3) selves we are afraid of becoming". In their paper, they emphasized the importance of future rather than

current self states in relation to individual's goals and wishes which have a potential to come true.

In 1987, Higgins also made a similar classification including three basic domains of self. The feature that made this classification original was its involvement of current self as related to an individual's experiences, not to the goals and wishes. These three domains of self were identified as "(a) *the actual self*-representing the beliefs that you or others hold about who you really are at a given point in time; (b) *the ideal self*-representing the beliefs about who you would like to be and how you would wish others to view you; (c) *the ought to self*-representing the beliefs that you attribute to others about who you should be" (Higgins, 1987, p. 320).

In an attempt to adjust these domains into L2 learning, Dörnyei (2005) introduced the L2 Motivational Self System as a framework. It proposes a non-traditional instrumental framework which works for the demonstration of L2 motivational developments. Based on Higgins' three domains and the "future" emphasis of Markus and Nurius (1986), Dörnyei (2005, p. 105) developed three components for this motivational framework and among these three components, special attention was paid in the present study to the initial one:

1. Ideal L2 Self. The Ideal L2 Self is based on the individual's aspirations and goals as a language learner,
2. Ought-to L2 Self. The Ought-to-L2 Self is a product of the individual's perceived obligations and responsibilities as a language learner,
3. L2 Learning Experience. This dimension is derived from the learning environment and learners' perceptions of their previous language learning successes and failures. (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 105).

The ideal L2 self is referred as the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). It represents learner's L2 specific hopes, aspirations, desires (Csizer and Dörnyei, 2005). It might be seen as the most effective motivator of the L2 learning process since it is associated with a person's mastery of L2 (Ryan and Dörnyei, 2013). Dörnyei (2014, p. 33) even claims that "a major source of any absence of L2 motivation is likely to be the lack of a developed ideal self".

Moreover, the facilitating effect of motivation on the L2 learning process is supported by ample evidence (e.g. Csizer and Lukacs, 2010; Dörnyei, 2014; Huang, Hsu and Chen, 2015; Papi, 2010). Thus, playing a major role in the development of L2 motivation leads ideal L2 self to become a stakeholder directing the rate and success of L2 learning. Hence, two recent research studies, conducted by Huang et. al (2015) and Lanvers (2016), point out the crucial impact of ideal L2 self on learners' L2 success.

In light of the literature, this study aimed to explore the influence of ideal L2 self on L2 communication rather than L2 success. This represented the main reason for using ideal L2 self as an independent variable in this study and this concern was addressed through analysis related to predicting the effect of ideal L2 self on L2 WTC.

2.2. Academic self-concept

Self-concept has been measured in a general perspective as the “composite view of oneself” (Bong and Skavallvik, 2003, p. 3). Following Bandura (1986), Brown (2004, p. 123) defines self-concept as a “process of thinking about one’s own experiences and behaviors, then contemplating one’s thought processes, and the need for self-acceptance and ego protection”. Self-concept is seen as a formation shaped through experiences with the environment and is altered mainly by environmental reinforcements (Shavelson et al., 1976). According to Shavelson et al. (1976, p. 411) self-concept has seven crucial characteristics: it is “a/an organized, multidimensional, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative, and differential unit” of motivation. Moreover, it consists of some subdomains such as general, academic, social, emotional, or physical, each of which symbolizes its multi-partial nature (Bong and Skavallvik, 2003; Erten and Burden, 2014).

Academic self-concept as a subdomain of self-concept refers to individuals’ knowledge and perceptions about themselves in achievement situations in related studies (e.g. Bong and Skavallvik, 2003; Bryne, 1984; Huang, 2011; Marsh and Craven, 2006; Marsh, Hau and Kong; 2002). Erten and Burden (2014) highlighted that academic self-concept is highly related to experiences of people with the learning environment during the process of conceptualizing their skills based on academic abilities and achievement. The dominant view of academic self-concept is that it is “a collection of a host of related perceptions such as competence, self-worth, interest, enjoyment, and intentions” (Bong and Skavallvik, 2003, p. 29).

One’s positive perceptions and beliefs about the self are claimed to be one of the major facilitators of academic achievement (Marsh et al., 2002). This concern forms the theoretical assumptions behind almost all studies conducted on academic self-concept (Huang, 2011). Accordingly, it could be claimed that the studies focusing on academic self-concept have been searching for its effect on achievement. Echoing Marsh et al. (2002), Huang (2011) presented the result of this search through a meta-analysis of these studies and showed that positive and higher academic self-concept in learners would lead to achievement.

There have been a few studies conducted in the field of language learning concerning academic self-concept so far. Following the same path as the other academic self-concept studies in other fields, the main concern of these few studies is to find out the relationship between academic self-concept and L2 achievement. De Fraine, Van Damme and Onghena (2007) present the findings of their study investigating the development of academic self-concept and language development in a Flemish-spoken context where Flemish is the first language. They discovered a positive relationship between participants’ academic self-concept and their achievement. Erten and Burden (2014) recently investigated the relationship between academic self-concept and L2 achievement in a Turkish context where English is a foreign language. The results of the study suggested that there is a positive and high

correlation between academic self-concept and test performances referred as the indicators of L2 achievement.

It is extremely interesting that there has been no study concerning the effect of academic self-concept on communication in an L2. Since almost all studies about the relationship between academic self-concept and L2 appears to be based on academic achievement (Huang, 2011), they generally refer to L2 as a school subject rather than a new language as a tool of communication. This study, in that vein, aims to be in a different position while regarding the role of L2 along with the relationship between academic self-concept and L2 learning. As it sought to find out the effect of learners' academic self-concept and their WTC in English, it might appear to be one of the first explorations in the L2 learning field.

2.3. Intercultural communicative competence

The concept of culture has been investigated through numerous studies in the domain of learning and the area of teaching languages research (e.g. Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Nieto, 2010). Considering the intricate relationship between culture and language, the existence of such studies is quite reasonable. These two concepts are so tightly linked to each other in nature that it is not possible to consider one of them without referring to the other one. Based on the same assumption, Brown (2007) views culture as the glue which binds languages together. As a consequence, foreign language learning is better envisaged as a process under the glaring influence of culture.

In line with this inextricable link between culture and language, it is necessary to expand the concept of communicative competence (CC) that Hymes (1967) introduced to the researchers of language learning and teaching with the inclusion of culture. As Liddicoat (2002, p. 5) mentions, “culture shapes what we say, when we say it, and how we say it from the simplest language we use to the most complex” and for this reason, it has a great impact on the language we use, which impacts the communication process. However, Hymes' CC in a sense neglects the tight connection between language and culture by focusing mainly on communication (Liddicoat, 2002). Thus, a new concept has been introduced to the field of foreign language learning and teaching: intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

It would not be wrong to claim that ICC took the place of communication competence, especially, in the field of teaching English as a foreign language since its introduction. According to Canagarajah (1999), ICC makes CC, having a competence based attitude related to native speaker's norms, invalid due to the international language status of English, which leads to the questions about whom to be named as native speaker. From the same perspective, highlighting the international feature of English, Alptekin (2002) and Linder (2010) criticize the existence of communicative competence as a concern in environments where English is a foreign language and suggest the appearance and development of ICC.

ICC, accordingly, refers to “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other’s cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment” (Chen and Starosta, 1999, p. 28). Byram’s (1997) intercultural competence model illustrating intercultural features of languages has been quite influential (Linder, 2010). Including five interrelated phases, this model suggests the components of intercultural competence, which are, namely, a) knowledge, b) intercultural attitudes, c) interpreting and relating, d) discovery and interaction, and e) political education as critical cultural awareness. Based on this model, Dearsold (2006, p. 13) develops the definition of intercultural communicative competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes”.

In light of these developments, a research study concerning communication in an EFL setting must include ICC since it would be irrelevant if it did not consider cultural effects on communication. Instead of focusing on communicative competence, ICC should be conceptualized when the aim is to examine communication in such studies (Mirzaei and Forouzandeh, 2013). As the main focus of the current study is to uncover the variables affecting communication in an L2, it is important to include participants’ attitudes towards their ICC levels. According to my best knowledge, a review of literature shows that there has been no research study concerning the variables affecting communication in L2 and touching upon the relationship between ICC and L2 WTC.

2.4. Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has been described as a construct as being a “personality-based, trait-like predisposition which is relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers” (McCroskey and Richmond, 1990, p. 73). McCroskey and his associates (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey and Baer, 1985; McCroskey and Richmond, 1987; 1990) focus on the various speaking behaviors of different people as some being very talkative in almost all contexts and situations while some talk very little, such as only responding to questions in the same contexts and situations. This variability of speaking behaviors paves the way to introduce a new concept referred as WTC. It seeks to explain the probability of a person to talk when free to do so (McCroskey and Baer, 1985) and the reason why one person chooses to talk and while another chooses not to talk under the same constraints (McCroskey and Richmond, 1990).

An individual’s WTC could be shaped by many different variables (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels, 1998). According to McCroskey and Baer (1985), one of these variables could be related to situational constraints however, stable in nature. The mood of a person on the day that the situation is encountered, the type of communication that person has recently had with others; the characteristics of the person that appears to be the receiver, the physical appearance of this receiver; gains and losses caused by the communication could be reflected as aligned elements sourced by situations with a person’s WTC’s level (McCroskey and Baer, 1985).

Though it is certain that the situation would influence a person's level of WTC, the construct developed by McCroskey and his associates (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey and Baer, 1985; McCroskey and Richmond, 1987; 1990) has been conceived as a personality trait rather than as a situation-based variable. Because, according to them, individuals tend to give regular WTC reactions to similar situations each time since the personal regularity of speaking behaviors in each situation observed in communication construct the main ingredients of WTC (McCroskey and Baer, 1985). Therefore, as for the major variable of WTC, personal orientations, explaining "why one person will communicate and another will not under identical or virtually identical situational-constraints" is offered by McCroskey and Baer (1985, p. 3). Apart from these two variables, MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 546) collocated "the degree of acquaintance between communicators, the number of people present, the formality of the situation, the degree of evaluation of the speaker, the topic of discussion" with other variables having potential effect on an individual's WTC level.

Many second or foreign language studies have attempted to treat WTC construct in a person's first language (L1) the same as in that person's second or foreign language (L2) since the stable and personality-trait facets of WTC would facilitate the simple and direct transfer of WTC from L1 to L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). However, the complex nature of language learning would restrain such a smooth transfer (MacIntyre and Charos, 1996) and L2 WTC could not be easily regarded as a "manifestation of L1 WTC" (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimuzi, 2004, p. 124) since L2 communication is equipped with "a number of intergroup issues, social and political implications" that are usually not as noticeable in L1 use (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). That's why WTC referred to in L2 studies needs to be identified as L2 WTC and emphasized to have different facilities than L1 WTC.

Moreover, WTC suggests an integration of "psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative approaches to L2 research" which have appeared independently in research agenda (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 563). WTC, being such a generous construct, should be conceptualized as a concept somehow related to L2 for the sake of L2 research. In this respect, MacIntyre (1994) developed a transition model that posits that WTC is based on a "combination of greater perceived communicative competence and a lower level of communication anxiety" (Yashima et al., 2004, p. 123). This model aimed to illustrate the variables which have potential influences on L2 WTC, of which the main focus is on why some learners seek, while others avoid the use of L2 in communication (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conrod, 2001). This pyramid shaped model indicates the range of all factors and comparable influences of the factors as more or less on L2 WTC (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan, 2002). It categorized the influences into two groups as enduring influences and situational influences in the model. The first one, referred to as personal-trait influence by McCroskey and Baer (1985) reflects the stable features of an individual such as personality which could be seen same in almost all situations while the latter is observed as being more brief and relied on a particular context (MacIntyre et al, 1998).

WTC in L2 shows that L2 communication cannot always be represented by the competence level of learners (MacIntyre et al., 2001). Teachers may observe some learners who have less competence in skills but willingness to participate in the lesson while some others may be more competent but also more hesitant to participate (Sert, 2015). Thus, L2 WTC should gain more attention in L2 studies as an affective factor influencing the L2 learning process. Moreover, the variables underlying WTC need to be addressed deeply in the field of L2 education in order to reveal WTC's intricate position in the language learning process along with the inner-positions of other variables which are referred to more as attitudes, beliefs and attributions towards language learning in most of the studies focusing on the underlying variables of WTC (Erten and Burden, 2014; de Saint Leger and Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, 1994; Yashima et al., 2004). As aforementioned, the nature of WTC as integrating various variables together in itself triggers the appearance of the current study since it is crucial to investigate which factors affect L2 WTC in a context in which English is a foreign language.

2.5. Related research on the variable affecting L2 WTC

There have been a few studies conducted to investigate the relationship among the aforementioned concepts being related to motivation, to the best of my knowledge. Furthermore, even fewer efforts have been made to inquire into the connections of these interrelated concepts in L2-specific studies and yet, the same situation could be observed for the studies focusing on the variables influencing L2 WTC. In a first attempt to reflect a qualified and decent understanding of L2 WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) highlighted that WTC has a stable interaction with self-confidence. Following the path they paved, some researchers in L2 studies have been focusing on the concepts that might interact with L2 WTC and have attempted to clarify a cause-and-effect relationship between L2 WTC and various individual differences, mostly related to personality (Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). These empirical studies concentrated mostly on anxiety (MacIntyre, 1994), personality traits (MacIntyre and Charos, 1996), learners' age and gender (MacIntyre et al., 2002), and ethnolinguistic vitality and norm (Clément et al., 2003), and self-confidence along with anxiety (de Saint Leger and Storch, 2009).

When the literature is reviewed to find studies relating to the integration of motivation and L2 WTC, it is observed that a considerable number of these studies have attempted to reflect the way L2 WTC relates to motivation (e.g. Hashimoto, 2002 and Peng, 2007). The interaction between aforementioned motivational units and L2 WTC has hardly been addressed by researchers so far. More recently, Öz (2016) conducted a research study concerning the interaction between ideal L2 self and L2 WTC. Barraclough, Christophel and McCroskey (1988) and Roach and Olaniran (2001) studied the interaction between L2 WTC and cultural awareness.

In his study with university-level students who were majoring at an English-medium program, Öz (2016) suggested that there is a positive relationship between ideal L2 self and L2 WTC. Through multiple regression analysis, he concluded that

the ideal L2 self as an individual difference variable contributes to the improvement of L2 communication. Barraclough et al. (1988) suggested the same predicting effect on L2 WTC for cultural awareness. The fact that recognition of cultural differences interacts positively with a learner's WTC was highlighted in their study concerning communication orientations conducted in different cultures. In the same vein, Roach and Olaniran (2001) conducted a research study about the effect of intercultural differences on communication. Selecting the intercultural teacher assistants as the target group of the study, they claimed that intercultural awareness, an indicator of higher intercultural communicative competence, has an influence on assistant teachers' WTC in a second language.

In light of the literature, it could be postulated that L2 WTC could be affected by variable motivational units which appear to be individually shaped. Moreover, L2 WTC itself is related to language learning motivation (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng, 2007). The intricate and interrelated nature of language learning could be observed in L2 WTC construct. The current study aimed to investigate this harmonized nature of the L2 learning process, and more specifically, the multilateral nature of L2 WTC.

To the best of my knowledge, it is evident that there has been no study focusing on the interrelationship among the four self-guided motivational units, namely, ideal L2 self, academic self-concept, ICC and L2 WTC. As it is assumed that the ideal L2 self is highly correlated with one's academic self-concept since having a positive academic self-concept in terms of English learning process, especially where the learning takes place in the targeted language has no place in social and daily life of the learners and is learnt mostly through formal instructions, would affect ideal self of an individual related to L2. Moreover, ideal L2 self as a perception of a learner concerning his or her own ideas, beliefs and attitudes related to the use of the language with others would have an influence on the self-assessment of his/her concern about ICC. The relationship between one's ideal L2 self and intercultural communicative competence has been investigated by Oz (2015), of which contribution to the field of language teaching studies in this respect needs to be granted. However, it lacks the sense of covering a broader perspective and questioning the possible other relationships when it is aimed to reveal the "motivational self-guides" (Oz, 2015, p. 49) for L2 learning. By touching on this shortcoming, the current study aims to explore variables affecting L2 WTC by relating the effects of more than one motivational self-image upon language learning in order to fill the present gap by building its own "niche" (Swales, 2004, p. 116).

Accordingly, the current study seeks to supply answers to the following two research questions by applying four questionnaires and analyzing their results:

1. What is the nature of relationship among ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and intercultural communicative competence?
2. Is willingness-to-communicate predicted by each concept, namely, ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and intercultural communicative competence?

3. Method

3.1. Setting and participants

The study was conducted at a state university in Turkey in the fall semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. There were 173 students, who had been taking intensive English courses for approximately three months at the time of data collection. The participants varied in terms of their gender (female, male and other), their competence levels of English (A1, A2 and B1), and departments. However, each program that they were enrolled in have either full English medium instruction (100% of the education is English medium based) or partial English medium instruction (30% of the education at the programs is English medium based). Thus, it was assumed that learning English and even more, using English was one of prerequisites of being successful and having a undergraduate degree in their programs, in which they would have education based on their prospective professions for at least four years.

3.2. Instruments

The study employed a measurement set consisting of 5 different parts, namely, demographic information, Ideal L2 Self Measurement, Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance (SELP), Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCCQ) and Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTCS). Considering participants' variable levels of English, each of the originally English instruments was translated into Turkish by two different Turkish experts of English language teaching. After combining their translations and analyzing them, I prepared a draft version of translated instruments. These draft translations were sent to an experienced field-worker in the translation and interpretation field in order to get translations from Turkish to English or vice versa. The translation expert translated the Turkish versions of the instruments back into English in order to minimize any meaning based differentiations based on the translation process in each instrument. Based on the comparisons between the original items and the translated items, the final version of the instruments was composed. A field-expert of English Language Teaching checked the comprehensibility of each item in each instrument and meticulously studied each item in order to shape the last version of the instrument set translated into Turkish.

The first part of the set of measurements aimed to gather demographic information of participants. This part consisted of gap-filling questions asking participants to identify their gender, their level of English, their departments and their ages. Information about the other parts of this instrument set will be provided in the following subsections.

3.2.1. Ideal L2 self measure

Ideal L2 Self Measure is a sub-component of L2 Self Measure developed by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010). In order to “avoid the undesirable outcomes” (Öz, 2015, p. 46) in

the data arising from the use of unrelated sub-sections of the main instrument, only the sub-section designed to identify ideal L2 self was applied in this study. The instrument has ten 6-point items ranging 1 to 6-strongly disagree to strongly agree such as *I can imagine myself writing English e-mails fluently* and *I can imagine myself having a discussion in English abroad*. This 10-item ideal L2 self-measure had .91 Cronbach's Alpha value indicating its high internal consistency in a piloting study conducted with the participation of 26 EFL students.

3.2.2. Self-Efficacy for learning and performance questionnaire for academic self-concept

The current study sought to find out the academic self-concepts of Turkish young adult learners of English related to English. The scales such as MALS developed by Burden (2012) or Liu and Wang's Academic Self-Concept Scale (2005) are used widely when the concern is to identify participants' academic self-concept. In order to identify participants' academic self-concepts related to English, using mostly performed scales would be inappropriate on this target group when their ages, being 18-20 were considered since the aforementioned scales were designed to be used for younger learners. Thus, the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance (SELP) subscale from Motivated Strategies for Learning Strategies (MLSQ), developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McKeachie (1991) was employed in order to identify participants' academic self-concepts. MSLQ, as a comprehensive scale, had 81 items designed to measure college students' motivational concerns, one of which was self-efficacy referred to as self-concept in the current study due to the nature of all of the items being highly related to academic self-concepts such as *I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class* and *I expect to do well in this class*. The mentioned subscale, namely SELP had eight 7-point items in the original version, in the range of *1. not at all true of me* to *7. very true of me*. However, when the number of participants and the intensity of the items were concerned in the current study, a negatively formed version of item 9 as an individual item (item 5) was added in order to detect and omit the participants who paid less attention to the instruments. The original version of the subscale was reported to have high Cronbach's Alpha value as being .93, which indicated a high internal consistency (Pintrich, 1991). The alpha value in the current study was found to be .90 in the pilot study, which was quite close to the original study's value.

3.2.3. Intercultural communicative competence question

For exploring the intercultural communicative competence of participants, the Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCC) developed by Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013) was used. When the items in the questionnaire (such as *I believe that intercultural experiences can add some information to my previous knowledge, I can take part in any conversation dealing with daily life issues*) were examined, it was decided that they could be appropriate for Turkish EFL learners, as well. This 22-item-based questionnaire included 12 items for evaluating the participants' knowledge about cultural self-awareness, culture related information,

linguistic knowledge and socio-linguistic awareness, 5 items in order to assess participants' ability to communicate across cultures and also 5 items for assessing participants' respect for other cultures (Mirzaei and Forouzandeh, 2013). Participants of the study rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale type ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. There were seven items, namely item 4, item 5, item 8, item 9, item 13, item 16, and item 20, which were reversed. The Cronbach's Alpha value in Mirzaei and Forouzandeh's study (2013) was .71 and it appeared to have reliable internal consistency. The present study also had higher and reliable internal consistency value with .85 as an Alpha value.

3.2.4. Willingness to communicate scale

The willingness to communicate scale published in McCroskey (1992) was employed in the current study. The scale was designed to explore participants' "predispositions toward providing or avoiding initiation of communication" through 20 items (McCroskey, 1992, p. 17). Participants were required to state the percentages of their probable-estimation to communicate ranging from 0-100 for given 20 situations. Among these 20 situations, each of which was represented by each item in the scale, there were 8 filler items (e.g. *talk with a service station attendant, talk with a salesperson in a store, talk with a garbage collector*) and 12 items which were related to the concern (e.g. *present a talk to a group of strangers, talk with an acquaintance while standing in line and present a talk to a group of friends*). These 12 items consisted of three subparts based on the types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, friends), and of four subparts based on types of communication contexts (public, meeting, group, dyad). In the original study, the reliability coefficients were found to be .92 (McCroskey, 1992) and in the present study, Cronbach's Alpha value was .91.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The instruments were sent to a state university in Turkey, where two instructors collected the data on behalf of the researcher in November, 2015. It took approximately four weeks to collect the data from the 173 participants of the study and it ended in the middle of December, 2015.

Data collected through the instruments were analyzed with the software called Statistical Package for Social Science 21 (SPSS 21). The relationships among the three self-guided motivational units were analyzed by performing Pearson correlation coefficients. A standard multiple regression analysis was carried out to find an answer to the second research question. Effects of ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and ICC levels were tested in order to identify their predicting effect of participants' L2 WTC.

In order to determine if the data set used in the current study was appropriate to employ standard multiple regression, a range of preliminary statistical analyses were held. The sample size was found to be adequate for the standard regression analysis. It is suggested that for a regression analysis there should be a minimum of 8

participants per independent variable in addition to a minimum of initially required 50 participants (Pallant, 2007). It was understood for the current study that, with 3 independent variables, a minimum of 74 participants would be sufficient to meet the requirement. Therefore, the present study had a satisfactory number of participants (n=173) in order to employ such an analysis. In order to analyze a data set by using regression analysis, there should also be a normal distribution in the variables without any intense and sharp outliers. As the variables in the current study did not violate the normal distribution assumption and it had very few outliers (only 2 according to analyses depended on Mah. value), the data set appeared not to violate the free of outliers assumption. Apart from these two assumptions, in terms of having multicollineraty, the correlations among independent variables were checked and were found to be under the limits along with coefficients values. In sum, all of the assumptions stated by Pallant (2007, pp. 155-158) were confirmed by the data set used in the study and standard multiple regression was used to analyze the second research question. Findings related to these analyses will be discussed deeply in the following sections.

4. Findings and discussions

The current study primarily aimed to explore the predicting effects of motivational self-guided units on participants' levels of WTC in English. It additionally intended to present the interrelationship among the motivational self-guided units. This part served to include findings of the study in relation to its goals along with discussion of these findings in the light of available literature.

4.1. The nature of the relationship between ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and intercultural communicative competence

The study aimed to explore the interrelated relationships among the variables referred to as motivational self-guided units. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated after the preliminary statistical analyses (e.g. control of normality and linearity) and it was found that all of the variables were correlated positively with each other at a statistically significant level. The strongest correlation was observed between *ideal L2 self* and *academic self-concept* ($r_{(173)} = .675, p < .01$) with a large size of correlation (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relationship between the self-guided background concepts

	1	2	3
1. Ideal L2 self	1		
2. Academic self-concept	.675**	1	
3 Intercultural communicative competence	.449**	.564**	1

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

Being in the same vein of Marsh's et al. claim (2002), the strongest correlation between ideal L2 self and academic self-concept in this study suggests that the more

positive learners' perceptions of their academic self-concept become, the more positive attitudes they have regarding their idealism for language learning. As an indicator of how learners see themselves as language learners today, academic self-concept is known to have a role in shaping their accessible and realistic future goals and desires (Dörnyei, 2009), which highlights the intricate relationship between ideal L2 self and academic self-concept. Demir-Ayaz (2016, p. 64) emphasizes the similarity between actual L2 self and academic self-concept "in the sense that both of them are about perceptions of individuals regarding their abilities, competences and skills" and suggests that the current states of learners in terms of language learning, referred to as actual L2 self, affects the creation of ideal L2 self in each individual. This result is also compatible with the strong positive correlation between ideal L2 self and academic self-concept in the present study.

It was also found, as indicated in Table 1, that there was large a correlation coefficient between *academic self-concept* and *ICC* ($r_{(173)} = .564, p < .01$). This correlation ascertains that perceptions of language learners about their own current state in the process of language learning would have a positive influence on development of their competence regarding the target culture. Thus, positive academic self-concept would lead to higher level of ICC. In another perspective supporting the positive relationship between academic self-concept and ICC, Shavelson et al. (1976) claims that academic self-concept is highly related to the support coming from the surrounding environment since learners perceive their own competences and skills in comparison with others. In the same vein, cultural competence, thereby ICC is highly influenced by the environmental interferences since it is based on comparisons among surrounding cultures, which lead to mutual relationship. The process of forming learners' current state in terms of language learning by comparing themselves with others leads to the appearance of competence both in language and culture.

As shown in Table 1, the correlation between *ideal L2 self* and *ICC* indicated a strong and medium size of relationship between these two concepts ($r_{(173)} = .449, p < .01$). Dörnyei (2009) refers to ideal L2 self as the first indicator of L2 motivation and regards it as the best motivator since it illustrates the future goals and desires to be achieved by learners. This suggests that such a motivator will trigger willingness to learn the target culture in the process of language learning and this motivation would affect the acquisition of ICC. Being compatible with Dörnyei (2009), Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) and Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013), it is recognized that learners with higher ideal L2 self and thereby, with higher level of ICC are motivated to learn an L2 and eager to participate in the target culture.

4.2. Predictors of willingness to communicate

The study addressed how well the motivational self-concepts for language learning predict participants' level of L2 WTC as well. A standard multiple regression was performed on the data by setting the mean value of willingness to communicate as the

dependent variable and the motivational self-guided units, namely, ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and ICC as the independent variables after being certain that the data were not violating the required assumptions for conducting standard multiple regression. Before focusing on the results of the standard multiple regression analysis, the relationship among these variables shown in Table 2 was analyzed. Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that all three of the independent variables correlated positively at the statistically significant level. Among these three related variables to L2 WTC, the strongest correlation with L2 WTC belonged to ideal L2 self ($r_{(173)} = .482, p < .01$), which also indicated a medium size correlation. Academic self-concept ($r_{(173)} = .447, p < .01$) and ICC ($r_{(173)} = .369, p < .01$) had positive and medium size correlations as well. A summary of these correlations was provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Relationships between willingness to communicate and motivational self-concepts

	1	2	3	4
1. Willingness to communicate in L2	1			
2. Ideal L2 self	.482**	1		
3 Academic self-concept	.447**	.564**	1	
4 Intercultural communicative competence	.369**	.447**	.369**	1

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

After controlling for the interaction between each motivational unit and L2 WTC through the analyses of the correlation table, standard multiple regressions were used to assess the effects of each concept on the prediction of participants' L2 WTC. It was found that the model which included the control of three different motivational self-concepts on L2 WTC explained 27.3% of the variance in achievement, $F(1,172) = 21.38, p = .00$. Of these three motivational self-concepts, only ideal L2 self-made a significant unique contribution to the prediction of L2 WTC ($\beta = .314, t = 3.514, p = .00$).

Table 3. Predictors of L2 WTC

Predictors	Standardized coefficients β	t	p	Correlations		
				Zero order	Partial	Part
Ideal L2 self	.314	3.514	.00	.482	.261	.230
Academic self-concept	.157	1.618	.10	.447	.124	.106
Intercultural communicative competence	.139	1.738	.08	.369	.132	.114
Overall Model	F	df	p	R^2	$Adj. R^2$	
	21.138	172	.00	.273	.260	

P = .01

Ideal L2 self was shown to be the only predictor of L2 WTC among the three self-guided motivational units in the current study. This result is consistent with a similar study in which Öz (2016) explored the predicting effect of ideal L2 self on WTC. Such a finding implies that learners' awareness related to his ideal L2 self would elicit willingness to communicate in that language. This could be related to the clear

influence of ideal L2 self on learner motivation (Csizer and Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 2009). As ideal L2 self helps learners to shape their dreams about language learning and set their goals to reach during the process, they motivate themselves to move from their current state to beyond in terms of language learning. Their motivation towards language learning will directly affect their L2 WTC positively. Learners' positive perceptions about their future state as language users may give them confidence to become good communicators in the target language. Thus, it can promote motivation, and thereby willingness, to communicate in L2 (Öz, 2016).

5. Conclusions and implications

The present study firstly explored the interrelationships among the three motivational self-guided units referred to as ideal L2 self, academic self-concept and ICC and it mainly focused on the predictive one(s) of L2 WTC among the concerned units. Each unit had a positive interaction with one another and the correlations among them suggested that if a person had positive attitudes towards one of these motivational traits, it would be an indicator of having positive attitudes towards the other three motivational traits as well. Additionally, it revealed the predictive power of the ideal L2 self when L2 WTC was the concern. Hence, it would not be wrong to conclude that each motivational unit had interdependency on one another; however, they would have different effects on different linguistic domains.

It might be claimed that this study shed light on the necessity of integrating motivational units into the language learning process. Rather than focusing on only one of the motivational traits throughout the study and trying to uncover its effect on communication in an L2, it aimed to explore the effects of three different motivational units together. Thanks to this unique feature, it could be regarded as a compact source to be reviewed while searching for the effects of different motivational traits on L2 WTC.

It also suggested the most effective motivational units on L2 WTC and this could lead L2 teachers to integrate these units into the flow of their lessons. For instance, the fact that one's high level of ideal L2 self would enable a learner to gain willingness to communicate in that language and achieve a high level of L2 competence would play a role in teachers' decisions to learn each learner's ideal L2 self and integrate these findings into the techniques and activities they used in order to strengthen the communicative atmosphere in classrooms.

It needs to be highlighted that the results of the study should be considered in light of the study's limitations. The present study was conducted with university level learners of English who are at the age of 18-20. In order to have more a consistent generalization, further research might be conducted with the concern of expanding the age range. Moreover, the current study was only able to apply quantitative method, which is in contrast with the nature of language learning since "it is qualitative in nature" (Erten and Burden, 2014, p. 400). Further research studies need to be conducted based on qualitative research principles, or even better,

triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative research principles. As for another methodological suggestion for the further studies, it could be pointed out that the current study remained open to criticisms by applying standard multiple regressions for the analysis concerning the predicting effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. In order to avoid the limitations based on the method of analysis, further studies had better prefer to use path analysis model.

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