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İngilizce İletişim Kurma İstekliliği: Gaziantep Üniversitesi'ndeki Türk ve Suriyeli EFL Öğrencileri Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma*

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Özet

İletişim kurma istekliliği ikinci dil ediniminde son zamanlarda büyük önem kazanmıştır. Yabancı dil öğrenmede ve iletişimde oldukça etkin bir role sahip önemli duyuşsal faktörlerden birisi olarak bilinen iletişimde bulunma istekliliğiyle ilgili alanda çok sayıda çalışma yapılmış olsa da, Türkiye’de ilköğretim, ortaöğretim, veya yükseköğretim düzeyinde yeterli sayıda çalışmanın yapılamadığı ve bu alandaki boşluğun henüz tam olarak doldurulamadığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma bir devlet üniversitesi olan Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu’nda İngilizce dil eğitimi alan Türk ve Suriyeli öğrencilerin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce’yi sınıf içi ve sınıf dışında kullanma istekliliklerini araştırmayı amaçlayan kültürlerarası karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma olarak yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla, nicel veriler Hazırlık Okulu’ndaki 200 öğrenciden toplanmıştır. Bu çalışmada veri toplama araçları olarak anket ve ölçek kullanılmıştır. Nicel verilerin analizinde SPSS V26.0 programı kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde, iki öğrenci grubunun yabancı dil olarak İngilizce’de iletişim kurma istekliliklerine yönelik algılarını ve algı düzeylerindeki farklılıkları detaylı bir şekilde incelemek için sıra ortalamaları, toplam ortalama değerleri, yüzdellikler ve Man Whitney U testi gibi betimsel istatistiklerden yararlanılmıştır. Çalışmaya katılan Türk ve Suriyeli öğrencilerin İngilizce konuşma isteklilikleri toplam ortalama skorlar üzerinden değerlendirildiğinde, sınıf içi ve sınıf dışı ortamlarda Türk öğrencilerin iletişimde bulunma istekliliklerinin orta düzeyin

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üzerinde ve yüksek düzeye yakın olduğu, Suriyeli öğrencilerin ise görece orta düzeyde olduğu görülmüştür. İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliği noktasında, Türk öğrencilerin Suriyeli öğrencilerden görece daha istekli oldukları görülmüştür. Ayrıca, yapılan karşılaştırmalı analiz sonuçlarında, ulus değişkenine göre Türk öğrencilerinin Suriyeli öğrencilere göre iletişimde bulunma istekliliği noktasında nispeten daha yüksek bir seviyeye sahip olduğu ortaya çıkarken, cinsiyet değişkenine göre ise her iki öğrenci grubunun iletişimde bulunma istekliliğine ilişkin algılarında ve algı düzeylerinde anlamlı bir farklılık olmadığı görülmüştür. Bu çalışmada elde edilen bulguların yabancı dil öğretim müfredatını geliştirmeye, öğretmen eğitimi programlarına, yabancı dil öğrenimine ve yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin farklı etnik kökündeki öğrencilerinin sınıf içi ve dışı ortamlarda İngilizce iletişimde bulunma istekliliğiyle ilgili algılarını daha iyi anlamalarına olumlu anlamda katkı sağlayacaktır.

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Abstract

Willingness to communicate has recently gained considerable attention and significance in second language acquisition. Although many studies have been carried out in terms of willingness to communicate (WTC) in different EFL contexts, it can be said that the number of the studies conducted at primary, secondary, or higher education levels is not sufficient in the Turkish EFL context, and so the gap in this field has not been fully filled yet. In this sense, this study was conducted as a cross-cultural comparative study aiming to investigate the willingness of both Turkish and Syrian students to communicate in English as a foreign language inside and outside the classroom. For this purpose, the quantitative data were collected from 200 students in the Preparatory School. A L2 WTC questionnaire and scale were used as data collection tools in this study. And also, SPSS V26.0 statistics program was used in the analysis of the quantitative data. In the analysis of the data obtained, such descriptive statistics as mean ranks, total mean values, and percentages were utilized accordingly. In addition, Man Whitney U test was used to examine in detail the differences between the two student groups with

respect to their perceptions of willingness to communicate in English and WTC levels inside and outside the classroom. The analysis results showed that the Turkish students had a moderate to high level of L2 WTC in English, whereas the Syrian students were found to have a moderate level. In terms of WTC in English, the Turkish students were found to be relatively more willing than the Syrian students. Moreover, through the comparative analysis results, it was revealed that the Turkish students had a relatively higher level of WTC than the Syrian students according to the nation variable, while no significant difference was found in each student groups' WTC levels according to the gender variable. The findings of this study will contribute positively to the development of foreign language teaching curricula, teacher education programs, as well as EFL teachers by better understanding their students from different ethnic backgrounds considering their WTC perceptions and levels in English inside or outside the classroom.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate, Perceptual Differences, Nation and Gender Variables, Preferred Interlocutors in Foreign Language Communication

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Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that one of the significant prerequisites in SLA is to provide L2 learners with necessary conditions for learning or acquiring a L2. Like all theorists of language learning and acquisition, Krashen (1982) also states that learners need to have some form of second-language input in order to learn a new language efficiently. The significant point with this, however as further stated by Krashen, is the comprehensibility of the input that is to be processed by the learners while trying to acquire that L2. Keeping in mind the fact that SLA takes place on a development continuum, what Krashen (1985) terms as 'comprehensible input' is highly crucial for L2 learners to understand what is learnt during this continuum. According to him, comprehensible input is a form of input that is slightly beyond the current level of language learner's interlanguage or language competence in the target language. In other words,

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if 'i' is considered as the current level of L2 learner's interlanguage, then 'i+1' is the subsequent step along this development continuum. In accordance with what Krashen underpins above, Breen and Candlin (1980) also state that if the ultimate goal of L2 learning is to facilitate the language learners' progress in their tasks, it is a must to provide them with comprehensible input [i +1], too.

Regarding communication, Krashen points out that essential input level is achieved automatically when interlocutors involved in communication manage to understand one another reciprocally (2014). Besides, a significant factor that makes communication successful is when interlocutors use situation-specific contexts as well as some necessary input modifications during their speech communication or talks. Given the importance of situational contexts in communication, Canale and Swain (1980) indicate that they increase efficiency in communication between both parties, namely the message sender and receiver. They also argue that since interaction is an indispensable tenet in second language learning, we need to set a communicatively-sensitive classroom environment in which language learners can interact with each other and so develop their communicative skills efficiently. They further highlight the significance of meaningful interaction to be promoted through in-class or out-of-class activities and tasks to maintain successful communication steadily, which is indeed the ultimate goal for all stakeholders in second language learning process. However, in lack of opportunities to be provided for meaningful communication, they further argue that language learners are quite likely to feel demotivated or unwilling to participate in even relatively more ordinary or non-challenging conversations. By placing special emphasis on the social interaction between teachers, learners, and their classmates, Williams and Burden (1997) also indicate that social interaction entails some kind of exchange between two or more individuals by giving them an opportunity to modify their actions and reactions in case of communication.

Given that in all L2 acquisition theories it is essential for learners to learn and use the target language more efficiently, it is a notable issue why some learners have less developed oral or communicative skills than the others, even seemingly in equal learning conditions. The same applies to learners' levels of

willingness to communicate (WTC), which varies from time to time and in different conditions while learning the target language. As Altiner (2017) suggests, a considerable majority of L2 learners have relatively varying levels of WTC from each other in an EFL classroom setting, which is indeed considered as one of the major drawbacks in successful L2 learning process.

As the ultimate goal in language learning is to acquire that target language successfully, it should be kept in mind that effective communication and interaction is of great significance in achieving this goal. Needless to say, this can get possible through a classroom environment where teachers and students, as two important stakeholders of the L2 learning process, can communicate effectively. However, in the absence of such an environment, it is more likely for learners to feel unmotivated or unwilling to communicate with their peers or teachers, which is something not desired at all in the whole L2 learning process. What needs to be done in case of unwillingness to communicate in learners is to investigate their perceptions or beliefs about their L2 WTC in English. And moreover, it is needed to identify any potential differences between each group of students in EFL classroom settings in order to reach some conclusions about how these differences between them can affect their L2 WTC perception levels during this process. Considering this, it is primarily aimed with this study to both identify the Turkish and Syrian EFL learners' L2 WTC perceptions and discuss how any potential differences between the two student groups can influence their WTC levels inside and outside the classroom.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Second and Foreign Language

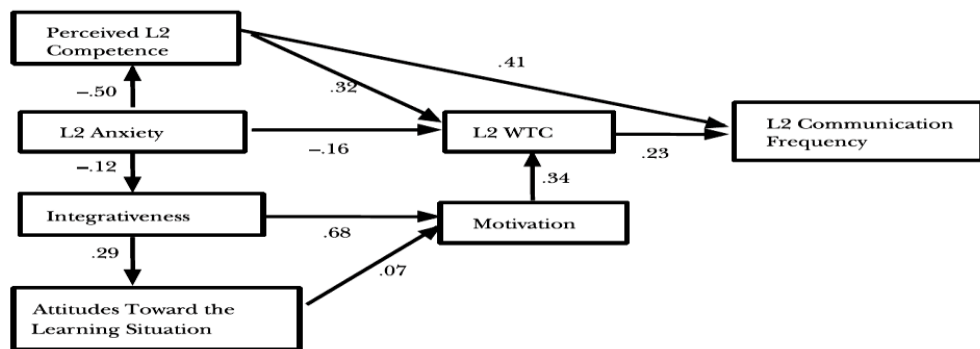
In the early 1990s, the development of research in L1 WTC-related studies drew researchers' attention to L2 WTC studies, with a particular focus on the variables that influence L2 WTC and the distinction between L1 and L2 WTC. With this in mind, it is suggested by McIntyre et al (1998) that one of the most significant differences that distinguish L1 from L2 is that of discourse language. Due to this variation, it is quite likely that communication in L2 tends to differ a lot from communication in L1 in a communication setting. Another thing that differentiates L2 WTC from L1 WTC lies in the fact

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that L2 WTC might have more antecedents than L1 WTC. For instance, as stated by Uyanik et al (2018), L2 communicative competence in most of people might vary from 0 % to 100 %, while this is usually above a standard level in L1 communication, which is generally more than 0%. Since there are some other social, cultural, and political factors included in the context of L2 use, WTC in L1 may not principally lead to WTC in L2 (1996).

To this end, the first attempt to adapt the WTC model to L2 was made with MacIntyre and Charos's prominent research (1996). The two sources which they adapted their structural model from were primarily MacIntyre's (1994) model of L1 WTC and Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of second language learning. With this path model, what they aimed was to investigate how efficient this model would be in explaining the relations between language learning and communication models, and also to find out to what extent individuals use the second language in communication. They further integrated both personality traits and sociolinguistic context into this new model in order to examine how they influence individuals' L2 WTC (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) Model of L2 WTC



In 2002, Hashimoto also adapted some parts of the MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) model into the Japanese context in order to further the WTC

studies in Japan. The researcher conducted a study to examine to what extent such affective antecedents as motivation and WTC would predict the L2 communication frequency of ESL Japanese students. The researcher grounded his regenerated path model on the socio-educational model and WTC model to be able to conceptualize the findings of his study. The data analysis revealed a number of remarkable results. Contrary to the findings in Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu (2004), it was seen that motivation and WTC influence how frequently the students use English as a foreign language in their classroom communication. In addition, while perceived competence had a direct impact on WTC by contributing to more frequency of L2 use in classes, L2 speaking anxiety had a negative correlation with WTC and perceived competence. Considering the results for L2 speaking anxiety and perceived competence as two variables underlying WTC, it is clear that there is a similarity between the results of Hashimoto's (2002) study and MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) study.

After reconceptualizing WTC according to L2 context, MacIntyre, et al (1998) suggested that there is no sense in limiting WTC to simply a trait-like variable. This is indeed a significant argument since the use of a L2 is liable to have some contextual differences based on unpredictable fluctuations in individuals' L2 perceived competence and inter-group relations (as cited in Şener, 2014). Given the fact that L2 use has such a latent nature, the researchers postulated that WTC should not be regarded as a fixed variable, but in fact as a situational or state variable. In line with this, they developed a theoretical model in an attempt to conceptualize WTC in L2 context. This redeveloped WTC model consists of twelve constructs as well as six categories as the layers of the model. These layers that are lined up from top to bottom are as follows: communication behavior (I), behavioral intention (II), situated antecedents (III), motivational propensities (IV), affective cognitive context (V), and social and individual context (VI).

Willingness to Communicate in Turkish EFL Context

Although recently there has been an undeniable increase in the number of the studies conducted on WTC, it would not be untrue to argue that there is still absolutely a great need to do more research on this research area in

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Turkish EFL context. Of the studies conducted from past to present, Bektaş's (2005) study takes an important place in L2 WTC research since it was the first study that was carried out to examine the Turkish EFL learners' WTC and its underlying variables. In her study, the researcher investigated whether the Turkish EFL learners were willing to communicate when they were provided with an opportunity to do so. As well as the relationship between WTC and socio-psychological, linguistic and communication variables, she also intended to examine how these variables would influence L2 learners' WTC. Since it was a study with a hybrid design in which quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures were used, both a number of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect the necessary data for the study. As the sampling of the study, 356 university students at a state university in Turkey were selected randomly to administer the questionnaires. After the administration of the questionnaires, the interviews were done with 15 students chosen randomly for this purpose. In order to investigate the relations between L2 learners' WTC, their communication apprehension, SPCC, motivation, personality, and attitudes toward the international community, Structural Equation Model analysis was used in the study. The interviews were also transcribed by the researcher for further interpretation and analysis of the questionnaire results. The data analysis of both the questionnaires and interviews revealed a number of striking results. It was found that L2 learners were not willing enough to communicate and also so motivated to learn English as an L2. However, they were reported to have a positive attitude towards the international community, with also a low level of L2 communication anxiety. Next, it was revealed that the students did not perceive themselves communicatively so competent in English language.

In Atay et al.'s (2009) study, it was aimed to investigate the factors underlying the L2 WTC of Turkish EFL learners and their perceptions of how competent they were in L2 communication inside and outside the classroom. It was both a qualitative and quantitative study in which the data were gathered from 159 students at a preparatory school of a state university in Istanbul. For data collection, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed

by the researchers. The results indicated a highly positive and strong correlation between the EFL learners' perceived competence and WTC, which was a finding similar to the findings of some studies previously mentioned (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986; Yashima, 2002). Further, the results revealed that the students' higher L2 WTC levels were closely related to their positive international postures. However, a non-significant correlation was reported between desire to learn English and their WTC, which denotes desire to learn English as an ineffective antecedent of WTC in this study. The results of the interviews also elicited a significant finding in that the students' WTC was influenced by a number of situational variables. At this point, it was especially noted that teacher, background knowledge, peers, and topic were found to be the most influential factors of WTC in this study.

In an attempt to investigate willingness to communicate and its two primary affecting factors, namely communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence, Asmalı, Bilki, and Duban (2015) conducted a comparative study, whose participants were 130 Turkish and Romanian university students. A series of questionnaires and scales were employed by the researchers in order to obtain the required results. Regarding the results of the L2 WTC of each group, it was found that the Romanian participants had relatively higher levels of WTC than their Turkish compeers (with a WTC mean score of 3.55 out of 10 for the Turkish students and 6.52 for the Romanian students respectively). As stated by the researchers, this finding is similar to the findings of the studies by Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2005) and Şener (2014) in some way. That is, in all the three studies, it was found that the participants were highly willing to communicate in the target language with their friends as the type of receivers. However, the differing side of this study from the previous two studies is in the fact that the overall L2 WTC of the participants in this study was comparatively lower than the participants of the other two studies.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

English plays a significant role in Turkish higher education system for

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for students (Selvi, 2021). Therefore, the present study was conducted at the Higher School of Foreign Languages at Gaziantep University, a state university in Turkey, in the winter and spring terms of the 2019-2020 academic year. The participants of the study were the Turkish and Syrian EFL students studying English as a foreign language at the Preparatory School of Gaziantep University. The data were gathered from 200 students ranging in age from 17 to 29. In addition to taking the consent of each participant beforehand, special care was taken to comply with some significant steps in the selection of the students to participate in the L2 WTC scale employed in the study.

Table 1 shows the distribution of sampling in the study according to various variables.

Table 1
Distribution of Sampling according to Various Variables

Variable	N	%
Gender	Female	39.5
	Male	60.5
	Total	100
Nation	Turkish	50.0
	Syrian	50.0
	Total	100
Age	17	5.0
	18	19.0
	19	31.0
	20	17.0
	21	14.5
	22	5.5
	23	2.5
	24	2.0
	25	2.0
	28	1.5
	Total	100

Measures

In the current study, the data were collected by means of a questionnaire for the students' background information and Willingness to Communicate

Scale (WTCS), which was conducted appropriately in order to investigate the Turkish and Syrian EFL students' L2 WTC perceptions and levels. The WTC scale used in the study is presented as follows.

Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTCS)

Having 16 items in total, the WTCS was originally developed by McCroskey (1992) to investigate EFL learners' WTC perceptions and levels. In the present study, it was also employed to assess the Turkish and Syrian prep school students' L2 WTC perceptions and levels in English. The researcher's study provided a two-factor solution for WTC: WTC inside the classroom (e.g. willingness to communicate with teachers inside the classroom) consisting of 6 items and WTC outside the classroom (e.g. willingness to communicate with foreigners outside the classroom) consisting of 6 items. The students responded to each item on a 10-point scale from 1 (never communicate) to 10 (always communicate) accordingly. The internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) of the scale was $\alpha = .97$.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Data of the study were collected in March, 2020 in the middle of the spring semester of Academic Year of 2019/2020 at Gaziantep University, Turkey. The study population was the EFL Turkish and Syrian students who were attending one-year preparatory school at Gaziantep University. As the first step, students were given a consent form which asked for their permission to participate in the study and guarantee their information confidentiality. Then, both the questionnaire for students' background information and WTC scale were administered to all of them during the regular class hours for the quantitative data. Approximately, each student needed 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and scale.

To this end, the quantitative data were analyzed in a detailed way in order to better understand the Turkish and Syrian EFL students' willingness to communicate levels in English inside and outside the classroom. As the first step, descriptive analysis of the scale (e.g. maximum and minimum scores, mean values, and standard deviations) was carried out through Statistical

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Package for Social Sciences- 26v (SPSS) to analyze the quantitative data. In order to investigate the perceptual differences regarding both of the groups, the data were analyzed by the Mann Whitney U test.

Findings and Discussion

This study primarily aimed to explore the levels of Turkish and Syrian EFL learners' L2 WTC inside and outside the classroom. The participants filled in the L2 WTC scale, which was also employed in previous studies within different EFL contexts (Bektaş, 2005; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Peng, 2007; Şener, 2014). In this sense, the participants were asked to indicate their willingness in the provided situations inside and outside the classroom through 16 items for each by use of 1 (almost never communicate) to 10 (always communicate) response type. The descriptive analyses were performed in order to categorize the participants in relation to their willingness level as low, moderate, and high. Considering the numerical data from some previous studies (Basöz & Erten, 2018; Kalra et al., 2017; Xie, Szymanski & Liu, 2011) the mean scores in the present study were classified into three as low WTC (scores between 0.0-3.5), moderate WTC (3.6-7.0), and high WTC (7.1-10) for both of the student groups accordingly.

A Comparison of Both Student Groups with Respect to Their L2 WTC Perceptions

The descriptive statistical analysis regarding the mean values for each of the 16 items and total WTC scores of the items for both the Turkish and Syrian students are presented in table 2.

Table 2
Turkish and Syrian Students' L2 WTC Perceptions Inside and Outside the Classroom

Inside Class				Willingness to communicate in English Item Description	Outside Class			
Turkish		Syrian			Turkish		Syrian	
\bar{X}	Ss	\bar{X}	Ss	\bar{X} *	Ss	\bar{X}	Ss	
6,75	1,41	4,38	1,14	1- Give a talk to a group of strangers (about 40 people) in English.	5,67	1,39	3,96	1,04

6,81	1,36	4,83	,83	2-Present a talk to a group of friends (about 40 people) in English.	5,88	1,48	4,40	,85
6,68	1,32	4,78	,87	3- Participate in a group discussion with a group of friends (3-4 people)	5,73	1,52	4,56	,96
7,21	1,33	5,67	,89	4- Talk in English with a few friends you know	6,56	1,60	5,44	,99
6,25	1,17	4,32	,83	5- Talk in English with a stranger.	5,44	1,14	4,15	1,10
7,31	1,57	5,62	,94	6- Talk in English with your teachers.	7,00	1,66	5,60	1,08
7,67	1,48	5,94	,96	7- Talk to your teacher about your homework/assignment.	7,49	1,45	5,71	1,08
8,03	1,37	6,19	1,04	8- You are confused about a task you must complete, how willing are you to ask for clarification/ instruction from your friend.	7,90	1,61	6,04	1,27
7,10	1,35	5,61	,86	9- You are not sure how to do your homework, how willing are you to ask for more information from your teacher.	6,75	1,71	5,33	,90
6,21	1,29	4,40	,84	10- A foreigner comes to your department, how willing are you to have a conversation if s/he talks to you first?	5,49	1,61	4,27	1,00
6,66	1,27	4,75	,99	11- Talk in a small group of acquaintances (about 3-4 people) in English	5,98	1,52	4,56	,84
6,72	1,39	4,95	,97	12- Perform a presentation to a group of friends (3-4 people) in English.	6,17	1,54	4,50	,81
8,20	1,60	5,96	1,16	13- Play a game with your friends in English, for example monopoly	7,60	2,14	5,85	1,30
5,79	1,30	4,30	,80	14- Talk in English with a group of acquaintances in a large meeting	4,94	1,46	4,21	,87
6,10	1,28	4,45	,73	15- Talk in English with foreigners in a small group (2-3 People)	5,11	1,46	4,06	,81
5,94	1,26	4,42	,96	16- Perform a presentation to a group of acquaintances (about 40 people) in English	4,89	1,15	4,33	,78
6.83	1.11	5.03	.59	Total WTC Score	6.16	1.23	4.81	.57

* 0.0 - 3.5: Low; 3.6 -7.0: Moderate; 7.1 - 10.0: High

When Table 2 was examined, it was revealed that the Turkish students' overall willingness to communicate inside the classroom was in between moderate and high levels, which was in fact quite close to the high level

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interval (\bar{X} =6.83, SD=1.11). Regarding the mean scores of WTC in English outside the classroom, they were found to be moderately willing to communicate as well, with an overall score of (\bar{X} = 6.16, SD= 1.23). As presented in table 2, the participants had a relatively higher level of L2 WTC inside the classroom than their WTC outside the classroom. This indicates that they were more oriented to communicate inside the classroom rather than outside the classroom.

With respect to the Turkish students' L2 WTC inside the classroom, it is clear that they had moderate levels of willingness to communicate in the classroom context. In this sense, they were found to be moderately willing to participate in a group discussion with a group of their friends (\bar{X} = 6.68, SD= 1.32) as well as having a slightly higher level of WTC while presenting a talk about their classes in front of the classroom (\bar{X} = 6.81, SD= 1.36). Similarly, performing a presentation to a group of friends (3-4 people) in English with a mean value of (\bar{X} = 6.72, SD= 1.39) indicates that they feel self-confident enough to manage their in-class presentations. The results show that the participants had relatively lower levels of WTC as can be seen in the items numbered 14, 15, and 16.

It is clear that the Turkish EFL students tend to have relatively lower mean scores in case of a large meeting (\bar{X} = 5.79, SD= 1.30) or a presentation held in the presence of a large group of acquaintances (\bar{X} = 5.94, SD= 1.26). By its very nature, this might be an indication of shyness or abstention from appearing before large groups of people and presenting something to them (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; MacIntyre, MacMaster & Baker, 2001). Another interlocutor group with which Turkish L2 learners feel less willing to communicate inside the classroom is foreigners. Despite a limited number of foreigners (2 or 3 people), the Turkish students perceive a relatively lower WTC while talking to them in English in their classes, as presented in Item 15 (\bar{X} = 6.10, SD= 1.28). When compared to talking in English with a few of their friends or presenting a talk to a group of friends (\bar{X} = 6.81, SD= 1.36; \bar{X} = 7.21 SD= 1.33 respectively), the mean values related to communicating with

foreigners is relatively lower as indicated above. Additionally, the findings revealed that the Turkish students perceive higher WTC while playing a game like monopoly in English ($\bar{X} = 8.20$ SD= 1.60) by implementing a task entrusted to them with the cooperation of each individual in their groups.

Likewise, the results showed that the participants were highly willing to ask for clarification or instruction from both their teachers and friends in case of any kind of confusion about a task they must perform inside the classroom. The mean values of items 8 and 9 as ($\bar{X} = 8.03$) and ($\bar{X} = 7.10$) provide solid evidence for this. In addition to this, the fact that students could communicate with their teachers about their homework or assignments showed that they were highly willing to initiate communication in their classes, which suggests that a healthy communication took place on both sides ($\bar{X} = 7.67$, SD= 1.48). This is a significant finding similar to the findings of a very comprehensive study conducted by Kanat-Mutluoğlu (2020) in L2 WTC ($\bar{X} = 4.19$, SD=1.23) in that the participants in both of the studies perceived high WTC with their instructors inside the classroom.

Considering the Turkish students' L2 WTC levels outside the classroom, the findings also revealed that a great majority of them (almost 83%) had a moderate level of willingness to communicate in different communication contexts. As illustrated in Table 2, an L2 WTC overall mean value of ($\bar{X} = 6.16$, SD= 1.23) indicates that the participants had a relatively lower level of WTC outside the classroom when compared to their inside-class WTC level with a mean value of ($\bar{X} = 6.83$, SD= 1.11). In this sense, the following items (i.e. Item 2, Item 3, Item 4, Item 8, Item 11, and Item 12) were to find out their WTC with their acquaintances such as their friends or teachers. Unlike communication inside the classroom, it was found that there was a decrease in the L2 WTC of the students outside the classroom, even with their acquaintances. Regarding some potential changes in L2 learners' WTC orientations in various contexts, such an average decrease in their WTC out of the class might indicate that they find communication outside less appealing than communication inside the classroom. The mean value in Item 3 ($\bar{X} = 5.73$, SD= 1.52) obviously exemplifies this contextual change. That is, while they had more willingness to join a group

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discussion with some of their friends in their classes ($\bar{X} = 6.68$, $SD = 1.32$), they were found to be less willing to do so out of the class as seen in Item 3. A similar decrease in their WTC can be seen when the mean values of the Item 2 (from $\bar{X} = 6.81$ to $\bar{X} = 5.88$) and 4 (from $\bar{X} = 7.21$ to $\bar{X} = 6.56$) are examined closely. It thus seems that a change in students' L2 communication context somehow results in a significant decrease in their WTC levels as well. A closer look at the means in the Items 1, 5, 10, and 15 indicates that the WTC values regarding the Turkish students' communication with foreigners or strangers outside the classroom actually dropped to a considerable extent. For instance, they reported relatively lower levels of WTC while communicating with a small group of foreigners (2 or 3 people) in English ($\bar{X} = 5.11$, $SD = 1.46$), while talking in English with only one stranger in a dyadic conversation ($\bar{X} = 5.44$, $SD = 1.14$), or in a more populated environment while talking with a group of about 40 strangers ($\bar{X} = 5.67$, $SD = 1.39$). This is indeed a strong sign of their communication apprehension or fear of making mistakes while communicating with foreigners for the first time in a different context.

As for the Syrian students' perceptions of their L2 WTC, the findings revealed that their overall willingness to communicate in English was moderate on average, but also fairly close to the low level threshold (see Table 2). Considering all the mean values obtained from a total of 16 items, it was reported that their L2 WTC levels inside the classroom ($\bar{X} = 5.09$, $SD = 0.59$) were only slightly higher than their WTC levels outside the classroom ($\bar{X} = 4.82$, $SD = 0.57$). Although this difference between inside and outside WTC mean values was not very high in total, it was noted that the Syrian students mostly tended to develop communication inside the classroom rather than outside.

The results related with the Syrian students' WTC orientations inside the classroom revealed that they were moderately willing to communicate in their language classes. Regarding communication with their acquaintances, such as their friends or teachers, it was found that they had relatively higher WTC levels in initiating communication and maintaining it with their friends ($\bar{X} =$

5.67, SD= 0.89) than they did it with foreigners or strangers ($\bar{X} = 4.45$, SD= 0.73) inside the classroom. Like this, they reported a higher level of WTC while performing a presentation to a group of friends (about 40 people) ($\bar{X} = 4.83$, SD= 0.83) in English than a group of strangers (about 40 people) ($\bar{X} = 4.38$ SD= 1.14). The results also indicated that a great majority of the Syrian students (92 %) showed a high tendency to participate in a group discussion with their friends ($\bar{X} = 4.78$), perform a presentation to a group of friends (3-4 people) in English ($\bar{X} = 4.95$), and play a game with their friends in English, for example monopoly ($\bar{X} = 5.96$). Considering this, it was found that they were mostly prone to refrain from developing communication with foreigners or strangers rather than initiating communication with their friends inside the classroom. And in fact, this could be a clear indication of how they might display a unidirectional communication orientation instead of a multidirectional one in a dissimilar culture from theirs, namely the Turkish culture. As stated by Bartaclough et al. (1988), deep-rooted cultural values and various lifestyles are mostly the dominant force emerging in L2 communication and shaping the individuals' perceptions and their communication behaviors in the process of L2 learning.

A striking finding of the study was that overall Syrian students were found to be more willing to communicate with their teachers inside the classroom than outside the classroom. For instance, they were found to be more willing to talk in English with their teachers and ask something about their homework or assignments in their classes ($\bar{X} = 5.94$) than they did it outside ($\bar{X} = 5.71$). However, in case of any confusion about a task they had to complete, it was reported that they were more willing to ask for some clarification or instruction from their friends ($\bar{X} = 6.04$) than their teachers ($\bar{X} = 5.33$) both inside and outside the classroom.

As for the findings related with the Syrian students' perceptions of their WTC outside the classroom, it was found that they perceived a lower level of L2 WTC ($\bar{X} = 4.81$, SD= 0.57) when compared to their WTC levels inside the classroom ($\bar{X} = 5.03$, SD= 0.59). The following Items (i.e. 2, 3, 4, and 12

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respectively) were to explore their WTC with their friends out of their classes. Based on the fact that contextual changes such as communicating outside instead of inside the classroom can play a significant role in individuals' communication behaviors and orientations, it was seen that their willingness to communicate decreased outside to a considerable extent. Item 2 with a mean value of ($\bar{X} = 4.40$, $SD = 0.85$) suggested that there was a decrease in their WTC while presenting a talk to a group of friends (about 40) in English. Similarly, the mean value of item 3 as 4.56 ($SD = 0.96$), Item 4 as 5.44 ($SD = 0.99$), and Item 12 as 4.50 ($SD = 0.81$) clearly indicated that their WTC regarding communication with their friends in various contexts outside decreased considerably. In this respect, the view is taken that individuals have an innate tendency to approach or avoid communication in different cultures as well as within a given culture during the process of intercultural communication. Therefore, it can be argued that the Syrian students might have avoided communicating even with their acquaintances like their friends outside the classroom in a dissimilar culture to theirs.

The results regarding the Syrian students' WTC perceptions of strangers or foreigners outside the classroom revealed a significant decrease in their overall L2 WTC mean values as well. The Items 1, 5, and 10 presented the total mean values with respect to their WTC dispositions towards this group of interlocutors. It was found that they were not as willing to have a conversation with a foreigner outside of the classroom as in the classroom in case of the presence of a foreigner in their department or classroom ($\bar{X} = 4.27$, $SD = 1.00$). With even a lower mean value, it was noted that the Syrian students were not so willing to initiate a conversation or talk with a stranger ($\bar{X} = 4.15$, $SD = 1.10$). Moreover, when the WTC mean values of this group of students were examined closely, it was found that the situation in which they had the lowest level of WTC outside the classroom was presenting a talk to a group of strangers (about 40 people) in English ($\bar{X} = 3.96$, $SD = 1.04$). Therefore, it could be inferred that the contextual differences such as having communication outside the classroom could play a fundamental role in shaping the students' communication behaviors and orientations accordingly.

A Comparison of Both Student Groups’ Perceived Levels of WTC with Respect to Nationality and Gender Variables

The results demonstrating the differences in Turkish and Syrian EFL learners’ perceptions of their L2 WTC according to nationality and gender variables are presented in table 3. In order to investigate the perceptual differences regarding both of the groups, the data were analyzed by the Mann Whitney U test.

Table 3

A Comparison of Turkish and Syrian EFL Learners’ L2 WTC inside and outside the Classroom

	Nationality	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	P
WTC in	Turkish	100	140.08	14007.50	1042.50	-9.673	.000
	Syrian	100	60.93	6092.50			
WTC out	Turkish	100	134.35	13434.50	1615.50	-8.273	.000
	Syrian	100	66.66	6665.50			

When Table 3 was examined, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the Turkish and Syrian students’ L2 willingness to communicate scores inside the classroom [$U_{WTC\ in}=1042.5$, $z=-9.673$, $p< .05$] and outside the classroom [$U_{WTC\ out}=1615.5$, $z=-8.273$, $p< .05$] according to the nationality variable. Considering the data obtained from the mean rank and medians, it was revealed that willingness to communicate in English both inside and outside the classroom showed a more significant difference in favor of the Turkish students [WTC in Median_{Turkish}=111.5, WTC out Median_{Turkish}=100], than the Syrian students [WTC in Median_{Syrian}=80; WTC out Median_{Syrian}=75]. The comparative results indicated that both Turkish and

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Syrian students had a moderate level of L2 WTC, with the exception of Turkish students' higher scores in a few sub-dimensions of WTC. This significant finding is in line with the findings of some previous studies (Basöz & Erten, 2018; Oz, Demirezen & Pourfeiz, 2015). Despite the moderation in the scores of both groups in L2 WTC, the results obtained in some L2 WTC sub-components were observed to be significantly different between the two groups in this comparison.

One of these above-mentioned WTC subscales that shows the difference between the two student groups clearly is teachers, as one of the types of receivers that students prefer to communicate with inside and outside the classroom most. In this sense, while a great majority of the Turkish students (73, 6%) expressed their preference in communicating with their teachers with a mean value of (\bar{X} =7, 36), this corresponded to a relatively lower percentage of (57, 2%) and a mean value of (\bar{X} =5, 72) for the Syrian students. When the results for the Syrian students are considered, it can be suggested that the Turkish students believe that teachers have a more active role than their friends in solving some of the problems they may experience in their language education process at school. In a similar vein, the second type of interlocutor who the Turkish students preferred communication with more and got higher L2 WTC scores than the Syrian students were their friends.

Another L2 WTC subscale showing the differing results of Turkish and Syrian students is the context type that represents the EFL learners' divergent L2 communication contexts. Regarding the L2 communication context, the results revealed that almost 70% of the Turkish students were willing to communicate in English, more preferably in dyads, inside (\bar{X} =7, 24) and outside the classroom with a mean value of (\bar{X} =6, 78). As for communicating in small groups, this result was (\bar{X} =6, 82) for their L2 WTC inside the classroom and (\bar{X} =6, 16) outside the classroom. Given the context of communication, these results obviously showed that the Turkish students perceive themselves as more successful in dyadic or two-way communication with their friends, teachers, or foreigners inside and outside the classroom.

When the comparative results were examined, it was found that the communication contexts in which the Syrian students preferred to communicate in English most were dyads and small groups, too. However, they had relatively lower L2 WTC scores in both types of contexts than their Turkish counterparts. That is, almost 52 % of the Syrian students were found to be willing to communicate in dyadic situations with a mean value of (\bar{X} =5, 40) inside classroom and (\bar{X} =5, 23) outside the classroom. And also, they had a low to moderate level of L2 WTC in small groups both inside the classroom (\bar{X} =5, 12) and outside the classroom (\bar{X} =4, 92). Similar to the Turkish students, the Syrian students were found to be successful in communication with their friends, teachers, or strangers through dyads and small groups too, despite some relatively lower levels of L2 WTC in these two contexts. Based on these results, it can be suggested that both Turkish and Syrian students perceived themselves more competent and willing to communicate inside the classroom rather than outside the classroom.

The results of Table 4 that examine the differences between Turkish male and female students' perceptions about their L2 WTC according to gender variable are presented below. In order to investigate the perceptual differences regarding both of the genders in the study, the data were analyzed by the Mann Whitney U test.

Table 4
A Comparison of L2 WTC levels of Turkish EFL Learners according to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	P
WTC in	M	60	52.78	3166.50	1063.50	-.961	.337
	F	40	47.09	1883.50			
WTC out	M	60	49.53	2972.00	1142.00	-.408	.683
	F	40	51.95	1078.00			

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As indicated in Table 4, there is statistically no significant difference between the Turkish male and female learners in terms of their L2 WTC inside [U_{WTC in} = 1063,5, z = -. 961, p> .05] and outside the classroom [U_{WTC out} = 1142,0, z = -. 408, p> .05] according to the gender variable. Despite a non-significant difference in the L2 WTC mean scores of both genders, the male EFL learners were reported to perceive slightly higher WTC inside the classroom with a mean rank of (52.78) than the female EFL learners with a mean rank of (47.09). As for the out-class L2 WTC levels of the male students (49.53) and female students (51.95), no significant difference was reported, either. Similar to the results of Donovan and MacIntyre (2004), demonstrating statistically no differences in WTC level based on the gender variable, the current study reported no clear-cut differences between the Turkish EFL learners with respect to their genders. And therefore, the gender-based difference in the levels of Turkish students' L2 WTC inside and outside the classroom could not be regarded as a significant result.

The results indicating the differences between the Syrian male and female EFL learners' L2 WTC inside and outside the classroom according to their genders are displayed in Table 5. In order to investigate the perceptual differences regarding both of the genders in the study, the data were analyzed by the Mann Whitney U test. Based on the results of the Table 13, it is clearly seen that there is statistically a significant difference between the male and female EFL learners in terms of their L2 WTC inside the classroom [U_{WTC in}=774, 0, z=-2.940, p< .05] but a non-significant difference between the two genders outside the classroom [U_{WTC out}=1142, 0, z=-.408, p> .05].

Table 5
A Comparison of L2 WTC levels of Syrian EFL Learners according to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	P
WTC in	M	61	57.31	3496.00	774.00	-2.940	.003
	F	39	39.85	1554.00			

WTC out	M	61	53.86	3285.50	984.	-1.452	.147
	F	39	45.24	1764.50	50		

The comparative results showed that the Syrian male learners of English perceived higher L2 WTC than the female learners inside the classroom with a rank average of (57, 31) against (39.85). On the other hand, a relatively lower mean rank was observed in WTC between the two groups of students outside the classroom as (53, 86) and (45, 24). One of the striking findings of the current study was that the degree of WTC in English was decreased for the male learners, whereas this degree was increased for the female learners outside the classroom. Therefore, in a pairwise comparison, the male learners could be identified as high willing learners in-class settings, while the female learners could be identified as high willing learners in out-class settings.

As suggested by Peng (2010), a possible explanation for the reason why the Syrian female EFL learners perceive more L2 WTC outside rather than inside the classroom might lie in feeling freer of being assessed outside the classroom. Another implication that can be drawn with respect to the decrease in L2 WTC results of the male learners in out-of-class settings is that they are not sufficiently exposed to English as the target language and they have a much lower chance of communicating with others in English outside the classroom (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014). The fact that they may not have some hardware or software L2 communication opportunities to use English as their communication language outside the classroom and see to what extent they are willing or not, at least in situations that require L2 communication, might be another reasonable explanation for this situation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this comparative study, it was observed that the Turkish and Syrian students, as the participants of the study, had some similarities as well as differences considering their L2 WTC perceptions and levels. The quantitative findings revealed that the Turkish students' overall WTC in English inside and outside the classroom was moderate to high level.

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On the other hand, the Syrian students' overall L2 WTC inside the classroom was found to be moderate, while it was a low to moderate level outside the classroom. Regarding the receiver or interlocutor type whom the Turkish students preferred initiating L2 communication with most, teachers and friends were respectively found to be more intimate than acquaintances and strangers both inside and outside the classroom. Similar findings were obtained for the Syrian students regarding the preferred collocutor type by contending that they would also favor initiating communication with their teachers and friends instead of their acquaintances or foreigners in in-class or out-of-class settings.

The findings of this study are significant in providing some pedagogical implications for L2 learning and teaching. In an EFL context where students only have the opportunity to communicate in English in their classroom settings, it is essential for L2 educators to understand in which situations students are more willing to communicate, or what individual, contextual, and linguistic factors may hinder or enhance their WTC in their English classes. Additionally, as attitudes and motivation are two significant factors that affect the EFL learners' WTC in English, one of the main concerns of language educators should be to help their students generate positive attitude towards L2 learning and motivation to participate in L2 communication. Moreover, L2 educators and teachers need to help learners to develop a sense of accomplishment, stimulation, and knowledge by increasing their integrative motivation through successful L2 learning experience. It is well-known that a higher level of integrative motivation means a higher level of WTC.

As it is known well, there is a close relationship between a non-threatening classroom environment and learners' WTC in English. Considering this, it can be concluded that teachers need to provide their learners with a peaceful classroom environment as it has a pivotal role in influencing the students' motivation to learn and self-confidence positively, which in turn can increase their WTC in English. As well as a non-threatening classroom atmosphere, the EF learners should be supported with effective teacher support and immediacy, peer collaboration, sense of responsibility, and careful

selection of speaking tasks or topics in order to foster higher levels of L2 WTC and better perceptions in them. In addition to teacher immediacy and positive attitudes, creating good collaboration among class members is also an essential characteristic of a non-threatening classroom environment. Believing that a classroom is a small social setting where students can interact with each other on an ongoing basis, creating a friendly environment in a language classroom where students are friendly to each other, helping other class members and being tolerant of mistakes will necessarily help students feel more motivated and willing to communicate in their speaking classes.

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