The Role of Academic Confidence and Grit in Willingness to Communicate of Iranian EFL Students in Outside, Inside and Online Classrooms

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Abstract

Academic Confidence, Grit and WTC of students play important roles in their second language achievement. This paper examined the role of academic confidence and grit in willingness to communicate of Iranian EFL students in different communicative and educational contexts. To this end, 385 EFL students responded to the relevant questionnaires. The analysis of the data revealed that the students with higher levels of academic confidence and grit had a higher L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class, and online classrooms. The results also revealed that the students' grit was a predictor of their L2 WTC in all communicative contexts, and the university students scored the highest, followed by language institute and senior secondary school students. Moreover, academic confidence and grit had significant relationship with L2 WTC of students in senior secondary schools, language institutes and universities. Another finding was that grit was a predictor of all groups' L2 WTC, while academic confidence predicted L2 WTC of students in language institutes and universities. The results of this study have implications for EFL teachers.

Keywords: Academic Confidence; Communicative and Educational Contexts; EFL Students; Grit; Willingness to Communicate

1. Introduction

Willingness to communicate (WTC) was initially explored in the context of first language (L1) communication, and has been defined as a free chosen process with the possibility to rise and fall quickly as the situation varies (MacIntyre, 2007). Individuals' L1 WTC is regarded as a personal trait, which is formed over the years (MacIntyre et al. 2003), while things are more complex concerning willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC), since different variables are highly influential (Dörnyei, 2005). L2 WTC is regarded as the last step before actual L2 use (Lee, 2020) and is defined as an inclination to enter into discourse at a specific time with particular individuals using an L2 (MacIntyre et al. 1998). L2 WTC in an EFL context has received much consideration (Peng, 2019) and different scholars, and investigators (e.g., MacIntyre et al. 2019; Zhang et al. 2018) have asserted the need to research concerning the role of favorable variables in L2 WTC. One positive factor is confidence, which is vital to a happy and satisfying life in general, and it influences success in family life, work, relationships, and leisure activities (Preston, 2001). The notion of confidence is a sense which has existed in each individual since their infancy, and has principally two core components, i.e., competence and lovability (Mutluer, 2006). It is believed that confidence is an essential quality that students possess (Kakepoto et al. 2012). Academic confidence is defined as a "strong belief, firm trust or sure expectation" of how students handle the requirements of undertaking a particular academic course (Sander & Sanders, 2009, p.19). Academic confidence refers to the students' capability to plan and perform those behaviors that are pertinent to various academic tasks. Academic confidence of students can fluctuate if they enter into the academic setting wherein the form and procedures of schooling itself are elucidated. It includes providing learning opportunities to improve the learners' academic abilities (Tett, 2000). Thus, an understanding of learners' academic confidence could be helpful in serving instructors to build more effective learning settings.

Another positive factor is the concept of grit, which is conceptualized a complex concept of psychological strength, which entails both consistencies of attentiveness, and perseverance of determination (Duckworth et al. 2007). It is believed that grit requires following a determined objective despite important, and severe hindrances and difficulties for years (Vainio & Daukantait, 2016). Grit is reported to be rooted in both interest and effort (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Grit has recently received significant consideration in SLA (e.g., Credé et al. 2017; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Keegan, 2017; Lee, 2020; Lee & Drajati 2019; Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Vainio & Daukantait, 2016) have reported that grit has a prominent role in improving learners' performance. However, it is essential to conduct more studies in this regard since the role of grit in Iranian EFL students' L2 WTC has yet to be ultimately confirmed. Thus, this study was an attempt to

identify the potential role of academic confidence and grit in WTC of EFL students in outside, inside and online classrooms.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Willingness to Communicate

The decision to communicate or not, over time, employs an influence on the individual's accomplishment at language learning (MacIntyre, 2007). The decision to circumvent communication can bring about severe consequences for learners in different language programs (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). In other words, those language learners who want to stay silent once there exists an opportunity to make use of their L2 may not become second language speakers even after studying a language for several years (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). It is believed that WTC affects different language skills' styles of language learners (MacIntyre et al. 1998). Perse, L2 investigators believe that L2 WTC is one of the best predictors of accomplishment in L2 learning. Consequently, L2 students with high levels of WTC may have the better chance to improve L2 proficiency. The prominence of WTC reaches to the extent that specialists like Dörnyei (2005) consider it the decisive objective of instruction. L2 investigators agree that active learners typically have a more incredible capacity to improve communicative competence by having more chances to interact with others. In addition, MacIntyre, et al. (2001) have argued that WTC should be expected to facilitate the learning process. As proposed by Baker and MacIntyre (2000), the amalgamation of L2 learning research, and communication could provide insight into studying individual differences in SLA. WTC was positively linked to different components of L2 motivational self-system (Lee & Lee, 2020), classroom environment (Peng & Woodrow, 2010), L2 motivation (Lee & Hsieh, 2019), foreign language use and enjoyment (Dewaele, 2019), and self-esteem (Azmand, 2014). The computer-generated world offers language students interaction affordances that simplifies learning, and forms an authentic setting for communication (Liou, 2012).

2.2. Academic Confidence

Academic confidence is referred to the learner's conviction about performing a particular task at a specific level to attain a specific academic goal (Sander & Sanders, 2005). In other words, academic confidence reflects a substantial certainty or sure anticipation of accomplishment in an academic field. Generally, as aptly maintained by Stevens (2005), learners perform those activities and tasks they feel competent. According to Sander and Sanders (2005), academic confidence clusters around five different elements, i.e., *studying, understanding, verbalizing, clarifying,* and *attendance.* Confidence is a significant predictor of academic attainment (Bartimote-Aufflick, Bridgeman, Walker, Sharma, & Smith,

2016). It is believed that confident language learners are passionate, have higher enthusiasm, study harder, and do not give up once problems confront them. Mckerrow, et al. (2007) asserted "appearing confident will help put your audience at ease as they listen to your ideas" (p. 61). Sander and Sander (2005) stated that students' academic confidence could be improved from the mastery of different abilities, skills, and experiences and both emotional and social support.

Learners with higher levels of academic confidence are proved to be high achievers (Stevens, 2005). Having an increased confidence in one's skills and also in one's individuality, students will achieve important and considerable objectives and great elaborate strategies (Sander & Sander, 2005). As noted by Cole and Kinzie (2008), highly confident learners are more productive in their learning in general and foreign language performing in particular. Moreover, they are more focused on their achievement and progress. Wright (2008) argued that there are certain features, which are universal and can be acquired if such features are not present in an individual's life at the moment. High confidence students: (a) are ambitious (b) are goal-oriented: (c) are visionary, (d) have learned to communicate, (e) are loving and kind, and (f) are attractive and open to others (Wright, 2008, p.12). Learners with low academic confidence enter school and university with lower levels of academic abilities and accordingly is less involved and confront more transition difficulties (Shoemaker, 2010). Lacking confidence and high submissiveness levels among learners bring about feeling the incapability to improve (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). Since low confidence is regarded as a psychological obstacle to accomplishment, learners with such performance will constantly have undesirable outcomes in their presentation and professions (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). There are certain traits of those who have low confidence in their abilities. Low confidence learners (a) are dreadful of change, (b) are suspicious, (c) have difficulty talking about what they actually want from life, (d) want to please others more than be true to themselves, (e) are self-doubting and are naturally drawn to other individuals who also see themselves as victims (Wright, 2008, p.11).

2.3. Grit

The construct of grit basically denotes to the inclination to sustain passion and effort while working persistently towards a long-term purpose, predominantly facing challenges and obstacles (Duckworth, & Quinn, 2009). It is believed that grit encompasses concentrating on a sole purpose and working hard to attain it over a long period regardless of failure, hardship, and impediments (Duckworth, et al. 2007).

Grit has two main dimensions, i.e., *persistence of effort* and *consistency of interest* (Duckworth, & Quinn, 2009). The first dimension, i.e., *persistence of effort,* basically refers to the tendency to work very hard regardless of different

obstacles and setbacks, and the second dimension, i.e., *consistency of interest,* principally refers to the tendency to not regularly change interests and objectives (Duckworth et al. 2007). Grit is believed to be firmly rooted in both interest and effort (Von Culina et al. 2014). Interest principally acts as a motivational element that sets the objective and befits an individual to find the thirst to overcome difficulties and obstacles. Effort refers to the individual's engagement with a task or activity not to give way to immediate preferences and instead concentrate on the significance behind the long-term objectives. As pointed out by Martin and Marsh (2006), grit is regarded as the fruitful reaction of learners when confronted with various academic challenges and obstacles in the ordinary course of college life. As Duckworth, et al. (2007) maintained, dissimilarities in the individual's grit help elucidate why two individuals with akin capabilities in a specific field behave differently. Individuals with higher levels of grit are believed to be stronger students, mainly since they are less disheartened by failures and obstacles, more encouraged to tackle strategic behavior and endure a concentrated effort to attain accomplishment (Eskreis-Winkler et al. 2014).

According to Duckworth et al. (2007), the concept of grit, which is regarded as persistence and thirst for long-term objectives, is one of the essential personal features linked with higher results and perseverance through additional academic challenges. Recently, different studies have been conducted on grit in various fields. For instance, grit has a significant positive association with test performance (Putwain et al. 2013), higher professional, and academic performances (Eskreis-Winkler et al. 2014), educational level and age (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), inclination to communicate in different EFL contexts (Lee & Drajati 2019; Lee & Hsieh 2019) and L2 performance (Keegan, 2017).

Regarding the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised:

RQ1: To what extent do academic confidence, and grit correlate to Iranian EFL students' L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online contexts?

RQ2: Is there any significant difference between Iranian EFL students' academic confidence, and grit in predicting their L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online contexts?

RQ3: How do Iranian EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities differ concerning their academic confidence, grit, and L2 WTC?

RQ4: To what extent do academic confidence, and grit correlate to L2 WTC of Iranian EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities?

RQ$_5$: Is there any significant difference between academic confidence, and grit in predicting L2 WTC of Iranian EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were 385 EFL students (118, 30.64% senior secondary school, 141, 36.62% language institute and 126, 32.72% university students) with the age range of 16 to 30 (Mage=21). The participants (male = 153, 39.74%; female = 232, 60.26%) were selected from six senior secondary schools, four private language institutes and two state universities in Tehran, Iran. The participants were selected based on a convenience sampling procedure. They were all native speakers of Farsi. The gender and age of the participants were not considered moderator variables in the present study.

3.2. Instruments

The following instruments were used in the current study.

3.2.1. L2 Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale

To check the students' overall L2 WTC and their L2 WTC in inside classroom, outside the classroom, and online classroom, the researchers used the L2 WTC Scale developed by Lee and Hsieh (2019). This 12-item scale is on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores showing more willing students to communicate in their L2. The L2 WTC Scale assesses EFL students' L2WTC in three main contexts, i.e., *inside classroom* (4 items), *outside classroom* (4 items), and *online classrooms* (4 items). For each particular context, the researchers used the items of that particular context separately to obtain the students' L2 WTC score in that specific context, and a higher score specifies a higher level of L2 WTC in that particular context. The L2 WTC Scale enjoys an acceptable validity level (Lee & Hsieh, 2019). Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of WTC inside classroom ($\alpha = 0.91$), WTC outside classroom ($\alpha = 0.86$), and WTC in online classrooms ($\alpha = 0.87$) was estimated (Lee & Hsieh, 2019). Additionally, the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the WTC in in-class ($\alpha = 0.75$), out-of-class ($\alpha = 0.76$), and online classrooms ($\alpha = 0.78$) were re-estimated in the present study.

3.2.2. Academic Confidence Scale (ACS)

The ACS (Sander & Sanders, 2006) was administered to assess the students' academic confidence level. This instrument, used frequently in the last few years, includes 24 five-point Likert-type items, with higher scores showing more

academically confident students. Sander and Sanders (2006) estimated the reliability of the ACS (α=0.88) and confirmed the validity of the Scale. Additionally, the reliability of the ACS turned out to be $\alpha = 0.83$ in the present study.

3.2.3. EFL-Grit Scale

The researchers used the EFL-Grit Scale developed by Ebadi, et al. (2018) to assess students' grit. This instrument, which is an Iranian context-specific grit scale, includes 26 five-point Likert scale items, with higher scores showing grittier students. The EFL-Grit Scale encompasses four main components, i.e., *trying hard to learn English (THLE)* (7 items), *having interest in learning English (ILE)* (6 items), *practicing a lot to learn English (PLE)* (7 items) and *having a goal for learning English (HGLE)* (6 items). The validity of this instrument was verified by Ebadi, et al. (2018), adopting expert views, pilot testing, and factor analysis. Additionally, the reliability of the EFL-Grit Scale was reported to be α=0.83 (Ebadi et al. 2018). However, the reliability of the EFL-Grit Scale in the present study was found to be $\alpha = 0.91$.

3.3. Procedure

The data collection process started in October 2020. The researchers collected the data from six senior secondary schools, four private language institutes, and two state universities located in Tehran, Iran. The EFL students were initially informed about the aims and objectives of the study and guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The researchers obtained informed consent for voluntary participation in this study. The research instruments of the study, i.e., *the L2 WTC Scale, the ACS,* and *the EFL-Grit Scale*, were prepared as described in the previous section and distributed among the participants. Since it was not possible to collect data from 385 EFL students simultaneously and in the same place, the researchers administrated the aforementioned research instruments of the study in one package at different times and on other days.

3.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used for each instrument. The normality of the data was checked using Skewness and Kurtosis ratios. Pearson's Correlation analyses were applied to study how EFL students' academic confidence, and grit are associated with their L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online contexts. One-way ANOVA was used to identify how EFL learners in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities differ concerning their academic confidence, grit, and L2 WTC. Pearson's Correlation analyses were also used to explore how academic confidence and grit of EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes and universities are

linked with their overall L2 WTC. Regression analyses were used to estimate the prediction power of EFL students' academic confidence and grit in predicting their L2 WTC in different communicative and educational contexts.

4. Results

As indicated in Table 1, the EFL students (n=385) reported above-neutral levels of their academic confidence (M = 3.27, SD = 0.79) and grit (M = 3.07, SD = 0.90) as their mean score was above the neutral agreement (=3) on the 5-point Likert scaled instruments, i.e., *the ACS, and the EFL-Grit Scale*. Moreover, concerning EFL students' WTC, the results revealed that WTC in online context (M = 3.85, SD = 1.05) had the highest mean score, followed by WTC out-of-class (M = 3.09, SD = 1.05), and WTC in-class (M = 2.92, SD = 1.05). Furthermore, as depicted in Table 1, the distribution of academic confidence, grit, WTC inside classroom, WTC outside classroom, and WTC in online context scores was perfectly normal as the skewness and kurtosis ratio scores fell within the acceptable range of -1.96 and +1.96.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Confidence	385	3.27	.79	-.11	-.30	24	.83
Grit	385	3.07	.90	.20	-.24	26	.91
WTC Inside Classroom	385	2.92	1.12	.39	.44	4	.75
WTC Outside Classroom	385	3.09	1.05	.65	-.72	4	.76
WTC in Online Context	385	3.85	1.05	.74	.42	4	.78

4.1. Findings of RQ₁

Pearson's Correlation analyses were applied to check how EFL students' academic confidence and grit are associated with their L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online classrooms.

Table 2
Correlations Among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic Confidence	-	.49[**]	.24[**]	.18[**]	.20[**]
2.Grit		-	.39[**]	.38[**]	.36[**]
3.WTC Inside Classroom			-	.62[**]	.35[**]
4.WTC Outside Classroom				-	.50[**]

5.WTC in Online Context	-

Note: **$p < .01$.

As shown in Table 2, EFL students' academic confidence had a significant positive association with their L2 WTC in in-class ($r = 0.24$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$), out-of-class ($r = 0.18$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$), and online ($r = 0.20$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$) contexts. Likewise, EFL students' grit was found to have a significant positive link with their L2 WTC in in-class ($r = 0.39$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$), out-of-class ($r = 0.38$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$), and online ($r = 0.36$, $n = 385$, $p<.01$) contexts.

4.2. Findings of RQ$_2$

Regression analyses were used to estimate the prediction power of EFL students' academic confidence, and grit in predicting their L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online classrooms.

Table 3

Regression Analyses (1)

	WTC Inside Classroom			WTC Outside Classroom			WTC in Online Context		
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p
Academic Confidence	.06	1.25	.20	-.00	-.03	.97	.03	.66	.51
Grit	.35	6.66	.00**	.38	7.02	.00**	.34	6.24	.00**
R^2	.15			.14			.13		
Adjusted R^2	.15			.14			.12		
F	35.75			32.39			28.62		

As is evident from Table 3, EFL students' grit was a significant positive predictor of WTC inside classroom ($\beta=0.35$, $t=6.66$, $p<.01$), WTC outside classroom ($\beta=0.38$, $t=7.02$, $p<.01$), and WTC in an online context ($\beta=0.34$, $t=6.24$, $p<.01$). Moreover, EFL students' academic confidence did not predict L2 WTC in any of the above mentioned contexts.

4.3. Findings of RQ$_3$

As stated earlier, one-way ANOVA was used to identify how EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities differ concerning their academic confidence, grit, and L2 WTC. Table 4 shows descriptive statistics of the groups.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Groups

	Senior Secondary School (n=118)	Language Institute (n=141)	University (n=126)

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Academic Confidence	2.83	.69	3.29	.86	3.66	.53
Grit	1.99	.23	3.42	.77	3.70	.44
WTC	2.55	.61	3.65	.55	3.64	.91

With respect to the academic confidence, the results of one-way ANOVA revealed that EFL university students (M= 3.66, SD = 0.53) scored the highest level, followed by EFL language institute students (M= 3.29, SD= 0.86), and EFL senior secondary school students (M= 2.83, SD = 0.69) [F (2, 382) = 41.24, p < .01].

Likewise, concerning grit, the results of one-way ANOVA indicated that EFL university students (M= 3.70, SD = 0.44) showed a higher grit level, than EFL language institute students (M= 3.42, SD= 0.77) and EFL senior secondary school students (M= 1.99, SD = 0.23) [F (2, 382) = 340.48, p < .01].

Table 5
One-way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic	Between Groups	42.58	2	21.29	41.24	.00
Confidence	Within Groups	197.22	382	.51		
	Total	239.81	384			
Grit	Between Groups	203.58	2	101.79	340.48	.00
	Within Groups	114.20	382	.29		
	Total	317.78	384			
WTC	Between Groups	97.89	2	48.94	97.05	.00
	Within Groups	192.63	382	.50		
	Total	290.52	384			

Notably, concerning WTC, the results of one-way ANOVA showed that EFL university students (M= 3.64, SD = 0.91) and EFL language institute students (M= 3.65, SD= 0.55) showed a higher level of WTC, than EFL senior secondary school students (M= 2.55, SD = 0.61) [F (2, 382) = 97.05, p < .01]. Interestingly, no significant difference was found in L2WTC level of EFL university students (M= 3.64, SD = 0.91) and EFL language institute students (M= 3.65, SD= 0.55).

4.4. Findings of RQ$_4$

Pearson's Correlation analyses were applied to identify how academic confidence and grit of EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes and universities are linked with their overall L2 WTC.

Table 6
Correlations Among Variables for Groups

	Senior Secondary School (n=118)			Language Institute (n=141)			University (n=126)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
1. Academic Confidence	-	.67**	.44**	-	.23**	.40**	-	.43**	.40**
2. Grit		-	.69**		-	.48**		-	.49**
3. WTC			-			-			-

Note: **$p < .01$.

As presented in Table 6, academic confidence had a positive link with senior secondary school students' WTC ($r = 0.44$, $n = 118$, $p<.01$), language institute students' WTC ($r = 0.40$, $n = 141$, $p<.01$), and university students' WTC ($r = 0.40$, $n = 126$, $p<.01$). Likewise, grit had a positive association with senior secondary school students' WTC ($r = 0.69$, $n = 118$, $p<.01$), language institute students' WTC ($r = 0.48$, $n = 141$, $p<.01$), and university students' WTC ($r = 0.49$, $n = 126$, $p<.01$).

It is worth noting that there existed a high association between grit and WTC of senior secondary school students ($r = 0.69$, $n = 118$, $p<.01$), while no such strong association was found among other groups, i.e., language institute and university students.

4.5. Findings of RQ$_5$

Regression analyses were run to estimate the prediction power of academic confidence, and grit in predicting L2 WTC of EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes and universities.

Table 7
Regression Analyses (2)

	Senior Secondary School (n=118)			Language Institute (n=141)			University (n=126)		
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p
Academic Confidence	-.04	-.51	.60	.31	4.34	.00**	.23	2.78	.00**
Grit	.73	8.07	.00**	.41	5.76	.00**	.39	4.70	.00**
R^2	.48			.32			.29		
Adjusted R^2	.48			.31			.28		
F	55.05			33.75			25.42		

Table 7 shows that academic confidence significantly predicts only WTC of

language institute students (β=0.31, t=4.34, p<.01) and university students (β=0.23, t=2.78, p<.01), while grit was found to predict WTC of all the groups significantly (i.e., senior secondary school students (β=0.73, t=8.07, p<.01), language institute students (β=0.41, t=5.76, p<.01), university students (β=0.39, t=4.70, p<.01)).

5. Discussion

The results revealed that Iranian EFL students' academic confidence was significantly associated with their L2 WTC in the three aforementioned communicative contexts. It indicates that, regardless of the communicative contexts, when Iranian EFL students perceived themselves academically as more confident and capable of communicating in English and had lower levels of apprehension for speaking, they were more enthusiastic and eager to share in English. That is, Iranian EFL students, who felt more academically confident were likely to make more efforts to begin communication in any of the three aforementioned communicative contexts. The findings align with those of Khajavy, et al. (2016), who reported a significant association between EFL learners' self-confidence and L2 WTC. Some other scholars and investigators reported a similar result (e.g., Cetinkaya, 2005; Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Pyun et al. 2014).

The results also indicated that Iranian EFL students' grit had a significant link with their L2 WTC in the three aforesaid communicative contexts. According to Keegan (2017), those students who make a constant attempt to attain their long-term objective such as speaking English fluently and accurately deemed to seek out more opportunities to practice their communicative skills and develop their English proficiency. Supporting our findings, Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) held that grittier students have a tendency to study longer and more patiently and concluded that such traits have a significant link with higher academic accomplishments and successes. The study results are consistent with those of Lee and Hsieh (2019), who found a linear relationship between grit, and L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class and online contexts among Taiwanese EFL learners.

The results also showed that Iranian EFL students' grit significantly predicted WTC in three communicative contexts. In light of the findings of this study, it can be claimed that EFL students' grit was a significant predictor of their WTC. These findings of the present study are in line with those of Lee and Hsieh (2019). They concluded that grit was a significant predictor of WTC in different communicative contexts among Taiwanese EFL undergraduate students. The findings can also be supported by those of Duckworth et al. (2007), who reported grit was a significant predictor of success. The study results also showed that academic confidence did not predict L2 WTC in any of the three abovementioned communicative contexts. However, our results contrast with those of Lee and Hsieh (2019) and Khajavy et al. (2016), who found that students' confidence significantly predicted their L2 WTC.

Concerning academic confidence and grit, the results revealed that university students scored the highest level, followed by language institute students and senior secondary school students. Concerning academic confidence, the findings can be justified by Shoemaker's (2010) argument that EFL university learners typically face more notions related to language learning theories and, as a result, get more awareness and understanding about various academic confidence improving strategies. Likewise, high academic confidence of language institute students might be due to the more focused confidence-building approaches and techniques used and applied in such private language institutes.

Concerning grit, the findings can be explained by the fact that typically Iranian EFL university and language institute students learn English to pursue different long-term goals such as studying and living abroad or entering prestigious universities, in the case of language institute students, and also gaining access to information (Taguchi et al. 2009). However, the static and inflexible nature of education in senior secondary schools in Iran (Soodmand Afshar & Hamzavi, 2017) might be the root of low levels of academic confidence and grit among EFL senior secondary school students

Notably, pertaining to WTC, the results showed that university and language institute students showed a higher level of WTC, than EFL senior secondary school students. At the same time, no significant difference was found in the L2WTC level of university and EFL language institute students. A plausible explanation might be that, in the Iranian context, senior secondary schools are primarily teacher-centered. At the same time, private language institutes and universities are naturally communicative, therefore, providing EFL students with more and more openings to use their L2 language, i.e., English. One reason for the lower level of L2 WTC of EFL senior secondary school students' is the fact that EFL senior secondary school students do not have sufficient incentive to initiate a communication in their L2 mostly due to the non-interactive nature of their English classes. According to Soodmand Afshar and Hamzavi (2017), in senior secondary schools, EFL learners are rarely given real chances to communicate with both the educator and classmates.

There were two significant results concerning the way academic confidence and grit were associated with L2 WTC among EFL students in different educational contexts. First, academic confidence had a significant link with L2 WTC among Iranian EFL (state-sector) senior secondary school, (private-sector) language institute, and state university students. One plausible justification might be the Eccles et al. (1989) discussion that students' academic confidence affects their L2 performance through the stimulus on the perception of a task. Moreover, it is believed that students with high academic confidence typically create a sensation of calmness when approaching a complex task such as L2 communication and hence are more willing to initiate communication in English (Stevens, 2005). The findings are supported by those of Leger and Storch (2009), who reported a significant association between L2 self-confidence and WTC among language learners. The results of this study are also corroborated by those

of Peng and Woodrow (2010), Cetinkaya (2005), and Hashimoto (2002), who found that L2 self-confidence was significantly positively correlated with students' WTC. Second, grit had a significant relationship with L2 WTC among Iranian EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and state universities. A possible explanation might be gritty students, specifically in the EFL contexts, make an effort to focus on their activities and tasks and apply various stimulating strategies to practice reasonably to complete an action (U. S. Department of Education 2013). In the same vein, Von Culina et al. (2014) held that grittier students are more likely to seek meaning in their activities and tasks and therefore are more willing to commence communicate in different contexts. According to Moeller and Catalano (2015), the most successful students show the superior set of personal traits such as grit that supports them reaching their full potential mainly since gritty students are liable to work firmer and remain devoted to reaching challenging long-term goals such as improving L2 communication skills. The findings are in agreement with those of Credé et al. (2017), Duckworth et al. (2007), and Duckworth et al. (2011). They found that grit had a significantly positive association with academic performance.

The results also indicated that grit significantly predicted L2 WTC among Iranian EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and state universities, while academic confidence merely predicted L2 WTC of language institutes and university students. Based on the findings, grit was the best predictor of L2 WTC of EFL students in senior secondary schools, language institutes, and universities. In other words, the findings revealed that grittier EFL students are more likely and expected to begin English communication in diverse educational contexts. Individuals with a higher level of grit and perseverance of effort would be more determined and flexible in their endeavors and deem to reflect an individual that tends to work conscientiously toward fulfilling different challenging tasks such as L2 communication and speaking, therefore more enthusiastically initiating L2 communication in different educational contexts and situations. The study findings confirm those of Lee (2020), who found that grit significantly predicted L2 WTC of Korean EFL students in various educational contexts. Also, different scholars and researchers (e.g., Aparicio et al. 2017; Lee & Drajati 2019; Lee & Hsieh 2019; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014) reported that grit had a positive role in the enhancement of L2 WTC of language learners in different contexts.

6. Conclusion

As Hashemian and Heidari Soureshjani (2011) noted, senior secondary school classes in Iran are primarily teacher centered, thus EFL instructors are suggested to play their role in promoting students' L2 WTC by providing an approachable and stress-free environment to facilitate appropriate contact with the learners. Iranian EFL educators can remove the distance between learners and teachers in teacher centered classes and make communicative contexts more stimulating by

incorporating humor and jokes (Peng, 2009), challenging and communicative tasks (Khajavy et al. 2016). Furthermore, EFL students are also recommended to dare to use English in different communicative contexts in general and online context in particular, which is essential in nowadays globalized online world. As Dewaele et al. (2018) asserted, it is vital for L2 students need to be in a non-frightening, positive emotional environment wherein linguistic trialing is acknowledged, in which errors do not bring about derision, and wherein L2 WTC is cultivated.Since competence and confidence naturally go hand in hand (Cole et al. 2007), therefore, EFL teachers are suggested to apply different techniques and methods (i.e., rewards, praises, include other materials) that support students in various educational and communicative contexts to nurture their academic confidence. One simple way might be treating language learners by their names, which naturally makes them motivated and helps them develop more academic confidence.

As grit had value for all Iranian EFL students in different educational and communicative contexts, EFL teachers are thus recommended to boost their students' grit by making it a buzzword in their schoolrooms and assigning more long-term activities and tasks. For instance, EFL educators can have a friendly discussion with their learners to help them recognize the fact that their long-term language learning objectives and goals are crucial and hence ask them to set some practical, precise, and specified long-term objectives and aims for their language learning with a practical and factual time frame in mind. As Ebadi et al. (2018) suggested, grit is developed through holding different workshops and explicitly training EFL students to have grit, supporting them while considering obstacles, and difficulties in the language learning process and making mistakes and errors as good progress signs. One useful strategy to teach Iranian EFL students to distinguish and confront various obstacles in the processes of their language learning might be applying the method of 'wish, outcome, obstacle and plan' (Oettingen, 2014). Another effective grit-building strategy might be incorporating more learner reflection with different tasks, accomplishments, or assessments. Additionally, EFL teachers are also suggested to maintain high expectations in various educational and communicative contexts and encourage their learners to keep trying and persevering. It is believed that lowering standards foster no grit in students. Like all other studies, this study suffers from some limitations. The results and interpretations of the present study are based on self-reporting questionnaires. They therefore are subject to the inherent limitations of self-reporting, which are constantly argued by scholars (e.g., Dornyei, 2007) in the field. Hence, a future investigation needs to apply other data collection procedures such as interviews. The use of various journal entries, end-of-semester portfolios, and observations might have also served as a good instrument to obtain data about Iranian EFL students' academic confidence, grit and L2 WTC, respectively.

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