



The Role of L2 Motivational Self System and Grit in EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate: A Study of Public School vs. Private English Language Institute Learners

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Learning a second language (L2) is analogous to a journey replete with setbacks and discouragements. Given the pivotal role of communication in L2 learning, researchers have set out to identify factors that may influence L2 learners' willingness to communicate (L2 WTC). To this end, the present comparative study attempts to investigate the role of the L2 motivational self-system and grit in learners' L2 WTC in two different educational settings: public schools and private language institutes. L2 motivational self-system includes ideal L2 self (ILS) and ought-to L2self (OLS). Grit also comprises two lower-order constructs: perseverance of effort (POE) and consistency of interest (COI), which are examined separately in this study. The data collected through an online survey from 308 participants were analyzed using the Mann Whitney *u*-test, Spearman's rho, and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed a stronger ILS, POE, and a higher level of WTC among language institute learners. In contrast, public school students showed stronger OLS and lower levels of WTC. Moreover, unlike its counterpart, COI did not display a significant correlation or predictive power with/over L2 WTC in either context. The findings suggest that low levels of ILS and lack of POE can lead to lower levels of L2 WTC.

Keywords: willingness to communicate, L2 motivational self-system, grit, classroom enjoyment, EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

Promoting the target language use is an inseparable part of second language acquisition (SLA) pedagogy and research. For a long time, SLA was dominated by structural approaches, focusing on proficiency in vocabulary and grammar. However, with the blooming of communicative approaches, there has been a significant shift in scholars' perspectives toward SLA. They realized that communication should be considered not just as an essential part but also as the goal of second/foreign language learning (Fallah, 2014; Yashima et al., 2018). However, many scholars have pointed out that people differ in their willingness to communicate (WTC) generally and in the process of L2 acquisition specifically. WTC, in essence, highlights the fact that some individuals

seek chances to speak while others escape them and remain silent (MacIntyre, 2020). During the past decades, WTC has attracted vast research attention from L1 and L2 researchers as a critical factor influencing communication behavior.

Regarding L2 WTC, researchers' main concern was the dysfunctional aspects of non-communication (Richmond and McCroskey, 1989) while aiming to improve communication by removing these hindering constructs that prevent people from initiating or participating in oral communication. Still, with the blooming of positive psychology (PP) and the works of educational psychologists, more attention has been directed to the link between positive variables and L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al., 2019).

Grit is a recently proposed positive internal variable that has not been studied sufficiently in relation to SLA as much as other internal variables such as motivation and language aptitude. Defined as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" by Duckworth et al. (2007, p. 1087), grit is believed to be a significant predictor of success and performance. Grit can play a crucial role in the L2 acquisition process since the process requires extended effort, perseverance, and patience (Alamer, 2021).

Another variable investigated in relation to WTC is L2 motivation. Early researchers used Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model as the basis of their investigation. Nevertheless, due to the limited applicability of this model in EFL contexts, Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) model garnered more attention recently. This new conceptualization of L2 motivation re-oriented the concept of motivation and dealt with possible selves and future self-guides in learning an L2. According to this model, there exist three primary sources of motivation in learning an L2: ILS, OLS, and L2 learning experience. Drawing upon L2MSS, researchers have examined the link between EFL students' ILS and OLS with L2 WTC (Peng, 2015; Yung, 2019; Lee and Lee, 2020; Lee et al., 2020).

Many language scholars have investigated the connection between L2 WTC and positive variables (e.g., MacIntyre and Mercer, 2014; Dewaele and Dewaele, 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there is still a paucity of comparative research on L2 WTC, especially between EFL learners studying English at different educational institutions. This paucity is strongly felt in regard to English programs in Iran which have always been subject to criticism in relation to L2 WTC. The significance of communication inside the language classroom is more highlighted in EFL contexts, such as Iran, where EFL learners find few if any, opportunities to communicate with native speakers of English.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Positive Psychology in L2

In the last two decades, positive psychology (PP) has caused an everlasting revolution in mainstream psychology, deviating from an exclusive focus on problems to more positive dimensions of humans' minds (Dewaele et al., 2019). Before the advent of PP, psychology was regarded as a science to repair the damaged.

It was replete with studies on "psychological disorders and the negative effects of environmental stressors such as parental divorce, death, and physical and sexual abuse" (Gallagher and Lopez, 2009, p. 4). Around the turn of the millennium, psychologists realized that psychology is not just about mental illnesses and how to heal them. With the rise of PP, these researchers started investing in positive aspects of human experience, such as hope, love, joy, optimism, etc. (Dewaele et al., 2019). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), as the pioneers of the field, explain that PP aims to "catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities" (p. 5).

Throughout the years, a cognitive perspective dominated the SLA and applied linguistics resulting in sheer ignorance of the human psyche (Dewaele et al., 2019). With the flourishing of humanistic approaches such as the *whole-person approach* in the SLA domain, affective variables were brought into the spotlight. However, researchers believe that even after thriving of scholars' interest in affective variables, positive emotions have been overshadowed by negative emotions (Seligman et al., 2006). Therefore, little attention has been given to the role of positive variables in second and foreign language teaching and learning. Under the umbrella of PP, there has also been a shift from a deep-rooted focus on negative emotions, especially anxiety (Jiang and Dewaele, 2019) and cognitive perspectives (Li, 2020) in the SLA, to a more holistic analysis of emotions. Scholars have started to recognize the positive and negative emotional dimensions of language learning as significant assets. Before that, emotions were "poorly studied, poorly understood, seen as inferior to rational thought" (Swain, 2013, p. 11).

In accordance with positive psychology, researchers have started a *positive renaissance* or, in other words, a *flowering of positive psychology in the SLA*, too (Lee, 2020). Based on this view, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), pointed out that L2 teachers can help learners increase the degree of students' positive emotions in the classroom, thereby "broaden a person's perspective [and] opening the individual to absorb the language" (p. 193). PP in the SLA domain has been studied in relation to a variety of perspectives such as academic achievement, positive L2 self (e.g., Kikuchi and Lake, 2021), motivation (e.g., Martin, 2005), emotional intelligence (Li, 2020), WTC (e.g., Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021), and classroom enjoyment (Jin and Zhang, 2018). With the advent of PP, another variable gardening attention in the SLA domain is grit, a positive, non-cognitive trait which has been discussed in detail in the next section.

Grit

As the pioneers of the grit construct, Duckworth et al. (2007) defined the notion in a broad sense concerning success in the workplace, military, education, and sports. Grit gains immediate relevance in the SLA field, especially with the blooming of PP in this domain, since successful proficiency of an L2 is highly dependent on learners' sustained effort (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013). Researchers have established that grittier EFL students succeed in achieving higher scores in English (Strayhorn, 2014; Khajavy et al., 2021), employ persistent effort during learning

an L2 (Lake, 2015), and experience more positive classroom emotions (Wei et al., 2019).

Grit as a higher-ordered variable comprises two lower-order constructs: *Perseverance of Effort* (POE), which refers to a person's continued investment of energy in long-term pursuits; and *Consistency of Interests and passion for long-term goals* (COI), which refers to a person's durable passion for high-order goals over a long period regardless of failures, disappointments, or challenges (Lee, 2020; Teimouri et al., 2020). Since grit is not a fixed personality trait and can be malleable and teachable, the importance of measuring and estimating grit is gaining unprecedented attention. Duckworth et al.'s (2007) grit is a domain-general variable that could be applied to various fields such as military, workplace, education, and sports. As Teimouri et al. (2020) explained, there are two main reasons behind the incongruent findings of research on personality variables such as grit in the SLA field: "(a) its focus on super-traits instead of lower-traits with more relevancy to L2 learning and (b) its use of general personality measures instead of the situation- or domain-specific measures that assess students' traits in L2 situations" (p. 32). As a result, L2 researchers have recently extended the concept to L2 learning and developed L2 domain-specific grit notions.

Among these scholars, Teimouri et al. (2020) and Alamer (2021) proposed L2 domain-specific grit scales to help researchers in addressing grit in the language studies domain. The former examined the 12-scale validity through principal component analysis (PCA), which resulted in the reduction of the items from 12 items in the original scale to 9 items. They explained that grit as a higher-order factor consisting of two lower-order elements, namely POE and COI, should be examined separately. The latter, however, retained the 12 items and used bifactor-CFA to account for the specific constructs, COI and POE, and the general construct, Grit. The study examined the effect of L2 grit on future attainment of vocabulary. The study illustrated a weak predictive power of initial levels of grit on subsequent L2 learning. However, the author found that only students who sustained their levels of grit over time showed later language achievement. For this study that was conducted in Saudi Arabia, the author developed a 12-item L2 domain-specific grit scale. In the present study, we utilized Teimouri et al.'s (2020) grit scale.

L2 Motivational Self-System

Motivation is of great significance within the field of SLA. To highlight the importance of motivation in language learning, Dörnyei (2005) argues that motivation is the key impetus to start learning an L2 and to carry on through the long and arduous journey. He also points out that "all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent" (p. 65). While early studies on L2 motivation investigated the issue through Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, the concept was soon challenged by researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) who questioned the model's efficiency for addressing the expanding FL learning environment. As an answer to a call for a reconceptualization of motivation theory and inspired by self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and possible selves theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986), Dörnyei (2005, 2009) presented a prominent model of learner motivation that is L2 motivational self-system. L2MSS

has three components; ILS is the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self; OLS refers to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to avoid possible negative outcomes (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). And L2 Learning Experience focuses on the learner's present experience, covering a range of situated, "executive" motives related to the immediate learning environment (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015, p. 88).

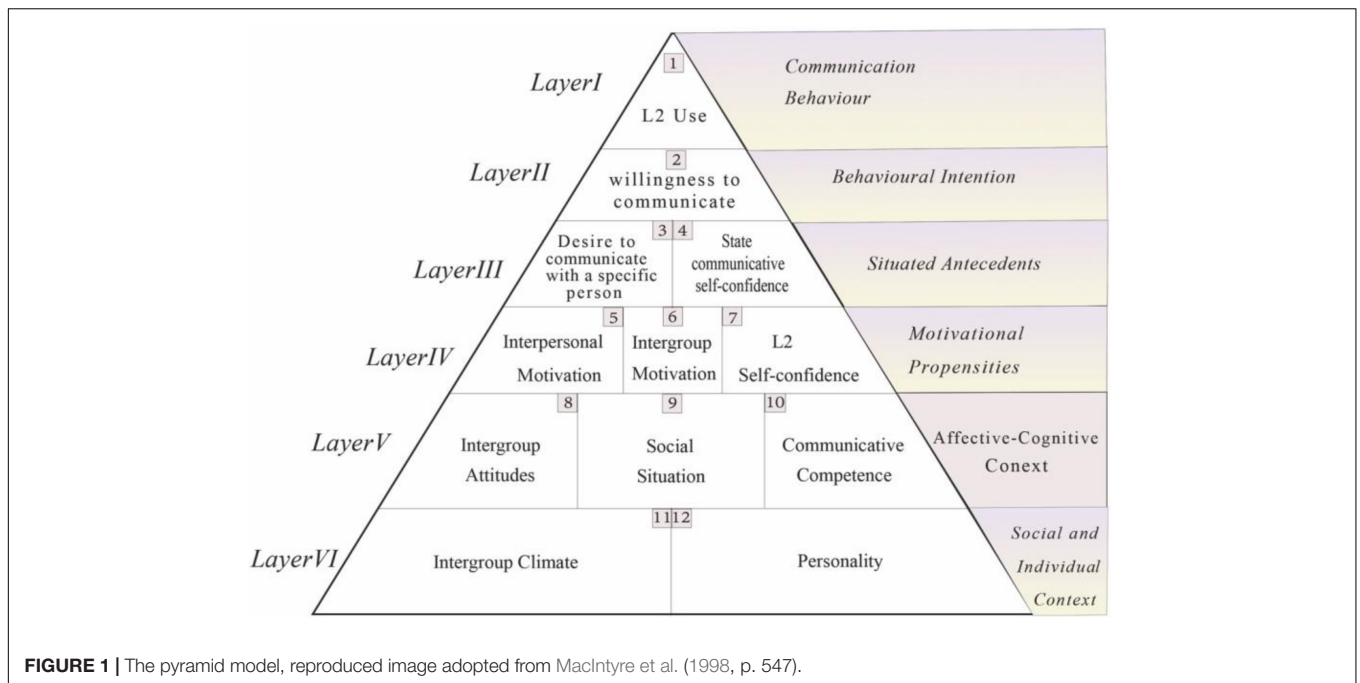
Over the past years, multiple empirical studies have been conducted to test and validate L2MSS in various learning environments (e.g., Csizér and Kormos, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009; Kim and Kim, 2014). All the studies in the literature report solid confirmation for the proposed L2MSS. Inspired by Dörnyei's (2005) argument regarding a positive relationship between the ILS and L2 WTC, a new strand of research has focused on the relationship between L2 WTC and L2MSS. Munezane (2013) was the first researcher who tested the path between the ILS and L2 WTC and approved Dörnyei's (2005) hypothesis. Ever since, various studies have lent further support to the relationship between L2MSS components and L2 WTC (see Munezane, 2015, 2016; Darling and Chanyoo, 2018; Zulkepli, 2020).

L2 Learners' Willingness to Communicate

Verbal communication holds a central place among humans. The importance of *talk* in human interpersonal communication is an undeniable fact. As Khajavy et al. (2018) put it, the plethora of investigations on communication is because having communicative competence does not necessarily imply a willingness to use the language for authentic communication by itself. This can explain why some people with an acceptable linguistic competence may avoid communication and stay silent. In contrast, some with partial competence seek every opportunity to speak, which brings us to the issue of WTC.

Throughout the last decades, considerable research has been conducted on the various dimensions involved in WTC as an influential aspect of communication in L2. MacIntyre et al. (2003, p. 590) define WTC as "the probability of initiating communication, specifically talking when the opportunity arises." In its early stages, WTC was considered as a personality variable that is stable across time and in different situational contexts. More recently, however, L2 WTC has been presented not only as a stable tendency toward communication but also as a situational trait. Nowadays, researchers believe that internal variables such as L2 motivation and attitude toward L2 and external variables such as inter-group climate and social support can influence learners' L2 WTC (Zhang et al., 2019).

In their groundbreaking model of L2 WTC known as the Heuristic model of WTC in L2 (Figure 1; MacIntyre et al., 1998) emphasized that L2 WTC is dependent on complex interactions of varying factors such as context, personality traits, cognition, and emotion. This model illustrates the multifaceted effects of different individual and situational variables, including the variables of interest to the present study (i.e., grit and L2MSS), in each layer on L2 communication. This model consists of six layers which include 12 constructs. In this model, the above layers



(I, II, and III) include “more changeable, and context-dependent” (state) variables, and at the bottom layers of the pyramid (IV, V, and VI) more “stable social individual context” (trait) variables are placed (Dewaele and Pavelescu, 2021, p. 3).

Previous Studies

Lee (2020) examined the effects of grit and classroom enjoyment on Korean FL students' WTC. To obtain the data, he utilized Duckworth et al.'s (2007) grit scale, Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) FLE scale, and a five-item WTC scale (Lee et al., 2020). Lee realized that POE and classroom enjoyment (CE) correlate positively with L2 WTC among the participants. He explained that students with higher levels of POE who experience a positive environment in the classroom are more likely to show higher levels of WTC. On the other hand, COI was not observed as a significant predictor of L2 WTC. Another important finding of this study was the positive relationship between L2 WTC and the length of time devoted to learning English. In other words, students with more experience learning English tend to communicate more than others; on the contrary, Lee found out that there is a negative correlation between the age of students and their level of L2 WTC.

Cheng (2021) investigated the effect of language-specific grit and future self-guides on Taiwanese college English students' L2 WTC. In his study, L2 grit was measured using the 9-item scale developed by Teimouri et al. (2020), and L2 selves were estimated by Tseng et al.'s (2020) 16-item scale measuring four different L2 self-configuration (i.e., ILS/own, ILS/other, OLS/own, OLS/other). The data regarding the L2 WTC was collected using a questionnaire developed by Lee and Hsieh (2019). In disagreement with Lee (2020), the results of this study indicated that both POE and COI could predict L2 WTC. Yet, Cheng (2021) realized that COI showed a far less predictive power

compared to POE. Besides L2 grit, future L2 self-guides exerted a predictive power on L2 WTC. While both ILS, own and other, played a predictive role, only OLS/own could affect WTC, and OLS/other failed to do so.

Bursali and Öz (2017) focused on one of the components of L2MSS, that is, the ILS, and explored its relationship with L2 WTC of Turkish EFL learners. The data collected through a questionnaire from 56 students showed a positive and significant relationship between learners' ILS and their L2 WTC inside the classroom. The findings indicated that 32.1 percent of the participants had high, 30.4 percent had moderate, and 37.5 percent had low L2 WTC inside the classroom. However, they have noted that due to this study's limited sample, a generalization cannot be made concerning the relationship between L2MSS and L2 WTC at large.

Ghasemi (2018) set out to probe deeper into the WTC of Iranian English language major students and determine the variables contributing to L2 WTC in a single mode. The interrelationships between motivation, perceptual learning styles, cognitive variables, and language proficiency were under focus. Specifically, the role of the ILS, visual learning styles, and L2 confidence in predicting learners' language proficiency and WTC in real life were analyzed. 150 university freshmen students answered a five-section questionnaire. The results revealed that visual learning styles positively impact the ILS and are indirectly connected to L2 proficiency through the mediating function of motivation. These relationships support the fact that learners with more vivid images of the distance between their actual and ILS find language learning a goal-oriented activity and, consequently, are encouraged to attain higher levels of language proficiency. The desire to fill the gap between their current and ideal selves increases learner self-confidence, leading to higher levels of WTC.

To better understand the link between the ILS and L2 WTC, Lan et al. (2021) conducted a study that proposed a moderated mediation model incorporating grit and psychological shyness. To this end, the data were collected through a four-section questionnaire from 842 undergraduate students in three Chinese universities. Their findings revealed both direct and mediated links between the ILS and L2 WTC. ILS was positively associated with L2 WTC, and grit played a mediating role in this relationship. The authors argue that language learners with clear ILS images are grittier in achieving their language learning goals. Furthermore, learners with higher grit levels are more successful in facing learning tasks, such as participating in communicative activities.

In the present study, the aim is investigating the role of L2MSS and grit in EFL learners' L2 WTC in two different educational settings of public schools and private language institutes. To this end, the following research questions have been posited:

1. Is there a significant difference between the level of L2 WTC of Iranian EFL learners in public schools and private institutes?
2. To what extent do L2 grit (POE and COI) and L2MSS correlate with Iranian EFL public school students' L2 WTC?
3. To what extent do L2 grit (POE and COI) and L2MSS correlate with Iranian EFL private institute learners' L2 WTC?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

A total of 308 Iranian EFL learners from both public schools and private institutes completed a survey. Based on convenience sampling, the participants selected from the public schools were studying in the 11th and 12th grades at the time. As for the institute sample, language learners with elementary (A1) and pre-intermediate (A2) levels of English proficiency were selected so that the two groups of participants were at the same level of language proficiency. These levels were based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners to C2 for advanced students. Gender was not considered a variable in our study; hence, the inequality of gender distribution was not an issue. **Table 1** represents the demographic characteristics of each group that took part in this study.

Instruments

The data for each variable of interest were collected using an online survey consisting of four parts, viz. demographic information, L2 WTC questionnaire (Peng and Woodrow, 2010), grit questionnaire (Teimouri et al., 2020), and L2MSS questionnaire (Taguchi et al., 2009). In the first part of the survey, demographic information, two items in the public schools' questionnaire version were added to detect and remove those public-school students who were simultaneously attending private institutes and to identify students' grades. The

TABLE 1 | The participants' demographic information.

		Public school (N = 132)	Private institute (N = 176)
Gender	Male	63 (48%)	109 (61%)
	Female	69 (52%)	67 (39%)
	Total	132	176
Educational stage		11th G* (45.5%)	A1* (51%)
		12th G (55.5%)	A2* (49%)
Age	Mean	16.5	17.2

*G = Grade, A1 = Elementary, A2 = Pre-intermediate.

demographic section of the questionnaire administered to the learners in the private institutes also contained an additional item regarding their current English proficiency level. Moreover, to prevent age differences from affecting our results, the data collected from those institute learners older than 18 and younger than 15 were excluded from the analysis. The details of the different parts of the questionnaire are detailed below.

The L2 Learners' Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire

A modified version of L2 WTC by Weaver (2005) adopted by Peng and Woodrow (2010) was used in this study. The participants answered the 10 items such as *I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English* on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (definitely not willing) to 5 (definitely willing).

The Grit Questionnaire

The researchers employed the L2 domain-specific grit scale developed by Teimouri et al. (2020) that consisted of two separate sections, namely POE and COI, in the classroom. Overall, the questionnaire consisted of 9 items including 5 items regarding POE such as *I am a diligent English language learner* and 4 items regarding COI such as *I am not as interested in learning English as I used to be*. The participants could select their responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not like me at all) to 5 (very much like me).

The L2 Motivational Self-System Questionnaire

To investigate L2MSS, 20 questions were adopted from Taguchi et al.'s (2009) study of L2MSS in three contexts of Japan, China, and Iran. To suit the purpose of the present study, among the 76 items of this scale, ten items measuring the ILS including *I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners* and ten items such as *study English because close friends of mine think it is important* measuring the OLS were adopted. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was utilized in the present study.

Data Collection Procedure

To collect the required data for the present research, the following procedure was adopted. First, the questionnaires were translated into Persian by two professional translators. Google Forms was chosen to design an online survey. A pilot study was conducted with 50 students (25 public school students and 25 private

TABLE 2 | The reliability statistics for the three questionnaires of the survey.

Survey sections	Cronbach's alpha	N
WTC	0.97	10
POE	0.95	5
COI	0.95	4
ILS	0.93	10
OLS	0.76	10

language institute learners) from the target population. Based on the participants' comments, the translation of some of the items were edited to avoid confusion. After obtaining the schools ($N = 5$) and institutes ($N = 6$) board approval, the survey link was sent to the participants. The participants were assured of anonymity, and their participation was entirely voluntary.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of each questionnaire comprising the survey. As seen in **Table 2**, the questionnaires enjoyed high levels of reliability to elicit L2 WTC, Grit, and L2MSS from all the respondents in public schools and private institutes.

For the first research question, the mean and standard deviation for each group were calculated (**Table 3**). The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that the mean of L2 WTC in public schools was 2.56, and the standard deviation was 1.29. **Table 3** displays the descriptive statistics for WTC, L2 Grit (POE and COI), and L2MSS (ILS and OLS) in public schools and private language institutes. The respondents in public schools mean performance regarding these variables was above 2, which indicates a medium performance on L2 Grit (POE and COI), and L2MSS (ILS and OLS).

The mean of L2 WTC in private institutes was 3.82, and the standard deviation was 1.22, revealing that the participants' level of L2 WTC was also medium. The mean for POE, COI, ILS, and OLS, which were 3.90, 2.33, 2.61, and 3.31, respectively, indicated

TABLE 4 | Mann-Whitney U -test results.

Mann-whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymptotic. Sig. (2 tailed)
6789.50	15567.500	-6.278	0.000

that the participants' POE, COI, ILS, and OLS were at medium range for private institute learners. The POE has the highest mean (3.90) compared with that obtained for COI, ILS, and OLS.

To investigate how public school students and private institute learners differ in their level of L2 WTC, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were first conducted to see if the data were normally distributed. The results showed the data did not enjoy normal distribution; therefore, the Mann-Whitney U -test, the non-parametric equivalent of the independent t -test, was used. As shown in **Table 4**, the Mann-Whitney U -test showed a significant difference between the level of L2 WTC in private and public school learners ($U = 6789.50, p < 0.001$).

Correlational Analyses

The Spearman correlation was employed to investigate the relationship between L2 WTC, L2 Grit (POE and COI), and L2MSS (ILS and OLS) among the EFL learners in public schools

TABLE 5 | Spearman's rho correlation, grit, L2MSS, and WTC for public school students and private institute learners.

			PS students' WTC	PI learners WTC
Spearman's rho	Grit (POE)	Correlation coefficient	0.588**	0.352**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.000
	Grit (COI)	Correlation coefficient	0.110	0.135
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.210	0.073
	ILS	Correlation coefficient	0.340**	0.372**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.000*
	OLS	Correlation coefficient	0.679**	-0.117
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.123

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

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

TABLE 3 | Descriptive Statistics for WTC, L2 Grit (POE and COI), and L2MSS (ILS and OLS).

		N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Std. error skewness	Kurtosis	Std. error kurtosis
PS ^a	WTC	132	2.56	1.29	0.76	0.21	-1.29	0.41
	POE	132	3.00	1.40	0.22	0.21	-1.85	0.41
	COI	132	2.86	1.39	0.28	0.21	-1.76	0.41
	ILS	132	3.32	0.76	0.10	0.21	-0.82	0.41
	OLS	132	2.66	1.45	0.46	0.21	-1.63	0.41
PI ^b	WTC	176	3.82	1.21	-1.28	0.18	-0.23	0.36
	POE	176	3.90	1.04	-1.39	0.18	0.24	0.36
	COI	176	2.33	1.13	0.70	0.18	-0.87	0.36
	ILS	176	3.31	1.20	-0.28	0.18	-1.55	0.36
	OLS	176	2.61	0.92	0.04	0.18	-1.34	0.36

^aPublic schools.

^bPrivate institutes.

TABLE 6 | Multiple regression analysis for public school students.

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.900 ^a	0.809	0.803	0.57427

^aPredictors: (Constant), OLS, ILS, COI, POE.

TABLE 7 | The ANOVA results for public school students.

Institutes	Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Public schools	1 Regression	177.710	4	44.428	134.716	0.000 ^a
	Residual	41.883	127	0.330		
	Total	219.593	131			

^aPredictors: (Constant), OLS, ILS, COI, POE.

and private institutes (questions two and three). The results revealed that, in public schools, there was a significant positive association between POE and WTC, [$r(132) = 0.588, p < 0.001$] (Table 5). In the case of L2MSS, the results indicated a significant positive correlation between OLS and L2 WTC, [$r(132) = 0.679, p < 0.001$] and, between ILS and L2 WTC, [$r(132) = 0.340, p < 0.001$]. Grit (COI), on the other hand, did not show a significant correlation with L2 WTC, [$r(132) = 0.110, p > 0.05$]. Regarding the private institute learners, the results indicated significant positive associations between POE, [$r(176) = 0.352, p < 0.001$], and ILS, [$r(176) = 0.372, p < 0.001$], and L2 WTC in private institutes' context. COI, [$r(176) = 0.135, p > 0.05$], and OLS, [$r(176) = -0.117, p > 0.05$], on the other hand, did not show significant correlations with private institutes' EFL learners' L2 WTC.

Regression Analyses

Two separate regression analyses were also performed to estimate the predictive power of L2 Grit (POE and COI) and L2MSS (ILS and OLS) for L2 WTC. Table 6 shows information about the regression model as a whole. The four variables together positively correlated with the total score at 0.90, which is high. The adjusted R^2 indicated that the model significantly predicted 81 percent of the variance in the population.

TABLE 8 | Coefficients of grit and L2MSS for public school students.

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta			
Public schools	1	(Constant)	-0.851	0.280		-3.040	0.003
		POE	0.544	0.042	0.589	13.007	0.000
		COI	-0.025	0.037	-0.026	-0.669	0.505
		ILS	0.242	0.069	0.143	3.488	0.001
		OLS	0.392	0.041	0.439	9.600	0.000

^aDependent variable: WTC.

TABLE 9 | Multiple regression analysis for private institute learners.

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.508 ^a	0.258	0.241	1.06010

^aPredictors: (Constant), OLS, ILS, COI, POE.

The results of the ANOVA test (Table 7) revealed that this model differed significantly from the hypothetical model ($F(4,127) = 134.716, p < 0.001$).

Moreover, the coefficients table (Table 8) showed that POE as the Grit's first component ($\text{Beta} = 0.589, p < 0.001$), OLS ($\text{Beta} = 0.439, p < 0.001$), and the ILS ($\text{Beta} = 0.143, p = 0.001$) wielded significant predictive power over public schools' students L2 WTC. On the other hand, COI did not show any significant predictive power on L2 WTC among learners ($\text{Beta} = -0.026, p > 0.05$).

Table 9 demonstrates that the four variables positively correlate with the total score at $R = 0.508$, which is high. R-squared (R^2) shows 26 percent of the variance. The adjusted R^2 in the model reveals that L2 Grit (POE and COI) and L2MSS (ILS and OLS) could predict 24 percent of EFL learners' L2 WTC.

Examining the ANOVA results (Table 10), one can realize that this model differed significantly from the hypothetical model [$F(4, 171) = 14.855, p < 0.001$].

The table of coefficients (Table 11) displays that POE as the Grit's first component ($\text{Beta} = 0.265, p = 0.003$), and the ILS ($\text{Beta} = 0.266, p = 0.007$) exerted a significant predictive power

TABLE 10 | The ANOVA results for private institute learners.

The ANOVA results						
Private institute	Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	1 Regression	66.777	4	16.694	14.855	0.000 ^a
	Residual	192.172	171	1.124		
	Total	258.949	175			

Dependent variable: WTC.

^aPredictors: (Constant), OLS, ILS, COI, POE.

TABLE 11 | Coefficients of Grit and L2MSS for private institute learners.

Private institutes	Model	Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.335	0.533			2.503	0.013
	POE	0.309	0.101	0.265		3.047	0.003
	COI	0.110	0.085	0.103		1.295	0.197
	ILS	0.268	0.098	0.266		2.726	0.007
	OLS	0.052	0.108	0.040		0.487	0.627

^aDependent variable: WTC.

over learners' L2 WTC in the private institutes setting. COI and OLS, however, did not wield a significant effect on L2 WTC.

DISCUSSION

This study is among the first to investigate and compare the role of a positive variable (grit) and a motivational variable (L2 MSS) in L2 WTC among EFL learners in two educational settings. To some extent, the present study's results replicate but mainly extend previous findings on EFL learners' L2 WTC. To conclude the findings presented in the previous section and observe how the results of this particular study stand in relation to similar studies, a thorough discussion of the results is provided.

Willingness to Communicate in Public Schools and Private English Language Institutes

The descriptive data and the Mann-Whitney *U*-test demonstrated higher levels of L2 WTC among private institutes learners than public school students. From a socio-educational perspective, several reasons can be highlighted concerning this phenomenon.

Teaching Methodology

One way to interpret the significant difference between level L2 WTC is by highlighting the differences in the dominant methodology in these two settings. For decades, Iranian public schools' primary pedagogy of English learning suffered a sheer focus on "reading, translation, memorization, and grammar" (Hosseini Goodrich, 2020, p. 9). In 2013, the Ministry of Education succumbed to the long-called-for radical paradigm change from grammar-translation to a modified communicative language teaching (CLT). Nonetheless, criticism was still directed at the quality and effectiveness of the new English teaching method and its textbooks (Hosseini Goodrich, 2020). In essence, the revision in the English curriculum and textbooks aimed mainly at inserting the "Islamic-Iranian identity, national culture and local beliefs" (Mirhosseini and Khodakarami, 2015, p. 25), and in practice, public schools' English courses still focused on reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary development (Sadeghi and Richards, 2016). Writing practice is limited to composing decontextualized sentences, listening cannot be seen

anywhere in the syllabus, and speaking does not move beyond a few drills and short dialogues (Rahimi, 2009; Sadeghi and Richards, 2016; Khoshsima and Hashemi Toroujeni, 2017).

In contrast, by having the advantage of a decentralized system, private institutes utilize various international coursebooks and different approaches to teaching English. The majority of the private English institutes design their courses based on the principles of the CLT approach (Zhang and Rahimi, 2014) to prepare learners to communicate in both spoken and written modalities (Rahimi and Zhang, 2015; Moradkhani and Shirazizadeh, 2017). As a result, compared to private institute EFL learners, the lack of willingness to communicate among public school students is not surprising.

The Classroom Atmosphere

The majority of English classrooms in public schools suffer a strict teacher-dominated atmosphere which can discourage students' communicative participation. Compared to public schools, due to the less age difference between the EFL learners and their teachers, more appropriate teaching methodology, and the employment of novel activities, private institute classrooms are less strict and teacher-centered. This can be further confirmed by Zarei et al.'s (2019) findings suggesting that the teacher-centered style is among the debilitating factors regarding L2 WTC.

Teachers' Role and Test-Oriented Classrooms

Reflection upon teachers' role is crucial due to their effects on the educational process which ensures the quality of human and social resources of society (Zlatkovic and Petrovic, 2011). The EFL teachers play an influential role in students' WTC in many ways, including topic selection (Zarrinabadi, 2014), teaching style (Zarei et al., 2019), and appropriate activities selection (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Public school EFL teachers are forced/accustomed to avoiding employing L2 tasks, which can encourage and facilitate communication in the target language (Khoshsima and Hashemi Toroujeni, 2017; Hosseini Goodrich, 2020). This can be due to the centralized curriculum, the limited classroom time, excessive workload, inappropriate coursebooks, and crowded classes. This gains relevance in the Iranian public schools' context. English study for most public-school students in Iran is undertaken only to meet the need for passing examinations where performance-based tasks are disregarded in

the final exam criteria (Farhady and Hedayati, 2009). A similar observation has been reported for English language learning in the Chinese context where Peng and Woodrow (2010) found that EFL teachers and learners prioritize test-related skills such as vocabulary, reading, and writing over speaking in an exam-oriented context.

On the other hand, thanks to the decentralized curriculum, longer classroom hours, and more appropriate coursebooks, Iranian private institutes' teachers experience more freedom in choosing activities. Therefore, they are more likely to employ L2 communicative tasks such as information gap. Furthermore, these performance-based tasks are included in their examination criteria. Yashima et al. (2017) and Lee and Lee (2020) also further confirmed that inserting performance-based activities in the examination criteria can enhance students' WTC in Japanese and Korean contexts.

Grit and L2 Learners' Willingness to Communicate

In line with Teimouri et al. (2020), Cheng (2021), and Khajavy et al. (2021), who confirmed the superiority of a two-factor model over a single-factor model of language-specific grit, in the present study, the researchers examined grits' components (POE and COI) separately. This is in disagreement with Duckworth et al. (2007), who saw grit as a single variable. The results of Spearman's rho and multiple regression analyses revealed that grit (POE) has a positive correlation and significant predictive power with/over L2 WTC in both contexts, whereas grit (COI) showed no significant correlation or predictive power with/over EFL learners L2 WTC in either context. In a similar vein, Credé et al. (2017) proposed that "perseverance is a much better predictor of performance than either consistency or overall grit." (p. 502).

The positive relationship between grit (POE) and WTC can be reviewed in light of Fredrickson's (2003) "broaden and build" theory: The "broaden" side of this theory explains in what way positive emotions play a motivating role in encouraging the learners to explore new experiences and seek more learning opportunities. This theory expounds why learners who experience positive emotions in the classroom are more willing to participate in communicative activities. Therefore, we can infer from the analysis that grittier students who show determination and hard work are more likely to engage in communication despite setbacks. This is in agreement with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2013) claim that success in an L2 is at the mercy of learners' sustained effort. These findings align well with those of the prior studies that confirmed a positive relationship between positive emotions and L2 WTC (Peng, 2015; Khajavy et al., 2018, 2021; Jiang and Dewaele, 2019).

Regarding grit (COI), during the lengthy and tedious language learning process, learners' interest in language learning may suffer some ups and downs due to the numerous setbacks and failures. Nonetheless, learners' hard work and sustained effort are not reliant on unwavering interest in the process. Similar findings in other contexts such as Korea (Lee, 2020), Switzerland (Karlen

et al., 2019), and China (Feng and Papi, 2020) further confirms the results of this article.

L2 Motivational Self-System and L2 Learners' Willingness to Communicate

According to the Spearman correlation, both ILS and OLS showed a significant relationship with L2 WTC in public school setting. However, in the case of the learners in the private institutes, only ILS correlated with L2 WTC. Additionally, the multiple regression revealed that OLS was the second predictor of WTC in public school, while it failed to predict WTC in private language institutes. On the other hand, the ILS was the second predictor of L2 WTC in private language institutes and the third in public schools.

As noted, between the two components of L2MSS, OLS plays a more vital role on L2 WTC of public school students, which suggests that these students tend to become motivated to learn English to meet the expectations of their significant others, such as parents and teachers. Although the OLS usually appears as the weakest component of L2MSS (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Aubrey, 2014), research in collectivist cultures has proved the opposite. It has been claimed that learners with collectivist cultures, such as Thai and Chinese EFL learners, tend to have stronger OLS (Patterson and Smith, 2003; Taguchi et al., 2009; Lanvers, 2016; Darling and Chanyoo, 2018). In concordance with these findings, the results of the present study invite the possibility that Iranian collectivist culture has led to a significant relationship between OLS and school students' L2 WTC.

The strong impact of the ILS on the L2 WTC of private language institute learners denotes that in this group of learners, an ideal future image rather than external expectations and obligations aid language learners to put aside any fears they might have of communication and engage in the communicative act. The general tenor of previous studies on L2MSS has introduced the ILS as the strongest dimension of the model (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009; Papi, 2010; Kim, 2012). Thus, the present study's findings tie in well with the literature. Furthermore, the results of the current research are in line with studies that have reported a positive relationship between ILS and L2 WTC among Turkish (Bursali and Öz, 2017, 2018; Sak, 2020), Thai (Darling and Chanyoo, 2018), Japanese (Munezane, 2013, 2015, 2016), Chinese (Peng, 2015; Lan et al., 2021; Li and Liu, 2021), and Iranian (Ghasemi, 2018) EFL learners.

CONCLUSION

The present study set out to investigate if/how L2MSS and grit correlate/predict L2 WTC in two educational settings of public schools and private language institutes. The findings pointed out that public school students with stronger ILS and POE enjoyed higher levels of WTC; meanwhile, private institute learners with a stronger OLS were less willing to communicate compared to their counterparts. Moreover, while POE was the strongest predictor of WTC in both settings, COI did not display a

significant correlation or predictive power with/over L2 WTC in either context.

The implications of this study mainly call for changes in the overall Iranian system of education to improve WTC among EFL learners. The present research highlights the role of grit (POE) and L2MSS (ILS) in this process. The fact that learners with higher levels of ILS (private institute learners) were more willing to communicate than those learners with strong OLS (public school students) underlines Dörnyei's (2009) call for the promotion of motivation in academic settings, which can be achieved by enhancing what he calls learner's vision. As the centerpiece of classroom instruction, teachers play an essential role in helping students hold and build more vivid ILS images. Creating vivid ILS images may be achieved by visualization and goal-setting activities such as writing future-oriented autobiographies, creating L2 goals for the semester and for the next 10 years (Al-Murtadha, 2019; Safdari, 2019); establishing short-term goals that are tangible and achievable through more active participation in communicative classroom activities (Lan et al., 2021). Meanwhile, by having high levels of POE, EFL learners would be more likely to exert themselves to achieve these goals (communication in the target language in this case) despite setbacks and failures.

Grit has a malleable nature meaning that it can be increased through practice and instruction. EFL teachers should be aware of the importance of grit and how it can help learners in the possible tedious and challenging (e.g., participating in communicative activities) language learning process (Wang et al., 2021). They can ensure that their learners are familiar with the positive role of POE by giving lectures, introducing successful people, and encouraging them to be persistent to achieve their objectives. Keegan (2017) explains that being "gifted" is not the only predictor of success in language learning. Therefore, EFL students should be informed of the malleable nature of intelligence which explains that besides talent, other appreciated factors such as assiduousness and perseverance can aid them to achieve their goals in relation to L2 WTC. This gains relevance in the EFL context since many teachers, regardless

of where they are teaching, struggle to engage their students in communication.

It needs to be acknowledged that generalizations based on the findings of this study must be made with caution. Since the researchers intended to compare the results obtained from public schools with those of private institutes, students with the same level of proficiency in these contexts had to be selected. Due to the limited curriculum in Iranian public schools, English proficiency among students remains low, almost equal to the lowest level of proficiency in private institutes. Moreover, more research is called for to compare the WTC of learners in different educational settings and studies that cover the effect of gender on EFL learners' grit and L2 MSS in relation to L2 WTC.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

NF and FE-A conceived the research idea and wrote up the article which was read and commented on multiple times by MN. NF and FE-A revised the article which was given final approval by MN. MN submitted the manuscript and did all the corresponding with the journal. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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