

Original Article**The Effect of Explicitly Teaching Motivational Regulation Strategies
on the Iranian Online Language Learners'
Willingness to Communicate (WTC)****Saeed Sayyad Chamani^{*1}, Manouchehr Jafari Gohar², Amir Reza Nemat Tabrizi³**

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Received: 2021/06/22**Accepted:** 2021/10/22**Abstract**

The current study aimed to examine whether or not the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies significantly affected Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in general English online classes. Moreover, it endeavored to investigate if there was a significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' WTC in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies. To this aim, a pretest-posttest design was used and 130 participants were randomly chosen out of 406 pre-intermediate level students. After the administration of the homogeneity test, 92 learners were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups. There were 46 learners in the experimental and 46 learners in the control group with equal number of male and female participants in each. The findings revealed that the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies significantly affected Iranian EFL learners' WTC in general English online classes. It was also observed that female Iranian learners' WTC was significantly higher than that of male learners' in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies. The findings of this study could be of great importance for language learners, teacher trainers, and teachers.

Keywords

Motivational regulation strategies; Willingness to Communicate; Affective factors.

Introduction

Online learning is designed and practiced differently by various institutions. Despite these differences, there is general consensus regarding the crucial role of providing motivational support for online students. In fact, motivation is considered a critical determinant of online students' successful learning experiences [1,2] due to the autonomous nature of the online learning context [3]. Therefore, self-regulated learning strategies play an important role in online classes given the fact that self-regulated learners actively control their motivation to implement, monitor, and evaluate various cognitive and metacognitive strategies for facilitating knowledge growth and acquisition [4].

Motivational regulation is an important component within self-regulated learning theory, which emphasizes "the proactive engagement of learners and the active management of their own motivation in learning processes" [5, p.10]. Motivational regulation has long been recognized as crucial strategies the learners use to actively initiate, sustain, and increase their motivation and

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efforts in general learning contexts [6,7]. However, research on motivational regulation strategies has gained attention in the field of second and/or foreign language teaching only recently (e.g., 8, 9,10,11). Additional attention to this new area of research can be attributed to the fact that “language acquisition requires a substantial investment of time on continuous basis due to the dynamic nature of language itself” [12, p. 602].

Moreover, recent approaches to teaching a foreign or second language have attached great importance to the role of frequent meaningful communication in gaining L2 competence [13]. It is maintained that language is acquired and/or learnt through communication [14] and that learners’ willingness to communicate is crucial in language learning and acquisition. That is to say a speaker’s or writer’s propensity to voluntarily engage into an interpersonal communication when the situation requires [15,16,17] regardless of their level of proficiency, is essential in establishing a sound, meaningful communication.

- Statement of the Problem

Attaining high level of foreign language proficiency depends on self-regulatory skills of a learner [18]. Self-regulated learning, is an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment [19, 20]. Motivational regulation is an integral component of self-regulated learning which explains “how learners endow themselves with appropriate knowledge and skills to motivate their learning” [21, p.1]. It has long been recognized as an essential factor in helping learners initiate, sustain, and boost their motivations and efforts in different learning contexts [6,7].

It is stated that motivation plays a crucial role in learners’ willingness to communicate which refers to the idea that language learners who are willing to communicate in the second or foreign language essentially try to find opportunities to communicate and at last, they will really do communicate in the L2 [22, 23]. It is argued that increasing learners’ willingness to communicate should serve as the ultimate goal of any language teaching programs as it is stated that the crucial objective of second or foreign language learning should be to “engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them” [17, p. 547].

It should be noted that Internet-based distance learning, by its very nature has the potential to affect learners’ motivation and their willingness to communicate because it radically changes the learning environment offered by physically separating the instructor from the learner. Therefore, it can be assumed that teaching motivational regulation strategies to the students in online classes can be highly beneficial and can affect their willingness to communicate.

Moreover, along with situational elements, a set of affective and cognitive factors seem to be correlated with learners’ willingness to communicate [17]. One important factor which has been reported in literature to impact the affective construct of willingness to communicate is the learners’ gender. Similarly, in most research studies, gender is referred to as a significant factor which can lead to variation in the rate and outcome of second language learning among different language learners [24] and the way they use self-regulated learning strategies in general and motivational regulation strategies in particular [25,26,27,28].

However, examining the effect of teaching motivational regulation strategies on Iranian language learners’ willingness to communicate and the differences that exist between male and female learners is an under-researched area which needs more investigation. Considering the importance of self-regulated strategies and affective factors in language learning and the paucity of research in this area, the main purpose of the current study is to examine the effect of motivational regulation strategies on Iranian EFL learners’ willingness to communicate using a mixed methods approach of data collection. The other aim of the study is investigating the gender differences regarding the effect of motivational regulation strategies on willingness to

communicate. Based on the aims of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. Does the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes?

RQ2. Is there a significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies?

The following null hypotheses were formulated based on the research questions:

Null Hypothesis 1: The explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies does not significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies.

- The Review of Literature

- Motivational Regulation Strategies

Motivation is the key to successful language learning [21]. Every goal needs a reason to be accomplished and without that reason, it is impossible to reach goals. That reason is considered to be motivation. Therefore, the key to learning goals is motivation and language learning is no exception [29]. It is postulated that motivational regulation strategies refer to "thoughts and behaviors through which students act to initiate, maintain, or supplement their willingness to start or to provide effort toward completing academic activities" [30, p. 218].

Expanding Wolters's model, the following eight motivational regulation strategies were suggested:

(a) Enhancement of situational interest which "can be used to make boring tasks more enjoyable. To achieve this, students may modify several aspects of the task" [31, p. 269].

(b) Enhancement of personal significance which "seeks to establish a relation between the task and one's own individual interests and preferences" [31, p.270].

(c) Mastery self-talk which encourages the learner to "highlight and anticipate his goal to enlarge his competence and master challenging tasks" [31, p.270].

(d) Performance-approach self-talk which is concerned with the learners' desire to "desire to outperform their classmate" [31, p.270].

(e) Performance-avoidance self-talk which involves a "focus on not performing worse than others" [31, p.270].

(f) Environmental control: Intentionally eliminating possible distractions

(g) Self-consequating which refers to "the principles of operant conditioning" [31, p.270] and involves self-reward

(h) Proximal goal setting where the learners attempt to "divide a distant long-term goal into smaller subgoals" [31, p.270] and make success more achievable.

There has been growing interest in research on motivational regulation strategies and how they can affect second and/or foreign language teaching and learning. Teng and Zhang (2018) investigated the effect of motivational regulation strategies on Chinese EFL learners' writing performance and reported improvements in the learners' writing outcomes as a result of the inclusion of motivational regulation strategies in the mediation model of teaching writing [11]. In another study, Oztusan (2021) investigated the relationship between self-regulated speaking motivation and foreign language speaking competence of Turkish EFL learners and concluded that self-regulated speaking motivation is one of the predictors of improved speaking competence [10]. Alotumi (2021) conducted a survey study to examine the Yemeni EFL-college senior students' level of self-regulated motivation for improving speaking skill and found that students used a range of motivational regulation strategies to improve their EFL speaking competence [8].

However, there has been no study conducted to investigate the effect of teaching motivational regulation strategies on willingness to communicate to the best of the researcher's knowledge.

- Willingness to Communicate

Speaking is considered to be one of the most important aspects of learning a second language [32]. Many students want to learn a second or foreign language just to be able to speak with others or communicate. However, speaking carried out by force in language classrooms is not enough to be considered a communicative experience for a language student [33]. In other words, no matter how proficient a person is in using a foreign language, his attempts at establishing sound communication will be less than desirable if he or she is not fully willing to communicate. Therefore, learners' willingness to use language to communicate is crucial to their second language acquisition [34].

A student can be considered a speaker of a foreign language when he or she takes advantage of opportunities to speak using the target language [35]. Whenever a person feels like he/she is able to partake in a communicative situation (helping, giving directions, asking for help, etc.) and actively uses the target language without being forced by an outside entity such as a teacher, then that person is showing an instance of WTC and can be considered an official speaker of the target language [36].

Willingness to communicate is defined as "to take initiative to communicate in case of certain opportunities given in a particular context" [15]. It is also called individual's orientation towards communication [22]. Another proposed definition of willingness to communicate is the "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2" [17, p. 547]. They devised a heuristic model of variables influencing willingness to communicate called the pyramid model (figure 2.1). The higher a language learner goes on this pyramid, the higher their level of WTC.

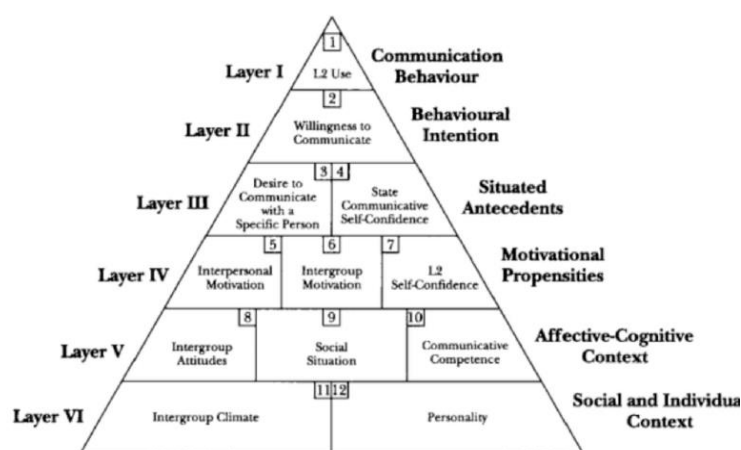


Figure 1. The Pyramid Model

Although the WTC construct was originally applied in L1 communication context, it is now a "necessary part of becoming fluent in a second language, which is the ultimate goal of many L2 learners" [37, p. 196]. Interaction plays an important role in the development of language. Higher language proficiency leads to higher WTC and higher WTC is an outcome of language learning [22].

There have been a number of studies done in Iran and other countries which investigated the relationship between willingness to communicate and gender [25,26,27,28] but the results were not consistent. While Zakian (2022) found no significant difference between male and female

learners' WTC [28], Amiryousefi (2018) reported that male Iranian learners communicated with their teachers more for the participatory and sycophantic motives than female learners [25]. Yetkin and Zekiye (2022) on the other hand, found that female EFL learners had higher willingness to communicate compared to male EFL learners in Turkey [27] whereas Alqurashi (2022) reported no significance difference across gender [26]. Therefore, there is need for more investigation in this area.

- Methodology

To investigate the effect of the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies on the learners' WTC, the pretest-posttest design was used. Out of an initial 406 pre-intermediate level students, 130 participants were randomly chosen and 92 learners were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups after the administration of the homogeneity test. There were 46 learners in the experimental and 46 learners in the control group with an equal number of male and female participants in both groups. They ranged in age from 20 to 35 and were randomly chosen from among pre-intermediate learners of the online general English classes held by Safir Language Academy in Spring 2022. All the participants' first language was Farsi.

The Nelson English Language Proficiency Test [38] was used to ensure the homogeneity of the participants regarding their proficiency level. This test consists of 50 multiple choice items and each item values one point. The items are divided into four parts: grammar (two sections), vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The time needed to complete the test is 40 minutes.

The validity and reliability of the Nelson test have been estimated several times before by other researchers and it is considered a highly valid and reliable test of English proficiency [39, 40]. To estimate the reliability of the test, a pilot test was conducted and the KR-21 formula was applied to the obtained data of 15 participants. The result was 0.82 which is considered a high reliability index.

McCrosky's (1992) Willingness to Communicate Scale [15] was administered to evaluate the participants' willingness to initiate and take part in the interpersonal communication in online classes. This scale is composed of 20 items. Of the 20 items on the instrument, eight are used to distract attention from the scored items. The twelve remaining items generate a total score, four context-type (public, meeting, group, dyad) scores, and three receiver-type (strangers, acquaintances, friends) scores. In other words, these 12 items represent the crossing of three types of receivers with four types of communication context which might not be exhaustive but are considered to be representative [15]

The scale comprises 20 situations in which people might choose to communicate or not communicate. Participants are instructed to respond by determining the percentage of times they would choose to communicate in each type of situation ranging from 0 for 'never' to 100 for 'always' given that they have completely free choice.

Simple scoring guidelines are provided which make the computation of one total score and seven subscores possible. The subscores relate to willingness to communicate in each of four common communication contexts and with three types of audiences [15].

There has been extensive research on the validity and the reliability of this scale and the results indicate that the face validity and the predictive validity of the instrument are strong. Moreover, Alpha reliability estimates of this scale have ranged from .85 to above .90 [15] which is high enough to be used in research.

Another instrument which was used in the study to collect data was Willingness to Communicate Classroom Observation Scheme [41] which consists of two main parts considering the interaction patterns usually observed in language classrooms.

The scheme was originally developed based on observations related to a range of classroom behaviors demonstrated by L2 learners who appeared to show high willingness to communicate and motivation in class [e.g., 42,17,43,44]. The operational definition of willingness to

communicate proposed in this scheme was based on eight categories including volunteer an answer/a comment, give an answer to the teacher's question, ask the teacher a question, try out a difficult form in the target language, guess the meaning of an unknown word, present own opinion in class/respond to an opinion, volunteer to participate in class activities, and talk to neighbor/another group member [41].

There were a total number of 35 items on the observation sheet and the observer marks 1 or 0 depending on whether the learners volunteer to take part in communication or not. The scores can range from 0 to 35 and the items focus on whether or not the learners volunteer to answer, volunteer to comment, give answer to group and individual, and give answer to private response.

Motivational regulation strategies were explicitly taught to the experimental group using Wolters' (1998, 1999, 2003) and Schwinger, Laden, and Spinath's (2007) model [45,46,47,48]. Each motivational strategy was operationalized and translated into tangible concepts which could be taught in the classroom. It is worth mentioning that both classes were taught by the researcher himself to eliminate the extraneous variables that might be caused because of the differences in teachers and teaching styles. The WTC Questionnaire was given to the control and the experimental group before and after the treatment. Moreover, the researcher filled in the willingness to communicate observation sheet for 12 learners in both control and experimental groups once during the first session of the class and once during the last session. These 24 learners were randomly chosen prior to the study. Considering the fact that the classes were online, a second teacher was chosen as an intercoder and was asked to fill in the sheets simultaneously. It is worth mentioning that the second teacher received meticulous training and detailed instruction for rating the items on the observation sheet. The inter-rater reliability was 0.73 which is acceptable.

- Results and Findings

The descriptive statistics related to the WTC pretest were examined and the results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: PreWTC				
Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Experimental	Female	45.52	5.79	23
	Male	46.70	7.03	23
	Total	46.11	6.40	46
Control	Female	46.69	5.98	23
	Male	44.73	5.74	22
	Total	45.73	5.88	45
Total	Female	46.11	5.85	46
	Male	45.74	6.44	45
	Total	45.92	6.12	91

Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness of the WTC pretest scores were analyzed to check the normality of the score distribution and the results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PreWTC	91	-0.028	0.25	-0.51	0.50
Valid N (listwise)	91				

Table 2 shows skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios over the standard errors. If the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors are lower than ± 1.96 , as is the case in this study, it can be concluded that the collected scores do not show any significant deviation from a normal distribution. In order to see if the male and female participants in the experimental and control groups were homogenous in the WTC pretest or not, two-way ANOVA was used and the results can be seen in Table 3 [49.50.51,52].

Table 3. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PreWTC

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.93	3	20.97	.55	0.64
Intercept	191737.41	1	191737.41	5048.93	0.00
Group	3.64	1	3.64	0.09	0.75
Gender	3.45	1	3.45	0.09	0.76
Group * Gender	56.52	1	56.52	1.48	0.22
Error	3303.89	87	37.97		
Total	195283.96	91			
Corrected Total	3366.83	90			

a. R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = -.015)

Table 3 displays the results of the two-way ANOVA. The results ($F(1, 87) = 0.09, p > 0.05$) indicated that there was no significant difference between the experimental ($M = 46.11, SD = 6.40$) and control groups' ($M = 45.73, SD = 5.88$) means on the WTC pretest. Hence, it was concluded that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous in terms of their WTC prior to the administration of the treatment.

The results shown in Table 3 also indicated that there was no significant difference between the male ($M = 45.74, SD = 6.44$) and female ($M = 46.11, SD = 5.85$) groups' means on the WTC pretest ($F(1, 87) = 0.09, p > 0.05$). Thus, the male and female EFL learners were homogeneous in terms of their WTC prior to the administration of the treatment. Finally, it can be concluded that there was no significant interaction between groups and gender ($F(1, 87) = 1.48, p > 0.05$) on the WTC pretest.

Table 4 shows the Cronbach's alpha reliability indices for the pretest and posttest of WTC. The Cronbach's alpha indices for pretest and posttest of WTC with 20 items were 0.96 and 0.97 respectively.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pretest of Willingness to Communicate	0.96	20
Posttest of Willingness to Communicate	0.97	20

The first research question was examined to see if the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies significantly affects Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes or not. ANCOVA was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the WTC posttest. The descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the WTC Posttest

Dependent Variable: PostWTC			
Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Experimental	62.35	6.12	46
Control	56.50	5.51	45
Total	59.46	6.49	91

Table 6 shows the results of the one-way ANCOVA. It was seen that the participants in the experimental group ($M = 62.35$, $SD = 6.12$) had a higher mean than the participants in the control group ($M = 56.50$, $SD = 5.51$) on the WTC posttest in comparison to the pretest ($F(1, 88) = 22.59$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the first null-hypothesis that stated that the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies does not affect Iranian EFL learners' WTC in general English online classes was rejected and it could be said that there is a significant difference between the Iranian EFL learners' WTC in general English online classes due to the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies.

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostWTC					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	784.51 ^a	2	392.26	11.45	0.00
Intercept	5187.33	1	5187.33	151.45	0.00
PreWTC	5.77	1	5.77	0.16	0.68
Group	773.82	1	773.82	22.59	0.00
Error	3014.07	88	34.25		
Total	325527.13	91			
Corrected Total	3798.59	90			

a. R Squared = 0.20 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.18)

The second research question was analyzed in order to see if there was a significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' WTC in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies. The descriptive statistics related to the male and female groups in the WTC posttest can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptive of the WTC Posttest

PostWTC								
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Female	46	64.73	3.94	.58	63.56	65.90	59	74
Male	45	54.07	3.41	.50	53.04	55.09	46	59
Total	91	59.46	6.49	.68	58.11	60.81	46	74

According to Table 8, the female participants ($M = 64.73$, $SD = 3.94$) compared to the male participants ($M = 54.07$, $SD = 3.41$) demonstrated significantly higher levels of WTC, $t(91) = 4.79$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the second null-hypothesis which stated that there was no significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' WTC in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies was rejected and it could be said that there is a significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' WTC in

general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies, with female language learners showing a significantly higher WTC.

Table 8. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
PostWTC	Equal variances assumed	1.99	.16	4.79	89	0.00	5.85	1.22	3.42	8.27
	Equal variances not assumed			4.79	88.40	0.00	5.85	1.22	3.42	8.27

In an attempt to triangulate the data, classroom observations were carried out on 24 of the language learners using the WTC classroom observation scheme. 12 of the language learners were in the control group while the 12 others were in the experimental group. They were observed prior to and after the implementation of the treatment.

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine a possible statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups on the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies in the pretest and posttest phases and the results can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	649.77 ^a	2	324.87	114.55	0.00	0.92
Intercept	69.10	1	69.10	24.36	0.00	0.54
pre	341.60	1	341.60	120.44	0.00	0.85
group	290.53	1	290.53	102.43	0.00	0.83
Error	59.56	21	2.84			
Total	15312.00	24				
Corrected Total	709.33					

a. R Squared = .916 (Adjusted R Squared = .908)

Table 9 shows that there was a significant effect of explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies on the learners ($F(2, 21) = 114.54, p < 0.05$). In addition, the partial eta squared value of .91 indicated an effect size of 91% of the variance in the dependent variable is due to the independent variable, a high effect according to Cohen's 1998 guidelines [53]. Furthermore, a post hoc test was conducted to further understand the findings and the results can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10. Pairwise Comparisons

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
con	exp	-6.96*	0.68	0.00	-8.39	-5.53
exp	con	6.96*	0.68	0.00	5.53	8.39
Based on estimated marginal means						
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.						

It was previously seen that both groups significantly differed from their pretests. However, Table 10 shows that among the posttest scores, the positive mean difference was between the experimental group and the control group (MD=6.96, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be said that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the WTC observation sheet as a result of the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies.

- Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the current study showed that the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies significantly affects Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes. It is stated that speaking-based activities carried out by force in language classrooms were not considered as suitable enough to create a communicative experience for language students [33]. That study maintained that students needed an extra boost or factor that made them want to freely communicate with others. Moreover, it is argued that willingness to communicate is the active use of a language in a voluntary manner [36]. That is, students cannot be forced to actively participate. They need an incentive to communicate with their peers and others. This can be seen in the findings of the current study in that the direct teaching of motivational regulation strategies was shown to help significantly increase the participants' willingness to communicate which can in turn result in better language learning [22].

The positive effect of motivational regulation strategies on different aspects of language learning has been shown in previous studies as well. The role of motivational regulation strategies on speaking skill were examined in two studies [10,8], and their effect on writing skill was examined in another research [11]. The results of all of these studies were in line with the findings of the current study.

The pyramid model for willingness to communicate [17] listed motivation as one of the factors that led to higher levels of willingness to communicate. This can be due to the fact that high levels of motivation, which can be regulated by the learners themselves, can help students feel better about talking and communicating with others. Hence, this study adds to the literature on willingness to communicate and motivation.

The findings of the current study also showed that there was a significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' willingness to communicate in general English online classes regarding the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies, with female participants showing higher levels, which are in line with a previous study [27]. A significant difference between male and female Iranian learners' WTC was found in another research but in that study male learners outperformed female learners [25]. Some studies, on the other hand, did not report a significant difference across gender [26, 28]. The inconsistency of the results can be attributed to learners' individual differences in different studies. It should be also noted that in none of these studies, motivational regulation strategies were taught explicitly. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted to draw more accurate conclusions.

It is widely accepted that self-regulatory skills play an important role in attaining high levels of proficiency in language classes [18]. Moreover, motivational regulation strategies, as an integral part of self-regulated learning [21] play a crucial role in learners' willingness to communicate. This was seen in the current study, which aimed to examine the effect of the explicit

teaching of motivational regulation strategies on learners' willingness to communicate. The findings of the study revealed that Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate increased as a result of learning how to employ motivational regulation strategies while learning a second/foreign language.

Furthermore, gender is generally believed to impact the affective constructs of willingness to communicate. It was seen in the findings of the current study that there was a significant difference between male and female learners' willingness to communicate. The analysis of questionnaires and observation sheets provided information on the effect of teaching motivational strategies on willingness to communicate which can have important implications for researchers of self-regulated learning theories. It can shed light on the unknown aspects of the intricate concept of self-regulated strategies and help them propose and formulate more precise theories in this respect.

Moreover, the results of the study provided some valuable information about the differences between male and female students regarding their willingness to communicate which can be used in the process of curriculum design and materials development.

Teacher trainers can add teaching motivational regulation strategies to teacher training courses so that teachers learn how to teach these strategies in their classes. They can dedicate a separate module to teaching motivational strategies, familiarize novice teachers with its layers and components, inform them about the importance and effect of teaching motivational strategies and equip them with the techniques they need to employ in order to successfully teach motivational strategies to their learners.

Teachers, can greatly benefit from the results of the study. They can get a better understanding of their learners' needs and help them in the process of language learning. As the current study showed the explicit teaching of motivational regulation strategies can positively affect learners' willingness to communicate, teachers can use questionnaires and interviews in their classes to find out about their learners' characteristics and give them individual help and advice to boost their motivation and willingness to communicate.

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