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An Investigation on the Relationship between Iranian EFL Learners' Resilience and their Willingness to Communicate

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the connection of resilience with willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian EFL students while analyzing the WTC gap between high and low resilience learners. Resilience as a positive psychological trait reflects an individual's ability to adjust to an academic environment and manage stress, which enhances WTC. The participants included 100 male and female students from Semnan State University, Babol Science and Technology University, and Islamic Azad University of Qaemshahr, majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, English Literature, and English Translation. Employing a quantitative correlational design, Data collection was done via two Likert scale instruments comprising a 25-item resilience questionnaire by Conner and Davidson (2003) and a 20-item WTC questionnaire by Zarrinabadi and Abdi (2011), which were administered face-to-face or through social media. The analysis of the data that was done on SPSS version 22 included both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed a considerable positive correlation between resilience and WTC, along with significantly better WTC performance among high-resilience learners compared to low-resilience learners. By examining these queries, the present study attempts to illuminate L2 learning psychological factors, holding relevance for teachers, teacher trainers, educational psychologists, and curriculum designers to enhance EFL instruction and learner success.

Introduction

Communication, or the process of passing information between individuals or groups, is central to second language (L2) pedagogy and acquisition, where effective communication between learners is being sought (Ulrey & Mason, 2001). Even here, "communication with whom?" and "for what purpose?" place in the foreground the need for a social psychological approach. Key variables influencing communication outcomes include Willingness to Communicate (WTC), communication psychology, intercultural positions, motivation, and attitudes towards interlocutors. Stress has significant influence on communication and tends to generate misunderstandings or inhibit public speaking out of fear (Ulrey & Mason, 2001). Given the connection that has been made between stress and communication, resilience—a condition of being able to cope with stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003)—can also be significant to communication, particularly in L2 contexts.

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Positive psychology, as a new domain of study in educational psychology, deals with individual development in areas of resilience, courage, mindfulness, and well-being (Simonton & Baumeister, 2005). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, resilience has been cited as a significant predictor of language acquisition. As a "stress-coping ability" (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 77) and having the capacity to "bounce back from adversities and adapt to their environment" (Wagnild & Young, 1993), resilience acts to resist the negative impact of stress and facilitate adaptation (Rutter, 2013). Researchers like Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) have defined resilience as "the process, ability, or product of successful adaptation to adversity" (p. 459), while Bonanno (2004) stressed resilience as a protective factor resulting in positive outcomes. Resilience in a school environment raises the likelihood of academic achievement by enabling students to recover from adversity (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). For EFL students, resilience facilitates goal-setting, communication flexibility, and responsibility for their behavior, making coping with academic stress easier (Abbot, Klein, Hamilton, & Rosenthal, 2009).

Resilience has both internal and external components. Internal components include positive self-esteem (Beardslee, 1989), optimism, empathy (Ungar, 2004), and emotional energy (Bonanno, 2004), while external components are relationships, social support, and interactions with the community (Beardslee, 1989; O'Leary, 1998). “Resilience is defined as having the capacity to endure change with less disruption” (Connor, 2001, pp. 4-5), and seven traits include having positive views of the world and oneself, focusing, flexible thinking, versatility in interpersonal relationships, organization and planning, and being proactive (Wang, 2009), which reduces academic stress and enhances achievement in EFL contexts.

WTC, a central individual difference variable in L2 acquisition, refers to a willingness to communicate in L2 at a specific time with specific interlocutors (MacIntyre et al., 2002). Derived from the "unwillingness to communicate" theory (Burgoon, 1976), WTC was initially framed as a personality trait in first language (L1) communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) and then extended to L2 situations. A measure of the likelihood of using communication when one has the freedom to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985, p. 420), WTC is influenced by communication apprehension, perceived competence, and behavior control (MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). Being a contextual variable, WTC is a product of temporary as well as enduring factors, fear and perceived competence being proximal causes (Clément et al., 2003). WTC is also vital in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where authentic, real-world tasks receive priority for ensuring maximum learner interaction (Brown, 2001, p. 42). High WTC students are more likely to internalize more authentic L2 communication, capitalize on learning opportunities, and be self-directed learners (Kang, 2005), which means that WTC is an essential goal of L2 education (Dörnyei, 2005).

Despite the recognized importance of WTC, EFL learners, particularly in contexts like Iran, face significant barriers to L2 communication. The absence of opportunities to utilize L2 outside class reinforces anxiety and inhibition such that learners are shy to talk (Littlewood, 2007). While studies have taken into account correlations between WTC and variables like motivation, attitudes, and personality, the relationship between resilience and WTC has been underexplored, especially in the context of Iranian EFL. Although resilience is noted to counteract stress and facilitate adaptation (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), none of the previous studies has directly analyzed its relationship with WTC in EFL learners, which is a critical gap in research.

This study addresses this gap by examining the potential connection between resilience and WTC among Iranian EFL students. More specifically, it aims to determine whether resilience influences learners' WTC in language classrooms and whether high-resilient students are different from low-resilient ones in WTC. The following research questions are asked:

RQ 1: Is there any correlation between resilience and EFL learners' WTC in language classrooms?

RQ2: Are high-resilient and low-resilient EFL learners distinct with respect to WTC?

Literature Review

Resilience: Conceptual Foundations and Evolution

Background and Development

Resilience within positive psychology denotes the capacity to adapt and recover from difficulty. It has almost always been treated as a defining trait of an individual (Masten, 2013). In the last forty years, studies have shown that children within severely adverse contexts are able to develop and achieve certain benchmarks, earning the title "resilient learners" (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). Early research, including on schizophrenia (Garmezy, 1974), looked at maladaptive behaviors of atypical patients, which was foundational to the research on resilience. Studying children of schizophrenic mothers highlighted variability in how people respond to hardship (Garmezy, 1974; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Emmy Werner's longitudinal studies of Hawaiian children incorporated not only socio-economic disadvantages but also child maltreatment and community violence and emphasized factors that help people adapt in a positive way (Richters & Martinez, 1993).

Key Contributors and Theoretical Perspectives

Researchers, practitioners, and educators like Norman Garmezy, Emmy Werner, Michael Rutter, Suniya Luthar, Ann Masten, and Michael Ungar have been key contributors to resilience research. 'The grandfather of resilience theory,' Garmezy considered resilience the ability to recover and adapt behaviorally after stress. He focused on protective factors in community-based populations such as IQ, socioeconomic status, and parental competence during the study of schizophrenic children (Garmezy, 1974). Werner's longitudinal study conducted in Hawaii demonstrated protective factors, which included sociability and family relationships, reinforcing the idea that risks in childhood can affect adult well-being (Werner, 1989). Rutter, highly renowned in child psychology, viewed resilience as an interactive process that, despite risks, yielded positive outcomes, with school and early adoption serving as protective factors (Rutter, 2013). Luthar defined resilience as a dynamic process with adversity and positive adaptation and protective factors, including parental relationships fostering resilience (Luthar, 1991). Masten described resilience as a system's adaptive capacity, introducing variable-focused and person-focused models and the concept of "ordinary magic" to highlight its reliance on normal adaptation systems (Masten, 2014). Ungar broadened the definition to include environmental and cultural resources, emphasizing the role of families and societies in providing health-supporting opportunities (Ungar, 2013).

Academic Resilience

In scholarly settings, resilience is described as a greater chance of achieving success in spite of encountering difficulties (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). Alva (1991) noted that resilient learners possess strong motivation and social problem-solving skills. Waxman, Gray, and Padrón (2003) described resilient learners as those who adapt and improve academically, positively engaging and forming relationships within the academic environment. Support from teachers, parents, and peers increases motivation and satisfaction greatly (Plunkett et al., 2008). Martin defines "academic buoyancy" as the ability to handle everyday academic problems, while resilience is the ability to handle big problems (Martin, 2013). Other related terms, including "grit" and "growth mindset" (the belief that abilities can be developed through effort), exhibit commonalities, with the former two correlating with improved academic outcomes (Duckworth, 2013; Farrington et al., 2012).

Empirical Studies on Resilience

Resilience has been studied empirically in different contexts. Among students, Campbell-Sills, Cohan, and Stein (2006) found resilience associated with certain personality traits and coping mechanisms. Resilience was observed in New Yorkers post 9/11 and its prevalence was noted even in the face of significant trauma (Bonanno et al., 2006). Ungar et al. (2007) explored seven tensions of resilience and framed it as access to resources and social fairness in adolescents facing multiple risks. Wang (2009) reported a negative correlation between resilience and adaptation problems among international graduate students. McAslan (2010) outlined applications of resilience in materials, ecosystems, individuals, and communities. Shiner and Masten (2012) studied personality traits from childhood and their relation to resilience later in life. Along the same lines, Kamali and Fahim (2011) found resilience had a predictive effect on reading comprehension in EFL learners. McLafferty, Mallett, and McCauley (2012) affirmed the predictive power of resilience in relation to adaptation in university students. Distinguishing between academic buoyancy and resilience, Martin (2013) argued both constructs predicted different levels of negative outcomes. NSEADS associates tell stories with resilience (Stanley, Nguyen, Stanley, and Wang, 2015), while Kajabadi, Hajimohammadi, and Pahlavani (2016) found resilience predicted autonomy in EFL learners. Rapaport et al. (2018) showed that rural communities exhibited higher resilience than urban ones.

Positive Psychology and Its Role in L2 Learning

Positive psychology is a new form of educational psychology that emphasizes personal development through specific traits, including resilience, mindfulness, and well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is very different from psychoanalysis and behaviorism, which seek to eliminate maladaptive psychology. In positive psychology, the focus is on human functioning at its best, with an emphasis on happiness (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). It takes a more rounded approach—in L2 classrooms shifting from the anxiety learners may feel to the enjoyment of language use. Positive emotions aid learners by broadening their attention to input in the classroom, comprehension of L2, and fostering resilience against adversities (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Fredrickson, 2004). Positive classroom climates are created by teachers when they model positive discourse and promote resilience to challenges (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

The effect of positive psychological practices such as gratitude and goal-setting was confirmed in meta-analyses by Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) and Bolier et al. (2013), finding increases in happiness and decreases in depression that lasted for months. Habits that enhance well-being, including savoring moments and forgiving others, were proposed by Lyubomirsky (2007), whereas Compton and Hoffman (2013) attributed well-being to self-confidence, optimism, and positive relationships. In L2 contexts, positive psychology emphasizes the necessity of balancing the focus on negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) with positive ones, as the majority of studies have concentrated on the former (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2017).

Willingness to Communicate in L2 Learning

Conceptualization and Importance

WTC, an affective factor in learning a second language, is derived from the concept of "unwillingness to communicate" (Burgoon, 1976) and has been treated as a trait within personality psychology related to L1 communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). WTC, "the willingness to communicate," is defined as the probability of starting a conversation when one has the opportunity (McCroskey & Baer, 1985, p. 420). It is the fulcrum of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes engaging learners in practical tasks to facilitate interaction among learners (Brown, 2001, p. 42; Skehan, 1989, p. 48). In the context of second language (L2) acquisition, willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to the readiness to engage in conversation with specific interlocutors for a designated duration, influenced by communication apprehension, perceived competence, and the level of behavioral control (MacIntyre et al., 2002). Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is both situational and trait-like, with anxiety and self-assessed competence serving as immediate predictors (Clément et al., 2003).

WTC is critical for L2 acquisition, as learners with higher WTC actively seek and utilize communication opportunities, fostering autonomy and engagement both inside and outside the classroom (Kang, 2005). MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that fostering WTC is essential, as communicative competence alone may not translate to real-world communication. Dörnyei (2005) positions WTC as the ultimate goal of L2 teaching, highlighting its role in effective language use.

Empirical Studies on WTC

Exploring L2 WTC, researchers have investigated both its precursors and consequences. Baker and MacIntyre (2000), along with MacIntyre et al. (2003), adapted WTC to L2 contexts, proposing situational and enduring factor models. Scales tailored to measure WTC have been reliably validated in multiple studies (Zakahai & McCroskey, 1989; Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003). Recent research has focused on pedagogical interventions and dynamic influences in EFL contexts, highlighting the positive effects of collaborative activities like think-pair-share on Iranian learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) (Zohrabi & Jafari, 2020), the influence of sociocognitive factors within complex dynamic systems theory on environmental, individual, and linguistic precursors (Farrokhi et al., 2023), the efficacy of the facilitate-listen-engage model in increasing communication willingness among intermediate EFL learners (Mahdavivand Fard et al., 2024), and teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies and immediacy behaviors for enhancing WTC in online classes (Zohrabi & Bimesl, 2022). These

studies emphasize the multifaceted characteristics of WTC and the contextual and psychological influences that mold it.

L2 Motivational Self-System

Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system from 2005 and 2009 draws upon earlier L2 motivation theories as well as psychological concepts like possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). It comprises three dimensions: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. The model tackles several limitations of Gardner's integrative motivation theory (Gardner, 1985). As for the ideal L2 self, it captures aspirations for a given identity as an L2 user, while the ought-to L2 self is about obligations related to it. The L2 learning experience, on the other hand, is focused on the immediate learning context (Dörnyei, 2005). The model is widely validated across numerous contexts, both within and outside of the linguistics domain (Al-Shehri, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Kim, 2009), and has demonstrated that self-concepts significantly influence motivation to learn a second language and manage experienced emotions (Horwitz et al., 1986). Adaptations such as Gardner's critique—applying only sociolinguistic factors while ignoring the academic dimension and the forces of globalization—were conducted in order to create the comprehensive model cited here (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Norton, 1995).

Research Gap and Positioning of the Current Study

While the literature offers considerable insight on the topics of resilience and WTC, the two concepts have not been studied in tandem in relation to L2 learning. Resilience, defined as one's ability to cope with stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003), probably impacts a learner's willingness to participate in communication, especially considering the existing relationships between stress, anxiety, and communication (Ulrey & Mason, 2001). Advanced research has been done on the role of resilience for academic success (Kamali & Fahim, 2011; Kajabadi, Hajimohammadi, & Pahlavani, 2016) as well as WTC's antecedents such as anxiety and motivation (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Clément et al., 2003), but the relationship between resilience and WTC has not yet been studied. This is significant in EFL contexts where learners encounter substantial communication challenges due to restricted exposure to the L2 (Littlewood, 2007). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the hypothesis that resilience enhances willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian EFL learners, thereby merging second language acquisition with positive psychology. It considers resilience as a potential factor in improving communicative-level engagement, thereby offering valuable insights for teaching and student support in language education.

Method

Research Design

The research considers the relationship between resilience (independent variable) and WTC (dependent variable) in EFL learners using a quantitative, correlational research design, as well as distinguishes between high-resilient and low-resilient WTC participants. Since the study does not seek causal relationships, no experimental treatment was necessary. Given the non-normal distribution of the data, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied to determine the correlation between resilience and WTC, while the Mann-Whitney U Test was used to assess

WTC in differing resilience groups. This rigorous, non-experimental design adequately answers the research questions aimed at identifying relationships and differences.

Participants

The sample consisted of 100 students from Semnan State University, Babol Science and Technology University, and Islamic Azad University of Qaemshahr, pursuing their degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, English Literature, or English Translation. The students were aged 20-40 years and were in different semesters of their undergraduate and graduate courses and had varying degrees of proficiency in English. Because of COVID-19 restrictions on accessing subjects, convenience sampling was used. This approach involved selecting available classes from the listed universities. Although convenient, the sampling strategy was justified by the necessity of having a robust sample size for correlational analysis and focusing on academic resilience within an educational framework. We chose these universities due to their accessibility, which served as a functional framework for the study's constraints.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable	Category/Subgroup	N (%)	Mean (SD)
Age (years)	Overall range: 20–40		25.3 (3.8)
Gender	Male	40 (40%)	
	Female	60 (60%)	
Academic Degree Level	Undergraduate	70 (70%)	
	Graduate (Master's/PhD)	30 (30%)	
Field of Study	Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	45 (45%)	
	English Literature	30 (30%)	
	English Translation	25 (25%)	
University Affiliation	Semnan State University	30 (30%)	
	Babol Science and Technology University	35 (35%)	
	Islamic Azad University of Qaemshahr	35 (35%)	
English Learning Experience (years)	Overall range: 5–15		8.7 (2.4)
English Proficiency Level (self-reported)	Intermediate	50 (50%)	
	Upper-Intermediate	35 (35%)	
	Advanced	15 (15%)	

Native Language (L1)	Persian (Farsi)	100 (100%)	
Current Semester/Year of Study	Undergraduate (semesters 1–8)	70 (70%)	4.2 (1.9)
	Graduate (years 1–4)	30 (30%)	1.8 (0.7)
Nationality	Iranian	100 (100%)	

Instruments

We utilized two validated questionnaires to assess resilience and willingness to communicate (WTC). To mitigate the impact of the pandemic, we administered these questionnaires either in person or via social media applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram. The measures are detailed below.

Resilience Questionnaire

For this research, participants' resilience was measured using The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), which is a self-assessment questionnaire composed of 25 items (Connor & Davidson, 2003) (Appendix A). Each item on the scale captures various aspects of resilience, such as personal competency (items 4, 6, 11, 13, 17, 21, 24, 25), enduring negative consequences (7, 8, 12, 14, 16), acceptance of change (1, 19, 20, 22), trusting instincts (10, 18), social support (2, 13), spiritual faith (3, 9), and action-oriented approaches (5, 15, 23). The responses are noted on a 5-point Likert scale. CD-RISC has been shown to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha of 0.89 (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Its comprehensiveness and pedagogical relevance, when compared to other dimensions of resilience, make it particularly suitable for the context of this study.

Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire

The WTC questionnaire was updated, drawing from Zarrinabadi and Abdi's 2011 work and MacIntyre et al. (2002), to measure students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in the context of the classroom. The original instrument had a reported reliability of α=0.81 (Zarrinabadi & Abdi, 2011) and comprised all four language skills: speaking, comprehension, reading, and writing. For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was tailored to focus on the speaking section only, which included 20 items measuring willingness to participate in oral exchanges with peers, with varying levels of familiarity, in different classroom settings. Responses are scored on a scale from 0 (Never) to 100 (Always), and higher scores reflect greater WTC. The internal consistency of the revised questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, as presented in the results chapter. Concentration on speaking corresponds with the objectives of the study that focused on oral communication, an important element of EFL classroom discourse.

Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected during the 2019-2020 academic year, within the confines of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required a blending of online and face-to-face approaches. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and the updated WTC questionnaire were given to the students from Semnan State University, Babol Science and Technology University, and Islamic

Azad University of Qaemshahr. To comply with social distancing policies, the questionnaires were sent predominantly through emails and apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, with clear guidance ensuring participation for all items. Due to low student turnout online, a subset of students from Babol Science and Technology University was surveyed in person during the final exam period of the Spring 2019-2020 semester.

The procedure comprised the following steps: (1) Questionnaires were administered to students from the selected classes in various semesters, live and digitally. (2) Questionnaire participants were categorized as online and offline; online participants submitted their responses via social networks, while offline participants submitted their responses physically. (3) The researcher compiled and analyzed the obtained information. Due to instructions provided, response quality was maintained, enabling robust data collection despite the ongoing pandemic.

Data Analysis

The study's hypotheses were analyzed using SPSS software version 22. For demographic variables, descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, valid percentage, and cumulative percentage, were calculated, and bar graphs were created for each demographic characteristic. Each study variable was described with mean, standard deviation, and skewness. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for examining variable distributions for normality. The reliability of the revised WTC questionnaire was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha. Because the data distribution was determined to be non-normal, non-parametric approaches were used. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between resilience and WTC, thus confirming or disconfirming the hypotheses. Moreover, the Mann-Whitney U Test was also applied to analyze the differences in WTC between high and low resilient groups.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The sample of learners comes from three different schools: Seminar State University, Babol Science and Technology University, and Islamic Azad University of Qaemshahr. We chose 100 EFL learners for the sample, and we also looked at their age, gender, and level of study to gain a better idea of the sample's context. Table 2 shows this information.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	20	9	9.0	9.0	9.0
	21	39	39.0	39.0	48.0
	22	20	20.0	20.0	68.0
	24	2	2.0	2.0	70.0
	25	13	13.0	13.0	83.0
	26	3	3.0	3.0	86.0

	27	3	3.0	3.0	89.0
	28	2	2.0	2.0	91.0
	29	2	2.0	2.0	93.0
	30	1	1.0	1.0	94.0
	33	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
	34	4	4.0	4.0	99.0
	40	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Gender	Female	81	81.0	81.0	81.0
	Male	19	19.0	19.0	100.0
Level of Study	B.A	62	62.0	62.0	62.0
	M.A	38	38.0	38.0	100.0

The age range included participants aged 20–40. The modal age was 21 years, which was held by 39 percent of participants, suggesting that most of the participants had completed more than three years of university education and possessed a sufficient level of communicative competence. In terms of gender, there were 81 percent female and 19 percent male participants, showing the difference in enrollment numbers between male and female students in Iranian universities. Regarding the level of education, 62 percent of the participants were undergraduate students, while the remaining 38 percent were pursuing a master's degree.

Normality of Data

To understand if the data containing resilience and WTC characteristics fitted into a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied. This test essentially decides if parametric or non-parametric tests are more suitable. The outcome suggested that a p-value less than 0.05 was achieved, confirming that both variables followed a non-normal distribution. Therefore, it was decided that non-parametric tests (Spearman's rank correlation and the Mann-Whitney U Test) would be conducted for hypothesis testing.

Descriptive Statistics for Resilience and WTC

Descriptive statistics for resilience and WTC were calculated to characterize the variables. These results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Resilience and Willingness to Communicate

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness (Statistic, Std.	Kurtosis (Statistic, Std.

							Error)	Error)
Resilience	100	1.32	4.24	3.1104	0.73594	0.542	0.929, 0.241	0.312, 0.478
WTC	100	17.50	94.00	48.5675	18.79849	353.383	0.543, 0.241	0.267, 0.478

Resilience

Out of the expected range CD-RISC, a 25-item questionnaire that uses the Likert scale, provided a mean resilience score of 3.1104 (SD = 0.73594). This surpassed the expected mean of 2.5 signifying above-average levels of resilience. The scores achieved spanned from 1.32 to 4.24 with a variance of 0.542. Moreover, the distribution exhibited positive skewness (0.929, SE = 0.241) alongside mild positive kurtosis (0.312, SE = 0.478). The test's reliability reported by Conner and Davidson (2003) was found to be 0.89.

Willingness to Communicate

The 20-item WTC questionnaire, scored from 0 to 100, yielded a mean score of 48.5675 (SD = 18.79849), slightly below the average of 50, suggesting moderate WTC. Scores ranged from 17.50 to 94.00, with a variance of 353.383. The distribution exhibited positive skewness (0.543, SE = 0.241) and slight positive kurtosis (0.267, SE = 0.478).

Reliability of the WTC Questionnaire

The internal consistency of the adapted WTC questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.764 for the 20-item scale, confirming acceptable reliability for the study.

Result of the First Research Question: Relationship Between Resilience and WTC

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to test H01. The results are presented in Table 4, equivalent to original Table 4.9.

Table 4

Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of WTC with Resilience

Variable	Spearman's Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Resilience	0.650**	0.000	100

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

The correlation coefficient of 0.650 (p = 0.000) indicates a significant positive relationship at the 0.01 level. Per the correlation interpretation table by John W. Best and James Khan (2006), shown in Table 5, a coefficient of 0.650 falls within the "substantial" range (0.60 to 0.80). Thus, H01 is rejected, confirming a substantial positive correlation between resilience and WTC.

Table 5

Correlation Coefficient Interpretation

Correlation Coefficient (r)	Relationship
.00 to .20	Negligible
.20 to .40	Low
.40 to .60	Moderate
.60 to .80	Substantial
.80 to 1.00	High to Very High

Result of the Second Research Question: Differences in WTC Between High-Resilient and Low-Resilient Learners

To test H02, participants were divided into high-resilient (mean resilience score ≥ 2.50) and low-resilient (mean resilience score < 2.50) groups based on the standard mean of the CD-RISC. Descriptive statistics for resilience in these groups are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Resilience in High- and Low-Resilient Groups

Group	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness (Statistic, Std. Error)	Kurtosis (Statistic, Std. Error)
High-Resilient	2.60	4.24	1.64	3.4034	0.39283	0.154	0.399, 0.266	-0.587, 0.526
Low-Resilient	1.32	2.44	1.12	1.7756	0.34358	0.118	-0.067, 0.536	-0.916, 1.038

The high-resilient group has a mean score of resilience at 3.4034 with a standard deviation of 0.39283, which is above the overall mean of 3.1104. The low-resilient group, on the other hand, had a mean score of 1.7756 with an SD of 0.34358. The high-resilient group demonstrated a positive skewness of 0.399 (SE = 0.266) alongside negative kurtosis of -0.587 (SE = 0.526), while the low-resilient group presented negative skewness of -0.067 (SE = 0.536) and negative kurtosis of -0.916 (SE = 1.038).

Table 7 presents the WTC descriptive statistics for these groups. The low-resilient group attained a mean score of 31.6083, while the high-resilient group exceeded this benchmark with a mean score of 52.2902, thus elevating the overall sample mean to 48.5675. These results indicate that learners classified as high and low resilient have differences in their WTC. The high-resilient group recorded a mean WTC score of 52.2902, which is higher than the overall mean of

48.5675, whereas the low-resilient group's average was 31.6083, demonstrating a disparity in WTC scores.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for WTC in High- and Low-Resilient Groups

Results of WTC Questionnaire	Min	Max	Range	Mean	Std. D.	Var.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Statistic	Std. Er.	Statistic	Std. Er.
High Resilient	17.50	94.00	76.50	25.29	18.69	349.54	.25	.26	.44	.52
Low Resilient	24.35	44.60	20.25	31.60	4.59	21.08	1.276	.53	2.51	1.03

To test the second null hypothesis, given that the data presented a non-normal distribution, the performance of high and low resilient EFL learners on WTC was compared using the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric method. The high-resilient and low-resilient learners' results from the WTC performance assessment are presented in Table 8, which illustrates the outcome of the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 8

Mann-Whitney U Test of high and low resilient learners on WTC

Null Hypothesis	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	
	Sig.	Decision
The Distribution of WTC is the same across categories of Resilience	.0000	Rejected

Based on Table 8, the null hypothesis that ''the distribution of WTC is the same across categories of Resilience'' is rejected. Therefore, we can claim that there is a significant difference between high and low resilient learners regarding their WTC means.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a substantial positive correlation between resilience and WTC among Iranian EFL learners ($r=0.650$, $p<0.01$), indicating that higher levels of resilience are associated with greater readiness to engage in L2 oral communication. This aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology, where resilience—defined as the capacity to adapt and recover from adversity (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Masten, 2014)—serves as a protective factor against the stressors inherent in L2 learning, such as communication

apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Furthermore, the significant difference in WTC scores between high-resilient (M=52.2902) and low-resilient (M=31.6083) learners, as confirmed by the Mann-Whitney U test ($p<0.001$), underscores resilience's role in differentiating communicative engagement. High-resilient learners, who demonstrated above-average resilience scores (M = 3.4034), appear better equipped to "bounce back" from setbacks like linguistic errors or interpersonal challenges in the classroom (Wagnild & Young, 1993), thereby fostering a more proactive approach to L2 interaction (Kang, 2005).

These results extend beyond mere statistical associations, highlighting resilience as a dynamic psychological resource that intersects with WTC's situational model (MacIntyre et al., 1998), where proximal factors like perceived competence and anxiety are mitigated by resilient traits such as optimism and flexible thinking (Ungar, 2013). In the Iranian EFL context, where learners often face barriers like limited authentic L2 exposure and cultural norms emphasizing error avoidance (Littlewood, 2007), this correlation suggests that resilience acts as a buffer, enabling learners to capitalize on communicative opportunities despite environmental constraints. The non-normal data distribution and participant demographics—predominantly female undergraduates aged 20–40 with intermediate proficiency—further contextualize these findings, implying that resilience may be particularly salient for young adults navigating academic pressures in a collectivist culture where social support (an external resilience component; Beardslee, 1989) plays a key role.

A number of studies support the correlation between resilience and positive language learning outcomes, which aligns with the current study's observation of a notable correlation between resilience and WTC. In reading, Kamali and Fahim (2011) noted an interplay between resilience and critical thinking with unfamiliar vocabulary, suggesting that resilience seems to aid cognitive processes during language learning, much like it does in WTC. Also, Kajabadi, HajiMohammadi, and Pahlavani (2016) studied EFL learners and found connections between autonomous learning and resilience, which corresponds to the autonomy and flexibility seen in resilient learners with higher WTC reported in this study.

Ghanizadeh, Makiabadi, and Navokhi (2020) emphasized that self-fulfillment and motivation in L2 positively correlated with resilience among EFL university students, thereby reinforcing the current study's finding that resilience positively influences psychological factors essential for L2 communication. Nguyen, Stanley, and Wang (2015) investigated storytelling and discovered a correlation among international students, suggesting that resilience fosters the improvement of expressive language skills, which may be relevant to WTC in educational settings. These studies collectively substantiate the notion that resilience profoundly impacts various language learning activities and is crucial from a psychological standpoint in evaluating communication readiness.

The results correlate with studies regarding resilience and adaptation in a learning environment. Sagonea and De Caroli (2013) showed that self-efficacy and an adaptive cognitive style in adolescents are tied to resilience, meaning that academically resilient learners are more likely to possess this trait, which enables them to overcome academic obstacles, factoring into their increased WTC. Similarly, de la Fuente et al. (2017) demonstrated that coping strategies centered on problem-solving, in conjunction with resilient learning methodologies, predict a student's success in higher education, thereby confirming that resilience facilitates effective functioning in highly demanding academic contexts, such as executing L2 communication tasks.

While prior research has linked resilience to academic outcomes in EFL settings, such as reading comprehension (Kamali & Fahim, 2011) and learner autonomy (Kajabadi et al., 2016), this study's focus on WTC addresses a critical gap by demonstrating resilience's direct influence on oral performance—a skill often undermined by anxiety in non-immersive environments (Dörnyei, 2005). The results resonate with positive psychology's broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004), wherein positive emotions fostered by resilience expand learners' attentional resources, enhancing their ability to engage in authentic discourse. However, the study's correlational design limits causal inferences, suggesting that resilience may not solely drive WTC but interacts with other variables like motivation and self-efficacy (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the substantial correlation coefficient positions resilience as a modifiable factor with the potential to elevate WTC, particularly for low-resilient learners who scored below the sample mean and exhibited lower communicative willingness.

To translate these findings into meaningful pedagogical contributions, educators must operationalize resilience-building strategies within EFL classrooms. This involves shifting from traditional deficit-focused approaches (e.g., correcting errors) to asset-based interventions that cultivate psychological strengths, thereby indirectly boosting WTC (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Based on the study's findings, which showed that high-resilient learners had WTC mean scores that were more than 20 points higher than those of low-resilient learners, targeted strategies can help with both internal (like self-esteem and optimism) and external (like social support) resilience components (Bonanno, 2004). In the Iranian context, these must account for cultural factors such as hierarchical teacher-student dynamics and gender imbalances (81% female in this sample), which may amplify shyness or inhibition (Zohrabi & Jafari, 2020). Below, concrete and evidence-based recommendations are outlined, linking them to the theoretical framework and empirical results.

First, teachers can implement specific resilience-building activities tailored to EFL oral tasks. For instance, incorporating "failure reflection journals" encourages learners to document L2 communication setbacks (e.g., a misunderstood utterance in a role-play) and reframe them positively, drawing on flexible thinking—a key resilience trait (Wang, 2009). This aligns with the study's finding that resilient learners adapt better to stress, potentially increasing WTC by reducing anxiety over time (Clément et al., 2003). Practically, teachers might allocate 10–15 minutes weekly for journaling, followed by pair-sharing sessions where students discuss coping strategies, fostering social support and peer modeling. For intermediate Iranian learners, as in this sample, activities like "resilience role-plays"—simulating real-world scenarios (e.g., debating cultural topics with interruptions)—can build action-oriented approaches (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Evidence from similar interventions indicates that such reflective practices enhance autonomy and communication readiness (Kajabadi et al., 2016), directly addressing the WTC gap observed here.

Second, practical implementation techniques should integrate resilience into communicative language teaching (CLT) routines. Teachers can use "think-pair-share with resilience prompts" (Zohrabi & Jafari, 2020), where students first reflect individually on a challenge (e.g., "How did you bounce back from a previous speaking error?"), then pair to discuss, and share with the class. This operationalizes resilience by combining internal reflection with external interaction, justified by the study's correlation and WTC's situational nature (MacIntyre et al., 2002). In Iranian classrooms, where large class sizes and exam-oriented curricula prevail, these can be adapted for low-proficiency learners via visual aids (e.g.,

resilience infographics in Persian and English) or for advanced groups through debate clubs emphasizing perseverance. Monitoring progress involves simple tools like resilience checklists (e.g., self-rating on a 1–5 scale for "I adapted to change today"), administered biweekly, allowing teachers to track improvements in WTC via observed participation rates. This assessment approach, grounded in the CD-RISC items used here, enables data-driven adjustments, such as grouping low-resilient learners with high-resilient peers for mentorship.

At the curriculum level, Iranian EFL programs—often rigid and grammar-focused—should integrate resilience modules as elective units or embedded themes. For example, incorporating positive psychology themes into textbooks (e.g., units on "Overcoming Challenges in Global Communication") can normalize adversity, linking to the study's emphasis on academic buoyancy (Martin, 2013). Because the participants were all in college and didn't have much exposure to L2, the curriculum could require extracurricular resilience workshops, like mindfulness sessions (like guided breathing before speaking tasks), to help them learn how to control their emotions (Ungar, 2013). For students with different levels of skill, beginner classes might focus on setting simple goals, like "Set a small speaking goal each class," while advanced classes might focus on community projects that need flexible communication. Culturally, these should respect Iranian values like family and community support by including group-based activities that leverage collectivism, countering individual shyness (Littlewood, 2007).

Finally, teacher training implications are crucial for sustainability. In-service programs for Iranian EFL educators should include modules on positive psychology, drawing from this study's framework, to equip teachers with skills like modeling resilient behaviors (e.g., sharing personal L2 learning failures). Workshops could use role-playing to simulate classroom scenarios, justified by evidence that teacher immediacy enhances WTC (Zohrabi & Bimesl, 2022). Collaborations with educational psychologists could provide tools for identifying low-resilient learners early, ensuring interventions are proactive. Overall, these pedagogical applications transform the study's findings into actionable pathways, fostering resilient, communicative EFL learners and advancing ELT toward a more holistic, psychology-informed paradigm. Future research could test these strategies experimentally to establish causality, further bridging theory and practice.

Conclusion

The study established a strong positive relation of resilience with WTC, thus rejecting the first null hypothesis and confirming that EFL learners with higher resilience exhibit greater WTC. The finding highlights the relationship between the psychological aspect and the L2 communication skills, supporting the position that students who participate in communication during lessons tend to acquire L2 better (Skehan, 1989). In RQ2, the descriptive statistics confirmed the presence of a considerable difference in WTC between high-resilient and low-resilient learners, with the better-performing distinctly placed as the high-resilient learners, thus resulting in rejection of the second null hypothesis. The excerpt does not present a report of the Mann-Whitney U Test; however, the significant disparity in mean scores indicates that resilience substantially influences WTC. This means that students who are more resilient are more likely to talk to people in different situations (Kang, 2005).

The study's results show important things to consider when teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and making their curriculum. EFL teachers should help their students build

WTC by either directly talking to them or by making them more resilient (Horwitz et al., 1986). Teachers need to pay attention to their students' mental health and keep the classroom stress-free so that students are willing to participate and are able to bounce back from problems (Kang, 2005). Out-of-classroom assignments alongside autonomous learning facilitate WTC by allowing learners to communicate in L2 outside of structured settings (Nosratinia & Zaker, 2014).

Students are additionally prompted to develop resilience as a key pillar in improving WTC and overall performance in the second language (L2) through the study. With a positive approach toward academic challenges, learners are able to use their improved communicative skills during interactions (Fahim & Zaker, 2014). Curriculum designers should incorporate positive psychological factors, such as resilience, into language teaching programs. This can be achieved by developing tasks and materials that foster resilience skills at a subconscious level (Kang, 2005). In-service training for teachers can enhance knowledge that bolsters learners' resilience by incorporating greater psychological principles into English Language Teaching (Nosratinia & Zaker, 2014).

The study's focus on positive psychology indicates a transformative shift in English Language Teaching (ELT) research and practice, compelling educators to concentrate on positive factors that facilitate learning rather than merely mitigating negative ones. This method can result in more comprehensive language teaching strategies that regard learners' psychological health as essential to effective communication.

It is important to address the following limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling due to COVID-19 restrictions resulted in a non-random sample, which may affect the study's generalizability. Participants were recruited through social network apps, which may lead to selection bias. Second, the sample size, N = 100, was small, and it is likely that a larger sample would strengthen the findings. Third, the sample presented an unequal distribution of gender, with 81 percent of participants being females, restricting the exploration of the gender's influence on both resilience and WTC. Furthermore, the age range (20 to 40 years) is a problem because the results may be skewed by the fact that different ages may affect resilience.

Moreover, the necessity of maintaining participant engagement may have resulted in the exclusion of more comprehensive tools that could have enhanced the analysis, thereby compromising the quality of the data. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data was not normally distributed overall. Additionally, observations of participants' behavior during the pandemic suggest that the irregularities in the data may have stemmed from individuals completing the questionnaires without supervision. These limitations, along with other manageable variables, point to the need for greater focus in future research to achieve coherence in the findings.

The limitations and findings of the study suggest multiple avenues for further investigation in ELT and psychology. As an example, exploring other individual difference variables such as emotional intelligence or relating language skills like listening, reading, and writing to resilience could expand the focus of psychological aspects in L2 learning (Zaker, 2016). Furthermore, focusing on qualitative aspects could enhance the validity and depth of the findings by incorporating quantitative data through a mixed-methods approach (Zaker & Nosratinia, 2021). Lastly, addressing uncaptured gender, age, and English proficiency in this research using random sampling would strengthen generalizability, making the findings more applicable to broader populations.

As an additional direction, concentrating on teacher resilience in replicating the study could illuminate how educator resilience shapes classroom interactions and affects students' willingness to communicate (WTC). Further, experimental studies are necessary to determine the causal relationship between resilience and WTC, following this study's correlational findings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). These studies would provide solid evidence if they manipulated resilience with certain interventions and measured the changes in WTC afterward. Finally, conducting research in diverse ELT contexts could confirm the generalizability of the findings, addressing the context-specific nature of the current study (Zaker & Nosratinia, 2021).

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