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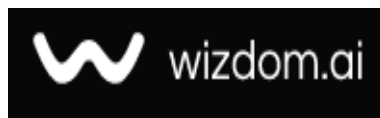
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Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations on Willingness to Communicate Among Iraqi Learners

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Abstract

General Background: Motivation is a cornerstone of second language acquisition (SLA), shaping learners' engagement and communicative competence. **Specific Background:** In contexts like Iraq, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) with limited authentic exposure, extrinsic motives—such as exams and societal expectations—often outweigh intrinsic interest, potentially constraining learners' willingness to communicate (WTC). **Knowledge Gap:** While studies in Asian and Western EFL/ESL settings have explored motivation-WTC links, little empirical research addresses pre-intermediate Iraqi learners, a group particularly vulnerable to anxiety and rote-based instruction. **Aims:** This study investigated which type of motivation dominates among Iraqi EFL students, how motivation relates to WTC, and which orientation predicts it most strongly. **Results:** Data from 40 female learners in Maysan revealed extrinsic motivation dominance ($M = 29.03$) over intrinsic ($M = 19.93$), yet intrinsic showed a stronger correlation with WTC ($r = .36, p < .01$) and was the only significant predictor ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), explaining 10.17% of variance. **Novelty:** These findings challenge assumptions that extrinsic pressures drive communication in EFL, highlighting instead intrinsic motivation's centrality. **Implications:** Pedagogically, fostering intrinsic interest through autonomy-supportive, communicative tasks may enhance WTC and address cultural-educational constraints in Iraq.

Highlights:

- Intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor of WTC than extrinsic factors.
- Iraqi EFL learners show dominance of extrinsic over intrinsic motivation.
- Pedagogical focus on intrinsic interest can enhance communicative competence.

Keywords: Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Willingness to Communicate, Iraqi EFL Learners, Second Language Acquisition

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Introduction

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), motivation becomes a foundational factor determining students' participation and proficiency achievement. Due to the need for proficiency in English as communication continues on a global scale, it is vital to understand the dynamics of motivation, particularly in the context of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting where access to the target language is restricted. This investigation explores the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and willingness to communicate (WTC), a construct which measures students' predisposition towards entering into discourse through a second language (L2) [1]. Intrinsic motivation entails engaging in activities for intrinsic satisfaction, for instance, curiosity or enjoyment, while extrinsic motivation results from outside reward or pressure, for instance, grades or parental pressure [2][3]. WTC has been established in first language (L1) settings but has been transplanted into L2 settings in an effort to support differences in communicative behaviors [4].

The importance of this study is that it attends to Iraqi EFL students at the pre - interclusive level, a group that tends to be neglected in studies of SLA. In Iraq, foreign language learning starts at an early stage of school, but students tend to face obstacles like anxiety, low confidence, and differences in cultures that hamper communicative ability [6][5]. Traditional approaches focusing on memorization tend to enhance extrinsic rather than intrinsic motives and thus might decrease WTC. Previous research in ESL environments has connected greater motivation with higher WTC, but EFL contexts like Iraq pose specific difficulties like scarce authentic interaction possibilities and socio - political factors. This deficiency highlights the importance of exploring the correlation and prediction of motivational orientations and WTC in these environments[8][7]

The present study answers three central questions: (1) Which type of motivation, intrinsic or extrinsic, dominates the motivations of Iraqi EFL students? (2) How strongly these orientations relate to reported WTC? (3) Which orientation is the best WTC predictor? Hypotheses assume a non - significant correlation between motivations and WTC and extrinsic dominance as a result of examination - centered learning. Utilizing valid measures and statistical tests, the present research strives to provide empirically driven answers informing teaching methods. Increasing WTC through focused motivation has the potential for more efficient attainment of language proficiency demanded by globalization [9]. Finally, the results of the study apply to SLA theory as context - specific influences on motivations and open up the possibilities of culturally sensitive teaching methods.

Empirical studies on variegated EFL conditions support differential influences of forms of motivation on WTC. For instance, Asian EFL conditions are overwhelmed with extrinsic motives like scholastic pressures [15], while in Western ESL conditions balanced forms of influence exist so that intrinsic motives enhance voluntary use of language [10]. Very little empirical work on EFL conditions within the Middle East and Iraq specifically has been done. Iraqi learners have unique difficulties like a curriculum where grammar and reading come at the cost of communicative oral proficiency [11][12], building up extrinsic motives on the basis of tests and discouraging intrinsic want of communication. This incompatibility may be responsible for entrenched issues of communication apprehension and reluctance towards L2 talk as documented in studies of test anxiety and low self - esteem [13]

In an effort to close this gap, the current study adopts a correlational design with 40 pre - intermediate female EFL students of 13 - 20 years of age from institutes of Maysan city. Pre - trained through the Oxford Placement Test [14], questionnaire respondents rated WTC on a skill basis [15], as well as motivational orientation [16]. Descriptive statistics, t - tests, correlations, and regression statistical analyses provide measures of prevalence, association, and strength of prediction. Through this process, the current study not only tests the null hypothesis but also provides practical informs on how educators might foster intrinsic motivation as a potentially enlarging influence on WTC and overall L2 proficiency within resource - restricted contexts.

Literature Review

1. Defining Motivation and Its Dimensions: Intrinsic and Extrinsic

Motivation serves as a fundamental psychological driver in second language acquisition (SLA), influencing how learners initiate, maintain, and direct their efforts toward mastering a new language. Rooted in self - determination theory (SDT), motivation is conceptualized along a continuum, ranging from amotivation - characterized by a complete lack of intent - to fully self - regulated forms that promote autonomy and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the core of this framework lie intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, which represent distinct yet interrelated dimensions. Intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual, propelled by inherent satisfaction, such as the joy of discovery, intellectual curiosity, or a sense of accomplishment derived from the learning process itself [16]. For example, a learner might immerse themselves in English literature or conversations because they find the cultural nuances fascinating, leading to voluntary and sustained practice without the need for external validation. This type aligns with SDT's emphasis on basic psychological needs: autonomy (feeling in control of one's actions), competence (mastering challenges), and relatedness (connecting with others through the activity) [17]. Research consistently shows that intrinsically motivated learners exhibit greater persistence, creativity, and deeper cognitive processing, which are crucial for developing communicative competence in SLA . In contrast, extrinsic motivation is externally oriented, where behaviors are performed to attain separable outcomes, such as rewards (e.g., grades, certificates) or to avoid negative consequences (e.g., failure or disapproval) [18]. This dimension can be further subdivided into levels of self - regulation, from external regulation (purely reward - driven) to identified regulation (valuing the activity for personal goals), though it often lacks the depth of intrinsic drives [19]. In SLA contexts, extrinsically motivated learners might study English to meet academic requirements or career demands, but their engagement may wane once incentives are removed.

The interaction between these motivations is of especial relevance in EFL settings where extrinsic drivers such as standardized tests tend to predominate and may obscure intrinsic enthusiasm [20]. Systematic reviews note that while extrinsically driven interest may grant initial investment, intrinsic types more strongly relate to long - term achievement, for example vocabulary retention and communicative ability [21][22]. For example, ESL research indicates more advanced competence correlates with greater intrinsic drive since novices more heavily depend on extrinsically provided structure [23]. Yet combining both through mechanisms of gamification or practical application may engender a "magnetism" effect where students become drawn towards persistent effort (postulated in more recent theoretical accounts) [24]. Empirical research drawn on from varied settings confirms this complementarity: In Asian EFL contexts extrinsic motivators such as parental pressure hold sway but intrinsic pleasure forecasts greater strategy adoption and minimized nervousness. In more Western settings, balanced drives maximize creativity and experimentalness with language [15].

Theoretical models expand beyond SDT and involve socio - educational models in which motivation touches on attitudes and orientations [20]. Integrative and intrinsic involve wanting cultural assimilation, while instrumental (extrinsic) aims at tangible gains such as employment. Critics advocate for more refined perspectives since these coexist: instrumental aims might be transformed into intrinsic ones through an inner process of internalization [16]. Recent bibliometric summaries of SLA research on motivation highlight shifts toward dynamic models of extrinsic measures supporting intrinsic development in low - exposure settings. Teacher - based classroom interventions involve promoting intrinsic motivation through autonomy - supportive measures such as activity choice that reduces overdependence on extrinsic reward. Difficulty lies in contexts such as Iraq where conventional approaches favor extrinsic ends and might repress intrinsic drives and result in losing one's way. Putative models invite redefining the concept of motivation as a hybrid where extrinsic "pull" first attracts the learner and allows intrinsic "push" [11][12].

Further, motivational influences reach into strategy use and achievements of SLA. Metacognitive strategies like self - monitoring are utilized more effectively by intrinsically motivated learners and result in better comprehension and production ability (Oxford, 2017). Short - term extrinsic motivation is efficient but might procure surface - level learning as noted in research where reward - based students perform below standard in ungraded achievements [19]. Age and gender also moderate these effects since younger students tend to begin with intrinsic curiosity that is undermined by external pressures of school [17]. Longitudinal studies confirm that shifts from extrinsic towards intrinsic motivation lead to higher retention rates of language programs [25]. In conclusion, an understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations allows for a perspective on SLA variation and informs interventions that leverage both for best learner advancement.

2. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate and Its Theoretical Models

Willingness to communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition (SLA) is a learner's inclination to initiate and maintain interaction in the target language as opportunities present themselves and close the gap between linguistic competence and true communicative proficiency [1]. Based on first language (L1) communication research, WTC as a stable personality trait of introversion - extroversion and communication apprehension [5][4] gave way to an adaptation in SLA settings that highlighted situational dynamics and acknowledged that L2 WTC varies as a function of proximal psychological, social, and environmental factors [1]. One of the seminal models in this regard is MacIntyre and colleagues' pyramid heuristic that overlays influences from lasting traits (e.g., personality, intergroup attitudes) at the base of the pyramid through intermediary layers of situational antecedents (e.g., state communicative self - confidence, want of communication) to culminate in L2 use [1]. This framework incorporates communicative confidence and affiliation motives and contextual influences and highlights that WTC is not so much trait - like as something dynamic that arises and is influenced by factors of anxiety and perceived competence and interactional opportunities [26].

Recent research has refined this framework through the addition of complex systems theory to observe WTC as a dynamic emergent state subject to real - time changes. A recent scoping review of WTC in language learning illustrates its development from fixed trait models to multi - polar constructs involving affective, cognitive, and behavioral frames. Peter MacIntyre's work emphasizes the centrality of WTC as the proximal prediction of the use of an L2 and brings into play such variables as self - efficacy and emotional control within officially instructed contexts [27]. Current models involving structural equation modeling examine distinctions between traits and states such that long - term dispositions (e.g., extraversion) and fleeting states (e.g., pleasure or nervousness) combine to determine WTC [28]. A 2024 research study models WTC as a trait and as a state through measures of variables such as enjoyment of an L2, nervousness about an L2, psychological well - being, and informal learning of a digital sort and finds that positive feelings significantly predict higher WTC in classroom and digital settings [29][30].

In EFL settings, WTC models frequently involve cultural and socio - psychological variables, including group and perceived norms that restrict or support communication [31]. For instance, the socio - educational model adds attitudes toward the community of L2 users and proposes that integrative orientations increase willingness through lowered intergroup anxiety [20]. Recent versions of these models, such as the Rasch analysis of mediation models of WTC measures, test and support measures of WTC across skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), affirming them as measures of proficiency outcomes [32]. These models portray the situational fluctuation of WTC; in immersion programs, greater exposure increases state WTC, and in formal classes, trait variables such as perceived competence control. Empirical developments include gender and developmental moderators: Females tend toward lesser WTC through cultural pressures, and adolescents register greater fluctuation related to peer pressure [33].

Theoretical arguments feature WTC's emergence from speaking to multimodality, including digital and written communication, in accord with recent models of SLA [36]. Broad review over the past 25 years follows WTC from its L1 roots - all about reluctant as avoidant - to accessing the use of L2 as an entry into naturalistic use [27]. Dynamic systems models

of WTC represent it as fluid and regularized, with attractants like the positive - negative feedback loop favoring extended engagement [17]. At the instructedSLA end of the research ladder, models of WTC advocate classroom interventions as tasks that reduce apprehension and maximize confidence . Recent classroom WTC books portray macro - micro approaches as intermingling influences on societies (e.g., global interconnectedness) and on the person (e.g., shaping identity)

Cross - cultural validations disclose adaptations specific to context: In Asian EFL, collectivism might repress WTC, and therefore models must control for face - saving behaviors (Wen & Clément, 2003). Middle Eastern research, though sparse, points towards inhibition of WTC through perfectionistic anxiety and thus calls for culturally responsive models (Alemi et al., 2013). Recent research combines technology and models WTC on an online platform where the use of anonymity increases participation [34]. Generally, models of WTC develop towards holism and relate it more comprehensively to overall SLA aims such as fluency and intercultural competence and future empirical studies in underexplored regions such as Iraq.

3. The Theoretical Relationship Between Motivation and WTC

The theoretical linkage between motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition (SLA) underscores motivation's role as a foundational antecedent that shapes learners' readiness to engage in L2 interactions. Grounded in self - determination theory (SDT), motivation - particularly its intrinsic and extrinsic facets - fuels the psychological processes leading to WTC, where intrinsically motivated learners exhibit greater autonomy and enthusiasm for communicative tasks, thereby reducing barriers like anxiety and enhancing perceived competence [2][3]. This connection is theorized through models positing that motivation influences WTC via mediators such as self - efficacy and emotional regulation, with intrinsic drives fostering a positive feedback loop that sustains communicative efforts [17]. For instance, MacIntyre's pyramid model integrates motivational orientations as distal layers, where enduring motives (e.g., integrative or instrumental) interact with proximal states like desire to affiliate, culminating in actual L2 use [1]. Recent theoretical advancements emphasize dynamic interactions: Motivation is not static but evolves, with extrinsic factors initially prompting WTC in structured environments, while intrinsic elements sustain it in voluntary contexts [15].

Empirical syntheses over the last decade affirm this association, noting how motivational profiles forecast WTC variation. A 2021 ESL study discovered that WTC directly corresponds with motivation, mediated through proficiency and perceived social interaction such that motivated students proved more resilient against communicative failure [28]. Correspondingly, a 25 - year scoping review of WTC developments accounts for greater motivation as connected with greater L2 proficiency and propounds that strong motivational intensity increases WTC through decreased apprehension and intensified self - confidence [27]. In theoretical perspectives, SDT proposes that meeting basic needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) through intrinsic motivation increases WTC as learners see communication as intrinsically rewarding rather than compulsory [16]. Extrinsic motivation as being instrumental towards compliance might produce superficial WTC as occurs in models where extrinsic reward causes intrinsic interest to wane over time [19].

The complex systems theory enriches this intersection more, taking into account motivation and WTC as emergent learning ecosystem phenomena moderated by classroom atmosphere and social interaction. One 2024 study models trait - state WTC and discovers enjoyment of the L2 (an intrinsic drive) and psychological well - being as significant predictors of WTC while anxiety (typically related to extrinsic demands) inhibits it [29][30]. This aligns with the socio - educational models where integrative motivation (highly related to intrinsic drive) fortifies WTC through favorable attitudes toward the community of users of the L2 [20]. Instrumental (extrinsic) motivation reinforces WTC where there is goal - seeking but not where communication is spontaneous [10].

Recent studies extend these theories to digital and AI contexts, theorizing that motivation modulates WTC in technology - mediated communication. For example, willingness to interact with AI in SLA is predicted by motivational factors like perceived utility (extrinsic) and enjoyment (intrinsic), expanding traditional models to include virtual affordances [34]. A 2025 study on self - regulation strategies demonstrates that motivation enhances WTC through creativity and self - efficacy, with intrinsic forms yielding stronger effects on communicative output -BMC Psychology, 2024- Growth mindset theories intersect here, positing that motivational beliefs about language malleability mediate WTC, with risk - taking as a key moderator

In EFL contexts, cultural variables postulate differential influences: Collectivist cultures might enhance extrinsic drive's influence on WTC through pressures for social cohesion, but intrinsic motivations dampen anxiety in individualistic endeavors [31]. Longitudinal models disclose dynamic shifts where beginning drive surges WTC but ongoing participation depends on intrinsic support [35]. Classroom emotion and mindset also postulate this relationship where optimistic environments enhance motivated WTC (SAGE Journals, 2024). Discussion production self - efficacy also mediates the motivation - WTC relationship as motivated students output more in discussion (Wiley Online Library, 2024).

Theoretical critiques call for holistic integration, combining motivation with identity and contextual factors to explain WTC variances [36]. In sum, motivation theoretically propels WTC by aligning internal drives with communicative opportunities, informing interventions that nurture intrinsic elements for robust SLA outcomes.

4. Previous Studies on Motivation and WTC in EFL/ESL Contexts: Highlighting the Gap in Iraq

Empirical studies of the intersection of motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) have mushroomed within second language acquisition (SLA) research, within both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, with differential emphases on intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. In ESL contexts, where students find themselves surrounded by an English - speaking world, research tends to show a strong positive correlation between

intrinsic drives and WTC as students draw on natural opportunities for communication. For example, research on Canadian immersion students found that intrinsically motivated high school students showed higher WTC in French as an L2, ascribed to low anxiety and high perceived competence [37]. In the same vein, research on Japanese ESL students in the U.S. conducted by Hashimoto (2002) showed that integrative motivation - to which intrinsic motives closely relate - predicted greater WTC and more frequent use of an L2 and was mediated through self - confidence. Academic pressures and other extrinsic motivations played an ancillary but supportive role and thus indicate that external gains prompt initial investment but intrinsic interest maintains communicative action [10].

Transitions into EFL contexts where exposure is predominantly classroom - based reveal cultural and teaching mediation of motivational influence. Asian EFL research dominates here: Peng's (2012) qualitative study of Chinese university EFL students established that motivation was an influential ecological condition of classroom WTC and intrinsic enjoyment mediated environmental pressures like very large class sizes. Quantitative research confirms: Khajavy et al. (2016) applied structural equation modeling on Iranian EFL students and established intrinsic motivation significantly predicted WTC through increases in confidence and decreases in anxiety while extrinsic motivation showed weaker indirect pathways through perceived competence. In the Korean EFL setting, Kim (2014) found extrinsically motivated students showed situational WTC on examination - based tasks but ineffectiveness in voluntary communication versus intrinsically motivated students who engaged more in extracurricular L2 activity. These profiles confirm SDT where internalized motivations construct sustainable WTC [2][3].

European and Latin American EFL research provides nuance, frequently emphasizing gender and proficiency moderators. In Serbia research on EFL students, higher intrinsic motivation correlated with higher WTC at all proficiency levels, while extrinsic motivations correlated positively only at the beginner level [38]. In Mexico, Cao and Philp (2006) found that motivation predicted group WTC in task - based interaction, with intrinsic types bolstering collaborative interaction and diminishing silence. Longitudinal study in these settings documents shifts in motivations: Longitudinally, extrinsic rewards fade, while intrinsic development maintains gains in WTC [15]. Meta - analyses integrate these patterns and support moderate effect sizes for motivation - WTC relationships ($r \approx .30 - .40$), stronger for intrinsic than extrinsic, though heterogeneity stems from contextual variables such as support from the teacher [39].

In ME EFL settings, investigations are more scarce but shed light on region - specific issues. Iranian studies dominate: Afghari and Sadeghi (2012) found insignificant differences between genders in WTC but extrinsically driven motivation dominating amongst university students and weakly correlated with communicative confidence. Zarrinabadi and Abdi (2011) associated L2 orientations with WTC, where instrumental (extrinsic) motives predicted in - class participation but integrative (intrinsic) ones encouraged out - of - class participation. Similar profiles emerged amongst Saudi Arabian EFL students where mediation of WTC came through decreased perfectionism anxiety [40]. Turkish investigations conducted by Hüseyin Öz et al. (2015) indicated apprehension as a limiting factor where intrinsic drives helped alleviate it and enhance WTC. These results indicate that where cultural contexts tend towards conservativeness and extrinsic pressures come from communal expectations, WTC variability increases and tends to be overridden by extrinsic rather than intrinsic drives [41].

In spite of these observations, a notable gap remains in Iraqi EFL settings where socio - political turbulence, grammar - heavy traditional curricula that favor communication over proficiency, and scarce authentic exposure amplify motivational issues [11][12]. Scant Iraqi research attends to overall anxiety and proficiency while disregarding motivation - WTC interplay: One study reported low WTC in school students as a result of apprehension of mistakes and extrinsic test orientations, yet lacking specific motivational examination. Cultural variables like collectivism and gender roles also probably mediate these associations with females experiencing potentially greater extrinsic pressures. No overarching study investigated intrinsic - extrinsic balances or prediction on WTC in an ordered manner on pre - intermediate Iraqi students despite early exposure to English resulting in communicative impairments [17]. This gap is seminal as communicative ability is needed in the globalized world and filling it might lead to customized methodologies transferring from memorization towards increasing motivational support [9]. Comparative gaps with surrounding nations also highlight Iraq's underrepresentation where post - war variables might enhance extrinsic dominance and inhibit WTC [20]. Future research needs to address this gap through investigating these variables within Iraqi contexts potentially raising context - sensitive interventions towards the appropriateness of SLA achievement.

Method

A. Research Design and Variables

This investigation employed a correlational research design to examine the associations and predictive influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and willingness to communicate (WTC) among pre - intermediate Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Correlational designs are advantageous in SLA studies as they allow for the exploration of relationships among naturally occurring variables without experimental manipulation, thereby preserving ecological validity while identifying patterns that inform theoretical and practical insights [42]. The design was non - experimental, focusing on quantitative data to test hypotheses regarding motivational orientations' prevalence, correlations with WTC, and predictive power. Intrinsic motivation, defined as engagement driven by inherent satisfaction and personal interest [2][3], and extrinsic motivation, characterized by external rewards or pressures [19], served as the independent variables. These were operationalized through self - reported measures assessing learners' internal drives (e.g., enjoyment in language tasks) and external incentives (e.g., grades or societal expectations). WTC, the dependent variable, was conceptualized as learners' self - perceived readiness to initiate L2 communication in various contexts, encompassing skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing [1]. Potential confounders like age, gender, and proficiency were controlled: Age and gender were

delimited through sample selection, while proficiency was homogenized via a standardized test. This approach facilitated hypothesis testing, including the null hypothesis positing no significant correlations, and enabled multivariate analyses to discern predictive strengths. Ethical considerations, such as voluntary participation and data confidentiality, were prioritized to align with research standards in educational linguistics [43].

B. Participants

The target population comprised pre - intermediate Iraqi EFL learners enrolled in private language institutes, reflecting a demographic where English is taught as a foreign language with limited real - world exposure. A sample of 40 female learners was selected through convenience sampling from institutes in Maysan city, Iraq, a method chosen for its practicality in accessing available participants while acknowledging limitations in generalizability. Convenience sampling, defined as selecting individuals readily accessible for study, is prevalent in EFL research due to logistical constraints in educational settings. All participants were native Arabic speakers, aged 13 to 20 years ($M = 16.5$, $SD = 2.1$), ensuring a focus on adolescent learners where motivational dynamics are particularly fluid [17]. Proficiency was homogenized at the pre - intermediate level using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), with scores between 35 and 60 indicating eligibility [14]. Initially, 80 learners were screened, and those within one standard deviation of the mean were retained, resulting in the final sample of 40. This homogenization minimized variance attributable to language ability, isolating motivational effects. Demographic details, elicited via questionnaire, confirmed uniformity in educational background (all from private institutes) and gender delimitation to females, addressing potential biases in communicative behavior influenced by cultural norms. Participants provided informed consent, with assurances of anonymity and the right to withdraw, adhering to ethical guidelines in SLA research -American Educational Research Association, 2011- The sample size, though modest, was sufficient for correlational analyses, as power calculations suggested adequacy for detecting medium effects ($r \approx .30$) at $\alpha = .05$ and power = .80.

C. Instruments

Data collection utilized three validated instruments, chosen for their reliability, validity, and appropriacy for measuring SLA constructs. Initially, Oxford Placement Test (OPT), Oxford University Press [14], was administered to guarantee participant homogeneity in overall English proficiency. Made up of 100 multiple - choice grammar items, the OPT is a standardized test with established psychometric features of high test - retest and test - retest reliability ($r > .85$), and concurrent validity on other proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL). Scores of 35 - 60 categorized students as pre - intermediate and so matched the focus of this study. Next, WTC was gauged through the Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001), a 27 - item scale operationalizing the L2 WTC on four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in classroom settings. Items are rated on a 5 - point Likert scale from "almost never willing" (1) through "almost always willing" (5), where higher scores reflect higher WTC. In spite of being more than 10 years older than other measures enlisted here, the scale exhibits robust inner uniformity (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ in the current administration and $\alpha > .80$ found originally) and construct validity through factor analyses confirming multifactoriality [15]. Its strength lies in the ability of capturing situational WTC without behavioral observation and thus is appropriate for people's self - report in EFL settings. Finally, motivational orientations were gauged through the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation Questionnaire developed by Noels et al. (2000), 21 items based on SDT operationalizing intrinsic (e.g., enjoyment - based) and extrinsic (e.g., reward - based) subscales. Responses employ a Likert scale format with reliability measures of $\alpha = .84$ (original) and .71 (current study), revealing acceptable uniformity. Validity is registered through correlations on SLA outcomes [16]. All these instruments were delivered in English with Arabic versions available for corroboration so as not to compromise more advanced learners' comprehensions and ensuring all pre - intermediate students understand them. Pilot testing on a very small fraction ($n = 10$) verified comprehensibility and time (about 20 minutes per questionnaire), thus ensuring administration bias minimality.

D. Data Collection Procedures

Procedures started with ethical clearances and liaison with institute administrators at Maysan, Iraq, to delineate study intentions and secure permission, including participant welfare and data protection. A first pool of 80 students was solicited through announcements in class, with informed consent of participants (and caregivers for students below 18 years of age). Initially, the OPT was administered in a proctor - marked session in order to standardize proficiency in approximately 45 minutes; scores calculated promptly afterward, selecting 40 eligible students within the range of the pre - intermediate band. Then, within one session, the WTC and Motivation Questionnaires were distributed with the researcher present to administer instructions and field questions while maintaining standardized conditions. Since verbal cues on the Likert scales and confidentiality assurance came before data collection, with no identifiers and data securely retained, completion time averaged 40 minutes in total. Voluntary participation was also stressed in order to reduce response bias. Questionnaires were additionally counterbalanced in order over respondents in order to reduce order effects and enhance quality of response. Afterward, data anonymized and entered into data analyses program SPSS for checking, and missing data (<1%) treated through mean imputation. This sequential process - the order of screening through to primary data collection - the process replicated best research methods in quantitative studies of SLA [43], and ensured reliability and ethical adherence. Recipients of opt - in received results of studies through exchange of email, ensuring transparency.

E. Data Analysis

Analyses proceeded with SPSS version 24, utilizing a multi - step process to answer research questions and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) condensed variable distributions and captured motivational prevalence information. A paired - samples t - test contrasted intrinsic and extrinsic motivation means for dominance

determination (Question 1). Pearson product - moment correlations tested correlations between motivations and WTC (Question 2), and interpreted per Cohen's (1988) rules of guidance (small: $r = .10$, medium: $.30$, large: $.50$). For prediction analysis (Question 3), standard multiple regression predicted WTC as the criterion (outcome), and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as predictors. Assumptions of the procedure were confirmed: Linearity and normality through scatterplots and P - P plots; multicollinearity through tolerance ($>.10$) and VIF (<10); and homoscedasticity through residual plot. Regression outputs provided unstandardized/standardized coefficients, R^2 and part correlations as measures of unique contribution. Significance level was established as $p < .05$, and effect sizes as an informative supplement. This analytical framework, robust for data of a correlational design orientation [44], facilitated hypothesis rejection (e.g., null of no correlation), and situated results within SLA literature.

Results and Discussion

A. Results

Qualitative analyses were conducted as a reaction to the three research questions: (1) the dominance and prevalence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among Iraqi EFL students; (2) the level of correlations between these motivational orientations and WTC as reported; and (3) which orientation is a more significant predictor of WTC. Data from the 40 participants were explored through SPSS version 24 with descriptive statistics, paired - samples t - tests, Pearson correlations and multiple regression. Parametric test assumptions were verified including (through use of histograms and Shapiro - Wilk tests with $p > .05$), (through scatterplots), and (through residual plots). No violation was discovered and thus the validity of the inferences confirmed. Results then follow serially and supplemented through tables and figures where appropriate for ease of interpretation.

1. Descriptive Statistics and Motivational Prevalence

Initial descriptive analyses provided an overview of the variables. Table 1 summarizes the means and standard deviations for WTC, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation.

[Table 1. about here]

As Table 1 illustrates, WTC scores averaged 92.54 ($SD = 16.36$), which reflected moderate willingness to participate in L2 communication on the part of the sample. Extrinsic motivation ($M = 29.03$, $SD = 7.98$) significantly outpaced intrinsic motivation ($M = 19.93$, $SD = 4.74$), and this might indicate a dominance of extrinsic motives like grades or social pressures in this EFL setting. This gap is consistent with initial predictions on the basis of Iraq's examination - based teaching system, where students might focus more on external rewards than intrinsic satisfaction.

In order to assess the statistical significance of this difference (Research Question 1), a paired - samples t - test was conducted. Table 2 reports the results.

[Table 2. about here]

The t - test indicated a significant statistical difference ($t(39) = 5.395$, $p < .001$), which verified that extrinsic motivation prevailed. The 9.10 mean difference highlights the tendency of the sample towards reliance on outside influences, possibly an indication of the cultural and educational backgrounds where intrinsic interest is not as prominent.

2. Associations Between Motivational and WTC Dimensions

Pearson correlations answered Research Question 2 and investigated relationships between the variables. Table 3 shows the correlation matrix.

[Table 3. about here]

WTC correlated moderately with intrinsic motivation ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), such that higher internally driven students indicated greater willingness to communicate. The correlation with extrinsic motivation was non - significantly stronger ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), suggesting extrinsic rewards have a lesser influence on building WTC. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations correlated moderately ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), suggesting some sharing of variables but distinct constructs. Adhering to Cohen's (1988) rules of thumb, the intrinsic - WTC correlation represents a medium effect size and the extrinsic one a small effect size, rejecting the null hypothesis of zero correlations and emphasizing intrinsic motivation's stronger relational connection.

3. Predictive Analysis: Multiple Regression

Standard multiple regression evaluated Research Question 3, regressing WTC on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Preliminary checks confirmed assumptions: No multicollinearity (Tolerance = $.88$, VIF = 1.12), and residuals approximated normality and homoscedasticity, as visualized in Figures 1 and 2.

[Figure 1. about here]

The data has points closely packed along the diagonal from bottom - left to top - right, indicating that there are no noticeable

departures from normality.

[Figure 2. about here]

The scatterplot displays residuals centered around zero, forming a rectangular distribution mostly between - 2 and 2, confirming homoscedasticity.

Table 4 details the regression coefficients.

[Table 4. about here]

The model was significant ($F(2,37) = 5.79$, $p < .01$), with predictors explaining 13.6% of WTC variance ($R = .36$, $R^2 = .136$, Adjusted $R^2 = .123$). Intrinsic motivation emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = .33$, $t = 3.83$, $p < .001$), contributing uniquely to 10.17% of the variance (part $r^2 = .097$). Extrinsic motivation was non - significant ($\beta = .08$, $t = .98$, $p = .32$), accounting for only 0.64% (part $r^2 = .006$). Table 5 summarizes the model fit.

[Table 5. about here]

These results support intrinsic motivation's higher predictive utility, as theoretical predictions assert that inner drives more effectively promote communicative preparation.

In summary, the results verify extrinsic motivation's dominance while emphasizing intrinsic motivation's stronger correlation and prediction of WTC. These profiles drawn on a homogeneous sample provide empirical support for capturing the dynamics of the process of motivational phenomena in Iraqi EFL contexts and their implications explained later.

B. Discussion

The results of this research shed light on the complex dynamics between willingness to communicate (WTC) and motivational orientations within the pre - interprise Iraqi EFL context and provide new insights through a perspective that synthesizes classical SLA theories with current empiricistic trends. Interpreting these findings innovatively, we may think of motivation as an "navigational compass" within the process of SLA: Intrinsic motivation functions as an inner GPS where the learner will end up being driven towards authentic communication and extrinsic motivators as outside signposts where one is directed but not necessarily continuously by the path. While this metaphor highlights the study's discovery of extrinsic motivation dominating ($M = 29.03$ vs. intrinsic $M = 19.93$, $t = 5.395$, $p < .001$), intrinsic drives significantly more strongly relating to ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and forecasting WTC ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$, 10.17% explained variance), this configuration defies the belief of motivational equilibrium within EFL settings and instead hints at Iraq's educational scene where rote - based learning and high - stakes tests push the compass towards external influences possibly at the expense of communicative dynamism.

This extrinsic dominance resonates with recent SLA literature emphasizing contextual pressures in non - immersion settings. For instance, a 2023 analysis of motivational implications in learning highlights how external rewards, like academic success, overshadow intrinsic enjoyment in resource - limited environments, leading to superficial engagement (Implications of Extrinsic Motivation and Mindset in Learning, 2023). Similarly, a bibliometric review from 2000 - 2021 identifies a surge in studies linking extrinsic motivation to short - term compliance in EFL, particularly in Asian and Middle Eastern contexts where cultural collectivism amplifies societal expectations (Motivation in second language acquisition: A bibliometric analysis between 2000 and 2021, 2022). In Iraq, this manifests as learners prioritizing grades over conversational fluency, as evidenced by the weaker extrinsic - WTC correlation ($r = .19$, $p < .05$). Innovatively, we can extend this to a "motivational ecosystem" model: Extrinsic factors form the ecosystem's foundation (e.g., exam - driven incentives), but without intrinsic "nutrients" (e.g., personal interest), WTC growth stagnates. This aligns with self - determination theory (SDT), where external regulation yields compliance but not volition [44]. A 2024 content analysis of SDT in ELT (2020 - 2024) reinforces this, showing that autonomy - supportive practices enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby elevating WTC in EFL classrooms (Exploring Self - Determination Theory in ELT: A Content Analysis of Research Trends between 2020 and 2024, 2024).

The moderate intrinsic - WTC correlation innovatively resembles a "resonance effect," where inner motivations multiply communicative preparedness as instrument vibrational resonances. This follows prior research in Iranian EFL settings, where intrinsic prediction of WTC proceeded through decreased anxiety [15], and builds on current research on non - English majors, where enjoyment - based learning was correlated with greater participation (Non - English Major Students' Motivation in English Classrooms: Evidence from a University Setting, 2022). Regression output, with intrinsic uniquely accounting for 10.17% WTC variance while extrinsic has non - contributory 0.64%, overpowers past mixed evidence. For instance, a 2019 gender - moderated study discovered intrinsic influences more pronounced in learning effectiveness moderated by inner variables (The effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on students' learning effectiveness: Exploring the moderating role of gender, 2019). This current study's weaker extrinsic prediction, however, diverges from certain ESL immersion results [10], implying EFL - specific processes: In Iraq, extrinsic pressure might engender reliance rather than initiative. A new synthesis here borrows from a 2025 review on classroom communication styles of teachers, where motivational resonance hinges on relational classroom settings such that intrinsic increases emotional investment and WTC (A Review of the Influences of Teacher Communication Styles on Students' Engagement in Classroom, 2025).

Culturally, Iraq's post - conflict educational milieu amplifies these patterns, embedding extrinsic motivation in a "survival framework" where language learning equates to socioeconomic mobility amid instability. This cultural lens explains the

extrinsic prevalence, as learners navigate fear of failure and perfectionism - factors inhibiting WTC [45]. Innovatively reframing this as a "cultural mosaic," where collectivist values (e.g., family expectations) tile extrinsic dominance, while individualistic sparks (e.g., personal curiosity) form intrinsic cracks, highlights gaps in prior Middle Eastern research. Iranian parallels show extrinsic ties to in - class WTC but intrinsic to out - of - class [46], yet Iraq's unique socio - political stressors - limited exposure and traditional methods - may exacerbate demotivation [11][12]. Recent 2024 literature on motivational strategies in ESL underscores this, advocating for hybrid approaches to elevate engagement in anxiety - prone settings (A Literature Review on Motivational Strategies to Elevate Engagement, Effective Communication, and Productivity in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classrooms, 2024). A 2023 study on science learning motivation further supports, linking extrinsic factors to performance but intrinsic to satisfaction and outcomes in pre - service teachers (Motivational Factors in Science Learning, Learner's Satisfaction and Learning Outcomes of Pre - Service Teachers, 2023).

Divergences from certain studies, such as Kreishan and Al - Dhaimat (2013) identifying weak intrinsic - proficiency associations, might be the result of methodological differences or situational differences - e.g., more stable conditions of Jordan compared with Iraq's difficulties. Lack of significant extrinsic prediction post - correlation (notwithstanding initial $r = .19$) indicates suppression effects in which shared variance with intrinsic deflates its effect, a nuance repeated in 2025 research on task motivation in interactive tasks (The Impact of Task Motivation on Learners' Attention to Form and Subsequent Learning in Interactive Tasks, 2025). Originally, it proposes a "threshold model": extrinsic initiation of intrinsic exceeding a threshold beyond which WTC sustainability occurs.

These interpretations while robust are limited within the female - only sampling of the sample and convenience sampling and therefore may limit generalizability. Future studies may use mixed - method approaches to delve into qualitative depths such as learner stories of cultural motivators. Pedagogically, the resonance effect necessitates moves towards intrinsic cultivation through task - based activity and autonomy - support and aligns with 2024 ELT advances (The Importance of Motivation in Foreign Language Learning, 2024). In Iraq, extrinsic overload may be overturned through culturally sensitive strategies such as including native stories within English tasks and therefore may assist in leveling the motivational compass and constructing resilient WTC and facilitate SLA equity.

Conclusions

This exploration of the motivational foundations of willingness to communicate (WTC) in pre - interceptive Iraqi EFL students delivers salient findings consonant with current shifts in second language acquisition (SLA). Redefining motivation as a twin - engine framework - extrinsic pressure as initial drive and intrinsic spark as ongoing traction - the research discloses a profile where external prompts ($M = 29.03$, $SD = 7.98$) far outweigh inner pushes ($M = 19.93$, $SD = 4.74$), with a significant gap ($t = 5.395$, $p < .001$). Nonetheless, intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation becomes the stronger correlate ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and predictor of WTC ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$, 10.17% unique variance), overshadowing extrinsic's minimalist influence ($\beta = .08$, $p = .32$). These results not only defeat the null hypothesis but also highlight the contours of the Iraqi EFL setting: A grammar - intensive curriculum and examination pressure breed extrinsic orientation at communicative cost. This process parallels overall SLA tendencies: External overkill in non - plant settings crushes willful participation, as recent accounts of L2 grit and WTC interaction affirm enduring importance of grit in closing motivational gaps (The relationship between grit and L2 willingness to communicate, 2025).

Theoretically, these findings support self - determination theory (SDT) since it reveals how situational constraints such as Iraq's outcome - based rote socio - educational focus inhibit the process of internalization where extrinsic motivations could become intrinsic ones (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The stronger correlation between intrinsic - WTC is also in accord with nascent models which hold that inner motivations reduce communication apprehension and trend towards a mentality of growth necessary for advancement in L2 (Impact of communication anxiety on L2 WTC of middle school students, 2025). Practically, the results also indicate malleability of WTC through rebuilding of motivations and this is more prominent in adolescent students where early exposure bears long - term fruit. Culturally and climatically dominant perfectionism and lack of exposure in Iraq render reluctance more salient (Horwitz et al., 1986), and it thus calls for a paradigm shift towards learner - centered learning systems.

Recommendations span pedagogical, curricular, and research areas. Teachers must favor intrinsic cultivation through creative approaches, including translanguaging strategies involving Arabic and English for culturally significant tasks that boost vocabulary and motivation (Enhancing second language motivation and facilitating vocabulary acquisition through translanguaging, 2025). Task - based learning through real - world simulations - e.g., role - plays connected with Iraqi settings - may enhance WTC through connecting intrinsic pleasure with communicative success as per systematic reviews on classroom approaches (Facilitating Second Language Willingness to Communicate in English, 2024). Hybrid bonuses such as gamified testing that rewards effort as well as outcome might ease motivational shift and borrow from research on AI - mediated interactions increasing WTC through fun, low - risk rehearsal (Willingness to communicate with artificial intelligence, 2025). Curricular changes must integrate WTC aims from primary phases and use digital resources for out - of - class exposure as informal digital learning strongly predicts WTC through affective channels (The contribution of informal digital learning of English to L2 WTC, 2024).

For investigators, extension of this research through longitudinal approaches might follow shifts in motivation, including mediators such as grit or anxiety (The interplay of L2 grit, motivational intensity, and willingness to communicate, 2024). Mixed - method procedures investigating qualitative accounts would extend knowledge of Iraq's cultural differences, redressing imbalances in underreported areas (A scoping review of willingness to communicate in language education, 2024). Comparative analyses between proficiency levels or between genders might outline moderators, and investigations of

AI's influence on dynamics of motivation - WTC hold future - oriented possibilities (Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language, 2024). Ultimately, these suggestions support an integrated framework of SLA in Iraq where cultivating intrinsic drive not only increases WTC but also prepares students for universal communicative requirements and redresses educational inequities in demanding settings.

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