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Willingness to Communicate, Active/Passive Motivation, and Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

As a trigger to communication, motivation still includes undiscovered aspects which require further investigation. Hence, considering the newly proposed dual continuum model of motivation, this study investigated the relationships among willingness to communicate (WTC), active/passive motivation, and foreign language achievement (FLA) among 216 high school English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. The modified version of the active/passive motivation scale (APMS) was revalidated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Structural equation modeling (SEM) revealed significant relationships among active/passive motivation, L2WTC, and FLA. Additionally, six models were proposed for the prediction of learners' L2WTC and FLA. The findings indicated that socio-cultural and sensory-perceptual active motivation as well as cognitive and sensory-perceptual passive motivation significantly predict learners' L2WTC, while only cognitive active motivation predicts FLA. Furthermore, passive motivation predicts FLA in all sub-constructs. Finally, active motivation is a negative predictor of FLA if mediated by L2WTC. Overall, the study highlights the importance of passive as well as active motivation in promoting WTC and improving FLA among EFL learners.

Keywords: active motivation, passive motivation, willingness to communicate, foreign language achievement

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1. Introduction

Interaction is a dominant feature of language classrooms to the extent that its absence will impair the acquisition of the oral skills required for communication (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999). However, one of the greatest challenges is that there are some second/foreign language (L2) learners who do not take advantage of communicating in the target language when they are given the opportunity (MacIntyre, 2007). This highlights the importance of investigating the variables influencing willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 to pave the way for more successful language learning. Another key issue regarding language classrooms is the wide range of the language learners' performance (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2013), which results in foreign language achievement (FLA). Recent evidence suggests that, as one of the fundamental psychological factors, motivation has been established to be a highly influential one on both FLA (Alrabai & Moskovsky, 2016; Cocca & Cocca, 2019; Gardner, 2007; Zeynali et al., 2019) and L2WTC (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Peng & Woodrow, 2010).

It has long been claimed that motivational factors can withdraw the effect of aptitude, particularly in situations where specific settings need mastery of L2 (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Motivation has also been regarded as the major impetus to initiate L2 learning and the driving force that persuades L2 learners to engage in the challenging learning process (Dornyei, 1998; Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008). In other words, without sufficient motivation, even those L2 learners with noticeable learning capabilities cannot probably fulfill their target language aims in the long run (Dornyei, 1998; 2005).

Additionally, the existing body of research suggests that motivation is one of the main factors influencing L2WTC. For example, according to Yashima (2020), motivated L2 learners are less anxious and have more tendency to communicate in L2. In general, a review of the related literature shows that attempts have been made to investigate the relation of L2WTC and motivation concerning the integrative/instrumental model (Öz et al., 2015; Park & Lee, 2013), motivational self-system (Bursali & Oz, 2017; Peng, 2015), or self-determination theory (Joe et al., 2017). So far, however, there has been little discussion about the role of active and

passive motivation, as two distinct variations of this construct, in L2 learners' WTC.

Active motivation refers to a variation of motivation, which leads to the total involvement (engaging both physically and mentally) of an individual in doing a task while, rooted in the concept of habitus by Bourdieu (2017), passive motivation is the one that does not turn into action and is limited to the individuals' mental involvement in doing a task (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Many EFL learners with passive motivation are never able to be fully engaged in the process of learning the target language. They may constantly struggle aimlessly to find a way to engage in L2 communication, which mostly ends up without any success, and makes them reluctant to communicate in L2.

Moreover, teachers' lack of knowledge about passive motivation usually makes them downgrade and neglect its role in WTC and the process of learning a foreign language. This hinders them from making use of effective strategies in order to guide the students' potential motivations toward the desired goal. Further, it is still not known whether active and passive motivation can separately predict L2WTC and FLA; hence, the present study was intended to put the relationships under examination. The literature review section will provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research on FLA, WTC, and active/passive motivation, with a particular focus on the ways in which these constructs are interrelated and their impact on language learning outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Foreign Language Achievement

Foreign language achievement (FLA) is regarded as the language learners' success in academic performance as a result of a higher level of preparation. In practice, foreign language instructors observe a wide range of performance in their classes. While some students are excellent at learning a foreign language, others underachieve or cannot achieve their expected level of proficiency. In order to understand this phenomenon, a multitude of internal factors that may affect language learning, such as cognitive, personality, demographic, and affective variables, have been explored

(Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000).

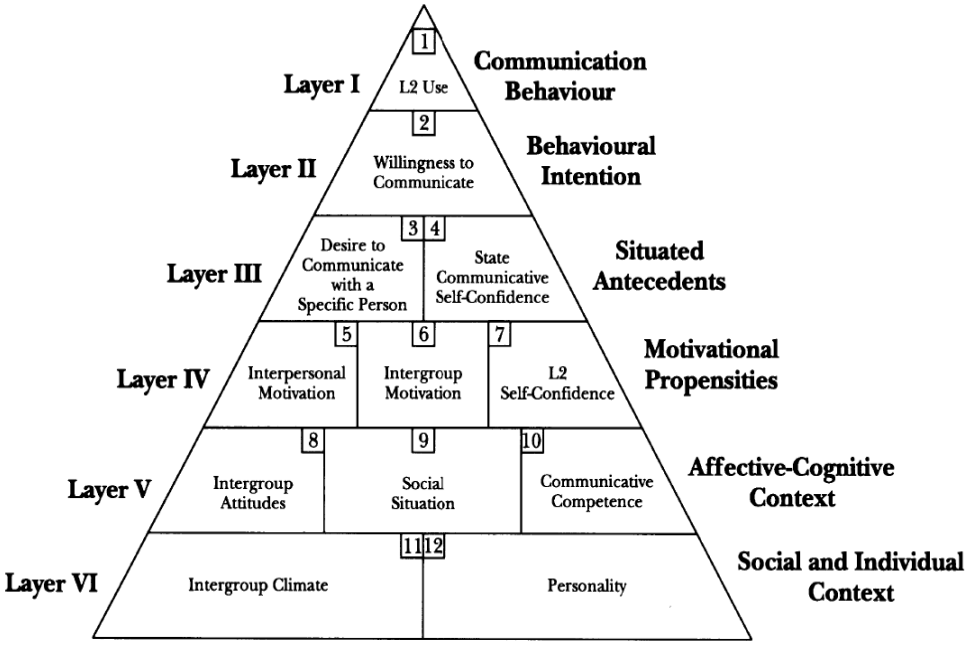
Among all these factors, motivation as an affective variable has been extensively probed by researchers in the realm of L2 learning and achievement. As a case in point, Alrabai and Moskovsky (2016) indicated that motivation is considerably influential in FLA. They also found that motivation accounted for the highest variance in L2 achievement. In another study, Cheng et al. (2014) found that students with higher intrinsic motivation performed better at English tests; on the other hand, students with higher instrumental motivation got lower test scores. Furthermore, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) demonstrated that motivation is a positive predictor of FLA. In a similar study, Khodadad and Kaur (2016) stated that the role of motivation in FLA was significant. Finally, a recent study by Cocca and Cocca (2019) showed that English proficiency was highly correlated with the level of learners' motivation, their attitude towards learning the target language, and their willingness to learn it.

2.2. Willingness to Communicate

L2WTC is defined as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). Unlike L1WTC, the situated nature of L2WTC, that is, the possibility of changing based on the situation of the learner, was emphasized by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and the variables that influence WTC were presented as a heuristic model in a pyramid (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC



Note. Adopted from "Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation", by P. MacIntyre, R. Clement, Z. Dornyei, & K. A. Noels, 1998, *Modern Language Journal, 82*, p. 547.

This model includes both enduring and situational variables related to WTC. It has six layers, for a total of eleven variables that can influence an L2 learner's WTC in the L2 in a given encounter. The top three sections of the pyramid, communication behavior, behavioral intentions, and situated antecedents, emphasize the mediated situation in which the L2 learner finds him/herself. The two situated antecedents, desiring to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence, vary based on the situation.

Factors influencing WTC have been scrutinized in many studies. For example, considering Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, MacIntyre et al. (2002) showed that those learners who were more integrative and motivated communicated more easily with the L2 community. Similarly, the results of the study by Hashimoto (2002) on Japanese ESL learners in a classroom context indicated motivation and

WTC as two indicators of L2 communication frequency. In another study, Clement et al. (2003) found that L2 confidence was related to WTC. Moreover, Peng and Woodrow (2010) found class environment as a predictor of WTC. They also realized that motivation is an essential correlate that influences individuals' WTC by means of confidence.

2.3. The Dual Continuum Model of Motivation

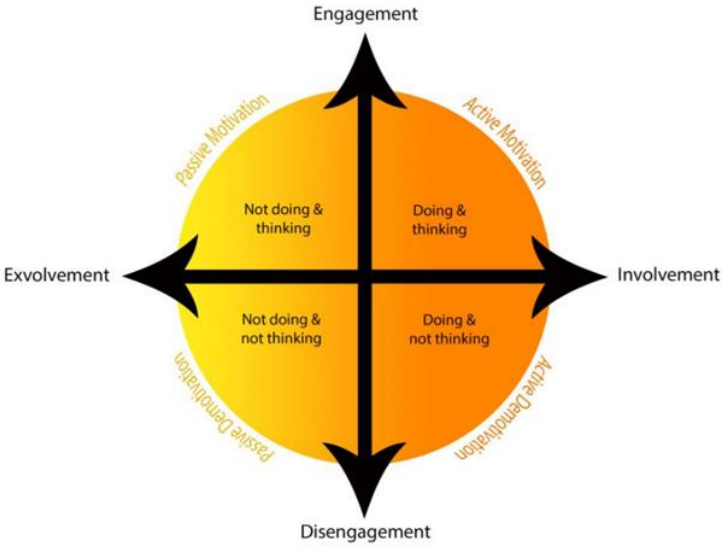
Treating motivation in much detail, Pishghadam et al. (2019) proposed a new model, that is, 'the dual continuum model of motivation' (Figure 2). In this model, they highlighted a more comprehensive role of immersion and emotioncy (Ebrahimi et al., 2022; Pishghadam, 2016; Pishghadam et al., 2016; Pishghadam et al., 2022) in motivation. This model considers both the mental processes and behaviors of individuals (Koohestanian & Zamani Behabadi, 2024; Momenzadeh et al., 2023). Basically, it investigates engagement as one continuum and involvement as another one. Pishghadam et al. (2019) described engagement and involvement as two interconnected constructs related to mental activity (thinking) and physical activity (doing). Furthermore, the model includes two halves: active and passive motivation. It can also be divided into four slices called active motivation, active demotivation, passive motivation, and passive demotivation or disengagement, while the degree of sensory involvement changes from exvolvement to involvement in each status. Exvolvement refers to the learning engendered by the indirect involvement of learners in the process of learning (e.g., through hearing a word/concept or seeing the pertaining object), yet not internalized, and involvement refers to the learning which is the result of getting learners directly involved in doing or experiencing something (Akbari & Pishghadam, 2022; Jajarmi & Pishghadam, 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2016).

Additionally, based on this model, active motivation, as an ideal form, is a total engagement and involvement in doing a task. Active demotivation illustrates a condition in which a person lacks sufficient mental engagement, and this changes ideal behavior to a mechanical action. Passive motivation exists when thoughts or motivational preferences are not turned into action although individuals keep thinking about them constantly. The least active dimension is passive demotivation which

involves no specific cognitive and physical activity (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021a).

Figure 2

The Dual Continuum Model of Motivation



Note. Adopted from "Unveiling the passive aspect of motivation: Insight from English language teachers' habitus," by R. Pishghadam, H. Makiabadi, S. Shayesteh, & S. Zeynali, 2019, *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language, 7*(2), p.20. Copyright 2019 by IJSCL.

Overall, it is now well established from a variety of studies that motivation plays a significant role in EFL learners' L2WTC and FLA; however, a search of the literature revealed no study that explores the role of active and passive dimensions of motivation in high school EFL learners' L2WTC and FLA. Thus, the study offers some important insights into first, the psychometric properties of a modified version of active/passive motivation scale (Alami, 2020) designed to fit for the present study's participants' age group (high school EFL learners' version); second, the possible significant relationships among active/passive motivation, L2WTC, and FLA; third, the power of active/passive motivation to predict L2WTC; forth, the power of active/passive motivation to predict FLA; and finally, the power of active/passive motivation to predict FLA through the mediation of L2WTC in the

Iranian high school learners of EFL. Specifically, the following issues are addressed in this study:

1. Does the active/passive motivation scale (high school EFL learners' version) enjoy psychometric properties?

2. Are there any significant relationships among L2WTC, active/passive motivation, and FLA?

3. Which components of active/passive motivation significantly predict L2WTC?

4. Which components of active/passive motivation significantly predict FLA?

5. Which components of active/passive motivation predict FLA concerning the mediating role of L2WTC?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Settings

A sample of 216 senior high school students from both genders, aged from 14 to 19 (M = 16.56, SD = 0.23) was recruited to participate in this study based on convenience sampling. The participants were English learners at public high schools without any experience of learning English in private institutes. The reasons behind choosing public high schools were first, to keep the data more homogeneous because private school students are generally of a different social, economic, and educational background. Second, to contribute to the body of literature in which sufficient research on public school students is lacking. Additionally, in research on L2 learning, the process of young learners' language acquisition has been comparatively under-represented (Hidalgo & Garcia Mayo, 2019), and most of the studies have been done with regard to adults with higher EFL proficiency levels. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the role of active/passive motivation on WTC and FLA in young language learners (age 14-19). Moreover, the participants had studied English as a school subject for at least three years at junior high school. They were at a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency and their native language was Persian. It is also worth mentioning that before collecting the data, all participants filled out a consent form and were assured

that their information would be kept confidential.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Willingness to communicate in English scale

In order to measure the participants' WTC in English, the 27-item questionnaire by MacIntyre et al. (2001) was used. The questionnaire is a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from *almost never willing* (1) to *almost always willing* (5). Since all the participants' native language was Persian, the Persian adaptation of the questionnaire validated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by Makiabadi et al. (2019) was used to increase the comprehensibility and the return rate. This scale investigates the learners' level of WTC concerning the four language skills, that is, both productive (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading). Each language skill represents a number of items in the questionnaire: speaking (8 items), writing (8 items), reading (6 items), and comprehension (5 items). Makiabadi et al. (2019) reported the reliability of willingness to write, read, listen and speak as .93, .89, .85, and .91, respectively, and the alpha reliability coefficient of the entire scale as .91. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability procedure showed the reliability coefficients of .93, .89, .85, and .91 for willingness to write, read, listen, and speak, respectively, and the reliability coefficient of .97 for the total questionnaire.

3.2.2. Active/Passive motivation scale (High School EFL Learners' Version)

To evaluate the language learners' active/passive motivation, a modified version of the active/passive motivation scales (APMS) designed and validated through CFA by Alami (2020) was used to make it appropriate for the age range of high school students. The modified version includes 24 items with a six-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6). It scrutinizes the participants' level of active/passive motivation with regard to three different aspects of cognitive, socio-cultural, and sensory motivation. The number of items allocated to each sub-construct are as follows: cognitive/active motivation (4 items), cognitive/passive motivation (4 items), socio-cultural/active motivation (4 items), socio-cultural/passive motivation

(4 items), sensory/active motivation (4 items), and sensory/passive motivation (4 items). Alami (2020) reported a total reliability of .90 for the APMS and the alpha reliability coefficients of .95, .86, .87, .84, .86, and .86 for cognitive active motivation (AM), cognitive passive motivation (PM), socio-cultural AM, socio-cultural PM, sensory-perceptual AM, and sensory-perceptual PM, respectively. In this study, using the Cronbach's alpha reliability procedure, the scale indicated the total reliability coefficient of .95. Additionally, the reliability coefficients of .86, .82, .87, .84, .86, and .86 were estimated for cognitive AM, cognitive PM, socio-cultural AM, socio-cultural PM, sensory-perceptual AM, and sensory-perceptual PM, respectively.

3.3. Procedure

To make it more convenient and accessible for students all over the country, both questionnaires were administered to senior high school students through one Google form. The researchers contacted senior high school English teachers in different cities of Iran and asked them if they are willing to cooperate in the study. The teachers who accepted were requested to send the Google form to their students in their virtual class groups and ask them to fill out the form. It should be mentioned that prior to taking part in the study, the students were ensured about the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their information. In order to measure the participants' FLA, they were asked to write their last year English language score (M = 16.56, SD = 3.02). Overall, it took at most 20 minutes for each participant to respond to the two scales. The procedure was carried out during the fall semester (from October to December 2020).

In this study, the internal consistency of the scales was estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Moreover, CFA was employed to substantiate the construct validity of the modified version of APMS. Finally, using analysis of a moment structures (AMOS, version 24), structural equation modeling (SEM) was run to analyze the relationships among the three variables and to gauge the possible predictability of learners' active/passive motivation through L2WTC and FLA.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the APMS and WTCS, along with their underlying subconstructs can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Two Scales and Their Subconstructs

	Min	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
APMS				
Cognitive AM	4.00	24.00	17.71	5.00
Cognitive PM	4.00	24.00	16.79	5.20
Socio-Cultural AM	4.00	24.00	18.73	5.01
Socio-Cultural PM	4.00	24.00	17.67	5.43
Sensory-Perceptual AM	4.00	24.00	16.46	5.56
Sensory-Perceptual PM	4.00	24.00	17.66	5.30
WTCS				
Writing	8.00	40.00	3.22	1.21
Reading	6.00	30.00	3.32	1.13
Listening	5.00	25.00	3.36	1.11
Speaking	8.00	40.00	3.29	1.09

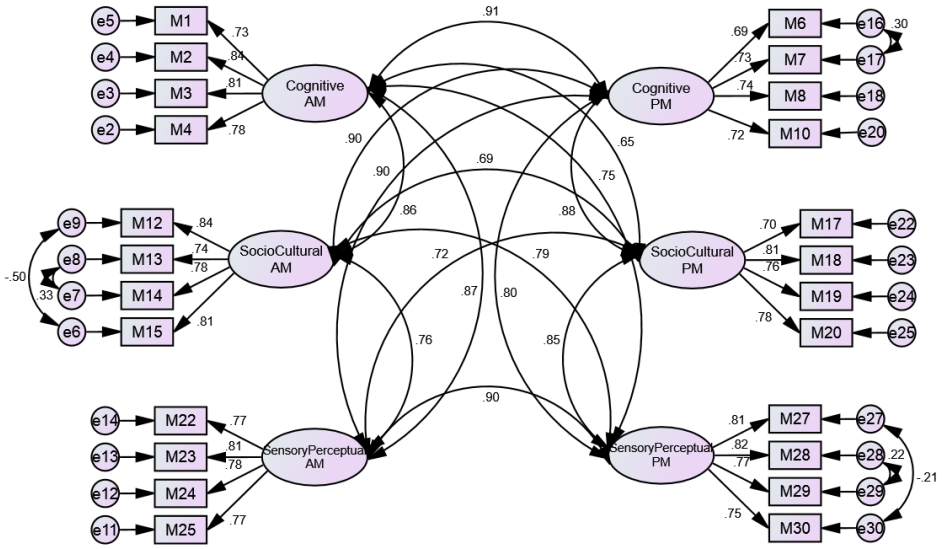
As the first step, the normality of the data was verified based on the skewness and kurtosis estimates which were within the range of -2 and +2.

4.2. Revalidation of the APMS

In order to revalidate the construct validity of the APMS and thus to answer the first research question, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used (Figure 3). Prior to the CFA, the Harman's single factor test was conducted. The results indicated that the first factor accounted for 43.11% of the variance, confirming the construct's multidimensionality. Additionally, six items were removed from the scale to improve model fit.

Figure 3

Measurement Model for the APMS



To see whether the model fits the data, AMOS was used to calculate goodness of fit indices. Table 2 illustrates the relative chi-square which equals the chi-square index divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Error (SRMR). Researchers have different criterion for acceptance; in this study χ^2/ df ought to be less than 3 (Ullman, 2001), TLI and CFI ought to be over .90, and RMSEA and SRMR ought to be below .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Based on the obtained results (Table 3), the model fits the data adequately, hence confirming the structure of the APMS.

Table 2

Goodness of Fit Indices for the CFA Model

Models	χ^2/df	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
APMS	2.35	232	.91	.90	.07	.05

4.3. Correlational Analyses

Regarding the second research question, correlational analysis was conducted. As Table 3 reveals, there are significant, positive relationships among all the subconstructs of APMS, WTCS, and FLA.

Table 3

Correlational Analysis for the Variables

		FLA	CA	CP	SoA	SoP	SeA	SeP	AM	PM	AMP	Write	Read	Listen	Speak	WTC
AMPS	FLA	1	.39**	.27**	.32**	.18**	.34**	.31**	.39**	.28**	.35**	.24**	.26**	.26**	.30**	.28**
	Cognitive AM	.39**	1	.75**	.77**	.53**	.75**	.65**	.92**	.72**	.86**	.65**	.68**	.64**	.67**	.71**
	Cognitive PM	.27**	.75**	1	.73**	.71**	.73**	.66**	.81**	.88**	.88**	.68**	.71**	.66**	.71**	.74**
	Socio-cultural AM	.32**	.77**	.73**	1	.55**	.65**	.67**	.88**	.72**	.84**	.63**	.64**	.66**	.69**	.70**
	Socio-cultural PM	.18**	.53**	.70**	.54**	1	.60**	.73**	.62**	.91**	.80**	.55**	.59**	.58**	.59**	.62**
	Sensory-perceptual AM	.34**	.75**	.73**	.65**	.60**	1	.78**	.89**	.78**	.88**	.70**	.75**	.73**	.68**	.77**
	Sensory-perceptual PM	.31**	.65**	.66**	.67**	.73**	.78**	1	.78**	.89**	.87**	.68**	.74**	.72**	.71**	.76**
	AM	.39**	.92**	.81**	.88**	.62**	.89**	.78**	1	.82**	.95**	.73**	.77**	.75**	.75**	.80**
	PM	.28**	.72**	.88**	.72**	.91**	.78**	.89**	.82**	1	.95**	.71**	.76**	.73**	.75**	.79**
	AMP	.35**	.86**	.88**	.84**	.80**	.88**	.87**	.95**	.95**	1	.75**	.80**	.77**	.79**	.83**
WTCS	Write	.24**	.65**	.68**	.63**	.55**	.70**	.68**	.73**	.71**	.75**	1	.83**	.84**	.84**	.94**
	Read	.26**	.68**	.71**	.64**	.59**	.75**	.74**	.77**	.76**	.80**	.83**	1	.80**	.82**	.93**
	Listen	.26**	.64**	.66**	.66**	.58**	.73**	.72**	.75**	.73**	.77**	.84**	.80**	1	.80**	.92**
	Speak	.30**	.67**	.71**	.69**	.59**	.68**	.71**	.75**	.75**	.79**	.84**	.82**	.80**	1	.93**
	WTC	.28**	.71**	.74**	.70**	.62**	.77**	.76**	.80**	.79**	.83**	.94**	.93**	.92**	.93**	1

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

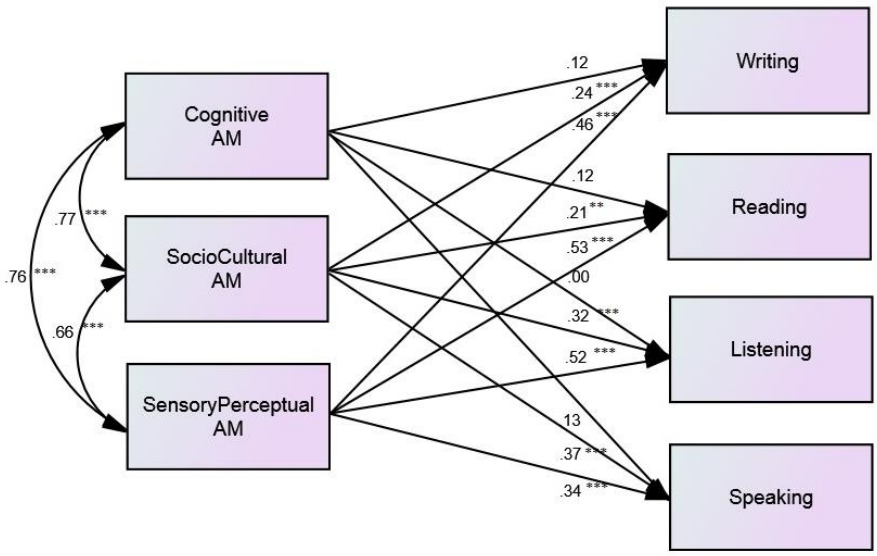
4.4. SEM

To check the predictive power of active and passive motivation as the independent variables and answer the 3rd to the 5th research questions, SEM was conducted. Six models were proposed for the prediction of learners' WTC and their FLA (See Figures 4 to 9).

The first model verifies the extent to which different subconstructs of AM predict learners' WTC. As Figure 4 illustrates, AM for cognitive concepts does not predict learners' willingness to engage in any of the four skills. On the other hand, active motivation for socio-cultural and sensory-perceptual concepts significantly predicts their willingness to write ($\beta = .24$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = .46$, $p < 0.001$), read ($\beta = .21$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = .53$, $p < 0.001$), listen ($\beta = .32$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = .52$, $p < 0.001$), and speak ($\beta = .44$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = .34$, $p < 0.001$).

Figure 4

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of AM and WTC

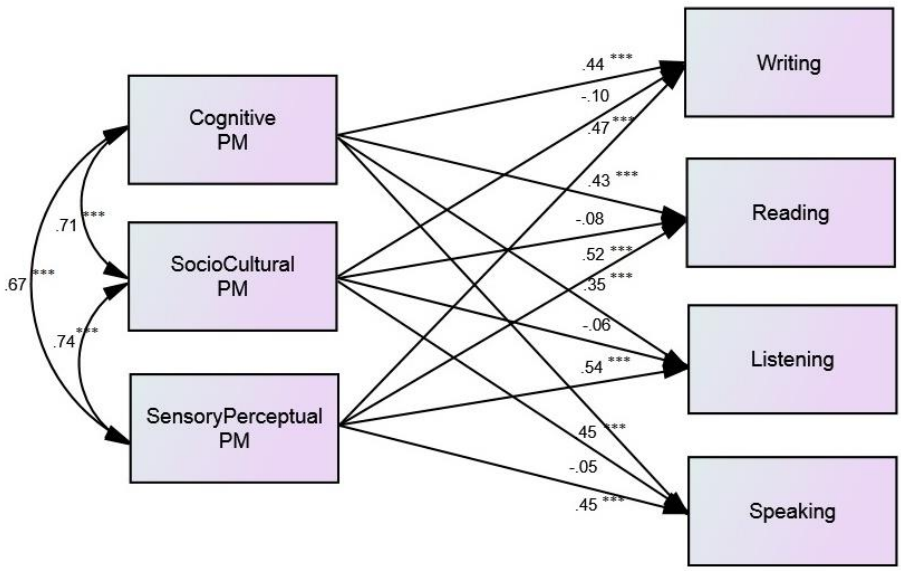


Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

The second model verifies the extent to which different subconstructs of PM predict learners' WTC. As Figure 5 shows, although PM for socio-cultural concepts does not predict learners' willingness to involve in any of the four skills, for cognitive and sensory-perceptual concepts, it significantly predicts their willingness to write (β = .44, $p < 0.001$; β = .47, $p < 0.001$), read (β = .43, $p < 0.01$; β = .52, $p < 0.001$), listen (β = .35, $p < 0.001$; β = .55, $p < 0.001$), and speak (β = .45, $p < 0.001$; β = .45, $p < 0.001$).

Figure 5

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of PM and WTC

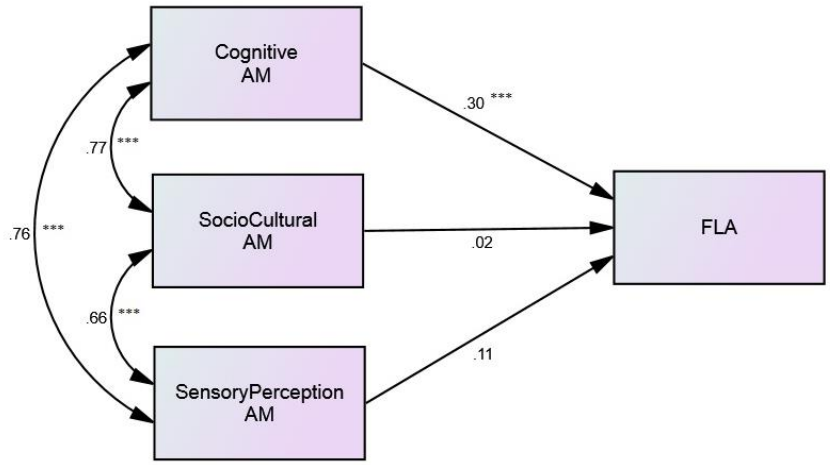


Note. ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

The third model examines the extent to which different subconstructs of AM predict learners' FLA. As Figure 6 reveals, only AM for cognitive concepts predicts their FLA (β = .30, $p < 0.001$).

Figure 6

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of AM and FLA

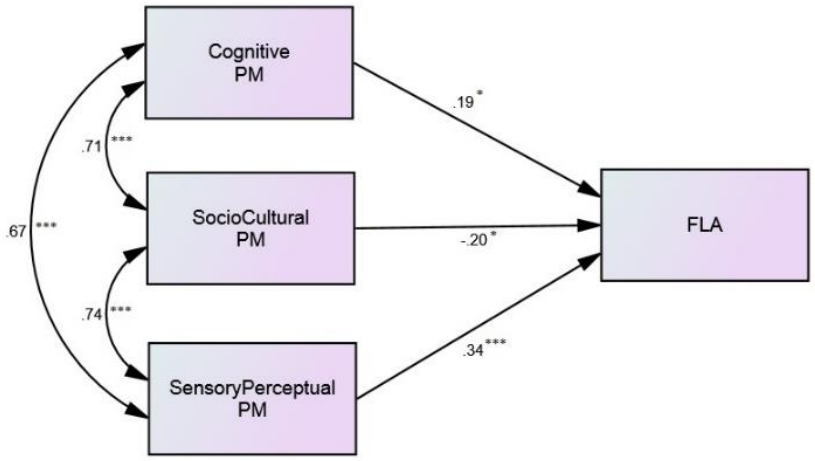


Note. ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

The fourth model checks the extent to which different subconstructs of PM predict learners' FLA. As Figure 7 indicates, unlike AM, PM for cognitive ($\beta = .19$, $p < 0.05$), socio-cultural ($\beta = -.20$, $p < 0.05$), and sensory perceptual concepts ($\beta = .34$, $p < 0.001$) predicts their FLA.

Figure 7

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of PM and FLA

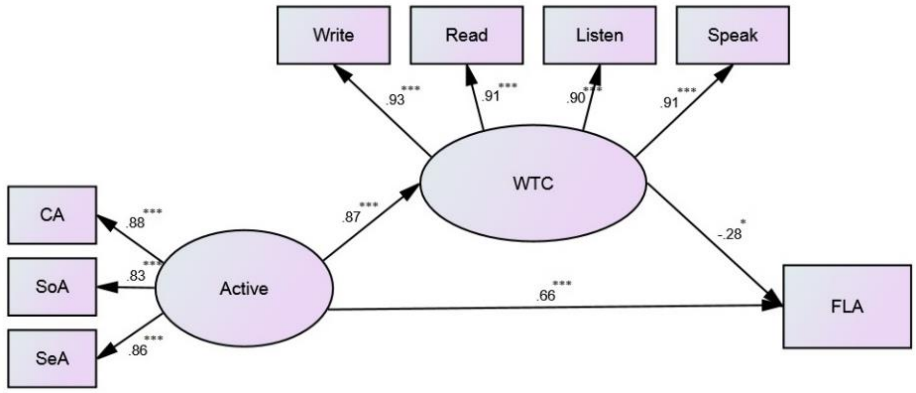


Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

The fifth model examines the extent to which AM predicts learners' FLA, with WTC as the mediator. As Figure 8 depicts, while AM is a positive predictor of FLA ($\beta = .66$, $p < 0.001$), mediated by WTC, it negatively predicts FLA ($\beta = -.28$, $p < 0.05$).

Figure 8

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among AM, WTC, and FLA

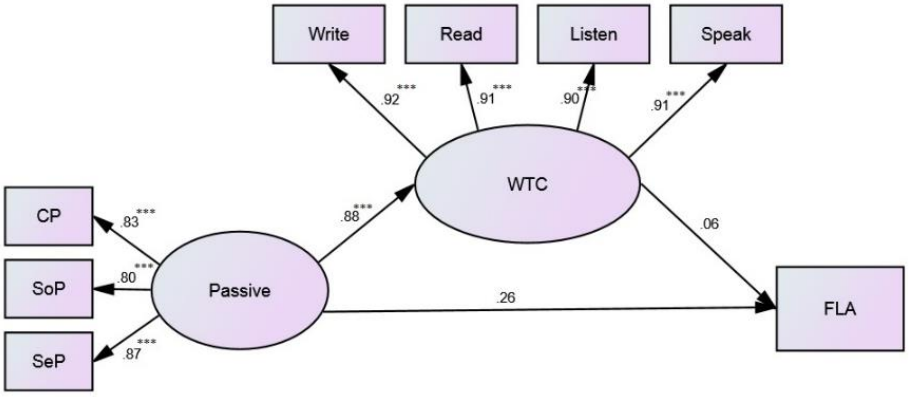


Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

The sixth model verifies the extent to which PM predicts learners' FLA, with WTC as the mediator. As Figure 9 shows, unlike AM, PM does not predict FLA either directly or mediated by WTC.

Figure 9

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among PM, WTC, and FLA



Note. ***. *Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.*

5. Discussion

The present study provides valuable insights into several areas. Firstly, it examined the psychometric properties of a modified version of the active/passive motivation scale (Alami, 2020) that was designed to fit the age group of high school EFL learners who participated in the study. Secondly, it explored the potentially significant relationships among active/passive motivation, L2WTC, and FLA. Thirdly, it analyzed the power of active/passive motivation to predict L2WTC. Fourthly, it investigated the power of active/passive motivation to predict FLA. Lastly, it explored the potential of active/passive motivation to predict FLA by using L2WTC as a mediator among Iranian high school EFL learners.

To answer the first research question, CFA was run and six components, namely cognitive active motivation (AM), cognitive passive motivation (PM), socio-cultural AM, socio-cultural PM, sensory-perceptual AM, and sensory-perceptual PM were recognized. This suggested that the way of processing the target language, forms of interactions with the environment, the degree of cultural affinity with the native speakers of the target language, and the level of sensory involvement in learning a foreign language all contribute to L2 motivation. It was also found that the APMS enjoys psychometric properties.

With respect to the second research question, positive relationships were found among all the sub-constructs of active/passive motivation, L2WTC, and FLA. That is, both active and passive motivations were found to contribute to the learners' tendency towards communicating in L2 and their academic achievement. This implies that not only does an increase in learners' active motivation lead to the improvement of L2WTC but also the elevation of passive motivation may enhance it. In other words, although being completely involved in the process of learning is the most beneficial for increasing L2WTC and consequently FLA, those learners with positive attitudes, thoughts, and emotions towards L2, even without active involvement, can be willing to communicate and have high academic performance due to their mental engagement. This is more likely to occur, especially if they are given the opportunity and assistance to express themselves in the target language.

This finding is in line with those of other studies that indicated a significant

positive relationship between L2 motivation and L2WTC (e.g., Al-Murtadha, 2021) and between L2WTC and FLA (e.g., Al-Murtadha, 2021; Khajavy et al., 2016; Shirzadeh & Jajarmi, 2023). It is also in agreement with the findings of a number of previous studies (e.g., Bernardo et al., 2014; Cocca & Cocca, 2019; Mutlu, 2025; Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Waninge et al., 2014; Wariyo, 2020) where motivation positively correlated with FLA. Moreover, it is consistent with Dornyei's (2005) assertion that motivation plays an important role in the rate and success of L2 language learning. However, the results of this research do not correspond with the findings of Binalet and Guerra (2014), who showed that motivation and FLA are not highly related to each other. Of note, all these studies have just considered the active dimension of motivation, and to date, the passive dimension has remained unexplored.

Concerning the third research question, the results showed that while cognitive AM did not predict learners' willingness to engage in any of the four skills, sensory-perceptual AM and socio-cultural AM significantly predicted L2 learners' WTC in all four skills. A possible explanation for this intriguing finding is that those learners who are interested in doing L2 sensory-perceptual activities such as listening to speeches and music, watching movies, or playing games in the target language tend to be more willing to communicate. A study by Amini (2017) corroborates this finding by showing that visual, auditory, and perceptual learning styles can predict WTC. Another possible explanation is that, based on the emotioncy model (Pishghadam, 2015), individuals may have different levels of emotioncy toward various items of language hinged on their sensory experiences. Those learners who have more sensory experiences with language items are more likely to become engaged with the language item they are trying to learn (Pishghadam et al., 2016) and thus more willing to communicate in the target language (Pishghadam et al., 2021b).

The results also revealed that as learners become more involved in socio-cultural interactions such as interacting with their teachers, peers and L2 community, engaging in cultural discussions, and doing cooperative tasks, the more likely they are willing to speak, read, listen and write in L2. The interpretation of this finding can be sought in light of the fundamental tenets of socio-cultural theory (Wells, 1999). According to this theory, language is used as a tool in social interactions for learning.

Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) explicated that language mainly has a social role, insisting on the communication, social contact, and the surrounding individuals. Moreover, this result is consistent with that of Swain (2005), confirming that from a socio-cultural dimension, the production of language is the most important.

Examining the role of passive motivation sub-constructs as predictors of L2WTC, we found that socio-cultural PM does not predict learners' WTC in any of the skills. On the other hand, passive motivation for cognitive and sensory-perceptual concepts significantly predicted L2WTC in all four skills. Corroborating the significance of passive motivation, this finding shows that those learners who are interested in learning a language in order to achieve a cognitive goal, such as getting a PhD degree or having scientific publications, are more willing to communicate. This is consistent with Peng (2012) assertion that cognitive factors influence the students' L2 communication. This also accords with Makiabadi et al.'s (2019) observations that cognitive emotioncy (i.e., preferring to do research, translating, playing brain games, and so on) significantly correlates with willingness to write and read. Similarly, the results indicated that being interested in having sensory experience with the target language, like traveling to the L2-speaking countries, or communicating with L2 native speakers, led to higher WTC. These results are likely to be related to the fact that although learners have not had the opportunity to put their motivation into action, their mental engagement encouraged them to use the language.

As to the fourth research question, that is, to find out the sub-constructs of active motivation predicting learners' FLA, the results revealed that only active motivation for cognitive concepts predicted students' FLA. This result may be explained by the need for cognition (NFC). According to Cacioppo and Petty (1982), NFC is a motivational tendency distinguishable from intellectual ability and refers to the individual's interest in seeking, engaging in, and enjoying effortful cognitive activities. High NFC learners tend to engage in and enjoy thinking more than their low NFC counterparts. This tendency to seek information actively and enjoy complex reasoning might be regarded as a cognitive AM that increases the accumulation of knowledge and thereby their FLA. In line with this finding, Alami (2020) found that cognitive AM correlates with FLA significantly.

Additionally, we examined different sub-constructs of passive motivation to determine if they predict learners' FLA. We found that while socio-cultural PM predicts FLA negatively, cognitive and sensory/perceptual PM predict FLA positively. This result may be explained by the fact that socio-cultural PM has an interaction-based entity. Passively motivated students are thinking about interacting in the target language, but since they do not get the opportunity (due to various reasons such as embarrassment, classroom climate, and individual differences), they get disappointed, and it negatively affects their L2 scores. On the other hand, cognitive and sensory/perceptual PM are more self-related factors, which can be more controlled by the learners themselves. Therefore, although passively motivated learners may avoid demonstrating and activating their cognitive and sensory motivation, they eventually benefit from their mental engagement by attempting to compensate for their passivity and make an effort to have a better performance in their achievement exams. This result supports Swain (2013) regarding the inseparability of emotion and cognition in L2 learning.

With respect to the fifth research question, the generated model investigated the extent to which active motivation predicts L2 learners' FLA, giving L2WTC a mediating role. The results indicated that while active motivation predicts FLA directly, it is a negative predictor of FLA as mediated by L2WTC. To explicate, generally, as learners' active motivation elevates, their L2 scores increase. However, actively motivated learners who are more willing to communicate get lower scores. This surprising finding might be a result of the non-communication-based methods of assessment in the Iranian high schools. Another explanation may be that L2 learners' motivation and their readiness to initiate communication are undervalued, constrained, or threatened by their teachers or the social climate of the classroom. A learning environment in which learners do not feel affiliation, group cohesion, or fair and positive interaction, gets them amotivated. This finding provides support for the study by Joe et al. (2017), who claimed that L2WTC does not have an influence on final L2 achievement because being willing to communicate in the L2 does not automatically lead to actual opportunities to communicate due to other environmentally influential mechanisms. However, this result is not consistent with Joe et al.'s (2017) findings that motivational variables could predict L2 achievement.

Finally, in order to examine the extent to which passive motivation predicts learners' FLA with the mediating role of L2WTC, a SEM was carried out. The results indicated that passive motivation does not predict FLA either directly or indirectly. This finding emphasizes the importance of involvement in motivation. As it was mentioned, passive motivation does not involve students directly, in the sense that they just think about their desired behaviors and actions without doing what they want. In line with this finding, MacIntyre and Blackie (2012) found that students' desire and interest to learn L2 are not associated with their L2 efficacy. As Pishghadam et al. (2019) stated, if individuals get directly involved in a process, they fully internalize the concept. Thus, passive motivation can be regarded as a basis in the process of getting motivated. In fact, it is an essential prerequisite to L2 learning, but it is not sufficient. In the same vein, Reeve and Lee's (2014) findings showed that if both emotional and behavioral engagements are combined, the academic motivation will lead to better academic achievement. More explicitly, learners with passive motivation who are willing to communicate need much more support and help from their teachers and educational environment to improve their language learning.

6. Conclusions

Overall, given the importance of probing motivation from different perspectives, employing the dual continuum model of motivation (Pishghadam et al., 2019), this study is the first to address the hidden passive aspect of motivation in comparison to the active one in exploring their relation with L2WTC and FLA. Moreover, it examined the mediation role of L2WTC in the relationship between the Iranian high school EFL learners' active/passive motivation and FLA. The findings of this study make several contributions to the field of L2 learning and teaching. First, they show the importance of distinguishing between actively and passively motivated students by the teachers, as they are both motivated but in a different way. The difference is related to their degree of engagement and involvement in the target language. If passively motivated learners and their potential capacity to activate their motivation are ignored by teachers, it may result in their demotivation and consequently

underachievement. On the other hand, those learners, whose interest and minimal effort in learning L2 are valued and appreciated by their teachers, may be able to become more involved in learning and have higher FLA. Therefore, it seems essential for language teachers to know the passively motivated students' interests in language learning and assist them in fostering their capabilities. Based on APMS, learners with passive motivation are interested in participating in L2 discussions, watching movies, or writing articles in L2. Second, the findings of this study should prove to be particularly valuable to administrators as well. By introducing the passive dimension of motivation and different ways of recognizing or activating it, administrators can provide teachers with significant requirements in order to facilitate L2 acquisition. Additionally, if administrators consider passively motivated students' interests in designing language-learning tools, the hidden capacity of these students may flourish, further develop, and turn into active motivation. Finally, the results suggest that EFL learners to appreciate their mental interest in learning L2 and make an effort to consolidate and activate their inner desires.

However, the generalizability of these results is subject to limitations due to the recruitment of participants based on convenience sampling and administering the questionnaires through Google Forms because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, further work is suggested to determine whether the findings remain consistent regarding gender differences. A future study investigating the role of other demographic variables, such as age and language proficiency level, would also be interesting. Another concept that needs to be studied is the emo-sensory load of the participants, which can contribute to WTC (Akbari & Pishghadam, 2022; Naji Meidani et al., 2022; Pishghadam et al., 2022; Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2017). It happens that individuals mostly do not pay attention to the emotional load of their own language proficiency. This issue can be studied further in other studies (Al Badi & Khan, 2022; Pishghadam et al., 2019).

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