



# The Role of Psychological Capital in Language Learners' Willingness to Communicate, Motivation, and Achievement

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## Abstract

By shifting the focus of studies in applied linguistics from negative psychology to positive psychology, psychological capital (PsyCap) consisting of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience can be an influential factor in the language classrooms. Prior studies have emphasized the role that PsyCap plays in management, though little attention has been given to it in education. Therefore, to address this gap, this research intends to assess the role of PsyCap in learners' second/foreign (L2) willingness to communicate (WTC), L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement. To achieve this goal, 317 Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners took part in the present study and completed the measures of PsyCap, L2 WTC, and L2 motivational self system. The findings of structural equation modeling demonstrated that the learners' PsyCap was a positive significant predictor of L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement. These findings confirm the influential role of PsyCap in language education. Based on the findings, some recommendations were presented on how to apply PsyCap to the realm of language education.

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**Keywords:** psychological capital; positive psychology; L2 WTC; L2 motivational self system; language achievement

## 1. Introduction

Previous research on psychological capital (PsyCap) has mostly paid attention to its role as a rich resource in management organizations (Larson & Luthans, 2006; Norman, Avey, Nimnicht & Graber Pigeon, 2010). This composite personality

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construct has been derived from the positive organizational behavior and the positive psychology theory (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). PsyCap is denoted as the state of one's positive psychology to rise to challenges and go on (Youssef & Luthans, 2007), and it comprises four sub-constructs of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Indeed, it examines the contribution of the optimistic attitudes and feedback to the individual and organizational development (Çavuş & Gökçen, 2015). Owing to the fact that the essence of academic tasks and student success could be compared to work duties and employees' success, PsyCap can be investigated in the realm of education and also can be potentially identified as the consistent predictor of academic attainment (Datu & Valdez, 2016).

The literature suggests that the four sub-constructs of PsyCap not only have significant relationships with various psychological, economic, and industrial issues, but also they correlate with academic outcomes regarding learning and learners' academic achievement, performance, and especially their motivation (Siu, Bakker, & Jiang, 2014). However, there are an insufficient number of studies which have paid attention to the contribution of PsyCap in education, and as far as the authors of this study are concerned, previous research has not explored the role of PsyCap in second/foreign language (L2) learning. Moreover, most of the previous studies were conducted in western contexts and little is known about its role in collectivist societies such as Iran (see Datu & Valdez, 2016). Therefore, to shed more light on the role of PsyCap in the L2 context and a collectivist society, this study aimed at examining the relation between PsyCap and L2-related variables in the Iranian EFL classroom context. Considering the components of PsyCap, we examined the relations between PsyCap with L2 willingness to communicate (L2 WTC), L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement to investigate the role of this construct in L2 context. More specifically, the basic objective of this research is to provide responses to the following questions:

1. Does the PsyCap scale have acceptable psychometric properties (reliability and validity)?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between low and high PsyCap students' L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement?
3. Is PsyCap a significant predictor of L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement?

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Psychological Capital*

It was in the first decade of the present century that the positive psychology movement was promoted by researchers (see Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2006) against the negative psychological approaches. The prime goal of the movement was to concentrate on the positive points and abilities of people instead of their negative points and weaknesses (Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen, 2012). As a

consequence of this positive psychology movement, Luthans (2002) put forward a new concept called *positive organizational behavior* and described it as investigating and practicing positive psychological capacities in individuals which can be measured, enhanced, and successfully handled for the enhancement of their occupational performance. Later on, the aforementioned movement and the positive organizational behavior gave birth to another new concept named *psychological capital*, which is different from financial capital and cultural capital in economics and cultural studies (Luthans et al., 2012).

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is referred to as a composite personality trait rooted in positive organizational behavior (Luthans et al., 2007; Nelson & Cooper, 2007), and as earlier mentioned, it is mainly derived from the positive psychology theory (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This construct is denoted as:

“an individual’s positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success.” (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3).

The study of PsyCap has become an interesting area of research for many researchers especially business research practitioners due to the fact that the literature suggests that this asset has the potentiality to exert a profound influence on employees’ performance and behavior in the workplace (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010; Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Bergheim, Nielsen, Mearns, & Eid, 2015, Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). According to the prior studies, the high levels of PsyCap in various professions are related to job satisfaction in a significant and positive way (Luthans et al., 2007), organizational commitment (Luthans et al., 2007), and work engagement (Karatepe & Talebzadeh, 2016; Simons & Buitendach, 2013).

PsyCap has mostly been investigated in the field of business management and only a few studies have been carried out on its possible effects in the academic domain and student-related variables. The primary focus of a few studies have been on the pivotal role of PsyCap in the learning processes and learners’ academic motivation, engagement, well-being, and achievement (Datu & Valdez, 2016; Siu et al., 2014; You, 2016). Siu et al. (2014) demonstrated that PsyCap had a relationship with study engagement and intrinsic motivation among a group of university students in Hong Kong. In another study, Datu and Valdez (2016) found that PsyCap had a positive relationship with academic engagement, positive affect, happiness, and flourishing among Filipino high school students. Finally, You (2016) reported a significant relation between PsyCap and empowerment, and PsyCap was indirectly related to engagement through empowerment among South Korean university students.

Similarly, in their seminal study, Luthans et al. (2012) attempted to explore the probable relation between business students' PsyCap and their academic achievement and found that PsyCap significantly predicts high Grade Point Averages (GPAs) of the students. Moreover, it has been proposed in previous research that PsyCap is negatively linked to learner stress; that is to say, students with substantial amounts of PsyCap are believed to handle tense and crisis situations in a more effective way compared to the learners with lower levels of PsyCap (Riulli, Savicki, & Richards, 2012).

Reviewing the extensive studies on the four sub-constructs of PsyCap has provided new insights into the existing literature. As to the first sub-construct, it has been demonstrated that self-efficacy is positively related to the utilization of cognitive strategies and achievement (Diseth, 2011). Furthermore, Siu et al. (2014) propounded that self-efficacious students are more willing to do their assignments and absorb materials more easily and effectually. With regard to the second and third sub-constructs, both optimism and hope are said to be highly correlated with more efficient academic performance (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Rand, Martin, & Shea, 2011; Seirup & Rose, 2011; Solberg, Evans, & Swgerstrom, 2009;), and also with successful graduation (Seirup & Rose, 2011) since optimistic learners are more willing to take and overcome challenges (Carver & Scheiver, 1998), and hopeful students pursue their goals more enthusiastically (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Finally, the last component of PsyCap, resilience, is to a great extent associated with persistence, active participation, and adaptation (Masten & Reed, 2002), and also the academic success of resilient individuals has been found inevitable. In addition, Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, and Benson (2006) reported a positive link between resilience and GPA.

## *2.2. Willingness to Communicate*

The notion of willingness to communicate (WTC) was evolved out of first language (L1) communication based on the pioneering research by Burgoon (1976) on the concept of unwillingness to verbally get involved in a dialogue or discussion. Afterwards, McCroskey and Baer (1985) adapted the Burgoon's (1976) notion and conceptualized the new notion of WTC in L1 research. In theory, L1 WTC is a trait-like personality construct, showing the inclination of individuals to initiate communication in their L1 whenever they have the opportunity to do so (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). In addition, a number of factors namely introversion-extraversion, alienation, communication competence, self-esteem, and communication apprehension have been demonstrated to have an influence on L1 WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

WTC has also been explored in second language (L2) communication due to the gained importance of communication competence in modern language pedagogy (Çetinkaya, 2005). As a result, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) proposed the L2 WTC construct and defined it as a state when someone is ready

enough to open a dialogue in L2 with other individuals. Also, it should be noted that there seems to be some marked distinctions between L1 WTC and L2 WTC. To support this discrepancy, Charos (1994) posited that L1 and L2 WTC are negatively related. The reason is while the level of communication competence in L2 is like a spectrum ranging from 0 to 100, the level of individuals' communication competence in L1 is fairly high and stable and does not normally fluctuate over time (MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to this state-like perspective, MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualized a pyramid model including many psychological, communicative, and linguistic factors that might potentially impact L2 WTC. Following this study, many studies were conducted in different contexts to examine L2 WTC and its correlates (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012; Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2018; Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Hosseini, & Choi, 2016; Öz, 2016; Öz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Zarrinabadi, 2014).

### *2.3. Motivation*

Motivation, a pivotal factor to the success of learning, enjoys growing research literature especially in foreign/ second language (FL/ L2) teaching studies. Motivation acts as an incentive both to commence learning an L2 and to sustain the arduous learning process. Dörnyei (2005) wrote about motivation as dynamic burning desire in an individual that directs his/ her cognitive abilities from the very beginning stage to their termination. The two major phases in this regard have given birth to the following classical theories in the L2 motivation literature.

The first phase started with the social-psychological period. This phase had its roots in the socio-educational model of Gardner (1985), which in turn initiated from a Canadian origin (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972). According to this model, the socio-cultural environments influence the learners' general outlooks towards the target language, culture, and ultimately their L2 motivation. What is particular about this model is the classification of motivation into integrative and instrumental motivation. While former stems from an internally-developed bond with the target language and culture, the latter is guided by the external forces and the practical aims such as the business-oriented tasks and academic purposes.

The second phase which is regarded as the reign of cognitive-situated theories, attempted to extend the first traditional socio-educational model. The previous model was not considered as a complete one due to some deficiencies in its concepts and its relevant ambiguous jargon (Dörnyei, 2005). It should be mentioned that the conceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were initially brought up during this period (Dörnyei, 2005). Intrinsic motivation is internally stimulated and deals with self-rewarding from inside; however, extrinsic motivation is enforced by the external rewards (Dörnyei, 2001).

A more recent L2 motivational construct called L2 motivational self system has been offered by Dörnyei (2005, 2009). This construct has been put forward to reduce the distance between integration and the real-life language contexts. Derived from the

notion of possible and future selves in personality psychology (Markus & Nurius, 1986), motivation conceptualizations by Noels (2003) and Ushioda (2001), and the results of some other studies (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), L2 motivational self system is conjured up of three inter-related sub-constructs including (1) Ideal L2-self, which is defined as the desired L2 persona of a learner motivating him/her in L2 learning process, (2) Ought-to L2-self, which is defined as embracing a set of features and essential factors of a learner in L2 learning, and (3) L2 learning experience, as a context-based issue, related to the drives directly pertinent to the learning environments and experiences. Based on this theory, learners' imagination of their future selves as actual L2 communicators tremendously motivates them (Papi & Teimouri, 2012). Indeed, if learners are far away from their own ideal L2-vision and are aware of this distance, they are highly motivated to reach their desired status (Dörnyei, 2014; Papi, 2010). Furthermore, a sort of relationship has been detected between the ideal L2-self and integrativeness and a knowledge-oriented approach (Kormos & Csizer, 2008). In contrast, ought-to L2-self is correlated with extrinsic motivation and a task-oriented approach (Dörnyei, 2005). The final dimension of L2 motivational self-system, the L2 learning experience, covers many facets of the proximate surrounding environment of the learners and is basically not related to the L2-self-image; as a matter of fact, it concerns with constructive learner engagement on the route of L2 learning (Papi, 2010). This model has been tested in different empirical studies (Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013; Papi, 2010; Papi, Bondarenko, Mansouri, Feng, & Jiang, 2019).

Öz (2016) investigated the part that ideal L2-self plays in envisaging WTC of EFL learners. The results of his contribution proved that there is a significant correlation between the ideal L2-self and WTC. He maintained that the ideal L2-self has an influence on making contacts with people from other countries; the noticeable result is increased motivation and L2 achievement.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Participants*

In this study, a total of 317 undergraduate students (81.7% male) majoring in English language and literature participated in the study. The age range of the students was from 18 to 30 years. It ought to be mentioned that the participants were chosen by convenience sampling, and they voluntarily participated in the study.

#### *3.2. Instrumentation*

##### *3.2.1. Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12)*

Developed by Lorenz, Beer, Pütz, and Heinitz (2016), this scale has been claimed to be proper for measuring the construct of psychological capital through the literature. The original version of the scale was composed in German, yet the authors of the present paper translated the English version of it into fluent Persian/ Farsi and

double-checked it so that the participants, who were basically native Persian speakers, are not faced with ambiguity while filling out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was back-translated into Persian by an expert in translation to guarantee the precision of the translated version. Then the original English version and the back-translated version were compared which showed a high level of similarity. This scale includes 12 items measuring one's psychological capital. The items had to be answered on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scale was piloted with five undergraduates and underwent necessary modifications subsequently.

### 3.2.2. Willingness to Communicate in English Scale

The second 8-item-questionnaire, derived from a 27-item-questionnaire constructed by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conard (2001) and initially translated into Persian by Makiabadi, Pishghadam, Naji, and Khajavy (2019), measures L2 WTC of the participant students in terms of all receptive and productive L2 skills (i.e., reading, listening, speaking, and writing). Participants had to answer the items on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*never willing*) to 5 (*always willing*).

### 3.2.3. L2 Motivation Scale

Composed by Papi (2010), this scale is to assess the individuals' L2 motivational self system and its subscales (i.e., ideal L2-self, ought-to L2-self, and L2 learning experience). It consists of eighteen 6-point Likert type scale items ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The first six items are related to ideal L2-self, items 7 to 12 measure ought-to L2 self, and the final six items deal with the last subscale.

### 3.2.4. English language achievement

To have a broad outlook of the participants' language background, they were asked to write their final grades in different speaking, writing/grammar, reading comprehension courses as well as their current GPAs in the demographic section. In addition, the academic score scale in Iran is numerical and ranges from 0 to 20. What is important to know is that since students reported more than one grade for reading and speaking courses, the average of all the relevant grades was considered as the final score. Students were also requested to evaluate their proficiency levels by marking one of the intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced options.

## 3.3. Procedure

After gaining the instructors' permission, the scales were distributed among the students during regular class hours. Students were ensured that their data would be kept confidential. Filling out the questionnaires did not take more than fifteen minutes. Following data collection, the collected data were entered into SPSS18 software. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was utilized for measuring the reliability of the scales, and to verify and establish the construct validity of the measures, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. Ultimately, the relations among the latent constructs

were examined via utilizing SEM. CFA and SEM were conducted using Mplus 7.4. To examine model fit, we used goodness-of-fit indices including comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). For a fit model, CFI and TLI should be higher than .90 and RMSEA and SRMR should be less than .08 (see Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Preliminary analyses

Prior to answering the research questions, preliminary analyses including checking missing data, outliers, and normality were checked (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Regarding missing data, we utilized expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm. EM is an imputation technique in which the missing data are replaced with a value (Kline, 2011). Outliers were examined using box plots in SPSS output. All of them were identified and removed. Finally, normal distribution was tested with the use of skewness and kurtosis statistics. Skewness and kurtosis values within the range of  $-2$  to  $+2$  show normal distribution. In the present study, all values were within the acceptable range confirming the normal distribution of the data. Results of the preliminary analyses can be perceived in Table 1.

Table1. Preliminary analyses of the variables

	No of original cases	No of outliers	No of missing cases	No of valid cases
WTC	317	0	0	317
Ideal	317	2	1	314
Ought-to	317	0	1	316
Experience	317	4	1	312
Hope	317	6	1	310
Optimism	317	4	5	308
Resilience	317	1	2	314
Self-efficacy	317	5	0	312
PsyCap	317	12	8	297
L2 achievement	317	0	15	302

### 4.2. Construct validity and reliability of the scales

To assure the construct validity of the scales, confirmatory factor analysis was practiced. Three separate CFAs for psychological capital, L2 motivational self system, and WTC were performed on the data.

In an attempt to respond to the first research question, the validity of psychological capital scale was examined. Two competing models were tested. The first model was a four-factor model in which the four components of PsyCap were correlated and the second one was a second-order model in which the four factors reflected a higher-order construct (i.e. PsyCap). As the two models were nested, Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-

square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2_{S-B} / \Delta df$ ) was utilized to compare the competing models. A significant test indicates that the nested model is superior to the competing model. Results of Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test for comparing and contrasting four-factor model and second-order model of PsyCap was significant ( $\Delta\chi^2_{S-B} = 8.62, p = .01$ ) confirming the superiority of second-order model to four-factor model. The superiority of the second-order model is also in line with previous studies on PsyCap (Lorenz et al., 2016). Results of CFA also confirmed the construct validity of the WTC and L2 motivational self system measures (Table 2). Finally, reliability of the measures was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha (Table 3). All scales and their subscales showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s alpha > .70).

Table 2. Measurement model of PsyCap, WTC, and L2 motivational self-system

	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Four-factor model PsyCap	112.77	48	.90	.88	.08	.07
Second-order model PsyCap	121.39	50	.92	.90	.06	.05
WTC	61.05	19	.95	.93	.07	.04
L2 motivational self-system	322.65	132	.92	.91	.06	.06

### 4.3. Descriptive Statistics and correlation

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the variables. As it is illustrated in Table 3, PsyCap has a mean of 4.32. Considering the possible range (1-6) of PsyCap, it is interpreted in this way that participants of the present research had an almost high level of PsyCap.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability of the variables

	Possible range	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s $\alpha$
WTC	1-5	3.08	.97	.86
Ideal	1-6	4.93	.86	.85
Ought-to	1-6	3.31	1.30	.89
Experience	1-6	5.07	.92	.89
Hope	1-6	4.08	.92	.71
Optimism	1-6	4.71	.94	.68
Resilience	1-6	4.18	.79	.67
Self-efficacy	1-6	4.27	.90	.72
PsyCap	1-6	4.32	.67	.80
L2 achievement	0-20	17.38	1.5	-

The inter-correlations between PsyCap, L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement are reported in Table 4. As it is shown in Table 4, there is a positive correlation between PsyCap with L2 WTC ( $r_{(317)} = .34, p < .001$ ), ideal L2 self ( $r_{(317)} = .45, p < .001$ ), language learning experience ( $r_{(317)} = .36, p < .001$ ), and L2 achievement ( $r_{(317)} = .19, p = .04$ ). However, no significant relations were observed between PsyCap and ought-to L2 self ( $r_{(317)} = -.02, p = .80$ )

Table 4. Correlations among variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.WTC	1.00									
2.ideal	.41**	1.00								
3.ought-to	.02	.12*	1.00							
4.Experience	.41**	.54**	.14*	1.00						
5.Hope	.28**	.36**	-.01	.31**	1.00					
6.Optimism	.21**	.30**	.09	.31**	.45**	1.00				
7.Resilience	.23**	.36**	-.12*	.24**	.47**	.22**	1.00			
8.Self-efficacy	.34**	.38**	-.04	.29**	.62**	.33**	.51**	1.00		
9.PsyCap	.34**	.45**	-.02	.36**	.83**	.67**	.71**	.80**	1.00	
10.L2 achievement	.35**	.35**	.03	.23**	.22**	.18*	.15*	.23**	.19*	1.00

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

#### 4.4. Differences between low and high PsyCap students in WTC, L2 motivational self system, and foreign language achievement

In order to provide an answer for the second research question to find out whether individuals with low and high PsyCap are different in their WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. Given the mean of PsyCap in this study ( $M = 4.32$ ), participants who had a PsyCap mean below or above 4.32 were assigned into low and high PsyCap groups. Results of one-way MANOVA showed a statistically significant difference between low and high PsyCap groups,  $F(4, 311) = 10.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\lambda = 0.88$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .119$ . Univariate tests showed the significant difference between low and high PsyCap groups with regard to WTC  $F(1, 314) = 19.82$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .059$  ( $M_{\text{low}} = 2.82$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 3.30$ ), ideal L2 self  $F(1, 314) = 30.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .089$  ( $M_{\text{low}} = 4.63$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 5.15$ ), language learning experience  $F(1, 314) = 24.54$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .072$  ( $M_{\text{low}} = 4.79$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 5.29$ ), and L2 achievement  $F(1, 314) = 19.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .057$  ( $M_{\text{low}} = 16.96$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 17.75$ ). No significant difference was observed between low and high PsyCap groups in terms of ought-to L2-self  $F(1, 314) = .008$ ,  $p = .922$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$  ( $M_{\text{low}} = 3.32$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 3.30$ ). These results confirm that students equipped with higher levels of PsyCap are more willing to communicate in English, own elevated levels of ideal L2-self and language learning experience, and have a better achievement in foreign language learning.

#### 4.5. Testing models

To answer the third question of this study to examine the predictive role of PsyCap in WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement, three separate structural equation models were tested. Goodness of fit indices for the three models can be observed in Table 5. All three models fitted the data adequately.

Table 5. Goodness of fit indices for the structural models

	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
PsyCap → WTC	297.30	164	.93	.91	.05	.05
PsyCap → L2 motivational self-system	781.57	395	.91	.90	.05	.06
PsyCap → L2 achievement	1120.33	105	.92	.90	.05	.05

In the first model (see Figure 1), the predictive role of PsyCap in L2 WTC was analyzed. Findings of SEM indicated that PsyCap was a significant positive predictor of L2 WTC ( $\beta = .35, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } f^2 = .139$ ). In the second model (see Figure 2), PsyCap was a significant predictor of ideal L2-self ( $\beta = .48, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } f^2 = .299$ ) and language learning experience ( $\beta = .38, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } f^2 = .168$ ), but not a significant predictor of ought-to L2- self ( $\beta = .35, p = .281$ ). Finally, the predictive role of PsyCap in L2 achievement was investigated (see Figure 3) and PsyCap was a positive and significant predictor of L2 achievement ( $\beta = .19, p = .041, \text{Cohen's } f^2 = .037$ ). These findings corroborated the significant role of PsyCap as a predictor of L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement.

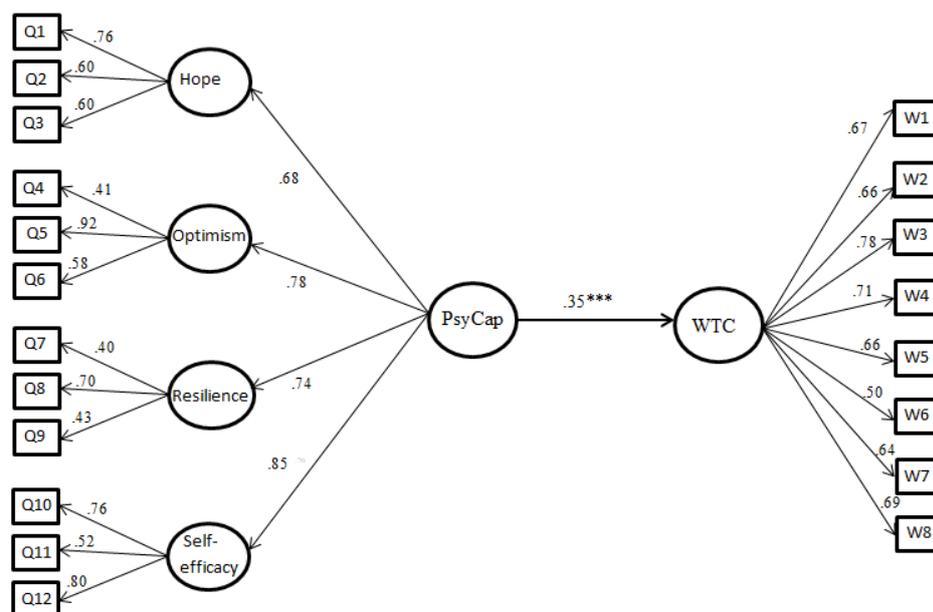


Figure 1. The structural relation between PsyCap and WTC. All beta weights are standardized. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

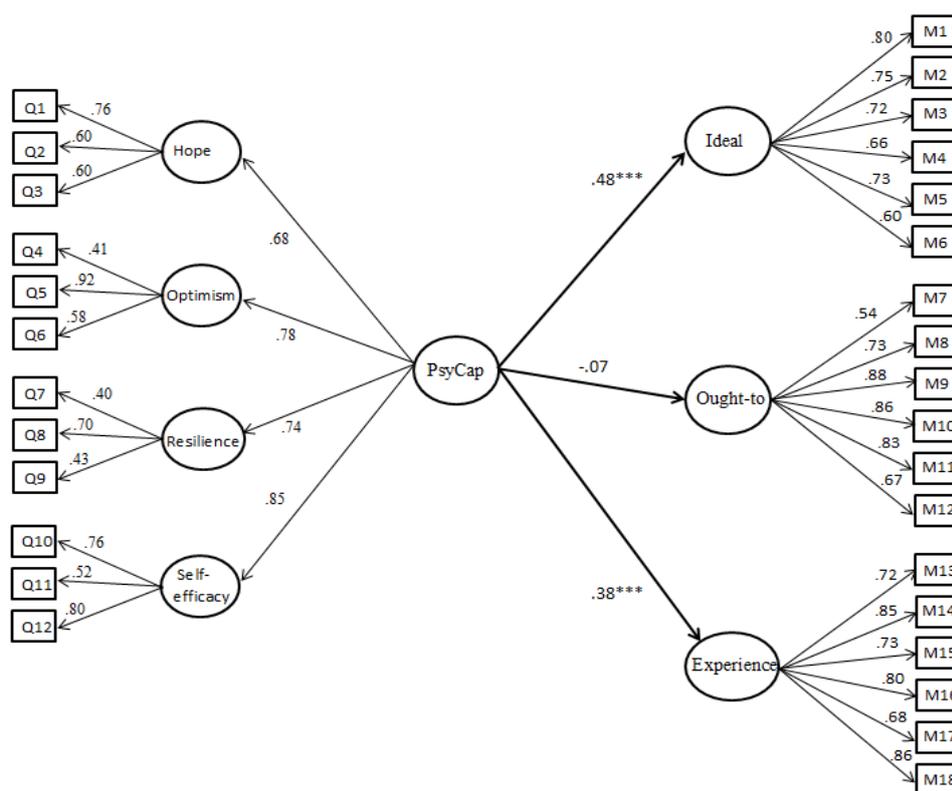


Figure 2. The structural relations between PsyCap and L2 motivational self-system. All beta weights are standardized. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

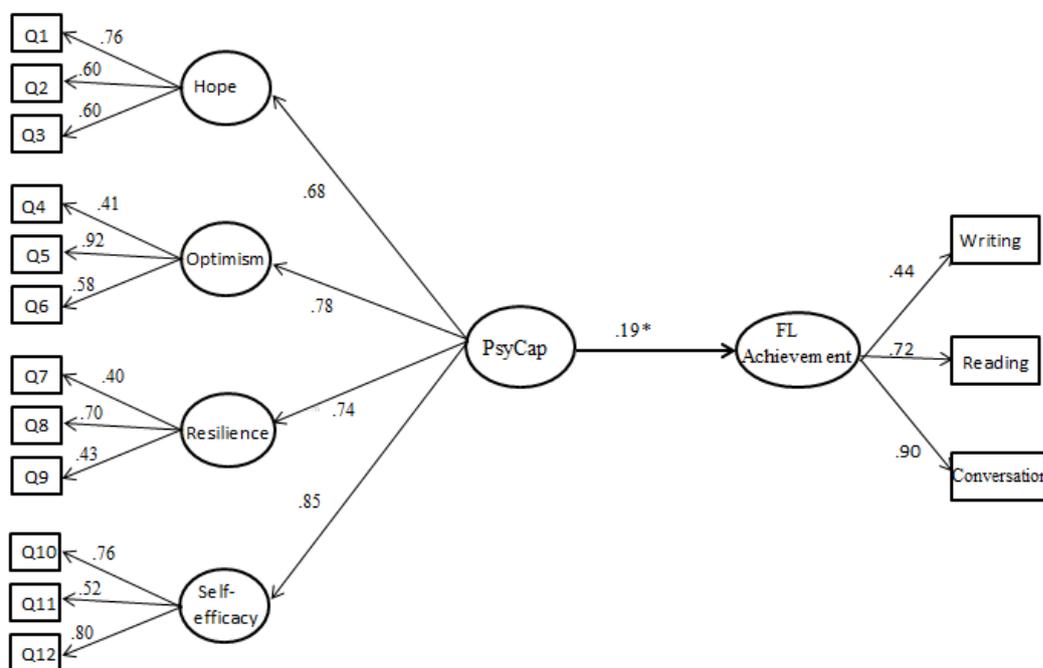


Figure 3. The structural relation between PsyCap and L2 achievement. All beta weights are standardized. \*  $p < .05$ .

## **5. Discussion**

While previous research has shown the importance of PsyCap in business and management studies, very few studies have investigated it in the field of education. Moreover, based on the literature review, no previous study has investigated PsyCap in the field of foreign language education. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to examine the role of positive psychological capital in L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement to broaden our knowledge on the applicability and role of PsyCap in L2 context.

First, findings of CFA demonstrated that the second-order model of PsyCap was a better fit than the four-factor model. In this study, instead of using Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24), we used Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12). The reason for choosing CPC-12 was that PCQ-24 measures PsyCap in the context of organizations, while CPC-12 considers PsyCap in a universal context. The superiority of second-order model to its competing model confirms the results of previous studies (Lorenz et al., 2016). This implies that the concept of PsyCap is better understood as a global factor which comprises hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience rather than considering it as distinct constructs. Therefore, instead of examining each construct separately, the global PsyCap can be examined in research studies. In addition to PsyCap, the factor structure of L2 WTC and L2 motivational self system measures was examined and confirmed.

Second, we examined whether students with low and high levels of PsyCap are different in L2 WTC, L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement. Findings of MANOVA showed that students who have higher PsyCap are more willing to communicate in English in comparison to students with lower levels of PsyCap. Then, results showed that individuals' who had higher levels of PsyCap had more levels of ideal L2-self and language learning experience, while no difference was found in their ought-to L2-self. Finally, students with higher PsyCap displayed better L2 achievement. Similar results were found in structural models. PsyCap was a weak predictor of L2 WTC. This result is consistent with the PsyCap theory that is related to attitudes and behavior (Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008). This finding implies that students who have high levels of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy are more willing to communicate in English in their classrooms. Considering the relation between PsyCap and L2 motivational self-system, results of SEM indicated PsyCap was a medium predictor of ideal L2-self and language learning experience. Therefore, students who endorse positive PsyCap in form of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy have an influential self-image of a competent user of the second language they would like to become in the future and experience more positive experiences in the classroom. It should be noted that Ideal L2-self and language learning experience are more desirable types of L2 motivational self system which have been linked to more positive learning outcomes (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Papi, 2010; Peng, 2015), while ought-to L2self has been

mostly linked with negative learning behavior and anxiety (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Papi, 2010).

Moreover, ideal L2-self and language learning experience are very similar to intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2009), while ought-to L2-self is more similar to extrinsic motivation according to Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000) taxonomy. That is why no positive significant relation was found between PsyCap and ought-to L2-self. The positive relation between PsyCap and intrinsic motivation was also reported in Siu et al. (2014) among university students in Hong Kong.

Finally, results of SEM indicated that PsyCap was a weak predictor of L2 achievement. This finding implies that students who have higher PsyCap in form of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy have a better performance in L2 achievement. This finding is also consistent with previous studies endorsing the role of PsyCap in better academic performance (Carmona-Halty, Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2018; Datu, King, & Valdez, 2018).

## **6. Conclusion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of psychological capital (PsyCap) in language related outcomes including willingness to communicate (WTC), L2 motivational self system, and L2 achievement. Results showed that PsyCap was related to WTC, ideal L2 self, language learning experience, and L2 achievement, supporting the important role of this construct in FL classrooms.

Findings of this research have several implications for language institute administrators, language teacher trainers, and language teachers. First, the positive relation between PsyCap and WTC implies that providing strategies that support learners' PsyCap improves learners' willingness to communicate in English in the classrooms. Similarly, the positive relation between PsyCap with ideal L2-self, language learning experience, and L2 achievement implies that PsyCap can be considered as an influential correlate of these positive outcomes and both teachers and researchers should design techniques and strategies which enhance the components of PsyCap including hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. One of the techniques which can be used to promote PsyCap in the language classrooms is a micro-intervention program introduced by Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman and Combs (2006). According to Luthans et al. (2006), this micro-intervention program takes about 1 to 3 hours and each of the four components of the PsyCap is promoted. First, for hope, students should talk about goals which are valuable for them and explain pathways which students can use to achieve their goals. For optimism, Luthans et al. (2006) explain that part of hope intervention and self-efficacy intervention are also used to foster optimism. For self-efficacy, they rely on Bandura's theory in which sources of self-efficacy such as task-mastery, modeling, and positive feedback are emphasized. Finally, for resilience, students should identify setbacks they had in learning a language and what strategies they can take to handle them.

Several limitations should be taken into account while interpreting the findings of the current research. First, only correlational approach was utilized to examine the relationship between variables. Therefore, caution should be taken while making any causal decisions among variables. To overcome this limitation, future research can use longitudinal or interventional design for making causal relations among variables. Considering an experimental research, for example, some methods for improving students' PsyCap can be developed and tested in the classroom. Second, the findings of this study can be complemented by using qualitative methods such as interview and observation. Finally, findings of the present research are only generalizable to the sample of the present research. More research is required to confirm the results of the present study in other settings. Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the present research was the first one that introduced PsyCap in L2 research and confirmed that it can be an important and influential factor for future research in the field of foreign language education.

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