Interrelationships of Willingness to Speak and Cultural Identity with English L2 Speaking Proficiency

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Abstract
Regarding the belief that willingness to communicate is strongly tied with developing some insights into the L2 culture, such a connection may not be always positive and the issue of cultural attachment and identity may sometimes function as a hindrance. Individuals are believed to be highly emotional in terms of "religion and spirituality", among other components of cultural identity. This study aimed at investigating the interrelationships of willingness to speak and cultural identity with English speaking proficiency. To this aim, 215 Iranian intermediate and upper intermediate EFL learners took part in this survey study to complete the Home Culture Attachment Scale and the Revised Version of Willingness to Communicate questionnaire. Using SEM, path analysis showed the degree to which the variables were related to one another. Also, Pearson Correlation was used for verification. The findings revealed positive significant relationships between all subscales of Home culture Attachment and both speaking and willingness to speak, except for the element of religious attachment. Further, willingness to speak was positively and significantly correlated with speaking skill. Having found a rather negative influence of religious attachment, it may be concluded that religion, as a cultural barrier, may hinder the process of L2 learning.

Keywords: Cultural identity, English L2 speaking proficiency, Iranian EFL context, Willingness to speak

Introduction

With the emergence and recent advancements of technology, communication has become possible for individuals who even stay thousands of miles away from each other and possess different cultural backgrounds speaking in diverse languages; thus, calling for knowing English as an international language and being able to communicate in that language. Accordingly, the main goal of language teaching, which used to be mastery in L2 structures, has been changed into the development of communicative competence (Dörnyei, 2005; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). To put it differently, Communication is believed to be the most outstanding function of language and its role has been remarkably recognized since 1970s (Reese & Overton, 1970).Generally speaking, communication takes place through the involvement of some psychological elements, such as motivation, attitudes, willingness to communicate (WTC), as well as intercultural influences (Yashima, 2002). To put it differently, communicative competence is enhanced once L2 learners' WTC is promoted. WTC, as a personality trait, is considered to be an essential factor underlying the interpersonal communication process (MacIntyre, 2007). Rooted in individual characteristics, WTC shows the intention of initiating a communicative behavior and this may be related to the speakers' proficiency level (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007).

Communicative approaches in education concentrate on the development of learners' communicative competence in L2 acquisition in the lieu of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Long, 1996; Nassaji & Swain, 2000). It is defined as the desire to be engaged in communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). It consists of a number of components, one of which is referred to as Willingness to Speak (WTS), the language learners' tendency to speak in the target language. According to MacIntyre (2007), various factors such as individual, social, linguistic, and situational, may prevent one from speaking up.

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) proposed that WTS in L2 means "readiness to enter into the discussion at particular time with special person(s) using the L2" (p.547). As Dörnyei (2005) points out, the possession of L2 competence by itself does not suffice, but language learners need to have a tendency to speak in L2. As a novel developing concept, WTS explains individual differences in L2 and L1 communicative approaches as far as their tendency to communicate is considered (Okayama, Nakanishi, Kuwabara, & Sasaki, 2006; Yashima, 2002). From this perspective, one can enjoy more from their possessed communicative competence to communicate in L2 if they have highly developed such a desire (Shahsavani, Shahsavar, & Sahragard, 2014).

From another perspective, as a wide-ranging issue in the domain of sociology, cultural identity has found its way into the scope of sociolinguistics and has been viewed as another influential element in language learning. Bausinger (1999) and Mackridge (2008) considered identity as a two-fold state; i.e., how we see ourselves, and how others see us. The connection occurs through communication. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), identity is "social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place" which individuals use in order to "self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives" (p. 19). As a closely related issue, cultural identity is a "shared culture … which people with a shared history and common ancestry hold in common", leading the community to developing a sense of unity (Hall, Braziel, & Mannur, 2003, p. 234). More specifically, cultural identity is defined as those distinguishing characteristics, "feelings, beliefs and ideas" that make a particular person, people or a group of people different from others (Collins Cobuild, 1990, p. 718). In large, the concept of cultural identity, which was initiated with the publication of "nigrescence" theory by Cross (1978), refers to those aspects of one's identity which are related to their family and culture, and how to be perceived by others (Ibrahim & Heuer, 2016).

To Galloway (1992), culture means sharing individual identity and establishing a system of thoughts and behaviors to effectively negotiate. Based on the definition by McCroskey and Richmond (1990), culture is a standard of verbal and non-verbal communicative approaches in human society which assigns a range of acceptable behaviors in that society. In general, "culture is unconsciously gained by attending human interactions and transmitted from one generation to the next through learning" (Weaver, 2005, p.1). So, one may come up with the idea that communication shapes an essential aspect of individuals' culture.

Researchers have looked at the issue of cultural identity from various dimensions. For instance, Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) talked about the 'attachment' theory which suggests that a person can experience intimacy, constant and warm rapport acquired from familial relations. On the other hand, 'cultural attachment' theory shows the function of emotional relationship with each person's culture (Bowlby, 1969). Moreover, within the framework of culture, two concepts of home culture or target culture have been identified which determine the communication and interactive relationship in social life distinguishing one society from another (Lado, 1964). Bowlby (1969) maintains that human beings are born with an attachment behavioral system that

encourages them to search for significant others (attachment figures) in times of need. To him, such "attachment figures-associated relationships" have a main role in human enhancement, human mental health, emotional balance and interpersonal relationships throughout a person's life.

More specifically, Ibrahim and Heuer (2016) propose that cultural identity consists of several components including one's biographical features, ethnical and familial background, social status, as well as languages and religion. Among all the components, "religion and spirituality" are considered of high importance as far as emotional relations are concerned (Cornish, Wade, Tucker, & Post, 2014; Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 2007).Religion is a set of subjective and individualistic assumptions, beliefs, and deeds being practiced in a community in order to promote the level of spirituality (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008).

As such, learning another language has been argued to pose potential effect on the language learners' identity and culture, as well as religious beliefs, in particular (Amiri & Yousefi, 2016). A direct relationship is assumed between language learners' biased religious identity and the tendency to detach from L2 culture due to the fact they do not rid themselves of ethnocentrism and do not want to develop other's system of beliefs (Ghonsooly, Hejazi, Pishghadam, & Shahriari Ahmadi, 2015). In contrary, the more openness they exhibit towards the other's system of values, the more they follow foreign culture and factors including orientation toward their components of culture (Ghonsooly et al., 2015).

Over the last decades, due to a shift of paradigm in language teaching methodology, there has been a growing endeavor to pay special attention to the issue of communication, for example through using original communicative-based textbooks written for the purpose of teaching English as a second language. Nevertheless, since English language learning is strongly tied to developing some insights into the L2 culture, the issue of cultural attachment and identity may function as a hindrance. Researchers assume that learners may be negatively influenced by the assumption that knowing a foreign language results in losing the learner's cultural identity, leading to cultural detachment. Particularly, in settings like Iran where religion is considered as a dominant aspect of culture, the issue turns out to be even more crucial.

Thus, this study mostly draws on the religious aspect of cultural identity to develop a hypothesis about the possible negative influence of L2 cultural identity. However, not all the components of cultural identity may have such negative influence. There might be other aspects in cultural identity which may positively correlate with WTS. Further, a good deal of research in the area of second language acquisition informs us that WTS plays an influential role in speaking performance (e.g. Tousi & Khalaji, 2014). There are also vast amount of research on the concept of willingness to communicate and its relationship with some aspects of cultural identity (e.g. Alemi & Pakzadian, 2011; Baghaei & Dourakhshan, 2012). However, although the literature is rich with the number of studies carried out so far on the role of WTC, to the best knowledge of the researchers, there is no study yet to show the interconnection among the WTS, in particular, and cultural identity with L2 speaking ability. So, this study intends to fill such a gap.

From what came above, one can infer that language learners are posed to the challenge of improving their potentiality of WTS in order to be a more successful learner on one hand; while on the other, there are some aspects of cultural identity, such as religious issues that might work as hindrance in the process of language learning. Thus, this study proposes direct interrelationships between all components of cultural identity and WTS whereas the relationship between the aspect of "religion and spirituality" is seen as indirect.

Background to the Study

As for the relationship between language proficiency and WTC/WTS, there is good amount of research in the body of literature indicative of positive relationships between these two variables. For instance, according to Alemi, Daftarifard, and Pashmforoosh (2011), those who are more proficient in English language are more willing to communicate. In their study, they investigated the relationship between Iranian EFL university students' WTC, their language anxiety, and language proficiency. They found a direct relationship between WTC and language proficiency. In other contexts, too, researchers came up with similar results. As examples, the studies conducted by McCroskey (1997) and Wen and Clément (2003) have shown a direct and positive relationship between language learners' proficiency levels and their WTC.

In the recent years, the study of active usage of second language (L2) in classrooms and its efficacy on learners' cultural identity has been a controversial issue among researchers. In this regard, cross-cultural research shows that language and values, as two cultural components, are related (Kmiotek & Boski, 2017). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), since language and cultural features like lifestyle, attitude, customs, and values are related, the process of language learning often leads to cultural consequences e.g., life style changes on the part of language learners. Some studies (e.g. Jiang, Green, Henley, & Masten, 2009; Lybeck, 2002) have been conducted to examine the relationship between cultural identity and pronunciation proficiency. They came to the conclusion that L2 accent can be influenced by cultural identity.

In terms of the relationship between WTC/WTS and cultural identity, a study carried out by Razmjoo (2010) investigated the effect of identity aspects on the Iranian EFL learners' language achievement. The results did not find any one of the components of identity to predict language achievement. Yet, in another study by Firoozjahantigh and Abdi (2015), the results revealed a positive correlation between proficiency level and L2 cultural dependency or deculturation. In another study on a sample of 411 Iranian English major university students nationwide, Motallebzadeh, Sharifi Feri, and Bemani Naeini (2017) investigated the relationship of sub-constructs of home culture attachment with Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. The results of path analysis suggested that all three subscales of attitudes (emotional, behavioral, and cognitive) were positive and significant predictors of students' western attachment except for. behavioral attitude which was found to be negative and significant predictor of students' religious attachment. Such a finding is of particular interest to the present study. However, since to our best knowledge, there is scarcity of research on the relationship between WTS, speaking proficiency and various components of cultural identity, including religious attachment, among Iranian EFL learners, this study aims at addressing the following research question:

Q1. What are the statistical interrelationships between willingness to speak, components of cultural identity, and speaking proficiency among Iranian EFL learners?

Q2. Is the proposed SEM model for the interrelationships between willingness to speak, , components ofcultural identity, and speaking proficiency appropriate for Iranian TEFL students?

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The sample of the present study were 215 male and female EFL students selected from eight private English language institutes located in different parts of the city of Mashhad, Iran. Participants' age range varied from 16 to 35 (M= 25.87, SD= 4.29). Their selection was based on convenience sampling and the participation was entirely voluntary.

Instruments

The data needed for the present study were of a quantitative nature; therefore, to this end, two scale questionnaires, each consisting of a demographic section, were used. The questionnaires used to measure the variables are: Revised Version of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Inside the Classroom (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2001) and Home Culture Attachment Scale (HCAS) (Pishghadam, Hashemi, & Bazri, 2013). They were used to measure the participants' willingness to communicate and cultural identity, respectively. Also, to assess the participants in terms of their speaking ability. Speaking section of Cambridge practice tests for IELTS (Jakeman & McDowell, 2006) was used.

Revised Version of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Inside the Classroom (Speaking Section). To measure and assess the participants' willingness to communicate inside the classroom, a modified version of the Likert-type questionnaire developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001) was used. The scale includes 27 items which range from 1 to 5 (1 = almost never willing, 2 = sometimes willing, 3 = willing half of the time, 4 = usually willing, and 5 = almost always willing). The participants were asked to indicate how much willing they were to communicate during the class tasks. The items were written in a way that would involve students' willingness to communicate inside the classroom in terms of all four skills. MacIntyre et al. (2001) have confirmed the validity and reliability of the scale in their report; i.e. speaking (8 items, $\alpha = .81$), comprehension (5 items, $\alpha = .83$), reading (6 items, $\alpha = .83$), and writing (8 items, $\alpha = .88$). The rate of reliability was calculated .91 for the present study. In this study, only the speaking section of this questionnaire was administered to the participants. The lowest obtained core (8) is interpreted as the least willing to speak in the classroom and the highest score of 40 suggests that those participants are the most willing to participate in the class conversations.

Home Culture Attachment Scale (HCAS). In a study, Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2009) initially developed the scale of home cultural attachment for the purpose of measuring the degree of individual attachment to home culture. Later, Pishghadam et al. (2013), tested and confirmed the sub-constructs of Home Culture Attachment Scale (HCAS) via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

Five factors were extracted as the underlying factors of (HCAS) namely, religious attachment, western attachment, Iranian attachment, cultural attachment, and artistic attachment. The constructing items of *religious attachment* are associated with the perception which each individual has regarding being religious, like fasting, going to the mosque, going to Mecca, doing charity with religious instruction, visiting holy shrines, taking part in religious ceremonies and wearing black in funerals and religious mourning ceremonies. The second factor is labeled as *western attachment*. Regarding this factor, various elements are measured; i.e., the tendency individuals have towards western clothing and appearance, rejection of traditional ceremonial occasions, the tendency of getting married to a foreigner, and inclination towards aspects of western culture like music, food, etc. The third factor, labeled as *Iranian attachment*, includes six items which measure different aspects like, the amount of appreciation the learners have for the history of Iran, individuals' tendency to Iranian customs, and an appreciation of Persian literature. The other factor in this scale is *cultural attachment.* This factor investigates learners' attachment to various dimensions of traditional culture like architecture, music, customs, and dialects. Finally, the last factor is *artistic attachment which* examines the effects of western movies on the learners' inclination towards reading western stories rather than Persian ones.

This scale consists of 36 items and is a four-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (4) "strongly agree". Since there are both positive and negative statements in the scale, the scoring of those negative statements need to be reversed. Table 1 summarizes the

information obtained from Cronbach alpha analyses. As can be seen, the utilized questionnaires gained acceptable indexes of reliability.

Table 1. *Results of Reliability Analysis*

Scale	Subscales	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Home-Culture Attachment Scale	**Religious Attachment**	7	.86
	Western Attachment	11	.76
	Iranian Attachment	6	.71
	Cultural Attachment	7	.69
	Artistic Attachment	5	.65
Willingness to Speak	----------	8	.91

Speaking Test. Speaking section of Cambridge practice tests for IELTS (Jakeman & McDowell, 2006) requires individual test takers to participate in an oral interview with the examiner. There are generally three parts: the first part focuses on everyday topics, the second part, on the ability to sustain a topic, and the last part tests the ability to express, analyze, and discuss opinions. The responses are scored and reported on a nine-band scale. The examinee receives a score for each one of the four categories: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical ratings and accuracy, and pronunciation.

Procedures

The quantitative data were collected by distributing the Revised Version of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Inside the Classroom and Home Culture Attachment Scale (HCAS) questionnaires among 215 intermediate and upper-intermediate EFL learners. The participants were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. The questionnaires were handed out to them during the class time under the supervision of both their instructors and the main researcher so that they could translate or clarify any questions in case of ambiguity. The researcher emphasized the importance of honest and genuine answers by assuring them that their scores and personal information would remain confidential. It took the participants about 45 minutes to fill out the questionnaires.

As for collecting the information regarding the dependent variable of the study, the participants' speaking scores obtained from the speaking section of the IELTS were gathered from the supervisory bureau of the eight private English language institutes under the study. The reported results were then taken onto a scale of maximum 10 to assure homogeneity of rating. The process of collecting data started in March 2018 and lasted for about two months for the procedure to be completed and analyzed.

Study Design and Data Analysis

To assess the statistical interrelationships of willingness to speak and the components of cultural identity with speaking proficiency among Iranian EFL learners, first Pearson Correlation was used to analyze the data. Besides, as a means of verification,

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was also conducted using Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS 23) statistical package.

Based on the reviewed literature, a vast amount of study revealed that Iranian EFL learners' WTC is directly correlated with their language proficiency (to name a few, Alemi, et al., 2011; Barjesteh, Bowlby, & Neissi, 2012; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012). In the present study the hypothesis mainly and specifically focused on English speaking proficiency.

From another dimension, since it is believed that cultural identity is an important factor in using second language (Pishghadam et al., 2013), it was proposed in our model that there would be a connection between the components of cultural identity and willingness to communicate, too. As Pishghadam et al. (2013) maintain, the more religious a person is, the more unwilling s/he is to detach from the second language culture, mainly the western culture, including English language. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that all the five components of cultural identity may pose direct positive relationship with English L2 speaking proficiency and willingness to speak, except for Religious Attachment which may have indirect relationship.

Results

In order to meet one of the pre-assumptions set for running inferential analyses, descriptive statistics of the study variables were to be calculated. Table 2 summarize the results.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religious Attachment	215	9.00	28.00	21.75	2.54
Western Attachment	215	14.00	42.00	33.54	3.69
Iranian Attachment	215	15.00	24.00	21.39	2.87
Cultural Attachment	215	17.00	28.00	19.54	2.09
Artistic Attachment	215	7.00	20.00	14.57	1.74
Willingness to Speak	215	15.00	38.00	29.54	4.49
Speaking Score	215	6.5	10.00	8.25	2.04

Pearson correlation was employed to assess the research hypotheses. Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation among willingness to speak, cultural identity and speaking proficiency.

Table 3. *Results of Correlations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Religious Attachment	1.00						
Western Attachment	-.69**	1.00					
Iranian Attachment	.18*	.26**	1.00				
Cultural Attachment	.09	.22**	.12	1.00			
Artistic Attachment	.08	.11	.47**	.53**	1.00		

Willingness to Speak	-.37**	.58**	.25**	.19*	.11	1.00	
Speaking score	-.30**	.53**	.23**	.12	.10	.46**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

As it can be seen in Table 3, there are negative significant relationships between Religious Attachment and both speaking score (r= -.30, p<0.05) and willingness to speak (r= -.37, p<0.05). However, there are positive significant relationships between Western Attachment and both speaking score (r= .53, p<0.05) and willingness to speak (r= .58, p<0.05). Furthermore, there are weak positive significant relationships between Iranian Attachment and both speaking score (r= .23, p<0.05) and willingness to speak (r= .25, p<0.05). Besides, there is a weak positive significant relationship between cultural Attachment and willingness to speak (r= .19, p<0.05) and no significant relationship was found between cultural Attachment and speaking score (r= .12, p>0.05). There is no significant relationship between Artistic Attachment and both speaking (r=12, p>0.05). There is no significant relationship between Artistic Attachment and both speaking score (r= .10, p>0.05) and willingness to speak (r=.11, p>0.05). Finally, it was found that willingness to speak correlated positively and significantly with speaking score (β= .46, p<0.05). And the null hypotheses are rejected.

Figure 1 shows the Path Analysis of the interrelationships among WTS and cultural identity with speaking proficiency before modification. The purpose of using path analysis was to structure a model for the directed dependencies among the variables and sub-variables of the study.

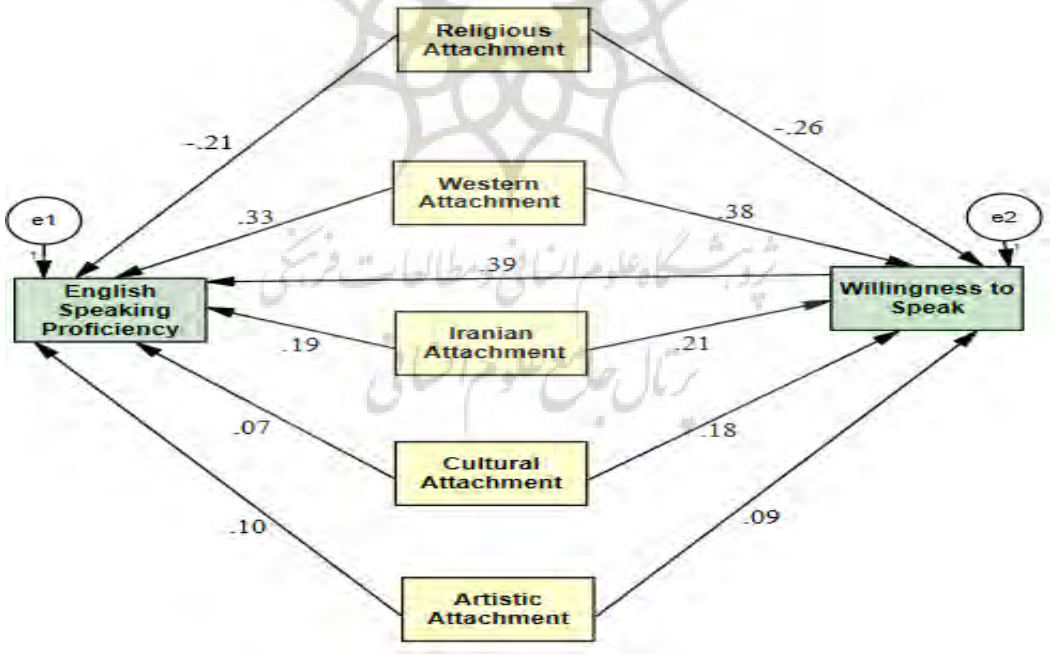

Figure 1. *Path Analysis Model before modification*

A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit. Goodness of fit indices for model of path analysis before modification can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. *Goodness of fit indices for model of path analysis before modification*

	X2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
Model	3.12	.88	.89	.074

As demonstrated in Table 4, (the chi-square/df ratio (3.12), RMSEA (.074), GFI (.88), and CFI (.89)), most of the fit indices do not lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Therefore, the model needs some modification. In order to modify the model, three non-significant paths were removed: 1) Cultural Attachment to English speaking score (β= .07, p>.01), 2) Artistic Attachment to English speaking score (β= .10, p>.01), 3) Artistic Attachment to willingness to speak (β= .09, p>.01). The results after modification are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Goodness of Fit Indices after modification*

	X2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
Model	2.97	.91	.90	.070

As Table 5 shows, the chi-square/df ratio (2.97), RMSEA (.070), GFI (.91), and CFI (.90), all the fit indices lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Hence, it can be concluded that the proposed model had perfect fit with the empirical data after modification. Figure 2 shows the Path Analysis of the interrelationships among WTS and cultural identity with speaking proficiency after modification.

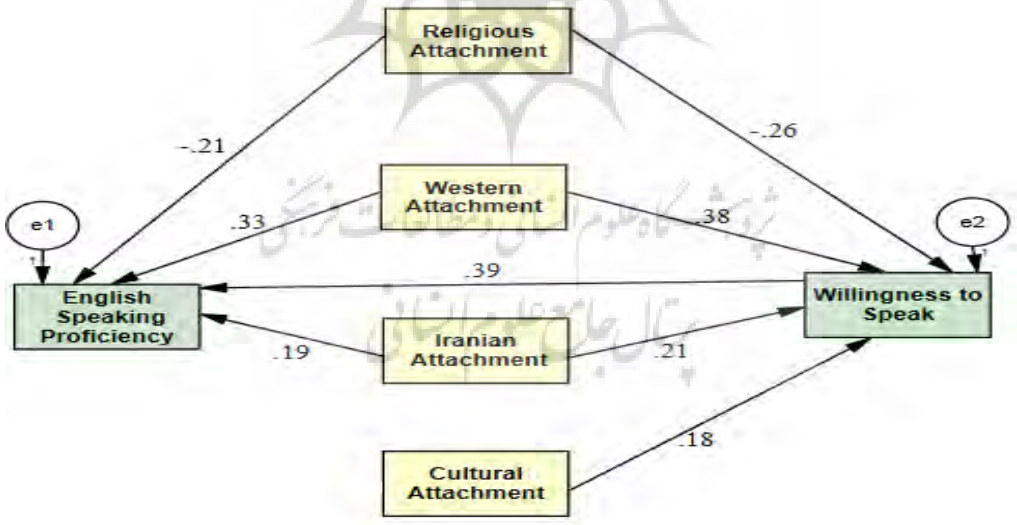

Figure 2. *The Path Analysis of the interrelationships among WTS and cultural identity with speaking proficiency after modification*

Discussion and Conclusion

To assess the statistical interrelationships of willingness to speak and the components of cultural identity with speaking proficiency among Iranian EFL learners, Path analysis and Pearson Correlation were conducted. The results of correlational analysis indicated negative significant relationships between religious attachment and both speaking score and willingness to speak. However, there were positive significant relationships between western attachment and both speaking score and willingness to speak. Also, weak positive relationships were found between Iranian attachment and both speaking score and willingness to speak, as well as between cultural attachment and willingness to speak. Furthermore, the analysis revealed no significant relationship between artistic attachment and both speaking score and willingness to speak. Finally, it was found that willingness to speak correlated positively and significantly with speaking score.

The proposed model was tested using Amos 24 statistical package**.** First it was found that most of the fit indices did not lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Therefore, the model needed some modification. In order to modify the model, three non-significant paths were removed: 1) Cultural Attachment to English speaking score (β= .07, p>.01), 2) Artistic Attachment to English speaking score (β= .10, p>.01), 3) Artistic Attachment to willingness to speak (β= .09, p>.01). It was concluded that the proposed model had perfect fit with the empirical data after the modification.

The main goal of this study was to determine the interrelationships among the components of three variables of WTS, cultural identity, and speaking language proficiency. The results of this study revealed that there exist interconnections among the aforementioned variables. Therefore, the null hypotheses of this research were rejected. Previous studies had also found the connection between different factors of willingness to speak and speaking language proficiency. Overall, there have been studies which have stated that various factors, such as personality-related factors (e.g. Alemi et al, 2011; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996) and perceived speaking ability (e.g. MacCroskey, 1985; Tousi & Khalaji, 2014) to be attributed to WTS which also directly relates to speaking scores. In this vein, this study adds to the body of existing literature in that social factors, such as cultural identity exhibit some roles in L2 WTS and speaking ability, as well.

The results also presented a negative significant relationship between religious attachment, as a sub-factor of cultural identity, and both speaking score and willingness to speak. Such findings are somehow congruent with those of Amini and Yousefi (2016) and Ghonsooly et al. (2015) whose focus was not specifically on WTS, but on WTC. Additionally, Pishghadam et al. (2013) revealed a negative indirect correlation between religious attachment and aspects of L2 culture, including the language. It can be concluded, then, that factors like religion are crucial cultural influences, known as cultural barriers, which can block the effective learning process and performance.

Among other sub categories of cultural identity, the connection of cultural attachment, western attachment, and Iranian attachment with L2 proficiency were found positive and significant. In this respect, this study gains support from Firoozjahantigh and Abdi (2015), Jiang, et al., (2009) and Kmiotek and Boski, (2017). However, the findings of this study are not confirmed by Razmjoo (2010) who found none of the aspects of cultural identity function as a predicting variable of language achievement. The findings of this study can be explained in the lieu of the fact that English language is regarded as one of the main aspects of western culture. As a support, Igawa (2010) once asserted that western culture is presented through the media using English language in music, movies, TV, etc. So, those who find interest in the western culture

may also develop positive attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. However, such a tendency on the part of EFL learners does not suggest willingness to detach from their own cultural identity.

Based on the current findings, cultural attachment is directly linked to willing to speak. More interestingly, the findings suggest that those who demonstrated higher Iranian attachment also gained higher English speaking scores and showed more willingness to speak English. Although this connection was statistically weak, it can be explained by the fact that learning about a new culture encourages language learners to reflect on and pay respect to their own culture; thus, showing more tendency to introduce their own culture to the rest of the world in English.

The results of this research revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between one of the components of cultural identity (i.e. religious attachment) and WTS and this denotes that the higher the attachment to one's religion, the lower the leaners' speaking proficiency and willingness to speak in L2. Moreover, it was found that speaking score was negatively and significantly correlated with only religious attachments in a sense that the higher the religious attachment, the lower the speaking score will be. This section of results partially conform to the study carried out by Motallebzadeh et al. (2017) who revealed positive correlation between western attachment and all aspects of attitudes toward language learning whereas behavioral attitude was found a negative predictor of EFL learners' religious attachment.

To conclude, as it was mentioned earlier, the overall connection between WTS and cultural identity was positive. Also, the results suggest that those English language learners who have higher cultural identity also have higher English speaking scores and are more willing to speak English. So, it is reasonable to conclude that since positive relations were found between cultural identity and WTS on the one hand, and with speaking on the other, then, WTS and speaking are expected to be positively related.

All in all, this study adds to the body of literature in that it reconfirms the fact that culture can function as an improving and/or hindering factor in the process of language learning. It all depends on the degree of one's attachment to their own culture. As once stated by Ibrahim and Heuer (2016), there are some aspects of cultural identity that individuals are more emotionally linked to, such as religious and spiritual dimension. Once the language learner finds a deep gap between his/her own religious ideology and that of the L2 culture, they tend to develop some biased attitudes towards all other aspects of that culture, including the language.

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