

L2 Anxiety, Proficiency, and L2 Willingness to Communicate in the Classroom, Outside the Classroom, and in Digital Setting: Insights from Ethiopian Preparatory Schools

Authors : Merih Welay Welesilassie, Marianne Nikolov

Abstract : Research into second and foreign language (L2) acquisitions has demonstrated that L2 anxiety, perceived proficiency, and L2 willingness to communicate (L2WTC) profoundly impact language learning outcomes. However, the complex interplay between these variables has yet to be fully explored, as these factors are dynamic and context-specific and can vary across different learners and learning environments. This study, therefore, utilized a cross-sectional quantitative survey research design to scrutinise the causal relationships between L2 anxiety, English proficiency, and L2WTC of 609 Ethiopian preparatory school students. The model for the L2WTC, both inside and outside the classroom, has been expanded to include an additional sub-scale known as the L2WTC in a digital setting. Moreover, in contrast to the commonly recognised debilitating-focused L2 anxiety, the construct of L2 anxiety has been divided into facilitative and debilitating anxiety. This method allows to measure not only the presence or absence of anxiety but also evaluate if anxiety helps or hinders the L2 learning experience. A self-assessment proficiency measure was also developed specifically for Ethiopian high school students. The study treated facilitative and debilitating anxiety as independent variables while considering self-assessed English proficiency and L2WTC in the classroom, outside the classroom, and in digital settings as dependent variables. Additionally, self-assessed English proficiency was used as an independent variable to predict L2WTC in these three settings. The proposed model, including these variables, was tested using structural equation modelling (SEM). According to the descriptive analysis, the mean scores of L2WTC in the three settings were generally low, ranging from 2.30 to 2.84. Debilitating anxiety casts a shadow on the positive aspects of anxiety. Self-assessed English proficiency was also too low. According to SEM, debilitating anxiety displayed a statistically significant negative impact on L2WTC inside the classroom, outside the classroom, in digital settings, and in self-assessed levels of English proficiency. In contrast, facilitative anxiety was found to positively contribute to L2WTC outside the classroom, in digital settings, and in self-assessed English proficiency. Self-assessed English proficiency made a statistically significant and positive contribution to L2WTC within the classroom, outside the classroom, and in digital contexts. L2WTC inside the classroom was found to positively contribute to L2WTC outside the classrooms and in digital contexts. The findings were systematically compared with existing studies, and the pedagogical implications, limitations, and potential avenues for future research were elucidated. The outcomes of the study have the potential to significantly contribute to the advancement of theoretical and empirical knowledge about improving English education, learning, and communication not only in Ethiopia but also in similar EFL contexts, thereby providing valuable insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers.

Keywords : debilitating anxiety, facilitative anxiety, L2 willingness to communicate, self-assessed English proficiency

Conference Title : ICALLLT 2025 : International Conference on Applied Linguistics, Language Learning and Teaching

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 24-25, 2025