

# GILE Journal of Skills Development

## The Role of Motivational Disposition in EFL University Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Hungarian Higher Education: A Pilot Questionnaire Study

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### Abstract

Globalization and the spread of English as a global lingua franca have shifted second language (L2) motivation research toward learners' self-concept and identity (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2011). The expansion of global connections has increased the need for English proficiency and for learners' readiness to use the language in academic and professional settings (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Although motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) have received considerable attention, little research has examined their relationship among Hungarian university students both inside and outside the classroom. To address this gap, a questionnaire was developed and piloted with 100 participants. The instrument is a composite of adapted and original items, as well as newly developed items derived from interview findings that preceded this questionnaire study. This paper outlines the instrument development process and aims to validate a questionnaire that measures EFL university students' motivational profiles and willingness to communicate in the Hungarian context, as well as to explore the relationship between these constructs. The results show that students' motivation is primarily associated with their Ideal L2 Self, attitudes towards the learning community, and travel orientation. Correlation analyses reveal a strong relationship between intrinsic motivation and motivated learning behaviour. Regression analyses identify Ideal L2 Self as a significant predictor of willingness to communicate, with a stronger effect outside the classroom. In the Hungarian EFL context, students reported high levels of confidence and motivation in both classroom and out-of-classroom settings; nevertheless, their WTC was even stronger outside the classroom. This pattern indicates that their engagement with English extends beyond formal instructional requirements. These findings are preliminary; however, the questionnaire shows potential for reliable measurement, while further research with larger samples remains necessary.

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language (EFL), Hungarian higher education, instrument validation; motivational disposition, pilot questionnaire study, willingness to communicate (WTC)

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## 1. Introduction

Motivation plays a central role in second and foreign language learning, as it influences learners' emotions, areas of interest, and personal goals, and it affects how much effort they are prepared to devote to learning a language (Richards, 2015). At the university level, motivation is particularly important because students are expected to take greater responsibility for their learning and to use the language in both academic and real-world contexts. For learners of English as a foreign language, motivation is also closely linked to willingness to communicate (WTC), which determines whether learners choose to use English when opportunities arise.

Within this broader research area, studies have examined various aspects of second language (L2) motivation across different educational contexts. However, research on the motivational disposition of EFL university students in Hungarian higher education remains limited, especially in the case of English majors. During the past fifteen years, only a small number of studies have focused on how motivation operates in this specific context. An additional gap concerns students whose university studies took place after the COVID-19 pandemic. This period brought major changes to higher education, as teaching moved largely to online platforms. These changes affected learning conditions in important ways and make it necessary to re-examine student motivation under current academic circumstances. A better understanding of post-COVID motivation could support the development of teaching practices and institutional policies that address present and future needs.

Second language motivation has often been examined through the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). However, its relationship with individual difference variables such as willingness to communicate has received less attention. Csizér (2020) points out that the impact of L2MSS components on WTC remains under-researched. Although a large body of international research exists on both L2 motivation and WTC, studies that examine their relationship among EFL university students in Hungary are rare. This lack of context-specific research highlights the need for further investigation into how motivation influences communicative behaviour in Hungarian higher education.

Against this background, the present study aims to examine the role of motivational disposition in EFL university students' WTC in English within the Hungarian higher education context. Through this aim, the study seeks to address gaps in applied linguistics and language pedagogy by offering a clearer account of motivation and communication at the university level. The study also seeks to contribute to the field by mapping students' motivational dispositions in the post-COVID period. This focus provides a basis for the development of teaching practices that respond more effectively to current learner needs in Hungary. Examination of the relationship between motivational disposition and WTC also allows closer analysis of which dimensions of L2 motivation exert the strongest influence on students' WTC.

The questionnaire in the present study is planned to be later used as part of a larger project that aims to complement the qualitative data collected previously. The broader purpose is to deepen the understanding of EFL university students' motivation to learn English and WTC in English in the context of Hungarian higher education. This pilot study had three aims. The first aim was to assess the reliability of the constructs that measure EFL university students' motivation and WTC in English. These constructs were partly adapted from previous questionnaires and partly developed by the researcher on the basis of previously collected interview data. The second aim

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was to establish the relative importance of these constructs so that the motivational disposition of EFL university students in Hungarian higher education could be described, together with their WTC inside and outside the classroom. The third aim was to examine the relationship between EFL university students' motivational disposition and their WTC. A quantitative questionnaire was considered the most suitable tool for identifying these relationships (Dörnyei, 2007).

Despite extensive research on motivation and WTC, few studies have examined how Hungarian university students' motivational dispositions relate to their WTC both inside and outside the classroom. This study fills a clear gap by providing a systematically piloted and context-specific questionnaire that examines the relationship between motivation and WTC among EFL university students in Hungarian higher education, an area that has received limited attention. The findings could benefit researchers by offering a validated instrument for a future large-scale study, and they may support teachers and curriculum designers by providing empirical insights into the motivational profiles and communicative readiness of university-level EFL learners.

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation plays a central role in L2 learning. Motivation, as described by Richards (2015), includes learners' feelings, interests, desires, and their willingness to put effort into learning an L2. Dörnyei (2005) states that motivation helps learners deal with difficulties that arise during the learning process. Motivation shapes learners' choices and behaviour, which then affects success or failure. Successful language learning requires enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence. Even highly talented learners may fail when motivation is insufficient. Learners with low motivation often encounter more obstacles than learners with higher motivation (Dörnyei, 2005). Motivated learners usually devote more time and energy to their studies, which increases their chances of academic achievement (Richards, 2015).

L2 motivation research reflects changes associated with globalisation and the global role of English, which have reshaped how motivation is conceptualised in L2 studies. These changes have shifted attention away from integration into a target language community toward learners' self-concept and identity (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2011). Recent L2 motivation research pays more attention to how learners imagine their future selves and how these self-images shape motivation and language development (Zhao et al., 2022). This perspective suggests that learners' future self-images strongly influence present effort and behaviour in L2 learning.

Increased global communication has also highlighted the importance of learners' readiness to use English. The expansion of global academic and professional networks has increased the need for English proficiency and learners' readiness to use the language in real communicative contexts (MacIntyre et al., 1998). MacIntyre et al. (1998) define willingness to communicate (WTC) as the readiness to initiate communication at a particular moment with specific interlocutors through a second language. This conceptualisation presents WTC as both a personal disposition and a situational response shaped by learner-related and contextual factors. WTC reflects learners' motivational readiness to engage in interaction and therefore functions as a key indicator of progress in L2 learning (Havwini, 2019; Yashima et al., 2018). Communicative competence remains a central goal in language education (Khajavy et al., 2016). Learners may still hesitate to communicate even when they possess adequate linguistic skills.

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A substantial body of work has examined different aspects of student motivation in Hungary (Bosnyák & Gáncs, 2012; Csizér & Kormos, 2008, 2009; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Kaw, 2024; Kaw & Kálmán, 2025; Kormos et al., 2008; Stamenkovska et al., 2022). The studies report generally positive attitudes toward English and show that Hungarian learners display both intrinsic and instrumental motives, especially motives linked to future careers. English continues to hold a central place in a globalized world, and external motives such as grade expectations and exam outcomes remain influential. Learners show a strong *International Posture* and that significant others shape their motivation in clear ways (Kaw, 2024; Kaw & Kálmán, 2025). Support from significant others, especially teachers, plays a central role. A strong international posture strengthens motivation because learners view English as a path to global communication. The findings of Csizér and Kormos (2008) align with those reported by Kaw (2024) and Kaw and Kálmán (2025), although they emphasise different aspects of motivational influence. Csizér and Kormos show that international posture is closely linked to learners' *Ideal L2 Self* and reflects an internalised future-oriented motivation rather than external pressure. Kaw (2024) and Kaw and Kálmán (2025) similarly report a strong international posture among learners, while also highlighting the shaping role of significant others in motivation.

Post-pandemic research also identifies differences between online and face-to-face learning contexts. Learners tend to prefer in-person classes because these settings provide interaction and a sense of connection. Learners continue to value online learning because it offers flexibility and functions as a complementary mode of instruction. Kaw and Kálmán (2025) show that the *Ideal L2 Self*, the *Ought-to L2 Self*, and the *L2 Learning Experience* continue to exert substantial influence on motivation. Learners pursue English for instrumental purposes such as career advancement and academic success, as well as for integrative purposes related to international interaction. Since motivation represents a key factor in long-term L2 achievement (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Lamb, 2017), awareness of these motivational patterns remains important for teachers who seek to adapt their practices to learners' changing needs.

Research on WTC portrays L2 communication as a complex and dynamic process. A wide range of studies describe L2 communication as influenced by linguistic, cultural, social, motivational, emotional, and pedagogical factors (MacIntyre, 2020). High WTC represents an essential condition for effective L2 development. For this reason, the promotion of WTC has become a central goal in language education (Kang, 2005; Kruk, 2022). Learners' WTC affects the quality and quantity of interaction, and this readiness emerges through both direct and indirect influences (Clément et al., 2003).

Previous research shows that WTC is influenced by a wide range of factors. Classroom atmosphere is repeatedly identified as a key influence, as supportive and positive learning environments encourage learners to use the target language more actively (Kaw, 2025; Khajavy et al., 2016; Peng, 2019). Language proficiency also plays an important role, since learners with higher proficiency levels tend to feel more confident about participating in communication (Chichon, 2019; Mahmoodi et al., 2021; Yashima et al., 2018). Perceived communicative competence further supports WTC, as learners who believe in their communicative ability are more inclined to speak (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Khajavy et al., 2016). Emotional factors add another important dimension. Enjoyment can increase learners' readiness to communicate, whereas boredom can limit participation (Alrabai, 2024; Bensalem et al., 2023, 2025; Kaw, 2025; Kruk, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). WTC is also affected by online learning conditions,

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preferences for digital interaction, and broader communicative contexts (Kaw, 2025). Research shows that students' WTC in online settings varies according to comfort levels, personal preferences, and situational demands (Kaw, 2025). In Hungarian higher education, communicative needs related to employment, travel, and everyday interaction contribute to higher WTC outside the classroom. Taken together, these findings show that WTC develops through the interaction of multiple interconnected influences.

Additional learner-related factors also contribute to WTC. Interlocutors play an important role, as learners respond differently depending on who they communicate with and how group dynamics operate (Chichon, 2019; Kaw, 2025; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Yashima et al., 2018). Peer interaction patterns can either encourage or inhibit participation. Personality traits also influence WTC, as some learners are naturally more inclined towards verbal interaction than others (Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Kaw, 2025; Lan et al., 2021). Topic familiarity and task characteristics affect communicative readiness, since familiar topics and clearly structured tasks reduce uncertainty (Chichon, 2019). Anxiety and self-confidence remain central factors in willingness to communicate. Higher levels of anxiety often limit learners' participation, whereas strong self-confidence supports more frequent and sustained communication (Clément et al., 2003; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Hejazi et al., 2023; Peng, 2014, 2015; Wei & Xu, 2022; Yashima, 2002).

Teacher-related factors exert a strong influence on students' WTC. Teachers shape WTC through their attitudes, behaviour, and pedagogical practices (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010; Peng, 2014). Research identifies teacher empathy and teaching style as factors that enhance learner confidence and reduce anxiety (Amiryousefi, 2018; Bui et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Kaw, 2025). Teacher involvement, expressed through warmth, approachability, and enthusiasm, promotes students' readiness to communicate (Kálmán, 2021, 2023; Lamb, 2017). Pedagogical practices such as adequate response time and interactive tasks support communicative confidence (Amiryousefi, 2018; Zarrinabadi, 2014). Teachers who demonstrate care, communicate clear expectations, and encourage learner autonomy strengthen students' sense of competence and intrinsic motivation, which enhances WTC (Delos Reyes & Torio, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Additional teacher-related influences include teacher support and teacher behaviour (Bui et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Hejazi et al., 2023; Khajavy et al., 2016; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zarrinabadi, 2014).

A strong relationship between motivation and WTC has been reported across a range of educational contexts (Alrabai, 2024; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Ghonsooly et al., 2012). Research grounded in the L2MSS shows consistent links between learners' motivational self-guides and their communicative readiness (Li & Liu, 2021; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Zhou, 2022). Among these components, the Ideal L2 Self emerges as the strongest and most consistent predictor of WTC (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022). By contrast, the Ought-to L2 Self shows weaker and less consistent associations with WTC, as external expectations alone appear to have a limited effect (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Peng, 2014; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024; Taguchi et al., 2009; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022). Learning experience also contributes to WTC, together with international posture, as positive classroom experiences and openness towards international communication support learners' readiness to use the language in both academic and real-world

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contexts (Li & Liu, 2021; Mahmoodi et al., 2021; Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pietrzykowska, 2011; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004).

Cross-context evidence further supports the central role of the Ideal L2 self. Studies conducted in Thailand and Turkey show that learners with a strong Ideal L2 Self demonstrate higher WTC (Öz & Bursalı, 2018). Research in Korea indicates that secondary school learners with stronger Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves report higher WTC both inside and outside the classroom, while university learners with a strong Ideal L2 Self demonstrate higher WTC across communication contexts (Lee & Lee, 2020). Studies in China also apply the L2MSS framework. Li and Liu (2021) report that Chinese university students with a strong Ideal L2 Self and positive learning experiences demonstrate higher WTC inside and outside the classroom. Their findings show no significant association between the Ought-to L2 Self and WTC.

Recent research extends this line of inquiry to additional contexts. Zhou (2022) reports positive relationships between all three components of the L2MSS and WTC, with learning experience showing the strongest association. Research in Iran highlights the role of international posture. Mahmoodi et al. (2021) report that high-proficiency male EFL learners demonstrate a significant positive relationship between international posture and WTC, while low-proficiency learners show no significant association. High-proficiency learners also report stronger international posture and higher WTC than low-proficiency learners.

### **3. Research Methods**

This section outlines the research design and details the procedures for data collection and analysis. It describes the participants, setting, and instrument, followed by the steps taken to generate and interpret the data. With a view to gaining insight into what motivates EFL university students to learn English and their WTC in English in Hungarian higher education, the aim of this study is 1) to develop and pilot a questionnaire with reliable constructs for this purpose, 2) to map EFL university students' motivational profile and their WTC in the Hungarian context, and 3) to investigate the relationship between EFL university students' motivation and their WTC in English. Based on the literature review and aligned with the aim of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ 1: How reliable are the constructs of the questionnaire for measuring EFL university students' motivation to learn English and their willingness to communicate in English?

RQ 2: What characterizes EFL university students' motivational disposition towards learning English as a foreign language and their willingness to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?

RQ 3: What correlations exist between EFL university students' motivational disposition towards learning English as a foreign language and their willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?

RQ 4: How does the motivational disposition of EFL university students towards learning English as a foreign language predict their willingness to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?

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### 3.1. Quantitative Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine EFL university students' motivation to learn English and their WTC in English inside and outside the classroom in Hungarian higher education. A quantitative approach was selected because quantitative inquiry is systematic, rigorous, and focused, and it relies on precise measurement to produce reliable and replicable data that can be generalised to similar contexts. Questionnaire-based data collection was chosen as an appropriate method because questionnaires are relatively easy to construct, highly versatile, and capable of gathering a large amount of information within a short period of time in a format that is readily suitable for statistical analysis. In addition, questionnaire items allow the systematic elicitation of information about respondents across clearly defined criteria (Dörnyei, 2007). To address the aims of the study, a questionnaire was developed and piloted to ensure its reliability and validity for the Hungarian university context.

### 3.2. Participants and Setting

This study involved BA- and MA-level EFL university students studying at different universities in Hungary. Participants were recruited through purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling, following Dörnyei's (2007) recommendations to ensure diverse perspectives and rich data. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms, which made participation convenient. In total, 100 students responded during the fall semester of 2024 over a four-week period: 73 females, 20 males, 3 non-binary participants, and 4 who preferred not to say. The average age of the sample was 21, with ages ranging from 18 to 28 and a standard deviation of 2.02.

### 3.3. The Instrument

To develop a reliable and valid measurement tool, the questionnaire instrument was developed with reference to Dörnyei's (2007) 5-step validation model. In the first step, an item pool was created with a wide range of possible items for each scale. Some items were adapted from previously validated questionnaires, and others were developed by the author based on insights from the literature review and from the themes that emerged in 21 interviews that had preceded that pilot study. Motivational disposition constructs 1 to 6, namely Motivated Learning Behaviour (MLB), Ideal L2 Self (ILS), Ought to L2 Self (OLS), Parental Encouragement or Family Influence (FI), Instrumentality (INST), and Intrinsic Motivation (IM), were adapted from the empirical study by Taguchi et al. (2009). Constructs 7 and 8, Attitude towards the L2 Community (ATT) and Travel Orientation (TRAVEL), were adapted from Ryan (2009). Construct 9, International Posture (IP), was adapted from Yashima (2009). Construct 10, Motivation to Learn English in Online versus In Person Classes, was newly developed on the basis of the interview findings. Construct 11, Teacher's Role in Motivation, was adapted from Kálmán (2015). With regard to willingness to communicate, the items measuring Willingness to Communicate in English Inside the Classroom (WTCIN) were adapted from Peng (2013), Ryan (2009), and Yashima (2009). In contrast, the items measuring Willingness to Communicate in English Outside the Classroom (WTCOUT) were self-constructed on the basis of the themes that emerged from the 21 interviews conducted prior to the pilot study.

Subsequently, for expert judgement and for checking the understanding level, three researchers (the supervisor and two PhD candidates, one from the same faculty and another from a different

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faculty) were asked to provide feedback and reduce the number of items (Step 2). Some modifications were made based on expert judgement and colleagues' feedback. After receiving their feedback, the pilot questionnaire was prepared in the way described below (Step 3).

When the final set and order of items were established, the online form was created. The final questionnaire contained 87 closed-ended items, each rated on a six-point Likert scale. For the motivational constructs, the scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), while for the WTC constructs it ranged from definitely willing to not willing. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) note that the Likert scale is a widely used instrument for measuring attitudes, typically employing five or six response options. Although five-point scales are common in research, this study adopted a six-point scale in order to avoid a neutral midpoint and to encourage more decisive responses. Previous research suggests that midpoint selection may reflect low cognitive effort (Krosnick, 1999; Krosnick et al., 2005).

The pilot instrument consisted of three parts. The first part included background questions related to the participants' age, gender, nationality, major, current academic level, year of study, university, age at which they began learning English, and English language proficiency. The second part measured factors related to the participants' motivational disposition, while the third part focused on students' WTC in English. Two open-ended questions followed the Likert-scale items in order to elicit further views on what participants considered motivating and what encouraged their WTC in English. The instrument covered eleven motivational disposition constructs (1 to 11) and two WTC criterion constructs (12 and 13), which were derived from the literature review and from themes identified in the preliminary interviews.

(1) *Motivated Learning Behaviour* (MLB) (six items): the degree of effort EFL university students are willing to devote to English study in order to reach a high level of proficiency.

Example: I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English (Item 43).

(2) *Ideal L2 Self* (ILS) (six items): the extent to which learners envision themselves as confident and proficient English users in the future.

Example: I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English (Item 44).

(3) *Ought-to L2 Self* (OLS) (six items): the degree to which learners feel motivated by external expectations and pressures that direct them toward successful English learning.

Example: Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English (Item 56).

(4) *Parental Encouragement/ Family Influence* (FI) (six items): the extent to which family members provide support, expectations, and encouragement for English learning.

Example: My parents encourage me to study English (Item 2).

(5) *Instrumentality* (INST) (six items): the degree to which students view English as a practical means to achieve future goals related to work, study, or life abroad.

Example: Studying English is important to me because I would like to spend a longer period living abroad (e.g., studying and working) (Item 47).

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(6) *Intrinsic Motivation (IM)* (six items): the extent to which students feel enjoyment, interest, and personal satisfaction during the process of learning English.

Example: I really enjoy learning English (Item 37).

(7) *Attitudes towards Learning Community (ATT)* (seven items): the degree to which learners hold positive interest and openness toward English-speaking people, cultures, and communities. Example: I would like to know more about people from English-speaking countries (Item 38).

(8) *Travel Orientation (TRAVEL)* (six items): the extent to which learners value English as a useful resource for travel-related communication and experiences abroad.

Example: Learning English is important to me because I use it when I am on holiday abroad (Item 50).

(9) *International Posture (IP)* (seven items): the degree of openness learners show toward international interactions, global involvement, and intercultural engagement.

Example: I want to participate in a volunteer activity to help foreigners living in the surrounding community (Item 40).

(10) *Motivation to Learn English in Online vs. In-person Classes (ONLINE)* (seven items): the extent to which learners experience stronger or weaker motivation depending on the learning mode of online or in-person instruction.

Example: In-person classes make the learning experience feel more real and personal (Item 69).

(11) *Teacher's Role in Motivation (TRM)* (seven items): the degree to which the teacher's behaviour, attitude, and classroom environment influence learners' motivation to study English.

Example: My English language teacher motivates me if he or she holds the lessons in a positive and supportive learning environment (Item 53).

(12) *Willingness to Communicate in English Inside the Classroom (WTCIN)* (eight items): the extent to which learners choose to initiate or participate in English communication during classroom activities.

Example: I am willing to volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class (Item 77).

(13) *Willingness to Communicate in English Outside the Classroom (WTCOUT)* (nine items): the extent to which learners choose to use English in real-life or informal situations beyond the classroom. Example: I am willing to use English when communicating with my international friends, both in person and through digital communication (Item 79).

### **3.4. Procedure and Data Analysis**

The questionnaire was developed in English. According to the self-reported English proficiency levels, fourteen students selected C2, sixty students selected C1, and the remaining twenty-six students selected B2 as their English proficiency level. These levels ensured that they understood the questionnaire without difficulty. Two lay people from Myanmar who were close to the target group completed the questionnaire to confirm that each item was understandable. In addition, another two members of the target population, who were learners of English, took

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part in a think-aloud protocol. They verbalised their thoughts as they completed the items to show how they interpreted each statement and to identify any problems that needed revision. Feedback from this stage led to the rewording of several problematic items before the final instrument was prepared.

The instrument was then piloted with EFL university students in the fall semester of 2024. Once the first 100 responses had been collected, the reliability analysis of the instrument began. All completed questionnaires were coded, and the results related to negatively worded items were reverse-coded. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27.0 was used for data analysis. To examine the internal consistency of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and McDonald's omega coefficient were calculated. To investigate the general motivational disposition of EFL learners and their WTC, descriptive statistics were computed. Correlation analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the motivational scales and between the motivational scales and the criterion measure, the WTC scale. Regression analyses were carried out to identify which motivational constructs function as predictor variables of students' WTC inside and outside the classroom.

### **3.5. Validating the Questionnaire**

After the data had been computer coded, the next stage of the validation process began. This stage corresponded to Step 4 of Dörnyei's (2007) model, which involves examining three key features of the responses. The first feature concerns missing responses and any signs that the instructions were misunderstood. The second feature concerns the response range of each item, because items that almost everyone agrees with, or almost everyone disagrees with, cannot be used effectively in statistical analyses. Statistical procedures require a certain amount of variation in scores. The third feature concerns the internal consistency of multi-item scales (Dörnyei, 2007).

Regarding the first aspect, the dataset contained no missing responses. This showed that the participants understood the questionnaire clearly, so no changes were required based on this criterion. Regarding the second aspect, some items, such as Item 1 ("If an English course was offered at university or somewhere else in the future, I would like to take it."), received the same response from all participants. Because these items did not produce variation, they could not be processed statistically and had to be removed from the final questionnaire. Keeping them would have weakened the internal reliability of the scales, which would have negatively influenced the third validity criterion, the internal consistency of multi-item scales.

To examine the internal reliability of the thirteen multi-item scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficients and McDonald's omega coefficients were calculated both before and after the adjustments described above. All scales showed acceptable values for both reliability indices prior to any modification. However, Step 5 of Dörnyei's (2007) validation process required post-hoc item analysis. This step led to the removal of the weakest item from each scale. After this refinement, the internal consistency of the scales improved further, as reflected in higher Cronbach's alpha and omega coefficient values (see Table 1).

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## 4. Results and Discussion

This section of the paper presents the results and discussion of the findings. The section is organized in accordance with the four research questions.

### 4.1. The Reliability of the Constructs in the Questionnaire

To answer RQ1 (How reliable is the questionnaire for measuring EFL university students' motivation to learn English and their willingness to communicate in English?), the internal consistency of the scales was examined in order to establish the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients were calculated for each scale as indicators of scale-level reliability. In addition, item-rest correlations and Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values were inspected to evaluate the contribution of individual items to their respective scales. A threshold value of 0.70 was considered acceptable for Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002). The results showed that all scales met or exceeded this threshold. Item-level diagnostics did not indicate any problematic items, as the removal of individual items did not result in a substantial improvement in reliability. Overall, the internal consistency of the scales was acceptable, and the questionnaire demonstrated satisfactory reliability across all constructs, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF THE SCALES

No.	Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (if item dropped)	McDonald's Omega (if item dropped)
1.	Motivated Learning Behaviour	6	.720	.746
2.	Ideal L2 Self	6	.818	.828
3.	Ought-to L2 Self	6	.782	.805
4.	Family Influence	6	.839	.843
5.	Instrumentality	6	.786	.798
6.	Intrinsic Motivation	6	.786	.804
7.	Attitudes towards Learning Community	7	.874	.879
8.	Travel Orientation	6	.729	.746
9.	International Posture	7	.779	.788
10.	Motivation to Learn English in Online Classes	7	.869	.887
11.	Teacher's Role in Motivation	7	.873	.876

12.	Willingness to Communicate in English Inside the Classroom	8	.932	.937
13.	Willingness to Communicate in English Outside the Classroom	9	.957	.959

Source: own compilation/ calculations

It is important to clarify that the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess whether the pilot data were suitable for factor analysis and to determine whether item reduction was warranted before proceeding to the larger-scale data collection. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.533, indicating marginal adequacy and limited shared variance among variables; thus, inter-item correlations were only just sufficient for reliable factor extraction. Consistent with this, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant,  $\chi^2(3741) = 8945.065$ ,  $p < .001$ , confirming that the correlation matrix departed from an identity matrix and that factor analysis was statistically permissible (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. KMO AND BARTLETT’S TEST

KMO and Bartlett’s Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.533
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	8945.065
	Df	3741
	Sig.	.000

Source: own compilation/ calculations

Given the relatively small pilot sample ( $n = 100$ ) in relation to the large number of items, sampling adequacy was constrained. As a result, any extracted factor solution would likely be unstable and sensitive to minor fluctuations in the data, which reduces the likelihood of replicability. Although these statistical prerequisites were met, the resulting factor structure was not sufficiently robust to justify item reduction at this stage. In light of the modest sample size and the unfavourable item-to-participant ratio, the methodological constraints outweighed any potential benefits of pruning the instrument on the basis of the pilot EFA.

Consequently, the EFA was treated as a preliminary diagnostic procedure rather than a basis for structural revision. The questionnaire nevertheless demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency across all scales. Therefore, the existing item set was retained, and the study intends to proceed to the main phase with a substantially larger and more diverse university sample, where a more stable and replicable factor structure could be expected. Overall, the current instrument shows promise as a tool for investigating motivation and willingness to communicate in Hungarian higher education and in comparable foreign language contexts, although further validation with larger samples remains essential for establishing stronger psychometric evidence.

#### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

To answer RQ2 (What characterizes EFL university students’ motivational disposition towards learning English as a foreign language and their willingness to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?) and to determine the relative importance of the constructs, descriptive statistics, mean values, and standard

deviations of the scales were calculated (see Table 3). The results showed that the mean values of all scales were close to the higher end of the Likert scale. *Ideal L2 Self*, *Attitudes towards learning community*, and *Travel orientation* produced the highest mean values at 5.31, 5.14, and 5.13. *Motivation to learn English in online classes*, *Ought-to L2 self*, and *Family influence* produced the lowest mean values at 2.52, 3.18, and 3.65 respectively. The prominence of the *Ideal L2 Self* corresponds closely with previous L2MSS research, which consistently identifies this construct as the strongest motivational component associated with willingness to communicate across contexts (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022).

TABLE 3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE SCALES

No.	Construct	Means	Standard Deviation
1.	Motivated Learning Behaviour	4.34	0.82
2.	Ideal L2 Self	5.31	0.76
3.	Ought-to L2 Self	3.18	1.00
4.	Family Influence	3.65	1.13
5.	Instrumentality	4.76	0.97
6.	Intrinsic Motivation	4.61	0.84
7.	Attitudes towards Learning Community	5.14	0.86
8.	Travel Orientation	5.13	0.73
9.	International Posture	4.34	0.94
10.	Motivation to Learn English in Online Classes	2.52	1.08
11.	Teacher's Role in Motivation	4.94	0.85
12.	Willingness to Communicate in English Inside the Classroom	4.85	1.09
13.	Willingness to Communicate in English Outside the Classroom	5.48	0.93

Source: own compilation/ calculations

The descriptive statistics show that students reported generally high levels of motivation across most constructs. *Ideal L2 Self* had a mean of 5.31 (SD = 0.76), indicating that students held strong visions of themselves as competent future English users. *Attitudes towards the Learning Community* (M = 5.14, SD = 0.86) and *Travel Orientation* (M = 5.13, SD = 0.73) also showed high values, suggesting positive feelings toward English-speaking communities as well as strong interest in travel and intercultural experience. This pattern aligns with earlier findings

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showing that learners with a strong Ideal L2 Self and high International Posture demonstrate greater willingness to communicate (Li & Liu, 2021; Yashima et al., 2004).

The teacher's role in motivation also showed a relatively high mean of 4.94 (SD = 0.85), indicating that students viewed the teacher as an important motivational factor. This finding aligns with studies by Kaw (2025), Kaw and Kálmán (2025), Kálmán (2021, 2023), and Lamb (2017). Intrinsic motivation (M = 4.61, SD = 0.84) and instrumentality (M = 4.76, SD = 0.97) further indicate that students found personal enjoyment in English learning and recognised its practical value for future goals. *Motivated Learning Behaviour* and *International Posture* both had means of 4.34, with SDs of 0.82 and 0.94 respectively, falling within the moderately high range. These values suggest that students maintained a stable willingness to invest effort and an openness toward global engagement.

Lower values appeared for constructs linked to external pressure or weaker personal preference. *Ought-to L2 Self* had a mean of 3.18 (SD = 1.00), reflecting a relatively weak role of external obligations in shaping learners' motivation. This is consistent with previous studies reporting that externally imposed motives are less stable and show weaker associations with willingness to communicate (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Peng, 2014; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Taguchi et al., 2009; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022). *Family Influence* showed a mean of 3.65 (SD = 1.13), again suggesting that external expectations played a smaller role in students' motivation. *Motivation to Learn English in Online Classes* had the lowest mean among all constructs (M = 2.52, SD = 1.08), indicating clear dissatisfaction with or low engagement in online English learning, consistent with Kaw's (2025) findings.

Willingness to communicate also showed strong results. *WTC inside the Classroom* had a mean of 4.85 (SD = 1.09), while *WTC outside the classroom* showed an even higher mean of 5.48 (SD = 0.93). These values indicate that students felt highly confident and motivated to use English in both contexts, with noticeably greater readiness to communicate outside the classroom. The overall WTC score had a mean of 5.18 with a standard deviation of 0.88, reflecting a strong general readiness among students to communicate in English.

### 4.3. Correlation Analyses

To answer RQ3 (What correlations exist between EFL university students' motivational disposition towards learning English as a foreign language and their willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?), correlation analyses were used to examine the correlations among the motivational scales and between the motivational scales and the criterion measure, the WTC scale.

In terms of correlations among the motivational scales, the analysis revealed several meaningful associations (see Table 4). The strongest correlation was observed between intrinsic motivation and motivated learning behaviour ( $r = .753$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This very strong positive relationship indicates that students who experience enjoyment, interest, and personal satisfaction in learning English tend to demonstrate higher levels of effort, persistence, and active engagement in their studies. This finding supports the central role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining motivated learning behaviour.

Another strong correlation appeared between attitudes towards the learning community and travel orientation ( $r = .726$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This association suggests that learners who hold positive

views of the English-speaking community also tend to express a stronger desire to travel and engage across cultural contexts. The third strongest correlation was found between international posture and instrumentality ( $r = .719, p < .001$ ). This strong relationship indicates that learners who adopt an outward-looking, internationally oriented stance towards English also perceive the language as highly valuable for practical purposes such as career development and global communication. Students who value the practical benefits of English also show a clear willingness to engage with global contexts. These associations reflect previous findings that position international posture and future-oriented goals as closely interconnected motivational dimensions within the L2MSS framework (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004).

TABLE 4. SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS ( $P < .001$ ) AMONG THE MOTIVATIONAL SCALES

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Motivated learning behaviour	1												
2.	Ideal L2 self	.525	-											
3.	Ought-to L2 self	.342	.291	-										
4.	Family influence	.454	.290	.601	-									
5.	Instrumentality	.388	.617	.404	.410	-								
6.	Intrinsic Motivation	.753*	.559	.201	.421	.510	-							
7.	Attitudes towards learning community	.487	.700	.294	.414	.520	.604	-						
8.	Travel orientation	.458	.671	.394	.419	.651	.512	.726*	-					
9.	International posture	.416	.556	.334	.382	.719*	.593	.685	.626	-				
10.	Motivation to learn English in online classes	.078	-.194	.265	.152	.027	-.051	.032	.092	.072	-			
11.	Teacher's role in motivation	.615	.657	.365	.404	.376	.559	.565	.556	.417	-.121	1		

12	WTCIN	.315	.469	.067	.280	.170	.359	.333	.366	.310	-	.404	1	
											.167			
13	WTCOUT	.396	.689	.107	.201	.434	.371	.581	.518	.324	-	.507	.538	1
											.191			

Source: own compilation/ calculations

With regards to the correlation between the motivational constructs and willingness to communicate inside the classroom (WTCIN), the strongest correlation is observed for the Ideal L2 Self ( $r = .469, p < .001$ ). This moderate positive relationship indicates that students who possess a well-developed future self-image as English users are more willing to speak English during classroom activities. A strong sense of future identity therefore appears to support classroom communication. Another moderate correlation is found between WTCIN and the teacher's role in motivation ( $r = .404, p < .001$ ). This result suggests that students who perceive their teachers as supportive, motivating, and encouraging show higher levels of willingness to communicate in class. Teacher-related factors therefore play a key role in shaping classroom interaction. A slightly weaker, but still moderate, correlation occurs between WTCIN and travel orientation ( $r = .366, p < .001$ ). This association indicates that learners who express a desire to travel and use English abroad are more willing to communicate in classroom settings, possibly because classroom interaction is perceived as preparation for future real-world use. These results (see Table 4) align with multiple studies which identify the Ideal L2 Self as a consistent correlate of classroom willingness to communicate (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022).

TABLE 5. SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS ( $p < .001$ ) BETWEEN THE MOTIVATIONAL SCALES AND THE CRITERION MEASURE SCALE (WTCIN)

		WTCIN
1.	Ideal L2 self	.469
2.	Teacher's role in motivation	.404
3.	Travel orientation	.366

Source: own compilation/ calculations

Regarding the correlation between the motivational constructs and willingness to communicate outside the classroom (WTCOUT), the strongest correlation is observed for the Ideal L2 Self ( $r = .689, p < .001$ ). This strong positive relationship highlights the central role of learners' future self-guides in encouraging the use of English beyond formal instructional contexts. The second strongest correlation is found between WTCOUT and attitudes towards the learning community ( $r = .581, p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that learners who hold positive views of the English-speaking community are more inclined to communicate in English in real-life situations, where interaction is less constrained by classroom structure. The third strongest correlation is observed between WTCOUT and travel orientation ( $r = .518, p < .001$ ). This relationship indicates that aspirations for travel and international mobility are strongly associated with learners' readiness to communicate in English outside the classroom. Learners

with higher travel orientation may view real-world English use as an extension of their personal mobility goals (see Table 5).

TABLE 6. SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS ( $p < .001$ ) BETWEEN THE MOTIVATIONAL SCALES AND THE CRITERION MEASURE SCALE (WTCOUT)

		WTCOUT
1.	Ideal L2 self	.689
2.	Attitudes towards learning community	.581
3.	Travel orientation	.518

Source: own compilation/ calculations

#### 4.4. Regression Analyses

In order to answer RQ4 (How does the motivational disposition of EFL university students towards learning English as a foreign language predict their willingness to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom in the context of Hungarian tertiary education?), that is, to identify which motivational constructs act as predictor scales of students' WTC inside and outside the classroom, linear regression analyses with an enter approach were carried out for the criterion variables of WTCIN and WTCOUT.

##### 4.4.1. Motivational Predictors of Willingness to Communicate Inside the Classroom (WTCIN)

With willingness to communicate inside the classroom (WTCIN) as the criterion variable, the overall regression model was statistically significant,  $F(11, 99) = 4.916$ ,  $p < .001$ , and it explained a meaningful proportion of variance in WTCIN, with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .303. This result shows that the set of motivational variables provides a substantive prediction of students' WTC in English during classroom activities.

The three strongest positive predictors of WTCIN are Ideal L2 Self ( $\beta = .542$ ), Family Influence ( $\beta = .322$ ), and International Posture ( $\beta = .314$ ). Ideal L2 Self emerged as the most influential positive predictor, which indicates that students with a well-developed future self-image as successful users of English are more willing to communicate in English inside the classroom. Family Influence represents the second strongest positive predictor, which suggests that family encouragement and support are associated with higher readiness to use English in instructional settings. International Posture appears as the third strongest positive predictor, which shows that openness towards international communication and global interaction relates to increased classroom communication once the effects of the other motivational variables are controlled.

In contrast, the two strongest negative predictors of WTCIN are Instrumentality ( $\beta = -.480$ ) and Attitudes towards the Learning Community ( $\beta = -.331$ ). Higher instrumentality, as it operates in this model, relates to lower willingness to communicate inside the classroom once the other motivational constructs are held constant. This implies that stronger goal-driven, outcome-focused reasons for learning English correspond to reduced in-class communication in the presence of the other predictors. Attitudes towards the learning community also show a negative unique association with WTCIN, which suggests that shared variance with other motivational constructs results in a negative contribution within the regression model.

Overall, these findings indicate that willingness to communicate inside the classroom is most strongly supported by a salient Ideal L2 Self, family support, and international orientation, whereas instrumentality and attitudes towards the learning community show negative unique associations with WTCIN once the influence of the other motivational variables is taken into account. The results are summarised in Table 7.

TABLE 7. RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVATIONAL SCALES WITH WTC INSIDE THE CLASSROOM AS THE CRITERION VARIABLE (SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL  $p < .01$ ),  $R^2 = .303$

Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Ideal L2 Self	.542	3.415	<.001
Family Influence	.322	2.733	.008
International Posture	.314	2.127	.036
Instrumentality	-.480	-3.256	.002
Attitudes towards the Learning Community	-.331	-2.091	.039

Source: own compilation/ calculations

#### 4.4.2. Motivational Predictors of Willingness to Communicate Outside the Classroom (WTCOUT)

With willingness to communicate outside the classroom (WTCOUT) as the criterion variable, the overall regression model was statistically significant,  $F(11, 99) = 10.549$ ,  $p < .001$ , and it explained a substantial proportion of variance in WTCOUT, with an adjusted  $R^2$  value of .515. This result shows that the set of motivational variables provides a strong explanation of students' willingness to use English beyond the classroom context.

The three strongest positive predictors of WTCOUT are Ideal L2 Self ( $\beta = .402$ ), Attitudes towards the Learning Community ( $\beta = .379$ ), and Instrumentality ( $\beta = .238$ ). Ideal L2 Self emerges as the most influential positive predictor, which indicates that students with a clearly developed future self-image as proficient users of English report higher WTC in real-life contexts outside the classroom. Attitudes towards the learning community represent the second strongest positive predictor, which suggests that favourable views of the English-speaking community relate to greater WTC in English beyond formal instructional settings. Instrumentality appears as the third strongest positive predictor, which shows that students who associate English with concrete academic or professional goals are more willing to use English in everyday and informal situations.

In contrast, the two strongest negative predictors of WTCOUT are International Posture ( $\beta = -.283$ ) and Intrinsic Motivation ( $\beta = -.213$ ). International Posture shows the strongest negative unique effect in the model, which indicates that, after controlling for the other motivational variables, a stronger international orientation relates to lower WTC outside the classroom. This result contrasts with studies that report a positive relationship between international posture and WTC (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kaw, 2024; Kaw & Kálmán, 2025; Li & Liu, 2021; Mahmoodi

et al., 2021; Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004), but corresponds with the findings reported by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pietrzykowska (2011).

Intrinsic Motivation also shows a negative unique association with WTCOUT, which suggests that enjoyment-based motivation does not lead to increased out-of-class communication once future-oriented and socially related motivational factors are taken into account. These negative associations most likely reflect shared variance among predictors, which influences the direction of their unique contributions within the regression model. The results are summarised in Table 8.

TABLE 8. RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVATIONAL SCALES WITH WTC OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM AS THE CRITERION VARIABLE (SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL  $p < .01$ ),  $R^2 = .515$

Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Ideal L2 Self	.402	3.036	.003
Attitudes towards the Learning Community	.379	2.870	.005
Instrumentality	.238	1.938	.056
International Posture	-.283	-2.303	.024
Intrinsic Motivation	-.213	-1.637	.105

Source: own compilation/ calculations

#### 4.4.3. Contextual Differences in Motivational Predictors of Willingness to Communicate Inside and Outside the Classroom

The two regression models differ notably, with the model predicting WTC outside the classroom explaining a substantially larger proportion of variance than the model predicting WTC inside the classroom. The model for WTCIN accounts for 30.3 per cent of the variance ( $R^2 = .303$ ), whereas the model for WTCOUT explains a substantially larger proportion of variance, at 51.5 per cent ( $R^2 = .515$ ). This difference indicates that motivational dispositions play a stronger role in explaining WTC outside the classroom than inside the classroom. Communication beyond instructional settings therefore appears to be more closely tied to students' motivational orientations.

Ideal L2 Self emerges as a strong positive predictor in both models, although its influence is stronger for WTCIN ( $\beta = .542$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than for WTCOUT ( $\beta = .402$ ,  $p = .003$ ). This pattern suggests that future self-guides are central to willingness to communicate in both contexts, but they are particularly influential in classroom settings, where learners may rely more heavily on imagined future identities to overcome situational constraints.

Attitudes towards the Learning Community show contrasting effects across the two contexts. In the WTCIN model, attitudes towards the learning community display a negative unique association ( $\beta = -.331$ ,  $p = .039$ ), whereas in the WTCOUT model they function as a strong positive predictor ( $\beta = .379$ ,  $p = .005$ ). This contrast suggests that positive attitudes towards the English-speaking community strongly support communication outside the classroom, where

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interaction aligns more directly with social and cultural engagement. Inside the classroom, however, the shared variance between attitudes and other motivational constructs results in a negative unique contribution once those overlapping influences are controlled.

International Posture also shows opposite effects across the two models. It positively predicts WTCIN ( $\beta = .314, p = .036$ ), but it negatively predicts WTCOUT ( $\beta = -.283, p = .024$ ). This finding indicates that an international orientation supports classroom communication, possibly because the classroom is perceived as a preparatory space for future international engagement. Outside the classroom, however, international posture shows a negative unique association once other motivational variables are controlled, which suggests overlap with stronger predictors such as Ideal L2 Self and attitudes towards the learning community.

Instrumentality demonstrates a further context-dependent pattern. In the WTCIN model, instrumentality shows a strong negative effect ( $\beta = -.480, p = .002$ ), whereas in the WTCOUT model it shows a positive but statistically non-significant effect ( $\beta = .238, p = .056$ ). This contrast suggests that outcome-focused motives may suppress classroom communication when other motivational orientations are taken into account, but they are more aligned with WTC outside the classroom, where English use directly serves practical and goal-related purposes.

The comparison shows that the same motivational constructs operate differently across classroom and out-of-class contexts. Classroom communication appears to be shaped more strongly by internal self-guides and social support, whereas communication outside the classroom aligns more closely with attitudes towards the English-speaking community and practical engagement with the language. The stronger explanatory power of the WTCOUT model further indicates that motivational factors are more directly connected to language use beyond formal instructional settings than within them.

The results show that Ideal L2 self explains 22 percent of the variance in students' WTC in English inside the classroom and 47.4 percent of the variance in their WTC outside the classroom. The effect of Ideal L2 self is therefore much stronger in out-of-class contexts ( $\beta = .689$ ) than in classroom settings ( $\beta = .469$ ). The high  $R^2$  value for WTC outside the classroom indicates that students' vision of themselves as successful English users is a powerful factor that encourages them to use English in real world situations. The  $R^2$  value for WTC inside the classroom also shows a meaningful level of explained variance, suggesting that students' image of their desired future English self influences their communication behaviour during lessons.

Overall, Ideal L2 self is a strong and significant predictor of WTC, with a moderate effect inside the classroom and a very strong effect outside the classroom. Students who hold a clear image of themselves as confident and proficient English users tend to communicate more in English, especially in authentic out-of-class contexts. This result aligns with previous studies (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wei & Xu, 2022; Zhou, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion, Implications and Future Research Directions

This study had three aims, and the results seem to show that all three aims were fulfilled. The first aim was to develop and pilot a questionnaire with reliable constructs to map EFL university students' motivational profiles and their willingness to communicate in the Hungarian higher education context. This aim was reached through a careful review of the literature and through

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the selection of relevant motivational and WTC dimensions. The pilot results suggest that the instrument shows acceptable internal consistency across all scales. To confirm the reliability and validity of the instrument more securely, future studies could include larger and more diverse groups of university students and examine the stability of each scale further.

The second aim was to describe the students' motivational dispositions and their willingness to communicate. The questionnaire included eleven constructs that helped outline the students' motivational profile. Ideal L2 Self, attitudes towards the learning community, and travel orientation appeared to be the strongest motivational dimensions, while motivation to learn English in online classes received the lowest scores. The WTC results suggest that students felt more ready to communicate in English outside the classroom than inside it.

The third aim was to examine the relationship between the motivational dimensions and students' willingness to communicate in English. Correlation and regression analyses suggest that Ideal L2 self plays a central role in students' communicative behaviour. Ideal L2 Self appeared as the only significant predictor of WTC both inside and outside the classroom, with a much stronger effect outside the classroom. These results might indicate that students who form clear images of themselves as future English users show greater readiness to use the language, especially in real-world settings.

The results seem to have useful pedagogical and institutional implications for EFL education in Hungarian higher education. The role of Ideal L2 Self in predicting WTC inside and especially outside the classroom seems to suggest that teachers and curriculum designers may benefit from placing more attention on learners' future self-images. Classroom practice may include guided vision building tasks, narrative activities, goal setting, and reflection on future language use in academic, professional, and personal contexts. These activities could help students form clearer ideas about themselves as future English users and might support their willingness to communicate.

The high means for attitudes towards the learning community and travel orientation suggest that students value a supportive classroom climate and often relate English to mobility and intercultural contact. Institutions and teachers could respond by creating classroom environments that encourage cooperation, peer support, and respectful interaction. Universities might also include more intercultural or international elements in the curriculum through virtual exchanges, guest speakers, short mobility programmes, or project work that brings students into contact with English speaking communities. These opportunities could help students feel that English offers access to wider communities.

The low scores for motivation to learn English in online classes seem to show continued dissatisfaction with online learning in this context. Programme leaders and instructional designers may need to reconsider the design of online components. More interactive tasks, clearer communication channels, and activities with meaningful communicative purposes could make online learning more engaging. A blended approach that uses the strengths of both face to face and online environments might support motivation more effectively.

The modest role of external pressure, such as ought-to L2 self and family influence, suggests that interventions may work better when they focus on internal goals rather than obligation. This could influence counselling, feedback, and assessment practices by encouraging more attention to personal growth, self-efficacy, and autonomy.

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Finally, the instrument developed and piloted in this study seems to show solid internal consistency. It may serve as a useful tool for researchers and practitioners who want to examine motivational profiles and WTC in Hungarian higher education or in similar contexts. The questionnaire may support needs analysis, programme evaluation, and studies that observe changes in motivation and WTC over time. In addition, the study could offer a modest contribution by providing empirical evidence from the Hungarian context, which remains underrepresented in the WTC literature. Its novelty may also lie in comparing students' willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom within this specific regional setting, a dimension that has received limited attention in previous research.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The pilot sample was relatively small compared to the number of questionnaire items, which reduces the statistical power of the analyses and limits the stability of the factor structure. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted cautiously until they can be validated with more robust, larger-scale samples. The study was also conducted within the specific context of Hungarian higher education, which is characterised by structural constraints such as large and heterogeneous student groups, uneven institutional support for language programmes, and limited opportunities for authentic English use on campus. These contextual factors may have influenced students' motivational patterns and willingness to communicate; therefore, the results may not fully generalise to other Hungarian institutions or different educational settings. Finally, the geographic scope of the literature reviewed presents a limitation. To better ground the study locally, the literature review should incorporate more studies specifically conducted within the Hungarian or Central and Eastern European context.

In terms of researcher reflexivity and positionality, the author acknowledges that the development of the original questionnaire items was shaped by personal interpretations of the preliminary interview data. Although efforts were made to stay close to participants' voices, the process necessarily involved subjective decisions about coding, item phrasing, and thematic categorisation. To minimise interpretive bias, the initial coding scheme and item pool were reviewed and refined collaboratively with the thesis supervisor, whose feedback helped provide critical distance and theoretical grounding. Expert judgement was also sought; the supervisor and additional academic peers reviewed early drafts of the items and recommended revisions to enhance conceptual clarity and cultural appropriateness. Two fellow PhD researchers independently co-coded portions of the interview data and compared interpretations, helping to identify ambiguities and increase the reliability of the thematic analysis. Despite these steps, the author recognises that the final set of items still reflects some degree of interpretive influence. Future research involving multiple coders, cross-institutional collaboration, or participatory item development could further strengthen the neutrality and validity of the instrument.

This study aimed to provide a clearer understanding of Hungarian EFL university students' motivation and WTC, and to offer insight into how these dimensions relate to one another. Although the findings seem informative, more research with larger samples would be needed to confirm the structure and predictive power of the questionnaire. Future work could include students from other institutions, follow up qualitative studies, and comparisons between different academic programmes or learner groups. Studies in other cultural and educational

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contexts could also help identify differences in motivational patterns, which may support the development of teaching practices that respond more effectively to students' needs.

Future research could focus on several areas. First, a larger and more diverse sample of university students could help confirm the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Data from different programmes, year groups, and institutions could show whether the constructs behave in a similar way across contexts. Second, future studies might examine changes in motivation and WTC over time. A longitudinal design could show how Ideal L2 Self, attitudes towards the learning community, and other constructs develop during students' university years, and whether these changes influence their communication behaviour. Third, qualitative follow up research could provide deeper insight into why certain constructs, such as Ideal L2 self or attitudes towards the learning community, show strong effects on WTC. Interviews or focus groups could help explain how students form future self-images and how classroom experiences shape their willingness to communicate.

Fourth, studies could explore differences across academic fields. English majors and non-English majors may hold different motivational beliefs and may show different levels of WTC. Comparing these groups could help identify programme specific needs. Fifth, research could examine the influence of teacher behaviour in more detail. Although teacher's role in motivation showed moderate correlations, classroom observations and teacher interviews could help clarify which behaviours support WTC most effectively. Sixth, the low scores related to online English learning suggest that further investigation could be useful. Future research might explore the specific features of online environments that reduce motivation and WTC, as well as possible solutions.

Finally, similar studies could be carried out in other national or cultural contexts. Comparisons across countries might show whether Hungarian students' motivational patterns and WTC tendencies align with or differ from those found elsewhere. Such research could support the development of teaching approaches that respond more accurately to students' needs in different educational settings.

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## Appendix

### The Pilot Questionnaire Constructs: EFL University Students' Motivation to Learn English and Their Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English

#### 1. Motivated Learning Behaviour (MLB) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items

MLB1. If my teacher gave the class an optional assignment, I would certainly volunteer to do it.

MLB2. I would like to study English even if I were not required to do so.

MLB3. I would like to concentrate on studying English more than any other topic.

MLB4. I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English.

MLB5. I am working hard at learning English.

MLB6. Compared to my classmates, I think I study English relatively hard.

#### 2. Ideal L2 Self (ILS) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items

ILS1. Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.

ILS2. I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues.

ILS3. I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.

ILS4. I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.

ILS5. I can imagine myself writing English e-mails/letters fluently.

ILS6. The things I want to do in the future require me to use English.

#### 3. Ought to L2 Self (OLS) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items

OLS1. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.

OLS2. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.

OLS3. I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.

OLS4. Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family/boss.

OLS5. Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.

OLS6. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.

#### 4. Parental Encouragement/ Family Influence (FI) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items

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FI1. My parents encourage me to study English.

FI2. My parents encourage me to take every opportunity to use my English (e.g., speaking and reading).

FI3. My parents encourage me to practise my English as much as possible.

FI4. My parents encourage me to attend extra English classes after class (e.g., at English conversation schools or private teachers).

FI5. My parents/family believe(s) that I must study English to be an educated person.

FI6. Studying English is important to me in order to bring honour to my family.

### **5. Instrumentality (INST) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items**

INST1. Studying English is important to me because English proficiency is necessary for promotion in the future.

INST2. Studying English is important to me because with English I can work globally.

INST3. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job and/or making money.

INST4. Studying English can be important to me because I think I'll need it for further studies.

INST5. Studying English is important to me because I would like to spend a longer period living abroad (e.g., studying and working).

INST6. Studying English is important to me because I am planning to study abroad.

### **6. Intrinsic Motivation (IM) (Taguchi et al., 2009), 6 items**

IM1. I like the atmosphere of my English classes.

IM2. I always look forward to English classes.

IM3. I find learning English really interesting.

IM4. I really enjoy learning English.

IM5. I think time passes faster while studying English.

IM6. I would like to have more English lessons at school.

### **7. Attitudes Towards Learning Community (ATT) (Ryan, 2009), 7 items**

ATT1. I like to travel to English-speaking countries.

ATT2. I like meeting people from English-speaking countries.

ATT3. I like the people who live in English-speaking countries.

ATT4. I would like to know more about people from English-speaking countries.

ATT5. I like films and the music of English-speaking countries.

ATT6. I like English magazines, newspapers, or books.

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ATT7. I like TV programmes made in English-speaking countries.

**8. Travel Orientation (TRAVEL) (Ryan, 2009), 6 items**

TRAVEL1. I like to travel to countries where I can use my English.

TRAVEL2. Studying English will be useful when I travel overseas.

TRAVEL3. Learning English is important to me because I would like to visit countries where I can use my English.

TRAVEL4. Learning English is important to me because I would like to travel internationally.

TRAVEL5. Learning English is important to me because I use it when I am on holiday abroad.

TRAVEL6. Learning English is important to me because when planning a trip, the availability of English-speaking services influences my choice of accommodation and activities.

**9. International Posture (IP) (Yashima, 2009), 7 items**

IP1. I want to make friends with international students or employees in Hungary.

IP2. I try to talk with foreigners if I can.

IP3. I wouldn't mind sharing an apartment or room with an international student.

IP4. I want to participate in a volunteer activity to help foreigners living in the surrounding community.

IP5. I want to work in a foreign country.

IP6. I'd rather choose the kind of work that sends me overseas frequently.

IP7. I often read and watch news about foreign countries.

**10. Motivation to Learn English in Online vs. In-Person Classes (ONLINE) (Self-constructed based on interview findings), 7 items**

ONLINE1. I feel more motivated to learn English when I am in online classes.

ONLINE2. I find it hard to stay focused on English lessons when I am in online classes.

ONLINE3. Online English classes are more engaging and versatile.

ONLINE4. I like online English classes more than in-person classes.

ONLINE5. Online classes are more fun and effective than in-person classes.

ONLINE6. The convenience of accessing online English classes from any location positively influences my commitment to learning.

ONLINE7. In-person classes make the learning experience feel more real and personal.

**11. Teacher's Role in Motivation (TRM) (Kálmán 2015), 7 items**

TRM1. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she is empathetic.

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TRM2. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she takes my personality into account.

TRM3. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she speaks about his or her personal stories and experiences.

TRM4. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she knows my strengths and weaknesses.

TRM5. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she holds the lessons in a positive and supportive learning environment.

TRM6. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she trains himself or herself regularly.

TRM7. My English language teacher motivates me if he or she tailors the tasks to learner's needs.

### **12. Willingness to Communicate Inside the Classroom (WTCIN) (Peng, 2013; Ryan, 2009; Yashima, 2009), 8 items**

WTCIN1. I am willing to talk freely in an English class when I am given a chance.

WTCIN2. I am willing to talk in front of the class in an English class if I am given a chance.

WTCIN3. I am willing to have a group discussion in an English class.

WTCIN4. I am willing to make a presentation in front of the whole class when I have a chance.

WTCIN5. I am willing to join a discussion in my English class.

WTCIN6. I am willing to volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class.

WTCIN7. I am willing to ask questions if I don't understand something in class.

WTCIN8. I am willing to express my own opinions in class.

### **13. Willingness to Communicate Outside the Classroom (WTCOUT) (Self-constructed based on interview findings), 9 items**

WTCOUT1. I am willing to use English when communicating with my international friends, both in person and through digital communication.

WTCOUT2. I am willing to switch to English when meeting people who do not speak my native language, to facilitate better communication.

WTCOUT3. I am willing to use English for online communication, including writing comments, making posts on social media platforms, and participating in text-based interactions.

WTCOUT4. I am willing to engage in conversations with people encountered abroad in foreign countries in English.

WTCOUT5. I am willing to use English during social activities and conversations with others, especially when interacting with international people.

WTCOUT6. I am willing to interact with online friends in English.

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WTCOUT7. I am willing to respond in English when someone addresses me in situations where English may be more comfortable for effective communication.

WTCOUT8. I am willing to use English at university, especially when interacting with foreign students.

WTCOUT9. I am willing to use English when socialising with international friends outside the classroom.

## **Declaration Statements**

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author reports no conflict of interest.

### **Funding**

The author received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

### **Data Availability**

No dataset is associated with this article. *OR* Data supporting the conclusions of this study can be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

### **AI Use**

AI tools (ChatGPT, OpenAI) were used only for refinement. No AI system was used to generate original scientific claims, data, or interpretations, which remain entirely those of the author.

### **Ethics Statement**

For studies involving human participants, the authors confirm that the research complied with relevant institutional and national ethical standards. Ethical approval was obtained where required, and informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection. If ethical approval was not required, the authors confirm that the study adhered to applicable ethical guidelines.

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