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Situational Self-Esteem and Willingness to Communicate and Their Relationship with Sociolinguistic Competence

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ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistic competence matters because learners may be willing to communicate yet struggle to select language appropriate to the interlocutor, setting, relationship, and formality level. Although situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate have drawn considerable attention in second and foreign language research, their association with sociolinguistic competence remains empirically underexplored. Examining these constructs together matters because confidence and readiness to engage may shape opportunities for interaction, yet neither guarantees appropriate communication in culturally and socially defined situations. Addressing this gap, this study investigated relationships among situational self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and sociolinguistic competence among 64 undergraduate English Language majors at the University of Zanjan. Questionnaires measured the three constructs, and Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficients examined their associations. Findings revealed no statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables and learners' perceived sociolinguistic competence, challenging the assumption that increasing confidence or willingness to communicate alone yields greater sociolinguistic competence. Language programs should move beyond affective interventions and provide systematic opportunities for context-sensitive language use through authentic interaction, explicit sociolinguistic instruction, role-play, and culturally grounded tasks. Individual differences must be recognized, and the assumption that confident, willing communicators are automatically socially and linguistically appropriate speakers must be avoided.

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1. Introduction

Effective communication extends beyond the mastery of grammatical structures and lexical knowledge. Successful communication requires learners to recognize the social meanings attached to linguistic choices and to modify their communication according to the demands of particular interpersonal and contextual situations. Hymes (1972) conceptualized communicative competence as the knowledge and ability required to use language appropriately within particular social and cultural contexts. From this perspective, language competence encompasses more than grammatical knowledge; it also involves understanding whether an utterance is possible, feasible, appropriate, and acceptable in a given communicative situation. Thus, a communicatively competent language user is able to adapt linguistic choices to factors such as the participants, setting, topic, purpose, and social relationship between interlocutors.

Canale and Swain (1980) conceptualized communicative competence into four subcategories, including grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Sociolinguistic competence is particularly consequential in second and foreign language contexts because learners may produce grammatically accurate utterances while failing to convey an appropriate degree of politeness, formality, directness, or interpersonal distance. The current study focused on sociolinguistic competence, which refers to learners' ability to recognize, interpret, and employ linguistic forms in accordance with the social and contextual conditions in which communication occurs. It encompasses knowledge of how linguistic choices are associated with factors such as the interlocutor, social relationship, communicative setting, purpose, and degree of formality, as well as an awareness of the social meanings conveyed by different linguistic variants (Pflaeging & Schleef, 2026; Regan & Kennedy Terry, 2025; Rehner & Lasan, 2023; Wirtz, 2024).

Alongside linguistic and sociocultural dimensions, psychological variables, especially affective variables, constitute an important dimension of foreign language learning, exerting a considerable influence on learners' L2 acquisition and subsequent development that may surpass the contribution of other factors. (Bao & Liu, 2021). One of the essential subcategories of affective factors is self-esteem. Wills-Herrera (2023) defined self-esteem as the evaluative dimension of self-concept, reflecting an individual's overall perception of the self as worthy or unworthy. Brown (2020) reported that self-esteem has been conceptualized from both unidimensional and multidimensional perspectives: the former emphasizes an overall evaluation of one's worth, whereas the latter recognizes that self-evaluations may differ across particular domains and circumstances. Contemporary accounts also distinguish relatively stable forms of self-esteem from more transient and context-dependent forms, highlighting the possibility that an individual's self-evaluation may change according to situational demands.

In the context of second-language acquisition, self-esteem is particularly relevant because learners continually evaluate themselves while functioning through a language that may not be their primary means of expression. Thus, self-esteem can influence how learners perceive their own capabilities, how they respond to communicative challenges, and how readily they engage in language-learning activities. In the literature, self-esteem has been divided into three categories, including Global self-esteem, situational self-esteem, and task-based self-esteem (Brown, 1941). The current study focused on situational self-esteem, which refers to an individual's evaluation of his or her own worth, adequacy, or capability within a particular context or domain. Unlike global self-

esteem, which reflects a relatively broad assessment of the self, situational self-esteem is more context-dependent and may fluctuate in response to the characteristics and demands of a specific environment. In foreign language learning, it can therefore be understood as learners' perceptions of themselves within the particular context of L2 learning and communication. Such evaluations may differ across situations depending on learners' experiences, perceived demands, and interactions with others (Burger & Mortimer, 2024).

Willingness to communicate (WTC), another essential subcategory of affective factors, is the focus of the current study. Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to a learner's readiness and inclination to initiate or participate in communication in the target language when an opportunity to interact is available. Learners' decisions to engage in L2 communication can be influenced by a combination of personal, interpersonal, and situational conditions, including perceived communicative competence, confidence, relationships with interlocutors, the characteristics of the task, and the immediate learning environment (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024; Peng, 2025). Thus, WTC represents more than a general desire to speak the target language; it concerns the learner's actual readiness to make use of an available opportunity for L2 interaction. Recent research consequently considers WTC an important antecedent of L2 communicative behavior because learners who demonstrate greater willingness are more likely to take advantage of opportunities to use the target language (Leeming et al., 2024). Although WTC has received extensive attention in second and foreign language research, its relationship with other dimensions of communicative competence warrants further examination. In particular, being willing to communicate does not necessarily mean that a learner can communicate appropriately across different social circumstances. Effective interaction requires not only the readiness to speak but also an understanding of how linguistic choices should be adapted to interlocutors, relationships, purposes, settings, and degrees of formality. This consideration establishes a meaningful connection between WTC and sociolinguistic competence. Investigating these constructs together may consequently help clarify whether learners' readiness to participate in L2 communication is associated with their perceived ability to use language appropriately in varying social and contextual situations.

In line with the objectives of the present study, several research questions were formulated to guide the investigation:

Research Question 1: What is the direction and magnitude of the relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence among undergraduate students majoring in English Language?

Research Question 2: What is the nature and magnitude of the relationship between willingness to communicate and sociolinguistic competence among undergraduate students majoring in English Language?

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in the relative strength of the relationships that situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate demonstrate with students' sociolinguistic competence?

According to the research questions, there are some null hypotheses:

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence among undergraduate students majoring in English Language.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant relationship between willingness to communicate and sociolinguistic competence among undergraduate students majoring in English Language.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant difference between the strength of the relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence and the strength of the relationship between willingness to communicate and sociolinguistic competence among undergraduate students majoring in English Language.

2. Review of Literature

The development of communicative competence in a second or foreign language is influenced by both learners' linguistic resources and the psychological conditions under which language use takes place. Among the affective variables that may shape learners' engagement with an additional language, self-esteem is particularly relevant because it concerns how individuals evaluate their own worth, adequacy, and capabilities. In language-learning contexts, these evaluations are not necessarily uniform across situations. A learner may feel competent and confident in one communicative circumstance while experiencing uncertainty or negative self-evaluation in another. This context-sensitive dimension of self-evaluation is especially pertinent to foreign-language communication, where learners are required to perform through a linguistic system that may not yet be fully established. The following section reviews the related studies on situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence.

2-1. Situational Self-Esteem and Sociolinguistic Competence

Harris and Orth (2020) examined the association between self-esteem and the quality of individuals' social relationships. Their findings indicated a positive and reciprocal relationship between the two constructs, suggesting that higher levels of self-esteem are associated with more favorable social relationships, while positive social interactions may, in turn, contribute to the development and maintenance of self-esteem. Satriani (2019) reported a strong positive association between learners' self-esteem and their level of oral proficiency, indicating that students with higher self-esteem tended to demonstrate greater competence in spoken language. Dadulla (2023) examined the relationship between learners' self-esteem and their verbal abilities in a second-language context. The findings revealed only a weak correlation between the two variables, suggesting that students' levels of self-esteem were associated with their L2 oral performance to a limited extent.

Enting et al. (2025) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and social interactions in everyday life using an experience-sampling design. The study examined how momentary changes in self-esteem were associated with individuals' anticipated and experienced social interactions. The findings provide further evidence that self-esteem is closely connected to individuals' social experiences, highlighting the importance of self-evaluations in understanding interpersonal functioning.

Mirzaei (2019) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and politeness in Persian request interactions, with particular attention to the effects of social power and interpersonal distance on participants' linguistic choices. The study examined whether individual characteristics, including self-esteem, were associated with the way speakers formulated their requests. The findings provide relevant evidence that self-esteem can be considered alongside social and contextual factors when examining the appropriateness of language use in interpersonal communication.

Muzayyanah et al. (2025) focused on learners' ability to employ politeness strategies and produce responses that were appropriate to particular communicative contexts. The findings indicated that students demonstrating higher levels of pragmatic competence tended to report greater self-esteem. These findings suggest that the ability to use language appropriately in social and communicative situations may be associated with learners' positive perceptions of themselves as language users.

While situational self-esteem concerns how learners perceive themselves within particular circumstances, willingness to communicate (WTC) concerns their readiness to make use of opportunities for target-language interaction. WTC has become a central construct in L2 research because linguistic knowledge alone does not guarantee that learners will actually use the language when opportunities arise. Recent scholarship conceptualizes L2 WTC as a learner's readiness or inclination to engage in communication when an opportunity is available and emphasizes its dynamic and context-sensitive nature (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024; Peng, 2025). Accordingly, WTC provides an important link between what learners know about the target language and their actual engagement in communicative activity. The following section reviews the related studies on WTC and sociolinguistic competence.

2.2. Willingness to Communicate and Sociolinguistic Competence

Leeming et al. (2024) examined the contribution of WTC to actual L2 spoken production among university students in Japan. The participants completed measures of WTC, speaking self-efficacy, and perceived communicative competence and subsequently participated in an eight-minute group discussion. Unlike studies relying exclusively on self-reported language performance, this study included an objective behavioral measure based on the amount of language produced during the discussion. The researchers found that the effects of speaking self-efficacy and perceived communicative competence on spoken L2 production were fully mediated by WTC. In other words, learners' confidence in their speaking ability was associated with greater spoken production largely through their willingness to communicate. Although this study did not directly assess sociolinguistic competence, it is important for understanding how WTC can facilitate opportunities for actual language use, which may provide learners with greater opportunities to encounter and practice contextually appropriate communication.

Burhanuddin (2023) investigated the role of sociolinguistic competence in EFL learners' communicative engagement. The study involved Indonesian EFL learners by incorporating scenario-based measures of sociolinguistic competence and learners' written responses. The findings indicated a moderate positive relationship between sociolinguistic competence and communicative engagement. Wang and Ren (2025) found a significant relationship between WTC and the perception of sociopragmatic inappropriateness but not pragmatic comprehension, while Lv et al. (2021) likewise reported limited relationships between WTC and some aspects of pragmatic competence.

The limited number of studies directly connecting these two constructs also provides a rationale for further investigation. In particular, research involving university-level EFL learners in contexts such as Iran can contribute to the existing literature by examining whether learners' willingness to communicate is significantly associated with their perceived sociolinguistic competence. Such research may help clarify whether a greater readiness to participate in L2 communication is accompanied

by greater awareness or perceived ability to use language appropriately across different social situations.

Engaging successfully in authentic communication beyond the classroom, particularly in interactions with native speakers, can be challenging for many language learners. A further difficulty concerns the ability to select linguistically and socially appropriate forms of expression according to the communicative situation, the relationship between interlocutors, and their relative social status. Given the reported challenges associated with the development of sociolinguistic competence among EFL learners, the present study sought to examine its relationship with two affective variables, namely situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate (WTC). Establishing an association between sociolinguistic competence and these factors could provide a basis for considering affective dimensions in efforts to support learners' sociolinguistic development. In particular, greater attention to learners' situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate may contribute to creating more favorable conditions for engaging in socially and contextually appropriate L2 communication.

MacIntyre and Ayers-Glassey (2020) noted that relatively limited research has examined the range of factors associated with willingness to communicate (WTC) in ways that may contribute to learners' effective and satisfying communicative experiences. Building on this gap, the present study aims to broaden the understanding of students' sociolinguistic competence by investigating its associations with two affective variables: situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate. Although self-esteem has received considerable attention in previous research, many studies have examined it as a general construct without distinguishing among its different dimensions. In particular, comparatively little empirical research has focused specifically on situational self-esteem, highlighting the need for further investigation of this context-dependent aspect of learners' self-perceptions.

In response to these considerations, the present study investigated the extent to which situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate are related to learners' sociolinguistic competence.

3. Methods

3-1. Research Design

Given that the present study seeks to examine students' sociolinguistic competence in relation to their situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate (WTC), a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design was adopted. The study focused on identifying the degree of correlation among the selected variables. Situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate served as the predictor variables, whereas sociolinguistic competence constituted the criterion variable. This design enabled the researchers to determine whether and to what extent students' psychological dispositions toward communication were related to their ability to use language appropriately in different social and contextual situations.

3-2. Participants

The study involved a sample of 64 undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Zanjan. The participants were recruited from the fields of English Language Translation and English Language and Literature. Given their academic background in English, the participants possessed sufficient reading proficiency to comprehend and complete the research instruments, which were administered in English. The participants ranged in

age from 18 to 25 years. Of the total sample, 37 students were female, and 27 were male. The participants' academic background and familiarity with English enabled them to respond to the questionnaires without requiring translation or additional linguistic support.

3-3. Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through three five-point Likert-scale questionnaires administered to the participants. The instruments were designed to assess the three main constructs of the study: willingness to communicate (WTC), situational self-esteem, and sociolinguistic competence. Each questionnaire employed a numerical response scale ranging from 1 to 5, with the values serving as the coding scheme for participants' responses.

3-3-1. Situational Self-esteem Questionnaire

Batula et al. (2012) developed an educational self-esteem questionnaire consisting of nine items, with responses originally rated on a four-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Always." The questionnaire developed by Batula et al. (2012) was originally designed to assess students' self-esteem and learning motivation within science and engineering disciplines. Since the current investigation focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the original instrument was adapted to reflect the linguistic and communicative context of EFL learners.

The revised version focused on students' self-esteem and motivation when engaging in communication in English. To establish the content validity of the adapted instrument, it was reviewed by English language professors at the University of Zanjan. The questionnaire demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .86, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency. In addition, the original response options were modified by incorporating a fifth category, "Rarely," alongside the existing choices. Consequently, the final instrument was structured as a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Response options were numerically coded from 1 to 5 to facilitate the measurement and interpretation of participants' levels of situational self-esteem.

3-3-2. Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Assessment Instrument

The willingness to communicate (WTC) instrument developed by Gol et al. (2014) was employed as one of the primary data collection measures in the present study. The questionnaire comprises 28 items designed to assess students' inclination and readiness to engage in oral communication during classroom activities. The instrument adopts a five-point Likert-scale format, allowing participants to indicate the extent of their willingness to communicate. To establish its content validity for the current study, the questionnaire was evaluated by English language professors at the University of Zanjan. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76, demonstrating an acceptable level of internal consistency. Participants' WTC levels were determined based on their responses to the five-point scale, with response categories numerically coded from 1 to 5 for data analysis.

3-3-3. Sociolinguistic Competence Questionnaire

The sociolinguistic competence questionnaire developed by Koran (2016) served as the principal instrument for assessing sociolinguistic competence in the present study. The

original instrument was designed to evaluate learners' performance in aural tasks and, based on their responses, determine their level of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. The questionnaire consists of 10 items presented in a five-point Likert-scale format. For the purposes of the current study, the instrument was reviewed and validated by English language professors at the University of Zanjan to ensure its suitability for the target population and research context. The reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. Participants' levels of sociolinguistic competence were determined according to their responses on the five-point scale, with the response categories coded numerically from 1 to 5 for subsequent statistical analysis. This instrument assessed learners' perceived sociolinguistic competence rather than their objectively demonstrated abilities.

3-4. Data Collection Procedure

The data for the present study were obtained from undergraduate students majoring in English at the University of Zanjan through a structured questionnaire-based data collection procedure. To facilitate access to participants and increase the potential reach of the study, an online administration strategy was initially adopted. The questionnaire was distributed electronically through established student communication channels, particularly WhatsApp and Telegram groups associated with undergraduate English students. Participation was voluntary, and students were provided with sufficient information about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire.

Because the initial online recruitment resulted in a relatively modest number of usable responses, the data collection strategy was subsequently extended to include in-person administration. With the permission and cooperation of the relevant instructors, printed copies of the questionnaire were distributed to eligible students during class sessions. Additional copies were also made available to undergraduate English students in appropriate locations on the university campus. Employing both online and face-to-face modes of administration was intended to broaden participant coverage and reduce the likelihood that reliance on a single recruitment channel would unduly restrict the sample. Questionnaires were collected only from students who met the predetermined eligibility criteria, and incomplete responses were excluded from the final dataset.

Importantly, the measure of sociolinguistic competence employed in the present study was designed to capture learners' perceptions of their own sociolinguistic competence, rather than to provide a direct performance-based assessment of their actual ability. This distinction is particularly relevant because self-assessment constitutes a subjective source of evidence and does not necessarily correspond perfectly with externally assessed language performance. Nevertheless, self-assessment can provide meaningful information when the research focus concerns learners' perceptions of their own abilities. Recent research has demonstrated that self-assessment can be a viable approach to assessing aspects of L2 competence when appropriate descriptors and validation procedures are employed (Peng, 2025; Winke et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the use of self-reported sociolinguistic competence in the present investigation was consistent with the study's emphasis on learners' perceived ability to recognize and use language appropriately across different social and contextual situations. The questionnaire items were therefore treated as indicators of perceived sociolinguistic competence, rather than as substitutes for an objective performance assessment. This methodological distinction is important when interpreting the findings,

as the obtained scores reflect participants' self-perceptions and may be influenced by factors such as self-awareness, confidence, or individual differences in self-evaluation. Thus, the results concerning sociolinguistic competence should be interpreted as evidence of learners' perceived competence within the specified social and communicative contexts, rather than as definitive evidence of their objectively demonstrated sociolinguistic performance.

3-5. Data Analysis

Following the completion of data collection, the responses obtained from the three questionnaires were systematically coded and converted into numerical scores for statistical analysis. The study utilized three instruments measuring willingness to communicate (WTC), situational self-esteem (SSE), and sociolinguistic competence (SC), respectively. All three instruments employed five-point Likert-type response scales. Each response category was assigned a numerical value from 1 to 5 in accordance with the scoring instructions of the respective instrument. The resulting WTC, SSE, and SC scores constituted the variables entered into the subsequent statistical analyses.

The coded data were subsequently entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Preliminary examination of the dataset was undertaken to assess the distributional characteristics of the three variables and to determine whether the assumptions underlying the planned correlational analysis were reasonably satisfied. In particular, the normality of the scores distribution was examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The results of this preliminary assessment were used to determine the appropriateness of applying a parametric correlation procedure.

After the preliminary screening and assumption checks, Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the associations among the study variables. Pearson's r was selected because the purpose of the analysis was to determine the direction and magnitude of the linear relationships between the continuous composite scores obtained for WTC, SSE, and SC. Specifically, the first correlational analysis examined the relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence, whereas the second examined the association between willingness to communicate and sociolinguistic competence. For each analysis, the correlation coefficient, direction and strength of the association, and corresponding significance level were considered in evaluating the research questions. Statistical significance was assessed using an alpha level of .05.

The third research question concerned the relative relationship of situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate with sociolinguistic competence. Because the first two research questions were addressed through separate bivariate correlation analyses, the third question was examined by comparing the magnitudes of the Pearson correlation coefficients obtained for SSE–SC and WTC–SC. Thus, the interpretation of the third research question was based on the relative strength of the two observed associations rather than on the application of an additional inferential statistical procedure. In other words, the variable yielding the larger absolute Pearson correlation coefficient with sociolinguistic competence was interpreted as showing the stronger observed relationship with SC within the present sample. This comparative interpretation was made with reference to the statistical significance and magnitude of the respective correlation coefficients.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. In reporting the findings, the correlation coefficients were interpreted in terms of both their direction and magnitude rather than statistical significance alone, since the size of an observed association provides information about the strength of the relationship between variables. Where appropriate, descriptive statistics and inferential results were reported to provide a transparent account of the analytical process and to facilitate interpretation of the findings.

4. Results

The present investigation was designed to explore two potential associations: the link between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence, and the relationship between willingness to communicate and sociolinguistic competence. Prior to conducting the correlational analyses, their assumptions were checked.

To examine normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was performed using SPSS. The results of this preliminary analysis were subsequently used to determine the appropriateness of applying parametric statistical procedures to examine the relationships among the study variables.

Table 1

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality of the Variables

Variables	Number	Test	Significance Level
Situational Self- esteem	20	.145	.200
Willingness to Communicate	20	.131	.200
Sociolinguistic Competence	20	.145	.200

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the data satisfied the assumption of normality. Specifically, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test did not indicate a statistically significant departure from normality. On this basis, the assumption of normality was considered to have been met. Consequently, a parametric correlation procedure, namely Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient, was considered appropriate for examining the associations among the study variables.

Prior to running Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient, some assumptions, including linearity, homoscedasticity, univariate outliers, and bivariate outliers, were examined. The boxplot indicated two potential univariate outliers in the situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate variables. The corresponding scores were examined and found to be valid observations; therefore, they were retained for subsequent analysis. In the sociolinguistic competence variable, there were no univariate outliers. A scatter plot was examined for bivariate outliers, linearity, and homoscedasticity. No severe bivariate outliers were identified. The dispersion of the scores for both independent variables appeared reasonably consistent across the range of the variables. The scatterplot of both independent variables showed no clear linear pattern, which was consistent with the weak and nonsignificant Pearson correlation.

4-1. Results for the First Research Question

Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence based on the collected data.

Table 2

Coefficient of Linear Correlation and P-value Between SSE and SC

		Sociolinguistic Competence
Situational Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.108
	N	64

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson correlation analysis yielded a weak positive relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence (r= .203, sig. = .108, P> .05). This indicates that higher levels of situational self-esteem tended to be accompanied by slightly higher levels of sociolinguistic competence; however, the strength of this relationship was limited. The significance test showed that the correlation did not reach statistical significance, as the obtained p-value exceeded the conventional significance criterion of .05. Therefore, the results do not provide sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that situational self-esteem is significantly related to sociolinguistic competence in the present sample. Accordingly, with regard to the first research question, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables is retained.

4-2. Results for the Second Research Question

To address the second research question, Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between willingness to communicate (WTC) and sociolinguistic competence.

Table 3

Coefficient of Linear Correlation and P-value Between WTC and SC

		Sociolinguistic Competence
WTC	Pearson Correlation	.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.097
	N	64

As reported in Table 3, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between willingness to communicate (WTC) and sociolinguistic competence (r= .209, sig. = .097, P> .05). Despite the positive direction of the coefficient, the magnitude of the relationship was small. Moreover, the obtained significance value was above the .05 threshold, indicating that the observed correlation was not statistically significant. Thus, the findings related to the second research question do not provide adequate evidence of a significant relationship between WTC and sociolinguistic competence in the present sample. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis, which assumes the absence of a statistically significant association between the two variables, is retained.

4-3. Analysis of the Third Research Question

The third research question was concerned with determining whether the relationships of situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate (WTC) with sociolinguistic competence differed in strength. To address this question, the results obtained from the preceding correlation analyses were considered jointly. Neither situational self-esteem nor WTC demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with sociolinguistic competence, as indicated by the findings reported for the first and second research questions. Consequently, the available results did not provide sufficient evidence to establish that either of the two affective variables had a stronger relationship with sociolinguistic competence than the other. The findings therefore supported the third null hypothesis, which assumed no statistically significant difference between the two correlations. Given the nonsignificant correlations observed in the initial analyses, no further predictive analysis was undertaken.

5. Discussion

The present study investigated the relationships among situational self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and sociolinguistic competence. Based on the results of the first research question, there was no meaningful association between participants' situational self-esteem and their level of sociolinguistic competence. The result of the first research question is dissimilar to the results of some other studies, including Harris and Orth (2020), Satriani (2019), Enting et al. (2025), and Mirzaei (2019).

Harris and Orth (2020) indicated a positive and reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and social relationships. Satriani (2019) reported a strong positive association between learners' self-esteem and their level of oral proficiency, indicating that students with higher self-esteem tended to demonstrate greater competence in spoken language. Enting et al. (2025) found that self-esteem is closely connected to individuals' social experiences. Mirzaei (2019) provided relevant evidence that self-esteem can be considered alongside social and contextual factors when examining the appropriateness of language use in interpersonal communication. The result of the first research question is similar to the results of Dadulla (2023), who revealed only a weak correlation between students' levels of self-esteem and their L2 oral performance.

Based on the results of the second research question, there was no meaningful association between participants' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their level of sociolinguistic competence. The results of the current study are dissimilar to the results of some other studies, including Leeming et al. (2024), Burhanuddin (2023), Wang and Ren (2025), and Lv et al. (2021).

Leeming et al. (2024) found that the effects of speaking self-efficacy and perceived communicative competence on spoken L2 production were fully mediated by WTC. The findings of Burhanuddin (2023) indicated a moderate positive relationship between sociolinguistic competence and communicative engagement. Wang and Ren (2025) found a significant relationship between WTC and the perception of sociopragmatic inappropriateness. Lv et al. (2021) likewise reported limited relationships between WTC and some aspects of pragmatic competence, which is closely related to the use of appropriate words in different contexts, as it is the focus of sociolinguistic competence as well.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the relatively small sample, which consisted of 64 undergraduate

English Language students from a single university, limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to learners in other educational settings or populations. Studies involving larger samples drawn from multiple institutions and contexts may provide a broader basis for comparison.

Second, the study relied on self-report questionnaires to obtain information about situational self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and sociolinguistic competence. Although self-report measures provide direct access to learners' perceptions and experiences, responses may be affected by factors such as self-awareness, interpretation of questionnaire items, or the tendency to present oneself favorably. In particular, the measure of sociolinguistic competence reflects learners' perceived competence rather than their objectively demonstrated ability to use language appropriately in authentic communicative situations. Future research could therefore combine self-report measures with performance-based tasks, observations, interviews, or other forms of assessment.

Third, the correlational nature of the study restricts the interpretation of the findings to relationships among the variables. The nonsignificant associations observed between situational self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and sociolinguistic competence should not be interpreted as evidence that these variables have no connection whatsoever, nor can the findings establish causal relationships among them.

Finally, although participants' sex and academic level were documented as characteristics of the sample, these factors were not examined as separate analytical variables. Consequently, the present findings do not indicate whether the observed relationships differ across sex or academic-level groups. Future investigations could address this limitation by recruiting larger and more diverse samples and examining whether demographic and educational characteristics contribute to variations in the relationships among the study variables.

Future investigations could examine the same research topic among students at more advanced academic levels, including undergraduate seniors as well as MA or PhD students. Extending the research to more advanced academic levels may offer a broader understanding of the educational contexts and conditions associated with the variables under investigation.

Future research could extend the scope of the present investigation by involving participants from a wider range of universities and educational institutions. Such an approach may provide more comprehensive and generalizable findings.

6. Conclusion

The present investigation sought to determine whether learners' situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate (WTC) were related to their sociolinguistic competence. To this end, the association between sociolinguistic competence and each affective variable was analyzed separately. The results revealed a weak positive relationship between situational self-esteem and sociolinguistic competence; however, this relationship did not attain statistical significance. Consequently, there was insufficient empirical evidence to reject the first null hypothesis. Likewise, willingness to communicate exhibited a weak positive correlation with sociolinguistic competence, but the observed association was also statistically nonsignificant, resulting in the retention of the second null hypothesis. Taken together, the findings failed to confirm that situational self-esteem and willingness to communicate were significantly related to sociolinguistic competence within the present sample. Furthermore, the results did not indicate a meaningful difference in the magnitude of the two relationships. Therefore,

the third null hypothesis was also retained. One possible consideration in interpreting the findings is the relatively homogeneous academic background of the participants. As all participants were undergraduate students majoring in English in the same university, their shared educational context may have limited variation in their experiences with English and communicative development.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Disclosure of AI Use in Manuscript Preparation

AI-assisted language support was used solely to improve the clarity and wording of some sentences.

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Appendix A

WTC Questionnaire

[Below are 28 situations in which a person might choose to communicate in an English class. For each item, mark □ which indicates the extent to which you would be willing to communicate in the given situation.
1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Almost always.]

No	I'm willing to talk in English when…	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1	The class is engaged in an open discussion. کلاس درگیر یک بحث آزاد است.					
2	I am in a small group in class. من در یک گروه کوچک در کلاس هستم.					
3	The topic is interesting. موضوع جالب است.					
4	My views differ from my classmates' views. دیدگاه های من با دیدگاه های همکلاسی هایم متفاوت است.					
5	I am sitting in the back of the class. من آخر کلاس نشسته ام.					
6	I am prepared for class. من برای کلاس آماده هستم.					
7	Everyone is talking. همه حرف می زنند.					
8	I am graded on participation. من در مشارکت درجه بندی شدم.					
9	The class is engaged in a heated debate. کلاس درگیر یک بحث داغ است.					
10	I am comfortable with the subject matter. من با موضوع راحت هستم.					
11	An assignment is being discussed. تکلیف درسی در حال بحث است.					
12	No one else is talking. هیچکس دیگری صحبت نمیکند.					
13	I am sitting in the front of the class. جلوی کلاس نشسته ام.					
14	My views differ from the teacher's views. دیدگاه من با دیدگاه استاد متفاوت است.					
15	I am angry about a topic. من در مورد موضوع عصبانی هستم.					

16	I know the correct answer. من جواب درست را میدانم.					
17	I can really help clarify the discussion. من واقعا" میتوانم به روشن شدن بحث کمک کنم.					
18	I dislike some of my classmates. از بعضی از همکلاسی هایم بدم می آید.					
19	I voluntarily answer to the teacher's question in class. من به سوال استاد در کلاس داوطلبانه پاسخ میدهم.					
20	I'm called upon by the teacher to answer a question in English. استاد از من می خواهد تا به یک سوال به زبان انگلیسی پاسخ دهم.					
21	I talk to my teacher before or after class. من قبل یا بعد از کلاس با استادم صحبت می کنم.					
22	I ask the teacher a question in class. در کلاس از استاد سوال می پرسم.					
23	I ask the teacher a question in English in private. من به طور خصوصی از استاد یک سوال به زبان انگلیسی می پرسم.					
24	I present my opinions in class. من نظرات خود را در کلاس ارائه می کنم.					
25	I participate in pair activities in class. من در فعالیت های زوجی در کلاس شرکت می کنم.					
26	I help others answer a question. به دیگران کمک می کنم به یک سوال پاسخ دهند.					
27	I give a speech with notes in class. من در کلاس با یادداشت سخنرانی می کنم.					
28	I chat with my classmates out of class. خارج از کلاس با همکلاسی هایم چت می کنم.					

Appendix B

Self-esteem Questionnaire

[Check the appropriate box to tell us how often you do each of these things.
1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always.]

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a) When I see a new conversational problem, I can see what I have learned to solve the problem. وقتی یک مشکل مکالمه جدید می بینم، می توانم ببینم که برای حل مشکل چه آموخته ام.					
b) I can use what I know to design and build conversational activities. می توانم از آنچه می دانم برای طراحی و ساخت فعالیت های مکالمه استفاده کنم.					
c) In practical and conversational activities, I can use what I have learned to design a solution. در فعالیت های عملی و محاوره ای می توانم از آموخته هایم برای طراحی راه حل استفاده کنم.					
d) I can effectively lead a team to design and build a conversational practice. من می توانم به طور موثر یک تیم را برای طراحی و ساخت یک تمرین مکالمه هدایت کنم.					
e) I know where I can find the information that I need to solve difficult problems. می دانم از کجا می توانم اطلاعاتی را که برای حل مسائل دشوار نیاز دارم پیدا کنم.					
f) I can use what I have learned to teach myself how to manage the conversation. می توانم از آموخته هایم برای آموزش نحوه مدیریت مکالمه استفاده کنم.					
g) I can explain course material to my friends to help them understand. می توانم مطالب درسی را برای دوستانم توضیح دهم تا به آنها در درک کمک کنم.					
h) I can get good grades in English language comprehension. می توانم نمرات خوبی در درک زبان انگلیسی کسب کنم.					
i) I can get good grades in making conversation. می توانم نمرات خوبی در مکالمه کسب کنم.					

Appendix C

Sociolinguistic Competence Questionnaire

[Check the appropriate box to tell us how often you do each of these things.
1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always.]

No		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I can only talk about a very small number of topics. من فقط می توانم در مورد تعداد بسیار کمی از موضوعات صحبت کنم.					
2	I can hold an ordinary social conversation with some difficulty, but I am occasionally lost for words. من می توانم یک مکالمه اجتماعی معمولی را با کمی سختی انجام دهم، اما گاهی اوقات کتمه ای به ذهنم نمیرسد.					
3	I can introduce myself. من می توانم خودم را معرفی کنم.					
4	I can greet a peer. من می توانم با یک همسال احوال پرسی کنم.					
5	I can greet an adult. من می توانم با یک بزرگسال احوال پرسی کنم.					
6	I can identify myself and spell my name. می توانم خودم را بشناسم و نامم را هجی کنم.					
7	I can find out when something occurs. من می توانم بفهمم که چه زمانی اتفاقی می افتد.					
8	I can express agreement and disagreement. من می توانم موافقت و مخالفتم را بیان کنم.					
9	I can express preference about food, sports Leisure, etc. من می توانم ترجیح خود را در مورد غذا، ورزش اوقات فراغت و غیره بیان کنم.					
10	I can express likes and dislikes. من می توانم دوست داشتن و دوست نداشتنم را بیان کنم.					