

## Investigating the Relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) Productivity, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and Self-Concept among Iranian EFL Learners



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### Keywords:

Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity, Self-concept, willingness to communicate (WTC)

### Abstract

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning and education, the constructs of the Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity, willingness to communicate (WTC) and self-concept can help learners remarkably. This correlational study aimed at investigating the relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity, WTC, and self-concept among Iranian EFL learners. The participants included 100 intermediate EFL learners (75 females and 25 males) who were conveniently selected from different private language institutes of Kerman, Iran. To collect the data, the Personal Productivity Questionnaire, the Persian form of Robson's self-concept questionnaire and the modified version of Willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire were used. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, and Pearson product moment correlation analysis. According to the results, there is a positive a significant relationship between GTD productivity and WTC. Moreover, GTD productivity and self-concept were positively and significantly correlated. An implication of the results is that EFL learners should attempt to improve their own GTD productivity.

بررسی رابطه بین بهروری انجام کارها (GTD)، تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) و خودپنداره در میان زبان‌آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی در حوزه یادگیری و آموزش زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی (EFL)، سازه‌های بهروری انجام کارها (GTD)، تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) و خودپنداره می‌توانند به طور قابل توجهی به زبان‌آموزان کمک کنند. این مطالعه همبستگی با هدف بررسی رابطه بین بهروری انجام کارها (GTD)، WTC و خودپنداره در میان زبان‌آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی انجام شد. شرکت‌کنندگان شامل ۱۰۰ زبان‌آموز سطح متوسط زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی (۷۵ زن و ۲۵ مرد) بودند که به طور تصادفی از موسسات زبان خصوصی مختلف کرمان، ایران انتخاب شدند. برای جمع‌آوری داده‌ها، از پرسشنامه بهروری شخصی، فرم فارسی پرسشنامه خودپنداره رابسون (۱۹۸۹) و نسخه اصلاح‌شده پرسشنامه تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) استفاده شد. تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از طریق آمار توصیفی، آزمون نرمال بودن کولموگوروف-اسمیرنوف و تحلیل همبستگی گشتاوری پیرسون انجام شد. بر اساس نتایج، رابطه مثبت و معناداری بین بهروری GTD و WTC وجود دارد. علاوه بر این، بهروری GTD و خودپنداره همبستگی مثبت و معناداری داشتند. یکی از پیامدهای این نتایج این است که کلمات کلیدی: بهروری انجام کارها (GTD)، تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC)

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## Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is inevitable in global era wherein international communications are conducted in English. However, EFL learning does not occur in vacuum. But it needs a variety of skills and traits. One of the required skills which should be learned by EFL learners is productivity. Learning productivity is significant for Iranian learners due to various reasons. For instance, learning a high volume of English content is complex for individuals who are not currently living in an English-speaking country (Seli & Dembo, 2020) because most of EFL learners' basic English knowledge is low. Furthermore, beyond needing to learn English skills, EFL learners are confronted with the challenge of applying these skills to foreign contexts. Productivity can be helpful for learners in coping with these situations, as a skill that can be learned through practice (Lackey et al., 2014). However, being productive is not an easy task for learners (Drucker, 2018), since it needs a high volume of time and energy (Segaran & Hasim, 2021). In the realm of learning and education, the construct of the Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity, proposed by Allen (2015), is a framework for personal productivity that can help learners practice stress-free productivity in learning. However, contrary to the fact that the GTD productivity framework is robust in terms of its theoretical underpinning (i.e., cognitive science, positive psychology, and self-regulation), it has not been much operationalized in EFL studies.

In addition, a trait required for EFL learners is willingness to communicate (WTC). In fact, the ability to launch the process of communication plays a key role in successful EFL learning. WTC was proposed as a main component of effective language learning (Pattapong, 2010). Kang (2005) defined WTC as a tendency toward communication that indicates individuals' orientation toward communication in English contexts and their willing to trigger communication. In a general sense, the construct of WTC is multi-layered and deeply under the effect of stress and anxiety. This is why many EFL learners suffer from a low WTC in English classes. Given that personal productivity is believed to be effective on reducing stress and distress (Allen, 2015), it may be also correlated with WTC. But this is now at the level of hypothesis and needs more investigations to be documented empirically.

Furthermore, EFL learning is influenced by a psychological affective trait called self-concept. Self-concept is one's idea of the self that is rooted in the beliefs he or she has about herself/himself (Pushpa & Yeshodhara, 2014, p. 25). Self-concept can support learners psychologically in various aspects of learning (Pushpa & Yeshodhara, 2014). However, some EFL learners deeply suffer from several emotional problems including low self-concept, as unpacked through personal experience of the researcher as an English teacher and reviewing the existing literature. With a view to the belief that personal productivity gives learners higher mental and physical energy by helping them set and meet goals, and prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended outcomes, it may also improve their views of themselves. But there is no evidence for this claim, although it seems true at the first glance.

In sum, the above discussions show that GTD productivity, WTC and self-concept all play key roles in EFL learning success. However, research paucity is really felt in the research on the relationship between these constructs. With a view to the psychological problems many EFL learners have in learning English, addressing this gap is necessary for solving these problems. Accordingly, this study sought to investigate the relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity, WTC, and self-concept among Iranian EFL learners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is theoretically built upon the GTD productivity framework, proposed by Allen (2015). The first component of the GTD framework, Five Steps, consists of steps and strategies to help students manage their time, energy and attention. The second component of the GTD framework, The Levels of Focus, consists of six levels. The highest level helps students find the "purpose" of what they are doing, and the bottom level helps them take the practical steps towards achieving their long-term and short-term goals, which can lead them to fulfilling that purpose. The third component of GTD, Planning Map, is a five-step model that provides practical steps for planning and delivering any "project" students engage in during their college years and later in life. These steps are: 1) Define purpose, principles, and standards, 2) Outcome visioning, 3) Brainstorming, 4) Organizing, and 5) Identifying the next action (Allen, 2015).

### **Objectives**

The gap identified above encouraged the researcher to conduct the present study with two main objectives. The first objective is exploring the relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and WTC among Iranian EFL learners. As the second objective, relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and self-concept among Iranian EFL learners was investigated in this study.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1.** Is there a significant relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and WTC among Iranian EFL learners?

**RQ2.** Is there a significant relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and self-concept among Iranian EFL learners?

### **Review of Literature**

In reviewing the existing literature, the researcher found just two related studies on personal productivity construct. Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2023) investigated the correlation between EFL teachers' efficacy and productivity. According to the results, a positive relationship was found between efficacy and productivity among EFL teachers. Moreover, it was revealed that efficacy can significantly predict productivity of teachers. In another study by Al-Hashimy (2023), a Personal Productivity Questionnaire was developed in 66 Likert items. The reliability of the questionnaire was .92. Its validity was also confirmed by factor analysis.

With regard to WTC, Yousefi and Kasaian (2014) probed the relationship between WTC and fluency and accuracy of oral performance of Iranian EFL learners. The results showed that WTC and fluency and accuracy of speaking were significantly correlated in a positive direction. Valadi et al. (2015) examined the relationship between WTC and speaking proficiency among language learners. The results showed a significant interplay between WTC and speaking proficiency of the participants. Zohrabi and Yousefi (2016) explored the relationship between reflection in teaching, WTC, motivation and English proficiency of EFL learners. Findings uncovered that teaching reflection, WTC, motivation and English proficiency of learners were correlated significantly.

In terms of self-concept, Alagozlu (2016, as cited in Tan, 2019) investigated the role of professional self-concept in personal growth and professional success of language teachers. Findings indicated that professional self-concept contribute significantly to teachers' personal growth and their professional success. In the study by Tan (2019), the sophomore university students' level of academic self-concept was explored. Moreover, the relationship between the level of academic self-concept and problem-solving mathematics achievement was investigated. Findings confirmed the existence of a moderate academic self-concept among the students. In addition, learners' academic self-concept was correlated with mathematics problem solving. Furthermore, learning strategies had a moderating effect on the relationship between academic self-concept and problem solving in mathematics.

## Method

### Design

In line with the nature of research questions, a quantitative correlational design was used. This type of design tackles the relationship between the variables of the study. No manipulation of any variable is done in this type of design.

### Participants

The participants included 100 intermediate EFL learners (75 females and 25 males) who were conveniently selected from different private language institutes of Kerman, Iran. The participants were in the age range of 20-30. All the participants' mother tongue was Farsi. To consider morality issues, the agreement of the participants was taken for participation in the study. Additionally, they were made informed of the goals of the study and promised on anonymity and confidentiality of their personal information.

### Instruments

To collect the data, the following instruments were used:

### Personal Productivity Questionnaire

The Personal Productivity Questionnaire, developed and validated by Al-Hashimy (2023) was used to measure the participants' personal productivity. It was developed in 66 items in the Likert format in a six-point range from 1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree 3. Disagree Slightly 4. Strongly Agree 5. Agree, to 6. Agree Slightly. Al-Hashimy (2023) reported the reliability of the scale .92. She checked its validity through factor analysis.

### **Self-Concept Questionnaire**

The Persian form of Robson (1989, as cited in Ghaderi, 2005) self-concept questionnaire was employed to assess the participants' self-concept. It includes 30 seven-point Likert items (from completely disagree to completely agree). The reliability index of the questionnaire was calculated .97 by Robson (1989). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed in the context of Iran via expert judgment (Ghaderi, 2005).

### **Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Questionnaire**

The modified version of Willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire, originally developed by MacIntyre, et al. (2001) and modified by Hamzehnejad and Shariati (2014) was utilized to assess WTC of the participants. It contains 27 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = almost never willing" to "5 = almost always willing". Reliability of the test was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha as .70 and its content validity was confirmed by expert judgment.

### **Procedures**

To collect the data, 100 intermediate EFL learners (75 females and 25 males) were conveniently picked up from different private language institutes of Kerman and informed of the objectives of the study, observing moral issues. Then, the google form of the Personal Productivity Questionnaire, the Persian form of Robson (1989) self-concept questionnaire and the modified version of Willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire was sent to them to be filled. Finally, the collected data was exposed to descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, and Pearson product moment correlation analysis.

### **Results**

To analyze the data, first, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and descriptive statistics were run. Table 1 shows the results.

**Table 1***Results of Descriptive Statistics and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				
		GTD productivity	WTC	Self-concept
N		100	100	100
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	209.72	82.12	90.13
	Std. Deviation	2.40	2.32	2.25
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.19	.72	.84
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.16	.64	.41
a. Test distribution is Normal.				
b. Calculated from data.				

The Table 1 shows that significance levels obtained for all the three variables are bigger than the study significance level ( $p=.05$ ). Thus, it can be said that distribution of data are normal at %95 confidence level. Moreover, the Table 1 shows that the mean scores obtained for GTD productivity, WTC, and self-concept are 209.72, 82.12 and 90.13, respectively. Moreover, the standard deviation values obtained for the same variables are 2.40, 2.32 and 2.25, respectively. These values show that the participants are heterogeneous in terms of their GTD productivity, WTC, and self-concept.

Then, to answer the first research question Is there a significant relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and WTC among Iranian EFL learners?, a Pearson product moment correlation test was run whose results are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2***Results of Correlation between GTD Productivity and WTC*

Correlations		GTD Productivity	WTC
GTD Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.86*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
WTC	Pearson Correlation	.86*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	

It can be seen in the Table 2 that there a significant relationship ( $r= 0.86$ ,  $p<.05$ ) between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and WTC among Iranian EFL learners which is strong in size. This means that higher GTD productivity is associated with higher WTC in EFL learners.

Thereafter, to answer the second research question Is there a significant relationship between Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity and self-concept among Iranian EFL learners?, another Pearson product moment correlation test was run. The results are demonstrated in Table 3:



**Table 3***Results of Correlation between GTD Productivity and Self-concept*

Correlations		GTD Productivity	Self-concept
GTD Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.95*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.01
Self-concept	Pearson Correlation	.95*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	

The Table 3 shows that Iranian EFL learners' GTD productivity and their self-concept are positively correlated. This correlation is significant ( $r = 0.95$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and very strong in size. This shows that higher GTD productivity is associated with higher self-concept in EFL learners.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The first finding of this research was that there is a positive and significant correlation between GTD productivity and WTC among Iran EFL learners. To account for this finding, those learners whose GTD productivity is high are more energetic than their counterparts. This leads to higher WTC in them. Moreover, they experience a higher psychological well-being (Al-Hashimy, 2023). Therefore, they have higher tendency to communicate with others. Additionally, since their goal setting ability is higher, they will to communicate more in order to negotiate and achieve their goals. Last but not least, project planning and executing ability of these learners are remarkably high. This causes them to communicate more to plan their projects better and more successfully. Since this study was a pioneering one on the relationship between GTD productivity and WTC among Iran EFL learners, the researcher could not find a similar study in the literature to compare this finding with it.

The second finding of this piece of research was that there is a positive and significant correlation between GTD productivity and self-concept among Iran EFL learners. This finding can be attributed to the fact that the learners with high GTD productivity has a high level of focus (Sinek, 2011). Accordingly, they get better decisions in life. The outcome of this is higher self-concept. Another justification for this finding is the fact that these learners can manage their time more effectively. Therefore, they achieve better results from their attempts. This achievement is associated with higher self-concept. Finally, stress and distress are low in the learners with high GTD productivity (Cheng, 2023). This leads to enhancement of self-concept in the learners. Similar to what was mentioned about the previous finding, there was no study in the literature on the correlation between GTD productivity and self-concept. Therefore, this finding cannot be compared with any similar study.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that enhancement of GTD productivity through different means contributes to higher WTC in EFL learners. That is, if GTD productivity is enhanced in EFL learners, they will be more willing to communicate. It is also concluded that

improving EFL learners' GTD productivity is associated with the main outcome of increasing self-concept. This means that those whose GTD productivity is higher have higher self-concept.

According to these conclusions, an implication of the results is that EFL learners should try to improve their own GTD productivity in a way that their WTC and self-concept is integrated. Another implication of the conclusions is that EFL teachers make their best to encourage GTD productivity in learners as an effective strategy in enhancement of their WTC and self-concept.

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