 Studies on gender differences in Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and ideal L2 self (Dörnyei’s, 2005) have produced conflicting results. Some studies have found significant impact of gender on WTC (MacIntyre et al., 2003), whereas others (Alemi et al, 2013) found no impact. Similarly, Ryan (2009) found significant effect of gender on ideal L2 self, whereas Henry et al. (2013) found no significant effect. Research on gender differences in WTC and ideal L2 self are still scarce. No research has been conducted to explore the gender differences in either language-related future visions, or the effects of goal-setting on enhancing WTC.

This presentation reports on an attempt to fill the gap by investigating (1) gender differences in WTC and ideal L2 self (2) gender differences in language-relate future visions, and (3) whether goal-setting treatments on enhancing WTC is equally effective for male and female participants.

A group of 372 Japanese university EFL learners majoring in science and human arts subjects participated in the study. Based on the empirical study using structural equation modeling (Author of this abstract, 2013), the visualization treatments were prepared for one group of students so learners could visualize their ideal selves and enhance WTC. For the second treatment, goal-setting activities were introduced to students (visualization plus goal-setting treatment).

A MANOVA suggested higher WTC and higher ideal L2 self for female participants than their male counterparts. The qualitative analysis of participants’ future ideal selves suggested that females’ future visions include more interpersonal qualities compared to males’. The ANCOVA results suggested that the visualization plus goal-setting treatment group showed significant increase in WTC over the visualization only treatment group among male participants but not among female participants. Pedagogical implications and future directions for exploring gender differences are discussed, integrating the new studies in neuroscience field.

Keywords: gender, possible selves, willingness to communicate.