Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review
www.plhr.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating the Relationship between Willingness to Communicate and Oral Proficiency in English

[1]Afifa Saher*, [2]Dr. Muhammad Imran and [3]Dr. Samina Sarwat

1. M Phil Scholar, Institute of Humanities and Arts, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Education, Vehari campus, Vehari, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Institute of Humanities and Arts, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author	saherjee111@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article aimed to investigate the relationship between willingness to communicate and learners' oral proficiency in English. For this purpose, this study aimed to find out the link between WTC and oral language competency in English. It looked at the relationship between WTC and other characteristics such as self-confidence, desire to communicate, and anxiety. Lastly, It targeted to see if are there any gender-based differences in WTC and learners' oral proficiency in English. The participants were 88 male and 87 female undergraduate students. The correlational analysis showed a significant correlation between the variables. T-test however highlighted non-significant gender-based differences. This study would aid in raising awareness about having good self-confidence level, a strong desire to communicate and a stress-free atmosphere for successful language learning.

KEYWORDS	English Language, Oral Proficiency, Willingness to Communicate

Introduction

When a chance to speak a second language, some people speak up while others choose to remain silent. When the opportunity presents itself, WTC stands for the psychological readiness to use the L2. Presumably, the level of WTC influences one's ability to learn a second language and to orally communicate using that language. To explain the variations in learners' success rates and the rate of picking up second or foreign languages, different researchers have also taken into account some important factors. It is necessary to note how people respond to speaking situations. A speaker's chances of success in second language acquisition increase with higher WTC. Increase level of frequency and volume of communication are related to high WTC. The choice of speaker to speak or not to speak measures learners' success in second language learning. With higher WTC, a speaker's second language acquisition success chances rise. The high degree of WTC is linked with increased communication frequency. It is common to be of two minds when the chance to use the L2 presents itself; one mind wants to approach the opportunity and the other wants to break away from it. WTC is variability in talking behavior and is treated as a personality trait in L1. Despite the possibility of situational factors influencing one's willingness to communicate in L2, individuals exhibit comparable WTC tendencies in different contexts. Other factors that contribute to variations in WTC include self-confidence, cultural diversity, introversion, self-esteem, communication proficiency, and communication apprehension (Richmond and Roach 1992). Research in the area of WTC results in an

integrative motivation that helps to view the causes of the potential failure of second language learning. A thorough model of willingness to communicate in L2 was introduced in 1998 by MacIntyre and his associates. For one's WTC in a second language, they combined linguistic, communicative, and social-psychological factors. WTC was defined by MacIntyre 1998 as the likelihood to communicate when given the chance to do so. WTC in L2 was not, however, considered to be a personality trait but rather a situational variable with both immediate and long-term implications. It was further suggested that, in addition to affecting the speaking mode, WTC also has an impact on the listening, writing, and reading modes. Therefore, a detailed examination of WTC in the context of actual language use is necessary for L2 research.

Literature Review

Communication is a significant objective of second language learning. In general, social science theories do not apply to all people. Apart from the general theories put forth by social scientists, individual differences among people play a significant role. According to Dörnyei (2005), an individual difference is a characteristic or trait that may distinguish individuals from one another. These differences appear to be barriers that prevent the development of general psychological principles to explain human behavior in general.

There was considerable development of WTC in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The concept of unwillingness to communicate highlights a person's propensity to avoid speaking with others due to a range of variables including anxiety, introversion, and alienation. WTC comes from three different independent sources. These include shyness, a disinclination toward verbal behavior, and an unwillingness to communicate. According to this viewpoint, WTC is a person's propensity to initiate communication whenever they are available to do so (Simic & Tanaka, 2008).

A person's willingness to communicate is defined as a learner's eagerness to begin any conversation with a specific interlocutor at a specific time. McCroskey and his friends were the ones who first introduced the idea of learners' communicative readiness (MacIntyre 2007). Willingness to communicate has a major influence on oral language proficiency and is a precursor to the learner's communicative skill. Measuring willingness to communicate can help to account for language learning success in second language acquisition.

WTC, according to Richmond and McCroskey 1992, is essential for learners' well-being since more communicative students are appreciated in several contexts, such as academic institutions, social organizations, and public events. A low level of WTC is frequently linked to low levels of emotional and interpersonal output. So, a lack of anxiety and a sense of competence are the main causes of the high degree of WTC. People who experience low levels of anxiety have no trouble starting a conversation. People with a high level of communication readiness encounter fewer obstacles and are regarded as effective communicators. WTC model by MacIntyre emphasized the notion that an individual's perception of their apprehension has a significant impact on how they are perceived as communicatively competent.
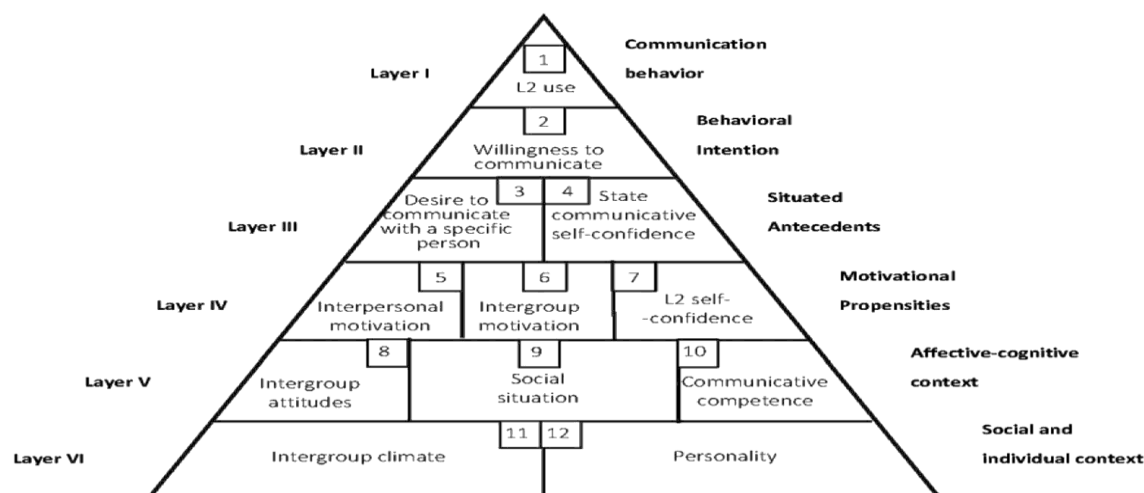
Figure 1 Heuristic model of WTC

A structural equation model was used to reflect the personality traits and interpersonal dynamics that precede WTC. Extraversion and emotional stability are the two personality traits displayed on the far left. The middle part indicates a stage of self-esteem. On the far right, alongside the specific communication scenario, are the variables fear and perceived competence that are directly tied to communication. A WTC pyramid model, therefore, includes a variety of linguistic, psychological, social, and personality-based variables. Layers are used to represent various variables that directly or indirectly affect the WTC.

In one segment of the lab session, the MacIntyre (1996) study participants were given communication tasks to complete. The participants' oral activities required them to speak for three minutes on a common topic. The researchers kept track of the quantity of speaking time and the range of ideas offered. Fear predicted both the speaking time and the number of thoughts for the speaking task, and perceived competence predicted both for the demanding task. According to the study, anxiety may affect how people view their abilities, and worried presenters may become so self-conscious that they would prefer not to talk at all. The researchers conclude that when applied High WTC scorers were more likely to volunteer for the lab study and more likely to speak out first when there were volunteers.

McCroskey and Baer 1985 found that non-linguistic factors like motivation and fear frequently contribute to WTC. Although there is not always a clear correlation between the two variables, Yashima's study's (2002) findings show that motivation boosts self-confidence in L2 communication, which raises L2 WTC.

Speaking is a complex skill that requires evaluation in several areas, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehensibility, coherence, and cohesiveness, as well as the capacity to interact and modify one's speech to fit in a certain social setting. Brown's (2001) oral proficiency scoring categories include grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task.

Material and Methods

This research used quantitative methodology. A five-point Likert-type scale-based questionnaire was adapted to collect the data for research developed by MacIntrye (MacIntyre, Baker et al. 2001). For data collection, an invitation link to an online survey was sent to 300 Pakistani students enrolled in the bachelor programs at Khawaja Fareed

University, Rahimyar khan. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Self-confidence, gender difference and desire to communicate were used as a variable of interest. An oral test was also designed to test the oral proficiency of the participants. Fifty out of three hundred participants were invited and individually asked to speak on a common topic for 2.5 minutes. Recordings of these students were saved to assess the elements of interest like fluency, sentence organization, clarity of ideas, pronunciation and use of vocabulary. The pilot study was used to identify and resolve issues in research instruments and also to improve its feasibility.

Results and Discussion

In this study, Self-confidence was used as the first variable. The frequency, percentage and obtained mean score of each questionnaire item are displayed in the form of table. Here the statement number ten states *'When I will speak English, my friends will laugh at me (Item 10)* The mean score of the statement is 2.35. The statement, I can easily remember and sing the lyrics of English songs (item 16)**.** Students' mean score for this Statement is 2.35. This shows that students have difficulty using this technique to facilitate their second-language learning. Complete result is given.

Table 1
Statistics for Self-confidence

Q No	Element	level of disagreement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Level of agreement	Mean
21	F	33	49	41	31	21	2.76
	%	18.9	28	23.4	17.7	12	
25	F	35	37	36	33	34	2.96
	%	20	21.1	20.6	18.9	19.4	
10	F	60	53	25	14	23	2.35
	%	34.3	30.3	14.3	8	13.1	
23	F	53	60	25	15	22	2.35
	%	30.3	34.3	14.3	8.1	13	
17	F	32	31	50	46	16	2.90
	%	18.3	17.7	28.6	26.3	9.1	
23	F	34	48	41	30	22	2.71
	%	18.10	28.2	23.4	17.4	12	

There were seven items from the questionnaire designed to measure the desire to communicate.

I like to think of myself as someone who will be able to speak English item (2).

In descriptive statistics of the participants' desire to communicate, this statement (item 2) shows a positive result of 3.011. It reflects the optimistic approach of the participants. They are aware that good workplace communication promotes a positive work environment and ensures that individuals are aware of how to utilize language to convey information effectively.

Table 2
Statistics for Desire to communicate

Q No	Element	level of disagreement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Level of agreement	Mean
2	F	36	34	33	36	36	3.01
	%	2.6	19.4	18.9	20.6	20.6	
12	F	28	39	45	35	28	2.97
	%	16	22.3	25.7	20	16	

13	F	44	24	30	39	38	3.01
	%	25.1	13.7	17.1	22.3	21.7	
15	F	25	48	44	37	21	2.89
	%	14.3	27.4	25.1	21.1	12	
18	F	33	20	28	49	45	3.30
	%	18.9	11.4	16	28	25	
19	F	35	36	42	33	29	2.91
	%	20	20.6	24	18.9	16.6	
22	F	37	30	29	43	36	3.06
	%	21.1	17.1	16.6	24.6	20.6	

Eleven items of the questionnaire are designed to measure anxiety using L2. Some of the least agreed statements from the table are *I feel anxious when a teacher asks me questions in English (item 1). I feel anxious when someone starts a conversation in English on the phone (item 20).* The mean score of item 1 is 2.46. The result of both the least agreed statement shows that most of the participants of the study are less concerned about grammatical mistakes.

Table 3
Statistics for anxiety

Q No	Element	level of disagreement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Level of agreement	Mean
1	F	52	46	36	25	16	2.46
	%	29.7	26.3	20.6	14.5	9.1	
3	F	55	44	29	23	24	2.52
	%	31.4	25.1	16.6	13.1	13.4	
4	F	36	47	37	34	21	2.75
	%	20.6	26.9	21.1	19.4	12	
8	F	37	45	43	30	20	2.72
	%	21.1	25.7	24.6	17.1	11.4	
9	F	36	42	46	29	22	2.76
	%	20.6	24	26.3	16.6	12.6	
11	F	43	44	45	26	17	2.60
	%	24.6	25.1	25.1	14.9	9.7	
14	F	35	45	46	29	20	2.73
	%	20	25.7	26.3	16.6	11.4	
20	F	47	54	35	21	18	2.48
	%	26.9	30.9	20	12	10.3	
6	F	50	32	44	30	19	2.60
	%	28.6	18.3	25.1	17.1	10.9	
5	F	42	52	28	27	26	2.65
	%	24	29.7	16	15.4	14.9	
24	F	41	50	34	36	14	2.75
	%	23.4	28.5	19.4	20.6	8.0	

WTC and oral language proficiency in English

To find the answer to this question of that is there any relationship between WTC and oral language proficiency in English, Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. A positive relationship between self-confidence and oral proficiency was found [r =0.505, N=50, p.300]. There is a negative correlation between anxiety and oral proficiency. High language anxiety means poor oral performance, as shown by the two variables' substantial connection [r =-0.622, N=50, p=.580]. The correlational analysis of oral test scores with a desire to communicate shows a moderately significant result [r =-0.411, N=50, p=.419].

Table 4
Pearson product-moment correlation for the measurement of WTC variable and oral test score.

	Self-confidence	DTC	Anxiety	Test score
Self-confidence	1			
Desire-to-communicate	.626**	1		
Anxiety	.529**	.459**	1	
Test-score	.505**	.411**	-.622**	1

**. Correlation at the 0.01 level is significant (2-tailed). (DTC stands for the desire to communicate)

Self-confidence, Anxiety and Desire to Communicate

The Second research question that research in hand addressed was how self-confidence, anxiety and desire to communicate correlate with each other. Pearson product-moment correlational analysis showed a positive relationship between self-confidence and desire to communicate variables [r =0.628, N=174, p=.000]. , a strong negative correlation between anxiety and self–confidence [r =-0.525, N=174, p<.000], and a medium correlation between the desire to communicate and anxiety [r =.459, N=174, p.000]. Communicative apprehensions are also related to learners' perceived levels of competence. Both learners' WTC level and their self-reported frequency of L2 communication could be predicted by anxiety and perceived language competence (Clément, Baker et al. 2003).

Table 5
Pearson Product Moment Correlation between WTC's variables

	Self-confidence	Desire-to-communicate	Anxiety
Self-confidence	1		
Desire-to-communicate	.628**	1	
Anxiety	-.525**	.459**	1

**. At the 0.01 level, the correlation is significant (2-tailed).

Gender Difference

There was no statistically significant difference between all individuals at the level of the independent T-test, according to the results (p .05). There were no discernible differences between boys and girls in terms of their need for communication, level of confidence, and level of anxiety. Different studies looked at age and gender differences in WTC, the results of their study showed that females were more communicative than males, but no significant differences in WTC between males and females were found in the high school or university groups (Donovan and MacIntyre 2004).

Table 6
Independent Sample T-test Scores

	Gender	N	M	SD	df	T	Effect size
Self- confidence	Male	87	14.95	4.54		-1.047	
	Female	87	15.66z	4.43	172		.00
Desire to communicate	Male	88	21.18	7.52		.008	
	Female	87	21.17	7.23	173		.00
Anxiety	Male	88	18.26	6.00		-585	
	Female	87	18.83	7.03	173		.99

The difference is significant at a .05 level.

Conclusion

This research examines the relationship between willingness to communicate and learners' oral proficiency in English. It studied the link between WTC and oral language competency in English as well as looked at the relationship among self-confidence, desire to communicate, and anxiety. There were no significant gender-based differences in WTC were found. Results confirmed that WTC helps to measure the level of success of second-language learning. Gardner 1983 stated that teachers need to be aware of the internal mechanisms and social interpersonal connections that are a part of language learning to properly comprehend how complex this process is. Considering the nature of correlational research, several experimental studies can be developed to improve speaking ability, desire to initiate communication, and self-confidence in light of the findings of the current study. To build a fair level of WTC in future studies, some specific classroom activities or tasks should be altered or organized in light of research findings.

References

Csizér, K. & Z. Dörnyei (2005). Language learners' motivational profiles and their motivated learning behaviour. *Language learning 55*(4), 613-659.

Gardner, R. C. & W. E. Lambert (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie 13*(4), 266.

MacIntyre, P. D. (2007). Willingness to communicate in the second language: Understanding the decision to speak as a volitional process. *The modern language journal 91*(4), 564-576

MacIntyre, P. D.,Clement, R, Dornyei (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in an L2: A situational model of L2 confidence & affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal 82*(4), 545-562.

MacIntyre, P. D. (2007). Willingness to communicate in the second language: Understanding the decision to speak as a volitional process. *The modern language journal 91*(4): 564-576

MacIntyre, P. D. & C. Charos (1996). Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication. *Journal of language and social psychology 15*(1), 3-26.

Richmond, V. P. & K. D. Roach (1992). Willingness to communicate & employee success in US organizations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research 20*(1): 95-115.

Simic, M., Tomoko, T., & Tomoko, Y. (2007). Willingness to communicate in Japanese as a third language among international students in Japan. *Multicultural Relations* 4, 101-122.

Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: *The Japanese EFL context. Mod. Lang. J.* , 86, 54–6