

**Original Article**

## Reticence and Willingness to Communicate to Predict Daily Class Participation Among Iranian and Iraqi-Kurdistan Kurdish EFL Learners

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**Abstract**

One of the most important factors influencing the participation of English language learners is the willingness to communicate and trying to reduce reticence. The purpose of this study was to predict daily class participation based on reticence and willingness to communicate. The sample for the current research was selected from the students of the English language department, College of Basic Education, the University of Halabja in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and students of the English Language Department at the University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj in Iran and the sample number was 200 people. The data of the present study came from two questionnaires consisted of two scales measuring Reticence scale, and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale to measure students' predisposition towards approaching or avoiding communication. According to the results of regression analysis, reticence can be a significant predictor of students' participation in daily classroom activities. Furthermore, the results indicated that the relationship between willingness to communicate and participation in class activities in both groups of boys and girls was statistically positive and significant. The results of regression analysis also revealed that willingness to communicate can significantly and positively predict students' participation in daily classroom activities.

**Keywords:** Class participation, EFL learners, Reticence, Willingness to communicate

## 1. Introduction

Verbal participation in class plays a key role in developing EFL/ESL learners' communicative competence. Learner engagement and active participation during accomplishing communicative tasks and activities are regarded crucial and a key for successful language learning in any foreign language classroom. Current communicative approaches encourage language learners to interact with other learners in pair or group activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, the interaction hypothesis suggests that comprehensible input is generated as a result of interaction; especially when learners engage in negotiation of meaning in which they modify their speech to make it understandable (Hall, 2011). The communicative approaches are based on active interaction of learners in the class, and the provision of maximum opportunity for student participation. From this perspective, the approaches and methods adopted in the realm of second or foreign language learning prioritize the communicative goals (Brown, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2000) which require learners' enthusiasm and interest to speak.

However, one of the challenges of ESL/EFL teachers is that some students might not be willing to participate in conversation classes. As Bailey and Nunan (1996, p.145) put it, "getting students to respond in the classroom is a problem that most ESL teachers face". This is more acute with students who are not willing to speak (are reticent) or talk about themselves in front of others. The concept of reticence has been first introduced to the field of speech pathology by Philips (1965); "[which is] the avoidance of social and verbal interaction"(p.21). One of the characteristics of reticent people is that they avoid social interaction because most of them feel incompetent (Philips,1965). Concerning language learning, reticent students face a real challenge in the classroom when it comes to active participation and interaction. Despite the fact that students are different in terms of their background knowledge, age, gender, etc., being reticent limits language learners' participation in class.

Furthermore, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) which reflects a learner's psychological preparedness to utilize the second or foreign language (Macintyre, 2007) is a concept which plays a great role in learners' interaction and communication. The more the learners interact in the second or foreign language, the more they develop their language and learning (Kang, 2005). Yu et al. (2011) believe that WTC is the major reason and motif for learners to frequently use second or foreign language inside and outside the

classroom. Dornyei (2005) perceives WTC as “the ultimate goal of instruction” (p.210). Mehrgan (2013) asserts that learners’ willingness to communicate is indicated by their tendency to initiate using speaking skills in specific contexts with specific individuals. Oz et al. (2015) proposes that WTC combines communicative, linguistic, social-psychological, and affective factors and can explain and anticipate learners’ communicative behavior in the foreign or second language. Macintyre et al. (1998) maintain that creating WTC within learners, which is a key component in modern foreign or second language instruction, can remarkably influence their communicative ability. The emergence of the concept of WTC in foreign language pedagogy more motivated language teachers to encourage their learners to frequently employ the target language authentically and communicatively in various conversational situations.

No studies have yet been done in the Iraqi-Kurdistan region and the University of Kurdistan as the central university residing the Kurdish language speaker’s students of TEFL as comparable mates to their Kurdish language counterparts on these variables to help students of TEFL knowing themselves better and help teachers in their instruction. Having a good knowledge of reticence and willingness to communicate is necessary for both teachers and learners to overcome for the sake of decreasing the first and increasing the last.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Reticence**

Reticent construct has been re-conceptualized a number of times since it was first introduced by Philips in 1965. The construct was first defined by Philips (1965, p.24) as “avoidance of social, verbal interaction”. Reticent people are reluctant to speak unless pushed and urged; they are not motivated to speak spontaneously and not willing to express their emotions (Philips, 1965). Decades later, based on the works of Philips and data collected, Keaten and Kelly (2000) re-defined reticence as avoidance of interaction by those people who think that remaining silent is better than appearing foolish. According to Philips (1997), the major characteristic of reticent persons is the avoidance of social situation in which they feel inept. Further, most reticent people think that they lack social skills because they have experienced failure due to their incompetence or they have been told about their incompetency.

There are different causes of reticence in the language classroom to name a few including culture, society, etc.; and personal factors such as anxiety, self-cautious, and type of personality. Reticence might be related to an introverted personality as well. Harumi (2010) states that reticence is triggered by three main factors: linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, researches show that there are external and internal factors for the reticence of English learners inside the class. For example, the results of a study which was conducted in the Iranian context has been found that mispronunciation, lack of lexis, lack of confidence, anxiety, introversion, and extroversion are some of the most common causes of reticence among EFL learners in Iran (Aghazadeh & Abedi, 2014). In another study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the results show that lack of practice, low English proficiency, lack of confidence, anxiety, cultural beliefs, personality, and fear of losing face are the most common causes of students' reticence among the students (Liu, 2005). Generally, the results of these two studies which were conducted in two different contexts show that the causes that mainly trigger students' reticence are very similar; as mentioned earlier, all the causes belong to the three major factors: linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Various researches at the international and national have shown that reticence is related to the daily participation of students in the classroom, so that with the increase of reticence, the rate of students' participation in class activities decreases, and on the other hand, as reticence among students decreases, so do student participations in classroom activities increases. (e.g., Amiryousefi, 2016; Baktash & Chalak, 2016; Chalak & Baktash, 2015; Chang & Lin, 2019; Eliason & Turalba, 2019; Goldoust & Ranjbar, 2017; Shao & Gao, 2016; Soo & Goh, 2017; Van Tuyen, 2017).

## **2.2. Willingness to Communicate (WTC)**

The term Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has been a matter of investigation and discussion by many researchers and experts in the field of second language acquisition and foreign language learning and accordingly, various definitions and explanations have been proposed in this regard. Macintyre et al. (1998, p.547) define WTC as “readiness to enter into discourse in a particular time with a specific person or persons using second [foreign] language”. Kang (2005, p.291) considers WTC as “an individual's volitional inclination toward actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation which can

vary according to interlocutor(s), topic and conversational context, among other potential situational variables”.

WTC, as a fixed and stable personality trait across different conversational situations, was originally put forward to deal with L1 learning. Then, Macintyre et al. (1998) extended the concept to include L2 learning through developing a theoretical WTC model based on the L1 WTC model that McCroskey and Baer (1985) had presented, by adding communicative, socio-psychological, and linguistic variables. The L2 WTC model illustrated communicative initiation in a pyramid-like figure which regards WTC as a mental procedure where multi-layered variables operate in a distal quantum. The model incorporated inter-group communication processes, level of conceptualization, and the issue of time (Macintyre et al. 1998).

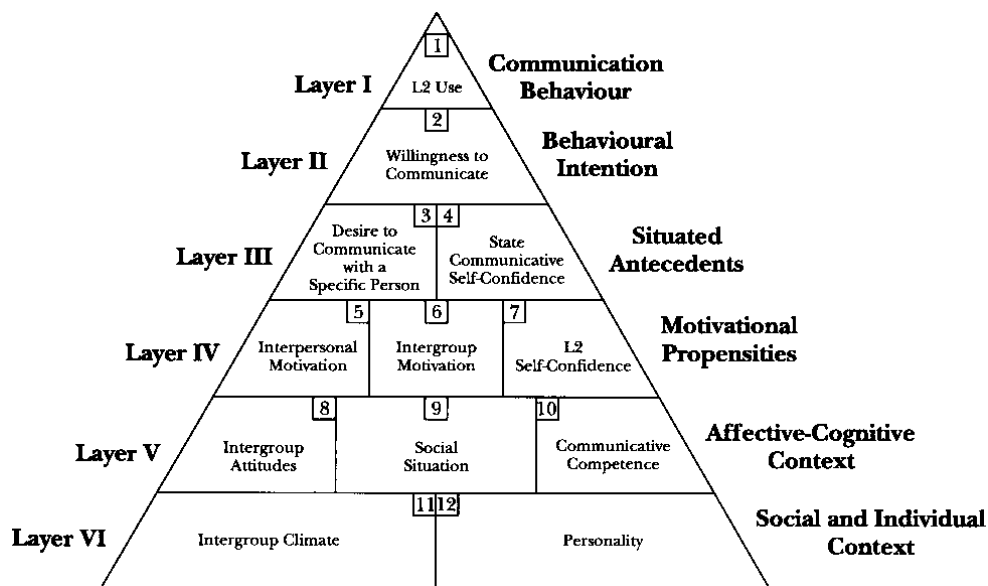


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the WTC construct as proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998).

The development of the construct of WTC from L1 to the L2 model stemmed from the fact that WTC in a second or foreign language becomes more complicated and learner’s communicative competence and language proficiency as two significant factors, indicate his/her WTC. Furthermore “it is highly unlikely that WTC in the second language is a simple manifestation of WTC in the first language” (Macintyre et al. 1998, p. 546). Individual differences are also another characteristic or trait that leads L2 learners to adopt different methods and techniques in learning the target language rather than precisely following the language learning formulation (Dornyei 2005).

Numerous studies have been carried out to demonstrate the factors which can positively or negatively impact learners' WTC in second or foreign language context (Chichon, 2019; Goldoust & Ranjbar, 2017; Khany & Nejad, 2017; Lee, et al., 2019; Ningsih, et al., 2018; Peng, 2012; Ro & Burch, 2020; Shao & Gao, 2016; Tousi & Khalaji, 2014; Zare-ee & Shirvanizadeh, 2014). Zeng (2004) investigated the role of Chinese students' WTC in the EFL Canadian context and discovered a positive relationship between WTC and students' perceived communication behavior. Also, Leger and Storch (2009), via employing a variety of data gathering methods, examined Australian students enrolled in a French course they noticed that the level of anxiety, group size, and inter-group affiliation negatively affected WTC. Cetinkaya (2005) on the other hand, conducted a study on Turkish college students with regard to WTC in the EFL context. The results showed that there was a direct relation between WTC and learners' attitude towards linguistic self-confidence and the international community. Furthermore, personality traits and motivation indirectly influenced their WTC. There was also a correlation between learners' views towards the international community and their own personality. To understand the effect of WTC on EFL learners in the Korean context, Kim (2004) undertook a research. The results demonstrated a direct influence of self-confidence on learners' WTC. Moreover, WTC was more attributed to the personality-based propensity than structural which, in turn, confirmed the reliability of Maclyntre et als' (1998) heuristic model in the Korean EFL context. Likewise, Yashima (2002) examined the role of WTC on EFL Japanese students' speaking ability in the Japanese context using the Macintyre WTC model and Socio-psychological model of Gardner. The results made evident that learners with a high perception level in L2 and a lower anxiety level enjoyed a high level of WTC. Additionally, learners' self-confidence and motivation increased WTC. Following the same path, similar research was performed to identify the impact of WTC on EFL learners in the Iranian context. The results found a direct correlation between learners' WTC and their learning orientations as well as their speaking opportunities inside and outside the classroom (Baghaei, 2011; Zarrinabadi & Abdi, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the predictability of daily class participation of students by reticence and willingness to communicate. Therefore, the current study is going to examine this main purpose through the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between reticence and daily class participation?

2. Is there any significant relationship between WTC and daily class participation?
3. Do reticence and WTC predict daily class participation?
4. Do components of reticence predict daily class participation?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Design and Context of the study**

This is a quantitative descriptive correlational study in which a regression analysis has been used. Reticence and willingness to communicate are predictors variables and daily class participation is the predicted variable.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The statistical population included all Kurdish language students in one Iranian and one Iraqi Kurdistan universities studying English as a foreign language. From this community, the University of Kurdistan (Sanandaj) from Iran and the University of Halabja in Iraq (a Kurdish language university where English is taught) were selected. These two selected universities from Iran and Iraq were better able to cover being Kurdish and being a student in the field of EFL. Therefore, these two universities were selected and the sample was selected from both universities, in such a way that both the sex ratio and the ratio of the number of samples from both universities are observed. According to the age of students, most of the age of students was in those ages that were divided into 3 age groups.

The convenience sample for the current research was selected from among the students of morning and evening classes in the English language department, College of Basic Education, University of Halabja, Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq, and students of the English language Department at the University of Kurdistan Sanandaj, Iran. It comprised 200 volunteers, Kurdish EFL learners, including both males and females. Demographic information is given in Table 1.

Prior to the study, participants were informed about the purpose, procedure and results of the study and were assured of their anonymity. Moreover, they were ensured that the information and the data they provided, would merely be used for the current research purposes. In order to know if there is a significant correlation between reticence, WTC, and participation of the students in the class, they were asked to give their names in the questionnaire, but they were assured their identities would be kept confidential.

Table 1.

*Demographic Information*

Demographic variables	Category	N
Age	18-20	59
	21-23	84
	Above 23	57
Gender	Boy	91
	Girl	109
University	Iran (sanandaj)	103
	Iraq (Halabja)	97
Total	200	

### 3.3. Instruments

The data of the present study came from three different sources:

1. Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale which measures students' predisposition towards approaching or avoiding communication. The WTC scale includes nine situations in which one might choose to communicate or not to communicate. L2WTC in English was tested through twelve items from McCroskey (1992) in terms of contexts of communication (talking in meetings, public speaking, interpersonal conversations, and group discussions) and types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends). The participants indicated the rate (0%–100%) that they would be inclined to communicate in each situation. Scores were the sum of the points that the respondents achieved based on the WTC scale. The Cronbach's alpha of reliability for the instrument in the current study was .93.
2. The Reticence scale (Keaten, Kelly & Finch, 1997). which is consisted of 24 statements was divided into six dimensions of reticence including anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, delivery, memory. The Cronbach's alpha level obtained from this questionnaire in the present study was 0.89
3. The third source of collecting data was a record of student participations in class activities kept by their respective teachers. Two teachers from the University of Halabja who teach English conversation classes in both morning and evening classes kept a record of their students' frequency of participation in their classes throughout 2019-2020 academic year. The other source of data came from an assistant professor teaching different English courses at university of Kurdistan,



Sanandaj, Iran. Students' participations were graded by their respective instructors. The scores were used to know whether their participation in class is predicted through the level of reticence and WTC.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedures**

The above Reticence and Willing to Communicate questionnaires were used to collect the data of the study. It consisted of two scales to measure the level of reticence and willingness to communicate (WTC) plus some demographic questions regarding the age, gender, and university of the participants. Initially, it was intended to distribute the hard copies of the questionnaire among the students of the University of Halabja and University of Kurdistan; however, due to the lockdown because of Covid-19, the researchers were not able to collect the data in this way. A Google Form was developed using the same items and statements of the questionnaire. The link of the Google Form was sent to the target participants via email, and they were asked to complete the form if they are willing to participate. A total of 200 students completed the form after 2 months. After receiving the responses, the data were put into SPSS and analyzed.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

Since the study was a quantitative descriptive correlational study, the sets of quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 18. A regression analysis was applied to run the correlational and prediction analysis. The predictor variables of reticence and willingness to communicate were taken as the variables to predict daily class participation which was the predicted variable.

## **4. Results**

This study was designed to fulfill the following three objectives. First, it investigated if daily class participation had any significant relationships with WTC and reticence. Second, it probed to what extent WTC and reticence can predict daily participation. And finally, it studies to what extent components of reticence can predict daily participation. The present data were analyzed through Pearson correlation and linear regression which assume normality of data, linearity, and homoscedasticity (homogeneity of variances for correlation and regression analyses). The latter two assumptions will be discussed when exploring the research questions.

Table 2 displays the skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios over standard errors. Since the absolute values of the ratios of skewness and kurtosis indices were lower than 1.96, which is the critical value for Z-scores at .05 levels (Field, 2018), it was concluded that the assumption of normality was retained.

Table 2.

*Descriptive Statistics; Testing Normality of Data*

Gender	N	Skewness			Kurtosis			
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Male	Reticence	95	-.160	.247	-0.65	.497	.490	1.01
	anxiety	95	.001	.247	0.00	-.069	.490	-0.14
	Knowledge	95	-.172	.247	-0.70	-.526	.490	-1.07
	timing	95	.343	.247	1.39	.119	.490	0.24
	organization	95	-.420	.247	-1.70	.046	.490	0.09
	Delivery	95	.060	.247	0.24	.827	.490	1.69
	memory	95	-.367	.247	-1.49	.060	.490	0.12
	WTC	95	.163	.247	0.66	-.040	.490	-0.08
	Daily participation	95	-.145	.247	-0.59	.132	.490	0.27
Female	Reticence	105	.301	.236	1.28	-.035	.467	-0.07
	anxiety	105	.178	.236	0.75	.167	.467	0.36
	Knowledge	105	-.087	.236	-0.37	-.446	.467	-0.96
	timing	105	-.221	.236	-0.94	.538	.467	1.15
	organization	105	.220	.236	0.93	-.183	.467	-0.39
	Delivery	105	.157	.236	0.67	-.418	.467	-0.90
	memory	105	-.123	.236	-0.52	-.645	.467	-1.38
	WTC	105	.057	.236	0.24	.233	.467	0.50
	Daily participation	105	.132	.236	0.56	-.243	.467	-0.52

**4.1. Exploring the First Research Question**

Table 3 displays the Pearson correlations between reticence and daily class participation for male and female participants. The results indicated that reticence had negative, significant, and large correlations with daily class participation among male ( $r(93) = -.665$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ); and female ( $r(103) = -.518$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ) groups. The two Pearson correlations were

compared for any significant difference. The results ( $Z^1 = 1.58, p = .056$ ) indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two Pearson correlation indices.

Table 3.

*Pearson Correlations; Reticence with Daily Class Participation with Gender*

Gender		Daily Participation		Z	P
		Male	Female		
	Pearson Correlation	-.665**	-.518**	1.58	.056
Reticence	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	95	105		

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.2. Exploring the Second Research Question

Table 4 displays the Pearson correlations between WTC and daily class participation for male and female participants. The results indicated that WTC had significant and large correlations with daily class participation among males ( $r (93) = .689$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ); and females ( $r (103) = .546$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ) groups. The two Pearson correlations were compared for any significant difference. The results ( $Z = 1.62, p = .052$ ) indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two Pearson correlation indices.

Table 4.

*Pearson Correlations; Willingness to Communicate with Daily Class Participation with Gender*

Gender		Daily Participation		Z	P
		Male	Female		
	Pearson Correlation	.689**	.546**	1.547	.061
WTC	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	95	95		

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1. The two Pearson correlations were compared using the following internet source (16 July, 2020) <https://www.psychometrica.de/correlation.html#independent>

### 4.3. Exploring the Third Research Question

Two separate linear regression analyses were run to probe to what extent WTC and reticence can predict daily class participation among male and female EFL learners. The results (Table 5) indicated that WTC and reticence predicted 53.4 percent of daily class participation among male EFL learners ( $R = .731$ ,  $R^2 = .534$ ). The percentage of prediction for the female group was 38.4; i.e. ( $R = .619$ ,  $R^2 = .384$ ).

Table 5.

*Model Summary<sup>b</sup>; Predicting Daily Class Participation Through WTC and Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Male	1	.731 <sup>a</sup>	.534	.524	10.203
Female	1	.619 <sup>a</sup>	.384	.372	11.433

a. Predictors: (Constant), WTC, Reticence

b. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

The ANOVA tests of significance of the regression models indicated that the model for the male ( $F(2, 92) = 52.71$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and female ( $F(2, 102) = 31.73$ ,  $p = .000$ ) groups enjoyed statistical significance. That is to say, reticence and WTC significantly predicted daily class participation among male and female EFL learners.

Table 6.

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup> Test of Significance of Regression Model; Predicting Daily Class Participation Through WTC and Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Male	1	Regression	10974.541	2	5487.270	52.711	.000 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	9577.291	92	104.101		
		Total	20551.832	94			
Female	1	Regression	8298.154	2	4149.077	31.739	.000 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	13333.904	102	130.725		
		Total	21632.057	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

b. Predictors: (Constant), WTC, Reticence

And finally, Table 7 displays the results of standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients and their t-values. Based on these results it can be concluded that both reticence ( $b = -.403$ ,  $Beta = -.352$ ,  $t = -3.438$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and WTC ( $b = .996$ ,  $Beta = .435$ ,  $t = 4.244$ ,  $p = .000$ ) significantly contributed to daily class participation among male EFL learners. The results also showed that both reticence ( $b = -.391$ ,  $Beta = -.332$ ,  $t = -3.751$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and WTC ( $b = .943$ ,  $Beta = .387$ ,  $t = 4.363$ ,  $p = .000$ ) significantly contributed to daily class participation among female EFL learners.

Table 7.

*Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>; Predicting Daily Class Participation through WTC and Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
Male	1	(Constant)	59.708	12.157		4.911	.000
		Reticence	-.403	.117	-.352	-3.438	.001
		WTC	.996	.235	.435	4.244	.000
Female	1	(Constant)	60.546	10.374		5.836	.000
		Reticence	-.391	.104	-.332	-3.751	.000
		WTC	.943	.216	.387	4.363	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

#### 4.4. Exploring the Fourth Research Question

Two separate linear regression analyses were run to probe to what extent components of reticence can predict daily class participation among male and female EFL learners. Table 8 shows that all components of reticence predicted 46.6 percent of daily class participation among male EFL learners ( $R = .682$ ,  $R^2 = .466$ ). The percentage of prediction for the female group was 27.3 i.e. ( $R = .523$ ,  $R^2 = .273$ ).

The regression model converged in four steps for the male group. On the final step; organization, delivery, and timing remained in the model as the best predictors of daily class participation to predict 45.3 percent of the dependent variable i.e. ( $R = .673$ ,  $R^2 = .453$ ). For the female group, the regression model converged in five steps. On the final step; delivery and timing remained in the model as the best predictors of daily class participation to predict 24.7 percent of the dependent variable i.e. ( $R = .497$ ,  $R^2 = .247$ ).

Table 8.

*Model Summary<sup>b</sup>; Predicting Daily Class Participation through components of Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Male	1	.682 <sup>a</sup>	.466	.429	11.173
	2	.682 <sup>b</sup>	.465	.435	11.111
	3	.680 <sup>c</sup>	.462	.438	11.081
	4	.673 <sup>d</sup>	.453	.435	11.114
Female	1	.523 <sup>f</sup>	.273	.229	12.664
	2	.522 <sup>g</sup>	.272	.235	12.611
	3	.519 <sup>h</sup>	.269	.240	12.572
	4	.513 <sup>i</sup>	.264	.242	12.558
	5	.497 <sup>j</sup>	.247	.232	12.638

a. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, anxiety, Knowledge, Delivery, timing

b. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, Knowledge, Delivery, timing

c. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, Delivery, timing

d. Predictors: (Constant), organization, Delivery, timing

e. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

f. Predictors: (Constant), memory, Knowledge, Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

g. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge, Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

h. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

i. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing, organization

j. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing

The ANOVA tests of significance of the regression models indicated that the model for the male group enjoyed statistical significance at first ( $F(6, 88) = 12.77, p = .000$ ), second ( $F(5, 89) = 15.49, p = .000$ ), third ( $F(4, 90) = 19.34, p = .000$ ), and fourth ( $F(3, 91) = 25.12, p = .000$ ) for the male group. The results also indicated that the model for the female group enjoyed statistical significance at first ( $F(6, 98) = 6.14, p = .000$ ), second ( $F(5, 99) = 7.40, p = .000$ ), third ( $F(4, 100) = 9.21, p = .000$ ), fourth ( $F(3, 101) = 12.05, p = .000$ ) and fifth steps ( $F(2, 102) = 16.72, p = .000$ ) for the female group.

Table 9.

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup> Test of Significance of Regression Model; Predicting Daily Class Participation through components of Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Male	1	Regression	9567.136	6	1594.523	12.774	.000 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	10984.695	88	124.826		
		Total	20551.832	94			
	2	Regression	9564.535	5	1912.907	15.495	.000 <sup>c</sup>
		Residual	10987.297	89	123.453		
		Total	20551.832	94			
	3	Regression	9500.861	4	2375.215	19.344	.000 <sup>d</sup>
		Residual	11050.970	90	122.789		
		Total	20551.832	94			
	4	Regression	9310.496	3	3103.499	25.123	.000 <sup>e</sup>
		Residual	11241.335	91	123.531		
		Total	20551.832	94			
Female	1	Regression	5915.908	6	985.985	6.148	.000 <sup>f</sup>
		Residual	15716.149	98	160.369		
		Total	21632.057	104			
	2	Regression	5887.559	5	1177.512	7.404	.000 <sup>g</sup>
		Residual	15744.498	99	159.035		
		Total	21632.057	104			
	3	Regression	5826.151	4	1456.538	9.215	.000 <sup>h</sup>
		Residual	15805.906	100	158.059		
		Total	21632.057	104			
	4	Regression	5702.909	3	1900.970	12.053	.000 <sup>i</sup>
		Residual	15929.149	101	157.714		
		Total	21632.057	104			
5	Regression	5341.853	2	2670.926	16.724	.000 <sup>j</sup>	
	Residual	16290.204	102	159.708			
	Total	21632.057	104				

a. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

b. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, anxiety, Knowledge, Delivery, timing

c. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, Knowledge, Delivery, timing

d. Predictors: (Constant), memory, organization, Delivery, timing

e. Predictors: (Constant), organization, Delivery, timing

f. Predictors: (Constant), memory, Knowledge, Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

g. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge, Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

h. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing, anxiety, organization

i. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing, organization

j. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery, timing

And finally, Table 10 displays the results of standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients and their t-values. Based on these results it can be concluded that on the final step of the regression model for the male group the following three variables remained in the model as the only significant predictors of daily class participation; timing ( $b = -1.586$ , Beta =  $-.275$ ,  $t = -2.756$ ,  $p = .007$ ), organization ( $b = -1.576$ , Beta =  $-.284$ ,  $t = -2.928$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and delivery ( $b = -1.332$ , Beta =  $-.249$ ,  $t = -2.251$ ,  $p = .013$ ).

Timing and delivery remained in the model on the final step of the regression model for the female group. Their contributions to daily class participation were statistically significant; i.e. timing ( $b = -1.453$ , Beta =  $-.283$ ,  $t = -2.770$ ,  $p = .007$ ) and delivery ( $b = -1.790$ , Beta =  $-.282$ ,  $t = -2.758$ ,  $p = .007$ ).

Table 10.

*Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>; Predicting Daily Class Participation through Components of Reticence by Gender*

Gender	Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	
		Coefficients		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
		(Constant)	106.938	5.827		18.354	.000
		anxiety	-.079	.550	-.015	-.144	.886
		Knowledge	-.441	.634	-.077	-.695	.489
	1	timing	-1.147	.663	-.199	-1.730	.087
		organization	-1.315	.598	-.237	-2.196	.031
		Delivery	-1.008	.589	-.188	-1.711	.091
		memory	-.661	.619	-.125	-1.067	.289
		(Constant)	106.810	5.727		18.650	.000
Male		Knowledge	-.450	.627	-.079	-.718	.475
	2	timing	-1.161	.652	-.202	-1.780	.078
		organization	-1.340	.569	-.241	-2.355	.021
		Delivery	-1.021	.578	-.191	-1.766	.081
		memory	-.669	.613	-.127	-1.093	.278
		(Constant)	106.019	5.605		18.915	.000
	3	timing	-1.319	.613	-.229	-2.153	.034
		organization	-1.451	.546	-.261	-2.658	.009
		Delivery	-1.043	.576	-.195	-1.810	.074



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	memory	-.749	.601	-.142	-1.245	.216
	(Constant)	105.133	5.576		18.853	.000
4	timing	-1.586	.576	-.275	-2.756	.007
	organization	-1.576	.538	-.284	-2.928	.004
	Delivery	-1.332	.528	-.249	-2.521	.013
	(Constant)	96.994	6.786		14.294	.000
1	anxiety	-.349	.603	-.067	-.578	.564
	Knowledge	-.335	.608	-.061	-.550	.583
	timing	-1.017	.586	-.198	-1.736	.086
	organization	-.624	.606	-.130	-1.029	.306
	Delivery	-.987	.789	-.156	-1.251	.214
	memory	-.286	.681	-.048	-.420	.675
	(Constant)	96.218	6.503		14.797	.000
2	anxiety	-.391	.592	-.075	-.660	.511
	Knowledge	-.372	.599	-.068	-.621	.536
	timing	-1.073	.568	-.209	-1.890	.062
	organization	-.668	.594	-.139	-1.125	.263
	Delivery	-1.013	.783	-.160	-1.294	.199
	(Constant)	95.247	6.293		15.136	.000
3	anxiety	-.498	.565	-.095	-.883	.379
	timing	-1.162	.548	-.227	-2.119	.037
	organization	-.726	.585	-.151	-1.241	.218
	Delivery	-1.028	.780	-.162	-1.318	.190
	(Constant)	93.689	6.034		15.528	.000
4	timing	-1.249	.539	-.244	-2.319	.022
	organization	-.856	.566	-.178	-1.513	.133
	Delivery	-1.183	.759	-.187	-1.558	.122
	(Constant)	92.410	6.012		15.371	.000
5	timing	-1.453	.525	-.283	-2.770	.007
	Delivery	-1.790	.649	-.282	-2.758	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Daily participation

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to predict daily class participation based on reticence and willingness to communicate. According to the results of the study, the relationship between reticence and daily class participation was significant and negative between boys

and girls. This means that the more reticent the students are (both boys and girls), the less they will participate in the daily activities of the class. In contrast, the amount of decrease in reticence among students will lead to more participation in daily class activities. The results of the regression analysis also showed that reticence can be a significant predictor of students' participation in daily classroom activities. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers (Asker, 1998; Baktash & Chalak, 2016; Chalak & Baktash, 2015; Chang & Lin, 2019; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Eliason & Turalba, 2019; Jackson, 1999, 2001, 2002; Li, 1990; Li, 1998; Sato, 1990; Shao & Gao, 2016; Soo & Goh, 2017; Tsui, 1996; Van Tuyen, 2017; Xia, 2009; Zou, 2004), who found significant negative relationships between the reticence and daily class participation.

Explaining these results, it can be stated that students' class participation decreases when they become reticent in the classroom due to various reasons such as feelings of anxiety, knowledge of conversational topics, timing skills, organization of thoughts, delivery skills, etc. Therefore, teachers should try to reduce anxiety and increase memory and organize thoughts among them so that they can increase their participation in the classroom.

Willingness and unwillingness to communicate in English as a foreign language classroom have been an issue and the source of controversy for foreign language teachers and learners (e.g. Amiryousefi, 2016; Goldoust, 2017; Peng, 2012; Zarrinabadi, 2014; Zarrinabadi, et al., 2014). Based on the results of the study, the relationship between willingness to communicate and participation in class activities in both groups of males and females was positive and significant. This means that the more willingness there is to communicate among students (both boys and girls), the more they will participate in the daily activities of the class, and the less willingness there will be to communicate among the students, the less they will participate in the daily activities of the class. The results of regression analysis also showed that willingness to communicate can significantly positively predict students' participation in daily classroom activities. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers (Cao, 2010; Chichon, 2019; Donald, 2010; Goldoust & Ranjbar, 2017; Khany & Nejad, 2017; Lee, et al, 2019; Ningsih, et al., 2018; Peng, 2012; Ro & Burch, 2020; Shao & Gao, 2016; Tousi & Khalaji, 2014; Zare-ee & Shirvanizadeh, 2014) who found significant positive relationships between the willingness to communicate and daily class participation.

Explaining these results, it can be stated that students will increase their participation in the class when they have a willingness to communicate. Therefore, teachers should try to increase students' motivation and willingness to communicate so that improving their willingness to communicate can increase their participation in the classroom. In fact, teachers can improve students' willingness to participate in classroom activities by using reinforcement and motivation mechanisms, increasing motivation, and trying to improve their willingness to communicate. As students' participation in classroom activities increases, so can students' willingness to communicate improve?

An important result for the males was related to the components of reticence which was noticed that timing skills, organization of thoughts, and delivery skills among the components of reticence had significant predictive power for participation in class activities compared to other components. Male students with the characteristics of weak timing skills, organization of thoughts, and delivery skills are less willing to participate in daily classroom activities. On the other hand, among girls, timing skills and delivery skills had significant predictive power compared to other components of reticence. Female students with poor timing skills and delivery skills are less willing to participate in daily classroom activities. Therefore, teachers should try to reduce the factors related to reticence. In fact, teachers contribute to reducing the anxiety of students by improving participation in classroom activities.

Liu (2005) believes that, when people speak in a second or foreign language, they become more apprehensive and tense and thus more unwilling to participate in the conversation. It has been found that many second or foreign language learners, especially Asian ones, are passive in language classrooms and choose not to use the target language most of the time, especially when responding to teachers (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jackson, 1999, 2001, 2002(ibid); Li, 1990; Tsui, 1996; Zou, 2004. ibid).

A teacher can closely monitor the students during the class to find out the reasons for reluctance in speaking or participating. In order to help reduce student's reticence, first and foremost, English teachers themselves should be aware of the existence of reticence among EFL learners and try to give more chances and encouragement to the more quiet ones by asking them more questions. In addition, English teachers can prepare more topics which are not only interesting but related to student life so that students have the interest in and ability to talk about them in English (Liu, 2005). Besides, English teachers should try to

establish a friendly, supportive, and non-threatening classroom learning environment, as suggested by Zou (2004), as well as the participants in the present research. It is important for teachers to be welcoming rather than stringent and critical in class, in order to make students feel at ease to speak English, especially when responding to teachers. It is also important for English teachers to teach and train students to be supportive of one another in class. According to Zou (2004), competition often caused anxiety in students to become less willing to speak the target language, while a supportive relationship among students usually made them feel free to do so in class.

Also, Liu (2005) suggested that students should also be aware of and acknowledge the existence of reticence in oral English language classrooms. Accordingly, they should take the initiative to seek strategies to deal with it. Liu (2005) stated, as pointed out by some participants, it is of extreme importance to be independent and active learners both in and outside the classrooms. Only thus will they actively seek and make use of every chance to practice in speaking English to others. This may ultimately help them to overcome reticence at least to some extent. It is also helpful for them to improve their oral English proficiency, expand vocabulary, and be supportive of one another in speaking in English during English lessons.

As the final word of the present study, some points are made for overcoming the problem of reticence in speaking English: Teachers can have an open session with the students about their problems in speaking English; Having group work or pair work that involves speaking English can be helpful in classroom; Classroom teaching techniques can be modified according to students' needs; audiovisual aid can be helpful for teachers to involve the students in speaking; Some common and easy ways of expressions in different situations can be listed and provided among the students to lessen their confusion about what to say in different situations. This may help the students to be more ready in participating conversations.

During the implementations of the study, the research encountered some limitations. The researcher had limited time and opportunity for the study due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus; the samples used in this research may not be able to give a complete scenario. Therefore, there should be more studies finding the reasons for and solutions of the reticence problem. More comprehensive research work should be done in this area to improve the condition of the students.

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