

**The Relationship between Willingness to Communicate and Two Types of Speaking Task:
Narrative and Dialogue**

Shamsi Bagheri Atdersi, Ramin Rahimy

**Department of English Language, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Tonekabon, Iran.**

Shamsi.bagheri72@gmail.com

Rahimy49@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to examine the relationship between WTC and two types of speaking tasks: Dialogue and narrative/monologue. The significance of this study lies in its theoretical contributions to the WTC construct and the pedagogical implications in second language teaching and learning. Sixty one intermediate female EFL learners were selected through an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) from Tabarestan English Institute in Nowshahr. A quantitative research method within a descriptive design using questionnaires was employed. Statistical data analysis methods of Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics were utilized in line with the two research questions. Results indicated a positive correlation between the WTC level and the narrative speaking as well as the dialogue speaking scores, i.e., the high L2 WTC leads to a better performance in L2 speaking skill in general. However, the correlation between WTC and dialogue speaking was stronger than the WTC and narrative speaking, i.e., WTC level affects dialogues better than narrative /monologue. To sum up, it was found that the participants with lower WTC level were weaker in L2 speaking in general and dialogues in particular.

Key Words: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Dialogue and Narrative speaking task,
Individual Difference (ID)

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) is a dynamic field which is changing all the time with revolutions and innovations. Teachers, researchers, and practitioners continuously search for the best teaching materials and practices that can help learners succeed in their language learning (Holi Ali & AbdallaSalih, 2013). In the nineteenth century, major language teaching practice was grammar-translation method which was outdated because new types of immigrants, business people, and tourists created a new kind of classroom population whose needs needed to be considered (Cook, 2003). As a result, new methods, e.g., direct method, emerged because grammar-translation method was no longer able to meet the new ELT needs. The emergence of

communicative language teaching (CLT) method which emphasized the importance of learners' needs and motivation in relation with the context of language use also motivated the significance of learner needs. This has led to the advent of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

It is believed that one of the main goals of L2 education is to create WTC in the language learning process, in order to have learners who are willing to look for and find communication opportunities to communicate. Given the great importance of communication in English, the experiences of the researcher of the present study reveal that some Iranian EFL learners are more willing to speak up in language classes and take part in language class discussions and thus are more willing to communicate. In contrast, some other language learners prefer to keep silent during the entire class period, although they enjoy a good command of English and can be as active as others. Yet, they are not willing to communicate and take part in class debates. This has always been a concern among language educators, teachers and planners of language teaching curriculum, since after all, the learners need to practice in order to learn a foreign language successfully.

A very common problem faced by many language teachers in classroom is the learners' unwillingness to speak. So it is difficult to elicit data from them to check their L2 competence and/or its development. One of the main purposes in learning second or foreign languages for many second language learners is the use of target language for communication. Language use also can indicate successful second language acquisition. When given an opportunity to speak, some learners prefer to speak up and express themselves, whereas others choose to remain silent. Why don't some language-learners-even after studying English for a couple of years-voluntarily speak up in language classrooms? This issue is undeniably important in the field of language pedagogy that deserves to be studied thoroughly. Therefore, understanding the variables that might increase or decrease language learners' opportunities and readiness to speak in language classrooms seems to be relevant in today's context.

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is defined as the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985).

Over the last two decades, SLA researchers such as MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) have all emphasized the importance of WTC as a crucial component of modern language instruction. So, it can be claimed that the notion of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which is actually the intention and desire to initiate communication, plays a key role in learning a second/foreign language; it is possible that learners with higher WTC will have more motivation to take part in dialogues than narrative tasks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A very common problem faced by many language teachers in classroom is the learners' unwillingness to speak. So it is difficult to elicit data from them to check their L2 competence and/or its development.

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is defined as the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) The construct of willingness to

communicate in a second language (L2-WTC) is defined as the “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). In other words, WTC consistently predicts actual initiation of and participation in communication, given the opportunity to do so. Although L2-WTC derives from communication studies examining WTC in the first language (L1), it is “not a simple manifestation of WTC in L1” in the L2/FL context (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In fact, some studies have proven a negative correlation between WTC in L1 and WTC in L2. In 1998 MacIntyre and his associates forwarded a “pyramid” model of L2-WTC showing a range of potential influences on the construct.

A number of factors have also been identified as directly or indirectly predictive of WTC, including personality (MacIntyre&Charos, 1996), L2 attitude and international posture (Yashima, 2002), gender and age, and social support and learning contexts (Clément, Baker &MacIntyre, 2003). Some other factors such as security, excitement, responsibility, and classroom environment and so on, have also been found to have an influence on WTC (Kang, 2005).

In regard to self-confidence, Clément (1986) claimed that it included two constructs: perceived competence and lack of anxiety, and these two constructs represent relatively enduring personal characteristics. In contrast to Clément’s concept of trait-like self-confidence, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested state communicative self-confidence as indicated in Layer III of their WTC model was a momentary feeling of confidence which might be transient within a given situation. Based on earlier research results that introverted people are less likely to communicate than are extraverts, McCroskey and Richmond (1990) have proposed that the personality trait dichotomy of introversion/extraversion is an antecedent to WTC.

In MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) WTC model, intergroup attitudes are interpreted as integrativeness, fear of assimilation, and motivation to learn the L2. Integrativeness and fear of assimilation are utilized here by MacIntyre et al. (1998) to represent two opposing attitudes toward a different language and cultural group. Integrativeness is related to adaptation to an L2 group which may be indicated by increased involvement in frequency and quality with that community. In contrast to integrativeness, fear of assimilation describes an apprehension about losing one’s self-identity by learning an L2, thus resulting in less contact with the L2 community members.

Gender and age have also been found to have an impact on L2 WTC. The effects of gender and age on WTC have been studied by MacIntyre and his associates. McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) found that communication apprehension was significantly related to a person’s willingness to communicate, and that communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence were powerful predictors of willingness to communicate.

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels’s (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in L2 is the most famous model related to WTC and tries to explain the interrelations of affective variables influencing L2 communication behaviors.

A phenomenon that can be considered a counterpart of WTC is communication apprehension (CA). McCroskey (1986, p. 279) defined the term as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety

associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons". Language is a tool for communication. We communicate with others, to express our ideas, and to know others' ideas as well. Communication takes place, where there is speech. Without speech we cannot communicate with one another. The importance of speaking skill hence is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech, a language is reduced to a mere script. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community. We use language in a variety of situations. People at their work places, i.e. researchers working either in a medical laboratory or in a language laboratory, are supposed to speak correctly and effectively in-order to communicate well with one another. Any gap in communication results in misunderstandings and problems.

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels (1998) studied the effects of self-confidence on oral performance. The results of their study showed that the learners' willingness to communicate was determined partly by their self-confidence. Park and Lee (2005) also examined the relationships between L2 learners' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance.

WTC has attracted increasing interest in the SLA field over the last two decades. Factors such as self-confidence, personality, motivation, international posture, gender, and age have been found to play a role in determining WTC. Empirical evidence has also shown that social and learning contexts have an impact on WTC.

A strong movement has been established in the field of foreign language learning and pedagogy of increasing emphasis on meaningful communication. In the past, goal of teaching English was the mastery of structures; however, by developing the communicative language teaching the purpose of language learning is promoting the learners' communicative competence in the target language (Dörnyei, 2005). In spite of this, learners show differences toward communicating in the target language. Some learners seek to communicate in the target language, while others avoid communicating in the second language (L2). On the other hand, "recent trends toward a conversational approach to second language pedagogy reflect the belief that one must use the language to develop proficiency, that is, one must talk to learn" (MacIntyre&Charos, 1996, p.3).

Speaking has been considered as an important skill in language learning by most learners and researchers. Researchers (e.g., Bygate, 2002) often describe it as a complex and multilevel skill. The reason is due to the fact that learners should use their knowledge of the language and activate their abilities to communicate in that language. Yousefi and Kasaian (2014) investigated the possible relationship between WTC and Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. In this way, OPT, WTC test, fluency and accuracy test were employed. The analysis indicated positive relationship between WTC and speaking fluency McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) found that communication apprehension was significantly related to a person's willingness to communicate, and that communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence were powerful predictors of willingness to communicate.

Yousefi and Kasaian (2014) believe that according to the practicality of the English language nowadays, most of people try to learn English. It is observable that majority of learners step in

this way just to learn how to converse and participate in discussions. In other words, they aim to improve their speaking skill.

From the review of L2 WTC studies carried out in different contexts, it can be seen that rapid progress in WTC conceptualization and its measurement have been made, and many influencing factors such as self-confidence, international posture, personality, gender and age have been identified through empirical research. It is noteworthy that a great deal of L2 WTC research has been conducted by MacIntyre and his associates in Western countries, in particular amongst Canadian Anglophone learners learning French. Studies on WTC in an EFL context have also been carried out in a number of countries, including Japan, Korea, and Turkey. However, few studies have been conducted in China, which may have the largest number of EFL learners in the world (Cheng, 2008).

An examination of the methodology that previous studies on L2 WTC have employed reveals that early L2 WTC research has predominantly focused on questionnaires to measure trait WTC. The questionnaires employed in the majority of the studies were adapted from McCroskey and Richmond (1990) or MacIntyre et al. (2001). McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) WTC scale was developed to measure individuals' WTC in an L1, so it included items related to four communication contexts i.e. public speaking, talking at meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads with three types of receivers – strangers, acquaintances, and friends. MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) WTC scale in L2 was operationalized in the four basic skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and it was intended to measure learners' willingness to engage in L2 communication both inside and outside the classroom. This scale has been adapted in a number of studies to include communication tasks specific to EFL classrooms (Peng, 2007).

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is a construct which was first proposed by McCroskey (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Willingness to communicate originally refers to first language (L1) communication. McCroskey et al. (1985) believed that WTC in L1 is a personality trait and argued that individuals show similar WTC tendencies in various situations. Therefore, WTC is a stable and enduring personality trait in L1. WTC is different when seen in an L2 context. Task and teacher's effect on learners' WTC in L2 have not been studied very thoroughly on their own and need further investigation. It has also been found that learners' perceptions of topic and language, task types, familiarity of interlocutors and interaction between interlocutors affected learners' WTC in the context of EFL classrooms (MacIntyre et al., 2011). The effect of WTC can be best studied when the nature of the task changes. For example, a speaking task which is dialogue needs higher degree of communicative involvement than a monologue.

Unfortunately not many ELT teachers accept their learners' affective factors such as learners' motivation and WTC. In NA, (Needs Analysis) not only we must pay attention to the learners' preferences but also we must consider teachers' awareness of those preferences, which plays a considerable role in influencing their decision-making processes and classroom behaviors (Spratt, 1999 as cited in Hyland, 2006). Designing a curriculum which matches the needs of the learners and help them meet the goals of a language course, especially at MA level, can best be achieved by starting with a comprehensive needs analysis.

Considering the existing gaps in the literature related to WTC, the primary purpose of the current study is to examine L2 learners' WTC in an EFL context and the effect of task type. It also attempts to determine the influence of learner variables underlying WTC in English among foreign language learners in language institutes to help them develop their English proficiency more efficiently.

RESERCH QUESTION OF THE STUDY

To comply with the objectives of the study, the following quantitative research questions are addressed:

Q1. Is there a significant relationship between the performances of intermediate level?

EFL learners on monologue speaking task and their WTC?

Q2. Is there a significant relationship between the performance of intermediate level

EFL learners on dialogue speaking task and their WTC?

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Based on the purpose of the study and the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H01. There is no significant relationship between the performance of intermediate level EFL learners on monologue speaking task and their WTC.

H02. There is no significant relationship between the performance of intermediate level EFL learners on dialogue speaking task and their WTC.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

61 intermediate female EFL learners Tabarestan English Institute in Nowshahr were the participants of this study. They were selected based on available sampling. They were between the ages of 15-20, and after taking the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), with the criteria of at least 1 standard deviation below and above the mean, they were selected.

Materials

To comply with the objectives of this study and in order to explore relationship between the performance of a group of Iranian EFL learners in two speaking tasks (narrative and dialogue) and their WTC, the following questionnaires were used as data gathering instruments:

A Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire included two sections: section one with questions to extract some personal and background information about the participants. It included questions about the age, gender, marital status, and educational level of the participants. In order to control variables such as age, level of education, gender, and etc. section one was used. Section two included specific questions about the participants' exposure and previous background in English language.

The Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The OPT (version 1.1, 2001) was used to tap the participants' level of proficiency. It comprised of three parts and 60 questions: The first part included forty questions out of which five were

multiple choice questions, three cloze tests (15 questions), and twenty multiple choice grammar items. The second part also included twenty questions out of which ten were cloze test and ten multiple choice grammar items. In section three of the OPT test, participants were asked to write a topic. Based on the criteria of at least 1 standard deviation below and above the mean, they were selected.

The WTC Questionnaire

The standard questionnaire of willingness to communicate by McCroskey (1992) was used as the main instrument in this study. It assessed language learners' willingness to communicate in English through 20 items (Cronbach's alpha = .94) in terms of three types of receivers, namely friends, acquaintances, and strangers in four situations including public speaking, talking in group, group discussion, and interpersonal conversation. Twenty situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate were given in this questionnaire. The subjects were to indicate the percentage of times they would choose to communication each type of situation. The WTC questionnaire permitted computation of one total score and seven subscores. The subscores relate to willingness to communicate in each of four common communication contexts and with three types of audiences. To compute the scores, the researcher merely needed to add the percentage scores of each participant for each item and divide by the number indicated in criteria given at the end of the questionnaire.

The 20-item WTC scale was administered with instructions which asked learners to indicate how willing they would be to initiate communication on a percentage scale (0-100%) in each of the situations. The anchors were "Never willing to communicate" at one end and "ALWAYS willing to communicate" at the other end. The use of the 0-100 probability response format was chosen over an agree - disagree type format, according to McCroskey (1992), because it allowed the respondent to use a response system common to most individuals. It was used as the measure of success in many instructional systems.

Speaking Tasks

These tasks included an IELTS speaking test part three for the dialogue part, and the IELTS speaking test part two as a monologue or narrative task .These tasks were adopted from Cambridge IELTS 9 and scored based on the holistic and analytical IELTS speaking scoring sheet.

Procedure

First of all, 100 learners from Tabarestan Institute in Nowshahr took the OPT test to be homogenized and then answered the demographic questionnaire. 61 female learners were finally selected. Based on the standard criteria for the OPT test, the intermediate ones with the scores of at least 1 standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. Then the selected participants took the standard questionnaire of WTC by McCroskey (1992).Their scores based on the sum of percentages were set according to the given criteria by the end of the questionnaire.

Next, the participants were interviewed based on the two speaking tasks and their voices were recorded. The recorded interviews were scored based on the analytical scoring system of IELTS and the guidelines for that. Two raters scored the recorded interviews to make sure of the reliability of the speaking scores as the average score between the two scores was selected as the score for the participants' speaking.

One of the main problems associated with oral tests is that they are subjective in nature and that there are no clear criteria for correctness. Some researchers on second language testing had looked into the issue of oral test rating. Shohamy (1983) examined inter-and intra-rater reliability of the oral interview test. She suggested that speaking tests such as the Oral Interview could be used reliably by decision-makers in spite of their subjective nature. Besides, Chalhoub-Deville's study (1995) contended that researchers might need to reconsider employing generic component scales. She recommended a research approach that derived scales empirically according to the given tests and audiences, and the purpose of assessment. The speaking scores and the WTC questionnaire scores were compared using SPSS version 20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistics included the mean, Standard Deviation (SD), range of scores,. Descriptive statistics could be obtained in a number of different ways, using Frequencies, Descriptives or Explore in SPSS.

As shown in Table 4.1, range was the difference between the highest and the lowest score Range= 268 with the highest score= 308 and the lowest 40 for levels of WTC; the mean score for the 61 participants of this study in WTC was 126.58 (M=126.58, SD= 50.36). For the IELTS speaking scores for which a band score of 0-9 was used the descriptive statistics were as follows:

- Narrative speaking task: Minimum score out of 9= 2, Maximum score=8, M=5.26, SD= 1.41)
- Dialogue speaking task: Minimum score = 2, Maximum score=9, M=6.29, SD= 2.02)

The comparison of means between the scores of the 61 participants of this study suggested that in average participants performed better in the dialogue speaking task than the narrative one.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
WTC	61	268	40	308	126.58	50.363
Narrative	61	6	2	8	5.26	1.413
Dialogue	61	7	2	9	6.29	2.022

Inferential Analysis of the Data

Table 4.3 showed the result of the Pearson Product-moment Correlation to investigate the answer to the two research questions of this study and test the formulated research null hypotheses. The r would show the correlation coefficient between WTC level, narrative and dialogue speaking scores.

Table 4.3. Results of the Pearson Product-moment Correlation

Test		WTC	Narrative	Dialogue
WTC	Pearson Correlation	1	.389**	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000
	N	61	61	61
Narrative	Pearson Correlation	.389**	1	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.000
	N	61	61	61
Dialogue	Pearson Correlation	.552**	.667**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	61	61	61

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

The relationship between the performance of Iranian EFL learners in the narrative (monologue) speaking task of IELTS and their WTC level was investigated using Pearson Product-moment correlation and the results were reported in table 4.3. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The results for the first question indicated that there was a positive significant correlation between the level of WTC and the narrative speaking scores of the subjects of this study. Based on Cohen's (1988, p.79-81) guidelines for the strength of correlation (Small: $r = .10$ to $.29$, Moderate: $r = .30$ to $.49$, Large: $r = .50$ to 1.0), the strength of the correlation between the WTC and the narrative speaking scores was Moderate ($r = .38$, $N = 61$, $p < 0.05$).

The relationship between the performance of Iranian EFL learners in the dialogue speaking task of IELTS and their WTC level (Research Question 2) was also investigated using Pearson Product-moment correlation (Table 4.3). The results for the second question of the study indicated that there was a positive significant correlation between the level of WTC and the dialogue speaking scores of the subjects of this study. The strength of the correlation between the WTC and the dialogue speaking scores was large ($r=.55$, $N=61$, $p<0.05$).

Although not a part of the main research questions of the study, it was worth mentioning that there was a significant positive correlation between the narrative and dialogue speaking scores of the subjects ($r= .667$); the correlation was very strong, i.e., the higher the scores of participants on the narrative task, the higher their scores on the dialogue task.

To comply with the objectives of this study, the following research hypotheses were formulated and were tested in this chapter:

H01. There was no significant relationship between the performance of intermediate EFL learners on narrative speaking task and their WTC.

H02. There was no significant relationship between the performance of intermediate EFL learners on dialogue speaking task and their WTC.

According to the results of the correlation analysis (Table 4.3), the first null hypothesis was rejected as a significant positive and Moderate relationship was found between the performance of intermediate EFL learners on narrative/monologue speaking task and their WTC. Also the second null hypothesis was rejected when a significant strong and positive relationship was resulted between the performance of intermediate Iranian EFL learners on dialogue speaking task and their WTC.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The positive correlation between the WTC level and the narrative speaking and the dialogue speaking scores showed that the high L2 WTC leads to a better performance in L2 speaking skill. According to the quantitative data collected in this study, it was found that the participants with lower WTC level were weaker in L2 speaking in general and dialogues in particular. The findings of this study were in line with the findings of the study conducted by Ghonsooly et al., (2013) in that higher levels of WTC affects the performance of the EFL learners in the classroom. Participants in their study were moderately willing to communicate in English inside the language classroom, felt low levels of anxiety, and perceived themselves moderately confident to communicate in English in the classroom. Results of their study showed that WTC was positively correlated with classroom environment and perceived communicative competence, and negatively correlated with communication anxiety. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Park and Lee (2005) who examined the relationships between second language learners' anxiety, self-confidence and speaking performance. They have found that WTC is correlated with the speaking performance of their subjects positively just as the findings of this study indicated.

Within the Iranian context, Barjesteh (2012) found that learners were most highly willing to communicate in two context-types (Group Discussion and Meetings) and one receiver-type

(Friend), which supports the findings of this study, in that the participants of this study performed better in dialogue tasks. Findings of the present study also support Yousefi and Kasaian's (2014) investigation about the possible relationship between WTC and Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. Since in this study, the correlation between WTC and dialogue speaking was stronger than WTC and narrative speaking, it was shown that WTC level affects dialogues better than narrative /monologue. Tousi and Khalaji (2014) also investigated Iranian EFL learners' degree of WTC in English. They found a statistically significant relationship between Iranian learners' WTC and their degree of learning English.

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