

Willingness to Communicate Among Esl/Efl Learners

Surayyo Amonova¹

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the crucial skills that every individual must master in order to succeed in life. When it comes to the process of a foreign language learning, the learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) reveals in various ways. EFL learners frequently come across to a number of difficulties impeding their ability to communicate in a target language. Some of them can be internal factors, such as personality traits. Even though language-teaching methodology has made significant leap forward and diverse speaking-developing environments, like speaking clubs, seminars and so forth are regularly organized, there are still some factors affecting students' speaking ability. Kuhl [5] suggested the theory of *action control*, which has as its basis hesitation, preoccupation and volatility, as the precursors for WTC, which means that individual traits have more influence on a person's wish to speak rather than the situation s/he is in inside or outside the classroom. Whereas Kang [4] after thoroughly studying Koreans living and studying overseas defined WTC as a situational variable, claiming that WTC does not mostly depend on the personality peculiarities, but on interlocutor(s), topic being discussed and conversational context.

In this case study, the main objective was to conduct a comparative research in order to identify whether willingness to communicate in the English language was related to the internal (personality) or external factors (topics, people they talk to, job, etc.). Therefore, the research question of the current case study is as follows, "What has more impact on the English learners' oral performance: individual traits or externalities, such as interlocutors, topics and their jobs?" Miscellaneous researchers have investigated the factors affecting students' WTC by conducting in-depth research and showing clear evidence of both internal and external elements influencing learners' will to express their ideas orally. In order to answer my question, I selected three English learners, who are males and work in the same sphere (programmers), but of different ages: the youngest is 22 and the oldest is 30. After some time of working with them, I realized why one of them was eager to talk to me although from time to time, he experienced lack of vocabulary, and the other two would mostly speak little despite being well informed about the topics. The results, to some extent, were surprising for the author of the current work. She used to think that internal and external factors equally influenced the wish to communicate; however, the former was more influential than the latter.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is inevitable in our day-to-day life. Some people are sociable by nature and readily engage in conversations in their mother tongue, others endeavor to stay unnoticed and speak only when necessary being concise. If to explore the same skill in a foreign language, willingness to communicate is expressed differently because of a number of factors, such as personality types, the topic, the atmosphere to speak and the like. It should be highlighted that as methodology commenced to advance, plethora of methodologists (e.g. Vygotsky, L., & Cole, M., 1978; Dörnyei, 2015; MacIntyre, 1994) put much effort to investigate the nature of communication and through experiments studied learners' WTC in a target language so as to identify language barriers and help the learners eliminate them.

Readiness to interact was said by McCroskey and Baer [8] to manifest itself quite similarly irrespective the situations when there is necessity to communicate as a result of the influence of personal traits. McCroskey and Baer analyzed why some tended to speak as little as possible, whilst others constantly verbalized and concluded that due to peculiarities in characters the degree of WTC in any language varied. Nevertheless, there was a contrary argument from MacIntyre et al. [7] who developed their own model to check WTC. According to them, the extent of WTC in individual's L1 was different to the one in L2. It was noted by MacIntyre et al. that neglecting state factors and accentuating features in character only would not make any study complete. In order to create reliable and effective methods to teach languages by integrating all skills and meeting students' needs it was vital to consider both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Studying the literature about Arabic students learning English illustrated that there were some contradicting opinions, as well. The research conducted by Hopp [3] concluded that educator's motivation made significant contribution to students' wish to converse with their groupmates, whereas the study by Lee-Ellis [6] claimed about personal traits being more influential in this regard. The researcher mentioned about the importance of overcoming fear in order to be able to practice English orally.

The correlation between socio-affective strategies (e.g. asking for correction, discussing one's feeling with others, cooperating with others, using music) and willingness to communicate in L2 was explored by Mehrgan et al. [9]. According to them, "Socio-affective strategies are the types of strategies which are associated with social mediating activity and transacting with others." The researchers examined what socio-affective strategies FL learners would apply

¹ YEOJU Technical Institute in Tashkent

while communicating and how these strategies show the degree of WTC. In order to link the strategies and WTC, the explorers selected two male and female learners and collected the data through the interview. The participants were supposed to choose what strategy they would use in different situations where communication was urgent and according to the results, they made some relevant conclusions. The results of the study showed that the main strategies were cooperation and question for clarification. What was surprising, the strategies applied by a male learner were different to the ones by a female learner. For instance, the former opted for taking risks wisely, whilst the latter was interested about what others thought and was eager to share her own worries. It can be assumed that gender influence in WTC might be compared, however, the study suggests only strategies and not gender role.

As aforementioned, a range of researchers devoted their lives to studying the factors affecting students' readiness to converse and a number of ideas were proposed. Some said that the wish to communicate in a foreign language is mostly dependent on internal factors (personality), whereas others argued that external factors were more influential. All of them came to such conclusions owing to the experiments they carried out.

III. PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

As the purpose to identify what factors have more impact on students' WTC; internal or external, three students were chosen as the subjects of the study. They are all males of different age from 22 to 30; their personality types vary. However, one thing uniting them is that they are all programmers.

Student A comes from a small family. There are his parents, him and his younger sisters. This participant is 30 years old. He is married and has two offspring. He is a front-end developer and mostly leads sedentary lifestyle. Because of this, he regularly goes to the gym in order to keep fit. One of his leisure-time activities is to listen to moralizing stories. He is learning English in order to cooperate with foreign developers and be able to converse with them. This student is outgoing and can easily start a conversation, although while creating a new application or program prefers not to talk to anyone to concentrate. Therefore, people who do not know him may erroneously consider him as arrogant. During the researcher's study, she noticed that he had good background knowledge and could support almost any conversation. What captured her attention was his flexibility while performing oral speech. Several times, he would skillfully switch the conversation to another topic, making a logical connection between previous and current topics.

Student B who is a reserved individual by nature, works as a front-end developer, as well as Student A. He is 27 and comes from the family of 6 – his parents and three siblings. He is still single and wants to get a career promotion before he creates his own family. He opts for staying unnoticed and has only one best friend, who, he says, is enough for him. He does not like meeting new people, either online or face-to-face, even though he does not have to put much effort in order to start a conversation. This learner possesses a surprisingly good sense of humour. In addition, he refuses to talk on the phone or to chat in social networks for a long time. In his free time, he desires to learn more about his job and watches videos related to state-of-the-art methods of creating new programs.

Student C who is a serious person of 22 works as a network engineer. He lives with his parents, grandmother and young sister. This learner may seem reticent to those who do not have close relations with him. However, during her investigation, the researcher found out that Student C may be quite talkative if he is close with this person, which means that he is open to those who are close to him and closed for others. He does not prefer communicating via social networks or phone and appreciates face-to-face communication. He started working as a programmer during his freshman period at university by receiving some orders from his teachers or group mates and gained some experience. While speaking on any topic this student tries to keep the dialogue, as well, as the first one, however, he opts for conversing with someone familiar, instead of a stranger.

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

It was necessary to correctly choose research methods, which would ensure accurate data. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative research methods were widely used. The following steps have been accomplished to make the study complete:

I. Selecting the participants.

In order to gather valid and reliable data, the researcher firstly speculated on selecting the participants of her case and made a decision to choose the representatives of the same job in order to check the effect of a job on a person's WTC in English.

II. Implementing the survey.

Next step was thoroughly thinking on data collection tools. She decided to conduct a survey (Appendix I) consisting of 10 questions (made up by the researcher) related to the extent of communication they use in their mother tongue on a daily basis. This survey was supposed to help the researcher have some ideas about the personality types of the participants.

III. Speaking topics and Observation.

In order to check whether internal or external factors were more influential, the researcher selected 10 different topics (Appendix II) on speaking and prepared a set of questions. The researcher observed the reactions of the participants on the questions and made notes on the number of questions being asked while conversing on each theme. This step was essential to determine whether personality traits (confidence, shyness, reticence etc.) or extrinsic factors (job, topic, and interlocutor) hindered the participants' WTC in English.

IV. Results and conclusion.

After having collected the data, the researcher started to analyze and calculate the results making necessary conclusions.

V. DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

The results of the survey

Survey was conducted to find out how much the participants communicate in their mother tongue in a daily life. It was important to have a picture of their characters and take further research actions. The participants were given a set of questions with three options: YES, IT DEPENDS, NO. The results of the survey were illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Survey results

Participants	Internal factors	External factors	Total
Student A	28	12	40
Student B	6	6	12
Student C	15	11	26

For each YES option, the participants got 6 points, for each IT DEPENDS – 3 points, for each NO – 1 point. The results are as follow: Student A likes socializing (40/50), Student B is reserved (12/50) and Student C (26/50) is talkative only with close friends.

The results of speaking topic

While observing the participants during 10 lessons, the researcher started to realize more clearly, what influenced their WTC in English. The purpose was to observe their attitude to the topics and the researcher counted the number of questions, which were asked from participants (Table 2). Spending one hour on each topic and individually conversing with each students, the researcher checked the link between WTC and a topic.

The influence of the topics on Student A was minimal because this participant could talk endlessly, connecting one topic with another. Lack of vocabulary was not a big barrier for him. If he could not express his point of view, he used to say in his mother tongue at first and the researcher would assist him to accurately translate these thoughts. The fewest quantity of questions were asked from him.

Student B, who is not talkative by nature, faced some obstacles in supporting the conversation and thus the researcher had to “pull” the answers from this speaker. Naturally, this speaker was asked the most questions among the three. If in some cases, he might refuse to answer several questions, in most cases, he limited himself to short responses saying that he did not have any ideas and there used to occur some awkward pauses. This was true for even the topics he was familiar with and had positive attitude to them.

Before starting to collect the data from Student C, the researcher tried to be closer with him in order to receive some fruitful results during the speaking lessons. The researcher found it difficult because Student C was too reticent and needed some time to get accustomed to her. Unlike Student B, who was reserved but could easily get on well with others if he wanted, Student C did not want to open in the beginning. However, in the process of communication, this student started to reveal some trust towards the researcher and managed to support almost all topics, despite being reluctant to a couple of themes. The number of questions did not usually exceed 8.

All of the students were provided with some vocabulary that might come in handy while responding to the questions. Moreover, the researcher wrote new words that the participants used in their speech, which were not given in the list of the useful vocabulary. In order to increase their lexicon, the researcher gave different home tasks, where it was important to use those words. This also helped them to memorize the words effectively. Each lesson during the research the explorer gave a text to retell. This way she wanted to check how these tasks would influence the participants’ speech. As Student B was the least talkative and the most reserved of all, from time to time, she would give the questions of the next topic (e.g. business, family values) beforehand in order for him to gather ideas and be able to support the conversation. However, despite her attempts to make him speak, she did not receive expected results from Student B. Even with the ready questions to answer, Student B did not reveal high level of WTC. Therefore, the researcher had to ask the most questions from him.

Table 2. Topics and the number of questions being asked.

Topics	Student A	Student B	Student C
Music	5	10	6
Family	7	15	8
Names	6	12	7
Business	7	7	9
Arguing	6	9	7
Emotions	7	13	10
Favourites	5	14	9
Shopping	6	17	7

Habits	8	9	6
Sport	5	10	5

The following table demonstrates the reactions of the participants to the topics. Student A adapted the questions if he found them difficult to answer. He would connect the question with his background knowledge or previous experience. Student B disliked the half of the topics, hence, the number of question being asked on those themes was the highest. In contrast to him, Student C was not eager to speak on certain topics, but in majority of cases, he would choose to change the subject and speak more about what made him feel more comfortable.

Table 3. The participants' attitudes to the topics.

Topics	Student A	Student B	Student C
Music	liked	liked	liked
Family	liked	disliked	liked
Names	adapted	disliked	liked
Business	liked	liked	adapted
Arguing	adapted	liked	liked
Emotions	adapted	disliked	disliked
Favourites	liked	disliked	adapted
Shopping	adapted	disliked	liked
Habits	liked	liked	liked
Sport	liked	liked	liked

VI. CONCLUSION

McCroskey and Baer [8] claimed that learners' WTC was influenced by personal traits highlighting that if a person is shy s/he will confront obstacles in communicating with others even though they have sufficient knowledge on a topic. The results of the current case study demonstrated that the scholars were partially correct. Although external factors were not as influential as internal ones, we should not neglect the former. The researcher believes that although a person does not express readiness to speak English, s/he can learn to communicate at least in urgent situations. Moreover, the researcher has concluded that the topic cannot always be an impediment to speak. If a person is sociable, he can make some attempts to maintain the dialogue on unfamiliar to him topics.

Suggestions

Taking into consideration the results of the case study, the researcher decided to make several suggestions:

- Educators should be attentive to the individual peculiarities of their learners and create the atmosphere where students will feel more confident in order to communicate;
- Teachers should try to give a chance to speak to every pupil, not emphasizing those who are eager to speak and neglecting the ones with low level of WTC.

Research limitations:

Although the researcher endeavored to cover many factors influencing students' WTC in the classroom, there were a range of limitations. First of all, as the researcher communicated with them individually, the learners' behavior in pairs and in a group stayed unstudied. In addition, the research does not give any idea about the influence of the interlocutor on the participants' WTC in English because the researcher did not observe their conversation with each other or other people who know English. Therefore, the influence of communicating with peers or different teachers on the students' WTC has not been showed in the current case.

APPENDIX I

Survey questions:

Questions	Yes	It depends	No
1. I am confident when I start a conversation			
2. I support many conversations			
3. I prefer to socialize instead of sitting at home			
4. How I speak mostly depends on a person I am talking to			
5. If I do not like the topic I hardly speak			
6. I try to adapt the topic if it is difficult for me			
7. I can easily make friends			
8. In my job I communicate a lot			
9. Only close people know what kind of person I am			
10. I feel confident while expressing my ideas			

APPENDIX II

The list of the topics and prepared questions:

1. Music.

- What kind of music do you like?
- Are you a good singer?
- Can you concentrate on other things when you are listening to music?
- Can you play a musical instrument?
 - If so, what do you play?
 - How long have you been playing?
 - Are you good at it?
- Can you play the drums?
- Can you play the guitar?
- Can you read music?
- Do you enjoy music videos?
- Do you ever listen to MP3 files on your computer?
- Do you have an expensive stereo system?
- Do you know the band named Metallica? If so, do you like them?
- Do you like all kinds of music?
- Do you like American rock bands?
- Do you like country music?
- Do you like heavy metal bands like Megadeath, Marilyn Manson, and so on?
- Do you like jazz?
- Do you like to listen classical music?
- Do you like to listen country music?

2. Family.

- Tell me about your family.
- Is your family friendly?
- What do you usually do with your family together?
- Who do you look like in your family?
- Who are you close with in your family?
- What should parents do in order to encourage their children to read books?
- Should parents punish their children when they are disobedient?
- What are the duties of a husband and a wife in a family?
- Why do children often grow in a single-parent family?
- How does being brought up by a single parent influence a child?
- What can be done to unite family members?
- Why do some prefer to live alone?
- What are the differences between families now and in the past?
- Is a father or a mother a good advisor?

3. Names.

- What's your name?
- What's the most beautiful girl's name you've heard?

- What's the best boy's name you've heard?
- How did your parents choose your name?
- Are you happy with your name?

If not, why not?

- What are some of the most common names for boys and girls in your country?
- What are some really unusual names you've heard?
- Are there any names you absolutely hate?

If so, what are they?

Why do you hate them?

- Do you think names shape our personality? To what degree?
- Does your name have a meaning?

If so, what does it mean?

- Do you have a middle name?
 - What is it?
 - If you have multiple middle names, what are they?
- In your culture, when you introduce yourself, does the last name come first or the first name?
- Do you have a nickname?
- If so, what is it?
- How did you get it?
- Do you like it?
- What are some interesting nicknames that you have heard?

4. Business.

- What are famous types of companies in your country?
- Has business changed in your country over 10 years?
- What are some benefits and drawbacks in working in a family-owned business?
- Has the Internet influenced the business development?
- What are some impacts of weather on business/
- Is it easy to set up business in your country?
- Tell me about a successful business you know.
- Have you ever tried to set up your own business?
- Why is business important for a country?
- What are some benefits and drawbacks in having a family business?

5. Arguing.

- Do you feel bad after you have an argument?
- What are some reason why people argue?
- What does your family argue about?
- How do you avoid arguments?
- Do you think it is best to argue or just walk away? Shy?
- Do you get along with argumentative people?
- Are you passionate about your beliefs?
- Do you ever try to impose your beliefs on others?
- Do you at times enjoy "playing the devil's advocate" (debating for the fun of it)?

- Do you get along argumentative people?
- Are you passionate about your beliefs?
- Would you describe yourself as an argumentative person?
- What other adjectives would you associate with an argumentative person?
- In your opinion is being argumentative a positive trait or a flaw?
- Are you easily persuaded in an argument?
- Do you ever try to impose your beliefs on others?
- Do you at times enjoy "playing the devil's advocate" (debating for the fun of it)?

6. Emotions.

- Are you annoyed when your partner, husband, or wife flirts with someone else ?
- Do bad mannered people upset you?
- Do you get angry when politicians make promises they can't keep?
- Do you get angry when you watch the news on TV and see all the terrible things happening in the world?
- Does it annoy you when shop assistants try to sell you things you don't need?
- Does it annoy you when someone interrupts you when you are speaking?
- Does it annoy you when someone knows everything better than you and says so?
- Does it annoy you when you are waiting in a long queue and someone pushes in front of you?
- Does it annoy you when your teacher speaks too quickly?
- Does it drive you crazy to always see the same faces and read about the same celebrities in the gossip columns?
- Does it drive you crazy when waiters ignore you?
- Does it drive you crazy when you have invited people to dinner and they come late and the meal is spoiled?
- Does it make you angry when motorists drive too closely behind you?
- Does it make you angry when people make nasty comments about you ?
- Does it make you angry when you have made an appointment to see the doctor at a certain time and he/she keeps you waiting for ages ?
- Does it upset or annoy you when a beggar asks you for money?
- Does it upset you when have to say "No" when someone asks you for help?
- Does it upset you when you see homeless people?
- Does it upset you when you see people hitting children or animals?
- Does it upset you when you see pictures of famines in India, Africa or other countries?

7. Favourites.

- What is your best friend's name?
- What is your favorite animal?
- What is your favorite city in the United States?
- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite country? And why?
- What is your favorite day of the week? Why?
- What is your favorite drink in the summer?
- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite holiday? Why?
- What is your favorite kind of book?
- What is your favorite kind of ethnic food?

- What is your favorite kind of movie?
- What is your favorite pastime?
- What is your favorite proverb?
- What is your favorite radio station?
- What is your favorite season? Why?
- What is your favorite sport?
- What is your favorite television program?
- What is your favorite time of day?
- What is your favorite TV program?

8. Shopping.

- About how much did you spend on presents last year?
- About how much do you usually spend each day?
- Are you a price conscious shopper?
- Are you good at saving money?
- Are you saving money to buy something?
 - If so, what are you planning to buy?
 - How much will it cost?
 - How much longer will you need to save before you can buy it?
- Do banks pay a higher percent of interest here or in your country?
- Do you compare prices at different stores when you shop?
- Do you enjoy shopping?
- Do you ever buy second-hand things? ("used things")
- Do you ever give money to charity?
 - How often do you give to charity?
 - How much do you give?
- Do you gamble?
- Do you give tips at a restaurant in your country? How about to taxi drivers

9. Habits.

- What are some things you do every day?
- What are some good habits you have?
- Do you have any bad habits?
- Can your group give you any advice for your bad habits?
- What is something you should do every day but don't?
- What are some activities you like to do?
- How much do you exercise every week?
- What is a successful life? What habits should you have to have a successful life?
- What three habits will improve your life?
- What are some habits that can improve your English ability?
- What is something you do about once a week, month or year?

10. Sport.

- Do you play any sports?
- Are you a good soccer player? Basketball player? Baseball player? Rugby player? Tennis player?

- Are you a member of any sports team? If not, have you ever been?
- Are you good at sports?
- Did your high school have a good baseball team?
- Do you ever listen to baseball games on the radio?
- Do you jog more than once a week?
- Do you know how to play golf?
- Do you like to exercise?
- Do you like playing tennis?
- Do you like to snowboard?
- Do you like to watch sports on TV?
- Do you like watching car races?
- Do you like wrestling?
- Do you think athletes earn enough money, not enough money or too much money?
- Do you think everybody should practice sports?
- Do you think playing sports helps people work better as a team at work?
- Do you think that parents are too involved in their children's sports activities?

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