

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This article explores learners' perceptions of their speaking ability, contributions to oral class activities in the EFL classroom, and attitudes toward these activities, as well as how these perceptions and attitudes influenced learners' readiness to communicate in the L2. The study used a variety of data collection instruments, but the online interview was the primary source of data. This study included twenty students from the English department (L2). During the online interview, students were asked to reflect on their opinions of problems encountered when studying and speaking in an EFL classroom. It was discovered that lack of vocabulary (35%), fluency (25%), anxiety (15%), grammar (10%), pronunciation (10%), and use of English with peers (5%) are the elements that make pupils feel uneasy when speaking in English. The findings of this study show that students' perceptions of the speaking activities and of themselves as learners in the foreign language classroom influenced their readiness to communicate in a variety of ways. In general, as learners' self-esteem grew, so did their readiness to use the L2 in class

Keywords: EFL classroom, students' perceptions, speaking ability, Willingness to communicate.

INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in second language (L2) teaching that take a communicative approach have emphasized the need for students to

demonstrate proficiency in the L2 through both oral and written means. These methods of teaching are backed by the most popular theories of second language acquisition, which hold that students acquire L2 proficiency through real-world application of what they've learned (e.g., Long, 1996; Swain, 2000). An important concept in second language teaching has emerged as a result of the recent emphasis on students' active use of the L2 in the classroom: communicative competence related to willingness to communicate (WTC).

Students who are "ready to participate in discourse at a particular moment with a specific person or persons, using an L2," as the definition puts it, are considered to be "willing to communicate" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). The ability to speak the target language fluently may not be enough, as pointed out by Dornyei (2003). Students need to have both the aptitude and the motivation to use the L2 for meaningful communication. Learners' WTC affects how often they engage in meaningful conversation in the target language (Cle'ment et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2004). MacIntyre et al. (1998) propose Willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 as a comprehensive conceptual framework for describing, explaining, and predicting L2 communication behavior as the central goal of language instruction.

Early models of WTC (MacIntyre, 1994) highlighted perceived communication competence and communication anxiety as predictors of WTC. It was expected in the model that reduced fear and improved confidence would lead to more WTC and, by extension, more frequent L2 communication. As early as 1998, MacIntyre et al. presented a multi-level pyramid model of WTC. This model disentangles the effects of persistent (such as personality traits) and transient (such as environmental) elements on communicative behavior (e.g., desire to communicate with a specific person). From the communication literature on L1 communication willingness, we learn that factors like as communicators' familiarity with one another, the size of the group, the degree of formality of the event, and the topic at hand all play a role.

Like the early studies on learners' desire to study an L2, the majority of studies on WTC have relied entirely on quantitative findings and data acquired at a single time point using a single instrument. MacIntyre et al. (2003) conducted a massive cross-sectional investigation on the relationship between age and WTC, using a questionnaire with eight measures to assess participants' WTC. This survey was completed by each participant just once.

Recent research has attempted to fill this knowledge gap by amassing data from numerous sources and across time to better comprehend the Willingness to Communicate. Student surveys (self-reports on trait-level variables), eight classroom recordings and observations (over one month), and

end-of-study online interviews with individual students were among the methods utilized by Cao and Philp in their study (2006). Due to the limited sample size ($n = 8$), researchers were unable to draw definitive findings regarding the relationships between learner-reported individual and situational factors and observed classroom behavior. Members of the focus groups cited group size, self-assurance, and familiarity with the interlocutors as the four most influential factors affecting WTC. These results supported those of a separate, more limited study conducted by Kang (2005).

Kang also discovered fascinating information about the students' perspectives on teamwork with native Korean speakers. Given that communicative strategies for teaching a second language stress the need of collaborative work in small groups, this is an especially timely observation. According to Kang, students admitted they were reluctant to use their second language skills in groups made up of native speakers. In response to this 'unnatural' circumstance, one participant said, "I feel like I'm wearing a mask" (p. 284).

Researchers using a sociocultural theoretical framework also place an emphasis on students' dispositions toward pedagogical practices. Learners are seen as autonomous actors in this framework (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) who invest meaning and significance in the world around them. When studying adult classroom settings, the idea of learners as active actors in their own learning is very relevant. Students who fit this description typically have a wide variety of learning aims, expectations, and aptitudes.

In conclusion, the requirement to collect data that capture the dynamic nature of the construct WTC has been highlighted in recent theoretical studies of the construct. Studies that have tried to answer this question so far have mostly been conducted on a smaller scale, and despite collecting data over time, they have barely touched on the question of whether or whether students' views evolved as they learned more. In addition, although attitudes have been identified as a significant component in understanding students' willingness to actively engage to the activity, relatively little study has been conducted on learners' attitudes towards such tasks in the classroom.

It was the purpose of this study to inquire into students' views on their own speaking skills and contributions, as well as their opinions on the various forms of classroom speaking that were utilized. Over the course of the semester, we gave students a number of self-assessment questionnaires to collect data on their initial impressions and any subsequent shifts in those impressions.

The aforementioned background information led to the study's primary research questions: (a) What were the students' perceptions of the difficulties that influence their speaking abilities, and did these perceptions alter over time? (b) What were the students' opinions of their participation during the semester?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Willingness to Communicate

After the first language (L1) was rejected, Burgoon created WTC to assess L2 communication skills (1976). The goal of this study was to investigate the underlying personality characteristics of first language (L1) speakers who are reluctant to initiate or engage in conversation (Burgoon, 1976). The author of the study claims that one's proclivity and aversion to using words in conversation can be anticipated by one's personality.

It was further proposed by McCroskey and Baer (1985) that a lack of readiness to communicate in the L1 may be taken as a positive indicator of WTC in the L2. They contended that WTC is similar to traits like extroversion and introversion in that it describes a person's inclination to use language and make first moves in social interactions (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). The WTC Scale was developed by McCroskey and Baer (1985) with this idea in mind. Items on the scale were divided into four communication contexts (public speaking, meetings, small groups, and dyads) and three types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends).

They underlined that WTC might be affected by both situational and affective factors, whereas MacIntyre, Clément, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) viewed the WTC construct not only as a trait-specific quality, but also as a fluid quality that could vary based on state quality. They went so far as to suggest that raising WTC should be the primary purpose of language instruction, on the grounds that doing so would increase students' L2 communication, hence enhancing their fluency and comprehension of the language. MacIntyre et al. (1998) revealed that WTC is influenced by a range of factors, some of which are under the instructor's control, such as communicative behavior, speech purpose, contextual antecedents, the affective-cognitive context, and the social and individual contexts. As Ellis (2012) stated, there is currently no conclusive study linking a student's WTC to improved learning (p. 324). While it was true that there was no single factor that affects how successfully a person learns a second language, research has shown that individual variations have a role in L2 learning in general (Ellis, 2012), suggesting that WTC as a factor can influence learning.

MacIntyre (2007) highlighted the intricacy of the WTC construct and the necessity to properly describe the variables explored in a more recent examination of the model. Anxiety about communicating can be caused by a number of factors, including the person experiencing it (the anxious person), the setting (such as a language lesson), or an external occurrence. This differentiation is critical for purposes of not just pedagogical intervention but also measurement and understanding of how these factors affect WTC. Situational anxiety may be more susceptible to pedagogical intervention since it tends to be more transitory. In addition, MacIntyre encouraged scholars to employ approaches that can capture the construct's inherent fluidity.

Kang (2005) found in his study that a participant's WTC was influenced by three factors: feeling safe, feeling excited, and feeling accountable. Topic, interlocutor, and conversational context each contributed further influences to these variables. The degree of familiarity one has with one's interlocutors, the number of people in the group, and the level of proficiency in the target language all contribute to one's sense of security, which may be analogous to the feeling of anxiety one has. They all felt less confident and less inclined to speak up when they thought others in the group spoke the language better than they did. Therefore, it was determined that a significant determinant in WTC is a learner's perceived level of L2 competency in proportion to their own. Factors like familiarity with and interest in the topic also had a role in how confident one felt. Learners' WTC improved as their comfort with and enthusiasm for the material grew, as indicated by their higher levels of both. A basic model of situational WTC in L2 was proposed as a result of this research, however it is not dynamic in any way. However, whether or whether students' perspectives on these contextual factors shifted as the semester progressed is unclear.

Speaking in EFL Classroom

Speaking English in an EFL classroom is difficult because students must talk with confidence in a foreign language. Fluency in a foreign language can be demonstrated by a person's ability to speak it fluently. Students frequently experience nerves, lack of confidence, and worry. This condition is known as foreign language anxiety. According to Gardner & MacIntyre (1993:2), language anxiety is the fear or trepidation that a student experiences when expected to perform in a second or foreign language. Anxiety is one of the negative emotions that can potentially detract from students' English-learning efforts. According to Carlson and Buskist (1997:4) in Musthachim (2014:4), anxiety is a feeling of worry or dread that is accompanied by certain

psychological reactions, such as a rapid heart rate, perspiring palms, and a tightening of the muscles that cannot grow their strength. Therefore, the students will not be able to maximize their potential.

The inability to speak up and display knowledge due to fear of public speaking can have a devastating effect on a student's self-esteem. Students' inability to fully grasp the teacher's explanation can be attributed in part to their apprehension of public speaking and presentation. It is linked to feelings of unease, self-doubt, apprehension, and worry, as noted by Brown (1994) in Maulidiyah (2014:22). Students of a foreign language are not likely to make significant progress in their studies if they allow themselves to become overwhelmed by anxiety. Anxiety, as noted by Oxford (1999:66) and Maulidiyah (2014:24), has a deleterious effect on language learners both indirectly, through fear and trepidation, and directly, through reduced engagement with, and outright rejection of, the target language. Arnold and Brown (1999) in Maulidiyah (2014:24) made a similar point, arguing that students' negative emotions and low performance form a vicious circle in the classroom when fear arises. In a similar vein, Kondo and Yong (2004) in Maulidiyah (2014:24) warned that worry about speaking a foreign language could impair students' progress in learning the language. In addition, as argued by Gregersen (2005) in Maulidiyah (2014:24), anxious students have trouble providing suitable responses to their own mistakes.

The educator should have techniques to calm the anxiety of the students. According to Kreshen (2003) in Sulastri & Ratnawati (2018:424), a person's language proficiency is affected by many variables like as fear, worry of making a mistake, lack of confidence, anxiety, and other emotional factors when learning English remotely. According to Crookall & Oxford (1991), cited in Fujii (2016:10), both the teacher and the pupils must regard themselves as a partnership and as working together to overcome hysteria, so that neither sees the other as a supply or a problem, and both may work together to address the same issue. Rather than only counseling students on how to improve their English skills, teachers may be compelled to engage them in a comprehensive discussion about their current difficulties pertaining to their anxious feelings.

Students' nervousness in speaking to perform in front of the class, the teacher, or another student may have an impact on language learning and their capacity to grasp a foreign language, among other things. Based on this premise, this study examines the foreign language anxiety of first-grade vocational high school students. The objectives of this study are to determine the causes that cause students to feel nervous when learning English, the

degrees of anxiety students experience when studying English, and the solutions students use to minimize their anxiety.

Recent research and theoretical discussions on what motivates language learners have emphasized the importance of students' attitudes toward classroom assignments and activities. Examples of more contemporary models of motivation include one by Do rnyei and Otto (1998), which emphasizes the role of situational dynamics in explaining learner behavior in the classroom (such as integrative or instrumental orientation). Accomplish rnyei and Kormos (2002) found that in both British and Hungarian classes, students' attitudes toward the language tasks they were forced to do significantly correlated with the number of words and turns they used during classroom speech exercises.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participant

Fifteen male and five female students were recruited for this study, for a total of twenty participants. They were selected based on their age and participation in online learning activities.

Participants are students from one Indonesian university, Universitas Negeri Medan. They are students enrolled in the Art and Language Faculty of English Department. With the lecturers' approval, the announcement regarding participant recruitment for this study was distributed via WhatsApp. Their ages ranged between 19 and 22 years old. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table I.

TABLE I: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHY

Participant	Gender	Age	Department	Semester
P1	Male	20	English	4 th
P2	Male	20	English	4 th
P3	Male	21	English	6 th
P4	Male	21	English	6 th
P5	Male	20	English	4 th
P6	Male	22	English	6 th
P7	Male	22	English	6 th
P8	Male	22	English	6 th
P9	Male	20	English	4 th
P10	Male	20	English	4 th
P11	Male	19	English	2 nd

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN EFL CLASSROOM

P12	Male	19	English	2 nd
P13	Male	21	English	4 th
P14	Male	20	English	4 th
P15	Male	20	English	4 th
P16	Female	22	English	6 th
P17	Female	21	English	6 th
P18	Female	20	English	4 th
P19	Female	20	English	4 th
P20	Female	22	English	6 th

Research Procedure

The methods for acquiring the data were carried out in stages. First, the authors outlined the objectives of the study and solicited the students' participation. After participants agreed to participate in this study, a Google form survey was distributed to them. After completing the Google form-based written online interview, the next step was scheduling the online interview.

The online interview was scheduled based on the participants' availability. The online interview was conducted via Whatsapp and Zoom video calls. The online interview was taped for the study of the application. Each online interview lasted twenty to thirty minutes. The online interview data was listened to multiple times before being written down or transcribed into tables to facilitate identification and classification. The online interview was conducted in English.

Data Collection

There were two methods employed for data collection. The first method is a written online interview using a Google form, and the second method is a virtual online interview via Whatsapp video chat and Zoom. The semi-structured virtual online interview investigated the participants' perceptions of their difficulties of speaking in L2 and some aspects that influence them to communicate in L2.

During the online interview, the participants answered the questions without hesitation. Because the author and online interviewer had previously developed a tight relationship. The author and participants have the relationship of instructor and pupil. They frequently discussed topics outside of academics. Thus, the author could investigate more participant information. Following participant online interviews, the next stage was data analysis. However, prior to data analysis, the authors provided the participants opportunity to review the online interview data (member checking). This measure was taken to increase the data's credibility and maintain the integrity of data reconstruction.

Data Analysis

Using thematic content analysis, the data collected were analyzed. This theme analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of "what has been told" rather than the story's structure. In addition, it was utilized to identify difficulties and experiences based on particular themes. The analysis centered on repeatedly reading the online interview transcript to comprehend the meaning and story discourse. The transcript was then coded based on the themes, subthemes, and any other potential themes that emerged.

The data were then evaluated using critical discourse analysis to determine the correct interpretation of each participant's utterance. The goal of this approach was to investigate the meaning inherent in data as empirical text. In addition, Halliday underlined that a phenomenon can be translated through meaning, word order, and experience within a particular social and situational context. The data in this study contain social functions that cannot be isolated from their social and cultural contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The online interview was to find out students' perceptions about of the difficulties that influence their speaking abilities in speaking in EFL classroom. These difficulties influence their willingness to communicate in L2.

Table 2. Student's Perceptions of Their Difficulties in Speaking L2

Perceived weaknesses	Frequency	Sample comments
Vocabulary	7 = 35%	"Basic vocabulary," "limited vocabulary," and "lack of confidence in spontaneously employing less common phrases" are all phrases that describe those with "limited vocabulary."
Fluency	5 = 25%	"Introducing my ideas simply"; "speaking consistently and clearly"; "phrasing in a way that allows me to consider the vocabulary I know"; "taking a long time to build a sentence"; "not knowing how to elaborate on a topic"
Anxiety (hesitation, fear, and lack of confidence)	3 = 15%	"My hesitation, fear of mispronouncing things," "greater confidence in my participation," and "a lack of confidence to utilize less familiar

		phrases spontaneously"
Grammar	2 = 10%	Grammar, particularly gender and conjugation; stressing about correct grammar; grammatical concerns.
Pronunciation	2 = 10%	Meaning of the word, "pronunciation" or "accent"
Use of English	1 = 5%	"Conversing in English with Peers"

There were eight questions in the online interview to find of student's opinion of their participation in EFL classroom.

Table 3. Student's Opinion of Their Participation In EFL Classroom

No	Question	Result
1	How do you feel while you are in the classroom studying English?	All of the samples indicated that studying English makes them happy.
2	What is the most bothersome aspect of your English classroom experience?	There is nothing that concerns three of the examples when they are studying English in the classroom. Two of the samples indicated that the most bothersome aspect of English study is the noisy classroom. - According to one of the samples, the most frustrating aspect of studying English is not understanding the topic.
3	Do you know why you're so tense in English class?	Seventeen of the samples reported feeling nervous when they do not comprehend the material provided by the English teacher. Three of the pupils responded that his anxiety in English class stems from his mindset.
4	What do you believe your peers will do if you make an error in English class?	All respondents indicated that their classmates will either laugh at their error, attempt to correct it, or simply disregard it.
5	Do you believe English is a challenging language to master?	All of the examples said that English is a challenging language to learn since they had trouble pronouncing words and comprehending the information.
6	Does your instructor affect your mood when learning English?	All of the examples responded affirmatively, since if the teacher is bored, the students will not be motivated to learn.
7	Do you have any	All respondents indicated a preference for a

suggestions for making English learning more enjoyable?	lighter, more fun learning experience, particularly through the use of educational games.
8 How do you handle public speaking anxiety?	All of the samples reflected a need for further effort, including rehearsal of pronunciation, speaking in front of a mirror or with friends, expansion of vocabulary, and internal drive before presenting in front of peers.

Discussion

Based on the previously conducted online interview, the writers determined the score for the twenty student participants. According to participants, there were six levels of speaking challenges, including vocabulary 35% (seven students), fluency 25% (five students) 15% (three students) on anxiety, 10% (two students) on grammar, 10% (two students) on pronunciation, and 5% (two students) on use of English (one students). It indicates that the majority of students have encountered difficulties with vocabulary when speaking English.

On the basis of the online interview data, conclusions were drawn regarding the causes of student worry. The first student has less English class preparation. Students' anxiety in English class is primarily caused by their lack of preparation, as they fear being questioned by the instructor on the material. The second circumstance is when pupils fail to comprehend the material delivered by the educator. The third consideration is whether or whether the pupils have a negative outlook when speaking, such as a fear of mispronunciation, misspelling, and using improper words for the topic, and a worry that their classmates would laugh at them if they make mistakes. When required to speak English in front of their classmates and teacher, many students feel awkward and uneasy. Medicinal variables such as apprehension, fear of making an error, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, and other emotional aspects have an effect on one's language proficiency, according to hypothesis from Karshen (2003) in Sulastri & Ratnawati (2018:424).

The online interview data also showed that all of the students mentioned four methods for lowering their speaking anxiety: practicing English pronunciation; trying speaking in front of a mirror or with friends to boost confidence; increasing vocabulary knowledge to know which words are appropriate to use in speaking; and boosting motivation by cultivating a positive mindset. Students who are self-motivated and pay great attention to

their English studies reportedly have a much lower fear of public speaking, according to Sulastri and Ratnawati (2018: 427).

We can infer that the students' nervousness was influenced by several factors, as shown in Table 2 above: their level of understanding of the material, the classroom environment, their fear of being ridiculed or corrected by their peers, their inability to correctly pronounce the words, their teacher's excessive focus, and the teacher's lack of interest in the learning process. Students who suffer from public speaking anxiety have found that practicing their pronunciation in front of a mirror or with friends, increasing their vocabulary, and finding the motivation to speak in front of their peers are all effective strategies.

CONCLUSION

Twenty students participated, and their scores were established by the authors based on an earlier online interview. Vocabulary (35%), level of fluency (25%), anxiety (15%), grammar (10%), pronunciation (10%), and use of English (10%) were all cited as factors limiting students' oral communication skills in the EFL classroom (5 percent). The findings revealed that the majority of students lacked self-assurance in their English language skills, including their ability to spell, pronounce, and select words, as well as their fear of falling behind in the material or what the teacher was discussing, their fear of making mistakes, their fear of being ridiculed by peers, and their ability to speak confidently. There are four strategies that students take to calm their anxiety before public speaking: Students can boost their motivation and self-confidence when their teacher asks them to speak in English by doing the following: practicing the words in English, speaking in front of a mirror or with friends to build self-confidence, expanding their vocabulary to know which words are appropriate for speaking, and cultivating a positive mindset.

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN WILLINGNESS TO
COMMUNICATE IN EFL CLASSROOM

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