EFL and ESP Leaners and their Willingness to Communicate in an Iranian Setting

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Abstract: *This study was going to delve into significant difference between English foreign language and English for specific purpose learners' desires to take part in discourse activities, their willingness to communicate. It also tried to investigate if there was any difference between male and female undergraduate learners of these two groups in term of their willingness to communicate. To these aims, 54 English for specific purpose learners (25 females and 29 males) studying in computer engineering at Shiraz Engineering University, Iran, and 61 English foreign language learners (34 females and 27 males) studying in English literature at Shiraz Humanities University were selected randomly during the academic year of 2014-2015. They filled out willingness to communicate questionnaire developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001) .Applying an independent t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between English foreign language and English for specific purpose learners in term of their willingness to communicate. Another independent t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female undergraduate learners of the two groups.*

Keywords: *Willingness to communicate (WTC); English foreign language (EFL); English for specific purpose (ESP)*

Introduction

Willingness to communicate shows learner's optional inclination to be a partner in a conversation that facilitates language learning. McCroksy and Richmond(1987) stated that lack of WTC or being a weak communicator is not socially acceptable.(cited in Moazzam, 2014).WTC indicates " being willing to communicate is part of becoming fluent in a second language , which often is the ultimate goal of L2 learning." (MacIntyre and Doucette 2010, p. 1).WTC may not depend on learners' proficiency in a second language as MacIntyre et al. (1998) believe that a learner with high level of proficiency in a second language may not will to communicate but another learner with low level of proficiency seeks opportunities to communicate. A lot of factors affect WTC which have been investigated during last 20 years. Cameron (2013) examined that WTC was not a stable characteristic and changed in different contexts that these contexts increased or decreased WTC. Cameron added that in the EFL contexts a lot of research has been done in countries such as Korea, China, Japan and the variables that influenced WTC "variables such as self-confidence, personality, attitude, international posture, gender and age, and social and learning context have also been isolated as

possible affective/ individual and social variables which may have an influence on WTC" (Cameron 2013, P. 178). Cao (2013,p.172) in a longitudinal study in New Zealand investigated dynamic nature of classroom WTC and the elements that influenced WTC, these elements varied over time. She considered three dimensions, individual characteristics such as "self-confidence, personality, emotion and perceived opportunity to communicate"; classroom environmental condition such as "topic, task, interlocutor, teacher and group size"; and linguistic factor". She concluded that when these three factors combined together, they oscillated in different situations. WTC varied in L2 among different tasks in a lesson. Based on these findings we can conclude that teachers should create an atmosphere that contributes to motivate students with interesting topics and shift teacher-centered approaches to learner-fronted ones and also support them. Ketabdar et al. (2014) conducted a study to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and WTC among Iranian EFL learners and results showed that there was a positive correlation between WTC and four factors of emotional intelligence that was, interpersonal relationship, empathy, assertiveness, and emotional self – awareness. The reason may be that a learner with high emotional intelligence aspires to learn socially rather than individually. Alemi et al. (2011) carried out a research to find out the relation between language proficiency, language anxiety, and WTC among Iranian EFL learners. Contrary to previous studies by MacIntyre et al. (2005) and Yashima et al. (2004) the results showed that anxiety did not have any effect on the way the learners decided to participate in communication. So the correlation between anxiety and WTC was not meaningful. Again contrary to previous studies by Matsuoka and Evans (2005) that there was not a positive correlation between proficiency and WTC, Alemi et al.'s research reported that learners' proficiency caused high WTC. So they believed that teachers should support learners to raise their language proficiency. Maftoon and Najafi (2012) made an attempt to examine WTC among kids in an Iranian setting. They selected two two – year old sisters (non-identical twins) who started to learn English in addition to their mother tongue. Seven months later, one of the twin showed a high degree of WTC with the score of 90 (90% interest in communication with others). She had progressed a lot   and was "careful, extrovert and group oriented". But the other twin's total WTC was 70.It indicated that her WTC was not high and her L2 developed in the sentence level. Her characteristics were "introvert, reticent, less careful and delayed responder". They came to this conclusion that WTC was a personality characteristic that influenced L2 development in kids. The pedagogical implication of this study was that there was a high relation between WTC and l2 development. Yashima (2002) depicted an L2 communication model and argued that attitude toward the international community and culture (international posture) in a Japanese setting had effect on motivation that it in turn impacted on L2 proficiency. This proficiency raised confidence in L2 that resulted in high WTC in L2.

What Is English for Specific Purpose?

 Based on Johnson and Johnson (1999, p. 105) ESP is a wide area of English language teaching "ESP describes language programmes designed for groups or individuals who are learning with an identifiable purpose and clearly specifiable needs." The purposes and concerns of ESP are to fit

learners to use English properly in the future and can communicate in the tasks that they are going to complete. So most writing has focused on the ways and procedures of ESP which are related to course and syllabus designs and also learners' need rather than theories of ESP. (Dudley Evans and St John 2005, p. 1). Since 1960 ESP has become one of the branches of English as a second or foreign language that they are themselves as the branches of English language teaching. Its purpose is learning English in order to be used in different contexts and situations. The main reason why ESP has have a permanent developed movement is in need of English as an international language and its influence in branches such as science, technology and business (Dudley Evans and St John 2005, p. 19). Hutchinson and waters (1993) stated that ESP originated and progressed for three reasons.1. The development of science and technology and a need for international language.2. Because of some changes in many disciplines, a shift happened in linguistics too from usage to use. The focus of traditional linguistics was on the usage and rules rather than use that is different forms of a language which are used in different contexts so language of engineering is different from that of commerce.3. Learners were placed in the center of education. Since they are motivated by different needs and interests with varieties of strategies and attitudes and also the materials have to be in accordance with their needs. The fundamental question of ESP is why a learner should learn a foreign language. The answer is only one word "need" .Need refers to the reasons that cause a learner to learn English " English in oil company, English in medicine, English in academic setting, English in banking and every day conversation" (Basturkman 2006 , p. 15). Basturkman (2006) in her book explains what has happened and influenced on its teaching and research area from the birthday of ESP and also determines the range of choices that recently exist in ESP. The approaches that are used in teaching ESP are genre-based, drawing learners' attention to text types, and deep-end classroom methodology. The first approach places stress on text types that are used in target discourse communities, that is groups of learners who intend to enter in order to develop their English proficiency not only by using language among themselves but also with outside world. So they make progress in specific communicative practices like the members of those communities. Genre based approach is going to put learners in their target discourse communities, that is academic, professional, and workplace. The teaching process of traditional approaches was in order of presentation, practice and performance but the second approach of ESP that is, deep- end strategy starts with production so the learners perform with minimal or no input, if necessary instruction can be taught where there are some problematic issues for the leaners. There are a lot of types of syllabuses in ESP. Ur (1996, p.179) defines syllabus in this way, what is going to be taught and the order in which the content is to be learnt. It may also contain a time schedule, methodology, and needed materials. What syllabus does into a course is to divide the content of a course into manageable units based on particular criteria. The different types of syllabi that can be used in ESP courses are "topic or theme, structural/situational, functional/notional, skills, situational, functional/task based, discourse/skills, and skills and strategies syllabuses" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1993, p. 85-88). Which one of these is used in ESP courses depends on the course designers, practitioners, and the purposes of teaching English in a country. An ESP practitioner plays these roles: first s/he is called practitioner because s/he does much more than teaching as a teacher

because s/he helps learners to learn as a course designer and materials provider s/he providers the materials as a collaborator with subject specialists as a researcher and an evaluator (Dudley Evans and St John 2005, p. 13).A practitioner should be aware of research in the areas of needs analysis, course designer, and materials development and apply these results and findings in the course. S/He as a researcher should try to search some strategies to raise learners' WTC that causes language learning. Evaluation of ESP is very important and necessary in order that we understand whether the aims of the ESP courses have been fulfilled and also if the program can be continued. A new model of evaluation of ESP has been suggested by Watanabe, Norris, and Gonzalez-Lioret (2009) that not only evaluates program and assesses learners it also considers many issues too such as learner need, authenticity and its subcategories, learner autonomy, authentic assessment like performance assessment and learner transfer to an academic course and to workplace and even teacher participant and empowerment (Tsou and chen, 2014). Bracaj (2014, p.41) emphasizes that most universities in the world try to organize courses to fulfil the cosmic needs and also to grantee the students' future career needs.

Research questions

1. Is there any significant difference between English foreign language and English for specific purpose undergraduate learners in term of their willingness to communicate?
2. Is there any significant difference between males and females of these two groups in term of their willingness to communicate?

Methodology
Participants

The English foreign language participants were 61 (34 females and 27 males).These undergraduate learners were from 19 to 40 years old with an average of 22 who were majoring in English literature at Shiraz state university. The English for specific purpose learners who were majoring in computer engineering in a state university were 54 (25 females and 29 males).These undergraduate learners were from 19 to 27 and the range of their age was 22. Both groups were selected randomly.

Materials
A questionnaire developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001) (See Appendix) that assesses four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) was used. It is a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that contains 27 items from 1=almost never willing to 5= almost always willing. MacIntyre et al. (2001) reported the reliability of the skills in this way: speaking (α=.79), reading (α=.80), writing (α=.82), and listening (α=.81). The participants marked the items anonymously and they only wrote their age and major.

Procedure and Results

The WTC questionnaire was applied to measure the participants' inclination in communication inside and outside the classroom. In order to answer the first research question an independent t-test was used to measure whether there was a significant difference between the ESP and EFL learners. Here are the results:

Table No.1 Group Statistics

major		n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	ESP	54	84.46	18.671	2.541
	EFL	61	88.20	16.244	2.080

Table No.2 Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
sco res	Equal variances assumed	.575	.450	-1.147	113	.254	-3.734	3.256	-10.184	2.716
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.137	105.845	.258	-3.734	3.283	-10.244	2.776

There are two different significance values. We consider the significance value of Levene's test that is .450 .This value is greater than .05 (our level of significance) and not significant, and consequently we should accept the first row in which variances are assumed to be equal. As you observe the value is .254 that is greater than .05 so we draw a conclusion that there is no difference between ESP and EFL learners in their WTC. In order to reply the second research question, that is the relationship between their gender and WTC another in- dependent t-test was applied.

Table NO.3 Group Statistics

gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean

female	59	87.14	17.518	2.281
male	56	85.71	17.503	2.339

Table NO.4 Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
scors Equal variances assumed	.220	.640	.435	113	.664	1.421	3.267	-5.051	7.894
Equal variances not assumed			.435	112.698	.664	1.421	3.267	-5.051	7.894

Similar to previous result there are two different significance values, we have to look at the significance of Levene's test that is .640 .Its amount is more than .05 (level of significance) so the first assumption that states variances are equal is acceptable for us. The significance of the first row is .664 that is greater than .05.Therefore we arrive at this conclusion that there is no significant difference between males and females of the ESP and EFL learners in term of their WTC.

There was no significant difference between the ESP and EFL learners. The EFL learners showed WTC because of their major and they knew that the best way of learning English is to raise their WTC and communicate with others. There are some reasons why the ESP learners also showed WTC. These computer engineering learners study in a state university that accepts only the students through university entrance examination with high and good ranking. Because of their major they deal with English a lot and they need to be to some extent proficient in English, that is there can be a relation between proficiency and WTC. This reason can be consistent with the research by Alemi (2011) that there was a straight correlation between proficiency and WTC. She states that "the students' language proficiency appears to contribute to their participation in communication" (Alemi et al.,2011, p. 160). These students may become

instrumentally motivated because they need to learn English due to their future job. Matsuok and Evans (2005) reported that instrumental orientation might affect WTC in English, but integrative orientation contributed to English proficiency. Halliday (1973) argues that people use language for two reasons referential and instrumental functions of language. Referential function of the language means conveying facts and knowledge; the second means language is used to have things done (cited in Basturkmen, p.22). Another reason is that these learners may have high level of confidence and self-efficacy that lead to will to take part in discourse activities. This reason is supported by Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) that expresses self-confidence is one of the variables that has a positive correlation with WTC and self-confidence can be a result of lack of anxiety but to possess high risk taking. Based on this model social status or social class is an element that can impact on WTC.As I stated, these learners possess a high social class in society. Maybe if this research is replicated in another place with another group of ESP it will have a negative correlation with present one because there are a lot of shortages in ESP courses in Iran. What is the situation of ESP in Iran? Do the practitioners consider the principles that were mentioned earlier? Very few learners in Iran become fluent in English during high schools so they enter the universities with a low proficiency in English. I observed two ESP classes, at Orumia state university, Iran, one class was majoring in physical education and the other class in history. The teacher entered the class and greeted in Persian then he read the passage and translated it into Persian, the syllabus was pure grammar translation method. There was no interaction in the class among teacher-students and students-students. The students tried to take notes on the translation. In a semi-structured interview I asked the students about their feelings and opinions. They were not satisfied with the classes and said that they had to take part in the classes to pass their exam without any motivation. They explained that final examination contained some sentences that they had to translate into Persian and also some exercises of the book. It was logical that the learners were not inclined in communication. Unfortunately ESP classes have been limited only to some texts which have been translated into Persian and some lists of vocabulary for memorizing. These classes neither reflect learners' interest nor contribute to motivation. The practitioners of ESP have to consider some points.1.applying a learner-fronted approach 2. Preparing learners for professional communication by selecting ESP proper courses and syllabus design 3. considering the most factor in ESP that is, learners' need and interest.AS Sysoyev (2000) supported the above sentences " designing a course that can best serve students' interests and needs is an obstacle for many instructors because they should answer these questions: How can teachers develop a new course? Where should they start?? What can be done about students' poor motivation? How should teaching materials be selected?" In Iran there are not opportunities for us to have subject specialists that collaborate with the English teachers to teach the subject matter in ESP classes. The English teachers have to teach not only English but also special technical terms. So the course designers should provide these teachers with necessary training and education. Needs analysis means some strategies and procedures

instructors use to gather and evaluate data which are related to course design. So it is a tool of creating these questions the *how* and *what* of a course (Hyland, 2006, p. 73).

Conclusion

We live in the era of communication and we need to share our thoughts and information. This issue reveals the importance of communication. That's why the modern teaching approaches pay much attention to it. They aim to train and educate learners who can use the different appropriate forms of a language in different real occasions. The starting point is to create rapport and atmosphere that the learners will to communicate. The suitable atmosphere is very essential and fundamental because teachers intend to make learners feel safe and do not fear of making mistakes or losing their face in other words, the aim is to raise their willingness to communicate. Riasati (2014) in his article tried to gather the reasons that different researches have collected through interviews and observation why some learners refused to participate in communication and discourse activities . The most important reasons were:" fear of public failure, fear of making mistakes, low English proficiency, lack of self- confidence, unfamiliarity with the interlocutor and environment, unfamiliarity with task, teachers' teaching style." Teachers should remove the obstacles that cause to lessen students' WTC. When they feel that their teachers support them they will be keen on taking part in tasks and discourse activities and commence to communicate. So the aforementioned barriers are eliminated. Fani and Ghaemi (2011) remind us important points exist in the heart of Vygotsky' theory .Scaffolding is very popular among educators and practitioners; attending in social behavior, like WTC, result in a level of development and growing cognition. The role of ESP teacher is more complicated than EGP (English for general purpose) because as said earlier, ESP teacher's role is more complicated.

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APPENDIX: THE QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Participants:

 This questionnaire shows your feelings and tendency about communication with other people, in English. Please indicate the frequency of time you choose to speak in English in each situation (adapted from MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001).

Sex: Male -----------   Female ---------   Age: ----------
1 = Almost never willing 2 = Sometimes willing
   3   = Willing half of the time 4 = Usually willing   5 = Almost always willing

1	Speak in a group about your summer vacation	1	2	3	4	5
2	Speak to your teacher about your homework assignment	1	2	3	4	5
3	Have a conversation with a stranger if he/she talks to you first	1	2	3	4	5
4	Ask for instructions/clarification when you are confused about a task you must complete	1	2	3	4	5
5	Talk to a friend while waiting in line	1	2	3	4	5
6	Be an actor in a play	1	2	3	4	5
7	Describe the rules of your favorite game	1	2	3	4	5
8	Participate in a debate	1	2	3	4	5
9	Read part of an English novel	1	2	3	4	5
10	Read an English article in a paper	1	2	3	4	5
11	Read letters from a pen pal written in native English	1	2	3	4	5
12	Read personal letters or notes in which the writer has deliberately used simple words constructions	1	2	3	4	5
13	Read an advertisement in the paper to find good merchandise, e.g. a book, you can	1	2	3	4	5
14	Read reviews in English for popular movies	1	2	3	4	5
15	Write an invitation to invite your schoolmates to a weekend party	1	2	3	4	5
16	Write down the instructions for your favorite hobby	1	2	3	4	5
17	Write a report on your favorite animal and its habits	1	2	3	4	5
18	Write a story	1	2	3	4	5
19	Write a letter to a friend	1	2	3	4	5
20	Write a newspaper article	1	2	3	4	5
21	Write the answers to a "fun" quiz from a magazine	1	2	3	4	5
22	Write down a list of things you must do tomorrow	1	2	3	4	5
23	Listen to instructions in English and complete a task	1	2	3	4	5
24	Bake a cake if instructions were in English	1	2	3	4	5
25	Fill out an application form in English	1	2	3	4	5
26	Take directions from an English speaker	1	2	3	4	5
27	Understand an English movie	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your collaboration and opinion