Willingness to Communicate in English: A Gender Based Study

Zarwa Arshad[1]
University of Gujrat, Pakistan
Muhammad Shahbaz[2]
Ahmed Mohammed Barjas Al-Bashabsheh[3]
[2, 3] Majmaah University, Al-Zulfi, KSA

Abstract: Willingness to communicate in a second or foreign language has a lot to do with student achievement in second language classrooms. This paper investigates the willingness of male and female students to communicate in English rather than their native or national language. Focusing on McIntyre's model of Willingness to Communicate in second/foreign languages, the data were collected using questionnaires from 353 BS final year students of BS (Undergraduate) from a public sector university in Pakistan. Descriptive analyses show that there are no major differences in the use of language inside and outside of classroom. Overall, there are no major differences in willingness to communicate, however, in some situations, boys and girls have arguable differences and this helps us to understand that while teaching a foreign language activities should be organized based on different individual variables like gender.

Key Words: WTC, Gender, Pakistan, Formal and Informal Settings

Introduction

Language as spring of communication has various functions to perform. The primary goal of language is to develop communication and interaction between speaker and listener in given social contexts. Halliday (1975) proposed a model of language functions as: instrumental, personal, interactional, regulatory, representational, imaginative and heuristic. Speakers more willingly communicate in their first language. There is the issue of willingness ad unwillingness to communicate in both languages.

Willingness to communicate (WTC) was developed for communication in first language (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). McIntyre (1998) adapted it in L2 communication by conceptualizing a heuristic model. There are many factors that may affect the willingness and unwillingness to communicate such as: motivation (Hashimoto, 2002), attitude, language learning strategies, anxiety, etc. WTC is defined as to take initiative to communicate in case of certain opportunities given in a particular context (McCroskey, 1992). It is also called individual's orientation towards communication (McIntyre, 2000). Other way round, 'unwillingness to communicate' is defined as to avoid taking part in communication, due to lack of competence in L2, and many other reasons (Burgoon, 1976). McCroskey and Richmond (1982) used word "shyness" as a factor to unwillingness.

Pakistan is a multilingual country where six major and fifty-eight minor languages are used (Rehman, 2005). Urdu is national language and national lingua franca, while English is enjoying the status of official language in courts, administrative offices, and academic institutes, etc. It helps the people to get passport of success in Europe and other countries (Shamim, 2008) because it is a global language (Crystal 2003) as well as 'Lingua Franca' (Seidlhofer, 2005) among those countries that have no common language to communicate. Haque (1983) claims the strong position of English in world as "primary vehicle of international communication". It is considered a language of "power and dominance" (Shamim, 2008). According to Kachru's concentric model (1975 cited in Simpson, 2011), Pakistan is a country where English is used in judiciary, education, in both private and public schools. Mari et al. (2011) assert that English is restricted to classrooms lectures and common people do not use it for communication. They do not interact because they have certain problems to use it in daily life for interaction. In Pakistani context, sometimes students have linguistic competence but they remain silent and feel shy to use L2 for communication. They have fear of negative response from audience (ibid). The other reason is that students are not competent to speak L2 for communication purpose (McIntyre, 2000). The major flaw in this area is that language proficiency receives more attention than communicative competence in Pakistan. The focus of this paper is to investigate willingness for communication among male and female. It is argued that WTC in English (L2) by male and female is influenced according to different environment and situation.

Literature Review

Language is a complex phenomenon. Human language has certain unique properties as, displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, discreteness, and duality. One of the properties is that language has communicative signals along with informative (Yule, 1996). An individual can communicate across cultures. For this reason, one has to get knowledge of other languages and ability to communicate in L2. Hymes (1972) asserts that along with linguistic knowledge, one has to know how to communicate, which is termed as communicative competence. He described four dimensions of communicative competence such as grammatical competence (ability to use grammatically correct language), Sociolinguistics competence (role relationship), Discourse competence (interpretation of the elements of the message), and Strategic competence (strategies that interlocutors apply to initiate, maintain communication) (ibid). According to Kachru's concentric model, (1975, as cited in Simpson, 2011) Pakistan is a country where English is used as second language and people use it for daily conversation. Parveen (2013) as well as Boltan (2008) claims that Eighteen million (11% of total population) people speak English in Pakistan. This ratio is making it the third largest English using country in Asia. Somewhat small but dominant groups of country in the areas of government, administration, judiciary, military, education, commerce and mass media (Baumgardner, 1993) use it.

WTC is also strategic competence that speakers apply in communication. It is a concept, which was primarily developed in L1 communication for certain opportunities and purposes

(McCroskey& Baer, 1988). Later, McIntyre et al. (1998) adapted this concept in L2 communication and conceptualized a heuristic model. They introduced certain linguistic, social and psychological variables that can influence one's WTC in L2. There are few reasons that affect individual's WTC at larger level. These are:

- o level of association among communicators
- o number of the inhabitants involved in the communication
- o Requirement of the context and circumstances.
- o level of assessment of the speaker
- o theme and topic of conversation

WTC is described as intentions to initiate communication (ibid). On the other hand, Kang (2005 in Mari et al., 2011) argues that eagerness and intentions to initiate communication vary according to topic, context and participants with other variables. It is an appealing area of study in L2 communication and learning. There have been much research in the area of motivation regarding L2 (Dornyei, 2005; Gardner, 2001) but WTC is not much studied in Pakistani context.
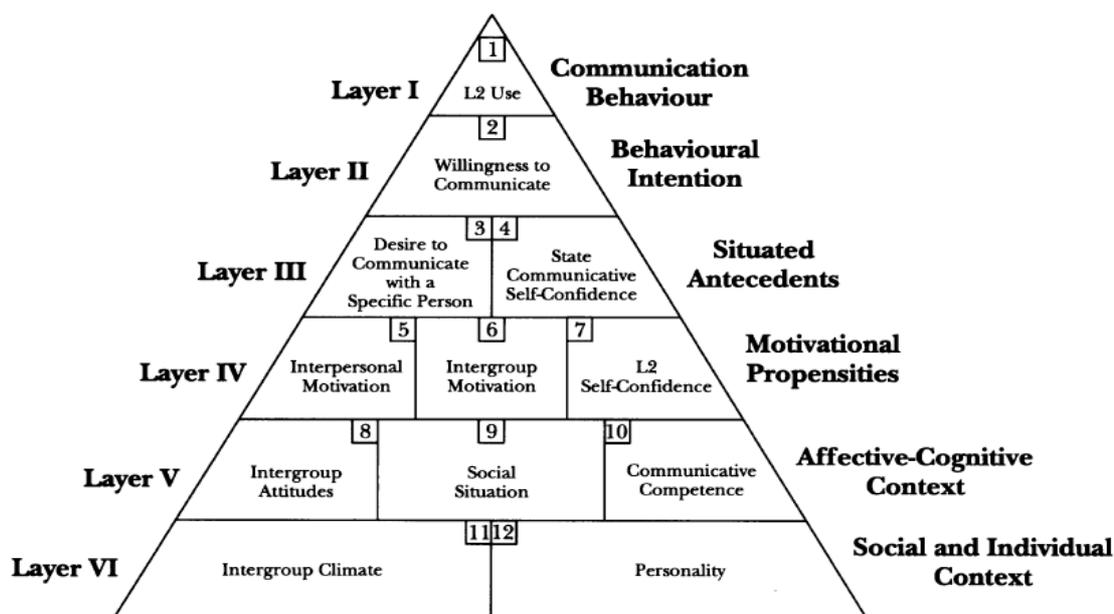
Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC

Figure 1: Adapted from McIntyre (1998)

The final layer of this model is based on social and individual context. This layer VI shows relationship between individuals and society that is their intergroup communication. It shows that the society provides opportunities for communication (Clement, 2003). It is quite reasonable that for interaction, an individual needs another individual or group. Next issue is that in what circumstances and situations, a person communicates? In diverse social situations, various psychological factors of individual's personality (linguistic competence, attitude,

motivation, confidence, etc.) affect the learning and communication. In past, it was considered that ability to use an L2 in social setting is called communicative competence but it is not so easy. Its complexity can only be understood through different types of communicative competence (grammatical competence, Sociolinguistics competence, Discourse competence, and Strategic competence). These types of communicative competence help in building self-confidence along with experience (McIntyre et al., 2003).

The above two layers in the pyramid model are WTC and use of L2 in communication. WTC indicates the growing effect of those social and psychological variables that are mentioned (Clement, 2003). A person can willingly communicate without the certain specific opportunity in particular context. An individual with higher WTC is often expected to use L2 more frequently, and can mould himself according to prior set situations (McIntyre et al., 1998). Baker and McIntyre (2000) conducted a research on the role of gender and immersion in L2 communication. The focus of their study was on the judgment of WTC in immersion and non-immersion students from high school and results showed that immersion students were more willing to use L2. The paper was based on gender but much attention is paid on immersion and non-immersion differences. Clement et al. (2003) attempted to merge WTC and social context model into one model to study whether contextual factors have impact on L2 communication or not. Richmond and Roach (1992, in Mari et al., 2011) studied WTC in L2 regarding sex differences. The results of this study suggested that age and sex strongly affect WTC. Smith (1997) found that adolescent girls more willingly engage in conversation than boys do. This research is more relevant to the studies of language and gender, which demonstrate that females are more talkative (Tannen, 1990), and much interested in building relations. There are many studies in the area of WTC and influences of sex and gender on WTC to communicate.

McIntyre et al., (2001) done study on WTC and the focus was on four pedagogical skills (speaking, reading and writing and comprehension) of students inside and outside the classroom. Mari et al., (2011) conducted survey on the perception of Pakistani University students' WTC in L2. The findings show that familiarity with audience and participants of conversation encourages the students and they readily communicate in English. Both of these studies have certain limitations. One of the limitations is that issue of gender is not discussed in them. To fill this gap, there is need to focus on gender differences in using L2 willingly in communication. The present study is focusing on willingness of Pakistani University students to use L2 inside and outside the classroom. The center of the research is the gender (male and female) comparison to use L2 regarding language skills (speaking, reading and writing) inside and outside the classroom.

Aims

The points and aims of this study are:

- To find out the social and psychological factors affecting WTC in L2.
- To find out whether male more willingly communicate in L2 or female.

- To search the role of context in willingness.
- To find role of linguistic competence in building confidence.

Research questions

1. What are the differences between male and female students target language WTC in different settings?
2. Why some students even after studying English for many years are unable to communicate in target language?
3. What is the influence of social situation on willingness or unwillingness to communicate in L2?

Methodology and Data Collection

The instruments used for this particular study are Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. For quantitative part, McIntyre and Baker's (2001) questionnaire was used as it one of most popular tool used in the field for data collection. It is an established and well-tested tool across the world. In total 353 students of BS final semester from a public sector university are the participants of this research. The reason to choose the final semester is that why even after studying English for 15 years many students are still not able to communicate in L2? Students from many different departments of UOG including: English, Mathematics, Statistics, Mass Communication, Psychology, Sociology, Zoology, Botany, Economics, Business administration, Political Science, Islamic studies, CS&IT, and International relations participated willingly in this Survey. The interviews are conducted from the students of various Departments and Language Center. The students were informed earlier, to participate in the study. The Questionnaires were distributed among them with the help of their departmental faculty. The data is analyzed through SPSS 16 for windows. There are 38 items to analyze on the basis of use of three language skills (speaking, reading and writing) in different contexts (inside and outside the classroom).

Table 1: Biographical Information of the Participants

Total	Average Age	Gender		
		Girls	Boys	Missing
353	21.7 Years	181	163	09

Results and Discussion

The findings show that students willingly communicate in three language skills in different situations as inside the classroom and outside the classroom environment. Table 2 and 3 below show the willingness of students to speak inside and outside the classroom situation. The findings suggest that male students use English as second language more willingly than female students. Both are willing to use English, however, boys depict a more positive desire to speak within classroom. It is often observed those males are considered more confident than female

members of society. The major reason for this difference can be a strong male dominated society where girls are often stopped or even snubbed to speak in front of others.

Table 2: Inside Speaking on the basis of Gender Differences

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	23.34	7.05
Boys	22.42	6.66

The table 3 implies that male students are more excited to speak English outside the classroom as well compared to female students. From table 2 and 3, it can be found that male students are more readily using English inside and outside the classroom. The interviews suggest that females speak shorter sentences because they feel shy and less confident to use English in front of strangers. The other reason is that they learn English just for the sake of fashion and trend. That's why female use their local languages along with English in same speech. The male students use longer sentences because they learn English for their jobs and going abroad. They use it in daily life for the improvement. We can say that instrumental motivation is a major reasons for boys to speak English in different settings.

Table 3: Outside Speaking on the basis of Gender Differences

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	20.02	9.21
Boys	23.01	6.57

Table 4: Inside Writing Score on the basis of Gender

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	20.02	9.21
Boys	23.01	6.57

The above table 4 shows that females are more willing in writing inside the classroom compared to their counterparts.It is implied through results that female students more readily participate in writing due to their lack of confidence in speaking with other people. Females have fear of negative feedback from teachers as well as other communicants in large group, which creates a rift in their self-confidence. To avoid this kind of feedback, female deny using more L2 and mixing it with their native language. However, they are good to communicate themselves through writing and feel more confident in this genre.

At the same time, Table 5 shows that female students are also active in writing outside their classroom. They are good at writing in target language and this is also clear from the abundance of literature produced by Pakistani women in English in comparison to males. An analysis of both table 4 and 5 tells us that in writing skill, girls are more active than boys are. The

results of willingly use of L2 depends upon the learning of language by both male and female students. It is often observed that female can only actively participate inside the classroom in all language skills. They can take part in small groups, while men tend to be active and use to interact more in all situations, as there are less chances of facing problems by them even if they make mistakes.

Table 5: Outside Writing Score on the basis of Gender

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	28.53	8.42
Boys	25.77	9.03

Table 6 displays the end result of reading skill inside the classroom. It tends to advocate that female students actively take part in reading skills. They are more willingly involved in reading stories, novels and such kind of activities. On other hand, male students less willingly take part in reading of such thing. If they read something that includes newspapers and sports magazines or business reports etc. which is out of classroom.

Table 6: Inside Reading Score on the basis of Gender

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	19.02	5.79
Boys	16.78	6.51

Table 7 suggests that male candidates are more willing in using English in reading outside the classroom. It includes newspapers, business reports and such kind of other things by which they come across in their routine life, while females are interested in novels and story reading. Girls might be more inclined towards academic stuff while boys have interests in other materials.

Table 7: Outside Classroom Reading Score

Gender	Mean	SD
Girls	18.76	6.07
Boys	16.55	7.31

Conclusion

The research is conducted on WTC in English in a public sector university and almost equal number of male and female students participated in research. Based on the results of the questionnaires and analysis of interviews, it is concluded that male students willingly participate in communication through English language, more specifically in speaking. Female students more readily use English in reading and writing. There is not a huge difference in their use of L2.

The results are dependent on their background knowledge as well as their self-confidence. Most of the time, communication is considered as to speak in the language to share some thing. In speaking skill, male students are more willing to communicate than female. These results cannot be generalized everywhere because there is difference of situation and opportunities in all areas. The results can also differ based on background knowledge and confidence.

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