

Factors influencing 10th grade students' willingness to communicate in English classroom

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Abstract: The study intends to analyze the degree of influence of such elements on students' willingness to speak in English classroom and recommends some practical application to improve learners' communication abilities. The study adopted Quantitative research and Qualitative research and research design with the participants of 150 students from three classes 10A3, 10A4 and 10A13 at Bac Ninh High School. A questionnaire and interviews were the two main sources to collect data for the analysis. The research revealed: 1. Willingness to communicate (WTC) of students is impacted by Subjective elements such as: Personality, Motivation, Confidence, Anxiety, Preparation, Mood; and Objective factors such as: Activity, Relationship with communicators, Classroom atmosphere, Topic. 2. The most affects on students' WTC, which are Confidence, Personality, Relationships with communicators, and Classroom atmosphere. The least influential factors include Topic and Mood.

Keywords: Willingness, Willingness to communicate, communication, English speaking, willingness to study English...

Introduction

The ultimate and most crucial aim of learning English is communication. Fostering and enhancing students' English communication capacity is an essential responsibility of the English subject in particular and the foreign language education program at all levels in general. In which, the main objective is to provide students additional chances to speak in English. But in the course of training, the researcher discovered that most students' capacity to speak in English is still inadequate. Students pay little attention to spoken language because of the long-standing effect of the structure and format of the written test. The majority of students are still highly apathetic and too lazy to engage in communication activities in class.

According to personal experiences of the researcher who was born and raised in Yen Phong, had a local education, and is also an English teacher at a local high school, a large number of students are unable to describe their daily activities in English fluently, and based on what students have demonstrated in their oral performance classes and their results in their speaking tests. Their abilities of mastering communication skills are normally highly complained by the teachers not just about pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar accuracy but

their willingness to communicate as well.

To deal with this challenge, language teachers need to find out factors that affecting students' willingness to communicate in English then find out the suitable approaches to encourage them to speak in English classroom with an highly emphasis on communicative purposes in real world settings, rather than completely focus on grammatical accuracy as in traditional teaching.

Content

1. Willingness to communicate (WTC)

At the end of the 20th century, the concept that "the ultimate purpose of language acquisition is communication" started to attract attention. The shift in teaching techniques also tends to emphasize interactive forms to increase language communication abilities. Whether students actively speak out or not has an essential function in impacting the efficacy of the language instruction process. This initiative is named WTC. Burgoon (1976, p.60) is regarded as the pioneer of study on WTC and points out five subjective characteristics (anxiety, introversion, self-esteem, social isolation, and isolation) that impact propensity to bias. Currently, WTC is referred to as a "unwillingness to communicate" and is characterized as a tendency to avoid conversation. Mortensen, Arntson, and Lustig emphasized that fear of

communication has a direct impact on “predisposition towards linguistic behavior” in 1977 when discussing the inclination to “unwillingness to communicate”. When studying this “unwillingness to communicate” tendency in 1982, McCroskey and Richmond also placed a strong emphasis on the adjective “shyness”.

McCroskey and Baer in 1985 adapted this to the native language L1 and described WTC as “the inclination to actively interact with people under particular situations” (as cited in MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, p. 7). McCroskey and Baer’s research also indicated that the variables impacting WTC are tedium and self-efficacy. In addition, MacIntyre (1994), when applying the WTC concept to L1, showed that the fear of communication and the sense of communication capacity has a substantial connection with the speaker’s willingness to actively communicate.

2. Factors affecting willingness to communicate

2.1 Personality

Personality is defined as “an individual’s characteristic pattern of thought, emotion and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms, hidden or not, behind those patterns” (Funder, 1997, p. 450). Personality is one of the factors that determine the way an individual communicates with others. Personality traits are rooted within and exist in habits, attitudes, beliefs, and other characteristics. People believe that personality traits are related to culture in shaping human life (McCrae, 2001). Clement et al. (2003, p.4) mention MacIntyre & Charos’ (1996) examples of personality traits which are “extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, influence second language learning and the willingness to communicate in that second language”.

2.2. Motivation.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) once underlined that attitude and motivation are essential variables for language learners to be able to acquire foreign languages successfully. Gardner and Lambert mentioned that social psychologists point out that mastery of a foreign language depends not only on intellectual abilities and attitudes but also on the willingness to absorb special aspects of behavior in the study save language. Motivation to learn a foreign language is determined by the learner’s orientation throughout the entire foreign language learning process (as cited in May, 2010, p. 8). Because of

the importance of motivation in language learning, language researchers believe that motivation is an important factor, and believe that it is necessary to understand students’ reasons and goals when learning a language, for example Peng (2007), Li (2012), Ma et al. (2019), Khudobina et al. (2019), etc.

2.3. Anxiety

Anxiety is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 125). Burgoon (1976, p.60) also noted that anxiety is one of the strong elements that affect language learning and foreign language communication efficacy. Anxiety means feeling nervous when using the target language in any context. It is the feeling of stress and anxiety associated with learning a language. Anxious speakers tend to not want to interact with others or avoid communication if possible.

The influence of Anxiety on WTC has also been demonstrated by previous studies such as, MacIntyre et al. (2001), Yashima’s (2002, 2004), Cao and Philp (2006), MacIntyre and Doucette (2010), Subekti (2019), etc.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. The first research question

Through the research process, the researcher has answered the first question that the study posed in Chapter 1. The factors affecting the self-discipline of 10th-grade students include:

3.1.1. Objectively, 10th graders will be affected by factors such as the relationships with the communicator, the environment and atmosphere, and communication activities.

Relationships with communicators: When 10th graders communicate with people in intimate relationships, they are typically classmates, close friends, or deskmates who will have a higher desire and self-discipline to share. According to the research findings, most students do possess a strong desire to communicate with teachers, with the exception of a small group of grade 10 students and some others who have stronger motivation and communication objectives, and most of the members of the class are still in a state of passive communication (the teacher asks or calls their name to respond).

Communication environment and atmosphere are also factors affecting the willingness to communicate among 10th graders. The vast majority of students believe that being in a friendly, engaging

environment with open communication will benefit them.. When evaluating the association with WTC, the Pearson correlation values of CA1 and CA2 suggest that there is a correlation between them.

Communication activities are also one of the main objective factors affecting the willingness to communicate among 10th graders. This is demonstrated by the fact that 10th graders in group or companion communication activities have higher expectations and self-discipline, but it is lower when talking to a teacher or by yourself because in group or pair activities, students will feel more at ease, more familiar, and less anxious than when communicating directly with the teacher.

3.1.2. *Subjectively*, the communication initiative of 10th graders was affected by factors such as personality, learning motivation, preparation, confidence, and anxiety.

In terms of personality, students with quiet personalities would seldom actively join in communication activities in English, while ordinary students, who are fundamentally dynamic and lively, are highly lively and often active participants in speaking activities in class. **In terms of motivation and learning purposes**, students who are driven to practice English communication abilities to have better work chances in the future will tend to actively communicate in higher classes. On the other hand, if students simply worry about learning English for tests or stress grammar over communication abilities, they will have less communicative initiative. **Students' confidence** is notably exhibited by their awareness of their own foreign language competency; the confidence of 10th graders is largely influenced by earlier training at home. **With regarding to Students' preparation**, during the research, most students responded that if they were prepared at home, they would feel more secure when participating in communication tasks in English in class. The students mentioned that when they are well-prepared in terms of knowledge, it will help them feel more confident, which will give them more confidence to be ready to participate in communication activities in English in class. **Regarding the anxiety factor**, students with a low level of readiness to engage in classroom English communication activities often have a high level of anxiety. And vice versa, students who are always willing to participate in communication activities in English in class will have little or no fear.

3.2. The second research question

Figure 5- 3: Results of voting for the most influential factor

As the findings provided in Figure 5-3 also reveal, the three factors students believe have the highest effect on WTC are Confidence, Personality, Relationship with communicators, and Classroom atmosphere. Combining the data from the number of student votes and the correlation index results from the SPSS quantitative analysis, it has been demonstrated that Confidence, Personality, Relationship with communicators and Classroom atmosphere have the most significant effect on the student's WTC.

Conclusion

Through findings and analysis from qualitative and quantitative data, the study has found out the main factors affecting the WTC of 10th graders, including subjective factors such as Personality, Motivation, Confidence, Anxiety, Preparation, Mood; and objective factors such as Activity, Relationship with communicators, Classroom atmosphere, and Topic. In which, after comparing the correlation index using SPSS, which has a lot of effect, the following elements must be mentioned: Confidence, Personality, Classroom atmosphere, Anxiety, Activity.

The study presents the variables that have the most impact on students' WTC, which are Confidence, Personality, Relationship with communicators and Classroom atmosphere, along with the results of the voting from students' opinions through the survey.

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