

Willingness to Communicate and Motivation of English Language Learners

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Received July 12, 2021; Revised August 17, 2021; Accepted August 25, 2021

Abstract The concept of motivation and willingness to communicate is by many researchers considered to be essential in learning a foreign language. The purpose of the study was to investigate the concept of willingness to communicate and motivation of English language learners in the context of Slovak university students aged 18-22 learning English as a foreign language. The theoretical framework is based on the theories by Dörnyei [4], Gardner [1,5,6], McGroskey [7], Arnold [2], and Horwitz [18]. The manuscript is divided into two main parts, the theoretical and the empirical. The first part of the research study discusses the concepts of integrative motivation and foreign language willingness to communicate. The second presents the results of the research. The results indicated the degree of factor of foreign language and the factor of willingness to communicate (FL-WTC) of the respondents being moderately high, as the students achieved 67.57% on the scale of WTC-FL. The current research study aimed to clarify the interrelatedness of the selected affective factors and their correlation to foreign language willingness to communicate. The findings supported the motivational construct outlined in the Socio-educational model of second language acquisition of Gardner [1] suggesting that students' motivation, namely desire, effort and attitude towards learning a language is supported by the two attitudinal components: integrativeness and attitude towards the learning situation. Although the strongest correlation occurred between the component of integrativeness and motivation the attitude towards the learning situation also significantly contributed to integrative motivation. Even though attention was paid to the importance of integrative motivation of English language learners, it also stands in a close relationship with the concept of foreign language WTC.

Keywords: *willingness to communicate, motivation, English language learner, educational setting*

Cite This Article: Silvia Hvozdíková, "Willingness to Communicate and Motivation of English Language Learners." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 9, no. 8 (2021): 543-548. doi: 10.12691/education-9-8-12.

1. Introduction

For the affective aspects of human behaviours it is essential to define the concept of affect in the process of foreign language learning. Arnold [2] provides a complex explanation by claiming that affect is an aspect of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which conditions human behaviour. It relates human behaviour to the emotional elements of the self, suggesting that feelings, emotions, moods or attitudes have a possible impact on the process of second or foreign language learning. There are several factors of language learning representing the intrinsic dimension of affectivity. As Brown [3] explains, they are personality factors that contribute in some way or another to the successfulness of the process of language learning. The variety of factors that influence the process of learning are mutually interrelated creating a complex construct of the affective domain, specifically, we emphasise motivation and willingness to communicate.

2. Motivation

One of the core components of the affective factors that influence foreign language learning is the concept of motivation. Motivation is a frequent problem of investigation within the field of language education, however, little agreement is found in literature when it comes to its definition. A wide range of definitions is classified based on those aspects, which represent the nature of the concept. Brown distinguishes between three main perspectives that define motivation differently [3]: 1) Behaviouristic perspective - Motivation is discussed here as an act of seeking positive reinforcement, which is driven by previous experience of reward. According to this perspective, motivation is linked to external forces. 2) Cognitive perspective - Experts preferring cognitive perspectives, link motivation to decisions made by individuals. Keller provides a complex explanation, where motivation is defined as the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they approach or avoid, and the

degree of effort they are willing to exert in this respect.

3) Constructivist perspective - Emphasis is put on the social context of motivation. However, motivation is understood as an act grounded on individual choice, it cannot be separated from the cultural and social circumstances in which this unique act is performed. According to Maslow's theory, motivation is dependent on the satisfaction of human needs, such as ones of physiological character, needing to be connected to the community, safety, esteem and self-actualization. Motivation, as a significant component of the human self, has a crucial position in language learning contexts. While in everyday life situations it represents the internal force that drives us towards decision making, in language learning situations it stands for a certain stimulation to learn a second or foreign language. Theories constructed to explain the nature of motivation within the field of mainstream psychology have been extended by experts in the hope of better explaining the concept of language learning motivation. As Dörnyei [4] explains, the field differentiates between two dimensions within the construct of motivation: Intrinsic motivation-focuses on behaviour, often described as activity for *'its own sake'* that is performed for joy, pleasure experienced from the very activity without the presence of any external reward. Extrinsic motivation- involves behaviour performed to receive external reward of material and non-material kind, or to avoid punishment or certain challenges. The intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy of the motivational construct is widely respected by the field however there is another important aspect of motivation in the context of second language acquisition introduced by Gardner & Lambert [5] that provides a deeper understanding of the construct of L2 motivation. The experts outlined the concept of integrativeness and instrumentality within the model of motivation explaining the particular dichotomy as issues of orientation that refer to certain attitudinal components of the motivation construct influencing the effort, desire and attitude of the individual when it comes to language learning. L2 motivation is viewed as a cluster of interrelated attitudes that explains the importance of the attitudinal factors not only in the system of motivation, but also in the language learning process in general. Gardner [6] explains two main types of orientation that provide more a detailed picture about learners' motivation towards second and foreign language education: 1) Integrative orientation- refers to the openness of an individual towards certain ethnic, linguistic or cultural groups that could influence the individual's motivation to learn another language. 2) Instrumental orientation- refers to individuals who are driven by practicality when learning another language. Learners with instrumental orientation want to learn another language for practical reasons, without significant openness towards the culture of the target language. There is a prominent distinction between the two main dichotomies presented in the field of psychology, the extrinsic/intrinsic and integrative/instrumental motivation. However, some of the experts tend to associate intrinsic motivation with an integrative orientation in language learning, while extrinsic motivation is often matched with the concept of integrative orientation. As it is explained by Gardner [1], both instrumental and integrative

orientations are explained as extrinsic, because of their goal-oriented nature. As he concludes, both of the orientations illustrate that the language is being learned in order to satisfy some goals not simply because of an intrinsic interest in the language itself. Based on the above conclusion, attitudinal dimensions presented by Gardner [1] provide a specific, unique insight into the construct of language learning motivation, while the extrinsic/intrinsic dichotomy is more suitable for the examination of motivation from general aspects. Forasmuch as our research focuses on the investigation of the various affective factors influencing the specific situation of language learning, we focus our attention on Gardner's Socio-educational model of language learning that further explains the function of the components of L2 motivation, such as integrativeness, in the language learning process.

3. Willingness to Communicate

The notion of willingness to communicate stands in the centre of attention in the modern language learning. Communicative competence is a certain ability to demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate communicative behaviour in a given situation. Apparently, communicative competence is highly connected to the affective side of the learner's mind, in terms of factors which can promote or inhibit the individual's behaviour when being in a situation that offers the opportunity for language use. One of those essential factors, which stands in close relation with the very action of communication in a target language, is the willingness to communicate. Willingness to communicate (WTC) occurs frequently as a problem of investigation in the field of psycholinguistics, because of the important role it plays when it comes to language use. Considering the crucial aspect of the concept we consider it important to include the particular issue in our research that aims to investigate the system of affective factors influencing the process of foreign language learning.

3.1. Theoretical Framework of Willingness to Communicate

There were various stages of defining the concept of willingness to communicate. First, WTC was described as a personality trait or a predisposition of an individual towards communication situations. It refers to how willing an individual is to communicate in his/her first language. As McCroskey [7], p.17 defined, willingness to communicate is a person's "...predisposition toward approaching or avoiding the initiation of communication". MacIntyre [8] provides an insight into the system of affective factors influencing the construct of WTC in L1 circumstances. He introduces the main factors that contribute to willingness to communicate in first language acquisition by referring to the important role played by communication apprehension and perceived communicative competence in forming willingness to initiate communication. He creates a path model to illustrate the concept of willingness to communicate as a certain combination of higher perceived communication competence and lower level of communication apprehension [9].

However, willingness to communicate had been introduced within the system of factors affecting first language acquisition, further investigation proved its suitability to second language situations. MacIntyre et al. [10] provided a detailed investigation of the problem of WTC in second language situations including factors from Gardner's socio-educational model and MacIntyre's path model. They examined the influence of factors, such as motivation, attitudes and personality on second language communication. There was a shift between the nature of the concept in first language acquisition and its manifestation within the affective system of second language learning. While willingness to communicate in first language refers to a certain trait, for instance, characteristics of a personality, a personal predisposition, it tends to have a situational character in an L2 situation. As MacIntyre et al. explained, WTC was defined in L2 communication as a certain readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person, using L2 [10]. The above definition suggested that second language use occurs in particular situations involving specific individuals, which suggests a higher complexity of the very concept than in the case of L1 situations. In order to explain the complexity of L2 language use, MacIntyre et al. [10] outlined a certain pyramid model that aims to reflect on the system of affective factors functioning within the process of second language use. The model highlights the dynamic nature of second language willingness to communicate, individual's WTC may vary according to various factors that emerge from the specific kind of second language situation, such as the nature of the contact between the speakers, the number of people present in the situation, the degree of formality of the particular setting, etc. The model of L2 WTC has been designed in the shape of a pyramid that suggests a hierarchical connection between the various factors contributing to an individual's willingness to communicate, or more specifically to the important outcome of any language learning process, the outcome of language use. Several layers include the factors contributing to second language production. According to the structure, the first three layers refer to factors of a situational-nature that tend to influence the process of L2 use and individuals' willingness to communicate in the target language at a certain moment in time, while the other three dimensions depict factors of a more stable character. On the other hand, it can be said that factors of social and individual context, affective-cognitive context and actors of motivational propensities are stable predictors of language use, creating the basis of the model, while situated antecedents with direct connection to the very factor of willingness to communicate represent the most proximate actors of the second or foreign language use.

3.2. Self-esteem as a Part of WTC Concept

The concept of self-esteem, is a multi-faceted construct widely influencing learning. Generally, self-esteem is defined as "*The disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness*" ([11], p. 65). Here, the concept of self-esteem is viewed as a mental characteristic of the individual ensuring the feeling of being able to face

the various situations of life that positively influences human behaviour.

Self-esteem determines the process of foreign language learning in the production phase. It is a strongly affective intra-personal factor and it covers experiences, personal characteristics, and behaviour. Moreover, success determines the level of self-esteem; the more successful the learner is, the higher the level of self-esteem they achieve. Cognitive and emotional elements create the core of self-esteem. The emotional element covers the emotions towards the self, such as self-confidence. The cognitive element covers the tension between the real self and the self that the individual would like to achieve, the aims they would like to accomplish. As Gurňáková [12] points out it has the greatest effect on the individual's motivational factors. It is essential to be capable of authentic self-reflection. Firstly, there is an individual with their natural predispositions and then there is the environment with its norms and expectations. Ruisel [13] considers self-esteem to be the factor that regulates cognitive achievement decision processes, thus, it regulates behaviour.

4. Research Part

Regarding the population of the Slovak Republic, the majority are Slovaks and other minority groups, such as Hungarians, Romany, Russians, Poles, etc., the rising phenomenon of bilingualism in modern society has become considerably essential in language education. Therefore, the issues of WTC and affective factors were examined in the current research study. The main two aims were formulated in relation to the research hypotheses. Firstly, the aim was to examine the relationship of language background and willingness to communicate in a foreign language in the examined group of speakers. Secondly, the aim was to find out any correlations between the affective factors discussed in the theoretical parts and the concept of WTC in the examined group of speakers. Several research studies illustrated comparable results. Tarighat & Shateri [14] discovered a difference between foreign language willingness to communicate (FL-WTC) of monolinguals and bilinguals in a Persian context. The results served as an influential input for the current research study.

4.1. Research Hypotheses

The focus of the research was positioned around the following research questions. Specifically, what is the extent of integrative motivation of the selected group of general secondary school students in Slovakia. How much they experience anxiety when using English as their foreign language, how they perceive their foreign language proficiency, to what extent they are willing to communicate in English as their foreign language, and to what extent bilingualism influences students' willingness to communicate in English as their foreign language. Based on the above research questions the following hypotheses were formulated:

H01 Students demonstrating stronger integrative motivation tend to be more willing to communicate in a

foreign language compared to students demonstrating weaker values of integrative motivation.

H02 Students demonstrating stronger integrative motivation tend to have more positive self-perceived foreign language competence than students demonstrating weaker integrative motivation.

H03 Bilingual students tend to be more willing to communicate in a foreign language than monolingual students.

4.2. Research Methods, Research Instrument and Research Sample

For the purpose of the research study emphasising the system of affective factors and their influence on willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language, a quantitative model of research was applied, specifically, the method of questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire of the study was designed as a precisely selected combination of instruments used for the purposes of the studies of the same character. In order to make the questionnaire available for a wide range of respondents, we designed an online version using the application of Google Questionnaire. It enabled us to get extensive information from the respondents in a short period of time. To avoid misleading information or limitations caused by the instrument language, the official language of the majority, Slovak, was used as the language of instrument. The data was analysed by the statistical program of SPSS Statistics 20 using Pearson linear correlation analysis, which depicted the measure of linear correlation between two variables in the form of the Pearson correlation coefficient ranging from +1 and -1 and the method of descriptive statistics. The instrument included four sequences measuring different affective factors and the concept of foreign language WTC among the selected group of general secondary school learners. Each of the sequences applied a different set of questions adapted from the instrument by Clément et al. [15] measuring foreign language use anxiety and self-perceived foreign language competence. As well as Baghaei's [16] instrument of FL-WTC measuring willingness to communicate in a foreign language by Gardner and McIntyre's [17], and mini-AMTB measuring the tripartite component of integrative motivation. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of six questions focusing on general facts, such as age, gender, mother tongue of the respondent, number of languages spoken in the environment of friends and family, number of years of learning English as a foreign language at schools and the academic achievements presented in the latest report. The instrument focussed on the measurement of two affective variables, language use anxiety and self-esteem (in the form of self-perceived foreign language competence) providing data about the respondents' L2 self-confidence, which was assessed by lower language use anxiety and higher self-perceived foreign language competence scores. The questions (Questions 7-14) used in the second sequence were adapted from McIntyre's [8] study, which examined the motivational system of foreign language study among 11th grade students in the mono-cultural setting of Hungary by focussing on the language variables of attitude to foreign language, anxiety, self-esteem and

motivation. The respondents were instructed to comment on eight statements assessing their attitudes on a 6 point-Likert-scale ranging from 1-Fully Disagree to 6-Fully Agree, where Questions 7-10 covered language use anxiety, and Questions 11-14 were related to self-perceived foreign language competence. The third sequence of the questionnaire was positioned around the concept of foreign language willingness to communicate. Baghaei's [16] WTC-FL (Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language Scale) was used to measure the individuals' willingness to communicate in a foreign language in contexts where the target language was spoken for learning and practice with only a few chances for authentic communication. The WTC-FL scale consisted of three main parts, each focusing on a different aspect of foreign language communication. The first section of the scale (Questions 15-20) aimed to assess the respondents' foreign language WTC when facing native speakers of the target language, native speakers of English in our study, providing information about the individuals' NS-WTC. The second section aimed to measure the respondents willingness to communicate in the foreign language when facing non-native speakers of English (NNS-WTC) (Questions 21-26), while the third section (Questions 27-34) aimed to measure the respondents' WTC in a school context (SC-WTC). The students were supposed to respond to 20 statements by assessing their attitudes on a 6- point Likert-scale ranging from 1- Fully Disagree to 6-Fully Agree. The third sequence of our instrument aimed to measure the respondents' tripartite component of integrative motivation using Gardner and McIntyre's [17] mini-AMTB instrument, which is a shortened version of the original Attitude Motivation Test Battery created by Gardner [1] to investigate the various factors presented in the Socio-educational Model. While the full AMTB consists of 11 subtests, from which 9 are of 10 items each and 2 are of 4 items, the mini version of the AMTB functions by measuring each scale of the full AMTB by one item. The main reason for applying the shortened version of the full AMTB was to make our questionnaire less time demanding, so the length would have no influence on the students' attitude towards accomplishing the questionnaire. The study focussed on the selected phenomena, the subscales of motivation, integrativeness and attitude towards the language-learning situation. Eight items measured the tripartite component of integrative motivation, where the motivation subscale consisted of 3 items (Questions 35-37), the subscale of integrativeness consisted also of 3 items (Questions 38-40) and the subscale of attitude towards the learning situation consisted of 2 items (Questions 41-42). The students were supposed to respond to 8 statements by assessing their attitude on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1-Unfavourable/Weak to 7-Favourable/Strong. The summary of the individual components resulted in the score of integrative motivation of the respondent. One hundred respondents of secondary schools students were addressed via online questionnaires, N=100. The average age of the respondents was MD=16.58 years, 74 female and 26 male students, from which 65 respondents (48 female and 17 male) spoke Slovak as their mother tongue and 35 respondents (26 female and 9 male) spoke Hungarian as their mother tongue besides the instructional

language of Slovak creating the group of bilingual students in the study. The average grade in the latest final report was 1.73 among the female students and 1.77 among the male students.

4.3. Research Results

In the following sections we present the results as they occurred in the research. They are further displayed and explained in the following tables.

Table 1. Average Scores Received from the FL-WTC Scale

	Mean	%	Std. Deviation
WTC.FL	81.0800	67.57	20.54986
NS.WTC	23.8600	66.28	6.86525
NNS.WTC	24.6000	68.33	6.75098
SC.WTC	32.6200	67.96	10.25018

Table 1 reflects the degree of integrative motivation and foreign language WTC among the sample of secondary school students (N=100). As it is described above, the respondents achieved 81.08 points on average from the maximum of 120 points on the WTC-FL scale. Apparently, the results show the tendency of the respondents to be willing to communicate in a foreign language. Specifically in such situations connected to communication with non-native speakers (NNS.WTC) scoring 24.6 points out of 36 points. While in situations, related to communication with native speakers (NS.WTC) they achieved 23.86 points out of 36, and in situations of school context (SC.WTC) they gained 32.63 points in average out of maximum 48 points. However, there is no significant difference between the scores achieved in the particular components of FL-WTC scale.

Table 2. Average Scores from the Mini-AMTB Integrative Motivation Scale

Descriptive statistics			
	Mean	%	Std. Deviation
Integrative motivation	42.8200	76.46	8.96050
Integrativeness	16.3600	77.90	3.68047
Motivation	16.2100	77.90	3.52278
Attitude towards learning situation	10.2500	73.21	2.82619

Table 2 displays the research results depicting the level of integrative motivation among the respondents. The students of the sample achieved a moderately high score of 76.46 points from the maximum of 56. The results show high score in the variable integrativeness achieving 16.36 points out of 21. Apparently, they are willing to integrate to the culture of English speaking people in the form of learning the language of the foreign language culture. The results also display on the degree of motivation towards learning English as a foreign language, the respondents achieved 16.21 points out of total 21. The scores gained show favourable attitudes towards the school context of English language learning. They gained 10.25 points from the maximum of 14.

5. Discussion

The focus of the research study was the investigation of selected affective language factors in the context of

foreign language learning and their representation among the selected group of secondary school students in Slovakia. The results received by the Pearson correlation analysis and the selected instruments of descriptive statistics supported the theoretical framework of our research. The first part of the research study emphasised the concepts of integrative motivation and foreign language willingness to communicate. The results indicated the degree of FL-WTC of the respondents being moderately high, as the students achieved 67.57% on the scale of WTC-FL. The current research study aimed to clarify the interrelatedness of the affective factors and their correlations to foreign language willingness to communicate. The findings supported the motivational construct outlined in the Socio-educational model of second language acquisition of Gardner [1] suggesting that students' motivation (desire, effort and attitude towards learning the language) is supported by the two attitudinal components of integrative orientation (integrativeness) and attitude towards the learning situation. The correlations showed promotion of motivation mainly by the students' integrativeness ($r=0.577^{**}$; $p<0.01$) and second, by their attitudes towards the learning situation ($r=0.520^{**}$; $p<0.01$). Although the strongest correlation occurred between the component of integrativeness and motivation the attitude towards the learning situation also significantly contributed to integrative motivation. Although the results displayed in the table of descriptive statistics attention is paid to the importance of the integrative motivation of the language learners, it stands in a close relationship with the concept of foreign language WTC. Apparently, discovering the significant role played by integrativeness in the system of integrative motivation and its close relationship with foreign language WTC introduced the need to lead foreign language students to cultural openness. Furthermore, the results depicted the relationship among certain affective factors of English language learning such as anxiety, self-perceived communication competence and willingness to communicate. Seemingly, the particular results serve as an input for further examination of the relationship between motivation and willingness to communicate and how they relate to the academic achievements of learners.

Acknowledgements

Publication of the article was supported by the agency APVV (Slovak Research and Development Agency) under the contract number APVV-17-0071 and the agency VEGA (National Grant Research Agency) under the contract number VEGA 1/0062/19.

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