

UNISEL ESL STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This present study aims to determine how effective variables and social support affect the learners' willingness to communicate in L2. The participants are 50 Malaysian students studying in University Selangor majoring in TESL and PAKK. The opinion from both English major students and non-major English students is being collected for this study of their willingness to communicate. This study used questionnaires adapted from a previous study in which 30 questions related to affective variables and social support were distributed to the participants. Most of the participants do not have high motivation to communicate in English because they do not get enough exposure and have low confidence when speaking English. This example indicates that affective variables and social support did affect students' willingness to communicate.

Keywords: Motivation, Anxiety, Social support, Shyness, Willingness to Communicate

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate (WTC) in English is the idea that language students who are willing to communicate in the second language actively look for chances to communicate. Willingness to communicate (WTC), conceptualized initially about first or native language (L1) communication, was introduced to the communication literature by (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), building on the earlier work of (Burgoon, 1976) and others. McCroskey and Baer conceptualized WTC as the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so.

This study would like to discover why some students are willing to communicate in the second language while others are unwilling to do so. Based on the research objectives and research questions of this study.

1.1 Research Questions

- a) In what way do affective variables such as attitudes and anxiety affect ESL students' willingness to communicate in English?
- b) How do social supports influence ESL students' WTC both outside and inside the classroom?

2.0 Willingness to Communicate

In earlier studies, Willingness to Communicate is defined as “the intention to initiate communication, given a choice” (MacIntyre, 2001, 369). In today's context, willingness to communicate refers to learners' tendency to actively engage in classroom communication with several differences, such as learners' abilities and characteristics, topic, task types, classroom atmosphere, and cultural influences. In Malaysia, both English and Malay are the two primary languages used in the country. Some students are willing to communicate in the second language, while others were unwilling to do so. This has something to do with their anxiety towards the language and their social support while learning.

As stated in the problem statement of this study, most of the learners are found to be more comfortable in speaking in their first language, Malay, than English, the second language. Since in Malaysia, both Malay and English are the two primary languages in this country. Some students prefer speaking in the Malay language as it is their first language, so it is more comfortable to use than English. This study would like to determine the influence of affective variables and social support on UNISEL students' willingness to communicate in the second language.

2.1 Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC

Based on the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC, Layer V, the Affective-

Cognitive Context, and Layer VI, the Social and Individual Context, are the two main focuses of this study.

Layer V addresses variables that are somewhat more remote from the specific language learning and communication context. Figure 1 above shows that affective variables like motivation will help students gain confidence, interest, and spirit in learning and communicating in English. While if the students' have anxiety, it may lead them to be afraid of speaking in English because they fear other people will judge them.

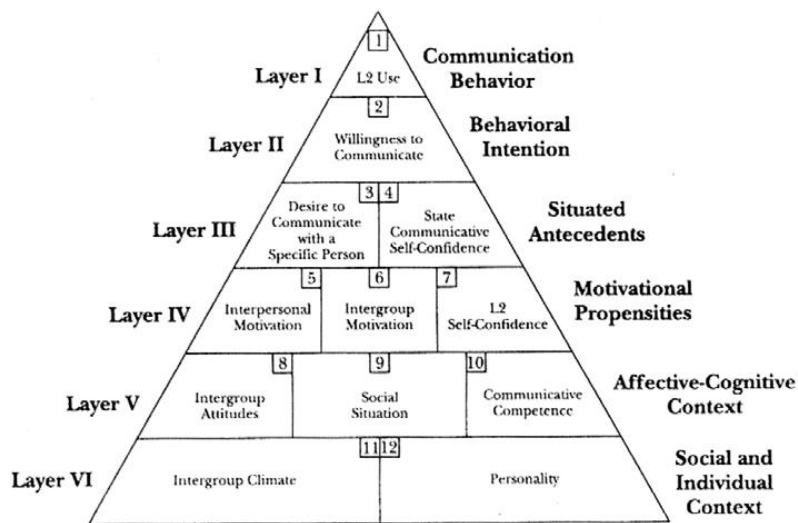


Figure 1: Heuristic Model of Variable Influencing WTC

In Layer VI, the Social and Individual Context, the context of communication, defined in its broadest terms, involves the interaction of two factors: society and the individual. This study's second research objective stressed engaging with the L2 community to learn and communicate directly with the native speaker.

In conclusion, the affective variables and social support did affect students' willingness to communicate since these two factors were included in the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC, among other factors.

2.2 Purpose of the study

This study aims to determine how effective variables such as attitudes, shyness, anxiety, and attitudes towards language affect ESL students' willingness to communicate in English

and how social supports influenced ESL students' WTC outside and inside the classroom.

This research topic, willingness to communicate, needs to be taken seriously since this study will affect the students and even the future of the people in this country. Since, nowadays, in most of the job sectors, the use of English in communication and written form is crucial, perhaps, the government or the company itself can provide special English classes for the workers so they can improve their communication and writing skills to be better at their job. As everyone is already aware, willingness to communicate is not a new topic to be studied since older researchers have already come out with various investigations and researches about it.

Their studies of some particular topic about WTC have been a big help and contribute a lot to the new research done by the students. The guidance from the lecturers, supervisor, family, and friends also help a lot in making this study successful.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study adopted a quantitative approach in which questionnaires were used to determine how effective variables and social support influenced learners' willingness to communicate among Unisel ESL students. A correlational design approach was chosen for the data collection of this study.

3.2 Participants/ materials/discourse

This study involves 50 Malaysian students studying at University Selangor (UNISEL), majoring in TESL and PAKK. The researcher chose two different majors because the researcher would like to collect both English major students and non-major English students. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected UNISEL students randomly. The fieldwork was conducted in University Selangor, located in Bestari Jaya, Selangor.

3.3 Data collection & Analysis

This study used questionnaires that are adapted from the previous study related to the research topic. The quantitative data were gained through questionnaires, in which Likert questionnaires containing 30 items were distributed to the participants. This particular study adapted questions from Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004) as well as from MacIntyre et al. (2001). These questionnaires are chosen because the items that are being asked have a direct link to the first and second research questions of this study.

For the data collection procedure, first, the researcher chooses the participants from ESL backgrounds based on the topic of this study. Then, the researcher determines the location of the study where the questionnaires take place. After that, the researcher finds the questions that related to the research objectives from the previous study. This study adapts 30 items based on the research topic. Then, consult the questionnaires with the supervisor in charge for further details. Next, the researcher corrected the grammar and sentence structured mistakes made based on the supervisor's advice. The researcher then does a pilot study of the questions to 15 students who will not contribute to the findings. Later, the researcher analyzes any problems and changes them accordingly. The distribution of questionnaires is done to the selected respondents. The researcher went to the respondents' class and personally gave them the questionnaires. In the end, the researcher collects the data for findings and analyzes them one by one using a thematic form and then makes a report based on the findings.

4.0 RESULT

This study focuses on the affective variables and social support influences towards UNISEL students' willingness to communicate as stated in the research objectives and research questions. The results were shown below.

From Figure 2, it shows that most of the students represented by 66.0% choose 'sometimes' for the question, "Compared to my classmates, I think I study English relatively high," in which means the students have their own up and down motivation depends on the circumstances.

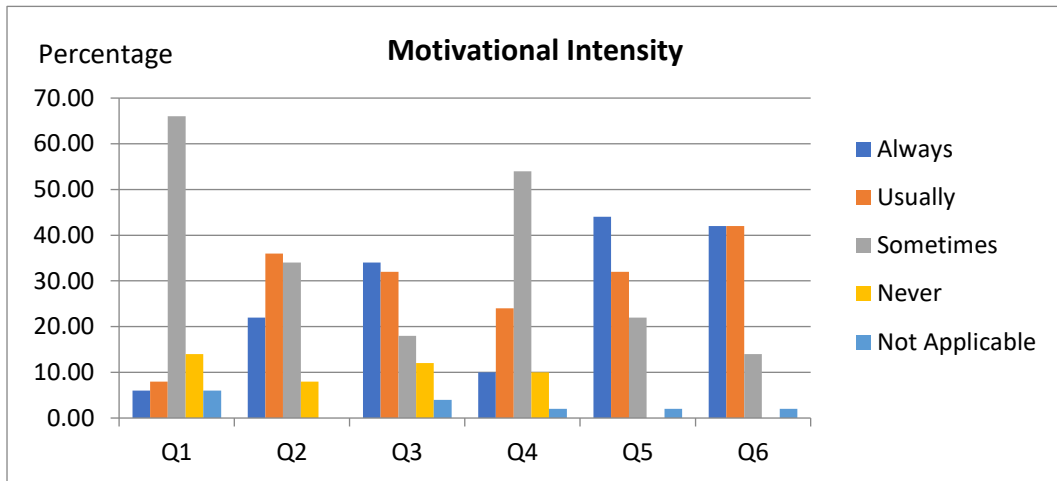


Figure 2: Result for Motivational Intensity

Next, for Desire to Communicate in English in Figure 3, most of the students, represented by 64.0%, choose ‘sometimes’ for the question ‘When I have a presentation to do in English, I will volunteer myself’. This shows that the students will volunteer to speak in English when they are interested. It means that the students are not entirely unwilling to communicate in the second language since sometimes they want to volunteer themselves for presentations.

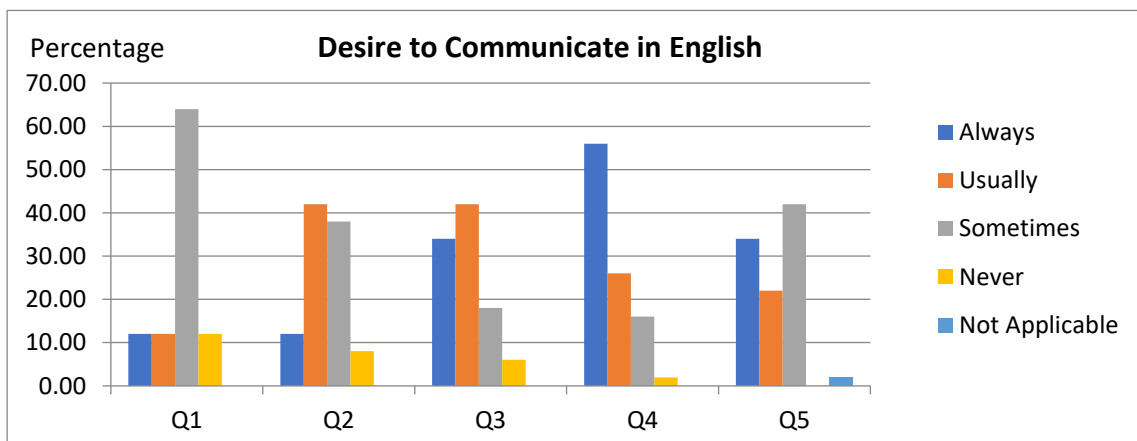


Figure 3: Result for Desire to Communicate in English

In Intergroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency (Figure 4), most of the students, represented by 58.0%, choose ‘Always’ for the question “I want to make friends with English native speakers”. This is a good sign in which it means the students are willing to communicate in English because the majority want to befriend native English speakers.

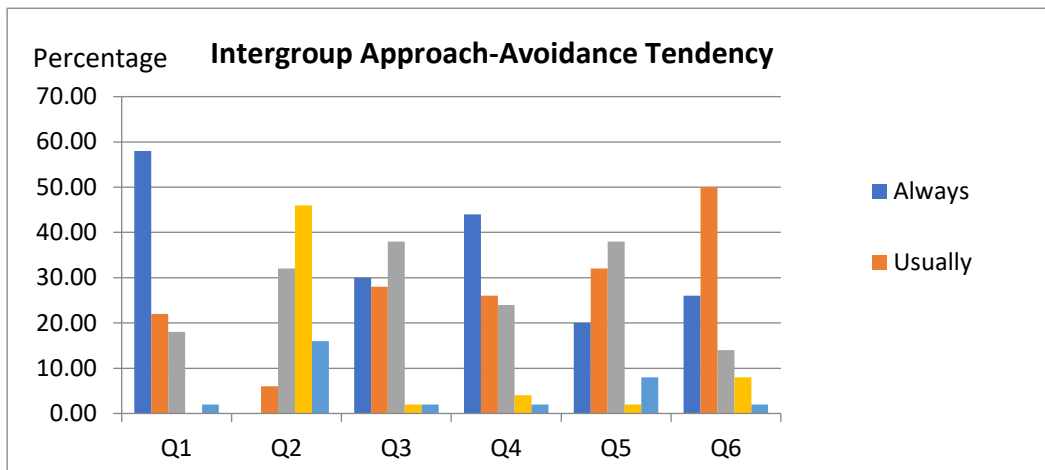


Figure 4: Result for Intergroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency

Looking at Figure 5, the result for Frequency and Amount of Communication in English, most of the students, represented by 56.0%, choose ‘Sometimes’ for the question “I asked teachers questions or talked to them outside the class period”. These students who meet the teacher outside the class period are mostly using English in their conversation. This is a good thing, even though it is only sometimes. Still, this means some students are willing to communicate using a second language.

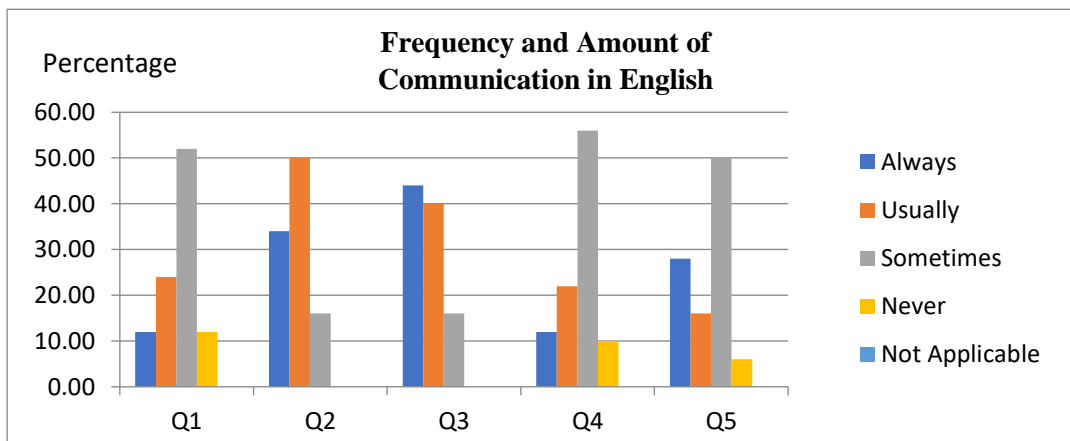


Figure 5: Result for Frequency and Amount of Communication in English

The result for Social Support shows that most of the students in Figure 6, represented by 56.0%, have chosen ‘Always’ for the question ‘Watching English movies with a variety of accents exposed me to different styles of speaking in the English language’. This proves that social support is not only coming from people but also from media and technology. The students agreed that watching English movies help them in learning English. Somehow, this will lead to the students’ willingness to communicate in the second language since they have a

high interest in the language.

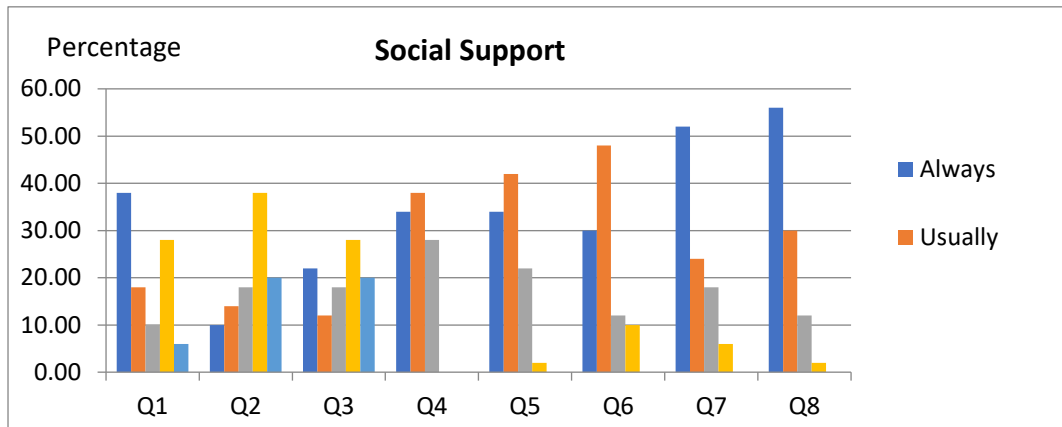


Figure 6: Result for Social Support

To summarize, the results gained from the questionnaires indicate that University Selangor students are not unwilling to communicate in the second language. Based on the results, some of the students did show interest in learning English which is the first step to communicate in the language. Some students would volunteer in presentations as well as become friends with a native speaker. Sometimes, they are also willing to communicate in English outside of the classroom. In motivation, the students seem to lack the motivation to learn and communicate in the language. Thus, only sometimes they feel like learning seriously.

5.0 DISCUSSION

This study focuses on discovering how many affective variables affect UNISEL students' willingness to communicate in the second language. Regarding the first research objective, the results from Motivational Intensity show that most of the students agree on 'sometimes' represented by 66.0% of the students for the question "Compared to my classmates, I think I study English relatively hard". This means the students have experienced high motivation and low motivation to learn and communicate in English depend on specific circumstances. This is not good for their second language communication because students who lack motivation tend to be unwilling to communicate in English.

The Desire to Communicate in English shows that most of the students choose 'sometimes' over other answers. This is due to them not getting enough exposure to the

language. Represented by 62.0% of the students choose 'sometimes' for the question, 'When I have a presentation to do in English, I will volunteer myself'. This is not bad since some students have the willingness to volunteer to speak and presenting in English. However, the students have less desire to talk in English because they lack knowledge about the importance of showing their fluency in English. These students should read more to open their eyes and see the world today where English is the main language used by everyone.

Intergroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency means the action or reaction of someone who encounters a situation that requires him or her to communicate in a second language. The result shows positive outcomes, with 58.0% of the students always choose as they have a strong desire to make friends with native English speakers. This positive result proves that if the students get better exposure to the English language and its culture, they will be willing to communicate and learning English. Students who have a greater interest in international affairs, occupations, and activities seem to be more willing to communicate in the L2 and voluntarily engage in communication more frequently. Thus, there should be mixed classes in university so that the local students can have interaction and communicate with the native speakers.

Results for the Frequency and Amount of Communication in English show that most students agreed by 56.0% that 'sometimes' they asked teachers questions or talked to them outside the class period in English. Good students will ask questions that they do not know to the teacher even outside of the classroom. However, they prefer to speak using their first language which is, Malay. Only students who have a high interest in the second language will communicate and asking questions in English. Based on the result, the majority of the students choose sometimes. That is good enough. Students will slowly use English in their communication. Somehow, the other students tend to follow and have an interest as well.

In social support, the results show that 56.0% of the students, the majority, agreed that watching English movies with various accents exposed them to different English language styles. Learning a variety of accents helps increase students' interest in learning and communicating in the second language. Medias have become important medium for learning English as well. Nowadays, people do many things through the media. Students gain interest in learning and communicating in English through Internet, phones, computers, and games. Since media have become very popular and essential, teachers and parents should find a way to use them to encourage the students to communicate in English.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Willingness to communicate has been put forward as both an individual difference factor influencing second language acquisition and its goal of instruction (MacIntyre, 1998). Making effective use of the language subtly indicates a deliberate behavioral intention and a genuine willingness to communicate in the second language. This study aims to find out how effective variables such as attitudes and anxiety affect ESL students' willingness to communicate in English and the influence of social support in ESL students' willingness to communicate both outside and inside the classroom. The researcher has distributed questionnaires related to affective variables and social support to the selected respondents inside the classroom. The results have been discussed in the previous chapter. It proved that affective variables and social support did affect this particular study, University Selangor (UNISEL) students' willingness to communicate.

Some recommendations, this study, however, are lacking in terms of gender, age group, respondents' proficiency level, and background knowledge. For gender, in many aspects, the opinions of girls and boys are different. Girls tend to relate everything with their emotions and feelings, while boys have their own opinions and thoughts. In terms of age group, new students and senior students will have different opinions on how they view language. Students' proficiency level is also essential. It will showcase their understanding of the language. In future studies, researchers can look thoroughly and put more effort into giving out the details in these aspects.

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