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Exploring Factors Influencing the Willingness to Communicate among English-as-a-Second Language University Students

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EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE
AMONG ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Chi-Fang (Michelle) Chang
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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

This present study anchored its inquiry in English oral communication and

learning English as a second language. The purpose of the study was to explore the

factors that influence the willingness to communicate (WTC) of ESL university students

from the perspectives of both the students and their oral communication professor. Since

the 1980s, WTC among ESL university students has attracted increasing attention

because helping them communicate authentically is essential. WTC is correlated with

overall English language proficiency because of its equal weight with the other language

skills. Therefore, ESL students have targeted WTC as a vital skill. However, research on

factors that influence WTC of ESL university students draws largely from the perspective

of the students, with little attention to the perspective of the professors. Moreover, no

research focuses on the perspectives of the ESL university students and their professor.

To fill in the gap, the current study has set out to explore factors influencing the WTC of

ESL university students from the perspectives of students and their professor, by means

of class observations, one-on-one and focus group interviews with students, as well as a

narrative interview with course professor.

The data were collected from ESL university students at the low intermediate

level and their oral communication professor at a Northern California university. Thirteen out of 14 students participated in the one-on-one interviews; 11 out of the 13 students participated in the focus group interviews, along with a narrative interview with the professor. The student participants reported six factors influencing their WTC while the course professor identified four factors influencing his students' WTC. The researcher integrated the factors from the students and professor, and five themes emerged from the study, which mostly centered on the sociocultural theory and social constructivism of Vygotsky.

The results of this study have implications for the fields of second language teaching pedagogy, teacher knowledge, second language training, classroom and cultural dynamics, and research methods. More studies on factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students would improve the WTC of ESL university students coupled with an increase in English proficiency.

Keywords: English as a second language (ESL), willingness to communicate, factors, challenges, oral communication

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and

approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the

Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this

work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Chi-Fang Chang   May 17, 2018
Candidate

Dissertation Committee

Sedique Popal, Ed.D.   June 25, 2018
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Susan Roberta Katz, Ph.D.   May 17, 2018

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: Jia-Fu Chang, Yueh-Nu Hung, I-Jui Chang,

Tinjung Chen, and Matthew Jeffrey Chen.

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THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has become one of the most prevalent topics in second language learning (Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2008). A number of researchers have claimed that authentic communication is the ultimate goal for many language learners (Alalou, 2001; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Ushioda, 2001). Along with this goal, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) postulated that "a proper objective for second language (L2) education is to create WTC" (p. 547), and the authors regarded any program which cannot accomplish this objective as unsuccessful. However, MacIntyre et al. noted that excellent linguistic competence does not necessarily predict second language learners' WTC or assure their automatic and ongoing use of the L2 because some second language learners with minimal linguistic competence communicate in a second language more frequently than others with high linguistic competence. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2003) further maintained that even though current language teaching practices focus on communication and require oral practice to learn a language, many language learners remain reticent in their communication (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). Thus, if English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) university students have low WTC abilities, they may have difficulty

reaching their goal in acquiring the target language of English.

With this premise, numerous second language acquisition researchers (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998; Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005) have explored factors that affect the WTC of ESL university students from the perspectives of the students themselves. Chen and Goh (2011, 2014) investigated factors that impact university professors' instruction of oral communication in English as a Foreign Language classes. However, little research has explored factors that affect the WTC of ESL university students from the perspectives of their oral communication professors. Moreover, sparse attention has been paid to factors that affect the WTC of ESL university students from the dual perspectives of students and their oral communication professor, which is the purpose of this study.

One of the first empirical studies dealing with the research on factors that affect the WTC of ESL students is that of MacIntyre (1994, as cited in de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009). He pointed out that "perceived communication competence and communication anxiety" (p. 270) are predictors of WTC for ESL students. MacIntyre et al. (1998) investigated WTC and reported that factors such as familiarity with interlocutors, discussion topic, group size, and social circumstances all easily influence people's WTC in their L1. In addition to these variables, the authors further indicated that "L2 use

carries a number of intergroup issues, with social and political implications, that are

usually irrelevant to L1 use" (p. 546) and developed a holistic model of variables

influencing WTC of ESL students that has been utilized by many other researchers. For

example, Cao and Philip (2006) and Kang (2005) supported MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) idea

that familiarity with interlocutors, group size, discussion topics (including interest in the

topics), and self-confidence influence the WTC of ESL students.

As discussed above, researchers have extensively investigated the factors that

negatively influence the WTC of ESL students from the perspectives of students.

However, little research explores factors that influence ESL university students' WTC in

terms of their oral communication professors' impressions. Furthermore, no one has

directed attention toward the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students

from the perspectives of students and their oral communication professor. Thus, this

study focused on the factors that influence ESL university students' WTC from the dual

perspectives of ESL students and their oral communication professor.

Background and Need for Study

Communicative language teaching and communicative competence

Since 1980, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which

focuses language education squarely on communication skills, has become one of the

most popular language teaching pedagogies. The CLT approach, originating in Europe in the late 1970s, appeared as an alternative to the Grammar-Translation approach to language teaching. Nishimura (2000) pointed out that the CLT approach is currently the most accepted language teaching approach in the United States, although the Audiolingual approach is still being used throughout the United States. Commenting on the state of Taiwanese EFL education, Liu (2005) argued that successful language learning relies on interaction. In this approach, English is a medium for classroom communication, not just the object of study; that is, the emphasis is on the process of communication rather than the mere mastery of language forms. CLT is essentially about prioritizing meaning, since the purpose of language is to communicate meaningfully. Thus, if learners practice language without attaching meaning to it, it is not real language communication. As a result, the approach enables students to communicate more effectively in English.

Partly what differentiates this approach from prior strategies is its learner-centered features and the balanced relationship between students and teachers. In his description of CLT, Hu (2002) indicated that in order to develop communicative competence, students should extensively practice communicating in the target language; therefore, he believed that foreign language acquisition under this approach occurs in negotiation and

interaction. He concluded that language learning should be student-oriented and experience-based.

Building on the CLT approach, communicative competence (CC) has become the main objective of English language teaching today, and its importance in the classroom as well as in research cannot be overstated. According to Hymes, CC refers to the ability to produce utterances that are not only grammatically but also linguistically and situationally appropriate (Liao, 1996). CC has four basic components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and communication strategies (referred to as strategic competence) (Canale & Swain, 1980; Brown, 2007). Thus, CLT aims to facilitate the integration of these four competences.

ESL students in the United States

Out of 1,078,822 international students in the United States, 903,127 were actually enrolled in school, and 30,331 were registered in non-degree intensive English programs during the 2016-2017 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2018). California hosts most of the international students. Of all the international students in the United States, 19.5% came from China, 19.2% came from Saudi Arabia, 12.5% came from Japan, 5.9% came from South Korea, and 4.6% came from Mexico.

Recent research often has described Asian students of English, especially East

Asian students, as reticent and passive in the ESL classrooms (Cheng, 2000; Jackson,

2002; Lee, 2007). Cheng (2000) and Lee (2007) found that this silence and passiveness

resulted from cultural, linguistic, and affective factors, foreign language proficiency,

opportunities for conversation practice, as well as different language teaching methods. In

addition, speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluations seriously impact ESL

university students' oral performance in class. Most Asian students expect to be able to

express themselves precisely and correctly; they would prefer to remain silent rather than

risk making errors (Cheng, 2000; Gregersen & Howrtiz, 2002; Lee, 2007; Liu &

Littlewood, 1997; Jones, 1999; Willems, 1987).

WTC in Asian culture

MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) found that not only linguistic but

also cultural factors affect Asian students' WTC. Chinese students of English perceived

cultural differences between Chinese and English more challenging than the English

language itself (Yue, 2016); therefore, cultural factors may heavily influence how ESL

students acquire English. Researchers, such as Cheng (2000), Jackson (2002), and Lee

(2007) have found East Asians reticent in ESL classrooms and have believed that their

reluctance stems from their inherited Chinese culture of Confucianism, which has

influenced East Asians considerably. Confucian principles state that students should

respect their instructors by not interrupting teacher-centered lectures, the preferable

classroom model in Chinese culture. These values and customs differ in the Western

classroom, which is often student-centered and structured around participation and

discussion.

Drawing on the work of Walker (1996) and Liu (2004), Hua, Nor Fariza, and

Jaradat (2012) stated that Chinese students of English found communicating in English to

be challenging because they perceived their communication efforts to conflict with

maintaining group rapport, upholding social status, and saving face. As a result, when

East Asian students study abroad in North America, they often have significant culture

shock when faced with class discussions and participation. Therefore, ESL students need

to learn about American culture to understand what is expected of them in the classroom;

similarly, ESL professors can learn information about their students to form the

underpinnings of cultural sensitivity (Hofstede, 1986; Zhan, 2016).

Concerning ESL acquisition, Hofstede (1986) pointed out that interactions

between teachers and students with different cultural backgrounds may generate

confusion. Chinese ESL learners and Westerners may have misunderstandings in their

cross-cultural conversations due to a lack of knowledge about classroom practices in

different cultures (Zhan, 2016). Hofstede further warned that information that is relevant

to teachers from a developed country may be irrelevant to local people with different

needs and societal ways of framing and solving problems. Both professor and students

may tend to hold the information in high esteem simply because this might have been

crucial in the evolution of the more-developed country, not necessarily because it shows

any promise as a means toward the evolution of the less-developed one.

Hofstede (1986) investigated conversational pairs, such as parent and child, man

and woman, teacher and student, boss and subordinate, and authority and member in

different settings, like the home, school, work, and community. He created a

four-dimensional model of cultural differences based on his research and personal

experiences from over 50 countries. One of these four dimensions is individualism, which

Hofstede used as opposed to collectivism from the anthropological perspective. He

thought people with individualistic cultural backgrounds focus mainly on themselves and

their nuclear family, whereas people with collectivistic cultural backgrounds focus mainly

on their group relations. Table 1 provides a deeper distinction between individualism and

collectivism. In his study, Hofstede categorized people from Arab countries, South Korea,

Taiwan, and Japan as low in individualism, whereas Americans are more individualistic.

In investigating communication apprehension (CA), self-perceived

communication competence (SPCC), and willingness to communicate (WTC), Croucher

(2013) concluded that as compared to people with collectivistic cultural backgrounds,

people from individualistic cultural backgrounds have higher WTC, higher SPCC, and

lower CA. Hofstede (1986) recommended that language teachers should learn how to

teach in a cross-cultural teaching/learning setting by realizing that people learn differently.

More specifically, Hofstede posited that professors, not the students, should take charge

of the cultural accommodations. Yet in an ESL classroom, the main thing a professor can

do is to become sensitive to the expectations of the students.

Table 1. Differences in teacher/student and student/student interaction related to the

individualism versus collectivism dimension

Collectivist Societies	Individualist Societies
- positive association in society with whatever is rooted in tradition	- positive association in society with whatever is new
- the young should learn; adults cannot accept student roles	- one is never too old to learn; permanent education
- students expect to learn how to do	- students expect to learn how to learn
- individual students will only speak up in class when called upon personally by the teacher	- individual students will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher
- individuals will only speak up in small groups	- individuals will speak up in large groups
- large classes split socially into smaller, cohesive subgroups based on particularist criteria	- subgroupings in class vary from one situation to the next based on universalist criteria
- formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times	- confrontation in learning situations can be salutary; conflicts can be brought into the open
- neither the teacher nor any student should ever be made to lose face	- face-consciousness is weak
- education is a way of gaining prestige in one's social environment and of joining a higher status group	- education is a way of improving one's economic worth and self-respect based on ability and competence
- diploma certificates are important and displayed on walls	- diploma certificates have little symbolic value
- acquiring certificates, even through illegal means	- acquiring competence is more important than acquiring certificates
- teachers are expected to give preferential treatment to some students	- teachers are expected to be strictly impartial

Source: Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10*, 301-320

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that influence the WTC of

ESL university students from the perspectives of both the students and their oral

communication professor. Generally speaking, when language educators discuss WTC,

they consider the productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing) of the language. This study

only focused on the WTC of ESL university students as far as speaking is concerned.

Research Questions

The following questions were investigated in this study:

1. How do ESL university students characterize their overall experience in the low

    intermediate level English oral communication class?

    1a. How do they describe their strengths in communication?

    1b. How do they describe their challenges in communication?

    1c. How does WTC affect their overall experience in the class?

    1d. What factors impact their WTC?

2. How does the professor of the low intermediate level English oral communication

    class perceive the ESL university students' WTC?

    2a. How does he describe his students' WTC in the class?

    2b. From his perspective, what factors impact his students' WTC?

2c.   In what ways does his students' WTC influence his teaching?

3.   What are the participants' recommendations for how to improve WTC?

3a.   What are the ESL university students' recommendations for how to improve

WTC?

3b.   What are the professor's recommendations for how to improve WTC?

Theoretical Rationale

The overarching theoretical rationale of the study is based on the sociocultural

theory (SCT) and social constructivism of L. S. Vygotsky, a psychologist whose research

involved developmental psychology, child development, and education. Vygotsky's

concepts have been extensively adopted in the Western countries, although he died at an

early age and left many of his works uncirculated and not fully translated. His primary

focus was on higher mental capacities, including voluntary attention, logical problem

solving, rational thought, and meaning making (Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Lantolf 1994,

2000). According to Vygotsky, language is the main channel of mediation; learning

occurs during a social event resulting from the interaction between the learner and the

environment. Learners construct their learning in a way that is meaningful to them;

therefore, all learners are unique and solve problems differently (Fahim & Haghani,

2012).

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT), first conceptualized by L. S. Vygotsky and his

colleagues, explains cognitive and linguistic development within the framework of

interaction and mental and social processes (Lantolf, 2007). Vygotsky's theory of

language, cognition, and culture focused on first language acquisition and child

development; yet later researchers (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf &

Thorne 2007; Thorne, 2000, 2004, 2005) extended his sociocultural theory to second

language acquisition based on two assumptions. First, second language acquisition is a

sophisticated process that is coordinated through culturally and socially constructed

objects. Second, learning English as second language requires a network of active

connections between the person, the society, and the topic. This assumption also includes

the idea that the classroom has to be related to the real world outside the classroom (Ajayi,

2008; Lantolf, 2000; Thorne 2004, 2005). Expanding Vygotsky's SCT to second language

acquisition, Lantolf and Thorne (2007) postulated that second language acquisition exists

in the context of daily life activities, and interaction within social and material settings

provides access to developing human cognition.

According to Vygotsky (1978), mediation plays an important role in SCT in that

human cognition is mediated by the social and cultural contexts of everyday activities.

Vygotskians regard mediation as a vehicle to connect humans with the world of objects or

the world of mental behavior (Lantolf, 1994). In terms of Vygotsky's theory, people use

physical and symbolic tools to mediate their relationships with others, and these tools are

artifacts evolving through generations by human cultural inheritance to meet the

contemporary need of the communities and individuals. Language is one of the symbolic

tools that adapts to the cultural practices and objects of the time.

The zone of proximal development

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) was introduced by Vygotsky as a

challenge to the traditional testing model that is largely accepted in Western countries.

Vygotsky defined his well-known concept of ZPD as the distance between what one can

achieve now only with assistance and what one can achieve independently in the future.

Related to this is Krashen's input hypothesis (i+1), which states that learning occurs

under critical conditions in which learners receive language input that is one level above

their current level. More specifically, the input hypothesis emphasizes that language

learning occurs when language learners are exposed to an environment that is beyond

their current level, challenges them to make progress, and still allows them understand

most of the content.

Unlike Krashen's i+1, ZPD focuses on the nature of the concrete interaction

between expert and novice and its goal of assisting the novice in proceeding to a more

advanced language level (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). The expert in ZPD refers not only to

professors but also to any more advanced peers. In addition to professors and advanced

peers, people with expertise and artifacts, such as "books, videos, wall displays, scientific

equipment, and a computer environment intended to support intentional learning" (Brown,

Ash, Rutherford, Nakagawa, Gordon, & Campione, 1993, p. 191) can take the role of the

expert in ZPD. In contrast to i+1, learners' receptivity to mediation can predict

ZPD-oriented development. With his concepts, Vygotsky strongly posited that

cooperative learning, especially in instructional settings, benefits development because

the learners imitate what they learn and then adapt the knowledge to suit their own

purposes. To second language students, imitation is indispensable because it sets current

social and cultural examples in the target language community.

However, students may prioritize their learning objectives differently from their

professors, and with this knowledge, professors may fine-tune teaching approaches to

maximize students progress in the language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Therefore, Ajayi

(2008) believed that the sociocultural approach suggests

a need for studies that shed light on the dynamics of language

teaching/learning situations, the possibilities afforded by social and

institutional structures, and an understanding of how professors relate their

pedagogical practices to the sociocultural background experiences of their

students (p. 640).

Ayaji (2008) further asserted that professors should take their students' background

experiences into account while choosing pedagogical approaches and materials from the

sociocultural perspectives but acknowledges that the challenges applying theory into

teaching practice receive sparse attention.

Social constructivism

Social constructivism originated from Vygotsky (1978), who stated that

knowledge is socially constructed through interactions and cooperative learning. With

respect to social constructivism, learning is interactive rather than isolated. Therefore, the

learning environment or context where learning occurs is important. Williams and Burden

(2004) created a diagram (Figure 1) to describe the relationship among teacher, learner,

and task, as well as their interactions. In this model, teachers select tasks based on their

beliefs about pedagogical philosophy. Learners validate tasks by connecting them to their

own experiences and ideas. Tasks, therefore, build a bridge between the teachers and

learners. Teachers and students interact with each other. Teachers' behavior in classrooms

reflects their values and beliefs, while learners react to teachers regarding their personal

characteristics and the attitudes of the teachers.
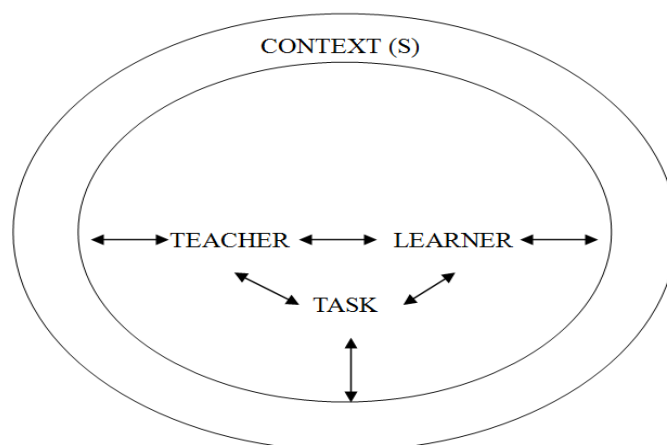
Figure 1. A social constructivist model of the teaching-learning process

     In a nutshell, Vygotsky (1978) recognized the important influence of culture and

society in human cognition as it relates to language acquisition and emphasized the

germane relationship between professors' pedagogical beliefs and students' class

performance. Under the theoretical rationale of the study, second language acquisition

consists of cultural and social structures in which teachers and students interact to

perform goal-oriented tasks, as well as evolving over generations to fit the most current

needs appropriately. In addition, second language acquisition is associated with daily life

and connects to the real world outside the classroom. In an effort to move forward to a

more advanced level, students need interactions with experts and peers. In cooperative

learning, students receive support and assistance to have current cultural and social

exposure in the target language community. By having access to the target language

community, students imitate what they receive and then utilize the knowledge for their

own purpose.

Students' goals and motivations are significant in learning because they influence

the way students prioritize their learning objectives. Therefore, ESL professors need to be

well aware of students' histories and reasons for taking the class to fine-tune their

teaching to best assist students' learning. Professors generally reflect their pedagogical

philosophy in their teaching, which may determine students' learning success. Students

provide feedback regarding what they received from their professors based on their

backgrounds and their characteristics. Consequently, when moving from an

English-as-a-Foreign Language (EFL) to an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) setting

to acquire the target language, professors and students need to raise their awareness about

the cultural and social differences since they play influential roles in language

acquisition.

Delimitations and Limitations

Certain delimitations and limitations for this study pertained to the selection of the

research site, an intermediate-level ESL class at San Jose State University. The

participants were delimited to intermediate level college-age ESL students in Northern

California. They were chosen because the researcher had access to this particular

university.

One limitation of the study related to research design. The researcher observed
low intermediate level Oral Communication, which met three times per week, in session
2 of the spring 2017 quarter, and her presence in class might affect the performance of the
students as far as WTC was concerned.

Educational Significance

This study explored factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students
from the dual perspectives of the students and their oral communication professor. This
study had the potential to help English language educators understand their students'
WTC and correlate the factors in the literature review with the results of this study. In
addition, since this study reported on ESL university students' and their oral
communication professor's perceptions and factors affecting the WTC of ESL university
students in class, ESL university oral communication professors may modify their
teaching pedagogy to assist their students in their language output and WTC. Furthermore,
ESL educators and future ESL researchers may also benefit from this study from gaining
a new perspective on WTC in the ESL classroom.

Definition of Terms

Willingness to Communicate: MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) describe

willingness to communicate as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time

with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547). In describing WTC, the writers

stated that WTC focuses more on students' readiness than on the opportunities. Oxford

(1997) defined willingness to communicate in the classroom as "a student's intention to

interact with others in the target language, given the chance to do so" (p.449).

English as a second language (ESL): Generally speaking, ESL refers to learners

acquiring English where it is an official language. In this study, ESL refers to

international students whose native language is not English learning English in the United

States.

English as a foreign language (EFL): In contrast to ESL, EFL refers to international

students whose native language is not English, and English is not any official language in

their countries. Brown (2007 a) stated that "foreign language contexts are those in which

students do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classroom." (p.

134)

Second Language (L2): SL or L2 refers to second language which is contrast to the first

language (L1) a person speaks. Brown (2007 a) stated that "second language learning

contexts are those in which the classroom target language is readily available out there.

Teaching English in the United States or Australia clearly falls in to this (ESL category)."

(p. 134)

Communication: Hua, Nor Fariza, and Jaradat (2012) defined communication as a

message conveying process between senders and receivers. Writing and speaking are two

types of communications, and this study only focuses on speaking, also known as oral

communication. In this study, communication refers to meaning convey between two or

more speakers.

Competence: Brown (2007 b) defined competence in language as a learner's basic

knowledge of a language, such as the grammar rules and vocabulary of the language.

Competence is usually associated with performance, which is a learner's actual

"production and comprehension" of the language (Brown, 2007, p. 36). More specifically,

competence refers to the knowledge of a language while performance refers to the actual

use of a language (Canale and Swain, 1980).

Communicative Competence (CC): Brown (2007 b) defined CC as the collection of skills

that allow people to mutually transmit and decode messages and handle meaning in

particular situations. According to Hymes, communicative competence includes

grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and

strategic competence.

Discourse Competence: is one of the components of communicative competence aiming

at complement grammatical competence. Brown (2007 b) stated that discourse

competence focuses on intersentential relationships.

Integrativeness: Gardner emphasized the significance of integrative motive/motivation in

his socio-educational model. Integrativeness is one of the three components of the

integrative motive/motivation. "Integrativeness reflects an individual's inclination to

interact or identify with the L2 community" (Peng, 2007, p, 38).

Summary

The issue of improving willingness to communicate has become important in ESL

research and has attracted serious attention because it is imperative to help ESL students

accomplish their ultimate language learning goal: communicating in English

interpersonally and authentically, and demonstrating their English proficiency. Therefore,

learners' willingness to communicate in the target language becomes an indicator of their

English language proficiency.

Several second language acquisition researchers (Cheng, 2000; de Saint Léger &

Storch, 2009; Lee, 2007) have investigated factors that influence learners' willingness to

communicate and found that cultural, linguistic, and affective factors, foreign language

proficiency, opportunities for conversation practice, as well as different language

teaching methods, greatly influence learners' willingness to communicate. However,

despite the popularity and wide-spread use of CLT, many education experts still find

foreign language learners silent and passive in the classroom. Furthermore, a gap exists

between research and the reality of WTC from the dual perspectives of ESL university

students and their oral communication professors.

The purpose and research questions of this qualitative study explored the

willingness of ESL students in the United States to communicate, as described from the

dual perspectives of the ESL university students and their oral communication professor.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory (SCT), based in social constructivism,

emphasizes that language is the main channel of mediation. Learning occurs during a

social event resulting from the interaction between the learner and the environment.

Learners construct their learning in a way that is meaningful to them; therefore, all

learners are unique and solve problems differently (Fahim, 2012). Today, an

ever-growing body of international students in the United States makes willingness to

communicate (WTC) one of the most prevalent topics in second language learning (Ellis,

1997). A number of researchers have acknowledged that authentic communication is the

ultimate goal for many language learners, and language learners should not only acquire

the target language but also learn how to use the language in their daily lives. (Alalou,

2001; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Ushioda,

2001). Despite students' best efforts to acquire the language, their WTC may remain low

because they do not fully understand the importance that U.S. culture places on active

participation, and they also lack experience interacting with this environment. Therefore,

this study focused on the factors that influence ESL university students' WTC from the

dual perspectives of ESL students and their oral communication professor.

This chapter presents a review of related literature in order to provide a solid foundation for the present study. This literature is divided into three categories: 1) ESL students' discourse competence in English inside and outside the classroom, 2) WTC, including factors that influence the WTC of ESL students, including instruments that evaluate WTC, and 3) sociocultrual theory in second language classrooms.

ESL Students' Discourse Competence in English Inside and Outside the Classroom

ESL university students sometimes have different communicative behaviors inside and outside the classroom. Certain ESL students may be quiet in class but talkative outside the classroom, while others may be talkative in class but do not use English outside the classroom (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). Therefore, prior to investigating factors that influence ESL university students' communication behaviors inside the classroom, the next section explores literature on ESL university students' communication behaviors in English, which has received sparse attention.

Shvidko, Evans, and Hartshom (2015) conducted one of the first empirical studies exploring factors that influenced ESL students' language choice outside the classroom recommended using only English. The researchers used questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions respectively in three successive semesters. They

(Shvidko, et al., 2015) reported that sociocultural, linguistic, individual, and affective factors affect ESL students' choice in using English outside the classroom. In addition to well-known variables, such as peer pressure, language proficiency, motivation, and confidence and stress in speaking English, participants in the study revealed that the need for cultural bonding and cultural communication patterns affected their choice in using English outside of the ESL classroom. A participant from Venezuela commented that speaking his native language with others maintains his friendships, and he regarded relationships as more important than reaching his language learning goal. Meanwhile, a Korean participant indicated that her friends declined to communicate with her because they claimed that she spoke Korean with an American accent because she studied English in the United States.

Translating is one of the factors that discourages participants from using English outside the ESL classroom. Three Korean participants claimed that interlocutors interact differently based on their gender and age-based seniority in Korean culture, using different intonation and vocabulary with people who were older or younger than them. These language differences do not translate to English in the same way, so sometimes ESL students could not find corresponding words to express their messages and they chose not to use English outside the ESL classroom.

Shvidko et al. (2015) suggested providing an encouraging language learning environment with interactionist and sociocultural perspectives, as language learning is only one facet of a second language learner's being. Emotional as well as social needs strongly influence their language acquisition. In this sense, Shvidko et al. also encouraged language teachers and administrators to guide students to draw up language use plans to regulate their acquisition, since self-regulated learners perform better by monitoring their own learning.

Willingness to Communicate in the English Learning Classroom

Given the factors affecting second language learners' communication behaviors outside the classroom, this category will consist of factors influencing English learners' willingness to communicate from the perspectives of English teachers and of English learners. Research exploring ESL teachers' perspectives on teaching oral skills is scarce, which is related to the purpose of the present study. As a result, the English teachers' perspectives in teaching oral skills in this category are from EFL classes, so a detailed picture will illustrate ESL students' English acquisition steps since their initial language learning experience occurred in their home country.

Factors that influence the WTC of ESL students

Teacher perspectives

Researchers (Chen & Goh, 2011, 2014) investigated teachers' perception of their

speaking teaching skills and knowledge, as well as their difficulty in teaching speaking.

Chen and Goh (2011) argued that teachers' self-efficacy plays an important role in their

teaching because their self-efficacy influences their enthusiasm and motivation in

teaching. In their study, Chen and Goh defined teachers' self-efficacy as "teachers'

individual beliefs about their own abilities to perform specific teaching tasks and achieve

specific results" (p. 333). Chen and Goh investigated EFL teachers' difficulties in

teaching oral English in higher education. They used a sample of 331 EFL teachers from

44 universities in 22 cities across China. The researchers found that the difficulties of

Chinese teachers of English are language competence, pedagogical knowledge,

approaches to motivate students, class sizes, limited class time, and outdated materials, as

well as striking a balance between students' proficiency levels and developmental needs.

Teacher participants of Chen and Goh's (2011) mixed methods study reported that

although the Chinese government emphasizes the importance of learning English,

especially oral English, students and instructors still spend more time on reading, writing,

and listening than on speaking because speaking is not included in exams. Consequently,

most Chinese students of English have little interest in participating and improving their oral skills in class. In light of class activities, teacher participants in Chen and Goh's study acknowledged that they have insufficient pedagogical knowledge to design a course plan and class activities to motivate their students' oral participation in class. These teacher participants also stated that their unsatisfactory English language proficiency influenced their oral skills teaching because they could not express their messages clearly and could not properly evaluate their students' skills. Subsequently, their students may not receive the benefit of authentic and real-world conversations from the teachers whose own oral English language proficiency is deficient.

The above factors resulted in teachers' low self-efficacy, and Chen and Goh (2011) believed that low self-efficacy was not the only issue for Chinese teachers of English. The use of multimedia was an alternative to compensate for teachers' insufficient knowledge; however, the researchers indicated that the textbooks and the multimedia equipment were outdated. Thus, several teacher participants in the study viewed participation in training programs or conferences in English-speaking countries as a solution.

However, in a subsequent study, Chen and Goh (2014) challenged the assertion that attending training programs and conferences in English-speaking countries is helpful.

The researchers stated that English teachers may not fundamentally benefit from attending training programs and conferences in English-speaking countries because the amount of target language exposure and duration are insufficient for making significant improvements in teachers' speaking skills.

In their previous study that investigated teachers' self-efficacy in teaching oral skills, Chen and Goh (2011) found that Chinese teachers of English had insufficient pedagogical knowledge. In their 2014 study, Chen and Goh urgently investigated teacher knowledge in oral English instruction with 527 teachers from 56 universities in 29 cities across China, and mainly focused on pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of students' characteristic. Chen and Goh stated that pedagogical content knowledge is "an integration of knowledge about content and pedagogy" (p. 93). Among many definitions, Chen and Goh referred to teacher knowledge as "teachers' evidential and factual understanding about themselves as teachers, teaching and learning oral English, and their students' needs and characteristics" in their study (p. 82). The researchers developed a questionnaire to investigate teachers' knowledge about speech pedagogy and about students' oral English learning needs and characteristics by employing criteria from the literature (Hughes, 2002; DeBoer, 2007; Thornbury, 2005).

Similar to their previous mixed methods study (2011), Chen and Goh (2014)

found that their participants, Chinese teachers of English, had insufficient knowledge

about oral English instruction. Their study indicated that the length of teaching

experience, overseas experience, and speaking and listening instruction training had little

impact on teacher knowledge. Chen and Goh posited that teachers' engagement in

teaching and learning plays a more important role than experience in developing teacher

knowledge. On the other hand, the study of Chen and Goh revealed that teachers' learning

experience, self-perceived speaking ability, and familiarity with teaching methods have

great influences on teacher knowledge. Few teacher training programs are available in

China, so Chinese teachers of English employed their previous learning experience in

their teaching. Research (Ellis, 2006; Reeves, 2009) has showed that prior learning

experience greatly influences teacher knowledge. Chen and Goh argued that teachers who

have higher English proficiency might have more confidence in their speaking ability,

which contributes to their familiarity with English speaking. With this argument, Chen

and Goh implied that when Chinese teachers of English have more confidence in their

oral English proficiency and more familiarity with oral English teaching methods, the

teachers have a greater possibility of helping their students improve their speaking ability.

A drawback of this argument is that Chen and Goh did not examine the English

proficiency of their Chinese teachers of English participants, so this implication may not

be convincing.

Building on the above findings, the self-efficacy and the knowledge of English language teachers affect their ability to teach oral skills and further influence oral proficiency. However, little research has investigated this knowledge and self-efficacy in oral English in an ESL setting, so the present study will fill this gap in literature.

Student perspectives

Despite the lack of focus on researching teachers' perspective, English learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) has garnered considerable attention (Cao & Philip, 2006; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Færch & Kasper, 1983; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011; Tarone, 1981; Willems, 1987). The term willingness to communicate was first used by McCroskey and his associates in first language acquisition (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987), and later discussed in second language acquisition (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). Some researchers maintain that WTC in the first language depends on personality, whereas WTC in a second language is more situation-dependent (Cao, 2012; Peng, 2013). Although MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) found it unnecessary to limit WTC to personality or situations, Zhou (2013) stated that investigating the factors that influence learners' communication behavior from personal and situational perspectives is

inevitable.

In addition to factors mentioned in the previous chapter, such as familiarity with interlocutors, discussion topic, group size, social circumstances, and self-confidence (Cao and Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, et al., 1998), researchers have found that culture, previous educational experiences, language difficulties, opportunities to speak English, personality, communication confidence, and perceptions of teacher-student compatibility influenced English learners' WTC (Cheng, 2000; Jones, 1999; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Spatt, 1999; Zhou, 2013). In terms of WTC, English learners found participating in group discussion in an English class to be the most challenging (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Zhu & Flaitz, 2005).

In their study, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) discussed factors that influence students' willingness to communicate. They described WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547). In describing WTC, the writers stated that WTC relies more on students' readiness than on the opportunities. The purpose of the study was twofold. The first purpose of the study was to provide an account of the linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables that might affect one's willingness to communicate. The second purpose of the study was to propose potential relations among these variables by

outlining a comprehensive conceptual model that may be useful in describing, explaining, and predicting L2 communication.

Along with these purposes, the study was developed on the basis of proposing WTC as the primary goal of language instruction. Under this premise, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) first discussed factors that influence WTC in the first or native language. With a negative correlation between WTC in the first and second languages, MacIntyre et al. later explored factors that affect WTC in a second language. The writers pointed out that a second language itself plays a role in influencing L2 students' WTC. Unlike communicative competence in L1, communicative competence in L2 warrants several intergroup concerns that have social and political overtones, and that generally are not related to L1 use. MacIntyre et al. also proposed that communication anxiety, situational context, and particular events affect L2 learners' WTC.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a pyramid-shaped model in order to systematically rank factors that influence WTC in a L2. This model contains six layers, the top three of which are categorized into "situation specific influences" and the last three of which are categorized into "enduring influences" (p. 546). However, this model is so complex and detailed that it may be difficult for readers to understand. In addition, MacIntyre et al. (1998) did not take cultural factors, a common but important influence,

into account.

de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) investigated language learners' perception and attitude toward speaking activities, as well as how these two variables influence language learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2. de Saint Léger and Storch stated that the current L2 teaching approaches focused on language production; thus, L2 instruction to motivate students' WTC in class becomes significant. With this premise, in addition to being able to communicate in L2, second language learners need to be willing to communicate in the target language. The research questions of de Saint Léger and Storch study were: 1) what were the learners' perceptions regarding their speaking abilities, and did these perceptions change over time? 2) What were the learners' perceptions of their participation over the course of the semester? 3) What were the learners' attitudes toward the whole class and small group discussion?

In order to find answer to these questions, de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) collected data from 32 undergraduate participants (out of 90 total enrolled) studying French at an Australian university. The participants in this semester-long study were at the most advanced level. Classes were taught in French and were theme-based. Instructors often tried to connect the themes to the learners' real-world experiences.

de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) used course grades as one of their criteria to

evaluate WTC. Class presentations, participation, and group debates, which were components of students' final grade, were used to evaluate students' WTC. These tasks emphasized participants' oral fluency. Self-assessment was the primary methodology of the study and was introduced to the participants as a way to motivate them to become more reflective and autonomous. de Saint Léger and Storch defined class participation to students as their level of input in the target language in class discussions, small group discussions and other class interactions, regardless of their proficiency level in the target language. The self-assessment questionnaires included a combination of multiple choice items, self-rating scales and open-ended questions. Data from this methodology were analyzed in qualitative and in quantitative measures. Thirty-two participants responded to the qualitative measure, while twenty-seven participants responded to the quantitative measure.

In addition to the primary methodology, other means of data collection were the self-assessment questionnaires, required anonymous course evaluation questionnaires, focus group interviews, and the teacher's assessment. The self-assessment questionnaires took place in week 4 and week 12. The course evaluation questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester. The focus group interviews and the teacher's assessment were conducted in week 12. The focus group interviews were semi-structured, and students

participated in voluntarily by email invitations. Each group size was different due to the

time availability of the researchers and participants.

The result showed that anxiety, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence were

variables. Fluency was the greatest difficulty followed by turn taking and pronunciation.

Vocabulary was regarded as a serious concern at the beginning of the semester, but as

compared with other sources of difficulty, it became less of a concern at the end of the

semester. Participants identified "positive attitude and/or confidence" (p. 275) followed

by "grammatical knowledge and pronunciation/accent" (p. 275) as their strengths in oral

proficiency. It is worth noting that all participants reported their weakness, but five out of

32 did not report their strength.

In terms of attitudes toward class activities, a majority of the participants reported

a potential risk of being negatively judged by their peers in whole class discussion where

participants have opportunities to demonstrate their language skill and knowledge in

public. Compared to whole class discussions, group discussions were less stressful and

participants had more speaking opportunities in group discussion than in whole class

discussion. However, participants experienced other difficulties in group discussions. One

participant reported that without assistance from a French native speaker in the group, it

was difficult to keep speaking French. The researchers suggested that foreign language

learners require authentic access to the target language to motivate their acquisition. de

Saint Léger and Storch concluded that "both cognitive and affective factors are socially

grounded and cannot be dissociated from the social setting in which learning takes place"

(p. 280).

Anxiety was another variable in group discussion. In their findings, the

researchers showed that anxiety resulted from competitiveness, fear of high exposure,

risk to self-esteem, and cognition required in discussion. Most participants noticed that

proficiency level prevented less proficient speakers from participating in discussions

because they felt apprehensive. Interestingly, few participants were worried about

participating too much and declared to hold back so as not to dominate the discussion. de

Saint Léger and Storch (2009) stated that although not all learners prefer small group

work to whole class discussion, small group discussions are generally viewed as a means

of alleviating learners' performance anxiety. Regarding negative judgment from peers,

peer pressure was also a concern in focus group interviews.

In their study, de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) conducted a thorough

investigation. However, de Saint Léger and Storch did not elaborate on their participation

selection: how did they select the thirty two participants (out of 90 total enrolled), why

did thirty two participants respond to the qualitative measure while twenty seven

participants responded to the quantitative measure? Are they two different groups of

participants or are some of the participants missing? Another limitation was when the

researchers' employment of students' class participation, which was part of final grade, as

a method of the study, which may influence the validity and reliability of the study.

Moreover, the validity and the reliability of the study, in terms of participants'

backgrounds and their subjective self-reports and self-assessments, were questionable.

The researchers did not describe the participants' nationalities, native languages, and the

languages they used to answer the self-assessment. The result of the study greatly relied

on participants' self-assessment, but the researchers did not declare the validity of the

instrument. In addition, class participation comprised 10% of the final score, and the

researchers did not prove the validity and reliability of the participants' report on their

class participation. Because of these flaws, although participants indicated that their class

participation and oral ability increased, the validity and the reliability of the instrument

were questionable.

In a more recent study involving six participants, Cao (2012) investigated the

relationship between WTC and actual communication because the researcher noticed that

a gap existed in the classroom WTC research. Cao viewed WTC as dynamic and

"operationalized for this study as occasions when learners initiate or engage in

communication when they have a choice to engage or not" (p. 20). The study operated

under the premise that contemporary language pedagogy has the purpose of exposing

learners to authentic language and to encourage them to communicate the language in a

meaningful and effective fashion. Thus, Cao stated that students with higher WTC

generally have more opportunity to use the L2 in authentic situations, which gives them

more opportunity to acquire and develop their L2. Cao aimed to explore 1) the

relationship between WTC and language quality in students' oral production, and 2) the

relationship between learners' WTC and actual classroom interaction. This study included

six voluntary participants from an intact English for Academic Purposes class at a

university language center in New Zealand. The study took place over three weeks of the

semester.

     All tasks were piloted by native speakers and non-native speakers with the aims

of establishing baseline data from native speakers and ensuring that the tasks generated

adequate quantities of talk. Feedback from pilot participants was used to revise the task.

The trial also aimed to establish a time limit for task completion (p. 22).

     Cao (2012) developed a WTC ratio to calculate participants' WTC behavior, and

evaluated participants' communication quality in interaction based on their accuracy,

fluency, and complexity in learners' speech production in the oral tests. Accuracy was

evaluated by "looking at the percentage of error-free clauses as a general measure and examining target-like use of vocabulary as a more specific measure of grammatical accuracy," (p. 24) "fluency was examined in terms of hesitation phenomena or dysfluency" (p. 24) and complexity was determined by grammatical and lexical complexity. In addition, Cao used the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test, a non-parametric equivalent of paired sample t-test to measure accuracy, fluency, and complexity. However, the result from Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks test showed no significant differences between tests in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Furthermore, Cao used a Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient to measure relationships between WTC ratios and communication quality. The result from this measurement indicated strong positive correlations between WTC ratio in Week 3 and complexity in the second test. This correlation implied that "the students with high WTC might tend to produce more complex utterances than those with low WTC" (p. 26). Consequently, the researcher found no clear relationship between initiation of communication and actual engagement in communication.

Cao (2012) adopted microgenetic analysis to characterize the participants' classroom interaction because this method is extensively employed in sociocultural research. Cao also compared the students with the lowest and the highest WTC in

pair/group work. He found that the students with the highest WTC initiate conversations and share opinions more often than the students with lowest WTC, who mostly relied on peer scaffolding. The researchers revealed a relationship between learners' situational WTC and the type of contributions they make in class participation as well as the assistance they seek and receive from the teacher and their peers in classroom interaction.

The study provided helpful information, but had several limitations. Cao (2012) implied that this study is part of a larger study and reported on preliminary findings. The number of participants was not sufficient to represent the variables. With an insufficient number of participants, investigating three variables seems limited. Cao acknowledged that the data was inadequate due to the short duration of the research, so the findings were limited.

Two studies above focused on factors influencing language learners' WTC and are considered classic in current studies. The researchers investigated factors influencing English learners' WTC; however, they neither focused on ESL settings nor in the U.S. Thus, this study of factors influencing ESL university students' WTC becomes necessary.

A substantial amount of research has identified motivation as one of the factors that affects ESL students' willingness to communicate (Hishimoto, 2002; Peng, 2007; Zhou, 2013). In addition, research of second language acquisition has shown the

association between motivation and gender (Heinzmann, 2009; MacIntyre, Baker,

Clément, & Donovan, 2002; Mori & Gobel, 2005). Some researchers (Dörnyei, &

Clément, 2001; Heinzmann, 2009; Mori & Gobel, 2005) indicated that girls are better

foreign language learners than boys. Mori and Gobel (2005) investigated the relationship

between motivation and gender in an EFL setting in Japan with 453 participants, and they

found that gender difference influences EFL students' learning in terms of integrativeness.

Namely, Mori and Gobel found that female participants place more importance on social

relationship and cultural learning experiences than their male counterparts.

Bashosh, Nejad, Rastegar, and Marzban (2013) investigated the relationship

between willingness to communicate and gender with 60 EFL students in Iran, yet their

study did not find any significant relationship between willingness to communicate and

gender. In contrast to Bashosh et al., Lahuerta (2014) investigated factors affecting

willingness to communicate, finding the same factors as in prior research but with the

addition of gender as an unexpected variable in WTC. Lahuerta carried out her study with

a sample of 195 Spanish L1 speakers studying various majors at the University of Oviedo

in Spain. Lahuerta examined the relationship between the following variables: 1)

students' level of motivation and their willingness to communicate, 2) students'

self-perceived communicative competence and their willingness to communicate, 3)

students' anxiety and their self-perceived communicative competence, and 4) students'

self-perceived communicative competence and their L2 competence. In investigating the

relationship between students' self-perceived communication competence and their L2

competence, Lahuerta found gender as an interesting factor outside of language

competence that affects students' willingness to communicate. Her study revealed that

gender influenced L2 competence, and with similar levels of perceived competence, men

perform slightly better than women. Drawing on the work of Baker and MacIntyre (2000)

and Mori and Gobel (2005), Lahuerta attributed this to instrumental motivation because

males generally have more specific and professional goals in mind than females.

However, her study is not convincing because the gender of the participants was not

mentioned. Moreover, the assumption that Lahuerta made is speculative, as she did not

interview her participants for more in-depth information about how their gender might

affect their motivation.

Instruments that Evaluate Willingness to Communicate

McCroskey (1982, 1992), who first theorized about willingness to communicate

in one's first language (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), developed three instruments to

evaluate communication in three different constructs: anxiety/communication

apprehension, actual talking frequency, and willingness to communicate. The Personal

Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) aims to measure the first construct,

communication apprehension. McCroskey and his associates have conducted

considerable research by PRCA, McCroskey and Baer (1985) acknowledged that in most

of his studies, the construct validity, predictive validity, and cross-situational consistency

of the PRCA were strong, but the content validity is not conclusive. Although all versions

of PRCA are reliable, McCroskey (1992) strongly recommended the PRCA – 24. The

PRCA – 24 (McCroskey, 1982) composites 24 statements in four different

communication settings: public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings,

and speaking in dyads, in relate to communication apprehension.

Actual talking frequency, including verbal activity, vocal activity, and

talkativeness, can be measured by either observation or self-report. McCroskey (1992)

proposed a measurement that was first entitled, "Verbal Activity Scale," and which he

later renamed as "Shyness Scale." Among the studies McCroskey and his associates

conducted, McCroskey regarded the reliability and validity in each study as fairly strong.

The willingness to communicate (WTC) scale is used to measure the preference to

approach construct. The WTC scale was previously called unwillingness to communicate,

and McCroskey and his associate renamed it positively in 1985. The WTC scale is a

direct means of the respondents' preference to approach the initiation of communication,

and this direct means operates under the premise that the respondents recognize their own

approach preference. The WTC scale contains 20 items: eight of them are fillers and

others are scored as part of the scale. Similar to PRCA-24, the WTC scale measures

willingness in four different settings: public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking

in meetings, and speaking in dyads. In addition to these four settings, McCroskey (1992)

used the scale to measure the WTC of receivers, such as strangers, acquaintances, and

friends, whom the respondents prefer to approach. McCroskey and his associates have

conducted a great number of studies and proved the WTC scale has fairly positive

reliability and validity.

　　　Chan and McCroskey (1987) investigated participants' involvement in an

on-going classroom environment based on their willingness to communicate; one group

regarded themselves as having high WTC while another group viewed their WTC as low.

The willingness to communicate scale is used to measure a predisposition toward actual

communication behavior. The researchers stated that the willingness to communicate

scale was used to correlate with other self-reporting scales in predictable ways.

　　　Students with different majors in three classes participated in the study.

Unfortunately, the researchers did not indicate the number of the total participants. The

instructor of each class assisted the researchers in identifying participants' WTC level.

This assistance may include subjective judgment that violated the reliability of the study.

The researchers observed the subjects' participation at the beginning, middle, and at the

end of the semester. The observer sat in the front of the classroom where she would not

interrupt the class.

The results showed that over 50% of the high WTC participants were involved in

class activities; on the contrary, fewer than a quarter of the low WTC participants were

involved in class activities. Therefore, the results supported the predictive validity of the

WTC scale.

Sociocultural Theory in Second Language Classrooms

Using language learning autobiographies, journal entries, pre- and post-

interviews, and stimulated recall tasks, Yang and Kim (2011) investigated the beliefs of

two second language learners. Based on sociocultural theory, the researchers looked at

how the experience of studying abroad changed these beliefs and found that learner

beliefs are formed depending on their language-learning objectives and social activities.

One of the participants regarded his communication skills as advanced. His goal, based

on his instrumental motivation, was to improve his English fluency. He assumed that

frequently interacting with native English speakers would improve his English fluency

and that studying abroad would be more beneficial than taking a receptive skill-oriented

TOEIC exam with the end goal of finding a job in an international company in Korea, his

native country. However, after studying abroad, the participant changed his mind because

his roommate, a native English speaker, was not interested in helping him improve his

English and later moved out. Furthermore, he did not participate in extracurricular

activities as frequently as he expected. Since he had difficulty connecting with native

English speakers, he had more contact with his friends in Korea, which did nothing to

help him meet his goal. In talking with his friends in Korea, the participant learned that

the TOEIC score influenced employment opportunities, so he changed his goal to focus

on the TOEIC.

Similar to the Korean male participant, another female participant in the study of

Yang and Kim (2011) changed her language-learning goal, but she had a different

experience. She believed that receiving sufficient feedback from second language

professors would further advance her skills. Although she had difficulty finding

opportunities to interact with native speakers of English, she found ways to increase her

English proficiency. For example, she invited one of the staff members to be her

conversation partner. She also made friends with a grocery owner and stopped by the

store to converse with the owner. Therefore, she realized the importance of participating

in second language community and discovered that making strong connections with

people would increase her English proficiency.

Mustafa (2012) conducted another study using SCT in an ESL classroom in

Canada. He explored five Saudi ESL students' opinions about written feedback from their

teacher through informal conversational interviews and semi-structured interviews. Since

writing is another form of willingness to communicate, Mustafa's findings are relevant. In

order to collect rich data, Mustafa selected five Saudi ESL students with diverse English

proficiency levels and various academic majors. Mustafa found that his participants

overwhelmingly had negative attitudes toward their teachers' feedback. Although

participants valued their teachers' feedback, they did not regard it as fully helpful because

it was surprising, difficult to understand, and based on cultural stereotype that the

students perceived the teachers to have. According to above findings, Mustafa stated that

the expected outcomes of SCT did not exist in this ESL class. Mustafa acknowledged that

one of the limitations of his study is the absence of the voice of the teachers. Therefore,

conducting a study including the opinions of professors and students is significant.

Liu (2011) recommended her autonomous English learning experiences under

SCT in Canada and emphasized the significance of autonomous learning. She reported

having a volunteer teaching job, working part-time, living with a host family, and

participating in extracurricular activities. In order to improve her oral communication

skills, Liu worked as a volunteer Mandarin language teacher in Canada. By teaching

Mandarin, she had more interaction opportunities with native English speakers in a

friendly environment. In addition to interacting with native English speakers, Liu had a

part-time job in a fast food store where she had opportunities to negotiate meaning with

people with different accents and speaking styles. Liu found her part-time work

experience beneficial because she acquired interpersonal communication skills, e.g.,

emotional and social functions of English, which she would not acquire in class. Her

home stay experience was another source of emotional support. Liu had a caring landlady

to help her overcome homesickness and alleviate her cultural shock. More importantly,

the landlady taught her the local culture, and introduced Liu to her friends so that Liu had

more cultural and social exposure than other international students who choose to stay

with people from the same country or by themselves. Liu also actively participated in

extracurricular activities where she made more friends and gained more Canadian culture.

Liu developed her communication skills under SCT through these supportive experiences.

Her extroversion aided her success; therefore, it is necessary to gather perspectives from

more introverted personalities. Interviewing the experiences of learners with a variety of

personality types is important for the scope of this study.

Summary

With the prevalence of the Communicative Language Teaching method in ESL

classes, being able to communicate in English in an authentic and real-world manner has

become imperative. Therefore, improving willingness to communicate in oral English has

been one of the most significant goals in ESL instruction. The literature review centers on

research findings in relation to three specific categories: ESL students' discourse

competence inside and outside the classroom, willingness to communicate, and

sociocultural theory in second language classrooms. The literature review explores

general findings along with critiques of individual studies in each area, and each finding

supports the purpose of this study and also shows that the study is necessary due to the

limitations of previous studies.

Researchers, such as MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) generally

believe that language learners have different communication behaviors inside and outside

the classroom. Some may be silent in class, but talkative out of the class, or vice versa. In

investigating factors influencing ESL students' language of choice outside the classroom

under an English-only policy, Shvidko, Evans, and Hartshom (2015) found that

sociocultural, linguistic, individual, and affective factors are important variables. Shvidko

et al. proposed utilizing both interactionist and sociocultural perspectives to create an

encouraging language learning environment. Language students are multidimensional

beings, for whom language learning is only a small slice of their entire selves. Thus,

emotional and social needs play an important role in their language acquisition as well.

Chen and Goh (2011, 2014) illustrated that not only language students but also

language teachers can influence the success of willingness to communicate in class. Chen

and Goh (2011, 2014) found that most Chinese teachers of English have insufficient

knowledge and competence in teaching oral English. Most of them adapted their prior

learning experience into their teaching, and this vicious circle negatively influences their

English proficiency. Thus, in the present study, it is significant to investigate whether

current ESL teachers in the United States have sufficient knowledge to adapt the current

CLT method, and whether they are ready to teach oral English classes.

From the perspective of English language students, researchers, such as Cheng

(2000), Jones (1999), Liu and Littlewood (1997), Peng and Woodrow (2010), Spatt

(1999), and Zhou (2013) all found that culture, previous educational experiences,

language difficulties, opportunities to speak English, personality, communication

confidence, and perceptions of teacher-student compatibility influenced English learners'

WTC. Therefore, studies on factors influencing WTC in English settings in the United

States are a necessary addition to the research that already exists about oral ESL teaching

and learning.

The present study is based on the sociocultural theory of L. S. Vygotsky from the perspective of Shvidko et al. (2015). This theory focuses on how social and cultural factors influence students coming from an EFL setting to an ESL setting and emphasizes the roles of mediation, goals, motivation, and interaction between teachers and students in learning. In accordance with the ZPD concept, students also need interaction with teachers and more advanced peers to develop their skills. This emphasis on the importance of interaction allows English learners to move forward to a more advanced level by cooperative learning with personalized goals. Through interactions, students build mutual rapport and provide comfortable opportunities to practice the language.

In conclusion, this literature review summarizes studies that explored the willingness to communicate (WTC) among ESL university students from two perspectives: ESL students and their oral communication professors. Previous research has devoted a great deal of attention to investigating factors affecting language learners' willingness to communicate, such as teachers' skills and knowledge, anxiety, motivation, communication confidence, culture, previous educational experiences, and opportunities to speak English. While these studies have explored and investigated a number of issues, shortcomings, and limitations in relation to their sampling, validity, or reliability in the

research, few studies have investigated factors that affect ESL university students'

willingness to communicate in an ESL program in the United States. Furthermore, few

studies have explored factors that affect ESL students' willingness to communicate from

the dual perspectives of students and their oral communication professors simultaneously.

This literature review clearly shows that a gap exists in the literature accounting for both

professors' and students' perspectives. Therefore, a more comprehensive study of these

two perspectives along with more factors that affect students' WTC is essential to bridge

the missing gap.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter first identifies the research questions that the study addressed and then described nine elements of the study: the research design, research setting, study participants, the protection of human subjects, sources of data collection, data analysis, and background of the researcher. The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students at intermediate levels from the dual perspectives of both the students and their oral communication professor at a state university in California.

The study intended to address the following questions:

1. How do ESL university students characterize their overall experience in the intermediate level English oral communication class?

   1a. How do they describe their strengths in communication?

   1b. How do they describe their challenges in communication?

   1c. How does WTC affect their overall experience in the class?

   1d. What factors impact their WTC?

2. How does the professor of the intermediate level English oral communication class

perceive the ESL university students' WTC?

  2a. How does he describe his students' WTC in the class?

  2b. From his perspective, what factors impact his students' WTC?

  2c. In what ways does his students' WTC influence his teaching?

3. What are the participants' recommendations for how to improve WTC?

  3a. What are the ESL university students' recommendations for how to improve WTC?

  3b. What are the professor's recommendations for how to improve WTC?

Restatement of the Research Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students from the dual perspectives of both the students and their oral communication professor. Generally speaking, when language educators discuss WTC, they consider the productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing) of the language. This study focused only on the WTC of ESL university students as far as speaking is concerned.

Research Design

In an effort to achieve the purpose, a qualitative research study was conducted. Creswell (2011) stated that qualitative research allows a more comprehensive analysis of the central phenomena that influence ESL university students' WTC. In addition,

qualitative research allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions that give the

participants an opportunity to share their thoughts in an unbiased way. The qualitative

study identified factors affecting ESL students' WTC. In the study, interviews and

classroom observations were used for data collection. While the observations are

important, interviews can best solicit information about participants' perceptions, feelings,

values, and knowledge.

Research Setting

This study took place in an Oral Communication course in the Academic and Test

Preparation (ATP) program, which is one of the five Intensive English programs (IEP) of

the International Gateways at San José State University (SJSU) in San José, California.

The ATP program operates on a quarter system, and Spring quarter is divided into two

sessions. In session 2 of the Spring 2017 quarter, the majority of SJSU students, not

including those enrolled in IEP courses, racially identified themselves as Asian. Of all

enrolled SJSU students, most were 20 to 24 years old, with around 14,171 females and

15,029 males (San José State University).

The ATP program functions as a general ESL program where international

students come to the United States with a student visa to improve their English

proficiency. The mission of the program is to help students develop and improve English

and academic skills for success in an American university. The actual table illustrating the

five programs and their purposes from the website is available in Appendix A.

International Gateways operates under the auspices of International and Extended Studies

at SJSU. The ATP program is accredited through the Commission on English Language

Program Accreditation (CEA). As of December 2012, all IEPs must be accredited to be

able to issue I-20s for student visas. Accreditation may be acquired through the host

institution's regional accreditation agency or the CEA. SJSU has been accredited since

2008 and recently received accreditation until 2024.

In session 2 of the Spring 2017 quarter, 31 instructors taught in the ATP program;

ten were full-time and 21 were part-time. Of all the instructors, 5 were non-native

speakers of English. The teaching experiences of the instructors ranged from more than

one year to more than fifteen years. Fifteen out of 31 instructors had taught oral

communication courses at different levels, and only two of them were native English

speakers. Six of the 15 oral communication instructors had taught in the ATP program for

over eight years. For CEA accreditation purposes, all instructors in the ATP program must

hold degrees in MA TESOL or related fields and have at least two years of teaching

experience, either in the United States. or overseas. Those instructors who hold their MA

in related fields have to demonstrate sufficient knowledge in the areas of language

teaching methodology and second language acquisition, the nature of language (e.g.,

introduction to linguistics), and the structure of English (e.g., syntax, phonology,

morphology, and discourse).

The program administers two evaluations: online and paper-based. Students

complete the paper-based 5-minute evaluations called snapshots, given by their

instructors in courses during the third week of each new term. The paper-based evaluation

contains yes-no questions regarding courses and general program comments. Students

later take an online evaluation, which is created through Qualtrics, at the end of every

8-week session. The online evaluation has questions pertaining to all courses, activities,

advising, registration, orientation, and general course comments. In order to increase

participation, advisors come to courses and ask students to complete the evaluation

during class on students' mobile devices and computers.

Students enrolled in the IEP program are non-native English speakers, aged 18 or

older, who have registered either in the ATP program or the MBA preparation program.

176 students were enrolled in session 2 of the Spring 2017 quarter, and China (68),

Vietnam (33), Taiwan (22), Japan (14), South Korea (14), and Saudi Arabia (13) were the

top six home countries of these students. The IEP students ranged in ages from 18 to 50,

with an average age of 24. In terms of gender, 105 were female and 71 were male. The

program provides courses year-round (with sessions starting in January, March, August,

or October) for academic, professional, or personal purposes, and students enroll in

courses based on their preferences and English proficiency. Courses are 5-17 weeks long,

depending on students' purposes. As part of the admissions process, the ATP program at

SJSU requires students to take the TOEFL IEP, an institutional paper-based placement

test, along with an internal oral assessment and 30-minute timed writing exercise to

evaluate their English proficiency. With reference to the internal oral assessment, two

instructors administer an oral interview with each student. In addition to general

questions, the instructors show each student a set of pictures and ask them to create their

own story.

The ATP courses are offered at eight levels: low beginner, beginner, high beginner,

low intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate, low advanced, and advanced. Course

offerings include written communication and grammar, oral communication (speaking

and listening), reading skills, and electives. The program has Skill Leaders, who are

designated instructors for the following skills: written communication and grammar, oral

communication (speaking and listening), reading skills. The Skill Leaders choose the

textbooks. For example, the Oral Communication Skill Leader chooses the texts for each

level one semester in advance. For any new texts, the Skill Leaders will introduce their

features to the instructors. In addition, the program also offers Communication Club that students can voluntarily attend to improve their oral communication skills.

Students attend class for four hours daily (two classes that are two hours each), Monday through Friday. In order to meet the requirement of the F-1 student visa, students need to take classes totaling at least 20 hours per week. Students sign up for a number of classes at the same level based on their placement test scores, but they may enroll in classes at different levels if they are advanced in a specific skill. For oral communication courses, students with a placement score of 386-414 register for level 300 courses, which are at the high beginner level, and students with a placement score of 392-450 sign up for level 400 courses, which are at the low intermediate level. Students in the ATP program take classes for either 9 or 17 weeks. Students may sign up for a 9-week session, and those who wish to study further may sign up for the following 8-week session.

Alternately, students may register directly for both sessions at a reduced price. Students take a final exam in each session but generally do not move to a higher level between sessions 1 and 2. Only students working beyond the scope of the course SLOs (student learning outcomes) are eligible to advance to a higher level with a recommendation from their professors. Student may also file a written appeal form requesting advancement. Advancement is based on mastery of the course SLOs.

Participants

The study had two categories of participants: ESL students and one of their

professors, who taught oral communication (OC). Purposeful and convenience samplings

were used to select both types of participants. In purposeful sampling, the researcher

purposefully selects participants and sites to understand the central phenomenon; in

convenience sampling, the researcher selects participants who are willing to and available

to participate in the study (Creswell, 2011). In this study, the researcher purposefully

selected ESL participants at San Jose State University because she had access to this

location. She intentionally chose student participants at the low intermediate level in

session 2 (began on March 13th and continued through May 11th, 2017) because most of

them had completed session 1 (began from January to March 10th, 2017) and thus had

sufficient English proficiency to be able to clearly express themselves in the interviews.

The director of the International Gateways provided access by inviting the professors of

the intermediate-level Oral Communication courses to participate in the study.

Particularly, she recommended a male professor of the low intermediate level class, and

he accepted the invitation.

Student participants

Student participants in the study were ATP students at the low intermediate Oral

Communication level, who were mostly from East Asia and the Middle East. Ninety

percent of the students in session 2 had attended session 1. Student participants at this

level were chosen because they had sufficient English proficiency to clearly express their

opinions in interviews. Fourteen students were enrolled at the low intermediate Oral

Communication level in session 2 of the 2017 quarter, with 6 students from China, 2 from

Taiwan, 4 from Vietnam, and 2 from Saudi Arabia. The students were between 18 and 28

years old, with a female to male ratio of 3:4. Thirteen of these students (six females,

seven males) voluntarily participated in the one-on-one interview and 11 of these students

(six females and five males) participated in the later focus group interview. A voice of

one student in the one-on-one interview was excluded, because his voice was not audible.

The following section provides information about student participants' educational

backgrounds in their native countries, English learning experiences, and reasons they

came to the United States. All the names used are pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Table 2 summarized background information about the student participants.

Alyssa is from Saudi Arabia. She was 25 years old and came to the United States

in December, 2016. She lived with her husband, also a Saudi, who was pursuing his

graduate degree in the United States. She held a bachelor's degree in curriculum and

teaching design, in a program focusing on ESL in Saudi Arabia. Arabic is her first

language, and English is her second language. She started learning English in kindergarten. When she was in Saudi Arabia, she did not have the opportunity to converse in English in school, but she was able to practice in restaurants. People in restaurants in Saudi Arabia were from different countries.

Chloe is from Liaoning, China. She was 23 years old and started studying English in first grade in a private elementary school. When she was in fourth grade, she transferred to a public school as it was closer to her home. She started attending a cram school to improve her English when she was in junior high school. Her undergraduate major was media, television directing. Her goal was to apply for a master's degree.

Jasmine is from Vietnam. She was 27 years old and arrived in the United States in December 2016. She was among the most proficient in English of the Vietnamese students because she could effectively communicate in the interviews and rarely required her smart phone to look up vocabulary. She received a bachelor's degree in Vietnam and interrupted her MBA degree in Vietnam in order to emigrate to the U.S. Her parents bought her English DVDs and VCDs, so she started her English acquisition at around age five. She came to the United States to study English in order to apply for a MBA and later to find a job in an international company. In addition, she came to the United States to experience living on her own.

Kevin is from Taiwan. He was 28 years old and arrived in the United States in June 2016, and lived with his younger sister off campus. This was his second session in this program. Before studying in this program, he attended a community college in his neighborhood. Unlike most Taiwanese students, who start learning English in elementary school, Kevin started learning English when he was in high school as a required subject. He admitted that he had barely taken his education seriously when he was in Taiwan, and he did not complete his undergraduate degree. Prior to studying abroad in the United States, he had worked for four years in the field of mechanical engineering in Taiwan. As he gained professional experience, he realized that becoming more proficient in English would be beneficial to his career, as it would enable him to work with engineers in other countries. He came to the United States. because his parents wanted him to improve his English proficiency in order to improve his future job prospects.

Kingston is from Taiwan. He was 26 years old and arrived in San Jose in August 2016. He may have had the most exposure to English of any student in the class. He had been exposed to English since childhood, because both of his parents graduated from foreign language departments in Taiwan, and his mother is a university professor in a foreign language program in Taiwan. In addition, his aunts visited him from England and sometimes visited his family. When his aunts visited him, they spoke either Mandarin or

English with him, but he did not like to communicate with them in English because of their British accents. In addition, his parents were extremely busy, so they seldom saw each other at home and therefore did not have many opportunities to practice speaking English. He attended part of a semester of tenth grade in Los Angeles, California, so he had several American-born-in-China (ABC) friends there. His undergraduate major was computer science. After graduating from college in Taiwan, he served in the substitute military service for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; therefore, he made friends in the service and spoke English with foreigners in Taiwan. His goal was to reach a score of 100 in the TOEFL because he thought it was a requirement to apply either for a master's degree or to pilot school.

Langston is from Vietnam. He was 18 years old and arrived in December, 2016 in the United States. He was a new student in this course. He was in a lower level in his first session and moved up to this level in the second session. He started learning English in middle school, around sixth grade. He attended a cram school for English learning at the same time, but he barely had the opportunity to speak English because the focus of English teaching in Vietnam is grammar. Despite having had little opportunity to practice his oral skills, Langston spoke rapid and fluid English with barely a trace of foreign accent, whereas Jasmine's accent often interfered with her effectiveness as an English

speaker. Langston had just graduated from high school before coming to the United

States.

Langston became interested in visiting the United States after consulting

resources on the Internet; he was interested in improving his spoken English and

increasing his vocabulary. He lived on campus, and his roommate was a native English

speaker who was nice and friendly to international students. Langston often practiced

English with his roommate, who helped him improve his pronunciation. He also practiced

English with his classmates from different countries. He did not plan to stay in the United

States. after the session was over because he planned to visit different countries.

Lawrence is from Zhejiang, China. He was 20 years old and arrived in the United

States in October 2016. He started learning English when he was in kindergarten. He was

inspired to come to the United States because one of his uncles currently studies at an

American university. His uncle developed leadership skills through his studies in the

United States, and Lawrence wanted to develop his own leadership skills. His practical

purpose of coming to the United States was to improve his English proficiency to attain a

satisfactory TOEFL score in order to apply for an undergraduate degree. Another purpose

was to show off his study abroad experience to his friends in China.

Nelson is from Saudi Arabia. He was 22 years old and arrived in the United States

in August 2016. He had attended school in Oregon 2014-2015, followed by Santa Clara University, and finally this program. He stayed with his older sister. He came to the United States. because his sister had been granted a government scholarship. He spent 2 years in college in Saudi Arabia, and then came to the United States. to restart his college studies. He planned to apply to a bachelor's program in business in the United States. He started learning English in Saudi Arabia at age 10. At the same time, his parents hired a tutor to teach him English until he was 19. However, he did not take English learning seriously because he regarded learning English as difficult. Nelson did not participate in the focus group interview because no student wanted to group with him and he often skipped classes, making scheduling difficult. Although he was eventually able to schedule an interview, his voice in the one-on-one interview was excluded, because his voice was not audible.

Tania is from Vietnam. She was 20 years old and arrived in the United States in May 2016. She started learning English in middle school, in grade 6 in Vietnam. During her English study in Vietnam, grammar was the focus. She attended an international school in Vietnam, so that she had more exposure to English. However, she did not have confidence speaking English because of her difficulties with pronunciation, which made her self-conscious. She planned to attend an American college for 2 years and then

transfer to a university. She stayed with her two older sisters off campus.

Teresa is from Vietnam. She was 24 years old and arrived in the United States in September 2016. She held a bachelor's degree in finance and banking in Vietnam. She started learning English in sixth grade in Vietnam. While her countryside schools offered English as a subject, they did not consider it to be important, since most of the rural companies and government institutions did not require English proficiency. Therefore, she did not spend much time on studying English until she came to the United States. When she was in Vietnam, grammar, writing, and reading were the foci in schools. Before coming to the United States, she hired a tutor in Vietnam to teach her how to take the TOEFL oral test. She came to the United States because she wanted to experience a different educational system. In addition, her goal was to pursue a bachelor's degree in math since she was not interested in finance and banking after studying those subjects in Vietnam.

Victor is from China. He was 20 years old and was exposed to English in kindergarten, but officially started learning English in third grade in a public school. He graduated from high school in 2016 and came to the United States to acquire English in order to apply for an undergraduate degree. In addition, his parents had a plan to immigrate to the United States, and they sent him here to become acquainted with the

culture and English language. He arrived in the United States at the same time as Lawrence, so they were good friends. He admitted that when he was in China, he did not listen to the lectures in English class because he could not understand English. He had experience communicating with foreigners in China, because Australian instructors had sometimes visited his high school.

Yvan is from Shandong, China. He was 19 years old and arrived in the United States in September 2016. He graduated from high school and planned to apply for a bachelor's degree in business or economics in the United States because he considered U.S. degrees superior to those in China. He started learning English in the third grade. He was the best student in the English class when he was in China. In addition to Nelson, Yvan did not participate in the focus group interview because he seldom attended class during the rest of the session because he chronically overslept. Only later did he realize that class attendance counted toward his grade and that he was dangerously close to failing.

Yvonne is from China. She was 19 years old and one of the two new students in this course. She had arrived in the United States only two months previously, after graduating from high school. She started learning English in the third grade. English became more difficult for her when she was in eighth grade because the instruction put

more emphasis on grammar. At the last stage of ninth grade, she spent one month

studying English in order to fulfill a high school requirement. Her area of emphasis in

high school was music, so she spent considerable time practicing music. The morning

classes were regular classes, and the afternoon classes were music classes. After class,

she went to cram school for music, so she did not have extra time for English. Moreover,

in the ninth grade, she transferred to an intensive music-only program. Therefore, she did

not pay attention to English through high school. She had been trained to be a pianist, so

the schools she attended in China focused mainly on developing her professional piano

skills. She came to the United States because her parents did not believe music could be a

profitable career and she did not receive satisfactory scores in her college entrance exam.

She planned to apply for a bachelor's degree in accounting. Since she had not learned

enough English in high school, she attended an IELTS preparation course for four days in

order to be prepared for application to the ATP program. When she was in China, she did

not have any opportunity to practice oral English.

Table 2

Background Information about the Student Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Length of stay in the U.S	English learning experience	Educational background	Purpose to the program
Alyssa	25	Saudi Arabia	5 months	First exposure in kindergarten.	University - Curriculum and Teaching Design	
Chloe	23	China	7 months	First exposure in 1st grade.	University - Media and TV Directing	To apply for a master's degree
Jasmine	27	Vietnam	4 months	First exposure at age 5. Parents bought DVDs and VCDs	University	To apply for a MBA
Kevin	28	Taiwan	11 months	First exposure in high school, but did not take learning seriously	University incomplete	To improve English for job
Kingston	26	Taiwan	9 months	First exposure in childhood at home.	University - Computer Science	To reach 100 score in TOEFL
Langston	18	Vietnam	5 months	First exposure in 6th grade.	High school	To improve English
Lawrence	20	China	7 months	First exposure in kindergarten, but did not take learning seriously	High school	To apply for a bachelor degree
Nelson	22	Saudi Arabia	At least 24 months	First exposure at age 10. Parents hired tutor to teach him.	University incomplete: Two years in university in Saudi Arabia, and two years in university in Oregon	To apply for a bachelor degree
Tania	20	Vietnam	12 months	First exposure in 6th grade. Attended international school	High school	To apply for a bachelor degree
Teresa	24	Vietnam	8 months	First exposure in 6th grade but schools did not focus	University - Finance and Banking	To apply for a bachelor degree
Victor	20	China	7 months	First exposure 3rd grade, but did not listen to instruction	High school	To apply for a bachelor degree
Yvonne	19	China	2 months	Since 3rd grade, but emphasis on music in high school	High school - Emphasis in Music	To apply for a bachelor degree
Yvan	19	China	8 months	Since 3rd grade. He was the best student in English.	High school	To apply for a bachelor degree

Professor participant

The director of the International Gateways provided the researcher access to the site by asking the Oral Communication professors who teach intermediate-level courses whether they wished to participate in the research. The program director recommended a male professor to participate in the study, and he accepted, including agreeing to observe his classes in order to generate interview questions and to be interviewed about his perspectives of f influences on his students' WTC. This professor was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. Farsi and Pashto are his native languages, and he has 17 years of English teaching experience.

The professor majored in accounting when he attended college in Afghanistan. He changed his major because he viewed teaching English as a more profitable job. He received a Master of Education in Trainer Development at the University of Exeter in England, returning to his native country for two years to teach English and English for Specific Purpose at a University in Afghanistan. He then pursued a Master of Arts in TESL/TEFL at Kansas State University. Since 2011, he has taught writing, reading, speaking and listening, and academic preparation in the American Language Program at Cal State University, East Bay (CSUEB). In addition to working at CSUEB, the professor has taught oral communication, writing, and reading at SJSU since 2013. Both positions

are part-time.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to visiting the ATP classes at SJSU to conduct the study, the researcher

received approval to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board for the

Protection of Human Subjects (IRBHS). The researcher applied for the approval letter

shown in Appendix B after receiving the approval of the research proposal from the

dissertation committee. The researcher also requested written permission as shown in

Appendix C from SJSU to conduct the study in the ATP program. Additionally, all

participants voluntarily took part in the study, and they signed an informed consent form

before data collection. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the

study at any time without any reason. See Appendices D and E for informed consent

forms.

In reference to confidentiality, the researcher ensured that all information was

secured. Except for the researcher, no individual had access to the data and records.

Participants were identified by pseudonyms.

Data Collection

The study collected qualitative data from the students and their Oral

Communication professor for a total of four sets of data in the following order:

1. Class observations of the students and their oral communication professor,

2. One-on-one interviews with the students,

3. Focus group interviews with the students, and

4. A narrative interview with the professor

Prior to initiating the study, the researcher visited the class twice at the end of the previous session in order to observe the class to organize her notes and familiarize herself with the students and professor. During the first week of the course, the researcher attended the class. The course professor presented the researcher to the students, and the researcher introduced her study, including the purpose, research methods: observations and interviews. The researcher informed the participants that the study was not a test and that their performance would not be graded. Furthermore, the researcher explained to the students that their participation would benefit the study and could improve their communication skills. Moreover, the researcher informed the students that she was an observer of the class and that her purpose was to observe their oral communication behaviors in the class; therefore, their communication performance would play an important role in the study.

After giving the above information, the researcher explained to the students that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

In order to ensure their understanding of the study, the researcher explained all of the

above information into Mandarin at the request of the course instructor because Mandarin

was the most common native language of the students. The researcher provided an

incentive for student participation by inviting them to clarify and provide more details

about their experiences in the interview, thus assisting them in developing a deeper

understanding of their learning environment so that they could work more effectively

toward their academic goals. The researcher informed the students that they could choose

the language they felt most comfortable with in the interviews, since the purpose of the

study was to investigate their willingness to communicate in class rather than their

proficiency. After the researcher shared this information, the study began.

Fourteen students enrolled in low intermediate Oral Communication in session 2

in 2017, with the majority from East Asia and the Middle East. Most of them took

TOEFL preparation as their elective course with the goal of improving their English

proficiency to apply for a master's degree in the United States. Because of this goal, the

students were most likely motivated to increase their cultural competence and take

instruction. These students provided the primary qualitative data with observations and

both one-on-one and focus group semi-structured interviews.

Observations

The observations started in the fourth week of the course. At this time, all student participants had had oral English communication experiences in the United States. The researcher observed the course two to three days a week, for 6 weeks, with a total of 16 observations. Observations provided holistic information regarding the ESL university students' classroom oral participation in the study. Students' class performance was documented according to the frequency of their participation. The researcher took field notes during every observation and transcribed the field notes weekly. The researcher's field notes from the observation then informed the interview questions.

Interviews

In addition to observations, the interviews allowed the researcher to explore the central phenomena that were not easily observable. Both observations and interviews allowed the researcher to focus on the purpose of this study: to examine the nearly imperceptible factors that influence the WTC of university students from the dual perspectives of student participants and their oral communication professor.

One-on-one student interviews

An invitation for one-on-one interviews was emailed when observations began, and the purpose of the interviews was to investigate previous English learning

experiences and communication behaviors of the participants. These interviews (see

Appendix G) explored factors that influence participants' WTC, assessed participants'

awareness of the importance of oral English communication, identified their WTC level,

and acquired their perceptions of their own communication experiences.

Thirteen out of 14 students voluntarily participated in the one-on-one interview,

and the researcher and course professor strongly encouraged them to join the focus group

later. A Chinese male student did not participate in the study because he thought it was

too time-consuming, and he only attended class twice. He was later on probation for low

attendance.

The participants included six female and seven male students. The researcher

shared information from her class observations with the student participants in order to

provide coherence. Each one-on-one interview took place either in a study room at the

King Library (SJSU's main library) or in the Student Union Center at each participant's

convenience. Each interview took 30 minutes.

Focus group student interviews

In order to deepen the understanding of data elicited through the one-on-one

interviews, the researcher invited the 13 volunteer students to participate in

semi-structured focus group interviews three weeks before the end of the session. Eleven

of these volunteers ultimately participated in the focus group interviews because two

male students who initially agreed to participate were absent when the interviews

occurred. These interviews (see Appendix H) investigated factors influencing their WTC,

identified their changes during the course, and collected their recommendations on how

to improve WTC. Unlike the one-on-one interviews, the semi-structured focus group

interviews were used to gather a collective perspective from a group of specific

participants. Focus group interviews are beneficial because they allow the researcher to

obtain data from participants who may have shared experiences and backgrounds as well

as generate information that the researcher did not expect. In order to provide ample

opportunity for students to talk and for the researcher to obtain sufficient information,

these eleven volunteer student participants were divided into three groups of

three-three-four mostly based on their first language and comfort level interacting with

classmates of different nationalities and genders.

During the one-on-one interviews, the researcher noticed that two Vietnamese

students could not fully understand the interview questions even though they used their

smart phones to look up the definitions of several key words. Therefore, the researcher

grouped participants based on their native language so that those who understood the

meaning of the question could translate to their classmates. In addition, in a short

conversation during the course break, the course instructor shared his experience that

Saudi Arabian females feel more comfortable conversing with other females. The

researcher later confirmed this with the only Saudi Arabian female in class, who shared

that she preferred to interview separately from the only Saudi Arabian male student. The

female did not want to translate for the male student since her English proficiency was

better.

Each semi-structured focus group interview took approximately one hour. All

semi-structured focus group interviews were tape recorded with permission of the

participants, and member checking was used for all transcribed interview data one week

after the focus group interview, in the penultimate week of the session. Member checking

plays a significant role in a qualitative study because asking participants to verify the

transcriptions ensures accuracy of the accounts.

Narrative interview with the professor

The male professor participating in this research sat for a narrative interview (see

Appendix F) two weeks before the end of the course concerning his perceptions and

knowledge of factors that influence the WTC of his ESL university students. The

interview was semi-structured and tape recorded. The interview took place in the office of

the professor at CSUEB and lasted for one hour. The professor reviewed the transcribed

data from the interview to ensure that the researcher accurately interpreted and reflected

his opinions at the end of the course.

Data Analysis

The researcher began the qualitative data analysis by organizing the field notes

taken during her observations and by transcribing interview information. The researcher

later categorized the information into themes based on the data from observations and

interviews. The results of the student one-on-one interviews answered research question 1.

The student focus group interview provided further information for research questions 1b,

1c, 1d, and 3a. Information from the professor narrative interview addressed research

questions 2a, 2b, and 3b.

Background of the Researcher

The researcher is an international student from Asia and has been studying in the

United States for over ten years. Based on her own experiences, she is aware of many

issues that international students encounter. Therefore, the researcher decided to pursue

her doctoral degree in order to support international students in conquering their

difficulties, especially in oral communication.

In tandem with her doctoral studies, the researcher has actively honed her

classroom teaching skills by working to become a creative, encouraging, and motivating

English teacher for many years. Her current research interests are communication strategies, applied linguistics, teaching English through drama techniques, teaching language through technology, and teaching methodologies.

During her career, the researcher has noticed that difficulties in oral communication prevent a number of English learners' willingness to communicate in English and affect their fluency in English. The researcher tutored English to adults in Taiwan and in the United States. She also taught English at the International Women's Club at the University of Iowa. She found that her students had sufficient English knowledge, but they experienced difficulties in expressing themselves orally. Therefore, the researcher designed teaching methods to assist her students in expressing themselves orally. The students' interests and active participation in her lessons motivated the researcher to further investigate this issue. The researcher has been investigating factors that affect ESL students' oral communication and exploring communication strategies that can improve ESL students' communication skills for many years. While working to motivate students to communicate, the researcher found that using drama in the classroom techniques can encourage ESL students' willingness to communicate and strengthen their negotiation skills.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative study investigated factors influencing ESL university students' willingness to communicate (WTC). This chapter presents the results in response to the three research questions, based upon data collected through one-on-one and focus group interviews with students along with a narrative interview with the professor. The one-on-one interviews explored factors that influence participants' willingness to communicate (WTC), assessed participants' awareness of the importance of oral English communication, identified their WTC level, and acquired their perceptions of their own communication experiences. Following the one-on-one interviews, the focus group interviews with student participants provided deeper understanding of data elicited through the one-on-one interviews, and recommendations to improve their WTC. Finally, the narrative interview with the course professor provided perceptions and knowledge of factors influencing the WTC of his ESL university students.

The researcher informed the students that they could choose which language they felt most comfortable using in the one-on-one and focus group interviews. Thus, the Chinese student participants selected Mandarin, which is also the native language of the

researcher. Therefore, the excerpts below from these interviews appear first in Mandarin, followed by the English translation. In the Mandarin excerpts, some students code switched, meaning they sometimes used Mandarin and sometimes used English. Their code-switching did not interfere with my understanding.

The results of the one-on-one student interviews were used to answer Research Question 1. The student focus group interviews provided further information for Research Questions 1b, 1c, 1d, and 3a. Information from the professor narrative interview addressed Research Questions 2a, 2b, and 3b. All interviews represent the authentic voice and viewpoints of the participants. The excerpts from each participant's one-on-one interview and focus group interviews are used to support the data.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section introduces the teaching materials and classroom practices in the intermediate level English oral communication course. The second section includes responses related to the three research questions set forth in this qualitative study. The third section summarizes all the findings of the study. All findings are presented below in the order of the research questions they address.

Teaching Materials and Classroom Practices in the Intermediate Level English Oral

Communication Course

This study took place in an Oral Communication course at the intermediate level.

The class met every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m., and most of

the students had another class at 1:30 p.m.-3:20 p.m. Based on these schedules,

interviews were primarily administered from either 12:20 p.m.-1:30 p.m. or after 3:20

p.m. With the program objectives, the grading criteria for the class included in-class tasks

and activities, homework, quizzes and final exams, and presentation projects.

In-class tasks and activities included textbook activity practices and group

discussions from teacher-made handouts inspired by outside materials. The textbook was

Lecture Ready 2 by Peg Sarosy and Kathy Sherak (2013). The textbook contains 10

chapters, and each chapter includes strategies for developing listening, note-taking,

academic discussion, and presentation skills. In terms of textbook activity practices, the

course professor taught students key phrases in presentations and speaking step-by-step.

The textbook offered listening practice opportunities for students to analyze the key

phrases in the listening passages. The professor also prepared a note-taking form for

students to practice their listening and note-taking skills in each chapter. Additionally, the

professor put together several pair-work activities from outside materials for students to

practice their oral communications.

In terms of homework, students previewed vocabulary for each chapter before every class meeting. In addition to the vocabulary assignment, students had a TV and conversation journal assignment each week. The professor required his students to watch TV and to describe the TV program they had watched, what the program had been about, and how much they had understood. The professor allowed his students to watch any TV program suitable and appropriate for their level, even cartoons. Furthermore, students needed to summarize whom they had talked with, what they had talked about, and how well they had communicated. In order to model the assignment, the professor provided a sample of the TV and conversation journal.

Students had two different presentations as well: one individual presentation and one group presentation. In the individual presentation, each student prepared a short video, and sent the video clip to the professor before the presentation to ensure the appropriateness. In the individual presentation, the presenter taught the class the vocabulary in the video and played the video. After watching the video, the presenter prepared two questions about the video for the class to discuss in groups. At the end of the session, the professor grouped students in pairs for a group presentation. Each group chose its own topic relevant to the textbook chapter the students had studied.

Responses to the Research Questions

Research Question One:

How do ESL university students characterize their overall experience in the

intermediate level English oral communication class?

With the above classroom practices, this section presents the overall experience of

the ESL university students in the intermediate level English oral communication class,

and the findings respond to research question one of the study, resulting from one-on-one

interviews with students and focus group interviews with students. Compared with other

classes they took in the program, student participants generally perceived their English

skills as having improved in the oral communication class. Recognizing that the students'

English skills had improved, the researcher evaluated the activities that had been most

effective in facilitating oral communication among the participants. Throughout the time

spent taking the course, student participants perceived their strengths and weaknesses in

their English oral communication. The students' accounts of factors influencing their

WTC centered around six themes (Figure 2): interest in the topics, affability of the

conversation partners, vocabulary and pronunciation, English language proficiency,

student-professor rapport, and physical and psychological issues. These were the issues

which, in their estimation, ultimately determined whether they would participate in class.

Factors from students' perspectives

A. Interest in the topics

B. Affability of the conversation
   partners

C. Vocabulary and pronunciation

D. English proficiency

E. Student-professor rapport

F. Physical and psychological

Factors from professor's perspective

G. Interest in the activity

H. Cultural background

I. Attitude toward professor's
   accent and nationality

J. Lack of a specific learning
   goal

Recommendations from students

1. Engaging in the learning
   environment

2. Making learning comfortable

Recommendations from professor

1. Knowing about the students

2. Seeking conversation
   opportunities outside the class

Figure 2. Factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students and recommendations to improve their WTC.

Course activities the students found helpful

In identifying the one activity they remembered best in the intermediate level oral

communication class, students chose either the note-taking strategy or the presentation

strategy they practiced in every chapter to be the most helpful in improving their

speaking and listening skills. Alyssa revealed earlier in her focus group interviews that

she did not like the note-taking strategy at the beginning of the session. (Note: in the

excerpt below, A refers to Alyssa, and R refers to the researcher.)

> A: Wait ! note-taking strategy, [At] first, I [didn't] like it at all. [At the beginning,]
> [at the beginning] maybe just [at the beginning] maybe the time I learn[ed] how [I
> can] do it first, and I learn[ed] from it. First one, I like it. I think it's the best way
> to learn.
> R: I trust you. Because I have my way [of doing] note-taking,
> A: Maybe [it is] the first time [in] my life, I don't know how [to] take note[s]. In
> Arabic, I don't do it. That's [because] I hate it. Maybe because it is hard [for] me
> [at the beginning], but [after the first time], I like[d] it.
> R: Why do you like it?
> A: It improve[s] my language.
> R: Improves your language
> A: I learn more vocabulary from that strategy. How [I can] write it, and how [I
> can] get it from the native [English] speaker. Because [he] speaks fast.
> R: So, do you think that also help[s] your oral communication?
> A: Yes, of course, when I learn more vocabulary, I can talk more [often]

Later in the focus group interview, Alyssa discussed the effectiveness of the note-taking

strategy in improving her English communication:

> A: It improve[s] my skill, improve[s] my listening. Before that, I [listened to the]
> IELTS exam. I'll give you an example. In [the] IELTS exam, when I [took it] in
> Saudi Arabia, the hard[est] one [was] listening. When I listen[ed], I [could] not

find the right answer. But after this class, I improve[d] it [by] maybe 50 %.

Researcher: How?

A: Maybe because I we have note-taking strategy. Maybe each week we have it and I [listen to] [it] many time[s] and [I] can write the notes. This is the first sign, right? Tak[ing] note[s].

R: So, do you think the note-taking strategy also helps your conversation with your classmates?

A: Yeah.

R : That's good because note-taking may be only for class. Not for general communication.

A: Yup, because when I take notes, of course, first I [listen], I [listen to] some speech. After that, I take notes. Because of the speech, I can make [a] sentence. Because I [listen to] it first. Then I know how [I can] say it in sentence.

Some of the student participants specifically indicated that the note-taking strategy and

presentation strategy led to improvement of their English speaking and listening skills.

For example, in the one-on-one interviews, Victor found the note-taking strategy practical

"然後用縮寫，還有用那個 symbols。" [by learning the use of symbols and abbreviations]

in his focus group interview. In the same focus group conversation, Lawrence indicated

presentation skills beneficial because "因為你是要自己說啊！" [I have to say it on my

own.] Chloe noticed that the note-taking strategy developed her skills in catching key

words and phrases in listening passages. She indicated that the words and phrases she

caught prior to taking this class were useless. Therefore, by being able to catch key words

and phrases, Chloe understood her interlocutor and had conversations with others. Kevin

reported that he learned how to introduce and conclude a presentation and to take turns

with his partner from the presentation strategy.

In their focus group interview, Kevin, Chloe, and Yvonne presented an example:

[Excerpt]

R: 對。裡面有沒有什麼就是口語技巧策略嘛、然後聽力技巧策略、還有什麼上台口說技巧，那你覺得這些東西有幫助你的口語溝通嗎？
K: 有啊！
R: 怎麼幫?
C and K: 就是一些例句啊！
Y: 這些我不會用到生活上的。就是你突然和別人講話，你怎麼 (interrupt)
C: I want to talk about (giving an example to Y)

[Translation]

R: Yes, do you find speaking strategies, listening strategies, and presentation strategies helpful in your oral communication?
K: Sure.
R: How?
C and K: Some sample sentences.
Y: I wouldn't use them in my daily life. When you talk to someone, how would you (interrupt)
C explained and illustrated to Y: I want to talk about

The excerpts from Kevin, Chloe, and Yvonne indicated that learning key phrases assists

students in making sentences in their conversations. Student participants such as Teresa

and Jasmine thought of the note-taking strategy and the presentation strategy as beneficial,

because these two strategies will later facilitate their work in an American classroom,

which is their goal in attending the program.

However, the student participants showed little evidence of planning when asked

the purpose of studying in the United States and how they would accomplish their goals.

Most of the students came to the United States to pursue a degree, so achieving a

satisfactory TOEFL or IELTS score became their priority. Some students did not have any

specific plan in mind to accomplish their goals; others thought studying hard and

completing the course assignments would suffice. Students generally found that the

learning environment made a difference in how they learned English in their native

countries and the United States. Rather than making good use of authentic conversations

with native English speakers, some Chinese students spent more time on TOEFL test prep

software during their stay in the program or planned to return to their country, China, to

attend cram schools for the TOEFL test preparation that would improve their skills to

accomplish their goals to apply for a degree in the United States. Both Victor and Yvonne

illustrated their dependent on using software to improve their listening skills. In her

one-on-one student interview, Yvonne stated:

> [Excerpt]
>
> Y: 我現在的目標就是要學好英文。
> R: 怎樣叫學好英文？具體一點！
> Y: 就是我現在的話，回到家先寫完作業，寫完作業，我有一個背單詞的(軟件)， 我已經背到初中的。現在準備要背高中的，然後晚上背完的話，就是說，我每天會背一張或是兩章，背完的話，我就會看英文劇，看一些電視劇，然後去聽，不過他有中文字幕，我有時候會看，我表姊是叫我聽，然後看英文的字幕。

[Translation]

Y: My current goal is to learn English

R: What do you mean by learning English? Can you be more specific?

Y: Now, I do my assignments when I get home. After finishing my assignments, I memorize vocabulary. I have some software with lists of vocabulary. I finished memorizing the vocabulary at the junior high level, and am going to move to the senior high level. I memorize 1-2 chapters. After memorizing the vocabulary, I watch an American soap opera, and I listen to the conversation with Mandarin subtitles. My cousin recommended me that I listen to the conversation and read the English subtitles.

In his one-on-one student interview, Lawrence indicated:

[Excerpt]

...... 因為我現在要進行托福考試，相對的這裡的教你，這裡有托福的課，我現在有在上，我一直都在上，相對於這裡的托福給你進行的，這些培訓，恩，我還是覺得國內的好，國內的雖然他是專門應付考試，可是托福他還是，國內應付考試確實有一套！...... 我去考了一次托福 iBT。他們現在都是講那種學術性的文章，然後學術性的聽力，然後，口語好像是比較 formal 的，(靦腆笑聲)，就是比較不常用的，就是這種，就是說這種，我覺得不是很搭。(indicating the learning in the class does not match the TOEFL requirements) 所以說，我要做什麼努力的話，肯定是要在課外時間加強訓練。...... 如果中國還有其他朋友只是想要進步他的英文的話，我會推薦他過來。那如果他想要加強的他 speaking 的話，我會推薦他來上這堂課。不過這裡太貴了，他可以選個便宜的。

[Translation]

...... Because I am going to take the TOEFL exam, I take the TOEFL prep class. Compared to the training in the TOEFL prep class here, I found the training in my country is better. Although what I learned in my country used to deal with tests, (the cram schools) are really good at teaching me how to deal with exams. ......I took a TOEFL iBT test. The content of the reading and listening tests is academic, and the content of speaking test seems more formal. The content is not commonly used in the class learning and in my daily life. Therefore, I think the learning in the class does not exactly match the TOEFL requirements. (indicating the learning

in the class does not match the TOEFL requirements) In this way, I may spend more time practicing outside the class. ......If my friends in China want to improve their English I would recommend them to come here; if they want to improve their speaking, I would also recommend this oral communication class, but it is too expensive here. They can pick up another cheaper one.

By saying the cram schools in China assist him more in achieving a satisfactory TOEFL score for school application, later in the one-on-one student interview, Lawrence explained:

[Excerpt]

在國內，我覺得，老師們還是注重，會了，你知道這個格式是什麼？恩，就是說，你知道這個題目的點在哪嗎？恩，國內就是注重比較偏向這些，還是我說的應付考試。國外就是比較注重你懂了嗎？你知道這個涵義了嗎？你知道這道題他說的是什麼了嗎？

[Translation]

In my opinion, teachers in the cram schools in my country focus on the point of the question, which means whether I learned the strategy to deal with the questions in the exam. It is very test-oriented. On the other hand, professors here emphasize my comprehension.

Unlike the Chinese students, Vietnamese students, such as Tania and Teresa, reported in their one-on-one interviews that studying hard is their method of accomplishing their goal of applying for a degree.

In addition, students reported that being given more challenging tasks and opportunities for genuine conversations with their classmates supported their learning. While comparing her oral communication courses at the 300 and 400 levels, Teresa

noticed that her English had improved more in the 400 level since it was more difficult.

Among all the courses they took, Yvonne indicated that the oral communication class was

the one in which they had the most oral practice, whereas they might not have any

opportunity to practice oral language in other classes. Despite having more conversations

with classmates in the oral communication course, Lawrence and Kevin viewed the

amount of immersion in courses as insufficient and expressed their desire to have more

oral practice opportunity in their one-on-one student interviews. Although the student

participants recognized that they preferred having opportunities for oral conversation and

they did not have adequate opportunity to do so, not all student participants had access to

foreign language speakers or native English speakers, or had actively looked for access to

arrangements to practice their oral communication.

English language exposure

During the one-on-one interview, Lawrence stated that he completed his TV and

conversation journal by practicing his oral communications with Uber drivers on the way

to school. However, this practice may be likely to be insufficient, because the ride

generally took within 5 minutes. In her one-on-one interview, Chloe replied that she

preferred to go directly home rather than stay on campus to spend time with others.

In the one-on-one interview, Tania replied:

Tania: TV (conversation)is ok, but I don't like the conversation (journal), you know. Every week I have to talk to other people, but I think it's [the] same.

R: It's what?

T: It's [the] same. Every week sometimes it's [the] same. The same conversation, so I think I don't have

R: Generally, how do you find people to talk to?

T: Sometimes I [am] joking and I don't have conversation, so when I do homework, I just .....

R: You just dream it up?

T: Think [make it up].

R: So you just think [make up] a conversation with someone else.

T: (laughing)

Later, in the focus group with Kingston, Langston, Teresa, Tania, and Jasmine, they

admitted that they had fabricated some of the conversations in their journals, because

they had few opportunities to practice English:

Teresa: Yes. I used to make up the TV (conversation).

R: Oh, you make up the story.

T: Yes, because I uh conversation I can write down, because in the whole week, I can [have] 1 or 2 conversations with some people in the bus. But the TV conversation, sometimes I didn't watch any video[s]. I don't like to watch the news [or any]thing like that.

R: How about you?

L: I will tell you the secret. All my journal[s] come from my imagination (everybody is laughing indicating that they all know what they did.)

Because of their inability to locate reliable conversation partners outside of class resulting

in fictional conversations, participants in this focus group interview later mentioned that

they would recommend that the professor drop this assignment.

Kingston is a noteworthy example in the class. He had a strong desire to

assimilate with target language speakers, (the native English speakers in this study).

During the observations, Kingston told the researcher that he imitated how people talked

in their native language. For example, he imitated his classmates from China, and when

he said the word "university," he used 本科 instead of 大學. The former word is the

word that people in Mainland China use, while the latter is the word that people in

Taiwan use. At the beginning of the observations, the researcher could not identify

whether Kingston was Taiwanese or Chinese because of his accent and lexicon. In both

interviews, Kingston reported that the oral communication course was beneficial, but to

some extent not the way he had expected. He had issues with the identity of the course

professor. He regarded the course professor as a non-native English speaker whom he

could not imitate for his American accent and pronunciation or expressions that

Americans would use. He thought that speaking with an American-like accent and using

the expressions that a native English speaker would use would make people regard his

English as excellent, and this is what he strived to become.

[Excerpt]

K: ...... 那像我來講，對我來講，我覺得聽跟說，不是太大的問題，主要是你怎麼說的正確。對，那基本上，這種東西你沒辦法學，跟同學去學。所以對我來講這堂課就變得比較沒有意義，因為我想要學的是我如何可以用正確的文法或者是更正確的發音來說話。但是這樣他的課沒有辦法，我跟同學說話，當然我是在練習說英語。但對我來講，我說的不是正確的英語。沒有意義，根本沒有意義！

[Translation]

K: To me, I don't think I have issues with my listening and speaking. The most important part is how I can say it correctly. Yes, basically, I cannot learn it from my classmates. Therefore, this class doesn't make sense to me because what I want to learn is how to use correct grammar or correct pronunciation in speaking. But I cannot do it in this class. Of course, I practice my English speaking when I talk to my classmates, but to me, it is not real English. It doesn't make any sense. It's meaningless.

Different from Kingston's issue with the professor's accent, Teresa thought that the professor's accent assisted her listening skill. While answering what she had learned in the class, Teresa replied:

T: Listening. Yeah. I think my listening skill improved too much.
R: Too much? A lot.
T: A lot. Because the first [time] I came here, and listen[ed] to the professor, I I [didn't] understand anything. Yeah, but now, I can [get] everything he [says].
R: So, you don't understand him because of his accent or because of English?
T: Both. Because maybe his accent [is] difficult but I [in] the first session, when I [studied] with [a] native speaker I couldn't listen. But now when I [learn with] the professor and [talk to] other people who are native English [speakers], I can [understand] what they say.

Teresa's statement is supported by the other student participants who also indicated that they had difficulty with the professor's accent at the beginning, which later assisted in their listening skill.

Strengths and weaknesses in communication among students

By interviewing students regarding their classroom strengths and weaknesses, participants seemed to have more difficulty discussing their strengths than their

weaknesses. The difficulty primarily derived from their difficulty in understanding the

meaning of the word "strengths," although they looked up the definition of the word on

their smart phones. Even with some understanding of the word, student participants were

unable to identify their own strengths. Some students denied having any strengths

whatsoever. Only Lawrence and Alyssa described their strengths. Lawrence viewed his

strengths as 不要臉, which means that he does not worry about losing face or feeling

embarrassed. In his one-on-one student interview, Lawrence said:

> [Excerpt]
>
> 就是說，我不會覺得自己犯什麼錯，是比較難堪的。不會像就是，恩，像是犯了個錯，被老師，我會很尷尬 ...... 。像上回我說想表示自己是一個人，alone， 可是我說了 single ......就很尷尬。就是說，不會顧及自己面子，不會顧及自己犯錯，我知道我錯了我會去修改他。
>
> [Translation]
>
> Which means I wouldn't feel that making mistakes is embarrassing. Last time, I wanted to say "I am alone," but I said "I am single." I felt embarrassed, but I didn't worry about my face. As long as I know I make mistakes, I fix them.

In her one-on-one interview, Alyssa stated that since she was friendly, she could speak

with everyone in the class, which was an advantageous for her. Later in the focus group

interview she participated in, Alyssa implied that

> Because I am here to learn, when I [make] mistake[s], I will learn from my mistake[s]. And no one will how can I say no one will kill me something like that when I [make] mistake[s].
>
> On the other hand, in evaluating the weakness in their oral communication, Teresa

viewed her silence due to her unwillingness to speak in class as a disadvantage. Victor

reported that listening was one of his disadvantages; he further reported that sometimes

he did not know what to say. When further asked to list the factors influencing their WTC,

students themselves categorized interest in the topics, affability of the conversation

partners, vocabulary and pronunciation, English language proficiency, student-professor

rapport, and physical and psychological issues as themes.

Factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students

Interest in the topics. In the focus group, Alyssa pointed out:

First, when I have some information about the question, I feel I want to talk.
When I don't have any information, I like to listen [to] the information.

Rather than discussing familiarity with the topics, most student participants indicated that

interest in the topic influenced their WTC. The excerpts from Chloe below provide an

example of the difference between interest in the topics and familiarity with the topic. In

the conversation, Chloe stated that she was not interested in the topic of Chapter 10,

which discusses the reasons that students have to learn English. As an international

student in an ESL program, Chloe absolutely knew the reasons she had to learn English.

Therefore, this factor differs from the findings of the previous studies. In the focus group

interviews, Chloe and Ken responded

[Excerpt]

R: 那你覺得這堂課怎樣會讓你更想要參與?口頭參與

K: 我覺得是題目多一點吧!

R: 嗯?

K: 有趣的題目多一點,像今天。

C: 我就不喜歡那個第 10 單元。問你為什麼要學英語 這還要回答嗎?

(all laughing)

K: 有些問題確實是蠻智障的。

[Translation]

R: What do you think would make you more likely to speak English in class?

K: I think more practice.

R: Yeah?

K: More interesting practice, like what we had today.

C: I don't like the topic of chapter 10. It asks "why do you want to learn English?" Is that really a question?

(all laughing)

K: Certain questions really sound stupid.

Along with Chloe and Kevin, Lawrence and Victor found some questions in the textbook boring and childish. They agree with the fact that interesting topics would motivate their WTC.

Affability of the conversation partners. Lawrence and Victor stated in their focus group interview that once they were familiar with their partner, they would be eager to participate in the conversation. Both one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews in the study revealed that their partner influenced the WTC of the ESL university students in terms of their attitude and their cultural dress. Nelson was the exception in the former

situation. In session 1, Nelson and Kevin had a group presentation, but Nelson seldom

attended class and spent hardly any time preparing the presentation, and later left Kevin

to finish the presentation alone. Kevin was upset and shared his feelings with the rest of

the class; as a result, most of the students had a negative impression of Nelson. This

negative impression influenced the WTC of other students who were partners with

Nelson. Some students stated that Nelson's disinterested attitude negatively affected their

willingness to communicate with him. While investigating factors influencing their WTC

in the class in the focus group interview, Jasmine, Kingston, Langston, Teresa, and Tania

said:

> Teresa: Maybe because I don't like [my] partner.
> R: Who is the partner? Tania?
> Tania: No.
> Teresa: I [am] never [her] partner because the professor ....(interrupt)
> R: What do you mean partner?
> L: Jasmine?
> Teresa: Because (thinking)
> Kingston: You mean Nelson.
> R: You have never worked with Nelson.
> Teresa: I did. One or two times.
> R: Why don't you like him?
> Teresa: Because he gave me a feeling that he don't he didn't want to talk with me.
> (Everybody is laughing)
> R: Why are you laughing? What happened?
> Teresa: Just because I feel he [doesn't] want to talk

Lawrence reinforced the idea that Nelson's attitude decreases his WTC in class.

[Excerpt]

L: 我不想和這個 PARTNER 討論。
V: 那個阿拉伯王子。
L: 對，我不想和他討論。
R: 怎樣的人你會不想要和他討論?
V: 口齒不清態度不好。
R: 怎樣叫口齒不清? 是覺得他有一個腔還是?
V: 口音吧！
R: 口音，所以這樣就不會想讓你和他討論。
V: 對！

[Translation]

L: I don't want to talk with my partner
V: The Prince Ali (indicating Nelson)
L: Yes, I do not want to discuss anything with him.
R: What kind of partner don't you want to work with?
V: Unclear speech and bad attitude.
R: What do you mean by unclear speech? Do you mean his accent or ?
V: Maybe accent
R: Accent? So, you don't want to work with him?
V: No.

Although Lawrence pointed out that his low WTC with Nelson resulted from Nelson's

accent; it seems that Lawrence discriminated against Nelson since Lawrence worked fine

with other students with accents. Therefore, his low WTC with Nelson seems unrelated to

Nelson's accent but more connected to Nelson's attitude. In their focus group interview,

Kevin, Chloe, and Yvonne also responded that both their classmates and the instruction of

the professor may decrease their WTC:

[Excerpt]

K: 很爛的同學。像 Nelson 啊！如果 10 個裡面有 9 個和他一樣，就不想。

Y: 好像很多人都不喜歡和他講，不知道為什麼？

C: 因為他......

(Ken interrupted by imitating Nelson's speech)

C: 對！

Y: 他講英文講不清楚。

C: 聽不懂，而且他也不用心！

[Translation]

K: Lame classmate, like Nelson. If nine out of ten classmates are like him, then I don't want to participate in the class.

Y: It seems that many people don't want to work with him, but I don't know the reason.

C: Because he ......

(Ken interrupted by imitating Nelson's speech)

C: Yes.

Y: His speech is not clear.

C: I cannot understand him, and he does not take the class seriously.

In light of the instruction of the professor (another professor), Kevin, Chloe, and Yvonne

commented:

[Excerpt]

R: 老師怎樣?

K: 太差！像有的我真的就不想來。

R: 為什麼？

K: 因為我覺得沒有意義。

C: 我也不想來！但是因為他還是管著出勤，所以我偶爾還是會來，偶爾逃個課。因為沒意思啊，也學不到東西！

K: 真的學不到！我覺得，因為，那些課本上的東西，我真的自己看就好，他連講都講不好。

C: 他有時給一個報紙，說兩句沒了。

Y: 對！最奇怪是還要寫總結！一開始我還很喜歡他的課，因為我能聽懂啊！

後面我學著學著，我現在，上兩節課我就會想睡覺。一開始我還好喜歡他，但這兩天我就覺得......

K: 他就是我說的 timed reading，就一直叫你要快要快，題目都看不懂。

R: 他叫你要快，因為 TOEFL 有時間限制，然後當你上大學之後，你一天看 30 頁都是基本的。

C: 而且到最後就是說一個正常的閱讀，然後你還在看，旁邊的就會一直問你做完沒做完沒，這樣你都不想做了。因為就你一個人在做題，他們都做完了。

[Translation]

R: How about the professor?

K: Really bad. Sometimes I really don't want to come to the class.

R: Why?

K: Because I found that it's meaningless.

C: I don't want to come, either. He is in charge of our attendance, so sometimes I still have to come, but sometimes I skip the class. The content is meaningless, and I cannot learn anything.

K: Yes, I don't learn anything. I feel I can read the course materials on my own. He even cannot make his instruction sound and clear.

C: Sometimes he gave us a newspaper with two instructions. That's it.

Y: Yes, sometimes we have to summarize the reading passage, which I find strange. At the beginning of the session, I liked his class, because that was the only one I understood. Now, as long as I attend the class, I fall asleep.

K: He did timed reading, so he keeps asking you to read fast, but I cannot even read the title of the article.

R: He asked you to be fast, because the TOEFL test has a time limit. When you attend the university, it is basic that you need to read at least 30 pages.

C: Sometimes, when I did the reading, my elbow partners keep asking me "are you done?" Then, I don't want to work on the activity, because everybody is watching you and waiting for you.

Later, Chloe declared that she opted not to work with her classmate who tended to

dominate the conversation. She further indicated that sometimes she chose not to work

with Victor, because he was usually reluctant to participate. Lawrence also shared his

personal experience with one of his classmates in another class. Lawrence mentioned that

he had low WTC with one of his classmates who was incredibly arrogant and

self-confident. In the focus group interviews, Lawrence stated that in another class he had

difficulty communicating with one of his female partners from the Middle East who wore

a veil over her face "like a mask." With the veil over his partner's face, Lawrence barely

heard what his partner said and he felt embarrassed about repeatedly asking her to repeat

herself.

Vocabulary and pronunciation. Tania and Teresa respectively reflected on their

concerns about vocabulary and pronunciation in their one-on-one interviews. Tania

expressed her desire to improve her speaking skills, because her unclear pronunciation

interfered with her speech.

English language proficiency. In this study, Chloe, Teresa, Victor, Yvonne all

indicated that English language proficiency influences their WTC. Because of their

limited English language proficiency, they had difficulty understanding conversations. In

addition to their English language proficiency, Chloe and Yvonne both indicated that they

tended to silently translate the questions from Mandarin, so later they had difficulty

generating answers in English. Therefore, they would not participate in conversations.

Teresa noted that sometimes she had thoughts in mind, but she did not know how to make

a sentence. From the perspective of Yvonne, the factor most affecting her WTC was

English language proficiency, more so than interest in the topics. Yvonne declared:

[Excerpt]

最主要是我的聽力吧！聽的懂他說什麼，我才能回答。我聽不明白，我怎麼回答？......我很想講，可是我不知道我用英文怎麼表達？其實我很想講啊！可是我不會用英文表達，我用中文想。 但是，我不知道英文那個詞，我表達不出來啊！

[Translation]

It mainly depends on my listening skill! I would love to participate in the class to answer questions if I understood what he was talking about. If I don't get it, how can I answer it? ......I really want to participate in the class, but I don't know how to express (my ideas) in English. My ideas are in Mandarin, and I don't know the corresponding words in English. I have hard time expressing my ideas.

Victor proposed:

[Excerpt]

有些問題很簡單的，但是，他會問你拓展，講很多，是想不到怎麼講。用中文我也不知道要怎麼講。

[Translation]

Some questions are simple, but when the professor asks me follow-up questions or he expects me to extend my reply, I don't know what I should or I can say, even using Mandarin to express my ideas.

While discussing how the environment influenced their language use in their group

discussion, Lawrence and Victor replied:

[Excerpt]

R: 那你會覺得這會影響你嗎?你會覺得說，啊！中文我就講多一點。那英文

的話，我不想講。

L: 英文的話，我不會不想講。我有很多話想說，但是我只能講出一部分出來。

V: 有些是不會講。

R: 那為什麼你會不知道要怎麼說?

L: 就是語言整理我需要，還不到那麼熟練的程度，需要整理一段時間。

R: 你是不曉得句子怎麼開始？還是說不曉得字怎麼講？

L: 都有，都有，不曉得字怎麼講，有時候會有的時候關鍵字嘛！就講不出來那個意思。

R: 你覺得生字對你來說很重要嗎?

L: 對我來說，反而是句子怎麼構造比較重要！因為你單字就是比較難的不會，你可以用別的一些詞來代替他。

R: 那句子呢?句子的話，反正就像我想吃飯，I want to eat。那為什麼句子你會覺得構不出來?

L: 就是有一些句子就是構不出來。

V: 因為有些人說，學一種語言就是要先忘記自己的母語吧！像一個小孩子一樣重新開始學吧！像我們就是用中文翻譯成英語，就像一個比較複雜的成語在中文裡面，你想要翻譯出來，又不知道怎麼收啊！

[Translation]

R: Do you think it (the environment) would influence you? Would you feel that you prefer to talk in Mandarin than in English?

L: English language would not bother me. I have a lot of ideas I want to share, but I can only express part of that.

V: For the rest, I don't know how to express it

R: Why don't you know how to express it?

L: I need to organize my sentences. My English is not fluent, so it takes time to organize.

R: You don't know how to start the sentence or you don't know how to say the word?

L: Both. If I don't know how to say the word, sometimes I use key words or synonyms, but the meaning cannot fully be expressed.

R: Do you think vocabulary is important to you?

L: In my opinion, how to make sentences is more important, because I can find other words to replace the vocabulary beyond my level.

R: How about sentences? If you want to eat, you just need to say "I want to eat." Why is it difficult for you?

L: I just cannot make some sentences.

V: Because some people said when you learn a new language, you need to forget your native language. Learning the language like a baby learns his mother tongue. If we translate Mandarin to English, we will have difficulty translating an idiom.

Chloe concurred with the statement of Lawrence and Victor that when it was difficult to compose sentences, she did not want to participate. In their focus group interview, Yvonne and Chloe revealed that their English language proficiency influenced their WTC further outside the class. They took phone conversations as an example and replied:

[Excerpt]

Y: 我都不聽外面人打來電話的！因為我聽不懂！
C: 聽不懂。
Y: 對！你在電話裡面根本就說不清楚，我絕對不用電話！
C: 他聽不懂你，你也聽不懂他。

[Translation]

Y: I don't answer phone calls from outsiders, because I don't understand (what they say).
C: I don't understand (what they say).
Y: Yes, you cannot make everything clear on the phone, so I would never have English conversations on the phone.
C: He doesn't understand you, and you don't understand him, either.

Student-professor rapport. The rapport between the professor and his students in the class was one of the first factors touched on in this study. Yvonne might show some grounds for discussion of the rapport between professor and students. Since Yvonne was a new student to the class in this session; she became easily stressed, and thus cried in the class at the beginning of the session. In the focus group interview, the researcher asked

Yvonne the reason she cried in the class, Yvonne answered:

[Excerpt]

Y: 壓力好大啊！一開始我連什麼都聽不懂，連問題我都聽不懂，他還叫我回答，根本就不會回答！然後我一句英文也不會。就剛開始，就兩節課後，我就受不了了。後面，我本來那天回家之後又好煩啊！又不會！後面就有點情緒崩不住，就哭了！後面他有問我，後面他有跟我說好多！他就有跟我說好多！他說他想幫我，你平時也很努力啊！所以你也要嘗試去說啊！不要怕啊什麼的。他有說，他......他......他還很貼心，我跟他根本溝通不來的。他就叫Victor 留下來幫我翻譯。對，就這樣，所以......

R: 所以其實你可以感受的到老師 (interrupt)

Y: 對，我可以感受的到他很想幫我，可以感受到他很想幫我。我在音樂班，我根本不會害羞。可是來到這裡，你一個人又不認識，然後又不會說。有時候人家叫你幫個忙，你也聽不懂，你會覺得好無助，你懂嗎?就是你會好無助的，你知道嗎?那種感覺就跟我......跟我在之前廣州學雅思的感覺不一樣，起碼那裏的人會說中文。這邊的人一句中文也不會說！

[Translation]

Y: I felt so stressed. At the beginning, I did not understand anything. When the professor asked me questions, I didn't even know about the questions. I didn't know how to answer them. I knew nothing about English. Everything had just started. After two class meetings, I could not hold it in any more. I was fuzzy, because I knew nothing. Then I could not hold it back any more, so I cried in the class. After that, the professor talked to me. He talked a lot. He told me that he wanted to help me and he knew I studied hard. He encouraged me to talk in the class, and not to be afraid. He was so considerate. He asked Victor to stay after class to translate everything he said to me, because he knew I had difficulty communicating with him, and I might not understand him well.

R: So, you could feel that the professor (interrupt)

Y: Yes, I could feel that he wanted to help me. I could feel that he really wanted to help me. When I was in the music class (in my country), I was not shy. However, when I arrived here, I didn't know anyone, and I didn't know how to talk. Sometimes people asked for my help, but I couldn't understand what they said. I felt so helpless. Can you understand me? I felt so helpless, do you understand me?

The feeling was different from the feeling that I learned IELTS in Guangzhou. At least, people there speak Mandarin, but no one speaks Mandarin here.

Yvonne further commented that the professor encouraged her to participate in the class:

[Excerpt]

Y: 有啊！在課堂下面會有的。就像我，他會有鼓勵我的！
R: 他怎麼鼓勵你的?
Y: 他在第一天他就有跟我說，你不要擔心什麼什麼的，我會幫你，後面之後的話，他也有跟我說過，就是他很想幫我啊！什麼什麼的。

[Translation]

Y: Yes, after the class, he always encouraged me.
R: How did he encourage you?
Y: On the first day, he told me "don't worry. I will help you." He said this to me in the following class that he really wanted to help. Something like that.

Later in the focus group interview with Yvonne, Alyssa stated that she might feel bad

when she made mistakes in conversation, but she did not feel sad because her professor

always encouraged her to express her ideas.

In another focus group interview, Teresa said

[Excerpt]

I think the professor is a good teacher, because he treats us very well. He tells us what we need to do to improve listening skill speaking skill and I like his class.

Physical and psychological issues. Physical and psychological issues have not

been discussed in previous research among factors influencing ESL university students'

WTC. In this study, many Chinese student participants attributed their low WTC in class

to their fatigue. This class was offered in the morning; therefore, it was not easy for these

ESL university students who had stayed up late to attend class early and focus on class

activities. Chloe said: 起不來啊！晚上睡不著。[I cannot sleep in the evening, so I

cannot get up.]

While she was not necessarily fatigued, Alyssa, as one of the most active students in the

class, implied that her bad menstrual cramps had resulted in low participation in class.

Some students noted that sometimes they were moody for no reason so that they

did not want to participate in the class. After indicating in the focus group interview that

interest in the topic and conversation partner might demotivate his WTC, Lawrence stated

that he was in a bad mood two days ago, so he was absent. Kevin mentioned in his

one-on-one interview that his mood influenced his WTC.

In addition to the above factors influencing the WTC of the ESL university

students in a direct manner, the students' self-regulation indirectly affected the student

participants in this study. This session was the last session for several students, such as

Chloe, Kingston, Lawrence, Langston, Victor, and Yvan. Under this circumstance, some

such students were absent more often. For example, Yvan attended the first two weeks of

the session, but was later absent. He first could not get up in the morning to attend class,

so later he skipped the class because he knew he would fail. Kingston was absent during

the whole sixth week, and he said:

[Excerpt]

K: ......他禮拜三就和我說:「就是你有看到你的分數嗎? 你禮拜一上課的狀況反應在你的分數上。」我就是說:「恩，it's fine. I'm good. 恩，我有看到。」說真的，我原本就沒有在看 Canvas，我完全不甩。我這個我已經大概快一個月沒有上去看了。 他給的任何分數我都先刪掉，我連登都沒有去登。
R: 那是因為你知道自己就要離開？
K: 對，我知道我要離開。就像 Lawrence 一樣。他知道自己就要離開，他根本都不來上課，那個 Yvan 也是一樣，他知道自己，他最後一個 session
(interrupt)
R: 他其他課有來嗎? 你知道嗎?
K: 全部沒來！
R: Yvan 你知道嗎?
K: 全部沒來，全部沒來啊！

[Translation]

K: On Wednesday, he asked me whether I [had] checked my scores on Canvas, because my Monday participation reflected on my score. I replied "Yes, it's fine. I'm good. Yes, I read that." To be honest, I did not check Canvas. I did not care. I have not logged in for a month. I deleted notifications my regarding any score update.
R: Is that because you know you are going to leave?
K: Yes, I know I am going to leave. Like Lawrence, he knows that he is going to return to his country, so he no longer attended class. The same as Yvan, he knows it is his last session (interruption)
R: Do you know whether he attends other classes?
K: He is totally absent!
R: Do you know Yvan?
K: He does not attend any classes at all!

In the focus group interview, Lawrence confirmed what Kingston had said regarding his absence in the course. In the focus group interview, the researcher asked Lawrence why he was absent in last class meeting, since they had an exam. He did not realize he had an

exam, and Lawrence said:

> [Excerpt]
>
> L: writing 沒關係啊！我都要走了。
> R: 所以你就不在乎就對了。
> L: 對啊！
>
> [Translation]
>
> L: The writing test is fine. That doesn't matter. I am leaving.
> R: So, you don't care.
> L: No.

The researcher and the professor found Lawrence strange, because he was a good student.

He studied hard and participated abundantly in class. However, he was absent from class

for no reason when he had presentations or tests. Although he asked for a make-up for the

presentation to show his intention of taking his responsibility for his study, he did not

show up on the exam day.

After investigating factors influencing the WTC of the ESL university students

from the student participants' perspectives, the researcher explored how WTC affected

students' overall experience in the class. Yvonne reported that by participating in class,

she listened to her classmates' viewpoints. In doing so, she developed her listening skills.

In order to share her viewpoints with her classmates, she spoke in English, thereby

increasing her speaking skills. Chloe stated that it was better to speak more than to say

nothing. By doing so, she found her appetite for knowledge increasing.

Surprisingly, not all student participants understood the relationship between their

WTC and their learning in the class; thus they had limited awareness of the importance of

oral English communication. Few students seemed to understand the purpose of the

questions the researcher asked about the relationship between their oral participation and

their learning. They agreed with the positive correlation between their WTC and their

learning outcomes, but they did not fully appreciate the relationship. Perhaps this resulted

from the fact that they were focused on increasing their English skills in order to apply

for a degree in the United States.

Research Question Two:

How does the professor of the intermediate level English oral communication class

perceive the ESL university students' WTC?

In addition to exploring factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students

from the students' perspectives, the perspective of the professor is also of significance in

this study. This section includes the professor's perspective which he shared in the

narrative interview, including the descriptions of the WTC of his students in the class, his

opinions regarding factors that impact the WTC of his students, and the influences of the

WTC of his students on his teaching. The professor noted cultural background, interest in

the activity, attitude toward the nationality of the professor, and lack of a specific

language learning goal (Figure 2) as factors influencing the WTC of his ESL university

students.

Course professor's description of his students' WTC in class

From his viewpoint, the professor thought most of his students participated in the

class. He acknowledged that some students might have been so shy that they did not

participate in the class at the beginning. However, after he gave them time to engage in

the classroom environment, he saw that the students participated more in lectures. The

professor described Victor as an example of a reticent student in this way:

> Victor is a shy student. He doesn't want to say [any]thing, especially when I have
> a presentation, he doesn't want to be called on. ...... He is a good person. He is shy,
> he doesn't want other people to hear what he says. ......That doesn't happen.
> Language learning is two-way. (blurring) but if you don't produce, how can we
> help you?

Concerning the classroom environment, the professor said:

> I really want the class to have a very open receptive classroom atmosphere. I don't
> say friendly because friendly doesn't mean anything. Like I remember one of my
> professors said friendly class, what do you mean friendly class? Do you want to
> just [tell] jokes? The situation in which students feel confident, valued, really
> open to share their ideas; that's the classroom I want.

Factors influencing ESL university students' WTC from professor's perspectives

Although the professor regarded the WTC of his students as satisfactory, he did

identify several factors influencing the WTC of his students. He discusses the first of

these factors - cultural background - below:

...... in their country, teachers do not really allow asking and answering questions. ...... So like [in] Asian culture, asking questions is challenging. For that means, you challenge them. They don't really want you to ask. And, sometimes the students are the problem, too. They know the answer, but they do ask the teacher to challenge him. It's true. But here, once they see the American way of teaching, which I believe I adopted in my teaching I introduced, I want them to really feel it's ok, not a problem, to ask questions. Even if you ask a question I don't know. Or I don't care. I will honestly tell you I don't know the answer. Could you ask me this question? I don't know. I will find the answer. I tell the students, as a teacher, I don't know the answer, so don't worry. If you make a mistake, it's ok. But I do [recommend that they] ask a question. It takes some time. Once they are encouraged to ask questions, they all find questions. Many of them at the beginning do not ask questions because of that cultural background.

The second factor influencing his students' WTC was related to the students' interest in the class activity. In terms of interest, the professor indicated that when he utilized outside materials for students to practice their oral communications, he usually selected topics related either to technology or to humorous and interesting matters related to the students' daily lives. On the contrary, the professor noted that topics related to politics were not good choices. In his statement below, he explained how students experienced certain activities as boring when the program objectives did not match their own expectations of the program:

Something that does not motivate and demotivate is [a] boring activit[y]. Something they believe they cannot learn anything from, that's demotivating. So, what I do I usually try to help the students understand why we do the activity. Once they know the purpose, once they know how it may help them, they do it a better way. Without knowing the purpose of the activity [, it] may demotivate the students.

In explaining the significance of knowing the purpose of each activity, the professor chose Monica, a female Chinese student in his grammar class, as an example. Monica first attended at the 400 level, and later moved up to the 500 level after the first class because of her somewhat higher level of grammar. Since Monica's grammar skills were brilliant, she regarded learning grammar as wasting time and further challenged the professor by saying the course did not help her. Therefore, she asked the professor to focus on teaching her how to write as described in the syllabus instead of grammar rules. The professor said that although Monica had great grammar knowledge, she wrote one sentence for one paragraph on one page which would lead Monica to fail in TOEFL, since she did not know American writing structure and her writing did not make sense to others. As a result, the professor found that some students had unrealistic expectations which negatively affected their learning in the class. The professor reported:

> Some of the biggest challenges, right? I told you just about Monica. Their expectation was too high, and they really don't know they cannot pass the TOEFL test. They just want to get out of the program and go there. They think it's expensive to be here. And these classes do not help them. So, these are the challenges. It takes some time to really tell them about what we are doing really helps them. Once they know, I believe it's ok, but some, they don't get it.

According to the statements of the professor, an accommodation zone existed between the students' expectations and the program requirements. When the students' expectation converged with the program requirements, the students found that the

program helpful and their English improved. On the contrary, when the students'

expectations diverged from the program requirements, the program requirements become

unhelpful and the students found studying a waste of time. Therefore, the professor

suggested knowing the students in terms of their backgrounds, goals, and plans to reach

their goals would facilitate the teaching.

The professor was aware that some students were sensitive to his nationality and

his accent. During the data collection process, Kingston showed his bias against

non-native English speaker professors. Throughout the observation phase in the study, the

researcher provided feedback about their presentations. At that moment, Kingston

thought the researcher might teach him later in the session and told the professor that he

would not accept the researcher's teaching because of the researcher's nationality. While

discussing Kingston's attitude toward non-native English speaking professors, the

professor said:

> ...... They (the students) come with the attitudes. It's not you and me, they have
> attitudes toward all teachers whose English is not first language. They have
> attitude. ...... sometimes their attitude matters. Their attitude (toward the fact that
> the professor is not a native English speaker) at the beginning: I don't know he is
> not a native speaker. ..... but after [a] few days, after [a] few weeks, they are ok.
> Nowadays, they do not have a problem, maybe Kingston is an example. I
> understand why they have the feeling, so I don't blame them. I don't make them
> responsible. That's ok. They came here or they come here to study, they have the
> expectation to be taught by a native English speaker. That's ok if they have the
> attitudes. I don't mind that. But I want them to give me a chance to teach them. I

> first want them to speak with a native speaker and come to my class. But I can do what a native speaker can do to help them. ...... Students who have been taught by me and my coworkers who are not native speakers, they appreciate it.

The professor believed that the students' attitude toward the nationality of the professor mattered, because their learning in the class might be infected by their negative attitude, causing them to be unwilling to communicate in the class.

The professor implied that lacking a specific language learning goal was one of the factors influencing his students' WTC. He found that some of the better-off students from China lacked a clear language learning goal. As a result, they did not necessarily spend their time on English or generally manage their time well, leading to a low level of class participation. With regard to a clear goal in learning English, the professor commented:

> It's just across the board. It is in general. Most of them really know what they are doing. So they really focus, but a few, I believe they come from very rich families, they are just here to have fun. They know "I want to learn English, I want to go to the university, pass the TOEFL," but I don't think they know what to do. They waste their time.

By commenting that his students were wasting their time, the professor illustrated that one of his students in another class was absent from half of the class meetings. The professor asked for the reason for his absence, and the student replied that he stayed up late playing video games or hanging out with friends. Sometimes he went to sleep at 2, 3,

or 4 o'clock in the morning, the earliest being 2 o'clock. For that reason, the student could

not keep his head straight and participate in the class.

ESL students' WTC

    After listing factors influencing his students' WTC, the professor described the

influence of the WTC of his students on his teaching comprising his previous learning

experience as a second language learner, his teaching experience as a second language

teacher, and the program objectives. Before addressing the influence of the WTC of his

students on his teaching, the professor described his own cultural background and

English learning experience which later influenced his teaching.

> Researcher: I am so impressed. Yeah, so how your cultural background influences your learning experiences: do you think that's helpful?
> Professor: It is. Because as a second language learner, now as a second language teacher, I know what experiences I went through. What helped me and what didn't help me.
> R: Can you tell me more about that?
> P: For example, when I teach grammar, I use my experience. When I learn English, I teach English to see what students really want. What students really need. So I really focus on them. Then, going England and coming to the United States for my master's degrees, so I see from [the] outside, too. So the local way of teaching and outside of the western part, so I see how they fit each other. So every time when I teach grammar, I get a lot of good positive feedback from the students. And they say what they say maybe because I really talk to their heart because that's what they want but many of the colleagues they think they teach and they teach it, but probably they don't really focus on specific needs of the students. They may start from somewhere that they think the students already [are], but they don't (blurring) from the basis.

R: Yeah, so do you think hmm your experiences can apply to all students because you know sometimes Asian culture or you have some students from the European that means western culture, do you think your experience can apply?

P: When I teach at the class, I look at the students, who they are. Of course, I don't use let's say the way I was taught in Afghanistan [a] hundred percent, but of course that's my background. That's who I am. So whether I want it or not, that influences me.

R: Yes.

P: But I really want to see who the students are. And every semester, I teach, my teaching would not be the same. It depends on the students. So I look at the students. Once I see if the students really like that, if it really helps the students, I do that. The next day if I see it doesn't work, I change it. So I think about it. Everyday when I teach and go home, I think about it. OK, use this activity. Was it helpful? Yes, how? What did the students engage [in]? Yes, and what did they [do]? What did they do? Did they really get anything out of the activity? How can I do it better? It's like of a self-reflection on what I do. So, that's why I showed you my USB drive. I have a lot of activities. But I don't use them any more. I have kept them. Maybe in the future I will use [them]. But, I think, oh, I gave them this activity, I really saw the students very engage[d] and they like[d] it, it helped them to communicate. So I keep them. And those activities I found I see [that] are less effective, I just separate them. So, this is what I do. I really think about it. So, I look at -- see I printed this syllabus. Every week, when I plan my lesson, I read this. Ok, this is what the program wants me to teach, so, let's see, this is what I want to do, so I teach it. If I really think it works, I keep it. If it doesn't, I do change it.

By applying his learning experience to his teaching, the professor strongly believed in his

teaching philosophy that language input plays a significant role for language learners.

P:......Like I said, I used my experience to think what might be good for my students. They need more time to process something. That's why I need to slow down. I need to give them time. So those things I went through and sometimes I need the same thing. A clear example would be: the language input. So let's say in Taiwan and Afghanistan and many other countries where English is taught as a second language, [there is] more focus on grammar, and because students speak the same language, and of course teachers are from the country, they need to

switch [to] their first language. Then they give less input of the language. So that experience tells me that's not a good idea. The more input you give the students, the better. One (blurred) expose (blurred) So, I did not use the first language, unless I see there really a pedagogical need. An instruction needs for that (indicating using the student's first language). Not because oh it is difficult, check your dictionary. So even here, sometimes in the United States, I have students whose first language is Farsi, which is also my first language, but I didn't use Farsi to teach even it works because I didn't see the need. If they have a problem, I could help them in English, and they will [be] ok with that. But sometimes I see that the students really need something, I say ok. I just tell one student to translate the meaning to the first language. But to me, my experience was the way I learned not to use the first language more even [if] I speak it. Like, expose the students to English as much as possible. Not only in the class, Outside the class. The more exposure they have in English, the better.

R: Yes.

P: So let's say, I went to the language school, I learned English from the school, the public school. Then, I went to the university to study English literature for 4 years. Then I became an assistant professor at the university. That's all experience. So, I learned, I could speak, I could write, I could communicate well. But now when I think about it, I didn't have much exposure, especially to spoken English.

The professor utilized his improved spoken English as an example. When he was

in the United of Kingdom, he worked as a English-Farsi translator in an accounting firm.

By communicating with people during translations, his communication skill improved.

Because of this experience, the professor encouraged his students to gain language input

experience by engaging in authentic conversation practice outside the classroom;

therefore, he designed the TV and conversation journal. He asserted:

That's why some of the activities you saw in the class, for example, the TV conversation journal, why did I ask the students to do this? Because they are in the class only for [a] limited number of hours, and we help them. Of course, it's helpful. It's why they are here. But the real learning happens outside which many

students DO NOT KNOW. So, this's why I asked them to watch TV, something in English, not in their own language. Go outside, go shopping, go talk to another teacher, find someone who is a native speaker of English. Or very fluent speaker of English. That I believe helps. So, that from my experience of learning English as a second language.

During the narrative interview, the researcher intended to explore the professor's

attitudes towards communication strategies. The professor said:

It's like if you think of language teaching is like an elephant, every method of teaching is one piece of that, you put them all together, that will help you. So, if you say only communicative, I don't think it helps. Because when they get started communicative method of teaching, they just talk, talk, talk. And then they notice that students suffer from lack of accuracy. And now, they say students should [have] both accuracy and fluency.

When the researcher tried to clarify that her interest in the question was in investigating

whether communication strategies had been extensively taught in the TESOL-related

field rather than discussing the usefulness of the well-known communicative language

teaching method, the professor replied:

I don't think we all know all those strategies. They are based on activities. For example, one communication activity we see in the textbook, the information gap. We have seen information gap activities. Why is it helpful? Because students don't have the information and they listen to, right? So in order to understand what other people have, they have to actively listen, right? That's one. In real life, that's communication strategy, that's what we need. We pay attention to the information that we don't have. If we know what other person says, why do we listen to the person? And 2-3 years ago, at the CATESOL program that I attended. I attended one session, taught by two professors. It was about teaching listening, the activity they used, they said in many grammar books, many workshops, they said "speak slowly when you teach English." They said no, don't slow down. Just speak normally, and they said the reason is: students do not need to understand everything. They said ok, it's your first time learning a language and you go to a

restaurant. Or you take a train. All you need to do is check the time. At the restaurant, this is the food I need. This is how much you paid. That's it. ...... Know what your purpose of listening is. That's what you need. Speak fast, speak naturally, do not slow down. And just help the students know this purpose for the listening. When you know the purpose for your listening, or you know the purpose for you reading, you know what to read, you know what to listen to. ...... That's the communication strategies. So it depends what you do, but I don't think there is one magic communication strategy. Communication strategy is okay, agree or disagree, giving opinions, supporting the opinion, arguing these are the things, these are one called communication strategy.

According to above statements of the professor, he was likely not to name particular communication strategies. However, he knew about these strategies and noticed their existence in the textbooks he used in communication classes.

On top of his teaching, the professor followed the program objectives. In the narrative interview, the professor used a Chinese proverb "If you give a fish to someone, you feed them one time. If you teach him how to fish, you feed them for the rest of their life" to describe his teaching philosophy. The professor believed that guiding his students in accomplishing their goals was more beneficial than simply handing them what they need. In his opinion, the professor thought that the program objectives are accordance with his teaching philosophy. Although sometimes he thought the textbook selected by the program did not completely match the needs of his students, he followed the textbook that matches the program objectives with outside material as needed. The professor said:

...... The program chooses good textbooks. No textbook is 100% perfect. We do need [to] supplement, they choose the textbook, the ask teachers" opinions. They try to match the course objectives.

The professor explained that

...... Even if my goals are different, as a teacher, I focus on the goal of the program. Let's say, I may want to help them in one way, if that way my goal is not helping the course objective sent by the program, I don't want to do that. Even the goal is against my goal, because I have the responsibility. This is what I have to do. I don't want to finish the book, but I want them to have the abilities. Because they go to the next level, in the next level, if they don't have certain basic ideas and skills, that will be challenging for them. The teacher may send them back to 400. Then, I waste my time.

With the above descriptions, the professor did not express any salient influence of

the WTC of his students on his teaching, because he regarded the WTC of most of his

students as satisfactory, he used his learning experience as an ESL student himself to

associate his students' difficulties; he followed the program objectives which he believed

could lead students to improve. However, the professor stated a concern; he was weary of

students who did not read the comments he wrote on their papers. He noticed that most

students did not correct mistakes based on his feedback. He assumed that the reason for

not doing so was that they tended to open files on their smart phones or tablets where the

professor's comments were not displayed. As a result, the students did not see his

feedback and so assumed that their work was correct as submitted. The professor pointed

out:

So you ask them in one session, write 2-3 essays, and every draft they gave you, and you read, it doesn't make any sense (The professor knocked on the table), you don't see any improvement. But I give you comments, right? Let's say I give you the comment, then I asked you to revise it. Then you give me the exactly the same thing. So, this doesn't help them. So, for this kind of students, what can you do?

Research Question Three:

What are the participants' recommendations for how to improve WTC?

After discussing factors influencing the WTC of the ESL university students in multiple interviews, the researcher invited student participants and their professor to provide recommendations to motivate the WTC of the ESL university students.

Students' recommendations for improving WTC

The students postulated that engaging in the environment and making learning comfortable would improve their WTC. In their focus group interview, Alyssa and Yvonne reported:

[Excerpt]

A: Feel comfortable and talk even [if] it is right or wrong. If you just have a small idea, talk, your teacher will help you to make a full sentence. If you just have one word, just give your teacher what you have, your teacher will help you. And after that, you can say a sentence, a[n] actual sentence by yourself without any help. After that, you have maybe not just sentence. Many sentence[s].
R: You told me this one. You don't have any native English speakers to talk with you and help your English, right?
A: Right. I have my husband. Because he is not a native speaker, he [has] studie[d] one year. His English is so good. [He] help[s] me with many things. I don't have any native speaker friend[s].
Y: 要享受這個課啊 就是說如果你拒絕這個課的話 你根本一點都學不了 就

是說你要把你的聲音放進去啊　你才可以學到啊 就是你要學會去適應這個
環境

[Translation]

Y: You need to enjoy the class. If you reject participating in the class, you will
learn nothing. That is to say, you have to put your voice in, so you can learn. You
have to accommodate [yourself to]the environment.

When asked the biggest difference between learning English in their native countries and

learning English in the United States, student participants all responded that it was the

environment. Lawrence emphasized the significance of environment in learning English

in his one-on-one interview. He further indicated in his focus group that staying in an

English-speaking environment, he could practice what he had learned right away. Chloe

endorsed this statement, because she found her listening skills improved as long as she

avoided the opportunity to speak Mandarin with Chinese people. Therefore, she regretted

that she has selected a Chinese woman as her roommate, because her apartment was the

place where she spent most of her time.

Professor's recommendations for improving WTC

From the perspective of the professor, knowing about the students and seeking

conversation opportunities outside the class would benefit the students' WTC. In the

professor's opinion, to understand the students was significant. The professor postulated

that

The more you know about them (your students), the [more] you will be able to teach them because you know what they are talking about.

Since understanding the students is essential in order to improve the WTC of students, the

professor recommended that every ESL professor knows the following:

- · Why are you here?
- · How long have you studied English?
- · What do you want to do?
- · What are your goals? and
- · How you will reach your goals?

With the above information, ESL professors can know more about their students and their

expectations. The professor pointed out that:

Sometimes their goals are not realistic. As I said, they want me to do something which is not possible. Whatever you do, you cannot encourage them. They come here, that's say 500 level, and they just want one session 8 weeks and go pass the TOEFL test, and go to the university. They cannot really do that. So, once you learn about them, once you know about their objectives, you can tell them "ok, these are your objectives, these are the objectives of the program for you, and they want me to teach you. If I do something you don't like, sorry, I have to do this. I have the responsibility," ......then I explain, "ok, it's what you want, and it's what we have." Then, I want them to know why I do this. I am not doing this to waste their time. I am doing this to help them, when they follow it, we hope they really improve their English.

Along with the significance of understanding the students, the professor further

shared his opinion regarding dividing students into group work. The professor divided his

students into groups according to their backgrounds, countries, and genders. The

professor generally mixed the genders into groups, but he was careful with distribution.

The professor sometimes did not put students with their close friends or classmates

together in one group, because they would not work well. The professor indicated that

> ......, they just get off topic, they don't talk about that. You give them 5 to 10
> minutes, after 1 or 2 minutes they are done and talk about something else. We
> need to separate those. If I ask them to work with another person, he or she
> doesn't know very well, they are not very close. They have to respect the other
> person, yeah, so he is not my friend, he really wants to work, so I cannot talk
> about this and that with this guy.

> During the interview, the professor and the researcher discussed an occurrence

with Kingston that had happened in session 1, which it reminded the researcher of being

cautious in grouping students. The professor asked Kingston to move to another group in

the middle of a group discussion, because the professor noticed that Kingston dominated

the discussion and the remaining two students became silent. However, Kingston became

very upset, because he mistakenly believed that the professor thought he was off-task

with another student and was not taking the discussion seriously. This situation was the

professor's first time being involved in such a misunderstanding in his life and teaching

career, but if it ever happened again, he would make the same decision. Moreover, the

professor once noticed that his Arabic female students had low interest in working with

male students.

The second recommendation which emerged from the professor's accounts as

pivotal in influencing his students' WTC, was that the students needed to seek outside

oral practice opportunities. The professor maintained that oral practice opportunities

differ inside and outside classroom in terms of extent and function. The professor said:

> ...... Inside the class is very limited. It's academic English. Outside, it is the real
> one, the authentic one that they need. I really encourage them to seek
> conversation opportunities and talk to people. That's the way they keep the
> fluency. In the class, we have more accuracy in addition to fluency. Fluency
> comes from the outside. So, if we only taught in class, class becomes boring and it
> helps, but I don't think that much.

Summary

This qualitative study investigated factors influencing the WTC of the ESL university students; the investigation allowed the researcher to gain insights which could not have been revealed simply by observations. The dual perspectives of ESL student participants and their professor provided their authentic voices regarding factors influencing the WTC of the ESL university students. Data were collected primarily through one-on-one interviews with students, focus group interviews with students, and a narrative interview with the professor.

In response to the first research question: how do ESL university students characterize their overall experience in the intermediate level English oral communication class, the findings indicated that student participants considered that their English oral communication skill improved and that the note-taking strategy as well as the presentation strategy contributed to this improvement. Regarding their strengths and weaknesses in the class, two students viewed their strengths as not worrying about

embarrassment and making mistakes, and several students identified being silent and

having low WTC as their main weaknesses. The student participants noticed these

primary factors as influencing their WTC: interest in the topics, conversation partner,

vocabulary and pronunciation, English language proficiency, student-professor rapport,

and physical and psychological issues.

In terms of the second research question: how does the professor of the

intermediate level English oral communication class perceive the ESL university

students' WTC, the professor viewed his students' WTC as satisfactory. Some students

might be shy at the beginning of the session, but the professor noticed that once they

became used to the English-speaking environment, which they found open and receptive,

they started participating in the class. Despite the satisfactory WTC of students in the

class, the professor's identified these factors as influencing students' WTC: cultural

background, interest in the activity, attitude toward the nationality of the professor, and

fatigue. Consequently, the professor addressed the way he used his teaching to deal with

his students' issues with WTC. The professor's teaching principally followed the program

objectives, because he believed this was the way he could help his students proceed on

the right track. Along with the program objectives, the professor utilized his learning

experience as a second language learner to develop his students' English skills. The

professor did not explicitly point out any communication strategy he had acquired during

his own education, but he noticed that the textbooks he had used included most of the

communication strategies for students' to learn. Therefore, the professor thought the

textbook in the class was helpful and he prepared outside materials when needed.

The third research question looked into recommendations from the student participants

and the professor regarding improving their WTC. During the one-on-one interviews and

focus group interviews, student participants stated that interesting topics would motivate

their WTC in the class. Most importantly, some students suggested engaging in an

environment where they could acquire authentic language communications and making

learning comfortable would facilitate progress on their WTC. From the perspective of the

professor, knowing about the students to ensure their expectations met the program

objectives and encouraging students to seek conversation opportunities outside the class

would benefit the WTC of ESL university students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter includes seven sections. The first section recapitulates the needs of

the study, the purpose of the study, methodology, and research questions. The second

section addresses the primary themes that emerged within the data. The third section

presents a structured discussion of the research findings according to the themes

generated in the study and compares the findings to prior studies. The fourth section

offers the researcher's reflections on the study. The fifth section addresses several

recommendations for future research. The sixth section provides implications of the

present study. Finally, the chapter culminates with conclusions of the study.

Summary of the Study

With the prevalence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) since the

1980s in the United States, second language researchers have emphasized the

significance of willingness to communicate (WTC) (Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2008). Researchers

regard achieving genuine communication as the culmination of language learning for

language learners (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011).

That is, second language acquisition focuses more on communication practice than on

correct grammar. Therefore, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) claimed that

institutions focused on second language instruction should examine their objectives in

increasing the WTC of ESL university students. Success is achieved when ESL programs

increase the WTC of ESL students. Although second language educators are devoted to

improving their students' communication skills, many of them remain silent (MacIntyre,

Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010), and linguistic

competence does not necessarily ensure students' contribution in communication

(MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998).

Recently, East Asian students have comprised the majority of international

students in the United States, and researchers (Jackson, 2002; Lee, 2007) have found

most of the Asian students reluctant and passive in ESL classes. The Asian students'

unwillingness to communicate in ESL classes may result from the cultural shock between

the Western culture and the Eastern culture. Western culture is characterized by a

learner-centered approach and balanced student-professor relationships, allowing that

language learners need substantial opportunities and experiences to negotiate and interact

in the target language to develop their communicate competence. On the other hand, the

Eastern culture, greatly influenced by Chinese culture of Confucianism, involves

teacher-centered and lecture-based learning, as well as sustaining group rapport and

social status.

For example, Hofstede (1986) categorized Americans as more individualistic, indicating that students will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher; whereas people from East Asia and the Middle East are more collectivistic, meaning students will only speak up in class when called upon personally by the teacher. As a result, Asian ESL students often have difficulties when they study abroad in North American universities which extensively require active class discussions and participation. Insufficient knowledge about classroom practice in different cultures may lead to misunderstandings in cross-cultural conversations (Zhan, 2016); hence, professors should take responsibility for cultural accommodations and be sensitive to the expectations of the students (Hofstede, 1986).

Many studies have investigated factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students from students' or instructor' perspectives. Chen and Goh (2014) were prominent in exploring factors affecting the WTC of the ESL university students from the perspective of ESL professors. However, little attention has been paid to the factors impacting the WTC of ESL university students from the dual perspectives of the students and their professors. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students based on the perspectives of both the students and their professor in one oral communication class.

To that end, the researcher administered class observations, one-on-one interviews with students, focus group interviews with students, and a narrative interview with the professor. One-on-one interviews with students were used to investigate participants' background information and explore students' WTC and the factors that influence their WTC. The focus group interviews with students were utilized to investigate factors influencing their WTC and identify their changes and learning in their WTC during the course, as well as compile their experiences and reflections on how to improve WTC. The narrative interview with the professor focused on his insights and knowledge of factors that influence the WTC of his ESL university students.

In an effort to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students from the perspectives of both the students and their oral communication professor, this qualitative study addressed three research questions. The first research question inquired into the overall experience of the ESL university students in the intermediate level English oral communication class. The second research question focused on factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students from their professor's perspective. The third research question centered on recommendations for improving the WTC of ESL university students.

Summary of Findings

Findings arranged by themes

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that influence the WTC of

ESL university students from the perspectives of both the students and their oral

communication professor. The primary themes (Figure 3) that emerged from the study

were: specific learning goals, student-professor rapport, interest in the course materials,

affability of the conversation partners, and English proficiency.

Specific language learning goals: The more knowledgeable the students are of their

learning goals, the more they will participate in the class

Among all the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, having

specific language learning goals seems fundamental. Some students, mostly

Mandarin-speaking, regarded themselves as reluctant to speak in class because of their

tiredness. A possible explanation for their fatigue from the professor's perspective might

be that the students lacked specific language learning goals. By commenting that not all

of his students had specific learning goals in mind, the professor pointed out that some

students wasted their time and always stayed up late playing video games and trying to

catch up on their assignments, causing their fatigue and low participation in class.

Chinese students and Vietnamese students proved to be different in the way they pursued

Factors from students' perspectives **Factors from professor's perspective**

A G
E H
F J

B
D
C

I

1. Specific learning goals
2. Student-professor rapport
3. Interest in the course materials,
4. Affability of the conversation partners, and
5. English proficiency
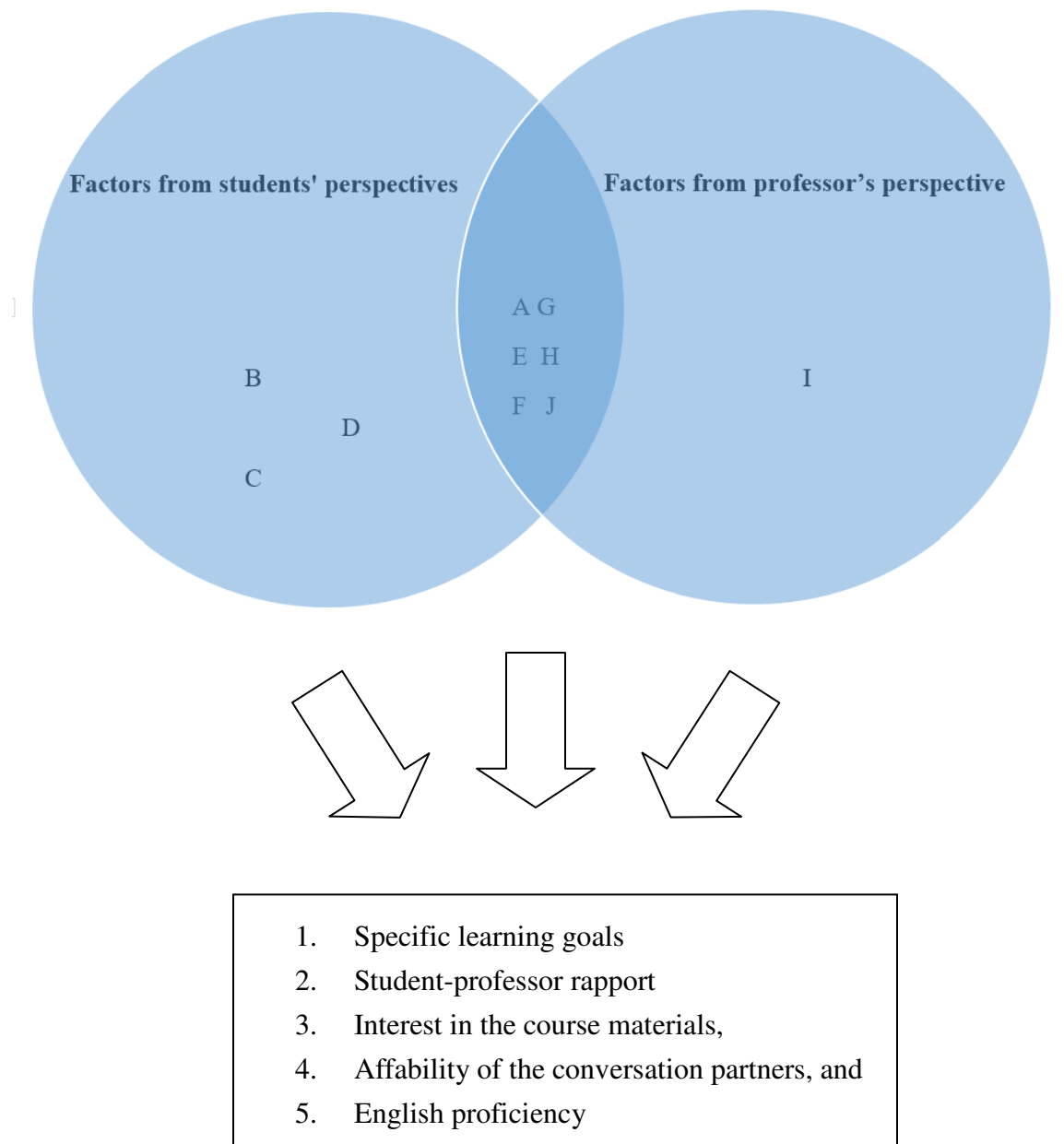
Figure 3. Synthesis: Themes of the study

Note. A: Interest in the topics

B: Affability of the conversation partners

C: Vocabulary and pronunciation

D: English proficiency

E: Student-professor rapport

F: Physical and psychological issues

G: Interest in the activity

H: Cultural background

I: Attitude toward professor's accent and nationality

J: Lack of a specific learning goal

their goals, as a result of their previous learning experiences in their native countries.

Contrasted with Vietnamese students, most Chinese students relied heavily on

mnemonics to memorize vocabulary and on software geared toward passing the TOEFL

or IELTS exams and paid little attention to the ESL course instruction, since they viewed

the software as more helpful than course instruction. As for the Vietnamese students,

some viewed studying hard as the best way to reach their goals; however, they showed

little initiative in going beyond the class requirements. Therefore, they had an inadequate

grasp of the importance of oral English communication and made ineffective use of

authentic conversations with native English speakers or other foreigners during their stay

in the program.

Among the students with specific language learning goals, some of their goals

were too unrealistic to accomplish. A notable finding was that the professor thought that

sometimes students misunderstood the usefulness of some of the activities and found

them boring and useless. Other students thought that they could achieve satisfactory

TOEFL or IELTS scores within two ESL sessions. When they found they failed to reach

their goals, they attributed their failure to the inefficiency of the program and the

professor's pedagogy. Therefore, the professor suggested that every ESL instructor should

know the learning goal of their students, guide them in increasing their awareness of the

ways to reach their goals, and explain how the program can help the students reach their

own expectations. He believed that once students begin moving toward a specific

learning goal and know how the program requirements will assist them in improving their

English, they will participate more in class.

Student-professor rapport: The more knowledgeable the professor is about his students,

the stronger the student-professor rapport, and the higher the comfort level of

participating in the class

The student participants and their professor in this study unanimously deemed

student-professor rapport as motivating the WTC. The rapport between the students and

their course professor further inspired the WTC of other students, because of their

confidence in their professor. The professor stated that his cultural background and

previous learning experience shaped his teaching; therefore, the professor stressed the

importance of understanding the students. The professor suggested that ESL instructors

understand their students by asking them questions such as the following:

- Why are you here?
- How long have you studied English?
- What do you want to do?
- What are your goals? and
- How you will reach your goals?

By understanding his students, the professor noticed that cultural background was one of

the factors that influenced the WTC of his students. The professor was aware that

sometimes international students, for example, Asian students, had low participation in

class, since they perceived participating in class by asking questions as disrespectful. Due

to his understanding of this culturally-bonded factor, the professor encouraged his

students to ask questions in class, even if he might not know the answers.

Throughout his own English learning and English teaching experiences, the

professor acknowledged the importance of knowing about his students. When the

professor related to his students according to their needs, difficulties, and backgrounds,

he modified his teaching to assist his students in improving their skills and proved

effective, and thereby encouraged his students to participate in class. Holding this belief,

the professor has been committed to developing a classroom where students feel

validated in sharing their ideas. As the professor encourages the students and provides a

comfortable environment to participate in class, a sense of rapport is built, which fosters

WTC.

Interest in the course materials: The more interesting the course materials, the more

likely students will participate in the class

In the interviews with all the student and professor participants, the researcher

found that interest plays an important role in ESL university students' class participation.

Throughout their interviews, students, especially Mandarin speakers, reported that

interesting topics increased their WTC. That is to say, sometimes ESL university students

were reluctant to participate in the class, because the topics seemed childish, boring, and

nonsensical to them. With regard to interesting topics, the professor noticed that topics

related to technology and students' daily lives motivate students' WTC more than those

related to politics. In the narrative interview, the professor reported that interesting

activities motivated his students' WTC. In reference to interesting activities, the professor

noted that activities considered boring in one class might seem interesting in another.

Although it was not within the scope of this study to determine which activities were

interesting, undoubtedly interest positively influenced the WTC of ESL university

students.

Affability of the conversation partners: The more congenial the relationships among

students in the class, the more likely that the students will participate in class

A factor influencing the WTC of ESL university students pertains to the affability

of the conversation partners. Student participants pointed out that their classmates and

their professor in another class influenced their WTC. Students indicated that their

classmates influenced their WTC by their attitude, personality, and cultural dress. They

explained that some of their classmates negatively affected their WTC in class by

expressing indifferent attitudes toward discussions, excessively dominating group

discussions, possessing arrogant personalities, and wearing cultural dress, such as veils

covering their mouths, impeding the respondents' understanding of the conversation.

According to the researcher's understanding of the students and their backgrounds,

students with concerns regarding their conversation partner's cultural dress had no

prejudice toward any ethnicity or religion. Certainly, some ESL students may be hesitant

to work with students with veils because they may assume that they cannot understand

their partner if the mouth is covered. In the students' opinions, because English is their

second language, when their classmate's mouths were covered by veils, they could barely

understand when they spoke. They reported that sometimes they would invite their

classmates to repeat their answers, but they were embarrassed to continuously ask their

classmates to repeat.

In terms of the nationality of the classmates, student participants reported that

talking with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds would not

influence their WTC. The professor participant indicated that although students with the

same language backgrounds engaged in group discussions to the same extent as the

students with different language backgrounds, they sometimes completed the discussions

faster than students with different language backgrounds and talked about something else

in their native language during the remaining time. Therefore, the professor generally

grouped students with different language backgrounds in pairing students.

In addition to attitudes toward their classmates, student respondents implied that

their unwillingness to communicate resulted from the uninteresting and monotonous

instruction of some professors. On another note, as a non-native English speaker, the

professor understood that his foreign accent and nationality may influence some students'

attitudes toward his teaching at the beginning of each session, thereby resulting in their

lack of participation in the class. The professor stated that once his students got

accustomed to his accent, their participation increased. Consequently, when students had

equal opportunities to engage in discussions, their WTC in group discussions increased.

English language proficiency: The higher the English language proficiency of the

students, the greater the tendency that they will participate in class

One last factor influencing the WTC of ESL university students relates to their

English proficiency. Some students found their English language proficiency prevented

them from participating in the class and in taking outside phone calls. Regarding this

difficulty, during the study most of the students asked the researcher to text them prior to

calling them. Moreover, the majority of the students implied that they had difficulty

structuring sentences to respond in conversations because of their unfamiliarity with key

words and phrases. In this regard, some students thought that their limited vocabulary

knowledge hindered their ability to communicate. Thus, student participants found the

presentation and note-taking strategies assisted them in improving their communication

skill the most. Many students acknowledged that they generally translated the

conversation from their partners from English into their native languages, and thereby

they could not produce answers in English. Once students translate their expression back

and forth in the target language and their native languages, they do not always achieve

authentic conversations. Building on the above statements, student participants reported

that if they had more advanced English language proficiency, they would like to

participate in the class more.

In order to develop his students' English proficiency by increasing language input,

the professor designed a TV and conversation journal assignment drawing on his own

experience with spoken English. The professor found that learning grammar knowledge

without exposure to authentic language use was less meaningful. As a result, the

professor believed that classroom learning is limited and encouraged his students to

extend their English learning outside the classroom by interacting with native English

speakers.

Findings beyond the themes

Prior to comparing the findings of the current study with previous literature, it is noteworthy to mention the issue of teacher knowledge and students' self-regulation in class. In terms of teacher knowledge, the professor reported in the interview that his teaching follows the program objectives, in accordance with his teaching philosophy. The textbooks are selected by the program coordinator in consultation with the professors based on the program objectives. The program objectives aim at assisting students in entering the academic environment in North America, in order to take general university courses rather than to prepare them to take the IELTS or TOEFL exams. While this course is designed primarily to support students' academic achievement, it also contributes to greater success on the TOEFL exam. Nevertheless, the students have the opportunity to also take a separate TOEFL preparation course.

In a closer investigation regarding the professor's knowledge of oral communication pedagogy, he revealed that he mainly utilized the textbook to follow the program objectives. He used outside materials to supplement prescribed textual materials when needed. The professor indicated that second language teaching is a broad field; as a result, instructors should use eclectic methods by incorporating different teaching methods rather than only use one specific teaching method in teaching. In addition, he

stated that the activities in textbooks are strategy-based, and students can acquire

strategies through activities. Although he might not have been able to identify all the

communicate strategies, when the researcher listed several communication strategies, the

professor seemed to recognize the strategies.

Based on her observation through the study, the researcher noticed that the ESL

university students' self-regulation indirectly influenced their WTC of ESL university

students. Since this was the last session of the spring quarter, some students planned to

return to their countries or to transfer to other universities when the session was over.

Building on this thought, some students were often absent, because they did not care

about their scores as much as when they arrived. This situation did not happen only with

low WTC students. A Chinese male student with a strong desire to participate in class

was also absent.

Discussion

This study explored the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students

from the perspectives of both the students and their oral communication professor. In this

section, the structured discussion centers on the research findings according to the themes

generated in the study and compares these findings to those of prior studies of the

influences on WTC.

First, the professor found that guiding students to set specific language learning goals positively affected the WTC of his ESL university students; therefore, he posited that one way to streamline student participation would be to create a comprehensive compendium of the students' backgrounds, goals, and language objectives. This finding was in accordance with the finding of Shvidko et al. (2015) who lent support to the claim that language educators need to instruct students to map out a language learning plan to manage their learning, since students improve more by evaluating their actual practice and their goals.

The finding of this study revealed that some students formulated learning goals without acknowledging that their current abilities were insufficient to achieve their goals. For instance, Kingston expected to assimilate his accent and phraseology to those of the Americans. Similarly, Peng and Woodrow (2010) found in their study that learner belief propels their learning behavior. Extending their finding to this study, student participants who set goals beyond their abilities engaged in unrealistic learning behavior.

In addition, the findings in this study showed that Chinese students and Vietnamese students had different approaches to pursuing their goals. Chinese students had a tendency to utilize mnemonics to memorize vocabulary and software to prepare for TOEFL or IELTS exams, corresponding to the finding of Song (1995) that previous

education experience influenced class participation. When ESL university students had previously studied English in a teacher-centered classroom, they made rapid progress. However, student participants in this study had previously relied on mnemonics and software, which had poorly prepared them to make active progress in dynamic authentic speaking situations. When they found that their progress was limited, they tended to challenge the effectiveness of the program rather than the effectiveness of their own study techniques, resulting in low class participation. Therefore, setting a specific and reachable goal must precede achieving their learning.

This study is unique in identifying the nature of language learning goal-setting among well-off Chinese students. This finding revealed that several students did not realize the significance of their awareness of the importance of their oral English communication. They recognized the relationship between their oral participation and their learning, but they showed little interest in improving their learning by increasing their oral participation. Furthermore, the physical and psychological issues mentioned by students may not have been noted in previous studies because their relationship with specific learning goals was unknown.

Second, in this study both student and professor participants revealed that student-professor rapport significantly influenced the WTC of ESL university students.

This finding corroborated the idea of Liu and Littlewood (1997) and Spatt (1999), who

suggested that perceptions of teacher-student compatibility influenced the WTC of

English learners. The student-professor rapport in this study was built on the foundation

of the professor's encouragement and understanding of the students, their confidence in

their professor, and the professor's previous English learning and English teaching

experiences. This finding further supported Vygotsky's (1978) concept of social

constructivism, which stressed the exchanges among professor, students, and task, as well

as their interactions. Hofstede (1986) suggested that language teachers should know that

international students learn differently; therefore, instructors should take the lead to help

students accommodate the learning environment.

Given the needs, backgrounds, and difficulties of his international students, the

professor exerted himself in creating a comfortable and non-threatening classroom

environment. The finding further supports the idea of Peng and Woodrow (2010) and

Zhou (2013) that an engaging classroom environment motivates the WTC of EFL

students. In addition, Chen and Goh (2014), Ellis (2006), and Reeves (2009) found that

the instructor's prior learning experiences can have an impact on their pedagogical

knowledge, which greatly influences their ESL students' WTC.

Third, the participants reported that interest was at the heart of the understanding

of motivating the WTC of ESL students. Some Chinese student participants indicated that

interesting topics inspire their WTC, while the professor found that interesting activities

increase his students' WTC. This finding agreed with research by Cao and Philip (2006)

and Kang (2005) which showed that discussion topic, including interest in the topics,

affected the WTC of ESL university students. Surprisingly, in interviews regarding

factors influencing their WTC, most students first mentioned their level of interest;

however, there is little corroboration in the literature. A possible reason for sparse results

in the literature may be that previous researchers regarded interest as a minor issue, or

that interest did not appear in their findings.

Fourth, another unique finding in this study was that the affability of the

conversation partners influence the WTC of ESL university students. The majority of the

student participants reflected that it takes two to tango; therefore, their partners in

discussions influenced their WTC, in terms of their attitude, personality, and cultural

dress. When students found that their partners did not respect them in discussions or

made the discussion difficult to continue, their WTC declined. This result differed from

Cao and Philip's 2006 and Kang's 2005 estimates of familiarity with interlocutors, but

their findings are broadly consistent with the idea that conversation partners influence the

WTC of ESL university students. In this study, student participants reported that attitude,

personality, and cultural dress of their conversation partners were more influential than familiarity with their interlocutors as far as their WTC is concerned.

Fifth, the results of this investigation showed that English proficiency influenced the WTC of ESL university students. This finding confirmed that the WTC of ESL university students is associated with their language proficiency (Cheng, 2000). Student participants revealed that they were always ready to participate in class. However, their basic English proficiency kept them from expressing their ideas, since they did not know how to initiate or finish conversation, as well as key words and phrases they can use to present their ideas. Therefore, this finding indicated that students need sample sentences to guide them in conversing. In addition, student participants put forward the claim that their limited vocabulary knowledge left them at a literal loss for words. In accordance with the present result regarding limited vocabulary, de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) previously demonstrated that vocabulary was one of the obstacles demotivating the WTC of ESL university students.

Translating was another factor influencing English proficiency. Chinese student participants reported that when they listened to a passage, sometimes they habitually translated the information into their native language. When they processed the knowledge in their native language, they had difficulty replying in English. This finding is in

agreement with Song's (1995) finding which showed that translating their idea from their

native language led Korean students to an unwillingness to communicate, since the

Korean language contains both speech levels and honorifics, virtually non-existent in

English. A possible explanation for this habit may be due to previous language learning

through the grammar translation method. However, although this finding supported the

statement that English proficiency influenced the WTC of ESL university students, on the

basis of the evidence currently available, it seems unfair to suggest that students with

lower English proficiency had lower WTC than those students with better English

proficiency.

In an effort to increase his students' English proficiency, the professor designed a

TV and conversation journal assignment due each week. The professor's view was

grounded on the assumption that ESL students need language input from outside

exposure to augment their language proficiency, especially authentic oral communication

skill. The professor's viewpoint is aligned with Vygotsky (1978) who posited that

knowledge is built cooperatively through social interactions. By interactions with people

outside the class, students become exposed to authentic language. During their

interactions, students have the opportunity to imitate their interlocutors' model of speech

and behavior.

In their prior research, Chen and Goh (2014) stressed the significance of pedagogical knowledge on the WTC of EFL university students. The available evidence in their study seemed to suggest that inadequate pedagogical knowledge may decrease the WTC of EFL students. In contrast, in this study, the professor's pedagogical knowledge did not appear to be a factor. For example, at the end of their interview, the professor and the researcher discussed the professor's familiarity with communication strategies. The professor thought that the overall English teaching was so broad that no one could know everything. The professor showed his knowledge about communication strategies and knew their existence in the activities of the textbooks the program selected, but he was not inclined to name all of them.

In the interview, the professor stated that his teaching was primarily aligned with the program objectives. He always reviewed the activities he prepared for the class with the program objectives to ensure his activities followed the program objectives, since he believed that the program objectives would assist students in improving their English proficiency. Furthermore, the professor reported that sometimes his goal might be different from the program objectives, but he had to follow them since he had the responsibility to teach his students the abilities to move to the next level. The statements of the professor proved that the program objectives dominate the pedagogy in an ESL

environment.

Reflections

The researcher of this study has studied in the United States for over 15 years as an ESL student, a master's student of TESOL, and a doctoral student. Improving the WTC of ESL university students has been one of her research interests. With her 15-year study in the second language acquisition field, she has supported ideas from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and social constructivism; therefore, she understands the significance of the learning environment in language acquisition and the necessity of practical life experience.

The researcher noticed that the majority of the student participants stayed with their parents in their countries; therefore, they did not have to worry about activating their utility, internet, and cell phone, communicating with their landlords regarding housing, running errands, grocery shopping, and so on. Without these types of experiences, ESL students generally have difficulties expressing themselves in English. Not to mention sometimes these students are concerned with how to make polite conversation following American cultural norms. To be sure, they can search information on the internet about how to have daily life with others, but daily life conversations occur organically and cannot be learned by consulting a textbook.

While exploring factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, the researcher confirmed that the WTC of ESL university students is situational. As found in this study, language exposure was one of the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students. Most of the student participants had studied English for at least six years in their native countries, so they were supposed to have certain basic knowledge of how to communicate with others in English. However, they chose to be silent in class because of their insufficient practical life experiences and limited language exposure, as well as their varying degrees of motivation. ESL instructors have encouraged their students to extend their language exposure by going outside, going shopping and interacting with other native English speakers, but their students are reluctant to do so and may give excuses, such as lacking money to go shopping despite the fact that they wear designer clothing, which seems to indicate that the factors influencing WTC are situational.

The researcher also noticed that having an extroverted or introverted personality does not significantly influence the WTC of ESL university students. While most of the students acknowledged that they are more introverted than extroverted, they all seemed to ready to participate in class. In the observations, it was certain that students who regarded themselves as extroverted participated in the class. However, those who regarded

themselves more introverted also participated in the class.

On the other hand, it was surprising that the program sent a staff member to visit every classroom when students were required to fill out the online course evaluation during the study. The program administrators know that students' participation in online course evaluation tends to be low, so an administrative staff visits each class to supervise all students participate in the online evaluation. While the researcher was present, she overheard some students discussing their courses in Mandarin. However, they chose not to express in the evaluation because they just wanted to complete the evaluation as soon as possible. When they finished, they also asked their classmates to complete the evaluation as quickly as possible, selecting random answers. Although it is not an index of their WTC, it is a sign that they did not want to communicate with the program. Therefore, it showed that the WTC of ESL university students is situational.

Along with factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, the researcher is also interested in communication strategies. The researcher has noticed that not all second language acquisition-related programs offer courses including communication strategies. The researcher does not encourage oral communication strategies teaching to be a requirement of second language acquisition-related programs, but proposes that communicate strategies should be a part of the curriculum for

instructors as reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies are for ESL students. If ESL instructors do not have sufficient teacher knowledge in teaching oral communication and the course content is subject to program academic objectives, then students may not receive substantial instruction to deal with communication. Once students cannot express their ideas by dealing with the difficulties in their communication, they may not be able to initiate communication.

When the researcher designed this study, she planned to investigate factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students and evaluate the effectiveness of using communication strategies to mitigate the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students since little research has been done in this field. The researcher later decided to explore the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students first. The results of this study have showed that communication strategies may not be the correct prescription to cure factors that negatively influence WTC. This aspect, however, might be something to consider carefully in future research.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research

This study has raised many questions in need of further investigation, and the emergent themes provide the following insights for future research. To investigate factors

influencing the WTC of ESL university students, it is recommended that further research

be undertaken in the following areas,

First, further research would benefit from extending the term of the study. The

current study took place during a session of 9 weeks, with the actual data collection

occurring approximately 7 weeks due to two non-class weeks of break and exams. As

compared to prior studies, which usually last for one semester, this study clearly took a

shorter period of time. Thus, the researcher might not have been able to explore the

comprehensive factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, and it would be

interesting to investigate the WTC of ESL university over the course of two sessions.

Second, further research regarding the role of teacher knowledge in the United

States would be worthwhile exploring in order to examine more closely the links between

teacher knowledge and the WTC of ESL university students in the United States. Chen

and Goh (2011, 2014) found that teacher knowledge in oral communication might

influence students' WTC, and future studies might explore the knowledge of the teacher

and its influence on WTC of their students in the United States. In the current study,

teacher knowledge was not clearly investigated, especially in an ESL setting in the United

States. Students' interest in class discussions is also important, and student participants

explicitly stated that their own interest motivated their WTC. The professor participant

echoed this sentiment, reporting that interesting classroom activities were an essential

factor influencing WTC of ESL students. More information on teacher knowledge in

teaching oral communication in the United States would help establish a greater degree of

accuracy on factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, although

investigating teacher knowledge may occasionally prove to be sensitive.

Third, another possible area of future research would be to investigate the factors

influencing interactions between native English-speaking students and international

students in the classroom, either fully or conditionally admitted. Conditionally admitted

students have insufficient English proficiency and must take ESL courses in order to

enroll in graduate programs. Future research could explore whether native speakers of

English are interested in interacting with international students who cannot always

communicate clearly and confidently. It might be interesting to explore the WTC of ESL

university students who have access to non-ESL college settings.

Fourth, a further study could assess topics influencing the WTC of ESL university

students. As found in the study, interesting topics and activities might increase the WTC

of ESL university students. However, researcher did not have a chance to explore the

topics that would motivate the WTC of ESL university students from the students'

perspectives during the study. Therefore, future research questions that could be asked

include topics that influence the WTC of ESL university students.

Fifth, future research in this field would be of great help in employing different

methodology to consider factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students. In the

current study, most of the students regarded their WTC in the oral communication class

as positive, and their statements were in accord with the observations of the researcher.

However, the observations from the researcher and the statements from the students were

subjective. Future research may take using the WTC measurement into account to

evaluate the validity of the statements from students. In addition, other research methods,

such as quantitative and mixed-method approaches, would be a great help for

triangulating the result. A noteworthy recommendation in conducting future research is to

avoid conducing focus group interviews during lunchtime, since students talk and eat at

the same time increasing the chance of misinterpretation of responses.

Recommendation for English language educators

To take proactive steps to improve the WTC of ESL university students, several

recommendations for future educators are presented below:

The first recommendation relates to the importance of knowing the students. In

the current study, the professor suggested knowing his students in terms of the reasons

they came to the United States, their English learning experiences, and their interests. The

reasons that international students came to the United States to study may vary; thus, the

level of concentration on their studies varies from student to student. Furthermore,

students' previous learning experiences and their beliefs about learning have an impact on

their learning (Peng & Woodro, 2010; Song, 1995). Understanding students' previous

learning experiences and beliefs can assist professors in knowing the disposition of their

students in learning, as well as the differences between the learning strategies they are

accustomed to in their previous learning settings and those in the United States. By

knowing the different learning approaches between the students' patterns and the United

States, professors might assist their students in their acquisition by accommodating their

learning patterns in the United States.

Furthermore, by understanding the interests of the students, ESL instructors can

introduce their students the interests of general English speakers of American, so they can

make conversation with them. Therefore, it is recommended that professors give students

a form on which students include their backgrounds, difficulties in learning, preferred

learning patterns, and any other information they would care to share with the professor

on the first day of the session. With the above information, ESL professors can facilitate

the WTC of ESL university students.

The second recommendation concerns setting a specific learning goal, including

time management strategies. The results of this study indicate that ESL students generally

lack a specific and practical learning goal in mind, causing their limited awareness of the

importance of oral English communication. Guiding students to map out a specific and

practical learning goal assists ESL university students in shaping their learning beliefs

and in focusing their learning behavior. Meanwhile, students can evaluate their progress

through the goal they formulate. While ESL instructors direct students to draw up their

learning plans, it is also important to advise students to manage their study time. Advising

students to set a specific learning goal with time management strategies would help

students control their own learning, thereby motivating their participation in class.

The third recommendation pertains to student-professor rapport. In this study, the

professor indicated that his prior experiences assist him in standing in his students' shoes

to relate to his students' needs and difficulties, resulting from their backgrounds. Because

of his understanding of student needs and difficulties, the professor always encouraged

his students to participate in class, even though they made mistakes. Although the

professor's encouragement did not guarantee his intention to build student-professor

rapport, many students reported that their professor's encouragement motivated their

WTC. Simultaneously, the professor was committed to creating a classroom where

students feel comfortable to express their ideas. Hence, it is helpful for ESL instructors to

keep their learning experiences in mind in their teaching to maintain an encouraging

learning environment for their students.

Fourth, the recommendation of increasing language exposure outside the class

could be useful in improving the WTC of ESL university students. As the professor in the

study stressed, outside exposure improves fluency, while class instruction enhances

accuracy. Increasing language exposure outside the class can support the WTC of ESL

university students. ESL instructors need to help students learn to navigate the

English-speaker community and gain access to language exposure outside the class.

Implications

Previous studies regarding factors influencing the WTC of English or foreign

language learners explored the issue either mostly from the perspective of students,

especially in EFL settings, or from the perspective of professors. No previous study has

investigated factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students from the dual

perspectives of the students and their professor in the United States. The current study

filled in this gap and generated several theoretical implications and pedagogical

implications, as follows.

Theoretical implications

First, the findings of the study related to the sociocultural theory and social constructivism of Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky, learning is a collaborative action between the learner and the environment; knowledge is the product of social collaboration through learning. On the basis of sociocultural theory in second language acquisition, oral English communication is a multifaceted skill, as the WTC of ESL university students requires cultural and social collaboration. In addition, sociocultural theory rests on the value of language students connecting their learning with society, where the context of daily life occurs. Kingston indicated in his one-on-one interview that he did not believe he could improve his accent and phraseology in the ATP program, because he did not regard English speaking practice with classmates as legitimate and authentic as conversation with native speakers of English. Drawing on the sociocultural theory, English language acquisition is not merely learning the language itself, since effective acquisition of a second language relies on the relationship between the learners and the social environment.

As part of the sociocultural theory, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) focuses on the distance between what students can achieve now with the interaction and assistance of experts and what they can achieve at a more advanced level independently

in the future. Vygotskian scholars Lantolf and Thorne (2007) recognized experts in ZPD

as professors or more advanced peers. The participants of the study identified factors

influencing the WTC of ESL university students, such as affability of the conversation

partners, English proficiency, and specific learning goals. These factors are related to the

sociocultural theory of Vygotsky.

Along with the sociocultural theory, social constructivism posits that learning is

collaborative rather than isolated. Based on social constructivism, the language learning

environment is influential. The findings of the study highlighted the influence of learning

environment on the WTC of ESL university students in terms of the diverse ways student

participants planned to accomplish their goals in English acquisition. For instance,

Chinese students revealed that they had learned test-taking strategies to take TOEFL or

IELTS exams in China; therefore, they employed these strategies during their acquisition

in the ESL program in the study. The professor participant's philosophy that extending

ESL students' language exposure outside the class reflects the influence of learning

environment on the WTC of ESL university students.

In addition to the influence of the environment, social constructivism also

emphasizes the significance of the relationship and interaction among teacher, learner,

and task. The factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students, such as

student-professor rapport and interest in materials, reported by participants, corresponded

to the impact of social constructivism on the WTC of ESL university students. The

findings of the study highlight that when ESL instructors establish good rapport with their

students, the students will be more willing to participate in class without fear.

Furthermore, when students have lower affective filters, their WTC increases.

Pedagogical implications

The findings of the study provide four pedagogical implications for second or

foreign language oral communication instructors, English speaking and listening

instructors in their native countries, practitioners, and ESL students.

First, for those second or foreign language oral communication instructors in the

United States, the findings of the current study obviously offer updated insights regarding

factors that may influence the WTC of ESL students. In addition, the findings of the

study remind second or foreign language instructors of the different learning

requirements between the target language and the students' native countries. After

obtaining the above information, the second or foreign language instructors can

accommodate their teaching to facilitate their students' learning. A reasonable approach to

tackling this issue could be to improve their rapport with their students and provide an

opportunity for increasing their exposure to English, since they have more responsibility

for helping students acclimate to the target language environment. Moreover, second or foreign language instructors should pay attention to students' interactions in the classroom, as participation in group projects and varying degrees of motivation to complete assignments can impact overall group dynamics.

Most importantly, as implied by the significance of sociocultural theory above, learning is the interaction between the learner and the environment, and knowledge is the product of these interactions. Therefore, ESL oral communication instructors in the United States should assist their students in exploring American cultural and society to further improve their oral communication skill, which further increases their oral participation in class. As for social constructivism indicated earlier in this study, ESL oral communication instructors in the United States need to pay attention to the homework they assign to their students which pertains to their teaching philosophy and the their students' reflection of their knowledge.

Second, similar to those ESL oral communication instructors in the United States, for those English speaking and listening instructors in their native countries, the findings of the study provide information regarding the U.S. teaching style and the difficulties that their students may encounter if they plan to pursue a degree in this country. Therefore, EFL instructors can evaluate their teaching with an eye on current U.S. teaching practices,

while maintain their own course goals. Not all local English language instructors have study abroad experience or access to English speaking environment, but it is recommended that they create scenarios for their students to practice English in their daily life.

Third, practitioners should improve their current best teaching practices and make a point of seeking out appropriate interesting classroom activities. In addition, practitioners can search for extracurricular language exposure opportunities for their students. Overall, the ESL education community may gain from this study as it found factors influencing the WTC of ESL university from the dual perspectives of the students and the professor.

As for ESL students, they may need to know the differences between learning English in their native countries and in the United States as well as to raise their awareness of the significance of oral communication in class. That is, when they realize that the emphasis is on class participation in the United States, they should focus their efforts on participating in the class. In addition, as mentioned above regarding teacher knowledge primarily dominated by the program objectives, students should review the program objectives before they apply. Once ESL students know the requirements of the program they are in, they should adjust their expectations from the program and work

well with the program to reach their goal. Additionally, ESL students should be aware

that the more exposure to English they receive in the English setting, the more knowledge

they acquire. Therefore, they should make good use of the outside classroom

environment to practice oral communication.

Conclusion

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is indispensible in any aspect of second

language acquisition, since it is one of the predictors of the language proficiency of

second or foreign language learners. Despite such importance, some second or foreign

language learners remain reluctant to communicate in class, which stimulates increasing

investigations regarding factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students. The

purpose of the study was to explore factors that influence the WTC of ESL university

students from the perspectives of both the students and their oral communication

professor. In an effort to shed light on the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university

students, class observations, one-one-one and focus group interviews with students, and a

narrative interview with the professor were employed. The findings of this study suggest

the following conclusions:

First, the study concludes that both student and professor participants viewed the

class participation as satisfactory in frequency and quality, and factors influencing their

WTC existed. The student participants characterized their experience as positive (as they

learned and participated), and recognized their WTC as above average. The evidence

overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that factors influencing the WTC of ESL

university students are interrelated to sociocultural theory and social constructivism. The

findings of the study consider the relationships between the learners and the learning

environment. The professor encourages gaining language exposure by seeking outside

conversation opportunities, which has the added benefit of fostering independent

learning.

Furthermore, the study has showed that as far as WTC concerned, sociocultural

theory demonstrated the class environment is not only for them and their professor, but

them, their classmates, and their professor. The results of the study indicated that

interactions between students and their classmates, as well as the students and their

course professors influence the WTC of ESL university students.

In addition, the findings of the study stressed the relationships among the learners,

the instructors, and the class activities and assignments. The professor participant

emphasized the significance of outside conversation opportunities; therefore, the

professor designed an assignment to encourage his students to gain access to outside

language input, as he described when discussing his pedagogical philosophy. Students did

the assignment in different ways. Few students had access to native English language speakers to complete their assignment; some students fabricated the assignment on their own. Without clear instruction directing students the ways they could find a reliable conversation partner, the assignment was not fully efficient in improving the WTC of ESL university students. Therefore, in light of the inability of the students to complete the journal assignments properly, it seems safe to conclude that ESL university students at the beginning intermediate level may need more explicit instruction to facilitate their learning.

Second, the study concludes that the course materials ignite the WTC of ESL university students by providing sample sentences and key phrases to develop conversational skills. Student participants reported that learning and using key phrases in their textbook assisted them in structuring their thoughts to be indispensable to conversing and participating effectively. Later, they could understand listening passages by picking up key phrases. The relevance of furnishing examples is clearly supported by the study.

Third, the study concludes that in order to increase the WTC of ESL university students, ESL instructors should take the primary responsibility to direct their students to engage in the learning environment. There is strong evidence that understanding

international students in terms of their cultural backgrounds, previous learning experiences, and learning goals is fundamental, since these details provide information regarding factors that may influence the WTC of ESL university students. By understanding their students, ESL instructors can offer aids to improve their students' English language proficiency, thereby building up student-instructor rapport. When ESL students have confidence in their instructors, they will feel comfortable to engage in the learning environment.

All in all, the most salient quotation from a student was, "I really want to participate in the class, but I don't know how." Indeed, factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students are complex. Given the factors influencing the WTC of ESL university students from the dual perspectives of students and their professor, this study provides recommendations for future research and practice, as well as implications. The findings of the study may be a starting for future studies regarding improving the WTC of ESL university students with a concomitant increase in English proficiency.

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APPENDIX A

I want to...	For how long?	Starting When?	Find out more about the program
• Study academic English • Improve my English to get into university or college	9 or 17 weeks	January, March, June, August, October	Academic and Test Preparation (ATP)
• Take SJSU university courses • Study with American students • Experience American university life	17 weeks	January or August	Semester at SJSU (SAS)
• Improve my GMAT score • Develop English skills for MBA or other graduate business programs in the U.S.	17 weeks	January or August	MBA Preparation (MBP)
• Improve my English conversation and fluency • Learn about Silicon Valley and California culture	5 weeks	June 27 - July 29, 2016	Active Communication in English
• Apply for SJSU degree program after I meet the English requirement			Conditional Admission/Eligibility

Retrieved April 7, 2016 from http://www.sjsu.edu/igateways/programs/

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

IRBPHS - Approval Notification

To: Chi-Fang Chang
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #791
Date: 03/23/2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your research (IRB Protocol **#791**) with the project title **Exploring Factors Influencing the Willingness To Communicate among English-as-a-Second Language University Students** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **03/23/2017**.

Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
irbphs@usfca.edu
USF IRBPHS Website

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER FROM SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

SJSU IRB Registration – S17044   Inbox x

Alena Filip <alena.filip@sjsu.edu>   10:59 AM (10 hours ago)
to cchang7

Chi-Fang Chang,

This email is to inform you that your IRB application for the study "Exploring Factors Influencing the Willingness to Communicate among English-as-a-Second Language University Students" has been registered with the San Jose State University IRB and assigned an IRB tracking number: S17044. Our office has received documentation of your IRB approval from University of San Francisco. Because the appropriate IRB approval has already been obtained from your home institution no further documents are required at this time. You may proceed with collecting data at SJSU in accordance with the protocol that was approved by your institution.

If at any time a research participant at San Jose State University becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of Research immediately at (408) 924-2427. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information.

This registration is valid for the duration of your University of San Francisco IRB approval. If you plan on collecting data at SJSU beyond the date indicated on your IRB approval, an extension of the approval must be submitted to the SJSU IRB prior to the continuation of data collection.

Please keep this email for your records as evidence that your registration with the SJSU IRB has been approved by our office.

--
Alena Filip, CIP, CIPP/US, MA
Human Protections Analyst

Office of Research
San Jose State University
One Washington Square
San Jose, CA 95192-0025

Phone: 408-924-2479
Location: Administration Building - Room 223

IRB Website: http://www.sjsu.edu/research/irb/index.html
IRB Forms: http://www.sjsu.edu/research/irb/irb-forms/index.html

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Introduction

Chi-Fang (Michelle) Chang, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is conducting a study on English as Second Language (ESL) university students who are currently enrolled in an intermediate-level course at a California university. The researcher will investigate factors that influence ESL university students' willingness to communicate, specifically in speaking.

I am being asked to participate because I am currently enrolled in an intermediate-level ESL Oral Communication course at a California university. My class is selected because it fits the research interest, and my experience will be very valuable to the study. Furthermore, I am over 18 years old. My participation is voluntary. I can withdraw from the study anytime, and my withdrawal will not impact my grade.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students from the perspectives of teachers and students in California. Generally speaking, when language educators discuss WTC, they discuss the production (i.e., speaking and writing) of the language. This study will only focus on the WTC of ESL students in speaking. Furthermore, the study will explore the way ESL students' willingness to communicate is perceived by the students and by their oral communication professor. In order to develop the study, the researcher will observe my classes and will administer a one-on-one interview in the beginning of the class term and a focus group interview at the end of the class term. During the observations and interviews, the researcher will take notes. My name will not be shown in the notes. My identification will remain confidential.

Procedures to be followed

First, the researcher will sit in the back of the class to observe my classes throughout the academic term. A one-on-one interview will be conducted at the same week as the observation. The researcher will conduct focus group interviews at the end of the class term.

Observations

The researcher will perform observations in my course. During the observations, the researcher will observe my professor's teaching methods, and my reactions and participation in class.

Interviews

The researcher will invite everyone in the course she observes to participate in a one-on-one interview in the third week of the term and a focus group in the eighth week. The researcher will send out an invitation email for interviews, and I will decide whether I will be interested in participating. The one-on-one interview includes only one participant and the researcher per meeting. Each interview should take between 30-45 minutes. The focus group interview includes volunteer participants and the researcher. The focus group interview should take one hour. All questions will be semi-structured. I am welcome to skip any questions I do not feel comfortable answering.

If I agree to participate in this study, the following will happen:

1. The researcher will be present in the classroom for a minimum of eight weeks.
2. I will be observed by the researcher during the Oral Communication class.
3. I will participate in a one-on-one interview in the second week of the session and the researcher will ask me about:
    A. my previous English learning experience,
    B. my purpose to study English, and
    C. factors that influence my willingness to communicate in the class
4. I will participate in a focus group interview in the eighth week of the session and the researcher will ask me about:
    A. what I have learned in the course,
    B. my learning experiences in the Oral Communication course, and
    C. my recommendations for the course
5. I will participate in a one-on-one interview first and focus group interviews later in a conference room, a study room in the library, or other place where I feel comfortable. I will reflect on and answer the interview questions. In addition, if I agree, the interview conversations will be audio-recorded.

Potential risks and discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions in the interviews may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to

answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. All interview transcripts will be kept confidential. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

3. Because the time required for my participation in the interview may be up to 1 hour, I may become tired or bored.

Potential benefits to respondents

There will be no direct benefit to any participant in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is to understand the factors that influence ESL students' willingness to communicate in English. With this understanding, we will improve the teaching methods that will benefit ESL students' communication skill development.

Cost/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs as a result of my participation in the study.

Reimbursement

I will not be reimbursed or paid for my participation in the study.

Questions

I have talked to Chi-Fang (Michelle) Chang about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have any further questions about the study, I may e-mail her at cchang7@usfca.edu.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in the study, I should first talk to the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do so, I may contact IRBPHS, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

Consent

I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my grade and my present or future status as a student or employee at San Jose State University and at the University of San Francisco.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature	Date of Signature

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date of Signature

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PROFESSOR PARTICIPANT

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Introduction

Chi-Fang (Michelle) Chang, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is conducting a study on English as Second Language (ESL) university students who are currently enrolled in an intermediate-level course at a California university. The researcher will investigate factors that influence ESL university students' willingness to communicate, specifically in speaking. The researcher will also explore ESL instructors' knowledge and perceptions regarding communication strategies. I am being asked to participate because I currently teach in an intermediate-level ESL Oral Communication course at a California university. I have been selected because my expertise and experience fit the research interest and will be valuable to the study. Furthermore, I am over 18 years old. My participation is voluntary. I can withdraw from the study anytime, and my withdrawal will not impact my employment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors that influence the WTC of ESL university students from the perspectives of teachers and students in California. Generally speaking, when language educators discuss WTC, they discuss the production (i.e., speaking and writing) of the language. This study will only focus on the WTC of ESL students in speaking. Furthermore, the study will explore the way ESL students' willingness to communicate is perceived by the students and by their oral communication professor. In order to develop the study, the researcher will observe my classes and will administer a one-on-one interview in the beginning of the class term and a focus group interview at the end of the class term. During the observations and interviews, the researcher will take notes. My name will not be shown in the notes. My identification will remain confidential.

Procedures to be followed

First, the researcher will sit in the back of the class to observe my classes throughout the

academic term. Second, the researcher will conduct a narrative interview with me.

Observations

The program director will provide access for the researcher to do observations in one Oral Communication course at the intermediate level. During the observations, the researcher will observe the professor's teaching methods, and the students' reactions and participation in class.

Interviews

The researcher will administer one narrative interview in the eighth week of the term, and only the professor of the class participating in the study will be interviewed. The interviews will be one-on-one with only the professor participant and the researcher meeting. The interview should take between 30-45 minutes. All questions will be semi-structured. I am welcome to skip any questions I do not feel comfortable answering.

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. The researcher will be present in the classroom for a minimum eight weeks.
2. I will be observed by the researcher during the Oral Communication class.
3. I will participate in an interview in the eighth week of the session and the researcher will ask me about:
    A. my previous English learning experience,
    B. my learning and teaching experiences in the Oral Communication course,
    C. my teaching philosophy, and
4. I will participate in a narrative interview in a conference room, a study room in the library, my office, or other place where I feel comfortable. I will reflect on and answer the interview questions. In addition, if I agree, the interview conversations will be audio-recorded.

Potential risks and discomforts
1. It is possible that some of the questions in the questionnaire and the interview may make me feel uncomfortable, and I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. All interview transcripts will be kept confidential. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.
3. Because the time required for my participation in the interview may be up to 1 hour,

I may become tired or bored.

Potential benefits to respondents

There will be no direct benefit to any participant in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is to understand the factors that influence ESL students' willingness to communicate in English. With this understanding, we will improve the teaching methods that will benefit ESL students' communication skill development.

Cost/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs as a result of my participation in the study.

Reimbursement

I will not be reimbursed or paid for my participation in the study.

Questions

I have talked to Chi-Fang (Michelle) Chang about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have any further questions about the study, I may e-mail her at cchang7@usfca.edu.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in the study, I should first talk to the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do so, I may contact IRBPHS, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

Consent

I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a professor at San Jose State University and at the University of San Francisco.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature	Date of Signature

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date of Signature

APPENDIX F

PROFESSOR NARRATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewee: Professor
Title: Professor in Oral Communication course

Introduction to Interview:

Hello, Professor, thank you for agreeing to meet with me and allowing me to observe your class. As you know, I am interested in teaching oral communication in ESL. I specifically focus on students' hindrances to oral communication and willingness to communicate. I would love to ask you several questions to get your opinion on certain matters. I would also like you to look at this as a conversation. I assure you that your identity will be masked.

Interview Questions

1. Would you please introduce yourself to me? Please include your cultural background,

    and your teaching and learning experiences.

2. How many languages can you speak? Can you share your language learning

    experiences?

3. Besides SJSU, where do you teach? What are the differences between the students

    there and those at SJSU?

4. What is your philosophy of language teaching, especially in teaching oral

    communication in English?

5. How long have you worked in the ATP program at SJSU? How long have you taught this Oral Communication course? What are your areas of focus in each class and why?

6. What is your main goal for the students in this class? How did you design your syllabus to help your students reach this goal? In what ways do your beliefs about improving oral communication skills align with the goals of the ATP program?

7. Which teaching methods of English oral skills have you studied? How have these methods influenced your teaching? What teaching methods do you use? How do your teaching methods differ when you teach different skills or courses? Why do you use different methods?

8. How would you compare your experiences teaching students from the same cultural background to teaching those with different cultural backgrounds? How do you modify your teaching style to accommodate students from different cultures?

9. What have you observed about your students' willingness to use English under various circumstances? For example, have you noticed students who seem more willing to use English in certain situations and less willing in others? Please explain.

10. How do you make your students feel comfortable with speaking English?

11. What do you think about the activities and exercises in the textbook in terms of their effectiveness for the students? How effective are the activities and exercises in the textbook?

12. How did your previous teaching experience help you motivate your students in the oral communication course?

13. What would you recommend to a new teacher someone who wants to teach oral communication in an ESL program like this? (What skills would s/he need in order to be successful?)

14. Generally, what is the makeup of your students? What do you think of your students? Are they mostly extroverted? Do they study hard? Do they have a clear goal in learning English?

15. In your teaching experience, what have you noticed regarding your students' willingness to communicate? What do you think can and/or cannot motivate their willingness to communicate?

16. What are some of the biggest challenges that you face in your class?

17. In your course, what have you noticed regarding your students' willingness to communicate? What do you think you can do to motivate their WTC? What have you done to motivate their WTC that has not worked as well as you had planned?

APPENDIX G

STUDENT ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewee:
Title: Student in Oral Communication course

Introduction to Interview:
Hello, X, thank you for agreeing to meet with me and participating in this interview. As you know, I am interested in teaching oral communication in ESL. I specifically focus on students' hindrances in oral communication and willingness to communicate. I would love to ask you several questions to get your opinion on certain matters. I would also like you to look at this as a conversation.

Do you mind if I record this interview? It would help me out so that I could focus more on our conversation, instead of taking notes, but if you are not comfortable, that's okay.

Note: "X" refers to interviewee, and "I" refers to interviewer below.

Interview Questions

1. Would you please tell me about yourself? Please tell me about your English learning experiences.

2. Why did you come to the U.S.? What are your goals while studying here? How are you accomplishing these goals?

3. How long have you been here? What differences have you noticed between the American classroom and that in your country? What are the differences between learning English in your country and in the United States? How do you feel about it? Do you have oral communication experience in your country?

4. How would you describe your personality? Introverted or extroverted?

5. What English skill is the easiest/ most difficult for you? Why?

6. How would you rate your English proficiency? Fair, good, or fluent?

7. Why did you take this course? What do you want to learn/improve in this course?

8. Do you think your listening and speaking skills improved?

9. Did you take an English oral communication class last quarter? If so, what are the

   differences between the course you took last quarter and the class you are taking this

   quarter?

10. Please describe your strengths and weaknesses in the oral communication class.

11. How would you describe your feelings about participating in this oral

    communication class?

    - I don't have any intention to participate in the class.

    - I always participate in the class.

    - I sometimes participate in the class.

    - I have the intention to participate in the class, but I don't have the chance to talk.

12. What do you think may influence your feelings about participating in the class?

13. How do you think your oral participation influences your experience in the class?

14. How would you describe your opportunities to practice oral communication in this class?

15. Do you have more interests in the questions of the student presentation or the class discussion?

16. One of your class assignments (the TV and conversation journal assignment) requires you to watch a TV program and talk to other people. How did you complete this assignment? What TV program do you watch and how did you know this program? Also, generally who did you talk to for this assignment? (Please be honest, if you make up the conversation, please let me know you make up it. It's ok because some students told me they didn't talk to anyone, they made up the conversation.) Do you have any access to native English speakers?

APPENDIX H

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewee:
Title: Student in Oral Communication course

Introduction to Interview:
Hello, X, thank you for agreeing to meet with me and participating in this interview. As you know, I am interested in teaching oral communication in ESL. I specifically focus on students' hindrances in oral communication and willingness to communicate. I would love to ask you several questions to get your opinion on certain matters. I would also like you to look at this as a conversation.

Do you mind if I record this interview? It would help me out so that I could focus more on our conversation, instead of taking notes, but if you are not comfortable, that's okay. In order to help me understand the recording later, I encourage one person to talk at a time.

Note: "X" refers to interviewee, and "I" refers to interviewer below.

Interview Questions

1. Would you mind telling me what you have learned in this course?

2. Would you recommend this course to your friends? Why or why not?

3. Is this your first oral communication course?

4. What do you think would make you more likely to speak English in class? What do you think would make you more unlikely to speak English in class?

5. What activity in the course do you remember best? Why? How does this activity help your oral communication in English?

6. If there were anything you could suggest to the professor to modify her teaching to motivate you to speak more in class, what would that be? What would you want to change?

7. What changes have you noticed in your oral communication skills in English?

8. In the previous one-on-one interview, some of you shared the factors that may influence your willingness to communicate, such as your personality and other factors that you mentioned. Today, do you notice any factors that influenced your feelings about participating in classes during the class?

9. What would you recommend to your friends or classmates if they want to improve their oral communication skills?