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Adult Students' Willingness to Communicate in the ESL/EFL Language Classroom: A Literature Review

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Adult Students' Willingness to Communicate in the ESL/EFL Language Classroom:
A Literature Review

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to survey the literature on what hinders and promotes willingness to communicate in the English /Foreign language classroom. Twenty-five articles published between 2017-2022 were evaluated in this study. The review of literature concentrated on foreign language students who are studying in a higher education setting or adults who are studying English in a Literacy Center setting. Findings indicated that the student's psychological state played a major part in a student's willingness to communicate. This includes self-efficacy, anxiety, emotions, trust, and motivation. A student's involvement in the learning process determines a student's ability to communicate. Another factor that has an influence on a student's willingness to communicate is the classroom environment. This can include the Level of the students' affective filter in the class, the students' peer relationships, and the demeanor of the teacher. Other factors that impact the student's willingness to communicate is the topic of discussion, the wait time used in answering a question or having a discussion, and the relationship the teacher has with the students.

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Adult Students' Willingness to Communicate in the ESL/EFL Language Classroom: A Literature Review

Introduction

When I was in graduate school, I took the opportunity to take three Spanish classes in order to improve my language skills. In two of my classes, the teacher asked us questions, but none of my classmates responded. At times, I felt the need to respond. Other times I waited about 15 seconds before I responded in order to give my classmates time to reply to the teacher's comments or questions. I did not feel comfortable when there was complete silence. When we were asked to work in small groups, either the students spoke in English, or they remained quiet. I became very frustrated because I was interested in improving my Spanish language skills, and it appeared to me that none of the other classmates were interested in applying their knowledge of the language. When I observed ESL adult classes for my degree program, I noticed the same occurrence. The students were hesitant to respond to the teacher or to each other. A student's unwillingness to communicate fascinated me and inspired me to study this phenomenon more closely.

There are many challenges a student must face when taking an English as a second language (ESL) or English foreign language (EFL) class. Adult language learners are faced with learning the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the usage of the language in different contexts, which can be daunting. Students also need to learn how to read, write and speak the language. The ESL/EFL language classroom is dynamic, where class participation is imperative to absorb and embrace the language. A key element of learning in the second language L2 classroom is the idea that participation, either with peers or the teacher is pivotal to L2 learning (Avila, 2019).

Oral communication between a teacher and her students and with and among students is necessary to be able to use the language in a variety of contexts and to demonstrate language proficiency and address challenges. Group discussion has a crucial role to play in improving learners' fluency in a second /foreign language (Vishwanathan, 2014). Not having discussion can create difficulty in the learning process.

Classroom participation can be defined in a variety of ways. Rocca, (2010) and Dancer & Kamvounais (2005) define classroom participation as an active process of engagement consisting of preparation, group and communication skills, contribution to discussions and attendance. Fassinger (2000) describes it as any questions or comments that students offer or raise in class. Burchfield and Sappington (1999) consider classroom participation as the number of spontaneous or unsolicited responses given in class. Aslan and Sahin (2020) suggest that participation is a complicated and dynamic process influenced by several factors such as psychological, socio-cultural, and cognitive factors. Psychological factors can include anxiety, self-esteem, fear of making mistakes and willingness to participate. Socio-cultural factors include age, culture, classroom climate and teacher traits. Cognitive factors that hinder classroom participation can be influenced by the student's lack of ability to formulate thoughts, and the lack of knowledge of the material being studied.

There is solid evidence for the importance in participating in class. The more students participate in class discussions the less memorization they need to do outside of the classroom. The students will engage in higher critical thinking skills, which include interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the language (Smith, 1977). According to Fassinger (1995), both the teacher and the students see the needs and benefits of student participation. Students also believe that participation in the classroom is essential to their learning the language (Fritschner, 2000) yet

ninety percent of interactions are made by just a few students (Howard & Henney, 1998). In their study, they discovered that around one-third of the students were regular participators, while the others observed and did not participate at all. Although researchers, teachers and students recognize the importance of participation, many students choose not to participate in class discussions (Rocca, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Students are generally required to speak during class discussions in the L2 classroom. Despite being told about the importance of active participation in the classroom, students may feel reluctant to join in the conversation because they want to avoid being the odd ball when they make mistakes when they answer a question or contribute to the discussion (Albertson, 2020). Albertson also states that a clash between expectation and actual student behavior can be challenging for both the students and the teacher. Sometimes by their active participation, students may be motivated to contribute more to the discussion so that they can get a higher grade in their class rather than participating to learn the language.

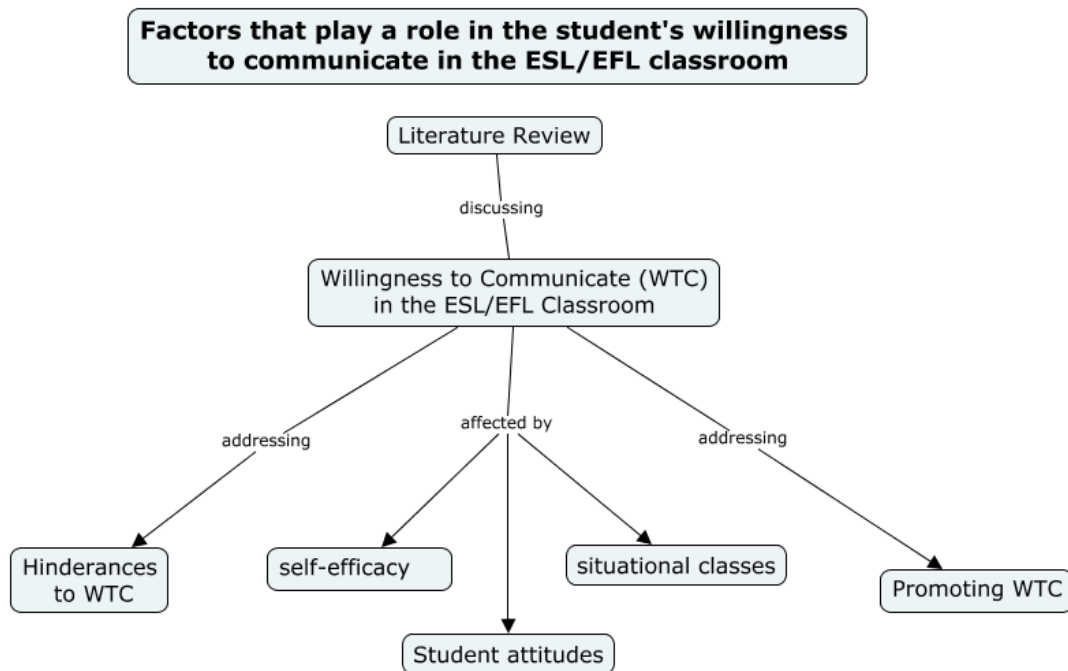
Teachers use a variety of interactional strategies to elicit answers from their students in the L2 classroom which can also lead to communication hesitance. The most common way a teacher prompts the L2 students to communicate orally is by asking individual questions in order to assess the students' learning, check comprehension and improve second language ability (Jafari, 2013) yet the student is hesitant to speak in class for a variety of reasons including class size. Nguyen (2018) discovered that students were more willing to communicate in a smaller class setting than a larger class.

Purpose of Study with Conceptual Framework

This paper presents a review of literature on different aspects of the adult students' hesitation in speaking in the target language in the classroom. This study delves deeper into what hinders and promotes willingness to communicate (WTC) in the ESL/EFL language classroom. Since WTC is such a broad topic to address, this paper focuses on the three of WTC. This includes self-efficacy, students' attitudes, and the situation classroom. Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework of the breakdown of the study. This paper discusses factors that contribute to low and high self-efficacy, students' attitudes towards others and the classroom, and the situation. A visual of the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of factors that influence willingness to communicate



The research questions addressed in this research are as follows:

1. What hinders willingness to communicate in the ESL/EFL classroom?
2. What promotes willingness to communicate in the ESL/EFL classroom?

Limitations of the study

Research done in the area of WTC is vast and wide making it difficult to hone into the specifics of what hinders and promotes WTC in the adult ESL/EFL classroom. There were ample studies conducted with the primary and secondary level students yet there were fewer studies carried out with postsecondary level students who are studying ESL/EFL.

It was also difficult to find appropriate combinations of search words to obtain the journal articles needed to conduct this study. To gain insight into areas needed for the literature I was reviewing, I read some articles about the teacher's use of wait time in elementary and secondary level given to the students in order for them to be willing to communicate. I was not able to find this information with the undergraduate and graduate level research.

As interesting as it was, most of the articles that I read were conducted from countries outside of the United States, so much of the information cannot be generalized to populations within the USA. The pedagogy for teaching EFL is different from ESL. The term "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) is used when English is taught in a country that uses another language in daily living. "English as a Second Language" (ESL) is used when English is taught in an English-speaking country, such as the USA, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand; in other words, English is used for daily living. When teaching EFL in a country outside of the United States, culturally embedded processes (Avila, 2019), teacher management practices, and the students' behaviors and attitudes (Fatima, et al., 2020) are also commonly studied.

Literature Review

In studying English as a second/foreign language, students are required to learn different aspects of language-pronunciation, grammar, syntax, morphology, and semantics. Students need to address their own psychological traits of learning which include anxiety, self-efficacy, motivation, and trust of the teacher and other students in the classroom. Finally, students need to address the pressures they feel to participate in class activities, complete teacher assignments, and achieve adequate grades in test taking and other graded activities. These factors contribute to a students' willingness to communicate (WTC) within the classroom setting.

McCroskey and Baer (1985) developed the WTC construct in the home or first language (L1), while MacIntyre and Charos (1996) applied the WTC paradigm to the learning of second language. There have been numerous studies conducted in the fields of WTC and the interrelated fields of self-efficacy and the classroom situation such as in Aslan and Sahin's (2020) study on factors affecting classroom participation. In this current study I will delve deeper into the reasons why many students waiver in their WTC. The literature review will address the following topics: WTC, student's psychological mind in learning, and the classroom situation. In addressing WTC, I will concentrate on some factors that influence or weaken students from WTC. In the student's psychological state when learning English, I will concentrate on self-efficacy, motivation, and emotions. In examining the classroom situation, the ecological approach, I will discuss classroom interactional competence and teachers' classroom practices. The focus of this study is to determine what hinders and promotes WTC. According to the graphic above, I will examine how WTC is affected by different aspects of the learning process, which include students' psychological states, attitudes and classroom situations, in regard to ESL/EFL.

Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has been defined as the intention of a student to interact with others in the target language when given the opportunity to do so (McCroskey, 1997; Oxford, 1997; & Wang et al. 2020). Studies have shown that second language WTC is created as a result of an active interplay between psychological variables--perceived opportunities and emotions-- and variables that are contextual--topic, conversational context, and interlocutors (Cao, 2009; Pattapong, 2010; & Suksawas, 2011). When students are presented with the opportunity to speak, most language learners are not eager to take part in classroom discussions (Riasati, 2018).

Katsaris (2019) states that factors that influenced language learner's WTC can include students' feelings, perceptions of the interlocutor and the characteristics of the situation. Kang (2005) found that the student's choice to speak depended on their feelings of security. If a learner spoke to someone who was not aware of his English proficiency, he tended to feel insecure. This kind of insecurity seems to originate from the student's fear of what others may think of them by making mistakes (Kang, 2005). Anxiety, perceived competence, motivation, and proficiency level can also play a factor in WTC (Hashimoto, 2002; Alemi & Pahmforoosh, 2013). This can be because the student has difficulty with grammar rules, pronunciation difficulties, and the usage of vocabulary words that would be relevant to speaking. These factors contribute to the student's anxiety when required to communicate in English (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Tanveer, 2007).

Peng (2002) states that learners' beliefs, affective factors, and classroom environment can also be factors in a student's WTC. When a student is WTC in the ESL/EFL classroom, it is

dependent upon the dynamic interaction between the personality of the student, the environmental characteristics, and the factors of the given situation (Katsaris, 2019).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a broad and an expansive term. There are areas in your life in which you have high self-efficacy, for example, riding a bicycle, and other areas that you have low self-efficacy like learning to drive a car. Self-efficacy in language learning is referred to the general belief in our capacity to succeed in learning the English language, perform tasks at a certain level, and have the ability to attain certain educational goals (Bandura, 1997, 2012; Soland & Sandilos, 2021; Kitsantas et al., 2011; Ackerman, 2020). These beliefs are the ones that shape how people think, feel, behave, and motivate themselves (Méndez & Peña, 2013). It determines what the students want to engage in, and the amount of persistence, effort, and perseverance they exhibit (Caraway et al., 2003). If English Language Learners (ELLs) have a strong perception of self-efficacy, this self-perception may reinforce their academic learning despite the challenges that may arise because of their having lower English proficiency (Soland & Sandilos 2021).

Newman and Newman (2006) and Santrock (2016) state self-efficacy in learning a language represents a sense of confidence that a student can master the language. Zimmerman (2000) found that with this self-confidence, their motivation increases, and it enhances students' efforts, activity choices, and emotional reactions to problematic situations in the classroom. Without this self-confidence, the student may find themselves struggling on tasks in class and assignments outside of class and have the possibility to give up.

Self-efficacy is concerned with task-specific performance expectations (Zimmerman, 2000), which includes their capability to develop their language skills. Unless students believe that they can achieve what they are attempting to do, they have little incentive to persevere in the

face of struggles (Bandura, 2001). The students who lack self-efficacy or have had limited success in the task they have been asked to perform in the past shy away from completing assignments and participating in class discussions, which lowers their WTC (Bandura, 1997). On the other hand, students who have high levels of self-efficacy are proactive in involving themselves in the learning process (Zhang and Cui, 2010). Soland and Sandilos (2021) state that students who have higher levels of self-efficacy increase their learning strategies (e.g. seeking help, persisting despite difficulties, and using cognitive/metacognitive skills). They may participate in tasks with the knowledge that they possess the capacity needed to be able to succeed (Méndez & Peña, 2013).

Diseth (2011) found a strong relationship between self-efficacy and learning strategies along with self-efficacy and success in the ESL/EFL language classroom. Having strategies in learning a language helps the student have a better sense of self-efficacy. Oxford (1989) defines language learning strategies as “the often-conscious steps of behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information” (p. 4). Students are likely to use strategies according to different needs, specific tasks, or context. They are more flexible, self-regulated, and appropriate in their use of learning strategies (Weinstein et al., 2011). They may also participate in tasks with the knowledge that they possess the capacity needed to be able to succeed (Méndez & Peña, 2013), which in turn increases their WTC. Learners with negative beliefs or attitudes often use fewer effective strategies to learn and speak the English language (Oxford & Nyikos, 1993).

High self-efficacy promotes willingness to communicate. Newman and Newman (2006) and Santrock (2016) state self-efficacy in learning a language represents a sense of confidence that a student can master the language. Without this belief, there is no incentive to undertake

learning and speaking English. When a student has high self-efficacy and self-confidence, their motivation increases and this enhances their efforts, persistence, and their activity choices. (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). Luangpipat, (2017) states that students who exhibit high self-efficacy put more effort in completing more challenging tasks while those who lack self-efficacy will avoid attempting to complete these tasks. It is important for students to feel that they can achieve in learning and speaking English so that they can be willing to meet the challenges that face them.

Students Attitudes

A student's attitude towards WTC in a classroom setting has a huge impact on whether a student will speak to others in the English language. Karnchanachari (2019) states that the variables that influence WTC are anxiety or security, excitement, especially when the student is interested in the topic being discussed, and a sense of responsibility. In addition, Tan, et al. (2020), adds that other factors that influence WTC are personality, motivation, self-perceived communication and the importance the student puts into learning English and the context of learning. These variables are affected by interlocutors, the conversation context and their perceptions of others who are more fluent than themselves which may influence willingness to communicate.

Maftoon and Ziafar (2013) discuss that learner's belief deals with a student's expectations, success in, commitment to, and satisfaction in learning the English language. This in turn will affect their willingness to communicate with others and the teacher. Even when a student may have a positive attitude towards learning and have a willingness to communicate in English, anxiety may hinder the students to speak. In his research with Japanese ELS learners, Maftoon and Ziafar (2013) discovered that anxiety inhibits speaking because these students are

less inclined to initiate conversation, volunteer to answer questions and ask for clarification.

Trang et al. (2013) contribute to this conversation by quoting one of his students stating

“I think anxiety about learning English exists among many students, because during English language sessions I find that many students are very quiet. They avoid looking at the blackboard or bend down, avoiding eye contact with the teacher for fear of being called on by the teacher to answer questions or to do exercises. Many students are even so trembling that when the teacher calls on them, they just hem and haw for long moments without being able to give an answer”. (p. 226)

A learners' decision to communicate may be related to their lack of competence (Cancino, 2020). In their findings, Alam et al. (2022) stated that Bangladeshi university students do not practice much with their classmates because they feel uncomfortable and embarrassed interacting with their friends due to the fact that they do not practice speaking English outside the classroom. Karnchanachari (2019) stated that one of his Thai students in his study said, “I don't feel confident speaking English to my classmates because I don't want to be mocked when I make mistakes” (p. 95). Another student stated, “I'm not good at English and I always feel very nervous when I have to use English. I usually try to memorize what I have to say for an assessment, but I would get so nervous and forget everything I want to say” (p. 97).

Another factor that plays a role in a student's WTC is the culture they come from. Karnchanachari (2019) states that culture may have a huge influence in a student's WTC. Even though students have a desire to communicate, they may not do so because of the social context, motivation, and personality. In a study conducted with East Asian countries, the students lacked autonomy. They were unwillingly to stand out from their peers by appearing to be more successful than others, or they were afraid of making mistakes and losing face (Griffiths et al.,

2014). In the Japanese culture, students consider their role in the classroom as having the attitude of obedience, displaying passivity, and exhibiting quietness (Cutrone 2009).

To summarize, hinderances to a student's WTC can include the culture they come from which encourages certain classroom behaviors. Because of this, the students carry those beliefs with them in either the same or new classroom settings. Anxiety also influences a lack of WTC. A student who does not want to lose face in front of others in the classroom will be unwilling to communicate. They also do not want to be perceived as knowing more than other students or have an air of superiority (Zhong, 2013).

Factors that promote WTC can include the student's sense of responsibility to do all they can to master the language which includes speaking in the classroom with the teacher and others in the class. Showing a sense of excitement in learning the language, and in the discussions that are engaging and are interesting to the students will increase their WTC. A student's personality may contribute to their WTC, especially if the student is an extravert.

Classroom Situation

Learning is viewed as a culturally embedded process that takes place with social interaction, where the students depend upon their repeated participation in activities with others who are competent or gaining knowledge in the language in order to succeed in language learning (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000, as cited in Avila, 2019). ESL/EFL learning depends upon pedagogical approaches, the teachers' personality, classroom ambiance, group dynamics, and peer relationships (Effiong, 2015). Other studies highlighted several affective, cognitive, socio-cultural, and other factors affecting learner participation that can be considered in creating a dynamic learning environment (Aslan & Sahin, 2020). This environment has many components to help the students succeed. Peng and Woodrow (2010) and Khajavy et al. (2016) conducted

studies on classroom context in a Chinese EFL class setting. Their conclusions indicated that the classroom environment and foreign language self-confidence were direct predictors of willingness to communicate.

Several quantitative (Khajavy et al., 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010) and qualitative (Cao, 2011, 2014; Peng, 2012) studies have taken an ecological approach to L2 WTC. In a general sense, ecology refers to the study of the relationships between the physical environment and the various organisms who live in that environment (van Lier, 2002). Learning is not attained inside the student's mind but lies in the gradual development of tools learned from within the classroom (Khajavy et al., 2016). The ecological perspective reflects on the students' cognitive processes that relate their experiences in the physical environment and the social world (Avila, 2019). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecological view investigates human development across the learning environment and the setting in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Quantitative studies conceptualized the classroom environment as student cohesiveness, task orientation, and teacher support. According to Khajavy et al., (2016) and Peng & Woodrow, (2010), these factors are a direct predictor of students' WTC. Linguistic, environmental, and individual factors affect the WTC of the students (Khajavy et al., 2018). The dynamics of the class are influenced by the context co-constructed by the perceptions of all actors involved. The language classroom represents the social environment where the teacher and students can negotiate their subjectivities as class members. (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). This means that both the teacher and the students together can determine topics of discussion along with the activities they want to participate in. Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2021) study showed that contextual variables played an important role in whether a student was willing to communicate. A student is more willing to communicate if he was emotionally engaged in the conversation and had ideas to

contribute to the conversation. A hindrance to willingness to communicate is the lack of background knowledge a student may or may not possess. When the class discussion focused on a topic that the students did not have background knowledge in, they tended to feel insecure and less willing to communicate (Kang, 2005). She also suggested that the classroom should be a place in which students feel responsible, excited, and secure. Topics of discussion should reflect the learners' life experiences, interests, and background knowledge. Students should also be able to share in the brainstorming activities when deciding the topics of discussion.

Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) refers to "teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting in learning" (Walsh, 2006, p. 158). It focuses on the ability of the students to communicate meanings and reach understanding between the speakers, whether to other students or the teacher, rather than assessing the student's accuracy or fluency. The notion of CIC focuses on the importance of the context and significance of the verbal and non-verbal interactions between the teacher and learners (Avila, 2019).

Fassinger (1995) states that teachers shape the student interaction in the classroom. Kamdideh, Z. & Barjesteh, H. (2019) revealed in their study that since teachers possess authority in teaching and authority to enhance the learning process for the students, they also have a great influence on whether the student has the willingness or non-willingness to communicate in the target language which concurs with Lee's (2020) research on the correlation between the teacher and WTC. According to Ellis (2008), "It is the teacher who is allowed to take part in all exchanges, to initiate them, to decide on the length of exchanges, to close exchanges, to include and exclude other participants" (p. 216). Yet, according to Fassinger (1995), the climate in the classroom is created by the teachers as well as the students.

A factor that is important with WTC is the compassion the teacher demonstrates towards the student. The teacher, by their actions and teaching style, can either support or hinder the students' language learning process. Teacher support refers to the teacher's help, trust, friendship, and the interest shown to students (Peng, 2010). Dorman et al. (2006) describes teachers' emotional support as the level in which teachers were understanding, positive, encouraging and interested in making friendships with their students. This support helps the students feel like their contributions matter and it gives the students incentive to try harder.

Teachers' classroom practices can influence student's intentions, behaviors, and attitudes (Katsaris, 2019). According to Arnold (2007), teachers should focus their attention on student security, so that students feel free to take learning risks in order to build a positive identity for themselves through interactions in the class. Teachers also need to be aware of the self-efficacy beliefs of their students. Huang & Chan (1996) state that teachers play an important part in a students' self-efficacy and their WTC. Fassinger (2005) suggests that building up the students' self-confidence can be the teacher's first step in promoting class participation. If ESL/EFL teachers guide their students to become more aware of their motivation, cognition, and behavior in language learning, then students can achieve more control of their outcomes and achievements (Hsieh and Kang, 2010). Shi (2018) states that teaching learning strategies is another practice that can increase the self-efficacy of the student.

A classroom practice the teacher needs to be conscious of is the wait time a student is given after a question has been asked. This is especially true with adult learners. Rowe (1974) defines wait time as the amount of time the teacher allows to pass before the student answers and the time it takes for a student to respond to a communication prompt. There are two types of wait time: 1) the time between the silence that happens after the teacher asks a question and before the

student answers the question, or 2) the time when the teacher starts talking again. The second type of wait-time begins when the student finishes speaking and ends when the teacher makes comments to what the student said. (Rowe, 1996). While the first wait-time allows students time to begin to process the questions, the second wait-time encourages them to elaborate and expand their answers (Blosser, 2000). It is crucial to give students enough wait time. Any effort to cut off silence when waiting for a response from the learner means that the oral communication process is halted, and it can cause damage to the learning process (Bao, 2020). Even though there may be learners who use silence as a cover up for not participating in class discussions or answer questions, there are other learners who use silence to process information to formulate what they are going to say in the target language they are studying. When the mind struggles with using a new language, learners need more thinking time to formulate what they want or need to say (Nijstad et al., 2010).

The students need time to formulate their responses. This entails developing their ideas and opinions, constructing the grammar appropriately, assessing their pronunciation, and making sure they use the correct semantics. Increasing the wait time was found to have positive effects for both the students, in their WTC, and the teacher's effectiveness (Blosser, 2000).

It is important for the students not to feel that they are being evaluated on their language skill all the time. Riasati (2018) states that more than 33% of those who responded to his questionnaire were moderately or unwilling to speak when they are aware that their speaking will be graded. This can hinder their WTC, lower their self-efficacy, and create a lot of anxiety. Ely (1986) says that students who display fear of negative evaluations feel that these errors may damage their image and therefore decide to stay silent and choose not to participate in activities in the ESL/EFL classroom. In his study of EFL students attending a university in Pakistan, Khan

(2015) discovered in his interviews that the students who were highly anxious felt that the classroom is a place where they were judged, their mistakes were given attention, and their grades could be affected when they took part in speaking activities.

Another hinderance to WTC is the wait time the teacher allows in the classroom. Ingram and Elliott (2016) studied the relationship between the interactional behavior between teachers and students. They determined that extending wait time can lead to array of changes in the classroom interaction. There is a fine line between too much and too little wait time. If the teacher does not give enough wait time, it can frustrate the students to not want to respond, and it hinders their WTC. Tsui (2001) investigated classroom interactions and discovered that “not giving enough wait-time for learners to process a question and formulate and answer is another reason for the lack of response from students” (p. 185). On the other hand, when the teachers used longer wait-time, they were able to decrease the amount of their talking and allow for responses from more than one student (Tobin,1987) which promotes WTC.

Factors in the classroom setting that promote WTC include the constancy in the classroom setting. Students, especially adults, who are learning a new language need the stability of the classroom environment in order to have WTC (Wang, et al., 2020). Teachers have the ability to foster WTC by showing emotional support, usually by smiling or nodding in agreement, and using confirmatory phrases that increased students’ WTC by lowering students’ apprehension (Zarrinabadi, 2014). Kamdideh & Barjesteh (2019) suggest addressing students by their first name and using non-verbal praise such as patting the student on the shoulder, which can act as ice breakers and lessen the student’s anxiety. In Sime’s (2006) study, students exhibited positive emotions from the teacher’s “relaxed body posture, abundance of gestures and eye contact and positive facial expressions” (p. 221).

Phillips's (1992) research showed that the support and encouragement from teachers helped to reduce communication fear and increase WTC. Creating a nurturing, interactional space gives students opportunities to contribute to the conversation (Sert, 2015; Walsh, 2012).

To summarize, this literature review states that hinderances to willingness to communicate include low self-efficacy. A student's lack of self-efficacy is shown by his lack of responses. The student is fearful of being judged by the teacher in the form of getting lower grades and from his classmates by their body language. ESL/EFL students who exhibit a poor attitude in learning the language will not complete assignments, participate in any discussions and will give up when assignments get too tough, which will hinder their willingness to communicate. How a student perceives the actions of his teacher can discourage him from speaking in class. This is true by the teacher's actions, emotions and body language. Unless a student feels compassion and encouragement from the teacher, he will not be willing to communicate.

On the other hand, promotions to willingness to communicate includes a student who believes in himself, has confidence in his ability to master the language and has little concern when he makes mistakes in front of the class. This student will venture out and try using the correct pronunciation and grammar while speaking. The student who is willing to communicate in the classroom will not feel the teacher or his classmates are a threat to him. His attitude is one of persevering. He will explore new strategies to master the components of the English language.

Methodology

This literature review was conducted by surveying published, peer-reviewed journal articles related to willingness to communicate (WTC) in the adult English language classroom. Twenty-five articles were selected to read from the last five years (2017-2022). Fourteen

quantitative, five mixed-methods, two qualitative, two literature reviews, one empirical and one case study were chosen. I selected the articles to meet the following criteria: to focus on English as a second/foreign language; students attending a university or a school that instructed adults; information about WTC, psychological aspects the students brings with them when trying to learn, or the classroom situation.

Key words used to search the literature were: ESL/EFL, higher education or adult students, self-efficacy, hinderances, WTC, classroom situations, reticence, or anxiety. The databases used for this study were: ERIC, Web of Science, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. The articles read comprised different design studies. Table 2 shows the summary of research articles reviewed:

Table 1

Summary of Research Articles Reviewed

Author/Year	Name of Journal	Participants	Study Design
Alam, Md R., Ansarey, D., Abdul Halim, H., Rana, Md M., Milon, Md R. & Mitu, R. K. (2022)	Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education	10 EFL Bangladeshi undergraduate students	Qualitative
Aoyama, T., & Takahashi, T. (2020)	Journal of International Students	88 ESL Japanese students studying at a university in California	Quantitative
Aslan, R. & Sahin, M. (2020)	Teflin	Seven undergraduate Turkish students in an English-medium university in an EFL context	Case Study
Avila, M.O. (2019)	International Journal of Instruction	60 female EFL learners from Tehran, Iran	Quantitative
Bao, D. (2020)	English Language Teaching Educational Journal	239 EFL Vietnamese university students	Mixed methods
Bukhari, S. F., Cheng, X., & Khan, S. A. (2015)	Journal of Education and Practices	170 EFL Pakistani undergraduate students	Quantitative
Cancino, M. (2020)	Journal of Language and Education	Four Chilean teachers and their students in an EFL classroom at an institute in Chile	Quantitative

Cave, P. N., Evans, N.W., Dewey, D. P. & Hartshorn, K. J. (2018)	ELT Journal	16 ESL students at the English Language Center at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah	Quantitative
Fatima, I., Ismail, S. A., Pathan, Z. H. & Memon, U. (2020)	International Journal of Instruction	234 Randomly selected EFL public university students in Malaysia	Quantitative
Hahn, N. T. (2020)	International Journal of Higher Education	85 English Major students at a university of foreign languages in Hanoi, Vietnam EFL	Empirical
Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., Barabadi, E. (2018)	Studies in Second Language Acquisition	1528 EFL secondary school students from 65 different classrooms in Iran	Quantitative
Kamdideh, Z., Barjesteh, H. (2019)	International Journal of Instruction	60 female EFL learners from Tehran, Iran	Quantitative
Katsaris, T. (2019)	Journal of Applied Languages and Linguistics	None	Literature Review
Lin, Y-T. (2019)	The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	701 EFL university students in Taiwan	Quantitative
Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (2021)	The Language Learning Journal	One EFL student from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland	Mixed Methods
Peng, J. E. (2019)	System	2058 Chinese EFL Students	Mixed Methods
Riasati (2018)	Cogent Education	156 Iranian EFL Language Learners	Quantitative
Sadighi, F. & Dastpak, M. (2017)	International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies	154 EFL Iranian university students	Qualitative
Saito, A. (2020)	Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics	90 EFL educational majors at a Japanese University	Quantitative
Shi, H. (2018)	Journal of International Students	198 ESL students from a university in the Southeastern region of the United States	Quantitative
Syed, H. & Kuzborska, I. (2020)	The Language Learning Journal	Six post graduate EFL students in a university classroom in Pakistan	Mixed Methods
Tan, D., Yough, M. & Wang, C. (2018)	Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education	50 Chinese ESL undergraduate students	Mixed methods
Wang, C., Tseng, W-T, Chen, Y-L, & Cheng, H-F. (2020)	Asia-Pacific Educational Resource	138 English major students at a university in the northern part of Taiwan (EFL)	Quantitative
Wei, X., & Xu, Q. (2022)	Foreign Language Annals	1007 EFL freshman college students from 8 universities in China	Quantitative
Zhang, J., Beckmann, N. Beckmann, J. F. (2018)	System	none	Literature Review

Results

The aim of this literature review was to attempt to understand willingness to communicate in the context of what hinders and promotes willingness to communicate for adult English language learners. While studying willingness to communicate, the focus areas of self-efficacy, student's attitudes in speaking in class and the classroom situation were studied.

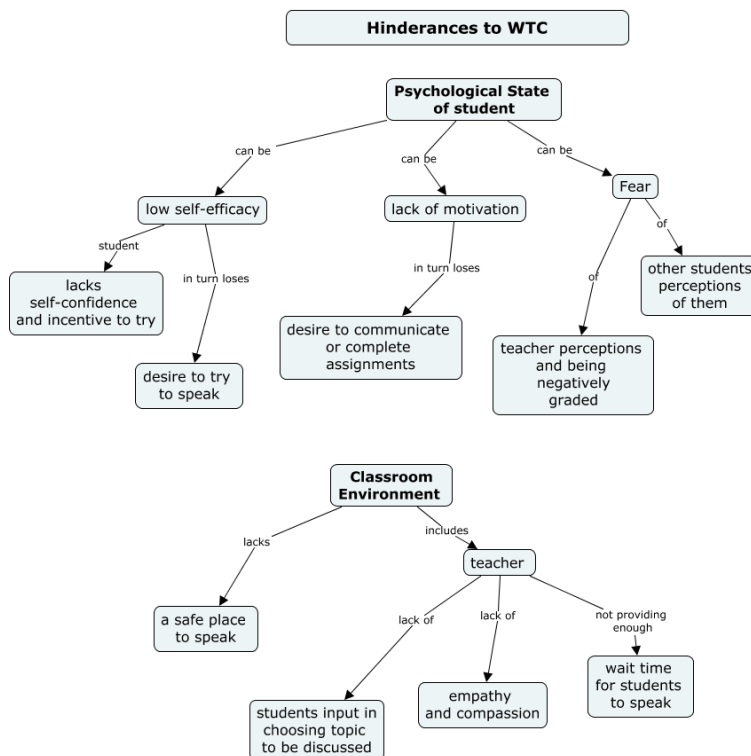
RQ1 asks "What hinders willingness to communicate in the ESL/EFL classroom?"

Aspects to self-efficacy that hinders willingness to communicate includes Mystkowaska-Wiertelak's (2021) and Kang's (2005) study on insecurity. Students choose not to speak in the English classroom because of their lack of confidence. They become concerned with how others may perceive them. Cutrone (2009) states that students are afraid of making mistakes. Luangpipat (2017), Bandura (1997), and Cancino (2020), in their research discovered that students who shy away from completing assignments fear that they are not competent enough in the English language choose not to participate in class discussions.

In the area of student attitudes, students are not willingness to communicate because of their personality, motivation and social contexts. Griffiths et al. (2014) articulates that along with trying to save face, students also do not want to stand out from their peers and appear to more successful than the other students. Alemi & Pahmforoosh (2013) and Hashimoto (2002) assert that anxiety, motivation and proficiency level has an effect on whether the student chooses to talk in class. Bandura (2001) and Luangpipat (2017) state that unless students believe that they can master the language, they do not have incentive to persevere when they find themselves struggling which lowers their willingness to communicate. Shi (2018) and Oxford & Nyikos (1993) say that learners with negative beliefs or attitudes use fewer effective strategies to learn and speak the language. Karnchanachari (2019) states that culture has a huge impact on whether

a student communicates in the classroom. Even though a student may want to communicate in class, their cultural beliefs may hinder them from communicating.

The teacher plays a significant role in whether the students are willing to communicate. Bao (2020) states that when the teacher limits the wait time in the communication exchange, the communication process is halted, and the students they may get frustrated and refuse to speak any further. On the other hand, students may use silence as a cover up for not being prepared for class, have insecurities or they lack the knowledge of the topics being discussed in class. Khan (2015) stated that students who were highly anxious felt that when they were in class they were being judged and their mistakes were given attention. Cheng & Erben (2012) and Ely (1986) affirm that when a student feels that he is being judged by the teacher and other students on their speaking abilities then they are unwilling to communicate in class. This can lower their self-efficacy and create anxiety.

Figure 2*Hinderances to willingness to communicate*

Q2 asks “What promotes willingness to communicate?”

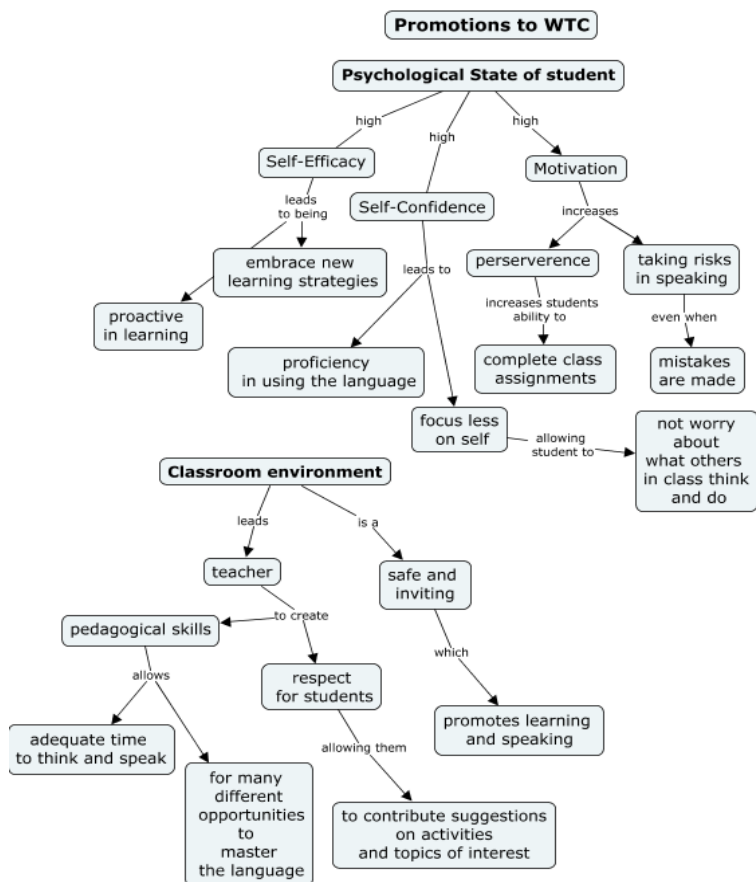
Soland and Sandilos (2021), Luangpipat (2017), and Zhang and Cui (2010) affirm the fact that a student who is willing to communicate will have a strong perception of self-efficacy and are proactive in involving themselves in the learning process even when that have low English proficiency. Zimmerman (2000) states that when a student exhibits self-confidence, their motivation increases and enhances their efforts to communicate willingly. Méndez & Peña (2013) maintains that students will participate in activities with the knowledge that they have the capacity to succeed.

In regard to students attitudes Tang et al. (2020) and Cameron (2013) articulate that factors that contribute to willingness to communicate include student's motivations, the context or learning, lack of anxiety, and a positive communication competence.

The classroom environment has a huge impact on a student's willingness to communicate. Katsaris (2019) states that the environmental characteristics, the dynamics interaction and the student's personality will determine the student's willingness to communicate. When the students know the teacher emotionally supports them by her actions, they will be more willingness to communicate (Khajavy et al., 2016 and Dorman et al., 2006). The teacher can exhibit her emotional support by her understanding, relaxed body posture, eye contact, positive facial expressions and an abundance of gestures (Peng, 2019 and Sime, 2006).

Another way a teacher can increase self-confidence in her students is by teaching them different learning strategies (Shi, 2018). Wait time the teacher gives the students has a significant influence on whether the students will be willing to communicate. Bilaloglu (2017) and Tobin (1987) concurred that when teachers used longer wait times, they decreased the amount of talking they did and allowed more time for responses from the students.

Figure 3

Promotions to Willingness to communicate

In summary, one of the main reasons students are not willing to communicate is because the perceptions that others may have of them when they make mistakes in speaking. These students are worried about saving face or being perceived as being not competent enough in their speaking abilities. Students avoid speaking because they lack the knowledge of the topic being discussed or they truly feel that they are being judged by the teacher or their classmates. When a student feels that they are being graded for each effort they make to speak, they are less inclined to make the attempts needed to speak.

Students are willing to communicate when they have a strong perception of self-efficacy. They have the confidence they need to not worry about how they are being judged. These students are motivated and will use learning strategies to improve the skills needed to learn the language and in turn increase their ability to take risks in speaking. The students who are willing to communicate feel that the teacher and their classmates are there to support their efforts when trying to speak.

Findings of study

In order for an adult to master the English language whether it is in an ESL or EFL classroom there are some components that need to be addressed in regard to willingness to communicate in the classroom setting. The results of this study address the issues of hinderances and promotions to willingness to communicate. The focus areas included aspects of self-efficacy, the student's attitudes as well as the teacher and the classroom situation.

RQ1 asks "What hinders willingness to communicate in the ESL/EFL classroom?" The research shows that low self-efficacy plays a significant role in not being willing to speak in class. Students who lack self-efficacy do not believe that they are capable of learning the language and get discouraged quickly in their attempts to learn. Because of their low self-efficacy, they do not develop strong strategies to learn the language or complete their assignments. These students shy away from speaking because they do not know how to use different aspects of the language adequately.

Students who have low or no self-efficacy have attitudes that hinder their ability to speak in class. These students lack the motivation to complete assignments because they have difficulty in doing the homework and have weak strategies to overcome difficulties. Students who struggle with self-efficacy will not persevere in their attempts to learn the language.

Because of this, these students shy away from completing tasks, which in turn discourages them from speaking. If the student does not know the material being presented, then he will not be comfortable speaking in fear that others will discover being unprepared. Students with low self-efficacy do not have confidence in themselves. When this happens, the students believe that they are being judged by the teacher or other students for their failures in speaking.

The classroom setting and the teacher play an important role in having the willingness to communicate. Signs of an ecological approach to willingness to communicate include how the students relate to one another, the students' perception of the teacher, and the pedagogical skills the teacher takes in the teaching. For example, if the teacher does not allow the students to have a voice in choosing topics they want to discuss, there will be less conversation in the classroom. The students will lack the enthusiasm needed to speak. Ignoring the importance of an ecological approach in any of these areas will hinder communication.

The teacher plays an important role in whether the students will be willing to communicate. If the students sense the teacher does not have compassion or understanding of them, then that will be a hinderance to communication. They will lack the trust needed in order to feel safe in speaking in class. Another important factor in a student's willingness to communicate is the wait time the teacher uses between them asking a question and the time the students answer. If the teacher does not allow enough time for the students to respond, the students will not be able to formulate their answers. When this happens, the students are discouraged from speaking. It will also be frustrating for the students not to have enough time to respond to an answer or a discussion the class may be having.

Q2 asks “What promotes willingness to communicate?”

Students who are willing to communicate believe in themselves. They believe that they have the capability to learn and speak the English language. They are risk takers in speaking because they worry less about what others think and more in giving an answer which may be correct or have errors. These students employ strategies in order to master the language. They are tenacious in completing the assignments and have the desire to learn all they can in order to be able to communicate.

Students who are willing to communicate have attitudes that enable them to succeed. They are highly motivated and have the personality it takes to put themselves out there. Their anxiety does not let them stop from learning but pushes them to learn and speak more. These students feel they are competent in speaking with fellow classmates and the teacher even if they are not. They are willing and excited in having the opportunity to speak when the occasion is available. Also, when students perceive that their contributions will positively affect their grades, then they are more willing to raise questions and offer comments in the target language (Fassinger, 2005).

Classrooms that promote willingness to communicate have positive group dynamics, pedagogical practices that encourages the students and reduces the fear the students may have in their attempts to speak. The teacher’s personality also determines whether the students are willing to communicate. The teacher who allows the students to choose what they want to speak about increases the students desire to communicate. When a teacher shows emotional support towards the students, the students feel that when they give input in the discussions, their contributions matter. Fassinger (2005) confirms this by stating that an emotional climate that is positive can enhance the probability of classroom participation.

As with hindrances to willingness to communicate, the wait time the teachers give the students to respond to a question or participate in discussion will determine whether the students will communicate. Giving adequate wait time to the students allows them to formulate their answer and gives them time to expand their answers. It also encourages the students to speak more and gives the teacher the opportunity to speak less.

Further Research

In the field of willingness to communicate, I found areas that needed further research including using adequate wait time when asking a question or having discussions. Little information is found in this field of working with ESL/EFL, especially with the adult population. Having suitable wait time during the communication practice enhances the opportunity to speak. Another area that can be researched is the act of speaking in the classroom. Research could be done on how much time the student speaks in class and how this can improve their willingness to communicate.

Conclusion

RQ1 asks “What hinders willingness to communicate in the ESL/EFL classroom?” Students who have low self-efficacy believe they are unable to achieve learning the English language and are hesitant to answer questions being posed and participating in classroom discussions in the target language. They tend to have a negative attitude in learning the language because they do not have the motivation to learn. They may feel inadequate in their knowledge of the material due to not completing the assignments. They exhibit weakness in using strategies to help them learn. They have high levels of anxiety. Because of this, they are concerned with saving face with classmates and teacher. The classroom is not a safe place for these students. They may feel that they are being judged when they attempt to speak because of mistakes they

make. They feel the teacher does not understand them, they cannot be trusted and are looking ways to lower their grade.

Q2 asks “What promotes willingness to communicate?” Students who exhibit high self-efficacy feel comfortable speaking in class. They have a positive attitude in their desire to learn the language and speak English. They are tenacious about completing their assignments, conceive strategies to help them study and learn. These students are motivated, and they have low levels of anxiety. They feel safe speaking in the classroom, and they worry less about what others think of them for making mistakes when they do speak. These students feel that the teacher understands them, has compassion respects their attempts to speak.

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