

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes Indonesian university student's willingness to actively engage in English language learning and their self-reported anxiety levels. The objectives of this study are to describe the willingness of Indonesian students to communicate in English, and to explain the relationship between anxiety and willingness to communicate in English. The participants of this study are 426 students of Bachelor's Degree in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS). The instruments used to gather data are questionnaire and interview. Quantitative data is analyzed using regression analysis (ANAREG) and qualitative data is analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results of the study show that their willingness to communicate in English is very low (scored 14.21 on WTC scale) while their anxiety is at moderate level (scored 39.66 on FLCAS scale). Only half of the students (51%) have low willingness to communicate in English. More than half (68%) of students indicate that their language anxiety influences their willingness to communicate in English, while 12% of them does not show that their anxiety influence their linguistic behavior. This study finds a significant relationship between language anxiety and willingness to communicate.

Keywords: *willingness to communicate, anxiety, spoken English, Indonesian University students.*

ABSTRAK

Paper ini mendeskripsikan hasil penelitian tentang kemauan mahasiswa dalam berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris dan level kecemasan mereka. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mendeskripsikan kemauan mahasiswa Indonesia berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris, mendeskripsikan hubungan antara kecemasan terhadap bahasa Inggris dan kemauan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Responden dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester satu di Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS). Ada 426 responden yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data berupa kuesioner dan wawancara. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis kuantitatif dengan analisis regresi (ANAREG) dan analisis kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemauan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris mahasiswa sangat lemah (skor 14.21 dari 100 dari skala WTC), sementara kecemasan mereka terhadap bahasa Inggris berada dalam level sedang (skor 39.66

dari 100 dari skala FLCAS). 51% mahasiswa menyatakan bahwa kemauan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris mereka lemah. 68% mahasiswa menyatakan bahwa rasa cemas terhadap bahasa Inggris mempengaruhi kemauan dalam berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris, sementara 12% mahasiswa menyatakan sebaliknya. Penelitian ini menemukan hubungan yang signifikan antara kecemasan terhadap bahasa Inggris dengan kemauan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: kemauan berbicara, rasa cemas, berbahasa Inggris, mahasiswa Indonesia.

1. Introduction

Teaching spoken English in non-English speaking countries is not easy. Teachers have to be able to arouse students' willingness to communicate in English, as it is very important for foreign language learners to be encouraged to keep speaking English during their conversations with their friends. Spoken English skills are very important for Indonesian students especially to enable them to get a job which requires undertaking an interview in English and they need spoken English ability. The spoken English skill is different from other language skills such as reading, writing and listening because in speaking, students need to interact with others. Students learn to speak the second language by "interacting" (Kayi, 2006). The ultimate goal of the teaching of spoken English is to enable students to produce language effectively (Bygate, 1987; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Hashimoto, 2002; Luciana and Aruan, 2005). MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that the objective of teaching language is to arouse a willingness to communicate in the language that students learn. In this study, the language that students learn is English. MacIntyre (1998:547) explains that:

Often, language teacher do not have capacity to create students speaking up or utilizing a L2 for L2 communication. Therefore the

ultimate goal of the learning process should be to engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate to them. A proper objective for L2 education is to create WTC.

The willingness to communicate (WTC) is very important for the foreign language learner. WTC is the learner's willingness to use the language that they learn. Their strong willingness to communicate supports their communicative ability in spoken English. Most Indonesian students have difficulties in using spoken English. It is found that confidence affects their willingness to communicate. Confidence allows students to develop what Jeffry and Peterson (1983) term "desire to communicate" (Clark, 1989). Spielberger (1983) considers 'state anxiety' to be a transient emotional reaction defined by feelings of tension and apprehension, accompanied by autonomic nervous system arousal. State anxiety varies in intensity and fluctuates over time. Anything that increases state anxiety reduces one's self-confidence and therefore one's WTC (Macintyre et al, 1998). When students have a strong willingness to communicate they tend to be able to use their spoken English to others during class activities. This could be happened when

a teacher was able to avoid the things that might create anxiety in the class.

It is believed that anxiety affect student's ability in using their spoken English skills. According to Worde (2003) anxiety can negatively influence students in their language learning experience in the class. Students' anxiety might reduce their language acquisition, and their motivation to study the language even this would affect them to use it to communicate among them in the class. Spielberger (1983) agrees and considers anything that increases state anxiety reduces self-confidence and therefore one's WTC (Macintyre et al, 1998). Similarly, a study by Young (2008) which investigated sources of anxiety over speaking in the foreign language with 135 university-level beginning Spanish students and 109 high school students. The study found that speaking in front of the class is the source of students' anxiety. In Indonesian context, it was found that some English Teachers sometimes still encountered difficulties in activating their students to speak English. Most of students seemed anxious when their teachers encouraged them to converse in English among their classmates, even though they had been studying English for six years before entering university. A proper objective for L2 education is to create willingness to communicate. In Indonesian context, students are not able to practice using their spoken English whenever they do not have strong willingness to communicate in English to others. WTC is a readiness to communicate at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2 (Macintyre et al., 1998). The literature suggests that higher

WTC among learners provide more opportunities to practice in L2 and facilitates authentic L2 usage (Macintyre et al, 2001). In addition, the desire to interact in English with specific persons and the student's level state self-confidence is the most important element of WTC (Macintyre et al., 1998).

Most Indonesian students in the study were at an intermediate level for their English ability when they entered university. This was because they had completed at least six years of English language studies before entering the university. In the private university where the current study was carried out, based on curriculum LC UMS 2006, all students had to take an English subject that focused on speaking and writing skills, worth sixteen credits within four semesters, to enable them to compete to get jobs at an international level. However, in 2009 this curriculum changed based on SK Rektor NO 088/II/2009 (<http://lpidb.ums.ac.id/>). All students are now only required to take a general English subject in particular English for Academic Purposes (EAP), worth four credits within two semesters. English one which focuses on reading, vocabulary and structure, while English two focuses on listening. As a result some students might reduce their spoken English ability since they only study English in two semesters and they cannot practice their spoken English in the classroom. The results of a student outcome survey administered at the university Language Centre found that the average score for students spoken English, according to academic discipline, was as follows:

Table 1: Students' spoken English ability in UMS 2008/2009

No	Faculty	(n)	Average score
1	School of Education (Economics study program)	184	2.98
2	School of Education (Indonesian study program)	319	2.68
3	Economic Management	124	2.45
4	Law	102	2.50
5	Civil Engineering	55	2.76
6	Geography	42	2.31
7	Psychology	168	2.55
8	Islamic Education (Tarbiyah)	56	2.79
9	Medical Education	109	3.26
10	Pharmacy	195	3.20
	Total	1354	2.79

The average score for all students spoken English in 2008/2009 was 2.79 out of a possible high score of 4.0. The best performing students were from the academic disciplines of Medical Education (3.26) and Pharmacy (3.20) while the poorest performing students were from the disciplines of Law (2.50), Economic Management (2.45) and Geography (2.31). The average score (2.79) is not considered to be very strong overall considering that the students would have completed a minimum of six years of English language studies before entering the university and had completed the full four semesters of English speaking and writing skill development. A study by Sembiring (2003) found that Indonesian students have communicative problems in actually using their English. Similarly, a study by Muamaroh (2009) also found that 84% male and 81% female university students actually perceived that they had difficulties in using their spoken English. Muamaroh concluded that it is likely that these perceptions actually reflected the student's lack of willingness to communicate in English. On the other hand, student's needed to have strong spoken English ability to compete at international level after they gra-

duated from university. WTC appears to be a significant barrier for students in achieving their English language goals. The current study explored the willingness of Indonesian university students to communicate in English. It considered the variable of anxiety as central to the problem and investigated the relationship between English language anxiety and willingness to communicate in English. This study is important most Indonesian students experience significant problems in speaking English. The study provided an original contribution to the area of enquiry about willingness to communicate and English language anxiety in an Indonesian context. The study was also provides valuable insight for English teachers in Indonesia into student behavior, and more generally provides real data about students willingness to communicate in English and English language anxiety as a basis to develop strategies that improve student's spoken English ability.

2. Research Method

The participants of the study were 426 students of the first year (freshman) of Bachelor Degree in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS) Indonesia who took the Eng-

lish course. The data obtained from participants were coded using a letter followed by a number e.g.: S1 for the student number one. Interview data was de-identified and any detail that might identify a participant was replaced by a bracketed expression to guarantee confidentiality e.g.: (student name omitted). The instruments used to gather data were questionnaires and interviews. Part 1: The survey questionnaire contained a number of closed and open items. The closed items were based on the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale developed by McCroskey (1992) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). Both scales were modified to suit the foreign language learning situation in Indonesia and to align specifically with aims of this study. All statements in the questionnaires were translated into Indonesian to avoid misinterpretation by students since all participants were Indonesian native speakers. A lecturer from the Indonesian Department in UMS checked the questionnaire and made suggestions for language clarity and understandability. The researcher made adjustments to the questionnaire based on the reviewer sugges-

tions. A Likert-type scale with five possible responses to each of the questions was used in scoring; scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). All questionnaires were distributed to students. The surveys were distributed to students in the Schools of Education, Economics, Engineering, Psychology, and Health. Completed surveys were returned to the researcher for inclusion in the research dataset ($n=426$).

The closed questionnaire was trialed before distributing it to respondents to see how well the statements in the questionnaires worked and check for accuracy and clarity. Before the survey was distributed to respondents, it was piloted on forty (40) students who were not included as respondents of this study. The results from the pilot study showed that statistic reliability for FLCAS questionnaire was 0.887 for 20 items, and WTC questionnaire was 0.848 for 25 items. The responses to the closed questions on the survey tool were scored according to a rubric and categorized into three categories: low, moderate and high scores, for both anxiety and willingness to communicate, as shown in the following Table:

Table 2. Categorization of student scores on closed survey questions

No	Items	Category		
		Low	Moderate	High
1	Students' English language anxiety	≤ 26	26 - 54	≥ 55
2	Students' willingness to communicate	≤ 33	33 - 67	≥ 68

Part 2: Semi-structured interviews. The interviews were held outside of class time. Indonesian was the language used during interview to facilitate the collection of detailed data from participants. Both the interviewer and students were native Indonesian speakers. Because of limited time, only 25 participants, from

different program studies, were interviewed. The study method was mixed methods correlational research. The questionnaire survey data were analysed using regression analysis (ANAREG). This method enables the researcher to draw conclusions about how student's English language anxiety contributes toward

their willingness to communicate in English. The data from interviews were analysed qualitatively using descriptive analysis. All data were analysed according to the student's study program discipline or faculty to ascertain whether there were difference between the groups. The researcher acknowledges that these factors needed to be controlled as potential confounders in the analysis.

3. Research Finding and Discussion

3.1. Students' willingness to communicate

Students' self-assessed perceptions about their willingness to communicate in English varied according to academic discipline as is displayed in Table 3:

Table 3: Students' Willingness to Communicate

No	Faculty/Study Program	(n)	WTC	Category
1	School of Education (Civic)	37	12.49	Low
2	School of Education (Indonesian)	46	9.98	Low
3	School of Education (English)	42	21.98	Low
4	School of Education (Mathematics)	43	9.07	Low
5	School of Education (Biology)	28	19.93	Low
6	School of Education (Pre-School)	39	15.54	Low
7	School of Education (Elementary School)	30	11.60	Low
8	School of Education (Geography)	40	12.35	Low
9	Economics (Management)	31	15.97	Low
10	Economics (Accounting)	22	17.05	Low
11	Engineering (Mechanical)	10	11.22	Low
12	Psychology	21	13.24	Low
13	Health (Physiotherapy)	37	14.32	Low
	Total / Average	N = 426	14.21	Low

The average score for the entire sample of Students' Willingness to Communicate in English was in the very low category (14.21). All students WTC is low indicating a generalized deficit in this aspect of their capacity to learn spoken English. Students from the School of Education (English Department) scored highest on the WTC scale with 21.98 among others. This finding can be accounted for as students from English Department had to practice their spoken English continuously as they are prospective English teachers in the future. It is expected that their spoken English ability is considered by them to be an important element in their educational preparation for their

future career. Students from the School of Education (Mathematics) scored lowest on the WTC scale with 9.07. These findings may reflect students' reality that they will not need to use spoken English in their future job.

3.2. Students' English language anxiety

Students perceived their English language anxiety as shown in Table 4.

The average score for the entire sample 40.73. This was classified as a moderate level of anxiety. School of Education (Mathematics) students had the highest anxiety level (49.53). This is the opposite of their WTC self-assessment – so not only are they the most

Table 4: Students' perceptions of English language anxiety

No	Faculty/Study Program	(n)	Anxiety	Category
1	School of Education (Civic)	37	39.05	Moderate
2	School of Education (Indonesian)	46	35.15	Moderate
3	School of Education (English)	42	42.79	Moderate
4	School of Education (Mathematics)	43	49.53	Moderate
5	School of Education (Biology)	28	43.71	Moderate
6	School of Education (Pre-School)	39	42.10	Moderate
7	School of Education (Elementary School)	30	43.60	Moderate
8	School of Education (Geography)	40	37.60	Moderate
9	Economics (Management)	31	41.23	Moderate
10	Economics (Accounting)	22	40.05	Moderate
11	Engineering (Mechanical)	10	27.44	Moderate
12	Psychology	21	29.71	Moderate
13	Health (Physiotherapy)	37	43.57	Moderate
	Total / Average	N = 426	39.66	Moderate

anxious group but also the least willing to communicate. The Engineering (Mechanical) had lowest English language anxiety score (27.44). This score is not very informative as the numbers of respondents for this discipline area was very small (n = 10) and no conclusion can be drawn except to say that the students who were surveyed were less anxious than other students. Psychology students also scored at the lower end of moderate (29.71). The reason for this is unknown but they, too, were less anxious with English language than other student groups.

Students' responses to the open questions on the Part 1 survey indicated their self-assessed willingness to communicate in English. Thirty-three percent (33%) of students answered that they had strong willingness to communicate in English but fifty-one percent (51%) did not, while 16% did not answer to the open questions. Of the 33% of respondents who perceived that their willingness to communicate in English as strong, the reasons they gave to support their position were that they wanted to speak to other people from other countries,

they wanted to have good spoken English ability, they wanted to get jobs easily and because they believe that English is the international language. For those who assessed their willingness to communicate in English as not strong, (51%) the reasons they gave were that they did not have enough opportunity to speak English in the class, they did not have an extensive English vocabulary, they did not have good English pronunciation, and did not master English language structure. These students indicated that one of the main reasons they felt this way was because they were not used to using spoken English in their daily conversations. They said they lacked practice of spoken English with others.

The students' comments in the open questionnaire were consistent with their comments in interviews about their willingness to communicate in English in the class. The following statements from students provide evidence of the lack of opportunity for them to practice spoken English language. The Indonesian interviews quoted in the following have been translated into English. Students commented as follows:

- S3 : *I never practice speaking English. My friends also do not want to communicate in English because they cannot speak English.*
- S4 : *English is not used in daily conversation.*
- S9 : *It may be because I seldom communicate in English in my daily conversation*
- S18 : *Because people surround me, they are used to communicating in Javanese and Indonesian.*

Other students believed that their low willingness to communicate was because they did not have mastery of English vocabulary, structure and pronunciation. The following statements reflect this problem: were stated by students in interviews.

- S7 : *I do not understand many English vocabularies*
- S17 : *I do not master English vocabulary and its grammar well*
- S5 : *Because English words are difficult to pronounce. I am confused with English pronunciation. I am also confused with English words which added by 'ing', 'ed' and so on.*
- S4 : *The English words are difficult to pronounce.*
- S15 : *I feel anxiety when I speak English then I make mistakes in vocabulary and grammar.*
- S21 : *I am afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation and this makes my friends will think that I cannot speak English.*

Some students perceived that English is a difficult subject and this made them lazy to try to communicate in English. They were confused and did not know what to talk about in English. They also felt inferior and were not confident to use English. The following student statements show these concerns. These are ve-

ry strong comments and should be valuable insights for English language teachers.

- S10 : *I am lazy learning English and I dislike English because English is difficult*
- S2 : *Because English is difficult this makes me lazy [to practice speaking English]*
- S8 : *Because I am not confidence [to communicate in English] and I am shy person*
- S1 : *I am sometimes not ready to communicate in English; I do not understand and do not know what to talk in English.*
- S11 : *Because I am not confidence to communicate in English*
- S12 : *I am very inferior to communicate in English*
- S4 : *I am afraid because I cannot speak English. I am not interested in speaking English.*

One student indicated that s/he did not have strong willingness to communicate in English because s/he will not be an English teacher in future.

- S2 : *I am not English Department student, I will not be an English teacher I will be an Indonesian teacher in the future.*

Finally, some students stated that they felt anxiety because they were afraid of making mistakes in using English and that they would be laughed at by their friends.

- S13 : *I am afraid of making mistakes in using English*
- S14 : *Because I am afraid if I speak English then I make mistakes, I will be laughed [by my friends]*
- S19 : *Because I am afraid of being laughed by my friends*
- S20 : *I am afraid of communicating in English and I am afraid being laughed by friends. I am not confidence.*

This study found that there was a significant relationship between English language anxiety and willingness to communicate (where $p = .025$). On the other hand, using simple logistic regression, it was found that there was a relationship between anxiety and willingness to communicate ($R = 0.415$). R^2 was 0.172; this means that the variable of anxiety contributed 17.2% to the willingness of students to communicate in English. Therefore to improve students' willingness to communicate can be

done by intervene students' English language anxiety. The researcher acknowledges the limitations with the statistical analysis in this study and suggests that English language anxiety was not the only variable which contributed to WTC. Gender has no effect on WTC as shown in Table 5. However, there may be other variables that influence students' Willingness to Communicate that could be explored in the future.

Table 5. Students' English language anxiety and willingness to communicate based on gender

Gender	N	Anxiety	Category	WTC	Category
Male	116	40.85	Moderate	15.45	Low
Female	310	40.96	Moderate	13.64	Low
Total / Average	N = 426	40.91	Moderate	14.55	Low

In view of gender, students' perception of their willingness to communicate in English, it was found that there was no difference between male and female students. Male students only had slightly higher Willingness to Communicate in English (15.45) than female students (13.64). Moreover, there was also no difference between female (40.96) and male students (40.85) in terms of their English language anxiety. Based on the open ended questions students were asked whether their anxiety affected their willingness to communicate in English. Sixty-eight percent (68%) students said that their anxiety influenced their willingness to communicate in English. The reasons given were that feelings of anxiety made them afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation in using English; they felt nervous if their friend did not understand their spoken English, and when they were nervous they forgot all the English words that they had known. In contrast, twelve percent (12%) of students felt that their anxiety did not influence their willingness

to communicate. The reasons they gave were that they had a strong desire to speak English fluently. They went onto explain that although they did not speak English fluently they wanted to keep trying learning English. They expressed that they were motivated to communicate in English, and that they understood their teacher's speaking in English even though, at times, that was only a little.

4. Conclusion

This study found that the first year students at an Indonesian university, who were learning English as a compulsory course, self-assessed their English language confidently. Overall, they scored a moderate rating for English language anxiety and a low rating for their willingness to communicate. Students of English Department had the highest WTC rating while a small cohort of Engineering (Mechanical) students had the lowest WTC. Students of Mathematics department had the highest ratings for English language anxiety and they

also had the lowest WTC. The findings suggest that there was a significance correlation between anxiety and willingness to communicate. Nevertheless gender difference had no significant effects to both levels of anxiety and WTC. Although this study is not exhaustive in

terms of the factors that influence English language learning for Indonesian students, the findings are important because they inform English language teachers about some barriers of English learning identified by the students.

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