

Pharmacy undergraduates' willingness to communicate (WTC) and its relationship with language learning motivation

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Abstract: This study aimed at investigating the willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Pharmacy undergraduates in various contexts. The study also aimed to see the relationship between WTC in English and the respondents' language learning motivation. The data for this study was extracted from 75 Pharmacy undergraduates who have undergone their practical sessions at selected pharmacies by using a questionnaire. The study opted for a quantitative method and the questions asked were adapted from McCroskey (1992) and Lambert's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (1987) to collect the respondents' responses. Based on the overall score, it is clear that Pharmacy undergraduates are less willing to communicate in English despite being exposed to it since primary school. However, they are keen to communicate in English on specific situations such as when they are surrounded with familiar acquaintances. Nevertheless, the Pharmacy undergraduates have a high level of language learning motivation due to the importance of the language use for their career.

Keywords: Willingness to communicate (WTC), language learning motivation, Pharmacy undergraduates, second language learning

INTRODUCTION

Malaysians are known for their ability to speak in more than one languages since it is a multicultural country comprises of three prominent races and multiple other ethnicities in Borneo. English is regarded as the country's second language and Malaysians are taught in this language

since they are young. According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), English is the primary communication medium for knowledge transfer of all education level of the country in making sure that the future generation could global communicators. Plus, according to Milosavljevic and Antic (2015), English is the basic means for communication. Universal communication relies greatly on English language skills since English is the lingua franca for people to access valuable information and resources delivered through various media including both printed and electronic. (Hermann et al., 2016; Syakur, 2017; Syakur et al., 2020). Since primary school, English language is taught as one of the compulsory subjects, up to the tertiary education in Malaysia. Hence, it is clearly seen that Malaysian students are exposed to the language since they are young. However, Ibrahim et al. (2014) discovered that most Malaysian university graduates regardless of their courses were uncomfortable using English and preferred to communicate using their native languages.

Pharmacists, as an important members of the medical team, should develop linguistic competence in order to become a successful practitioner and contribute to the optimization of health outcomes. Pharmacists convey information on drugs to the patients and they also provide advice or converse with other health practitioners about humans' health. In Pharmacy education, Pharmacy students are required to develop their consultation skills to ease the counselling process during drug dispensing. Since interpersonal communication skill is crucial in Pharmacy practice, Pharmacy students need to have the capability to interact in the second language in order to develop their versatile communication ability. According to research on communication skills training, a physician with good communication skills is more likely to improve his physician-patient relationship as well as his professional satisfaction, achievement, and confidence (Syakur et al., 2020). Therefore, in Pharmacy's curriculum, the integration of communication skill has been implemented in their teaching and learning. Students of Pharmacy are expected to possess excellent oral communication skills to interact efficiently and productively with their clients.

However, in occurrences where the undergraduates are asked to give speeches or proposed with a chance to express themselves, most Pharmacy students are not that eager to take part in classroom discussions and interaction especially if it involves English language. Most of the time, they are reluctant to give opinion or even raise their hand to ask questions to their lecturers or instructors. According to a study conducted by Khan and Azmi (2009), it was found that there is a high level of communication apprehension among Pharmacy students. In the study, there are few factors involved which are their study, race, gender, age, and year of study. Similar examples were also found in a study conducted by Majzub, Rais, and Jusoff (2010) indicated Pharmacy students had both moderate and lesser abilities in executing speaking skills even though initially they rated communication skills as the most crucial one. In a more recent study conducted by Wallman, Vaudan, and Sporrang (2013), it was revealed that there were instances where communication breakdown happened and had attributed to poor communication skills among Pharmacy students, practicing pharmacists, and patients.

There are not many researches that precisely research on the willingness to communicate (WTC) or communication apprehension in English language among medical-related students, especially Pharmacy students. Majority researches focused on looking at the school students or students of tertiary education of other courses. The present study, therefore, promotes one's comprehension of the willingness to communicate concept by making an attempt to spread willingness to speak among Pharmacy undergraduates in the English language in different contexts as well as to see whether there is a correlation between their willingness to speak and their English language learning motivation.

This study will therefore try to achieve these research objectives:

1. To investigate whether Pharmacy undergraduates are willing to communicate (WTC) in English during English lessons.
2. To explore whether Pharmacy undergraduates are willing to communicate (WTC) in English outside English lessons.
3. To find out the relationship between Pharmacy undergraduates' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their language learning motivation.

The research questions of this study would be:

1. How willing are the Pharmacy undergraduates to communicate in English during English lessons?
2. How willing are the Pharmacy undergraduates to communicate in English outside English lessons?
3. What is the relationship between Pharmacy undergraduates' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their language learning motivation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Willingness to communicate among ESL students

In tertiary education, students have more freedom in providing reactions or responses to their teacher and it could happen either through discussion, presentation, or in-class speeches. However, according to Karas et al. (2016), being actively involved in open class discussion can be a difficult and daunting task for many students and hence this proved that many students prefer to learn silently and have various creative ways to enhance language acquisition without speaking (Bao, 2014)

In normal English communicative classrooms, teachers expect students to respond willingly in the classroom. This is to accentuate their communication skills outside of their classroom or outside of their learning context. When students are hesitant to speak in the language despite being surrounded in it, they will not be able to progress as they are against the notion of willingness to communicate (WTC), which is actually the intention and desire to initiate communication, as it plays a key role in learning a second or foreign language (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998).

As reported by Soo and Goh (2017), the phenomenon of student reticence has continuously been reported and has become the focus of classroom based research from different angles and perspectives. Thus, it is generally believed that reticence in speaking activities inhibits learners from making improvements in their speaking capability and hence arriving at the outcomes of the language course purports to achieve.

Willingness to Communicate among Pharmacy Undergraduates

Though there are quite a number of researches have been conducted to look into the willingness to communicate (WTC) among EFL and ESL students, not much consideration are given to

students who are learning medical or health sciences courses that may need to communicate in the language with their respective surroundings in their specific settings. It may seem trivial, but effective communication plays an essential role in the delivery of health services.

In a document review done by Marcos et al. (2017), it was found that less concern was given to the role of performance and corrective feedback in shaping communication behavior of pharmacists. The majority of studies failed to describe the competencies and skills being investigated in relation to communication in the practice of Pharmacy. Even so, in a comparative research between pharmacist and Pharmacy students conducted by Majzub et al. (2010), it was found that Pharmacy students were perceived of having both moderate and lesser abilities in executing English language skills while practicing pharmacists indicated that they have greater abilities to practice communication skills in their daily professional lives.

These issues that exists among Pharmacy students are influenced by various reasons. According to Ibrahim et al. (2014), it is reported that English language proficiency among Pharmacy students is affected by lack of confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions in English as well as lack of time in attending extra classes.

METHODOLOGY

This research gathers its participation from 75 Pharmacy undergraduates. The students are already exposed to their clinical practice. 35 of the respondents were male while the remaining are female students. Their second language (L2) is English and the medium of instruction in Pharmacy courses is English. The data were collected twice since initial distribution of questionnaires only reached to 37 Pharmacy students. These undergraduates were selected based on their experience undertaking their clinical practical in the respective pharmacies and hospitals. To avoid choosing samples who do not experience any public clinical experience, the researcher decided to choose only students who are in their final year of study. They were more likely to have experiences speaking in English more with the public than other students and their experience of being exposed to the environment is longer as compared to the junior students.

The research design for this study is quantitative where the instrument used is a closed-ended questionnaire and was revised from McCroskey (1992), Cao and Philp (2006), and Lisa (2006). The other part of the questionnaire was adapted from Gardner Lambert's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (1987). There are two parts in the questionnaire with one preliminary part that has one demographic item which is gender. The first part (Part B) of the survey comprises of 25 instruments regarding willingness to communication (WTC). There are four constructs in the first part of the questionnaire mainly of communication namely (a) group discussions, (b) interpersonal, (c) public speaking, and (d) talking in the classrooms. The scale was designed as a direct measure of the respondents' responses whether they want to speak or avoid the beginning of communication.

The items included in Part B aimed to measure willingness to communication (WTC) among the respondents while the items in Part C is filled with items to measure the respondents' learning motivation towards English language. Out of the overall 20 items in Part B, 8 items are used as distractors that will divert the respondents from the scored items. Items that falls under group discussions are items 8, 15, and 19. For speaking in the classrooms, the items are numbered 6, 11, and 17. For interpersonal, the items are number 4, 9, and 12 and lastly for public speaking, the items are numbered 3, 14, and 20. To answer Part B, the respondents need to rate themselves

from 0-100 score of their willingness to response or communicate in the situation derived from the sub-constructs mentioned. The score the students rating themselves ranges from 80 to 100 for each items in the questionnaires shows that they are willing to interact in the specific situation stated in the questionnaire while the score between 10 to 30 shows their reluctant with 0 scores shows total reluctant.

After that, the data were then calculated and divided based on its overall mean scores. All these 12 items scores will decide the respondents' degree of willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language. Part C is filled with 18 questions or items that were adapted from Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery and adjusted to suit the respondents since the original one is related to French. The categories included in the items are attitudes towards learning English, integrative, motivation, and language orientation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Questionnaire

Following McCroskey (2013), there are predetermined scores that will determine the norm score for each construct of the survey. If the respondents overall score is more than 82, it indicated that they have high overall willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language while scores of lower than 52 indicated low overall willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language. For group discussion, scores of higher than 89 shows high WTC while lower than 57 shows low WTC. Scores more than 94 indicates high WTC in interpersonal constructs while less than 64 shows low WTC. The constructs in Public Speaking and talking in the classrooms also have their own norm scores. The norm scores and current study scores are tabulated in Table 1.

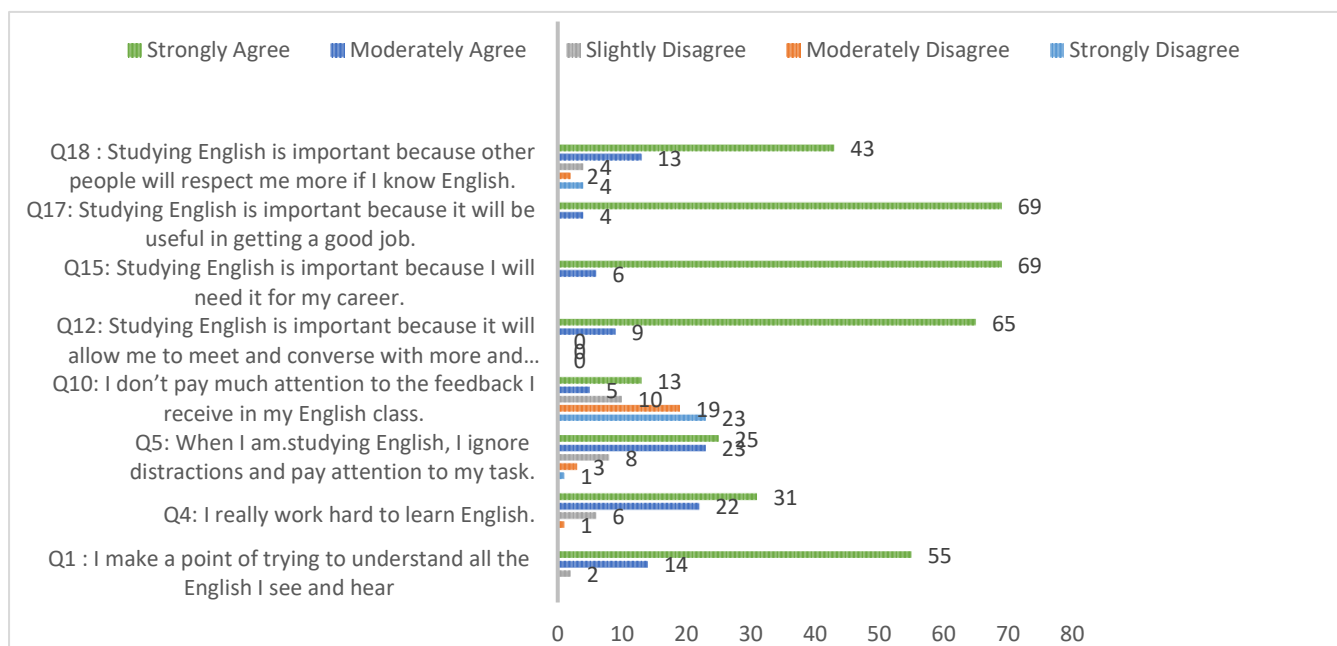
Table 1: Scores of four constructs of willingness to communicate (WTC)

Sub constructs	Current study		Norm score	
	N	Mean	High	Low
Overall WTC	75	63.95	>82	<52
Group discussion	75	73.08	>89	<57
Interpersonal	75	80.34	>94	<64
Public Speaking	75	56.72	>78	<22
Talking in classrooms	75	45.67	>80	<39

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the overall willingness to communicate scores among Pharmacy undergraduates is higher (M=63.95) as compared to the average norm set provided by McCroskey. The norm score of overall willingness to communicate (WTC) as provided by McCroskey (1992) is between 53 to 82. Since the mean score is slightly higher than the average norm score, it could probably show that the constructs provided to the Pharmacy undergraduates willingness to communicate (WTC) are not related to each other. For example, the mean score for interpersonal construct (M=80.34) is higher than the remaining sub constructs even though they may sound and look related to each other in the questionnaire. The responses gathered also could be affected by other factors as well such as their confidence level and their motivation in developing and enhancing their language ability.

Moreover, the current study also revealed that the Pharmacy undergraduates were reasonably high in the scores they gained when they were asked if they are competent and comfortable to speak English in a group interaction (M = 73.08). In group discussions, students are more willing to communicate as they probably speak and communicate with people they know, or of the topics that they are familiar with. Meanwhile, based on the findings, it can be seen that the Pharmacy undergraduates are less willing to speak English in the public (M=56.72) or in the classrooms (M=45.67). Speaking in the classrooms received the lowest score as compared to the other three sub constructs. This shows that Pharmacy students are almost reluctant to speak in English in the classrooms as compared to the other contexts or places.

Figure 1: Language learning motivation among Pharmacy undergraduates



Based on Figure 1, it was revealed that even though Pharmacy students have lower willingness to speak in the English language, they are actually having high motivation in learning English language. Most students tend to focus and understand the language aspects they learned in their English language classrooms. This probably because they realized the importance of learning the language and how it impacts their future life. Majority of the students consisting 92% (N=69), as portrayed in item no. 15 and 17 realized that the English language is important for their career since they know that their career deals with people from different backgrounds. This statement is reinforced by the data in item number 4 and item number 18. More than half of the students (N=55) with the percentage of 73.3% (item 1) would make a point trying to fathom all the English words they see and hear.

The importance of acquiring the language is important especially in the field of medical like Pharmacy. Most instructions and labels of the medications that they need to encounter later are usually in English language hence the motivation they have in learning the language. Besides that, as seen for item number 5, almost three quarter of Pharmacy undergraduates (N=48) ignore distractions and still pay attention (63.7%) when they have difficulties in learning the language. Plus, for item number 10, more than half of the respondents (55.8%, N=42) pay attention to the

feedback they received in their English language classes. For item number 12, almost all students agree (98.7%, N=74) that studying English is important because it will allow them to encounter and talk with diverse people. The students realized that being able to communicate in English language will widen their horizon and help them to improve their life.

Table 2: Correlation between willingness to communicate (WTC) and language learning motivation

		<i>Motivation</i>	<i>WTC</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.23**
	Sig (Two tailed)		.006
	N	75	75
<i>Willingness to Communicate (WTC)</i>	Pearson Correlation	.23**	1
	Sig (Two tailed)	.006	
	N	75	75

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

A Pearson Correlation was conducted to investigate whether there is any relationship between willingness to communicate (WTC) among Pharmacy undergraduates and their English language learning motivation. Table 2 reveals that there is an affirmative correlation ($r=.23$) between the respondents' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their language learning motivation. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level. From this table, it can be concluded that as the motivation increases, the willingness to communicate also rises.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings gathered from the research, it can be concluded that overall, the Pharmacy undergraduates are actually willing to communicate in English. However, they are more prone in speaking in the classroom as compared to the other context of communication in public. They are also ready to speak with people that they are accustomed with as compared to strangers in any situation. This results proved the study conducted by Cao (2009) that mentioned students tend to participate more actively during classrooms activities and discussions. Even though the respondents of this study have been to the practical sessions such as consultations and drug dispensing in hospitals and pharmacies, they seemed to be more comfortable speaking in English during language lessons instead of speaking with the public. This is coherent with the study conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2014) that mentioned graduates especially the Malay students usually prefer to converse in their native language.

However, it is important to note that the respondents of this study have a higher level of motivation in learning the language in their classrooms. Most respondents of this study also agreed that speaking English allows them to be at ease, or make them feel comfortable speaking with other English speakers. Hence generally, it can be seen that the students are aware of the importance of the language despite the irony of their unwillingness to communicate in the language in the public. To a certain extent, it could be said that there is a correlation between willingness to communicate in English with the respondents' language learning motivation.

The results of this study highly recommend that greater concern should be given to other factors that may influence willingness to communicate (WTC) among Pharmacy undergraduates. Future research should consider to conduct a study to understand if there are diversity in the factors that may improve or hinder WTC among the same type of respondents.

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