

VARIABLES AFFECTING WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN
ENGLISH AMONG VIETNAMESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

NGUYEN MANH HOAI

A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March, 2016

ABSTRACT

Seeking opportunities to communicate greatly increases the chances for intercultural contact, as well as L2 communication practice with comprehensible input when learning a second or foreign language. The communicative language teaching approach has focused on students' individual differences as English learners and users while highly emphasizing the importance of communicative language teaching for the development of students' communication competence in the classroom. However, despite the emphasis on communication and the view broadly accepted both by educators and learners that L2 learners need practice speaking so that they can communicate, students in the Vietnamese context appear to choose to remain silent when there are opportunities to use English. It needs to be examined if learners would communicate in English when they had chances, and what factors would affect their willingness to communicate. The present study was conducted at three colleges in Vietnam. The study attempted to examine Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions of willingness to communicate (WTC) in English and other individual variables related to English communication and to investigate the relationships among these English learning and communication variables. The study used a design that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. Questionnaires were first collected from 500 undergraduate students. Then, interviews were conducted with 20 students who had already answered the questionnaires. Structural equation model (SEM) analysis was used to examine the relationships among WTC in English, Self-perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) and Communication Apprehension (CA), Motivation, Attitudes, and Personality. Qualitative interviews were conducted to extend and elaborate on the quantitative results. The results showed that students had low WTC, low SPCC, moderate CA, moderate motivation, somewhat negative attitudes, and moderate personality in terms of introversion-extraversion personality traits. The path model proposed in the present study showed that the

variables that directly influenced WTC in English were Self-perceived Communication Competence (SPCC), Motivation, Attitudes, and Personality. Generally, the model suggested in the present study provided support to Gardner's SLA model and MacIntyre et al.'s heuristic model. Based on these findings, pedagogical implications for English teaching and learning were suggested to increase willingness to communicate.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised / read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

.....

Dr Jonathan Russell White

Supervisor

.....

.....

External Examiner 1

External Examiner 2

.....

.....

Internal Examiner 1

Chairman, Examination Committee

This thesis was submitted to Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

.....

.....

Dean, School of Education

Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

Name of Candidate: Nguyen Manh Hoai

Signature of Candidate: ManhHoai

Date: 15/3/2016

SAMPLE E: COPYRIGHT PAGE

Copyright by Asia e University

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jonathan Russell White for his intellectual and emotional support during my academic journey. I would like to thank him for inspiring and encouraging me to grow academically during my doctoral study at AeU. My special thanks go to all my dissertation committee members, Professor Siow Heng Loke, Associate Professor Dr Raja Mohamed Fauzi, Dr Choong Kam Foon for their support, suggestions, insightfull comments on my research proposal.

I also greatly appreciate the assistance from the school of graduate studies and students at Lam Dong College of Techniques and Economics, Lam Dong College of Medicine and Dalat Teacher's Training College. It would have been difficult to conduct this study without their willingness and precious help throughout the data collection process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
APPROVAL PAGE	iv
DECLARATION PAGE	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER	
1.0 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Significant of the Study	6
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Willingness to Communicate (WTC)	7
2.2 WTC Studies in L2 Contexts	10
2.3 WTC Studies in Asian EFL Contexts	16
2.4 Learning styles in Asian countries including Vietnam	21
2.5 Individual Difference Variables as Predictors of WTC	21
2.5.1 Self-perceived Communication Competence	22
2.5.2 Communication Apprehension	24
2.5.3 Motivation	30
2.5.4 Attitudes	33
2.5.5 Personality	35
2.6 Willingness to Communicate in English and Technology	40
2.7 The use of Technology in Colleges in Vietnam	41

3.0	METHODOLOGY	43
3.1	Research Design	43
3.2	Research Questions	43
3.3	Theoretical Framework	44
3.4	Conceptual Framework	45
3.5	Research Site	45
3.6	Participants	46
3.7	Participants' Background Information	46
3.8	Interview Participants	54
3.9	Data Collection	55
3.10	Instruments	56
	3.10.1 Student Background Information Questionnaire	56
	3.10.2 Willingness to Communicate in English Questionnaire	56
	3.10.3 Self-perceived Communication Competence in English Questionnaire	57
	3.10.4 Communication Apprehension Questionnaire	57
	3.10.5 Motivation Questionnaire	57
	3.10.6 Attitudes Questionnaire	58
	3.10.7 Personality Questionnaire	59
3.11	Interviews	59
3.12	Quantitative Data Collection	60
3.13	Qualitative Data Collection	61
3.14	Data Analysis	62
3.15	Reliability	63
3.16	Limitation	63
3.17	Pilot study	64
4.0	RESULTS	65
4.1	Results for the Primary Research Question	65
	4.1.1 Quantitative Results	65
	4.1.1.1 Willingness to Communicate in English	65
	4.1.1.2 Self-perceived Communication Competence	71
	4.1.1.3 Communication Apprehension	73
	4.1.1.4 Motivation	74
	4.1.1.5 Attitudes	79

4.1.1.6	Personality	81
4.1.2	Qualitative Results	82
4.1.2.1	English Learning Experiences	83
4.1.2.2	Awareness of the Environment for Learning English	85
4.1.2.3	Communication in English among intracultural group members and intercultural group members	87
4.1.2.4	Unnatural Communication with those who Sharing the Same L1	87
4.1.2.5	Concern for Precision and Formal Rules of English	88
4.1.2.6	High-proficient Students' Concerns	90
4.1.2.7	Preference for Intracultural Communication	90
4.1.2.8	Effects of Context Types on Willingness to Communicate in English	91
4.1.2.9	Effects of Receiver Types on Willingness to Communicate in English	94
4.1.2.10	Self-perceived Communication Confidence in English	95
4.1.2.11	Perspectives of English Learning	95
4.1.2.12	Confidence and Insufficient English-Speaking Abilities	96
4.1.2.13	CA related to Fear of Negative Evaluation/Fear of Losing Face in Front of Others	97
4.1.2.14	CA related to Previous Negative Experiences	97
4.1.2.15	CA in Group Discussion and Presentations	98
4.1.2.16	CA related to Lack of Appropriate Preparation	99
4.1.2.17	CA related to Competitiveness and Peer Comparisons	100
4.1.2.18	CA related to Interlocutor types	100
4.1.2.19	Motivation	101
4.1.2.20	Attitudes	103
4.1.2.21	Personality	105
4.2	Results of the Secondary Questions	106

4.2.1	Research Question One: Differences in Individual Difference Variables by WTC Levels	106
4.2.2	Research Question Two: Differences in SPCC among the three WTC Groups	107
4.2.3	Research Question Three: Differences in CA among the three WTC Groups	109
4.2.4	Research Question Four: Differences in Motivation among the three WTC Groups	111
4.2.5	Differences in Attitudes among the three WTC Groups	113
4.2.6	Differences in Personality among the three WTC Groups	115
4.2.7	Ethnicity Differences	117
4.2.7.1	WTC by Ethnicity	117
4.2.7.2	Self-perceived Communication Competence by Ethnicity	119
4.2.7.3	Motivation by Ethnicity	121
4.2.7.4	Attitudes by Ethnicity	122
4.2.7.5	Personality by Ethnicity	124
4.2.8	Dialect Accent Differences	124
4.2.8.1	WTC by Standard Accent vs. Non-Standard Accent Groups	126
4.2.8.2	Correlation Analysis and Predictors of WTC	128
4.2.8.3	Predictors of WTC	129
4.2.8.3.1	Predictors of Majority group's WTC	131
4.2.8.3.2	Predictors of Minority group's WTC	132
4.2.8.3.3	Predictors of WTC by Dialect Accents	134
4.2.9	Structural Equation Model	141
5.0	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS	146
5.1	Summary	146
5.1.1	Primary Research Question	146
5.1.1.1	Willingness to Communicate in English	147
5.1.1.2	Self-confidence in L2 Communication	152

5.1.1.3	Motivation	160
5.1.1.4	Attitudes	162
5.1.1.5	Personality	163
5.1.2	Secondary Research Question	164
5.1.2.1	Research Question One	164
5.1.2.2	Research Question Two	165
5.1.2.3	Research Question Three	166
5.1.2.3.1	Predictors of WTC	166
5.1.2.3.2	Predictors of Majority group's WTC	167
5.1.2.3.3	Predictors of Minority group's WTC	168
5.1.2.3.4	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Minority group's WTC	168
5.1.2.3.5	Predictors of WTC by Dialect	168
5.1.2.3.6	The Stepwise Regression Analysis for the Hue-Nghe Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	169
5.1.2.3.7	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of the Hue-Nghe Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	169
5.1.2.3.8	The Stepwise Regression Analysis for the Mien Trung Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	170
5.1.2.3.9	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of the Mien Trung Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	170
5.1.2.3.10	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of the Tay Nguyen Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	170
5.1.2.3.11	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of the Tay Nguyen Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	171
5.1.2.3.12	The Stepwise Regression Analysis for the Mien Nam Non-standard Accent	

	Group's WTC	171
5.1.2.3.13	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of the Mien Nam Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	171
5.2	Conclusion	172
5.3	Pedagogical Implications	176
5.4	Limitations of the Study	186
	References	188
	Appendix A	200
	Appendix B	202
	Appendix C	204
	Appendix D	206
	Appendix E	207
	Appendix F	208
	Appendix G	209
	Appendix H	210
	Appendix I	212
	Appendix J	215
	Appendix K	218
	Appendix L	220
	Appendix M	222
	Appendix N	224
	Appendix O	226
	Appendix P	228
	Appendix Q	230
	Appendix R	231
	Appendix S	232

Appendix T	233
Appendix U	234
Appendix V	235
Appendix W	236
Appendix X	237
Appendix Y	238
Appendix Z	239
Appendix A1	240
Appendix A2	241

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1	Total Participants by Major and Gender	46
2	Year in School and Gender of the Participants	47
3	Ethnicity Group and Gender of the Participants	48
4	Dialect Accent and Gender of the Participants	48
5	Participants' Self-Reported English Proficiency	49
6	English Study Experiences outside of the Classroom	50
7	English Communication Frequencies per Week	50
8	People and things affecting ways of learning English	51
9	Hours per week for learning English outside of the classroom	51
10	Passiveness and timidity when communicating with others	52
11	People and things affecting passiveness and timidity when communicating with others	53
12	Activeness and creativeness when communicating with others in English	53
13	Interview Participants' Background	54
14	Participants' Willingness to Communicate in English	65
15	WTC Subscores on Receiver Type Measures	67
16	WTC Subscores on Context Type Measures	68

17	Means and Levels for WTC Subscores and Total Scores on Measures	69
18	Dispersion of the Participants' WTC Levels by Context Types	70
19	Dispersion of the Participants' WTC Levels by Receiver Types	70
20	Participants' Self-perceived Communication Competence in English	71
21	SPCC Subscores on Context Type Measures	71
22	SPCC Subscores on Receiver Type Measures	72
23	Participants' Communication Apprehension in English	73
24	CA Subscores on Context Type Measures	73
25	Motivation Intensity	75
26	Attitude toward Learning English	76
27	Desire to Learn English	77
28	Interest in Foreign Languages	79
29	Attitude toward Native English Speakers	80
30	Integrative Orientation	80
31	Introversion-extraversion Personality	81
32	Self-perceived Communication Competence by WTC Levels	107
33	Differences in CA among the three WTC Groups	110
34	Differences in Motivation among the three WTC Groups	111
35	Differences in Attitudes among the three WTC Groups	113
36	Differences in Personality among the three WTC Groups	115
37	WTC by Ethnicity	117
38	Self-perceived Communication Competence by Ethnicity	119
39	Communication Apprehension by Ethnicity	120
40	Motivation by Ethnicity	121
41	Attitudes by Ethnicity	123
42	Personality by Ethnicity	124
43	Individual Difference Factors by Standard Accent vs. Non-Standard	

	Accent Groups	125
44	WTC by Standard Accent vs. Non-Standard Accent Groups	126
45	Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix	128
46	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for WTC	129
47	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of WTC	130
48	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Majority group's WTC	131
49	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Majority group's WTC	132
50	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Minority group's WTC	133
51	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Minority group's WTC	133
52	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Standard Accent Group's WTC	134
53	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Standard Accent Group's WTC	134
54	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Hue-Nghe Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	135
55	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Hue-Nghe Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	136
56	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Mien Trung Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	137
57	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Mien Trung Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	138
58	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Tay Nguyen Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	139
59	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Tay Nguyen Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	139
60	Summary of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Mien Nam Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	140
61	Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Mien Nam	

	Non-standard Accent Group's WTC	140
62	Means of WTC Subscales by Countries	147
63	Means of SPCC Subscales by Countries	153
64	Means of CA Subscales by Countries	154

List of Figures

Figure

1	MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) Model of L2 WTC	13
2	The Causal Model of SLA (Gardner et al., 1997)	13
3	The Pyramid Model of WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998)	15
4	L2 Communication Model in Japanese Context (Yashima, 2002)	18
5	The Model of L2 Communication (Hashimoto, 2002)	19
6	L2 Communication Model in the Korean EFL Context (Kim, 2004)	20
7	SEM Results of the Proposed WTC Model	142
8	SEM Results of the Modified WTC Model with Standardized Estimates	143

List of of Abbreviations

AEL	Attitude toward English Learning
ANES	Attitudes toward Native English Speakers
CA	Comprehension Apprehension
D	Dialect
E	Ethnicity
CMC	Computer-mediated Communication
DC	Desire to Communicate
DLE	Desire to Learn English
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
IFL	Interest in Foreign Language
IO	Integrative Orientation
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MI	Motivation Intensity
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
SEM	Structural Equation Model
SPCC	Self-perceived Communication Competence
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the world of globalization, the need to speak English has become a crucial issue in Southeast Asian countries and educators have given communication skills top priority. In a Vietnamese context now, social, economic, and educational success is increasingly associated with English to a greater extent. Schools and teachers have been pressured to implement communicative language teaching. Although Vietnamese learners of English see the benefits of learning English, they are still labeled as reticent learners lacking the intention to initiate communication in English when they are given the opportunity. It is obvious that their willingness to engage in communication using English relates to various individual difference factors. The main purpose of this study is to investigate Vietnamese college students' awareness of willingness to communicate (WTC) in English and variables influencing individual differences among language learners such as self-perceived communication competence in English, communication apprehension, English learning motivation, attitudes toward the international community, and personality traits. The study also aims to investigate the relationships among these communication variables.

Chapter one presents the background of the study, study purpose, problem statement, research questions, and the significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Countries in Southeast Asia have very different histories and experiences with colonialism and colonial languages. For this reason, the roles of English in different countries

are diverse. Those themes are colonial and postcolonial history, economic development, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and access to education (Richard F. Young 2008).

The status of English in Southeast Asia can be classified into two groups: as a second language and as a foreign language. The former consists of countries that were once colonies or protectorates of an English-speaking power (Britain in the case of Malaysia, and Singapore; the US in the case of the Philippines); and the latter contains some countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam (McArthur, 1998).

The history of Vietnam, as (Branigin, 1994) puts it, is “a saga of recurrent strife, turmoil, invasion, occupation and hardship”. For a long time, Vietnam did not possess its own language. Foreign interventions and the subsequent use of foreign languages as the national or official language overwhelmed most of the nation’s 4000-year history. The Vietnamese not only desired and fought to find a language for themselves, but also knew how to adorn and use those foreign languages for national development. Particularly in the twentieth century, the nearly simultaneous, direct involvements in Vietnam of such powers as China, France, Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States exerted various profound influences on language attitudes, language change, and language choice and use. These influences indeed helped shape Vietnam’s foreign language education policy.

During the years of the Vietnam War (1954-1975), Vietnam was divided into two parts - the communist North and the capitalist South. Foreign language education policy, thus, followed different patterns. Russian and Chinese were promoted by the North and English and French were emphasized by the South as the main foreign languages to be taught as required subjects in secondary and post-secondary education. The dominance of Russian as the main foreign language, and the decline of English as well as other languages in the educational system were marked by national reunification and the subsequent change in the political and economic system in 1975. Such a foreign language policy certainly reflected a desire to expand

relations among the countries of the communist bloc. Such a policy, however, limited communication and cooperation with the rest of the world, first of all with those developing nations in Southeast Asia such as Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, which had a pace and type of development similar to that of then South Vietnam (Do, 1993).

In 1986, Vietnam's open-door policy, *doi moi*, came into existence as a departure from obsolete dogmatism. For the first time, the central government realized that mismanagement in government policies and their implementation was the most crucial reason for economic failure, poverty and backwardness. The country witnessed a new change at the top of central power and an attempt to abolish bureaucratic centralization (Vietnamese Communist Party, 1991; World Press Review, 1988). In diplomatic relations, cooperation between Vietnam with every nation regardless of political differences became necessary. Furthermore, a free, market-oriented economy was put in force. All this helped to attract a large number of English-speaking visitors to Vietnam as business people and tourists. This situation was in contrast to the past when the majority of foreigners were from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Denham, 1992).

The reemergence of English as the language for broader communication and cooperation has been forced by social demands. English has thus regained its role as the main foreign language taught and used in Vietnam (Alter and Moreau, 1995; Shapiro, 1995; Wilson, 1993a, b). Consequently thousands of Vietnamese Russian language teachers had to change jobs because of this reemergence. This coincides with a greater amount of the population expressing the desire to promote the teaching and learning of English. English proficiency is now seen as a vital requirement for employment. Furthermore, English has facilitated economic cooperation and development with an ever greater influx of foreign investment, mostly from capitalist countries which require a competence in English to communicate or negotiate with.

Being willing to communicate is part of becoming fluent in a second or foreign language. However, in spite of the emphasis on communication in English education in EFL contexts and the generally accepted view that students need to practice speaking in order to learn (MacIntyre P. D et al. 2003), Vietnamese learners of English appear to habitually choose to remain silent when there are opportunities to use English in or outside of the classroom.

Reticence in foreign language classes has long been a challenge for both teachers and students. Empirical research on reticence among Asian students has shown a marked tendency to be quiet, passive and reticent (Braddock et al., 1995; Dwyer and Heller-Murphy, 1996; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Ferris and Tagg, 1996; Turner and Hiraga, 1996; Flowerdew et al., 2000; Yashima, 2002; Hashimoto, 2002; Liu, 2005; Nakane, 2006; Liu and Jackson, 2009) and Vietnamese students seem to be no exception.

In EFL contexts, fundamental issues in teaching and learning English from primary to tertiary levels or beyond are to investigate to what extent students are willing to communicate in English, reasons for their unwillingness to communicate in English, and how to facilitate students' willingness to use English for communication purposes.

Willingness to Communicate is one of the factors influencing the learning of English in Vietnam in which English is used as a foreign language. The study will be useful to specialists from the MOET (Ministry of Education and Training) and rectors of colleges by assisting them in making informed decisions on how best to develop their curriculum in facilitating teaching methods that meet the communicative needs of their students. In this way this study will contribute to the knowledge of learning and teaching English in Vietnam from the point of view of both students and teachers.

1.3 Problem Statement

Most studies in L2 Willingness to Communicate have been carried out in western countries, especially in Canada, where students learning French in a typical second language context have frequent linguistic exposure to and direct contact with the L2 community. In addition, quite a few studies (Warden and Lin, 2000; Wen and Clément, 2003; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu, 2004; Miao Yu, 2009) have been conducted in EFL contexts including Japan, Korea and China where students mainly learn English as a compulsory school subject and there is usually no immediate linguistic need for them to use English in daily life. In Vietnam, this issue has not been examined yet, especially at the college level. To address this gap, this study investigates the factors determining individual differences in the students' willingness to communicate in English in and outside the classroom at some selected colleges in Vietnam.

1.4 Research Questions

The primary research question of this study is: What is the awareness of the Vietnamese EFL college students of their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English and individual factors such as their self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) in English, communication apprehension (CA), English learning motivation (Motivation), attitudes towards the international community, and instrumental orientation (Attitudes), and personality traits (Personality)?

The secondary research questions which will be investigated in the study are:

1. Is there a relationship between students' SPCC, CA, Motivation, Attitudes, and Personality and their WTC levels?
2. Is there a relationship between students' SPCC, CA, Motivation, Attitudes, and Personality and their ethnicity?

3. Is there a relationship between students' SPCC, CA, Motivation, Attitudes, and Personality and their dialect?
4. Which individual difference variables best predict the participants' WTC in English?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Understanding the factors behind WTC is important because it can help students understand how to promote affective factors so as to enhance their willingness to communicate in English, which, in turn, is important since it can help them increase the possibility of achieving success in the attainment of high English proficiency. The relationships among the variables found in the study will demonstrate new or alternative paths in a Vietnamese EFL context. The findings of the study will contribute to better understanding of the dynamic nature of WTC in English in EFL contexts, help teachers, managers, and educators understand EFL students' communication behavioral characteristics in and outside of the classroom and suggest directions for best practice in language pedagogy.