The push toward language teaching to make learners effective communicators has been relentless. To be proficient language users, learners need to at least practice it inside the classroom to communicate functionally and interactively. Through such a way, they will be accustomed to the language not only from linguistic and structural matters, but also from authentic communicative competence. Willingness to Communicate (WTC), hence, is a crucial plus point for learners to succeed their L2 acquisition. This present study which was held in EFL context aimed to: (1) examine the Indonesian students' level of WTC in English, and (2) reveal the potential factors which influence students' WTC in English. A total 136 undergraduate students from three different majors (Medicine, Accounting, Elementary School Teacher Education) participated in this study. The data were gathered through a survey and a semi-structured interview. It was indicated that 197 out of 136 students (72.1%) had low Willingness to Communicate in English. Besides, it was disclosed that there were four most discouraging factors affecting students' WTC, namely language anxiety, task-type, teachers' and students' rapport, and class size.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Indonesian students, EFL context

Introduction

Language, wherever it comes from, is defined in different ways by scholars. These cover not only linguistic area, but also social, cultural, and not to mention psychological domains. However, the certain criterion emerged among these various descriptions is 'language is used for communication' (The Meriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003; Pinker, 1994; Halliday, 1973; Scollon, 2004; and Brown, 2007). It implies that language learners need to make use of the target language inside and outside the classroom to lead them to be effective communicators. Their unwillingness to communicate or shyness will result in less language production and ineffective communication (Riasati, 2012). Moreover, Maclntyre et al (1998) studied that one’s communicative competence in L1 does not guarantee the same of that in L2. Thus, the notion of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) fosters learners’ second language acquisition totally makes sense. Teachers need to bear in mind that the encouragement of learners’ WTC in language learning is essential, particularly when learners get increased opportunity to practice.

Another setback arises when teachers widely open the opportunity for learners to speak, but still many of them remain silent. In higher education institution, where they already learned English several years back, many learners unwillingly speak up. Some cases happen in EFL countries, in which learners possess very low English communicative competence as they do not grab the chance to speak English in the classroom and outside it they have little, if any, exposure to the target language.

Several studies of Willingness to Communicate had been conducted in various countries using English as their L2/FL. In Malaysia (ESL), it was found that language learning communication strategies directly affected WTC in English, while motivation influenced WTC indirectly (Yousef, Jamil & Razak, 2013). On the other hand, a study in China by Peng (2007) indicated that motivation was the strongest predictor of L2 WTC, while attitude towards the learning situation did not predict L2 WTC. A study in Iranian context (EFL), Riasati (2012) revealed that there were some factors contributed to WTC, such as task type, topic of discussion, interlocutor, teacher, class atmosphere, personality and self-perceived speaking ability. Aubrey (2010) also conducted a study of WTC in Japan (EFL). Through inter-group analysis between class types, he found that class size was a very strong factor affecting learners'
As dissimilar results come out from different countries and context, this present study examines the same variable, namely WTC, but in Indonesian context, where English is used as a foreign language.

**Willingness to Communicate**

In earlier studies, Willingness to Communicate is defined as “an underlying continuum representing the predisposition toward or away from communicating, given the choice” (MacIntyre et al., 2002:538). Or, more simply, it is defined as “the intention to initiate communication, given a choice” (MacIntyre et al., 2001:369). MacIntyre et al. (1998) describe it as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2”. The newest definition is proposed by Kang (2005) as follows:

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is an individual’s volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables (p.291).

It can be concluded that WTC in L2/FL learning is learner’s tendency to actively engage in classroom communication with a number of differences it may have, such as learners’ abilities and characteristics, topic, task types, classroom atmosphere, cultural influences. Kang’s definition of WTC is the stem to develop this research as it brings up factors which potentially differ learners’ WTC. Overall, the higher WTC the learners possess, the higher communicative competence they have. Dörnyei (1990) in Peng (2007) argues that EFL learners who have limited authentic interaction with the L2/FL community, in this case is in the classroom communication, will have lower language attainment. Learners then must be facilitated with greater opportunities to practice the target language in communicative use.

**Factors Influencing WTC**

A basic question that might emerge in regard to Willingness to Communicate is ‘Why do learners have different WTC levels?’ Teachers probably observe certain learners who are talkative outside the classroom when they use their L1. In contrary, they remain silent in EFL class, while those who are unlikely to engage in their L1 communication outside the classroom sometimes have higher WTC in EFL class. MacIntyre et al (1998) points out that one’s communication confidence range from 0% to 100% in an L2/EFL as the target language. Surprisingly, most people have a high level of communicative competence in L1. For this reason, teachers’ roles as motivator and facilitator in learner-centered lessons have a significant impact on learners’ motivation to engage and to keenly speak up in classroom activities and communication.

Scholars have conducted many substantial studies on WTC and have found a range of antecedents that might answer why people differ in their WTC levels. In some studies concerning learner’s perception of factors influencing their WTC level, it is found that there are many things that lead learners to speak up or to remain silent. These are motivation, communication anxiety, self-confidence, self-perceived communication competence, personality, content and context including topic familiarity, the presence of the opposite sex, learners’ mood, task-type (individual, pair, small group, team work), learner cohesiveness, familiarity with the environment, classroom acoustics, teachers’ roles and support, and learners’ fear of making mistakes hence getting embarrassed (Riasati and Nooreen, 2011; House, 2004; Cao & Phil, 2006; Cao, 2009; Zeng, 2010; Behzad et al., 2013).

As the goal of teaching language is to make learners able to communicate in the real world communication, it is crucial to reveal the factors that might affect learners’ eagerness to speak up in EFL classes. Through a survey and group interviews, this study attempts to find out those affecting factors in a university in Indonesia, a country which is well-known for its diversity.

**Research Method**

**Study Locale and Participants**

The study took place in University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Central Java. The subjects of this study were 150 undergraduate students. All of them were second semester students who joined English Enrichment Program (Program Pengayaakan Bahasa Inggris) for four semesters. Using simple random sampling technique, these students were chosen from three different majors, namely Medicine (50 Ss) Accounting
(50 Ss), and Elementary School Teacher Education (50 Ss), to seek the representativeness of those learning exact science, social science, and education. All the selected classes were studying relatively the same material from the same handbook and curriculum as well as have roughly similar language abilities. At the end, only 136 of them returned the complete questionnaire. Thus, 14 questionnaires were considered invalid.

Data Collection Techniques and Instrumentation

The researchers gathered both quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data were gained through a survey, in which dichotomous questionnaires (yes/no) with 25 items were distributed to the participants. The questions were displayed in Indonesian language to avoid any misunderstanding that might occur. This questionnaire attempted to capture students’ view on the important of English language competence, students’ self-perceived WTC and the factors affecting their WTC in English classes. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured group interview. 10 students (5 males and 5 females) from each major were invited for interview. The interview guideline consisted of 4 questions.

Table 1: The Analysis of Students’ WTC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Answer (Ss)</th>
<th>Answer (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Awareness of English importance</td>
<td>265 Yes 7 No</td>
<td>97.4 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-perceived WTC Level</td>
<td>76 Yes 196 No</td>
<td>27.9 72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Language Anxiety</td>
<td>156 Yes 116 No</td>
<td>57.4 42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>281 Yes 127 No</td>
<td>68.9 31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Peer Influence</td>
<td>176 Yes 232 No</td>
<td>43.1 56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Topic Familiarity</td>
<td>57 Yes 79 No</td>
<td>41.9 58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teacher Talk</td>
<td>65 Yes 207 No</td>
<td>23.9 76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Student Talk</td>
<td>130 Yes 278 No</td>
<td>31.9 68.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Teachers’ &amp; Students’ rapport</td>
<td>232 Yes 176 No</td>
<td>56.9 43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Teachers’ Competence</td>
<td>46 Yes 90 No</td>
<td>33.8 66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>89 Yes 47 No</td>
<td>65.4 34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>78 Yes 194 No</td>
<td>28.7 71.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Results and Discussion

Based on the 25 items on the questionnaire, the researchers grouped them into twelve sub-factors. Factor 1 is about their motivation to be a good communicator in English. Factor 2 discloses their self-perceived Willingness to Communicate. Factor 3 is language anxiety. Factor 4, namely task-type, is whether the students have to do classroom activities individually, in pairs, in group or in a whole class. Factor 5 is peer influence, including the presence of the opposite sex and peer’s English fluency. Factor 6 is about the learning topic. Factor 7, 9, and 10 are teacher talk, teachers’ and students’ rapport, and teachers’ competence. Factor 8 covers the items about student talk. Factor 11 is the class size, and the last factor (Factor 12) is about English exposure.

Excluding the students’ awareness of English importance and their WTC level, this study found four most influencing factors in students’ WTC. These were (1) language anxiety, (2) task-type, (3) teachers’ and students’ rapport, and (4) class size.

In terms of the importance of English, Table 1 indicates that 97.4% out of 136 students were aware of it. They did not deny that English is important for their academic success and future career. In addition, they had a hope to have better English communication skills. However, it was contradictory with their WTC in English classes, which was only 27.9%. As it was still less than even 30%, the students’ level of WTC was considered low. Accounting students, in particular, many of them mentioned the high competitiveness in ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 force them to speak English well.

I heard that in AEC later on, employees from all the member states of ASEAN are free to work in any ASEAN countries they want. But, companies only hire the best workers. So, I have to improve my English skills to smoothen my career path. I’ve been dreaming of working abroad, not only in ASEAN countries but I want to visit European countries, too (Student 13 - Accounting).

The current trend nowadays is people compete each other to get a scholarship abroad. Who doesn’t want it? For me as a medical student, it’s a must I think. But I really hate it when there in the scholarship requirement is stated ‘fluent in speaking English’. So, want it or not, I have to learn English (Student 7 - Medical).

Wijaya (2014) states that English language proficiency for Indonesia’s generations will in line with certain crucial reasons, such as: (1) being involved in a broader and global economy requires a lingua franca; (2) free flow of skilled labor has been established as one of the AEC core elements; (3) countries with the aging population problems thus certainly need additional employees are mostly English speaking countries or having English as the second language; and (4) many developed countries annually offer fully-funded scholarships for preparing future generations and the first requirement is commonly English language proficiency. The ASEAN countries agreed to facilitate the movement of professionals within the region because foreign talents are sometimes essential to provide competition, stimulation, and synergy to improve the quality and productivity of domestic talent (Chia, 2013). A bigger consideration is also given to the eight prior fields for AEC 2015. These include engineering, nursing, architecture, accounting, medicine, dentistry, hotel and tourism, and surveying (UP FORUM, 2014).

Regarding the factors influencing students’ WTC, it was revealed that the class size influenced the students’ motivation to talk. This factor was even the greatest cause of the low WTC in the classrooms. There were 65.4% students agreed that when the number of the students in a classroom was too big, they would not get adequate chance to talk. Unlike English department classes which have utmost 20 students, medical, accounting and ESTE classes commonly have more than 40 students. Therefore, it is hard for teachers to manage the class, and it is not easy for students to have equitable opportunity to speak.

People need appreciation when they talk. At least by others pay attention to them. Sometimes it’s useless when I’m already brave to say something but the other ignore me (Student 2 - Medical).

Those trouble makers! The lecturer always reminds them to behave. They do it but then they repeat the same noise again. So maybe the class runs effectively only 60 minutes out of 100 minutes that we should get (Student 15 - Accounting).

Our lecturer treats us the same. She always asks different students to share their ideas. But, when somebody’s talking, many other
students don’t pay attention. It’s usually run well if the lecturer divides us into some groups and spreads the ‘gang’ (Student 27 - ESTE).

This predicament is supported by some theories that state small class have adequate time which stimulate more student talk-time; students in small classes have more opportunity to talk and they commonly have better attitude as well as achievement. Bigger classes, oppositely, hindered the teaching and learning process (Kumar, 1992; Evertson & Folger, 1989, Glass & Smith, 1980; Wells & Chang-Well, 1992 in Aubrey, 2010).

Secondly, task-type is shown by the number of 68.9%. It indicates that the students mostly felt shy to present their ideas individually. They tended to be fearless if at least they did it in groups or in pairs. Cao and Philp (2006) contend that dividing a class into several groups or pairs, gives individuals greater opportunity to talk than in the case of speaking individually.

The findings also showed that the students had moderate anxiety to communicate in English (57.4%). The majority of Elementary School Teacher Education (ESTE) students admitted that they considered accuracy first before content and fluency. Consequently, they were afraid of grammatical mistakes. Harmer (2001) proposes that teachers need to decide whether a particular activity is designed to measure accuracy or fluency. In line to accuracy and fluency, Nunan (2003) suggests as follows:

In language lesson -especially at the beginning and intermediate levels- learners ... cannot develop fluency if the teacher is constantly interrupting them... Teachers must provide students with fluency-building practice and realize that making mistakes is a natural part of learning a new language (p.55).

Thus, it is important for students to notice that ‘It’s okay to make mistakes in English class’.

A dissimilar cause of language anxiety arose from accounting and medical students. During the interview, the participants said that it was their lack of vocabulary which makes them shy to speak. The other, additionally, adds that their shyness was due to their inability to state their ideas with appropriate dictions, hence, their friends and lecturer laughed at them.

I usually know the idea I’m going to say. It’s just that I don’t know the words in English. Firstly, I tried to state it in bahasa Indonesia. My lecturer accepted it but then she asked me to try to say it in English. I got stuck (Student 18 - Accounting).

Vocabulary matters in language learning for what distinguishes one language from another is mainly the words. It will be difficult for the learners to speak up in English if they possess limited English words. Nunan (2003:137) says,

“To cope well in English, a second language learner would need around 5,000 words and preferably 10,000 words.”

The third affecting factors in the students’ WTC is the rapport between the teachers and their students. 56.9% students from medical, accounting, and ESTE department had the same view on it. If the teachers were kind, the students will at least tried to speak even if they were not sure about their idea or language use. On the other hand, they would be reluctant to speak if the teachers could easily become angry that the students made mistakes and simply kid during the lesson.

Conclusion

Language learning is designed to facilitate learners to have a good communicative competence in the authentic interaction. To be proficient language users, they need to get more exposure and more time to practice the target language. Although students know that English is crucial for their academic success and future career, they have low Willingness to Communicate (WTC) - learner’s tendency to actively engage in classroom communication with a number of differences it may have. Through this research, it was found that among 136 students from three majors (medicine, accounting, and Elementary School Teacher Education) 72.1% of them still had low WTC in English classes due to four most influencing factors. These were: Class size (65.4%), Task-type (68.9), Language Anxiety (57.4), and Teachers’ and Students’ Rapport (56.9%). Overall, teachers need to learn how to manage big classes well by grouping the students, having them to do group discussion and presentation, as well as conduct various motivating activities that make students feel comfortable to join and talk.

References

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