

## **Turkish Students' Willingness to Communicate in English as a Second Language in a Third Language Environment**

Reyhan Yildiz (reyhan1684@hotmail.com)

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8418-3208>

Katalin Piniel (brozik-piniel.katalin@btk.elte.hu)

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9225-3301>

*Received: December 10, 2019*

*Accepted: January 6, 2020*

*Published: January 7, 2020*

**Abstract:** Over the past decades, the intriguing concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) has attracted the second/foreign language (L2) researchers' attention. In line with this tendency, the purpose of the present study was to report the findings of an investigation into Turkish students' WTC in L2 in a third language environment. A qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews was conducted with four Turkish students, whose language of education was English at various Hungarian universities. The findings revealed seven overlapping components, which were interlocutor, topic, learning strategy, interlocutor's attitude, number of people, participant's personality, and perceived proficiency in English. Moreover, two particular determinants that were *using ELF* (English as a lingua franca) in WTC and *anxiety* in unwillingness to communicate (UWTC) were found. These determinants seem to influence Turkish university students' WTC and UWTC in English in a third language environment. The findings of this study will be beneficial for Turkish foreign language curriculum developers to gain an insight about the effecting components of Turkish learners' readiness to communicate and for English teachers to unfold the determinants affecting their students' WTC and UWTC in EFL context.

**Keywords:** Willingness to communicate, Unwillingness to communicate, L2, perceived proficiency, language anxiety.

## **Introduction**

Successful communication is one of the main goals of foreign language learning (Şener, 2014); nonetheless, the road to acquiring a high level of ability to communicate in a second language is a complex and dynamic one (MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome, 2011), which is largely dependent on how willing the language learner is in terms of communicating in a foreign language. In other words, the higher the learner's willingness to communicate in a foreign language, the more they will seek out opportunities to practice the L2, and the more they practice, the more likely they will succeed in developing high levels of communicative competence (Yashima, 2012). It must be noted, however, that WTC in L2 is not simply a transfer of WTC in the first language (L1) (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998).

WTC in the L2 context has become an area of investigation in the field of applied linguistics (Bektas, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 2011; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Şener, 2014; Yashima, 2012; Öz, 2014; Öz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015). Most of these studies have involved the use of a foreign or second language in an L1 context. In the present study, our aim was to explore what perceived antecedents there are to communicating in L2 in an L3 environment. In other words, what seems to play a key role in Turkish students' WTC in English (L2) in the Hungarian (L3) context?

## **Background**

In Hungary, there is a Turkish minority of around 2500 people. They mainly work in the food and beverage, construction, textile, and tourism and hotel management sectors. Moreover, in 2017, almost 900 students were studying at Hungarian universities and other institutions. Approximately 400 of these students were Erasmus-program students at universities (Ş. Fakılı, personal

communication, February 29, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. It can be said that Turkish students are increasingly looking for opportunities to study abroad not only in Hungary but elsewhere as well via international study programs (like the Erasmus program) or by enrolling as full-time students at foreign universities abroad (Çankaya, 2015).

Although English is taught in Turkey as a compulsory subject from the second grade in elementary until the twelfth grade of upper-secondary school, Turkish students seem to have difficulties when they have to communicate in the foreign language (British Council & The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey [Tepav], 2014, p.16). One of the reasons for this could be that, in the curriculum, there is a heavy emphasis on the linguistic aspects of language learning, such as memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary, while there is very little focus on practicing communication (British Council & Tepav, 2014). In this type of institutional/formal context students tend to adopt the view that the primary concerns in language learning are the accuracy of grammar and word choice. Learners who come to share this view can easily feel less willing to engage in conversations as they feel they should speak English only when they are sure that they are using it accurately.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that L3 context would refer to Hungarian settings in this study in which our Turkish participants have used their EFL/L2 as if it is an L3 due to their insufficient Hungarian language ability as they have indicated. Therefore, we would like to highlight that to our best knowledge; the topic of English WTC in L3 context rather than L1 or English speaking settings has not been investigated up to now. Our study aims to explore the perceived influences of Turkish EFL learners' willingness to communicate in both formal and informal L3 contexts. Thus, we hope the findings would provide insight for Turkish foreign language curriculum

---

<sup>1</sup> Ş. Fakılı was the ambassador of Republic of Turkey in Budapest.

developers on the issues worth addressing related to Turkish learners' readiness to communicate in English as a foreign language.

### **Literature Review**

In this section, first the key concepts related to WTC will be identified. After that, a brief overview of studies on WTC (both L1 and L2) and their findings will follow. Before considering WTC, *communication* as one of the fundamental notions of this study should be defined. Holló (2012) gives a description of communication as "the transfer of meanings" (p.1). In order for this transfer to take place, the speaker has to feel an urge or desire to communicate. This desire is what McCroskey and Richmond (1987) have termed as *willingness to communicate*.

Researchers differentiate between WTC in L1 and L2. A person's willingness to communicate in their mother tongue is considered more stable across time and contexts; therefore, some researchers even argue that it resembles a personality trait (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) while WTC in L2 is thought of as "the readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547). In this latter sense, WTC in L2 is more context dependent and less trait-like.

WTC research is rooted in Burgoon's (1976) consideration of people's undesired circumstances to communicate by defining this predisposition as "a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication" (p.60). The author labeled this as *unwillingness-to-communicate* and described it as a stable personality characteristic linked to "anomia, alienation, introversion, self-esteem and communication apprehension" (Burgoon, 1976, p.60). Building upon Burgoon's study, McCroskey and Richmond (1987) began to investigate participants' personality traits and their willingness to communicate in four different contexts with three types of receivers. Their general conclusion was that while situational WTC depended on the

determinants of the specific circumstance, trait-like WTC had a power to affect all kinds of communication conditions (p.153).

MacIntyre *et al.* (1998) proposed a model of WTC in L2, which views WTC as a context dependent construct. Their so-called pyramid model comprises psychological, linguistic and social variables. While the bottom three layers of the pyramid consist of more stable variables, such as personality and intergroup climate, the top three layers comprise state variables that are particular to a specific context where the communication takes place. Most studies based on this model were conducted in the Canadian context of immersion schools where French as a second language served as the medium of instruction (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2011).

More recently, Yashima (2012) has used qualitative techniques to explore “the relationship among motivation, self-confidence, international posture, and L2 WTC” (p.123). Her findings indicate that the stronger the individual’s international posture, the more motivated they are to learn and thus to use the foreign language. That is, higher levels of motivation seem to be linked to higher levels of willingness to communicate in L2.

In the Turkish context, two studies have employed a mixed-methods approach to look at college and university students’ WTC. One of them focused on WTC and social-psychological, linguistic, and communication variables (Bektas, 2005), while the other linked WTC with linguistic self-confidence, motivation, attitudes towards the international community, and personality (Şener, 2014). The results of the first study suggest that there is a direct relationship between Turkish students’ WTC and their attitude towards the international community and WTC and students’ linguistic self-confidence (Bektas, 2005). The second study’s findings also highlight the important role of self-confidence and the extent to which integrative motivation contributes to raising the level of WTC (Şener, 2014). Apart from

these findings, the latter study also suggests that students are mostly unwilling to communicate with their teachers in English since they perceive their teachers to be less tolerant of linguistic mistakes (Şener, 2014).

More recently, Öz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz (2015) investigated Turkish EFL learners' perceptions of WTC by conducting a questionnaire study on WTC, communication and affective variables. While their results reveal a strong direct relationship between WTC and perceived communication competence and communication apprehension, motivational factors also have an indirect influence on L2 WTC.

Although the research summarized above highlights key issues about Turkish students' WTC in a foreign language in the L1 context, to the best of our knowledge, Turkish students' WTC in English as a foreign language in an L3 context has not been investigated. Since many Turkish people study abroad, it may be worth gaining a deeper insight as to how willing they are to engage in conversation in a shared foreign language. More specifically, we were interested in what characterizes the willingness to communicate in English of Turkish students at Hungarian universities in and outside the university classroom, where English is used for communication.

## **Method**

To find answers to the research question formulated above, we took a qualitative approach. An interview study was designed to gain insight and to provide a deeper understanding of Turkish students' WTC in English in- and outside the classroom in Hungary, an L3 context.

### *Participants*

The participants were selected by way of convenience and snowball sampling (Dörnyei, 2007). One male and three female Turkish students aged between 21 and 27 studying at Hungarian universities took part. The male participant,

who was given the pseudonym Haciev, is 27 years old. He is currently studying for an MA in computer programming at a well-known university in the capital city. He has been in Hungary for 7 months. His BA major was computer programming, and he studied science and math in the state upper-secondary school in Turkey. English was one of the compulsory school subjects that he had to study at school and had to pass an entrance exam for at the university. Although he had been learning English for 13 years, he felt he needed to improve his speaking skills when he took part in an Erasmus program in Poland three years ago. This period resulted to be difficult for him due to his struggles with the English language. Except for this six-month exchange program in Poland, he had never been abroad. In Hungary, nowadays, he has to communicate in English at university and in daily life. Based on his account, at present he has almost no problems with communicating in English in this L3 environment or with his international friends.

One of the female students, who was given the pseudonym Özike, is 26 years old. She is studying for a BA in English Studies. She has been studying and living in Hungary for five. Since she was not interested in Math or other subjects, she chose to study English in the state upper-secondary school. At university she decided to continue her English studies, as this was the topic she felt she was good at. She has been learning English for 14 years and, as she expresses, nowadays, in this foreign environment, she uses English all the time. Studying in Budapest is her first experience abroad. She claims that anything related to English is very easy for her.

The second female participant, Sena, 23, has been studying for a BA in Pharmacy in a large town in Hungary for three years. She is in her third year now. Sena took part in a university preparatory course in Budapest, at one of the largest Hungarian universities during the first two years of her stay. Then, she started to study pharmacy at another university in a different town. After

transferring from a state lower-secondary school to a private one, she studied English more intensively until her university years. Although she has been dealing with English for approximately 13 years, as she admitted, she had never focused on learning it until she went abroad to study. Even when she joined a college tour in England for a few weeks, she resisted practicing there. However, after starting to study abroad, it became a must to improve her English skills in order to understand the lessons. Finally, her only regret was to spend her first two years mostly with Turkish friends, which left her with few opportunities to practice English.

The fourth participant of the study is Ela, 21, who has been studying physiotherapy for three years. Including the university preparatory year, it is her 4<sup>th</sup> year in Budapest. She graduated from a state Anatolian high school and her major was Science-Math and their curriculum included approximately 10 hours of English lessons per week. However, based on her accounts, Ela did not seek out opportunities to practice English in Turkey. Although she had been learning English for almost 13 years, when she came to Budapest at first, she did not feel that she was able to speak in English and felt as if she had known nothing in English. This was her first experience abroad; therefore, she mostly preferred to be with Turkish friends. She is the only participant of all four whose flat mate and most of her friends are Turkish. This means that she uses English mainly at university or to get things done in her daily life, but her contacts and communication in informal contexts remain to be Turkish in the L3 environment, although she seems to be aware of the impact of her extensive use of Turkish on her English proficiency.

#### *Instrument*

For the purposes of data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Turkish with the four participants. The interview schedule consisted of four warm-up questions about the participants' language

learning background and 14 questions were adapted from previous research questionnaires and interview schedules (Bektas, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). The latter group of questions targeted students' WTC focusing on the situations they were the most and the least willing to communicate in on various occasions inside and outside the classroom. The interview schedule was translated into Turkish. To check the quality of the translation, the back-translation technique was used with the help of a Turkish EFL teacher.

### *Procedures*

First, a pilot run of the interview was conducted with the male participant face-to-face. As a result, certain questions were reformulated (e.g., "how do you feel about..." was replaced by "to what extent are you willing... or could you describe your willingness..., or how willing are you..."). The reason for these changes was that when the participant was asked in the pilot interview how he felt about some specific situations, it proved to be too broad for him to interpret; therefore, these items were simplified and specified to support the participants' comprehension.

After making the necessary modifications, the interviews were carried out via skype and audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed for data analysis. Each participant was given a pseudonym and the lines within the interview data were numbered. In the next section, we use these after the translated versions of the quotations cited from the interviews.

The verbal data was analyzed with the help of the constant comparative method (Dörnyei, 2007). As a result of the first detailed reading of the transcriptions, the texts included 312 coded segments, using 82 coding categories, which could be grouped into 13 larger categories. After going through the data several times and reaching a point of saturation, 36

categories remained. Then, a coding scheme was drawn up, which ultimately included eight categories for Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and Unwillingness to Communicate (UWTC) of which seven overlap (see table 1). To ensure the quality of data analysis and interpretation, member-checks and peer-debriefing were used involving the participants, their teachers as well as another researcher.

**Results and discussion**

In this section, we will present the final coding scheme for the two main themes of WTC and UWTC and provide examples from the interviews to illustrate the importance of the issues Turkish students consider when communicating in English in an L3 environment. Table 2 contains a summary of the seven categories used for both themes (WTC and UWTC), while Table 3 contains the two categories particular to only one of the themes.

**Table 1.** Part of the final coding scheme including the categories linked to Turkish students’ WTC and UWTC in an L3 environment.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example from the interviews</i>
Interlocutor	Reference to the particular individual or a particular group of individuals the participant feels willing or unwilling to communicate with when given a chance.	“I always come across my dorm mates. It’s easier to talk to them than talking to someone random on the street.” (Oziki:57)
Interlocutor’s attitude	Reference to any depiction of the interlocutor’s attitude toward the participant while communicating with them, including mentions of the interlocutor’s posture, facial expressions, feedback, and body language; any	“My teacher told me what I was like back then and she told me that I have improved a lot since then. I actually felt great afterwards and I was keen to talk and participate more.”
Number of people	Reference to the number of people the participant is willing or unwilling to engage in communication with simultaneously.	“I’d prefer talking in pairs to talking in groups. I also don’t want to talk to the teacher or like I said before in groups.” (Haciev:42)

Topic	Reference to the nature of the topic of communication in connection with being willing or unwilling to communicate.	“I would rather talk about something that I have got the knowledge about.” (Ela:63)
Participant’s personality	Reference to the participant’s personal characteristics that they perceive to influence their willingness or unwillingness to communicate.	“I don’t like talking much, that’s my personal characteristic...” (Haciev:54)
Learning strategy	Reference to social learning strategy use involving communication with others in order to gain knowledge about a subject, to clarify incomprehensible points, to help the	“I am not great at research. If I feel that it wasn’t explained well, then I would ask the lecturer.” (Sena:72)
Perceived proficiency in English	Reference to participants’ perception of their English knowledge.	“I am on a level that I don’t have any difficulty in speaking English. I can even have a fight or an argument in English.” (Oziki:7)

---

As a result of the data analyses, all the categories were grouped into the two main themes of WTC and UWTC to account for the perceived determinants of the participants WTC/UWTC in English in the L3 environment. While the theme of WTC includes eight components (interlocutor, topic, learning strategy, interlocutor’s attitude, number of people, using ELF, participant’s personality, and perceived proficiency in English), UWTC consists of eight determinants of which seven overlap with those of WTC above (the exception is using ELF) and anxiety (which by nature does not appear among the determinants of WTC). For an explanation of the two unshared categories see Table 2.

**Table 2.** Part of the final coding scheme including the codes particularly linked to Turkish students’ willingness or unwillingness to communicate in an L3 environment.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example from the interviews</i>
Willingness to communicate	Using ELF	Reference to using English as a Lingua Franca. That is, reference to using English in the L3 environment with interlocutors who do not	“I wanted to learn English in order to use it at the university. All the people and friends around me here are
		Reference to any kind of negative feeling of the participant that results in reluctance to use English in the L3 environment.	“If I need to speak English with a native speaker, I actually pray first before I start.” (Oziki:100)
Unwillingness to communicate	Anxiety		

In the following, we will illustrate these issues both in connection with WTC and UWTC in English with quotations from the interviews. First, we will elaborate on those topics that are relevant for both of the main themes; then, we will briefly mention the two categories particular to only one of them. In this respect, we will present and discuss our themes under the two sub-titles;

1-) *Perceived determinants of WTC in English in an L3 environment* including interlocutor, interlocutor’s attitude, number of people, topic, participant’s personality, learning strategy, perceived proficiency in English, and using English as a Lingua Franca,

2-) *Perceived determinants of UWTC in English in an L3 environment* covering interlocutor, interlocutor’s attitude, number of people, topic, participant’s personality, learning strategy, perceived proficiency in English, and anxiety variables.

*Perceived determinants of WTC in English in an L3 environment*

One of the key determinants of WTC in English for our participants seems to be the *interlocutor*, that is the person or a group of people who the participant is eager to communicate with. This reference included friends, teachers,

dorm/roommates, strangers and native speakers. In case of WTC, participants mentioned the positive attitudes of these interlocutors towards them as speakers, sharing interests, or sharing experiences. Examples included the following:

If I speak English with my friends, it wouldn't be a problem (...) When I talk to my friends, I can jump from subject to subject when I can't find anything to talk about. Teachers have expectations while doing a presentation. You have to cover the whole thing, you have to give them something, also the teachers and the classmates are listening.(Haciev:85-86)

If I have something in common with someone then I am willing to talk to that person. (Oziki:107)

If I get a new roommate, then why not. I actually talk a lot in the kitchen when I meet my dorm mates. (Oziki:60)

Overall, from the responses it seems that the participants do not have any problems in speaking with their friends in English. However, speaking in the classroom, especially with a teacher, is perceived to be rather different as participants feel that they have to meet their teachers' expectations while communicating in English. Many times, communicating in English with the teacher is restricted to responding to the questions posed to the student. When the communication partner is a peer (e.g. their dorm mate or classmate) or they have something in common with the interlocutor, our participants said that they are more eager to talk in English.

As Kang (2005) indicates, the more familiar they are with the interlocutors, the more secure the language learners will feel and the higher their WTC is likely to be. Moreover, according to Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2017), the characteristics of the interlocutor, such as the interlocutor's

familiarity, proficiency, involvement, personality, gender, social bonds, have effects on a person's WTC (p. 290). In addition, Nagy (2007) also mentions that people are more eager to communicate if they have something in common with the interlocutor.

Another important issue related to learners' WTC in English appeared to be the *interlocutor's attitude* towards the learner. This category included the mention of positive feedback, the interlocutor's posture, body language and facial expressions, and verbal encouragement, especially from the teacher, which all seemed to make the participants more eager to talk.

But if I see the teacher energetic, eager to teach us, even if I don't have any questions, I would ask something. (Haciev:53)

My classmates and lecturers are really understanding and encouraging. I sometimes don't want to talk, but they say come on Sena, you can do it that really helps me. They also correct me if I made a mistake. Therefore, I am quite relaxed [to talk] in the classroom. (Sena:28)

Also, if the participant is sure about not being judged based on their English knowledge, or if they do not mind being corrected and think of receiving feedback as something that helps them improve their English, it can increase the participant's WTC:

I know they [my peers] won't judge me for making mistakes. They try to understand what I am talking about. They also help me improve my English; therefore, I feel comfortable talking to them. (Ela:15)

The data showed that the *number of people* involved in the conversation also influences learners' WTC. Generally, it appears that the participants' WTC level in pairs and small groups is higher than in larger groups:

To be honest, I prefer smaller groups as it's informal, and I feel more comfortable. I feel better about myself. (Haciev:20)

I would probably hesitate speaking English in a big group as it can be crowded, and people are from different backgrounds. I believe I can speak English easily if I am in a smaller group like two or three people as the atmosphere is more relaxed. (Ela:11)

In this respect, for our participants, small groups are considered to be more informal, therefore more comfortable to converse in, as opposed to communicating in front of a large audience. In pairs or in groups, the participants also perceive fewer opportunities for misunderstandings to occur. Both the interlocutor's attitude and a number of features related to the interlocutor's characteristics (first language, number, proficiency, attitudes, interests, familiarity) have also appeared as key determinants in previous studies on WTC (e.g., Kang, 2005). Kang (2005) also states that these seem to influence participant's feelings of security, excitement and responsibility while communicating in an L2.

One of the most frequently mentioned determinants of WTC in English involves the *topic* of the conversation. When the topic is something the participants are eager to talk about, they are more ready to take part in a conversation. The most common topics the participants mentioned are their hobbies, girls (in case of boys), games, sports, school subjects (this was the most frequently mentioned one), feelings, personal life, and giving directions. The following quotations illustrate this:

I would definitely want to join the conversation if it's about something that I like or am interested in, like girls, or something that I studied before, or If I have the knowledge then I get the courage. I like to participate and talk in the programming lessons. (Haciev:80)

If I have got an upcoming exam, then I can talk about anything related to the exam topics because all I can think about is what I have to study. (Oziki:86)

I am eager to talk about my private life because I can tell them [my conversation partners] easily about what happened and how it happened. (Sena:60)

All in all, we can say that for our participants, if the topic is interesting, well known, or related to their daily life issues, it increases their WTC in the L3 environment. This result is similar to previous research conducted in an L2 environment (Cao, 2011), and it seems to be valid for both in- and outside the class situations.

Another factor that influences our students' WTC in English is the *participant's personality*, that is, any reference to personal characteristics some of our participants made when discussing their WTC, such as being a social person or not being shy.

On the other hand, I am social. I can even speak to a random guy at the bus stop. (Oziki:28)

I am a social person. I was on the street by myself quite a few times. I met some people and poured out my heart, then went back home. That's normal for me, it is my character. (Oziki:65)

I am not shy. I would just go and ask. (Ela:37)

Even if the interlocutor is an unknown person, for some participants, it is not a problem to speak. They can easily communicate with a stranger since they think they are open and sociable. Previous studies also show that social,

extravert, impulsive and flexible persons tend to take more risks and hence are more ready to communicate in L2 (Wen & Clément, 2003).

Another issue that has emerged from the data is the importance of *learning strategies*. That is, if the language learner looks upon communicating in English as a strategy to learn more about a subject (e.g., when the participant wants to gain knowledge about the conversation topic/subject or when they want to clarify incomprehensible points about the topic/subject in order to pass an exam, or to give a presentation in the classroom) they appear to be more eager to communicate in English. This is true for both oral communication as well as written communication (via email) with friends and the teacher:

If I think that the lesson is not that important, then I wouldn't bother asking questions. But, if I know that I will be using the information from that lesson in the future, then I would ask myself whether I will be able to understand it or not if I were to go through it by myself at home. If the teacher asks us questions constantly and gives homework then I would definitely ask questions [about the material] to the teacher. (Haciev:99)

I would definitely ask questions [for more information] especially if I realize that I won't be able to pass the exam [without it]. (Oziki:44)

I feel more comfortable asking my classmates. (Sena:71)

I would just go and ask. I have no other choice, so I have to ... I would ask my friend first...then move on to my teacher. I would prefer asking him/her face to face, but then if I need more clarification, I would text my teacher and ask him/her to explain me in more detail. (Ela:29-30,32)

Concerning WTC for the purpose of learning, there are two important points that emerged from the data: First of all, participants' level of WTC seems to increase depending on whether they perceive the topic to be worth learning (e.g., in order to pass an exam) or not. If the answer is yes, they do not hesitate talking/asking/emailing the teacher. Second, WTC in English also seems to depend on whether the learners feel that they can sort the unclear points out by asking others for assistance. This is closely related to Oxford's (2003) social learning strategies, which can be defined as the "specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning" (p.8). In her categorization, some of the social strategies of the L2 learners use are to ask questions for verification, clarification or for help in succeeding a language task.

The last but one determinant that emerged to be of key importance in our participants' WTC is participant's *perceived proficiency in English*. This finding refers to the participant's perception of their English knowledge ability and capacity that causes WTC to increase or decrease.

When I compare my English from last year to this year, I can see the improvement. I didn't understand anything before, but now I can communicate. They understand me, and I can understand them. (Sena:14)

If not great [the interlocutor's level of English], then I would feel more comfortable talking to them, thinking their English is the same as mine. (Ela:45)

In this respect, the participants believe that they have improved their English skills comparing to the previous years. Therefore, while only one of the participants regards her/himself as a proficient speaker, the other three participants indicate that their English proficiency is good enough to communicate. Another issue for this aspect is learner's perception of him/her

proficiency as compatible with that of the interlocutor. Numerous studies have found support for the notion that *perceived proficiency* is a key determinant of WTC (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; Bektas, 2005; Nagy, 2007; Nagy & Nikolov, 2007; MacIntyre et al., 2011;; Şener, 2014; Öz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015).

Finally, the determinant that only emerged regarding our participants' WTC in English was using *English as a Lingua Franca*. To our best knowledge, ELF has not been reported as a WTC determinant in previous literature. More precisely, in our study, this means that participants are willing to communicate in English if it is the common language to use with interlocutors of different linguistic background, in these cases with non-Turkish peers and friends, as illustrated by the following:

I go for a shower then I see someone there and say hi, how are you? So, you can't run away, you have to speak English. (Haciev:13)

My boyfriend was Hungarian and for us English was the common language to use. (Oziki:10)

I mostly have friends from different countries, and their pronunciation is not that great, and they can't really explain themselves to the other classmates or teachers. It puts me at ease when I speak English with them. I see myself equal to them. (Sena:50)

I tend to speak English with my close friends who are not Turkish as we have a good relationship. (Ela:14)

Using English as a common communication tool in an L3 environment seems to be something that our participants accept and are more eager to do. This may be because in order to deal with daily issues in an L3 context,

communicating in English is the most convenient way. Interestingly, from one of the quotes above, it appears that if the participant sees the interlocutor's English level as equal to her proficiency, she is more willing to speak in English.

*Perceived determinants of UWTC in English in an L3 environment*

As mentioned above, seven of the eight emerging components related to UWTC overlap with those of WTC since they can either increase or decrease the participant's WTC level in terms of different situations. The first one of these shared determinants is the *interlocutor*, in other words the person who the participant is (in the case of UWTC) reluctant to speak to due to the person being known or unknown, being an official figure or a familiar person, a Turkish person or not. Also, the interlocutor's attitude towards the speaker (even if the interlocutor is familiar) can inhibit the person from entering into communication using English in an L3 context.

I also don't want to talk to the teacher. (Haciev:98)

I wouldn't just go and speak to a random person on the street. (Oziki:56)

But if I see someone that I know but don't feel like talking then I wouldn't, I was literally running away from foreigners [non-Turkish people]. (Sena:42, 9)

I might think they will make fun of me, then I would rather keep quiet or keep to Turkish... It mostly happens in a group where Turkish people are present, and it automatically puts me off from talking to them as I get upset. (Ela:10, 60)

But I worry about talking to people in the official contexts such as immigration offices as they are quite serious and tough, so I get scared; therefore, I don't really like talking to them. (Ela:17)

Based on the participants' accounts, the teacher and strangers/foreigners are the persons who the participants are least eager to speak to. This result is in line with what Sener (2014) and Bektas (2005) found in their studies in the Turkish context. With respect to Sener's (2014) findings, students were reluctant to speak with their teacher since the instructors were perceived to be less tolerant of their students' linguistic mistakes. In addition, Sener (2014) and Bektas (2005) point out that when the students feel linguistically confident while communicating with the interlocutor, this lead to WTC in English. Moreover, the participants also are not eager to speak with their Turkish friends since they think their peers will be judgmental about their English. In addition, since the people in official places are more serious and formal, it is emphasized as another reason to be reluctant to interact with them in English. These results are similar to what Nagy (2007) has already found in the Hungarian context. According to her findings, her participants also indicated their reluctance to communicate in English with their Hungarian fellows. Moreover, the formal context of the classroom with teachers and peers was listed as one of the most unpleasant situations where the students were not eager to speak English.

As for the *interlocutors' attitude*, the data shows that the interlocutor's insulting, condescending, or negative approach; mimicry, posture or gesture can cause learners' WTC level to decrease:

Some of the teachers can be a bit rude, then I would prefer not to ask questions. They can embarrass you in the middle of the class. (Haciev:52)

It depends on the people I come across. It depends on how they reach out to me. It doesn't matter how big or small the group is. (Ela:23)

I always said even their mimics are important as I need to understand whether they are belittling me or not. It mostly happens in a group where

Turkish people are and it automatically puts me off talking to them as I get upset. (Ela:74)

Unfriendly approach, formal speaking style and negative body language of the interlocutor may be a source of reluctance when entering into a conversation. The *interlocutor* and *interlocutor's attitude* appear as separate categories in the present study. However, in others, they normally appear under the collective category of interlocutor with characteristics as a subpart of the category (e.g., Kang, 2005).

The *number of people* the participants interact with seems to be another determinant of UWTC. Our data generally suggests that the larger the interlocutor group size, the lower the level of WTC. However, when the interlocutor is the teacher conversing one-on-one with the learner, here too some participants are not willing to talk despite the small number of interlocutors involved in the conversation.

I can't really talk about my hobbies in a bigger group, as it is a formal situation. (Haciev:26)

No, I feel more comfortable with the smaller groups. I would share my ideas in the smaller group, but I am more reserved in the bigger groups. (Ela:41)

Regarding *the number of people*, larger groups are seen as more formal and so more threatening for the participants as depicted in the quotation above. This is in line with Nagy (2007), where she found that talking in front of a group of people is more worrisome for the participants than group or pair work. Moreover, Cao (2011) states that generally students prefer to communicate in small groups or dyads rather than in whole-class context.

The UWTC category of *topic* refers to the subject that the participants do not prefer (or are not eager) to talk about.

But when it comes to something I don't like, i.e., playing cards then I have no idea what people are talking about because I am not interested. I wouldn't even know what they are called if you were to show me 2 cards. I obviously want to change the topic or don't want to talk about it. (Haciev:81)

But if I don't know anything about bowling for example, then I would keep it quiet, so I wouldn't look silly. (Oziki:92)

When it comes to different topics for example when there was an explosion in Turkey, people kept asking me about what's happening in Turkey. I am not interested in politics, so I couldn't make any comments. It was even more difficult for me because they were obviously asking me the questions in English. I really didn't want to talk about these issues, and it does put me off not being able to answer... but when it comes to politics or history then I stop talking all together. (Sena:76, 77)

In this respect, the most common topics participants do not want to speak about are card games, unknown games such as bowling, political issues in Turkey, mathematics, history, and others. For instance, one of the participants believes that in order to speak about Math or history, she needs to know the jargon. Not knowing such specialized vocabulary can increase participants UWTC. In other words, talking about a specific topic is seen as more difficult than talking about general issues, such as about family, hobbies, and daily life. In addition, there are certain topics (e.g., games) that prompt some participants to communicate, while the same can cause reluctance for others. This ambivalence is also similar to what MacIntyre and his associates have already found in an immersion context (MacIntyre et al., 2011).

*Participant's personality* refers to the participant's own perceptions of their personal characteristics that have negative effect on their WTC.

I am not that talkative. I don't really talk unless there is a demand.

... It's got nothing to do with the language. It's to do with me. I don't really talk unless someone asks something. I talk to my friends but what am I supposed to talk with a stranger? I don't feel like talking. (Haciev:103)

I am normally a very active person and I am not that shy in a group but when it comes to language, it's different. (Sena:62)

Not so much. I might have an idea, but I would rather keep that to myself.

...I am shy in that sort of environment. (Ela:39)

Some participants prefer to keep their ideas to themselves due to their shyness instead of sharing them with others. When talking is not obligatory or unless someone wants to speak with them, they are not eager to use English in an L3 environment. This result is similar to what MacIntyre and his colleagues' (1998) refer to as having an enduring influence: *personality* trait. According to the authors, this variable remains fairly stable across the situations and through time. It is interesting to note, however, that some participants who perceive themselves as active/social persons can experience decreased levels of WTC when they have to speak in English in an L3 environment.

*Learning strategies* seem to determine the participant's WTC since these are the way participants cope with learning and gaining knowledge on a given topic. Therefore, if learning is not the focus, participants seem to be reluctant to contribute to the communication on certain topics.

I would also ask for some books from the lecturers which might help me out with the study...(Oziki:50)

I wasn't really keen on learning English to be honest. I had been to England for 3 weeks on a school trip, but I wasn't willing to learn it there either, so I didn't study. (Sena:4)

On the one hand, the participants indicated that if the given subject and having enough knowledge of English are not important for them, their WTC decreases. On the other hand, if they need a source to learn the subject, their WTC increase to ask help from the lecturer. In this respect, if the teachers are more aware of their students' learning style preferences, they will be more successful in orientating them into choosing the strategies that work best for them. This may increase learners' willingness to engage in conversation using English (Oxford, 2003, p.16).

*Perceived proficiency in English* for the UWTC category refers to the participant's low perception of their English language skills sometime in the past.

I went to Poland 2-3 years ago with Erasmus program and I couldn't speak English for 3 months. (Haciev:105)

I didn't speak much English in the beginning. (Oziki:29)

I remember not being able to understand anything for the first 3 months. (Ela:46)

Based on their previous experiences, learners thought that they did not have sufficient level of English to communicate with the interlocutors, so they were reluctant to speak. The previous research indicates that Language learners'

*perceived proficiency* plays a determining factor WTC. MacIntyre et al. (1998) named it “communicative competence” in their pyramid model, and Cao (2011) called it “language proficiency”.

Finally, due to its prominence in the interview data, *anxiety* constitutes a separate category. It is a negative feeling of worry that generally decreases participant’s WTC while using English; therefore, it was placed under the theme of UWTC.

I was afraid in case I made a mistake while talking. (Haciev:64)

I don’t know whether I should say it’s exciting or a bad movie with a terrible script. Everybody is excited about your presentation and can’t wait to ask you questions. It feels like there is a ticking bomb in the middle of the class and about to go off any minute. Presentations are very hard, that’s for sure. (Haciev:87)

When I need to speak English with a native speaker, I actually pray first before I start. (Oziki:100)

Let me put it this way. I feel stressed when I go to an official place, as they have no tolerance if someone doesn’t speak English. It actually puts a pressure on me when I have to visit official institutions. (Sena:25)

Making mistakes, being afraid of giving a speech in front of the classroom or using English in an unfamiliar environment, the interlocutor (being a native or non-native speaker of English), the atmosphere of formal contexts, and fear of presenting in front of others can be listed as the main contributors to our participants’ anxiety and their UWTC. These reasons have also appeared in other studies (e.g., Kang, 2005; Nagy, 2007; Bektas, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to explore what influences Turkish students' WTC and UWTC in an L3 environment. In terms of our findings, seven determinants of WTC and UWTC emerged, namely the *interlocutor, topic, learning strategies, interlocutor's attitude, number of people, participant's personality, and perceived proficiency in English*. In addition, in the case of WTC using ELF also emerged as a key component, while in the case of UWTC, *anxiety* appeared as an important determinant. Compared to the immersion context-based pyramid model of WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998), components such as personality, self-confidence, proficiency, anxiety also appeared in our results, too that was embedded in an L3 context.

Our findings imply that attention should be given to the various components that seem to directly impact communication in a foreign language. Instructors could place more emphasis on controlling (e.g., trying to show positive attitudes towards learner talk) and perhaps varying their character (e.g., including more pair work in their lessons, dealing with topics that learners are more comfortable with).

This study is not without limitations; therefore, conclusions are to be drawn with caution. Participation in our study was voluntary; thus, the data we obtained was somewhat limited. Although we found more potential participants, many refused to participate for various reasons. It is believed that if there were more participants, the emerging themes of the study might have varied.

For the following phase of this study, a larger sample size would be recommended, and the results of the qualitative study can be followed up by a quantitative inquiry validating the findings. This way more precise guidance would be available for Turkish EFL curriculum developers and EFL teachers about Turkish students' WTC while using English. In this respect,

they could adjust classroom activities in a way that would allow for Turkish EFL learners to use the target language more often.

## **References**

- Bektas, Ç. Y. (2005). *Turkish collage students' willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the Ohio State University.
- British Council & The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey [TEPAV]. (2014). 2013 report of Türkiye'deki Devlet Okullarında İngilizce Dilinin Öğretimine İlişkin Ulusal İhtiyac, Analizi (Turkey National Needs Assessment of State School English Language Teaching). Retrieved from [http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/13993885191.Turkiyedeki\\_Devlet\\_Okullarinda\\_Ingilizce\\_Dilinin\\_Ogrenimine\\_Iliskin\\_Ulusal\\_Ihtiyac\\_Analizi.pdf](http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/13993885191.Turkiyedeki_Devlet_Okullarinda_Ingilizce_Dilinin_Ogrenimine_Iliskin_Ulusal_Ihtiyac_Analizi.pdf)
- Burgoon, J. K. (1976). The unwillingness-to-communicate scale: Development and validation. *Communication Monographs*, 43, 60-69.
- Cao, Y. (2011) Investigating situational willingness to communicate within second language classrooms from an ecological perspective. *System*, 39, 468-479.
- Çankaya, I. (2015). Eğitimde yeni küresel pazar: Yükseköğretimde yabancı öğrenci hareketliliğine ilişkin bir analiz. *Eğitime Bakış Eğitim Öğretim ve Bilim Araştırma Dergisi*, (11)34, 79-81.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- English Language Curriculum for Primary and Lower Secondary Education: Grade 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. (2013). Ankara: Ministry of National Education.

- Holló, D. (2012a). *Culture and Communication*. Budapest: Intercultural Communication Studies: Concepts, Theories and Research MA Lecture Notes (DELP).
- Kang, S. J. (2005). Dynamic emergence of situational willingness to communicate in a second language. *System, 33*, 277-292.
- MacIntyre, P., Clement, R., Dornyei, Z. & Noels, K. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal, 82*, 545-562.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Baker, S., Clément, R. & Conrod, S. (2001). Willingness to Communicate, Social Support and Language Learning Orientations of Immersion Students. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 23*, 369-388.
- Macintyre, P., Burns, C., & Jessome, A. (2011). Ambivalence about communicating in a second language: A qualitative study of French immersion students' willingness to communicate. *The Modern Language Journal, 95*, 81-96.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1990). Willingness to communicate: a cognitive view. In M. Booth-Butterfield (Ed.), *Communication, cognition, and anxiety*. (pp. 19-37). Select Press.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1987). Willingness to communicate. In J. C. McCroskey & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Personality and interpersonal communication* (pp. 129-156). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mills, N. (2014). Self-efficacy in second language acquisition. In S. Mercer, & M. Williams (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA* (pp.6-22). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Pawlak, M. (2017). *Willingness to communication in instructed second language acquisition: Combining a macro- and micro-perspective*. Bristol-Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Nagy, B. (2007). *'To will or not to will' exploring advanced EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). PTE, Pécs, Hungary. Retrieved from: <http://nydi.btk.pte.hu/node/624>.

- Nagy, B., & Nikolov, M. (2007). A qualitative inquiry into Hungarian English majors' willingness to communicate in English: Classroom perspectives. In J. Horváth & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2007: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 149-168). Pécs, Hungary: Lingua Franca Csoport.
- Oxford, R. L. (2003). Language Learning Styles and Strategies: An Overview. *GALA*, 1-25.
- Öz, H. (2014). Big five personality traits and willingness to communicate among foreign language learners in Turkey. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 42(9), 1473-1482.
- Öz, H., Demirezen, M., & Pourfeiz, J. (2015). Willingness to communicate of EFL learners in Turkish context. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 37, 269-275.
- Şener, S. (2014). Turkish ELT students' willingness to communicate in English. *International Association of Research in Foreign Language Education and Applied Linguistics ELT Research Journal*, 3(2), 91-109. Retrieved April 24, 2016, from:  
<http://dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/eltrj/article/view/1063000116/1063000115>
- Wen, W.P., & Clément, R. (2003). A Chinese conceptualization of willingness to communicate in ESL. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 16(1), 18-38.
- Yashima, T. (2012). Willingness to communicate: Momentary volition that results in L2 behaviour. In S. Mercer, S. Ryan, & M. Williams (Eds.), *Psychology for language learning: Insights from research, theory and practice* (pp. 119-135). Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yildiz, R., & Piniel, K. (2018). Exploring Turkish EFL teacher trainees' willingness and unwillingness to communicate. In M. Lehmann, R. Lugossy, M. Nikolov & G. Szabó (Eds.), *UPRT 2017: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics* (pp. 70-93). Pécs, Hungary: Lingua Franca Csoport.