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THE LECTURERS' IMMEDIACY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, ARE THEY CORRELATED?

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were two-fold: first, to see whether or not lecturers' immediacy behaviors were linearly related to their students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC); second, to determine which immediacy behavior (Verbal or Nonverbal) predominantly impacted on students' WTC. To achieve the purposes, two types of questionnaires were utilized, 1) students' WTC and 2) lecturers' immediacy. Later, the participants were asked to choose 1–5 scales of question item. There were 122 EFL public university students from the Western part of Indonesia who partook in this study. They were involved voluntarily and chosen randomly. For data analysis, the bivariate calculation was applied to find the associations between the variables tested. Thus, SPSS 26 was utilized to meet the statistical analysis required. The result showed that the lecturers' immediacy behavior was positively and strongly correlated to the students' WTC with a correlation value of 0.716. However, if compared to nonverbal, lecturers' verbal traits had given the strongest positive association. It was described by Pearson correlation value found, 0.689 (verbal) and 0.502 (nonverbal). With regard to the study's findings, educators of all levels must be aware of their immediacy behaviors so that students' WTC can be controlled in a positive way.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Lecturers' Immediacy Behaviors, Verbal Immediacy, Nonverbal Immediacy, EFL.

Communicating to others is the nature of humans, and it's truly a basic need. For that reason, people will always communicate with one another throughout their lives. As pointed out by Lunenburg (2010), communication refers to a thorough activity of transferring information and establishing mutual understanding or agreement between speakers and listeners. To do that, people need language(s) as media, including first, second, or foreign language. Thus, people have unique initials in English teaching, like EFL, ESL, ESP, and EAP. However, EFL (English for Foreign Language) is the acronym that can best describe the situation of English learning in Indonesia now. According to Harmer (2007), EFL is defined as a situation where the students learn English in order to use it with any other English speakers in the world for traveling or business matters.

EFL students usually learn about English skills in their home country or take short courses in a target language country, such as Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Australia, etc., in which being able to use English in communication becomes the main target for some English language students. That is teachers' or lecturers' responsibility to help. One simple thing to do is to motivate and increase their willingness to communicate in English since people should have willingness to

initiate and actively participate in communication. In relation to it, EFL teachers, instructors, and lecturers believe that having considerable proficiency in using the language learned is the easiest way to measure students' ability. In other words, when students can develop their enthusiasm in classroom communication, they will hopefully have those habits in their real-life conversations.

Some experts argue foreign language learning actually directs the students to improve their communication skills and competencies in the target language so it will encourage their eagerness to communicate whenever possible (Dörnyei, 2005; MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, and Noels, 1998). It means that English foreign language (EFL) students are expected to speak English during class with or without being instructed by their lecturers. People name it "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC).

On the subject of WTC, encouraging students to actively communicate in the target language, unfortunately, is a tough yet challenging task for almost all language educators worldwide. (Reinders, 2016). For example, the writers themselves have observed that most EFL students in their class are hesitant to participate in classroom communication although they have been competent in English and are given the opportunity to speak. This condition, for sure, indirectly tells us that the students' willingness to communicate is in trouble. Related to this, Wen and Clement (2010) stated that language educators are fundamentally important to establish effective English learning and communication in a classroom context where teacher-centered instructions are applied. To some extent, students depend so much on teachers in the EFL classroom. Thus, teachers' behavior is something that should cautiously be watched. When viewed in this way, it is noticeable if Myers & Bryant, 2002; Yu, 2009 suggested that EFL instructors should be involved in their students' willingness to communicate as one of multiple influences they might have on students' academic experiences. To put it in another way, educators are the ones who can manipulate students' enthusiasm to participate in student-student and/or student-teacher classroom interaction. Hence, they must present unique and potential strategies in order to encourage their students in classroom communication (Habash, 2010, cited in Gol, Maryam, Zand-Moghadam, Amir, & Karrabi, 2014). This includes lecturers' immediacy behaviors.

The concept of immediacy in interpersonal communication study was firstly developed by Mehrabian in 1971. Further, he explained that immediacy includes "behaviors which reduce the physical and psychological distance between interlocutors." Consequently, people appear to be attracted to people or things they appreciate or enjoy. Then, according to Andersen (1979), immediacy actions are crucial elements in the communication process because they help speakers transmit favorable ideas and insights. Later, Christophel & Gorham (1995) explained that immediacy in an academic field refers to "nonverbal and verbal behaviors, which reduce the psychological and physical distance between teachers and students." Thus, it is known as teacher immediacy. To be detail, a social psychologist, Mehrabian, coined the concept of immediacy as persons who "drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer." In short, it means people are only attracted to things they like and they step away from things they do not like.

Concerning the field of communication studies, Andersen (1979) submitted that immediacy acts are a key role in the communication process since they help speakers and listeners share favorable thoughts and ideas. Later, Christophel and Gorham in 1995 identified the concept of immediacy in a pedagogical scenario as "nonverbal and verbal acts that diminish the psychological barrier between teacher and students." Academician also calls it "Teacher Immediacy Behaviors." Furthermore, verbal acts include addressing students by their name, praising the students, talking to the students before/after class, using "we" or "our" in classroom communication, and so on (Gorham, 1988). On the other hand, nonverbal immediacy acts include eye contact, smiles, body

position, gestures, and proximity (Andersen, 1979).

The term WTC was only discussed in the L1/native speaking context, but it then started to be implemented for L2/second language setting in the mid-1990s. However, it gained popularity among researchers in the late 1990s. To begin with, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) enhanced the previous WTC structural model, MacIntyre's (1994), to be used in the context of L2 learning by supplementing more potential determinants for second-language learning context, such as personality, motivation, and environment. Later, in 1998, MacIntyre et al. introduced a wide-ranging heuristic WTC model (see Figure 1) for the L2 setting which involved communicative, linguistic, and social psychological characteristics.

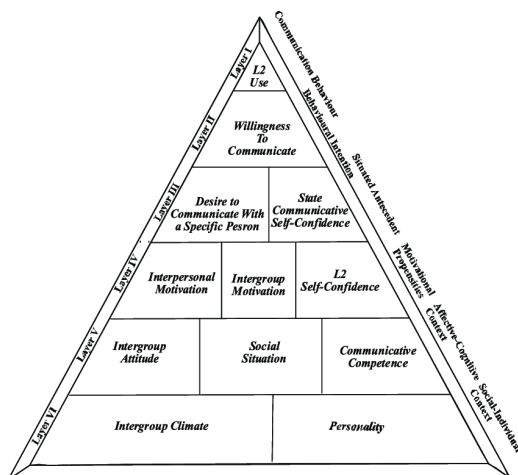


Figure 1. Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998: 547)

This pyramid-shaped model (Figure 1) provides six layers with specific categories which might be the influencing factors on students' WTC in the second language environment. Furthermore, MacIntyre et al. (1998) described an individual's level of L2 WTC was vividly determined by variables in the bottom four layers, such as self-confidence, intergroup motivation, interpersonal motivation, personality, communication competence, and intergroup attitudes. When the students have reached the top two layers, it shows their readiness to become involved in a certain communication. Accordingly, this Heuristic Model was actually created to investigate why some competent L2 students refuse to interact. Meanwhile, those with inadequate linguistics skills are willing to do so.

For those reasons above, most scholars worldwide are fired up to do studies on WTC in L2 communication in any set of conditions. For instance, some works which have been done in Iran (Riasati, 2018; Alemi, Tajeddin, & Mesbah, 2013), Saudi Arabia (Ahmed Mahdi, 2014), Turkey (Şener, 2014), Korea (Kang, 2005), and China (Cao & Philp, 2006; Wen & Clément, 2010). Those studies commonly have paid significant interest in testing potential and impactful variables for students' WTC, such as social & learning context, age, gender, attitude, personality, and self-confidence. However, the number of investigations on this variable is still limited in Indonesia.

Bringing this concern to English teaching and learning in Indonesia, it is believed that there is a research gap between these two elements, which is evaluating the association between immediacy qualities and students' WTC. There are two reasons for it; first, Gol et al. (2014) affirmed that the study about students' willingness to communicate was majorly carried out in the area of a second language (L2). Meanwhile, English acts as a Foreign Language (EFL) rather than as a Second Language (ESL) in Indonesia; second, Hsu (2005) stated that teachers' immediacy appeared to be

rated insufficiently in the language teaching and learning process as compared to the communication field. She also believed that communication in L2 learning mostly concentrates on linguistic production rather than student-instructor engagement. However, several studies concerning the students' willingness to communicate and English instructors' immediacy have been done in numerous countries where English acts as a foreign language, such as Turkey, Iran, Korea, Japan, China, and Indonesia. For example, two studies from Iran, Sheybani (2019) and Gol et al. (2014) showed a positive and significant correlation between teachers' immediacy and Iranian EFL learners' WTC. Other than Iran, South Korea also has studies that have the same focus. One of them was conducted by Lee in 2020. The research found that students' WTC were positively associated with the teachers' immediacy. In contrast, other research findings claimed different conclusions. For example, Fallah (2014) found that teacher immediacy did not have a direct effect on students' willingness to communicate. In the same way, a study from China, Yu (2011), stated that "teacher immediacy did not show direct predictive power on WTC in English." On that account, more comprehensive investigations should be done to view how these two variables are correlated, especially in the Indonesian context.

The objectives of this study are to find out whether there was a correlation between EFL students' enthusiasm in classroom communication and their lecturers' immediacy attributes and to gain a deeper understanding about which lecturers' immediacy behaviors that would affect the enthusiasm of the English foreign language students. Hence, the research problem was formulated in the following questions: (1) Are lecturers' immediacy attributes and the students' willingness to communicate significantly correlated? and (2) Which lecturers' immediacy behaviors (verbal or nonverbal) affected the students' willingness to communicate the most?

METHOD

Samples for this study were purposively chosen by two criteria. First, they have studied subjects focusing on English speaking within the classroom context. Second, the speaking classes taken were taught by the same person. As the result, 122 students took part in the data collection. All of them were given two questionnaires to answer as the assessment tool for the association between students' readiness to communicate and instructor immediacy qualities.

The first questionnaire was intended to assess the students' willingness to communicate. For this current work, writers used a ready-made instrument developed by Gol et al. (2014). In their previous research, it was pre-piloted, piloted, and factor-analyzed. Then, it generated the final product of a 28-item questionnaire with seven underlying constructs and 0.73 reliability index.

The second questionnaire aimed to assess the lecturer's immediacy behaviors, verbal and nonverbal. To get the objective designed, this study used a ready-made scale that calculates the students' perspective toward their teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy traits. It was a 34-item tool created by Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey in 1987. The 33 items had been tested and the result described acceptable internal consistency with .79 alpha coefficient (Sheybani, 2019).

The questionnaires were distributed to participants at the beginning of the semester. Before it is administered, writers told the participants about the research objectives. Because the participants and the researchers couldn't meet in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, Google Form was considered as the most appropriate place to share and fill out the questionnaires. Therefore, the researchers distributed the link to the questionnaire through WhatsApp groups and contacted the participants. In addition, they were also informed that the assessment result would not affect their classroom scores. So, the participants felt more comfortable in giving comments of their lecturers. The data were analyzed by using SPSS 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were discussed in terms of the study’s limitations, pedagogical consequences, and factors affecting students’ WTC. Another interesting topic to discuss is the findings concerning previous related studies. To get the details, see Table 1, 2, and 3 provided.

Table 1. Correlations between EFL students’ WTC and lecturers’ immediacy.

		<i>Students’ WTC</i>	<i>Lecturers’ Immediacy</i>
WTC	Pearson Correlation	1	.716(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	122	122
T1	Pearson Correlation	.716(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	122	122

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 26, 2021

Table 2. Result of Determination Coefficient Test.

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	.716(a)	.513	.509	6.958

It was found that 0.716 of Pearson Correlation value (see Table 1) and 0.513 of r square value (see Table 2) which showed that EFL students’ WTC explained 51.3% of the variance in Lecturer Immediacy attributes. In other words, the study revealed a correlation between two research variables tested. This overall outcome was consistent with prior comparable studies. First, a study done by Lee in 2020 described that there was a connection between students’ WTC and teachers’ immediacy behaviors. He found the results by asking students to fill out three different questionnaires, e.g. factors including credibility & self-rated English-speaking skill, WTC, and teacher immediacy. Not only that Lee’s study also had a discrete treatment to this current research, specifically he exposed the participants with a variety of teachers. Second, a research done in Iran by Sheybani (2019), the results showed there was a considerable correlation between teachers’ immediacy qualities and EFL students’ WTC. She found that verbal immediacy was strongly and positively correlated to the students’ willingness to communicate. Last, Gol et al. (2014) also mostly resulted in identical findings. This survey results said that there was a link between the teachers’ immediacy characteristics and their EFL students’ WTC. They also claimed some factors or elements which influenced students’ willingness, such as the topic of discussion, group size, students' perceived self-efficacy, classroom climate, external pressure, and students' perceived communication skills.

Table 3. Correlational Analysis Finding

<i>Model</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	<i>Sig (2-Tailed)</i>
WTC and TI (Nonverbal)	0.502	0.000
WTC and TI (Verbal)	0.689	0.000

In addition, the Pearson correlation value of Verbal behavior (0.689) was higher than Nonverbal behavior (0.502). Thus, it could be confirmed that students' WTC were mostly affected by lecturers' verbal immediacy traits. It means the number of students who interact in class depends on how effective the lecturers' verbal immediacy behavior is. Some previous studies, Lee (2020), Sheybani (2019), and Fallah (2014), also have similar results. However, Fallah (2014), in his study, described that teachers' nonverbal immediacy behaviors are to show an openness and invitation to students to communicate in the classroom. Therefore, the students will feel more open to initiating the conversation when teachers demonstrate habits, like showing relaxed body gestures, moving around, interacting without looking at the notes or the board, and gazing at the class while speaking.

Although this study suggested that lecturers' immediacy behaviors affect students' WTC, there were several other variables that associate with those two things. According to Weda, Atmowardoyo, Rahman, Said, & Sakti, (2021), the topic discussed can increase students' willingness to communicate. It means the more interesting the topic to discuss, the more exciting students to speak. Furthermore, Basoz and Erten (2019) believed that a compelling topic also encourages students to actively participate in communication. Besides, Pattapong (2015) stated that providing students with exciting topics for classroom discussion is a task for teachers. Therefore, educators always need to be updated on any interesting issues, both academic and non-academic. In the classroom context, a creative approach is good to apply in order to encourage them to speak with some thrilling topics for classroom discussion.

The educational consequences from this study's findings are: First, both immediacy behavior activities, verbal or nonverbal, enable teachers or lecturers to provide precise ideas to teaching guidelines. Hence, recognizing simple activities verbally or nonverbally, such as smiling, open body stance, and "voice expressiveness" must help teacher-student classroom communication. Then, according to Gorham (1988), once recognized, the instantaneity characteristics can directly be transferred to new instructors in order to improve psychological learning, learner inspiration, and learner-instructor interaction. Therefore, it becomes a task for lecturers, especially in the teacher training department, to be acquainted with teachers' immediacy behavior topics so that they can provide appropriate feedback to their students, who are going to be future teachers, throughout training.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, willingness to communicate (WTC) and lecturers' immediacy behaviors are positively and strongly associated. However, verbal immediacy attributes have performed a higher correlation to EFL students' WTC than nonverbal ones. This study resulted that teachers or lecturers in EFL classrooms should be more aware of performing immediacy attributes as well as choosing the topic during the learning process because those two elements can significantly impact the students' willingness to speak. Lecturers and teachers need to be more aware of their own attributes before inviting students to join classroom communication.

Further investigation should be conducted in various educational environments and age groups. More detailed examples of lecturers' immediacy behavior and students' WTC might be collected. This study did not control participants' demographic characteristics in equal, such as age, gender, and occupation either. Therefore, those demographic characteristics may operate as an intervening variable.

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