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The relationship between Iranian students' learning style and their willingness to communicate

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Abstract

This study was aimed at exploring the relationship between Iranian students' learning style and their willingness to communicate (WTC). Thus, One-way MANOVA and Chi-square was selected in this thesis. To conduct this study, 100 Iranian students (50 male and 50 female), studying English as foreign language in two different language institutes in Shiraz, Iran, with age range of 16-19 were selected through convenient sampling. To collect the data, the participants were asked to fill willingness to communicate and learning style questionnaires. To analyze the data, mentioned method was used. Results showed that there isn't a significant relationship between Iranian students' learning style and their willingness to communicate; there is not any statistically significant difference between Iranian EFL students on their learning style in terms of their gender and the results indicated that gender significantly affected learners' willingness to communicate

Keywords: Learning style; Willingness to communicate; EFL.

Introduction:

For the first time, the construct "Unwillingness to Communicate" was coined by Burgoon (1976) who gave this definition for it: enduring and chronic tendency to avoid or devalue oral communication. According to her, an individual's willingness for communication is influenced by variables like anomie and alienation, introversion, self-esteem, and communication apprehension.

McCroskey and Richmond (1982) defined this construct as tendency to be timid, reserved, and most specifically, talk less, however, they called it shyness.

The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) originated from the work on communication in a native language in the late 1950s and early 1960s (McCroskey, 1997) in North America.

McCroskey and Richmond (1982) defined WTC as a 'stable predisposition toward communication when free to choose to do so.' (as cited in MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, p.7) They believed that WTC shows individuals' general personality orientation for communication in different contexts and is the intention to initiate communication when given a choice.

Kang (2005) defined WTC as "… 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)

Research methodology

Participants

This study was conducted on 100 Iranian upper intermediate students (50 male and 50 female) who were studying English as foreign language in two different language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. The participants' L1 was Persian. Also, their age was in the range of 16-19. Convenient sampling procedure was used in this study because intact classes were selected for participating in the study without random sampling.

Instruments

The data of this study were collected using two instruments:

The first instrument was willingness to communicate scale in a foreign language context (WTC) questionnaire, developed by MacIntyre, et. al (2001) and modified by hamzehnejad and Shariati (2014). The scale comprises of 27 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = almost never willing" to "5 = almost always willing". The items were written in a way that involved students' willingness to communicate in all four skills. MacIntyre et al. (2001) reported this scale to be a valid and reliable one.

The second instrument involved learning style questionnaire (composed of two parts: learning style questionnaire and demographic information). This questionnaire was adapted from Ehrman and Leaver (2003). The questionnaire presented learners with two statements and required them to respond on a 9-point scale with statements which reflect their way of learning. It was further sub-divided to two main parts including ecstasis and synopsis. The ecstasis consists of field independent, random, global, inductive, synthetic, analogical, concrete, levelling, and impulsive.

In the other hand the Synoptic consists of field dependent, sequential, particular, deductive, analytic, digital, abstract, sharpening, and reflective.

Data analysis

To analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistics were run. More specifically, One way MANOVA was run to see whether there is a significant relationship between Iranian students learning style and their willingness to communicate. Moreover, Chi-square test was used to see if there is any statistically significant difference between Iranian EFL students on their learning style due to their gender. And to examine the difference between Iranian EFL students on their willingness to communicate due to their gender, One way MANOVA was run.

Results of statistical analysis

First, descriptive statistics was run

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
WTCspeaking	100	1.00	5.00	2.9100	.96499
WTCcomprehension	100	1.00	5.00	3.1300	.93911
WTCreading	100	1.00	5.00	3.0200	.90988
WTCwriting	100	1.00	4.00	2.7300	.66447
WTC	100	2.00	5.00	3.1000	.89330
Valid N (listwise)	100				

In order to answer the first research question, multivariate analysis of variance was used. Table 1shows the results.

Table 2. Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
Style	1.00	ecstasis	36
	2.00	synopsis	64

Table 3. Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.969	585.595[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.031	585.595[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	31.149	585.595[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	31.149	585.595[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
Style	Pillai's Trace	.028	.544[b]	5.000	94.000	.742
	Wilks' Lambda	.972	.544[b]	5.000	94.000	.742
	Hotelling's Trace	.029	.544[b]	5.000	94.000	.742
	Roy's Largest Root	.029	.544[b]	5.000	94.000	.742

a. Design: Intercept + style
b. Exact statistic

Wilks' Lambda in the section entitled **gender** is the first evidence that should be considere

As it can be seen in Table 4.3 the sig. value in Wilks' lambda row is .742 and above .05 indicating that learners' learning style did not significantly affect their willingness to communication. Tests of between-subject was also inspected to determine the effect of learning style on all subscales of WTC. Table 4. 4 show the resu

Table 4. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	WTC	.007[a]	1	.007	.009	.926
	WTCspeaking	.456[b]	1	.456	.487	.487
	WTCcomprehension	1.734[c]	1	1.734	1.985	.162
	WTCreading	1.210[d]	1	1.210	1.468	.228
	WTCwriting	.022[e]	1	.022	.050	.823
Intercept	WTC	887.047	1	887.047	1100.484	.000
	WTCspeaking	791.016	1	791.016	845.043	.000
	WTCcomprehension	925.174	1	925.174	1059.486	.000
	WTCreading	858.490	1	858.490	1041.883	.000
	WTCwriting	689.063	1	689.063	1545.708	.000
Style	WTC	.007	1	.007	.009	.926
	WTCspeaking	.456	1	.456	.487	.487
	WTCcomprehension	1.734	1	1.734	1.985	.162
	WTCreading	1.210	1	1.210	1.468	.228
	WTCwriting	.023	1	.023	.050	.823
Error	WTC	78.993	98	.806		
	WTCspeaking	91.734	98	.936		
	WTCcomprehension	85.576	98	.873		
	WTCreading	80.750	98	.824		
	WTCwriting	43.688	98	.446		
Total	WTC	1040.000	100			
	WTCspeaking	939.000	100			
	WTCcomprehension	1067.000	100			
	WTCreading	994.000	100			
	WTCwriting	789.000	100			
Corrected Total	WTC	79.000	99			
	WTCspeaking	92.190	99			
	WTCcomprehension	87.310	99			
	WTCreading	81.960	99			
	WTCwriting	43.710	99			

Table 4. 4 illustrates that learners' WTCs for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are not significantly affected by their learning style. All sig. values are above .05.

In order to determine the effect of gender on learners' WTC, multivariate analysis of variance was also run. The results are presented in Table 5

Table 5. Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.972	657.485[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.028	657.485[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	34.973	657.485[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	34.973	657.485[b]	5.000	94.000	.000

gender	Pillai's Trace	.251	6.293[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.749	6.293[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.335	6.293[b]	5.000	94.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.335	6.293[b]	5.000	94.000	.000

a. Design: Intercept + gender
b. Exact statistic

The sig. value that is reported in Wilks' lambda row is .000 indicating that male and female learners are significantly different in terms of their WTC. To determine if male and female learners are significantly different in terms of their WTCs for the four skills, test of between-subject Effects should be considered. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	WTC	1.440[a]	1	1.440	1.819	.180
	WTCspeaking	12.250[b]	1	12.250	15.018	.000
	WTCcomprehension	12.250[c]	1	12.250	15.994	.000
	WTCreading	5.760[d]	1	5.760	7.408	.008
	WTCwriting	.250[e]	1	.250	.564	.455
Intercept	WTC	961.000	1	961.000	1214.260	.000
	WTCspeaking	846.810	1	846.810	1038.121	.000
	WTCcomprehension	979.690	1	979.690	1279.105	.000
	WTCreading	912.040	1	912.040	1172.965	.000
	WTCwriting	745.290	1	745.290	1680.590	.000
gender	WTC	1.440	1	1.440	1.819	.000
	WTCspeaking	12.250	1	12.250	15.018	.000
	WTCcomprehension	12.250	1	12.250	15.994	.000
	WTCreading	5.760	1	5.760	7.408	.008
	WTCwriting	.250	1	.250	.564	.155
Error	WTC	77.560	98	.791		
	WTCspeaking	79.940	98	.816		
	WTCcomprehension	75.060	98	.766		
	WTCreading	76.200	98	.778		
	WTCwriting	43.460	98	.443		
Total	WTC	1040.000	100			
	WTCspeaking	939.000	100			
	WTCcomprehension	1067.000	100			
	WTCreading	994.000	100			
	WTCwriting	789.000	100			
Corrected Total	WTC	79.000	99			
	WTCspeaking	92.190	99			
	WTCcomprehension	87.310	99			
	WTCreading	81.960	99			
	WTCwriting	43.710	99			

The results indicated the sig. values for the effect of gender on learners' WTCs for speaking, listening, reading and writing are .000, .000, .008 and .155 respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that male and female learners were only not significantly different regarding their writing WTC.

Concluding remarks

Having conducted this study, the researcher reached the following findings:

One of the study findings was that there is a significant relationship between Iranian students' learning style and their willingness to communicate. This finding supports the major role of individual factors including learning style in learners' willingness to communicate. In confirming this finding, it can be said that, in line with constructivism, each person learns differently and in his/her own way. Thus, he/she transfers his/her own individualistic learning style in almost all aspects of learning a new language including willingness to communicate construct.

The other result found in the present study was that there is not any statistically significant difference between Iranian EFL students on their learning style in terms of their gender. This finding may refer to the point that male and female Iranian EFL learners have similar learning styles in learning English language.

The third finding of the study was that there is not any statistically significant difference between Iranian EFL students on their willingness to communicate in terms of their gender. This result support that male and female learners show an approximately equivalent level of willingness to communicate and there is no significant difference between them. However, the researcher expected a higher level of willingness to communicate in female learners.

Limitations of the study

The present study, like any other research project, suffers from certain limitations, which posed inevitable restrictions on the interpretations and generalizations of its outcomes. Some of these limitations include:

1. The small size of the sample is the main limitation of the study; therefore this study can be replicated with a larger sample.

2. The second limitation was related to the study setting. More specifically, the setting of the present study was constrained to two language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. Thus, generalization of the findings should be done with much care.

3. The third limitation was related to the sampling procedure of the study which was convenience sampling. Therefore, the sample may not represent target population.

Suggestions for further research

Having the above limitations in mind, the following aspects need further related research:

1. Conducting a study with a bigger sample.

2. Replicating the study in a more diverse setting.

3. Exploring the relationship between EFL learners' WTC and their learning styles, taking some other variables including age into consideration.

4. Investigating the relationship between EFL learners' WTC and their learning strategies.

5. Investigating the relationship between EFL learners' WTC and their identity styles.

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