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**WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AMONG LIBYAN LEARNERS IN EFL
CLASSROOM CONTEXT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH
SITUATIONAL FACTORS**

JAMILA ALI WENS AOMR



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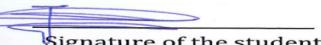
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the factors influencing Libyan learners' willingness to communicate in English in Libya. It examined the relationship between three variables, i.e. situational motivation, situational speaking anxiety and classroom environment, and the willingness to communicate in English among Libyan students at the university level. A total number of 209 Libyan university students were involved in the study. The study adopted a quantitative survey method. Descriptive analyses, correlational analysis and regression analysis were used to examine the data collected. The structural equation modeling (SEM) using Amos was also utilized to test the interrelationship among all variables. The findings showed that classroom environment and situational motivation are significant factors contributing to Libyan learners' willingness to communicate. It was found that willingness to communicate was positively correlated with classroom environment and situational motivation ($r = .478/.377$, $P < .01$) and was also predicted by them ($\beta = .389/.237$, $p < .01$) respectively. However, the results of the study also revealed that anxiety does not have a significant effect on learners' willingness to communicate. The study suggests that EFL teachers and educators need to understand the contributing factors stimulating learners' interactions. The results of this research have pedagogical implications for English language teachers and educators in exploring effective ways to increase learners' willingness to communicate.





KESANGGUPAN UNTUK BERKOMUNIKASI DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR LIBYA DALAM KONTEKS KELAS EFL DAN KAITANNYA DENGAN FAKTOR KEADAAN

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan meneroka faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesanggupan pelajar Libya untuk berkomunikasi. Ia mengkaji hubungan antara tiga pemboleh ubah, iaitu keadaan motivasi, keadaan kegelisahan untuk bertutur dan persekitaran bilik datjah, dengan kesanggupan untuk berkomunikasi dalam kalangan pelajar Libya di peringkat universiti. Dalam kajian ini, seramai 209 pelajar universiti Libya terlibat dalam kajian tinjauan kuantitatif. Analisis deskriptif, analisis korelasi dan analisis regresi telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data kajian. Structural equation modeling (SEM) menggunakan AMOS juga digunakan dalam menganalisis hubungan antara pemboleh ubah. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa faktor persekitaran bilik dadah dan keadaan motivasi pelajar memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi kesanggupan pelajar Libya untuk berkomunikasi. Didapati kesanggupan untuk berkomunikasi berkorelasi secara positif dengan persekitaran bilik darjah dan motivasi situasional ($r: .478$ $I: .377$, $P<.01$) dan juga diramalkan oleh faktor-faktor tersebut (beta: $.389$ 1.237 , $p<.01$). Walaubagaimanapun, faktor kegelisahan tidak mempunyai kesan signifikan ke atas kesanggupan pelajar Libya untuk berkomunikasi. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengajar dan pendidik EFL (bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing) perlu memahami faktor-faktor yang mampu merangsang pelajar untuk berinteraksi. Dapatan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi pedagogi untuk pengajar dan pendidik yang mengajar bahasa Inggeris iaitu mereka perlu mencari kaedah-kaedah yang berkesan untuk mempertingkatkan kesanggupan pelajar untuk berkomunikasi dalam bilik darjah. Kajian ini juga telah memberi implikasi teori dengan menguji model yang boleh berfungsi sebagai kerangka produktif dalam penyelidikan tentang kesanggupan untuk berkomunikasi.





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ASV	Average Shared Squared Variance
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CA	Communication Anxiety
CDST	Complex Dynamics Systems Theory
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CR	Composite Reliability
DC	Desire to Communicate
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MSV	Maximum Shared Squared Variance
SDT	Self Determination Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SIR	Self-Instructional Radio
SPCC	Self-Perceived Communication Competence
SPSS	Statistical Packages for the Social Science





TL Target Language

UWTC Unwillingness to Communicate

WTC Willingness to communicate





LIST OF APPENDICES

- A The study Questionnaire
- B Descriptive & Inferential Statistical Analysis (SPSS output)
- C Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis (AMOS output)





CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



This chapter exhibits the essentials of this research, presenting its general overview, accenting the problem statement, the objectives, purpose of the study as well as the research questions and the definition of terms. This research work investigates the situational factors affecting willingness to communicate among Libyan university students while learning English.

The English language is considered one of the critical subjects in the education system in Libya especially because it is taught at all levels as an obligatory foreign language subject, starting from the first grade of the primary stage at the age of 6. It is serving as a necessary subject to master among other subjects in all tiers of education in





the country. Hence without mastering the English language the academic excellence of the student could not be secured.

Since independence in the 1950s, English has grown to become one of the most important languages in Libya. English is taught in Libya as a foreign language and is frequently a language of teaching and a communication medium in several faculties within a university (El-Hawat, 2007). In the mid-1990s, the policy of the Libyan Ministry of Education towards teaching and learning English had undergone complete changes as English was given much greater attention. From that time, the idea of teaching and learning English has increased significantly. One of the key causes of this growing concern is achieving the importance of English in academic contexts. This is coupled with the usage of it as a medium of instruction in engineering, science, medicine and English departments. Also, the growing number of learners enrolled in university education has been a reason to increase the interest in learning English. In addition, in the context of Libya, the English language is a necessary requirement to gain important jobs in the country. To gain employment, the employee needs some degree of fluency in English. Hence, mastering English paves the way for learners to accomplish certain goals.

On the basis of this situation, there is a demand to assist the English learners to master oral communication skills which in turn help to overcome their communication obstacles. This can be done after finding the reasons or the factors behind their unwillingness to communicate. Situational factors such as motivation, speaking anxiety,



and classroom environment are considered as relevant to ascertain why language learners are unwilling or willing to communicate.

1.2 Background of the Study

Many recent research on the use of English at the university level in Libya (e.g., Orafi, 2008; Shteiwi & Hamuda, 2016) have revealed that Libyan students face difficulties in speaking the English language. Shteiwi and Hamuda (2016) maintains that lack of access to the target language and frequent use of Arabic, both within and outside the school, are key factors that contribute to difficulties in speaking for Libyan EFL learners. The lack of speech practices and the overemphasis of the teachers on precision are also other factors that lead to speaking difficulties. A survey conducted by the Libyan Ministry of

Education in 2004 found that performance of students' speaking English is unsatisfactory.

This issue is also highlighted by UNESCO, 2002, which states that Libyan students who learn the English language lack opportunities for interaction and participation in the classroom; they do not take responsibility for their learning and they miss the opportunity to work collaboratively. Based on the researcher's experience of teaching at the department of English, most students do not initiate communication in English and they prefer to keep silent instead of participating, interacting, or debating in a conversation.

Hence, the major concern to Libyan educationists and instructors should be to motivate their learners to use the English language. However, avoidance of communication creates a considerable obstacle for these university students. The consequence of the decision to avoid communication can be serious. This action might



have an impact on employability rates among graduates as the low proficiency in English raises the percentage of joblessness in the country.

English language skills in oral communication are the most significant capability that can attract foreign investment and give rise to economic benefits (Power & Shrestha, 2010). In Libya, for example, English language communication may provide the opportunity for the country to find its place in a global environment and build its international relations and partnerships. Davie (2012, as cited in Abushafa, 2014) maintains that international businesses have been investing in Libya and this has helped to open up the country to the impact of participation in a global community. In fact, recent employment requirements often involve some degree of fluency in English in order to meet the international requirements of any company.



This is clear in a multilingual workforce, for this reason, superior English communication skills is a passport to securing and keeping a good job. Very precisely, the oil industry on which modern Libya is built is a major employer (African Development Bank, 2012). Libyan employees need to have a job in this sector; they need good English skills, especially in the field of oral communication. (Kassim & Ali, 2010) confirms that there is a high demand for graduates to have professional oral communication skills as they can perform more efficiently in a modern workplace. In addition, according to Crosling and Ward (2002), staff will be at an obvious disadvantage if they are not fluent in English oral communication. As a concrete step, Libyan educators need to find the most successful ways to help their English-language learners develop oral language skills as an important aspect of FL learning.





In this regard, studies have shown that unwillingness to communicate has a negative impact on oral communication skills. The lack of willingness to use language leads to ineffective “interaction and language production” (Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006, p. 190). Willingness to communicate (WTC), a variable that was originally considered to account for some of the individual variations in first language communication, has eventually evolved to become an important factor in clarifying second language learning and communication. It was defined as “a learner’s readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2.” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). The development of WTC among learners is therefore crucial, especially in the context of the EFL, where learners do not have enough exposure to target language outside the classroom. WTC is also consistent with facilitating the process of language learning in such a way that higher WTC among students leads to increased opportunities for SL practice and authentic language use (MacIntyre et al, 1998).

It is quite clear that WTC is influenced by a number of factors, observed and stressed by Kang (2005), the importance of situational variables can create willingness to communicate among EFL learners. Studies have also found it depends on certain factors such as motivation, speaking anxiety, and classroom environment (Ghanbarpour, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2001; MacIntyre et al., 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Peng, 2007; Riasati & Nooreen., 2011, Weaver, 2010; Yashima, 2002). This being the case, discovering what variables affect students is essential; willingness to communicate or interact is therefore crucial to figuring out what makes certain students eager to talk while others are not.



1.3 Problem Statement

Nowadays, oral communication in English has gained more popularity because of its growing use as an international language. Not only this, but also opportunities for oral communication have increased, and ELT educators have become more concerned with finding the most effective ways to help English language learners master oral skills as an important aspect of FL learning. Consequently, speaking has been considered as an essential skill in language learning by learners and researchers. Bygate (2002) often describes speaking as a complex and multilevel skill owing to the fact that learners should use their knowledge of the language and activate their abilities to communicate in that language. The importance of communication in FL classrooms has grown while there has been an emphasis on students' talking in order to learn (MacIntyre et al., 2003).

However, recently, the common problem that is faced by many teachers is that their students are unwilling to communicate in English, although they participate in other skills such as reading, writing and listening. They are reluctant to communicate when they use L2 (Savaşçı, 2014).

The challenge that students face in speaking EFL in the classroom is a known issue in many countries, particularly in the Arab world (Al-issa, 2006; Al-mekhlafi, 2004; Rababah, 2005). In this context, Libyan EFL university students are no exception. Some studies (e.g., Orafi; 2008, Shteiwi & Hamuda; 2016) have revealed that Libyan students face difficulties in understanding and speaking the English language. Based on the familiarity of the researcher as a lecturer in the English language department, many

students are unable to connect, engage, interact, and discuss, or even debate, in classroom English conversations.

There is an urgent requirement to understand the situational and individual variables that play a critical role in the WTC of students in EFL contexts. It is therefore essential to investigate the context of WTC, factors that predict and trigger WTC in a second and foreign language and how language teachers can increase the WTC and performance of learners in a target language (e.g., Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre, et al., 2003). However, the heuristic willingness to communicate (WTC) model, has emerged from situations related to L2 use. In fact, willingness to communicate in a second and foreign language was found that it is strongly influenced by situational context (Macintyre et al., 1998). Thus, it is essential to explore why students opt for or avoid communication in the FL classroom at specific moments and what situational factors influence them in classroom communication (MacIntyre et al. 1998). In other words, it is fundamental to understand the situational factors that will help students to communicate. Kang (2005) stresses the importance of situational variables that can create a willingness to communicate. In L2 pedagogy, WTC can be produced by situational variables, rather than the trait-like WTC of a person which is fairly stable. It was also strongly suggested by Yashima et al. (2004) that future WTC research should concentrate on contextual or situational factors that make students more or less likely to interact or be willing to communicate.

In spite of the fact that diverse studies have been carried out on several variables showing a satisfactory flow of communication among students in a foreign language

classroom context, a few studies have been concerned about situational factors that potentially affect WTC. Furthermore, this study is novel in the sense that it uses mainly quantitative methodology. So far there have been only two quantitative studies related to classroom environment factors have been carried out by Peng and Woodrow (2010) and Khajavy et al. (2016). Although these studies have explored willingness to communicate and classroom environment, none of them has investigated the relationship between situational factors such as situational motivation and situational speaking anxiety. Furthermore, from reviewing the literature, the researcher has found that there is a lack of studies about WTC in English in the Arabic context. The researcher found only two studies which have been done in the Arab world context (i.e., Alqahtani, 2015; Turjoman, 2016). These studies have dealt with WTC and its antecedents as a trait-like predisposition. The researcher has not come across any study related to WTC in English in the Libyan EFL context.

Going by the fact that quite a few studies have focused on situational factors affecting WTC and that studies on EFL learners at the university level are obviously lacking, this study, conducted in the East part of Libya at English department in one university, focuses on addressing this identified gap. The study will examine WTC and the situational factors that affect WTC by Libyan students. It focuses on situational factors such as motivation, speaking anxiety and classroom atmosphere to assess whether they affect the ability of the students to communicate. Studies have found motivation as a factor that correlates with L2WTC (Lu & Hsu, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 2003; Peng, 2007). Speaking anxiety was also found as a correlating factor to WTC (Ghanbarpour, 2016; Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002). Research has

also found that WTC can be correlated to a classroom environment (MacIntyre et al., 2001; Riasati & Noordin, 2011; Weaver, 2010). Furthermore, this study proposes a model that investigates the interdependence relationships of situational factors such as motivation, speaking anxiety, classroom environment, and WTC by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Currently, there are not enough studies using situational variables in WTC models. Hence, there is a need to employ situational variables which can shape the WTC of a learner, in a particular situation, in order to better understand the factors that affect learning in the classroom (Weaver, 2010).

Hence, addressing why Libyan English-major students avoid communicating in English and remain silent even though there is an opportunity to use English in the classroom is the aim of this study. In addition, it is fundamental to understand students' individual differences that will help instructors to prepare their classes for communication. Also, there is a need to provide more insights into the communication and language learning and teaching to university students in Libya and to make administrators and teachers better understand the variables that prevent or encourage students to communicate in EFL classroom.

1.4 Research Aim

Understanding the factors that influence learners' willingness to communicate in classroom is important in helping curriculum designers, teachers and the learners as well. Currently, communicative language teaching encourages learners to use English in the classroom. It is evident that, in communicative language classroom, teachers need their

students to have high level of FL willingness to communicate. A lack of willingness to communicate leads to less interaction and language performance (Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006).

This research was carried out to explore the relationship between affective variables (situational motivation, classroom environment, and situational speaking anxiety) and FL willingness to communicate among Libyan learners at the university level. Situational factors such as motivation, classroom environment, and speaking anxiety were found as factors that influence students' willingness to communicate (Ghanbarpour, 2016; Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 2003; Peng, 2007; Yashima, 2002). Several studies were conducted among Libyan students at university level (e.g., Orafi, 2008; Shteiwi & Hamuda, 2016) that addressed students' communication difficulties in English speaking in classroom. Therefore, this study was conducted to add more knowledge that might help in understanding the students' communication in speaking English in classroom and the factors that may influence their speaking English.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine Libyan EFL students' level of WTC, situational motivation, situational speaking anxiety, and classroom environment.
2. To examine the correlation between situational factors and situational WTC among Libyan students.



3. To examine the prediction of situational variables' variance on situational WTC among Libyan students;
4. To examine the interrelationships between situational factors and situational WTC among Libyan students.

1.6 Research Questions

The main purpose of the research is to concentrate on the nature of the effects and the relationships between the various situational variables that influence the willingness to communicate in a context of foreign language. The study would also look for answers to the following questions:



1. What are the perceptive levels of WTC, situational motivation, situational speaking anxiety, and classroom environment among Libyan students?
2. Is there any correlation relationship between of WTC and their perception of situational factors among Libyan students?
3. Which situational variables predict the greatest influence in learners' WTC among Libyan student?
4. What are the interrelationships between WTC and situational factors among Libyan students?





1.7 Research Hypothesis

Hypotheses tested using SEM are:

1. Situational speaking anxiety has a significant effect on willingness to communicate.
2. Situational motivation has a significant effect on willingness to communicate.
3. Classroom environment has a significant effect on willingness to communicate.
4. Classroom environment has a significant effect on situational motivation.
5. Classroom environment has a significant effect on situational speaking anxiety.
6. Situational speaking anxiety has a significant effect on situational motivation.



1.8 Significance of the Study

This study sought to investigate the factors that affect WTC among Libyan university students. So far, there is no study which examined WTC on its relationship with situational factors that impact students' willingness to speak in English. Although Shteiwi and Hamuda's (2016) study investigated oral communication problems among English Major Students, they did not make any reference to WTC and situational factors that affect students' willingness to communicate. Furthermore, this study is significant in terms of employing a structural equation molding (SEM) method that combined the interdependence relationship among several variables by including situational variables. This shows a better understanding of the interconnected complexities of Libyan students'



willingness to communicate in EFL classroom context. Most previous studies examining models in learners' willingness to communicate utilized mostly none situational variables and focused only on testing willingness to communicate from trait perspective. This study went a step further by testing the situational WTC model among EFL students in Libya.

Moreover, the study is essential to the field of higher education because it offers an insight into more oral communication through speaking activities to help students increase their speaking skill and presents practical suggestions for teachers and educational policymakers. In specific terms, recently, the English language pedagogy in Libya seems to be an important part of educational research. Currently, researchers in the English language pedagogy in Libya are more concerned with communicative language teaching (CLT) approach which aims at involving learners in conversation to improve communication competence skills for learners (Savignon,2005), hence encouraging the studies that lead learners to interact in oral communication is crucial. As such a study is significant enough because it will help in revealing the overall importance of WTC among the learners. This can give curriculum planners a new focus that may enhance learner speaking activities in the classroom. Furthermore, the finding of this study will reveal relationships between situational factors and WTC. Specifically, the deficiency of studies in the Libyan EFL context is a key reason that makes this study more valuable. Hopefully, the findings will also offer profound knowledge for the improvement of English language learning and teaching in Libya.



The results of this research will add more contributions in the field of ESL/EFL language learning and communication particularly in the Arab context and in specific Libya settings. The results of the study are likely to serve as a base-line data to both students and instructors to provide conditions that encourage students' willingness to communicate and eliminate the obstacles that hinder their oral communication in the classroom. Creating an appropriate classroom environment where students feel more relaxed and are more motivated to engage in communication activity helps students to enhance their speaking skills.

To conclude, EFL researchers can also benefit from the findings of this study. By identifying the factors that influenced Libyan learners' WTC, they can help other EFL learners around the country or even the world by conducting more research about this area of interest. Therefore, the significance of the study is not only for Libyan university EFL students but also for other students elsewhere.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

1.9.1 Situational Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

It is the individual intention or the willingness to engage in the interaction process in particular situations which may vary according to “interlocutor(s) topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables” (Kang, 2005).





1.9.2 Situational Motivation

Motivation is considered as one of the most important factors that are used to describe individual differences in language learning. The motivation of learners has been reported as a complex mix of trait and situational factors (Cao & Philp, 2006). The motivation of students has been related to factors such as their interest in education, their ability to engage in activities, to become successful professionals, and to develop their communication skills in ESL. Situational motivation is linked to the interests of a person for his or her reasons to engage in certain tasks. Therefore, situational motivation refers to why a learner engages in the actual moment of activity, the here and now of motivation (Østerlie et al., 2019).



1.9.3 Situational Speaking Anxiety

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) defined situational anxiety as a particular type of anxiety that arises invariably over time with a given situation in classroom.

1.9.4 Classroom Environment

The place where language learning takes place, and teachers, learners, and tasks are considered as the three components that have an influence on the language classroom (Dörnyei, 1994). The three components also reflect the scale of the classroom environment as they are recognized in educational research (Peng & Woodrow, 2010).





1.9.5 Foreign Language (FL)

A language is spoken at a location or a country where it is not used as an everyday communication language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994)

