

The Impact of Doing Problem-Solving Tasks on Willingness to Communicate, Self-perceived Communication Competence, and Communication Apprehension among Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Willingness to communicate (WTC) plays a central role in learning a second/foreign language. The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of doing problem-solving task on learners' WTC in English. To fulfill the purpose of the study, 61 pre-intermediate learners were chosen by means of administering a placement test. Learners were pretested through three scales of WTC and its two antecedents: self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and communication apprehension (CA). Of course, the experimental group was provided with fifteen problem-solving tasks during the course, while the control group was not. After fifteen sessions of the treatment, two groups were posttested through the same three scales. The results demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of their WTC's level. Moreover, the learners' WTC was found to be directly related to their SPCC and indirectly related to CA. So based on the MacIntyre's path model (1994), these both antecedents can be the best predictors of WTC. The analysis of the data was done through multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) statistical programs.

Keywords: willingness to communicate; communication apprehension; self-perceived communication competence; problem-solving tasks.

Introduction

These days, the ultimate goals of English Language Teaching are to promote the learners' communicative competence and authentic communication in the target language and also to emphasize the importance of learners using the second/foreign language in oral and written tasks. In order to achieve the communication goals, the learners should be encouraged to use the target language for meaningful and effective communication not only inside but also outside of the classroom. So the language instructors need to put their efforts into persuading the learners to use the target language as much as they can in the classroom. The more using of the target language in the classroom the more learning would happen. Such being the case, it is true that the notion of Willingness to Communicate (McCroskey, 1987) plays a key role in learning a second/foreign language.

Although fluent speaking is often the ultimate goal of EFL learners and a vital component in interpersonal communication, students behave differently in the degree to which they actually talk. Whereas many different opportunities arise for speaking in EFL classroom, some students keep silent and some rarely speak, some students tend to speak only when spoken to and some are reluctant to speak and a few students are talkative! There is a concern for students who sign up for conversation courses but don't participate in face-to-face interaction and don't speak to their classmates and remain reluctant to use it (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). While the students' main goal is authentic communication, why do they refuse to communicate and avoid talking in EFL classrooms? McCroskey (1987) asserted that "this variability in talking behavior is rooted in a personality variable that we call Willingness to Communicate" (p. 129).

Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which is defined as "the intention and desire to initiate communication" (MacIntyre et al., 1998), or "the probability that an individual will choose to communicate, specifically to talk, when free to do so" (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), is one of the individual differences that has been a key focus of second/foreign language research for over 20 years. Recently, MacIntyre (2007) drew attention to the learner's decision to voluntarily speak the language when the opportunity arises, even as basic language skills are being acquired. Some researchers (e.g.

MacIntyre et al., 1998, 2003) have argued that a fundamental goal of L2 education should be the encouragement of willingness to communicate in language learning, because WTC is expected to facilitate the language learning process so that higher WTC among students leads to increase opportunity for practicing in L2 and authentic language use (Riasati et al., 2011). Actually the students' desires to speak in the class depend on the degree of their willingness to communicate and it is proved that willingness to communicate is a kind of personality trait which is changeable in different situations or contexts and with different receivers. Based on this theory, language teachers should prefer to use some activities in the class to persuade the student into speaking in target language as much as possible. They had better make an effort to create some opportunities for the learners in the class to motivate them speak more and more. To do so, they may need some motivating tasks such as problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, information-gap tasks, etc.

Underlying WTC are two key antecedents, communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence (MacIntyre, 1994). Communication apprehension, in general, is defined as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Horwitz et al., 1986). In fact communication apprehension refers to the anxiety that people experience in association with real or anticipated communication and in the L2 is also known as language anxiety (MacIntyre, 2003). Self-perceived communication competence refers to the self-evaluation of one's ability to communicate appropriately in a given situation (McCroskey, 1991).

McCroskey and Richmond (1990) suggested that WTC originates from two variables: lack of anxiety and perceived competence. This means that people are willing to communicate when they are not apprehensive and perceive themselves to be a competent communicator. This suggestion, later methodically explained by McCroskey (1997), was first empirically supported by MacIntyre (1994). He developed a path model which postulated that WTC is based on a combination of greater perceived communicative competence and a lower level of communication

apprehension (Figure 1). The model also hypothesized that anxiety influences the perception of competence (Yashima, 2002).

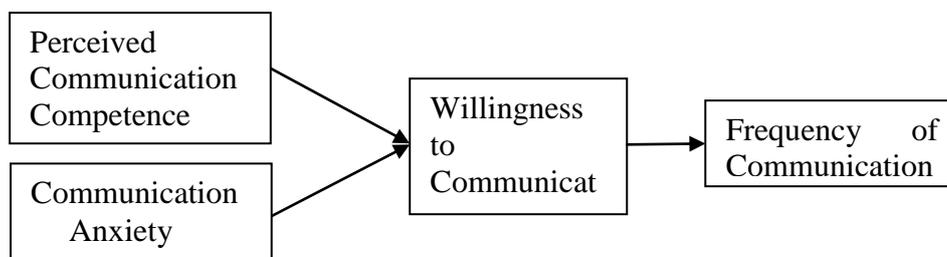


Figure 1: Segment of Macintyre's (1994) Willingness to Communicate model

For the past 20 years, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has attracted the attention of second language acquisition researchers, curriculum developers and language teachers. Brown(2007) asserts that “as the profession has continued to emphasize classroom interaction, learner-centered teaching, authenticity, and viewing the learner’s own experiences as important contributors to learning, task-based instruction draws the attention of teachers and learners to tasks in the classroom” (p. 242). Proponents of task-based teaching argue that the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is done by designing tasks—discussions, problems, games, and so on—which require learners to use the language for themselves (Willis & Willis, 2007). The present study is going to evaluate the impact of doing tasks, specifically problem-solving tasks, on the students’ willingness to communicate inside the language classroom. According to Skehan(2007 cited in Brown) task is “an activity in which meaning is primary, there is a problem to solve and relationship to real-world activities, with an objective that can be assessed in terms of an outcome.” Willis and Willis (2007) believe that

problem-solving tasks invite learners to offer advice and recommendations on problems ranging from the very general, like global warming, to the very specific, like what to do if your neighbor’s cat is causing trouble in your garden. These

tasks can stimulate wide-ranging discussion and also offer scope for a variety of writing activities, including note-taking, drafting, and finalizing proposals for solutions. (p. 93)

The purpose of this study is to investigate how doing problem-solving tasks affect willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian EFL learners. The present study tries to look into WTC in English as a foreign language context in Iran, among Iranian EFL learners in EFL institutes. The major point of this study is the impact of doing tasks, specifically problem-solving tasks, on learners' WTC inside the language classroom. It is believed that if learners are put into a free-anxiety atmosphere of the classroom and if they get encouraged to play a role in class discussions, they eagerly initiate talking when the opportunity arises, so they would have perfect practice for speaking skill. Also, it is believed that some effective tasks can involve learners in starting, doing, and finishing a certain activity successfully. To sum up, this study tries to find out whether the learners' WTC will increase by doing problem-solving tasks in the classroom or it is a consistent and stable personality trait of learners. The research questions formulated for the purpose of this study are:

1. Is there any correlation among Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate, their self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension?
2. Does doing problem-solving task affect Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English, their self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension?

Method

Participants

To accomplish the objectives of this study, 85 male and female learners of Iran-Mehr Language Institute were given a placement test. In the second phase, 61 pre-intermediate learners out of 85, 24 males and 37 females, were chosen for the final phase of the study. The ages of the students range from 20 years to 34 years and the average age was about 27 years. These 61 pre-intermediate learners were randomly put into two similar groups; one group as the experimental group, and the other as the comparison or control

group. Thirty two students were in the experimental group, and twenty nine students were in control group.

Instruments

In order to carry out this study, first, Oxford Standard Placement Test 2, written by Dave Allen (2004), based on American English File course books was used for homogenizing the learners. This test included three skills of grammar and structure, vocabulary, and listening in multiple-choice format. The next instruments used in this study were three scales used to measure willingness to communicate in English as foreign language (EFL), self-perceived communication competence, and communication apprehension, which were used as the pretest and posttest of this study. The original questionnaires were in English, so all three questionnaires were translated in Persian and were revised by three experts to increase reliability and validity of the research. Furthermore, the Back-translation method, which involves translating the original instruments into Persian and translating them back to English, was used to establish the accuracy of translation. The descriptions are as follows:

1. Willingness to communicate in English (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$): Twelve items from McCroskey (1992) were used to assess the percentage of time respondents would choose to communicate in four contexts (public speaking, talking in meetings, group discussions, and interpersonal conversations) and three types of receivers (stranger, acquaintance, and friend). The respondents chose the percentage of the time ranging from 0% to 100% that they would be willing to communicate in each case. This scale has been used by other researchers (Cetinkaya, 2005; Hashimoto, 2002; Matsuoka, 2005; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004) in EFL contexts.

2. Perceived communicative competence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$): Twelve items used by Yashima (2002) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996) were utilized to assess the extent to which the respondents feel confident communicating in English. The respondents self-evaluated their English competence by selecting a number ranging from 0% (entirely incompetent) to 100% (entirely competent). In this scale, the context and receivers of communication were the same with the WTC scale.

3. Communication anxiety in English (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$): This was measured by twelve items used by Yashima (2002). The respondents self-

assessed their communication apprehension or anxiety in English by indicating a percentage between 0% (do not feel anxiety at all) and 100% (always feel anxiety). The items covered the same context of communication and receivers as WTC and Perceived Communication Competence scales.

Procedure

With the permission of the manager of Iran-Mehr institute 61 pre-intermediate students based on a placement test participated in this study. These 61 students were classified in two main groups, 32 in experimental group and 29 in control group. The main course book of these classes was American English File (book 2) whose level was pre-intermediate.

The three scales of willingness to communicate and self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension were first piloted with 50 participants at the pre-intermediate level, studying at the same institute for checking the reliability and the validity of questionnaires.

As a pre-test, questionnaires containing measures of the willingness to communicate scale in English, self-perceived communication competence scale, and communication apprehension scale were administered to participants in both groups at the second session of the term. The main purpose was measuring the learners' willingness to communicate, self-perceived communication competence, and communication apprehension before any treatment, since the principal goal of this study is to find out whether the degree of learners' willingness to communicate and its two major antecedents can alter by doing some special tasks or not.

Regarding the treatment, this study required the teachers to provide the learners with a kind of tasks that pushed the learners to have a great intention to initiate talking and accomplish the tasks. So, fifteen problem-solving tasks, selected by the researcher, were assigned as the main treatment for the students in their class discussion time during the term. The reason of choosing these tasks is that they can invite learners to offer advice and recommendations on problems ranging from the very general one to the very specific one (Willis & Willis, 2007).

In the experimental group, the participants were provided with problem-solving tasks in addition to the course book (American English Files, book 2). In the control group, however, everything was similar to that of the experimental group, except that there was no problem-solving task. These tasks were performed almost every session in the experimental group in a way that students were known about them in advance and they had enough time for task-planning and task-preparation. The Students showed a lot of motivations for doing these activities based on some evidence: all students were ready and had some solutions to offer for the specific problem almost every session, and while doing the task, they were interested in offering their own solutions, so they initiated speaking eagerly and kept talking to achieve some good conclusions.

After 2 months treatment, the questionnaires including measures of willingness to communicate scale in English, self-perceived communication competence scale, and communication apprehension scale, were administrated in both groups for the second time as the post-test. The purpose was to know that the level of learners' willingness to communicate and its two main antecedents has changed as a result of the treatment or not.

Results

The quantitative data that came from the questionnaires were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was used to conduct descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the instrument. Due to the aforementioned research questions and the null hypotheses, as well as the design of the study, and also in order to examine the effects of the treatment on three communication variables (willingness to communicate, self-perceived communication competence, and communication apprehension), and to check whether two experimental and control groups are significantly different from one another on a particular variable of the study, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted.

Pilot Study

The WTC questionnaire was administered to 50 students in order to find the reliability indices for the WTC inventory. As displayed in Table 1, the Cronbach Alpha reliability indices for the WTC, Communication

Apprehension and Self-Perceived Competence are .94, .96 and .96, respectively.

Table 1
Cronbach Alpha Reliability Indices Pilot Study

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
WTC	.94	12
Communication Apprehension	.96	12
Self-Perceived Competence	.96	12

First research question

For answering the first question, LISREL (Version 8.8; 2006) was run to find out the chi square goodness of fit for the path model. A path model is a special type of structural model in which no latent variable is entered. As displayed in Path Diagram 1 (Figure 2), WTC (POSTWTC) has a negative correlation ($R = -.91$) with Communication Apprehension (POSTANX) while it shows a positive relationship ($R = .96$) with Self-Perceived Competence (POSTPCC).

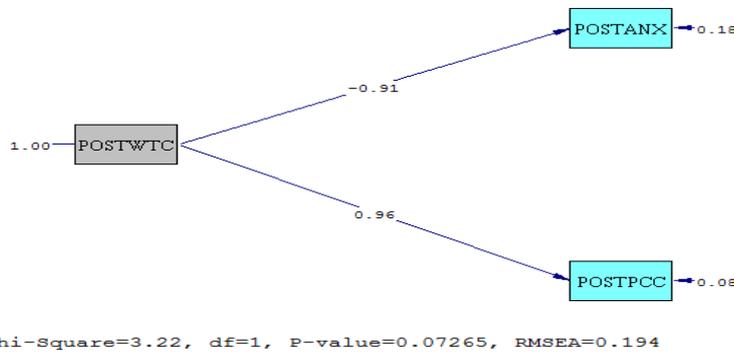


Figure 2: Path Diagram 1 (Model of Relationships between Components of WTC)

Although the Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA) is much higher than zero, the non-significant chi-square value of 3.22 ($P = .072 > .05$) and the indices of NFI = .98, NNFI = .95, CFI = .98 and GFI = .97 all indicate that the present model enjoys good fit. Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is not any significant correlation between learners'

willingness to communicate and their self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension in Iranian context is rejected and the model proposed by MacIntyre is supported.

Second research question

Pretest

A multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) was run to compare the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of WTC, Communication Apprehension and Self-Perceived Competence. Based on the results displayed in Table 2 it can be concluded that there are not any significant differences between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of WTC, $F(3, 57) = .285$, $P = .836 > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$; it represents a weak effect size. Thus it can be concluded that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their WTC prior to the main study.

Table 2
Multivariate Pretest of WTC by Groups

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.99	9625.46	3	57	.000	.998
	Wilks' Lambda	.002	9625.46	3	57	.000	.998
	Hotelling's Trace	506.60	9625.46	3	57	.000	.998
	Roy's Largest Root	506.60	9625.46	3	57	.000	.998
	Pillai's Trace	.01	.28	3	57	.836	.015
	Wilks' Lambda	.98	.28	3	57	.836	.015
GROUP	Hotelling's Trace	.01	.28	3	57	.836	.015
	Roy's Largest Root	.01	.28	3	57	.836	.015

The above mentioned F-value of .285 indicates non-significant differences between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the total WTC. Table 3 compares the experimental and control groups on the three components of WTC separately.

Table 3

Univariate Pretests of WTC

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
WTC	449.619	1	449.619	.026	.872	.000
	1007352.020	59	17073.763			
Communication	40.279	1	40.279	.005	.944	.000
Apprehension	483508.082	59	8195.052			
Self-Perceived	2087.283	1	2087.283	.143	.707	.002
Competence	863185.668	59	14630.266			

Based on these results it can be concluded that;

A: There is not any significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of WTC ($F(1, 59) = .026, P = .872 > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$; it represents a weak effect size).

B: There is not any significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of Communication Apprehension ($F(1, 59) = .005, P = .944 > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$; it represents a weak effect size).

C: There is not any significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of Self-Perceived Competence ($F(1, 59) = .143, P = .707 > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$; it represents a weak effect size).

Table 4 and Figure 3 display the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups on the pretests of WTC.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Pretests of WTC

	GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
WTC	EXPERIMENTAL	674.22	138.669	32
	CONTROL	679.66	121.191	29
Communication	EXPERIMENTAL	434.06	90.558	32
	CONTROL	435.69	90.492	29
Self-Perceived	EXPERIMENTAL	741.56	124.722	32
	CONTROL	753.28	116.644	29

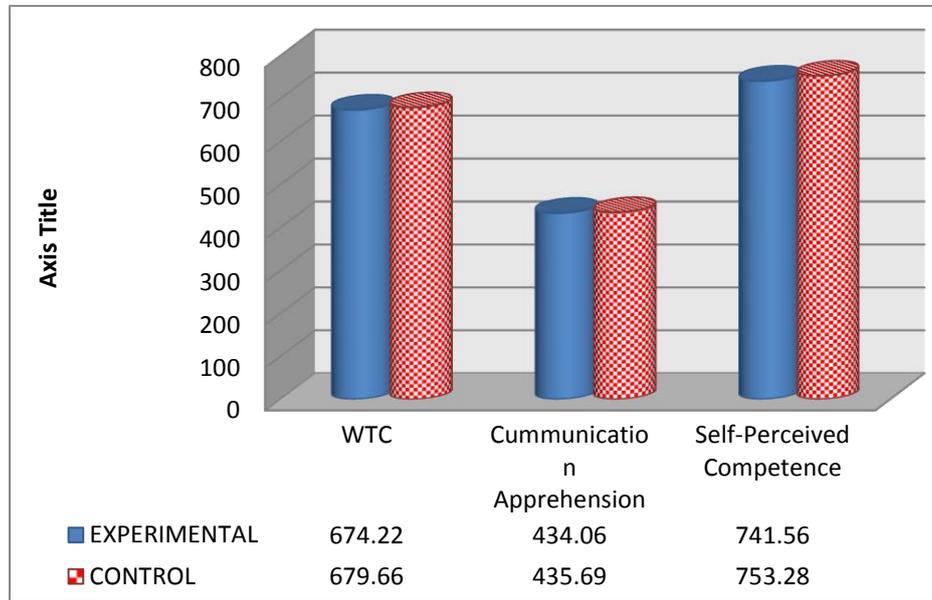


Figure 3: Pretests of WTC

Posttest

A multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) is run to compare the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of WTC, Communication Apprehension and Self-Perceived Competence.

Table 5

Multivariate Tests Posttest of WTC by Groups

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.998	9935.889 ^b	3	57	.000	.998
	Wilks' Lambda	.002	9935.889 ^b	3	57	.000	.998
	Hotelling's Trace	522.942	9935.889 ^b	3	57	.000	.998
	Roy's Largest Root	522.942	9935.889 ^b	3	57	.000	.998
	Pillai's Trace	.407	13.047 ^b	3	57	.000	.407
	Wilks' Lambda	.593	13.047 ^b	3	57	.000	.407
GROUP	Hotelling's Trace	.687	13.047 ^b	3	57	.000	.407
	Roy's Largest Root	.687	13.047 ^b	3	57	.000	.407

Based on the results displayed in Table 5 it can be concluded that there are significant differences between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on posttest of WTC, $F(3, 57) = 13.04$, $P = .000 < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .407$; it represents a strong effect size. Thus, the null-hypothesis as doing problem-solving task does not significantly affect Iranian EFL students' willingness to communicate in English at the pre-intermediate level of language proficiency; in comparison with another group doing no task at the same level of language proficiency was rejected.

The above mentioned F-value of 13.04 indicates significant differences between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the total WTC. Table 6 compares the experimental and control groups on the three components of posttest of WTC separately.

Table 6
Univariate Tests Posttests of WTC

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
WTC	288638.189	1	288638.189	15.829	.000	.212
	1075855.253	59	18234.835			
Communication Apprehension	223318.775	1	223318.775	25.797	.000	.304
	510754.176	59	8656.850			
Self-Perceived Competence	163976.099	1	163976.099	9.858	.003	.143
	981442.753	59	16634.623			

Based on these results it can be concluded that;

A: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of WTC ($F(1, 59) = 15.82$, $P = .000 < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$; it represents a strong effect size). The experimental group with a mean score of (518.15) (Table 7) outperformed the control group (Mean = 677.41) on the posttest of WTC.

B: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of Communication Apprehension ($F(1, 59) = 25.75$, $P = .000 < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .30$; it represents a strong effect size). The control group with a mean score of (435.69) (Table 7) outperformed the experimental group (Mean = 314.53) on the posttest of Communication Apprehension.

C: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of Self-Perceived Competence ($F(1, 59) = 9.85, P = .003 < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .14$; it represents a strong effect size). The experimental group with a mean score of (856.41) outperformed the control group (Mean = 752.59) on the posttest of Self-Perceived Competence.(Table 7)

Table 7 and Figure 4 display the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups on the posttests of WTC.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics Posttests of WTC

	GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
WTC	EXPERIMENTAL	815.16	149.010	32
	CONTROL	677.41	117.645	29
Communication Apprehension	EXPERIMENTAL	314.53	95.287	32
	CONTROL	435.69	90.492	29
Self-Perceived Competence	EXPERIMENTAL	856.41	139.140	32
	CONTROL	752.59	116.693	29

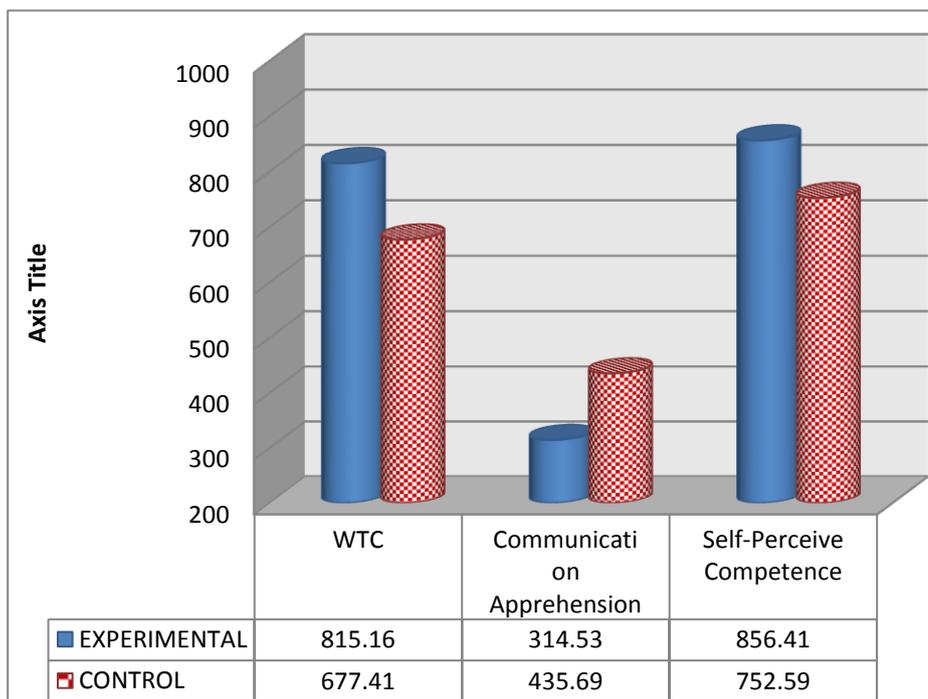


Figure 4. Posttests of WTC

Discussion

In this study, doing problem-solving tasks positively affected the learners' willingness to communicate in English and caused it to increase. This finding is specifically in line with what Tiu (2011) has found in his study regarding classroom opportunities that can foster willingness to communicate. In this study, since problem-solving tasks could stimulate rich discussion and also gave learners some great opportunities for expressing their idea in classroom, learners' WTC fostered.

According to the result, in addition to trait-like characteristic of WTC, it is situational-based too, so it can change from one situation to another. This finding goes with what Cao and Philp (2006) have found in their study regarding the understanding of the dynamic nature of WTC in a second language which suggested that learners' WTC behavior in each of the class contexts was influenced both by trait-level and state-level WTC.

The result moreover corroborated what Baker and MacIntyre (2000), MacIntyre et al. (2002), Yashima (2002), Hashimoto (2002), and also Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) have found in their study that is self-perceived communicative competence and communication anxiety are the best predictors of willingness to communicate. All these outcomes supported MacIntyre's Path model of willingness to communicate (1994) which postulates that WTC is based on a combination of greater self-perceived communicative competence and a lower level of communication anxiety which affects a high frequency of communication.

For answering the first question, LISREL (Version 8.8; 2006) was run. Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is not any significant correlation between the learners' willingness to communicate and their self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension in Iranian context is rejected and the model proposed by MacIntyre is supported in this study. Actually the results proved a strong positive correlation between learners' willingness to communicate and their self-perceived communication competence and also a negative correlation between learners' WTC and their communication apprehension in Iranian context. In fact, the results supported MacIntyre's Path model of willingness to communicate (1994) which postulates that WTC is based on a combination of greater self-perceived communicative competence and a lower level of

communication anxiety which affects a high frequency of communication. So, it is concluded that self-perceived communicative competence and communication anxiety are the best predictors of willingness to communicate. Moreover, the results of the present study approved what McCroskey and Richmond (1990) suggested that WTC originates from two variables -- lack of anxiety and perceived competence. This means that people are willing to communicate when they are not apprehensive and perceive themselves to be a competent communicator.

A multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) was run to compare the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest and posttest of WTC, Communication Apprehension and Self-Perceived Competence and also to answer question two. By doing so, the null-hypothesis as doing problem-solving tasks does not significantly affect Iranian EFL students' willingness to communicate in English at the pre-intermediate level of language proficiency in comparison with another group doing no tasks at the same level of language proficiency was rejected because after the treatment the experimental group outperformed the control group in WTC level significantly.

According to the results, although WTC is a personality-based, trait like predisposition, abundant evidence exists to support the argument that people exhibit differential behavioral tendencies to communicate more or less across communication situations. As results showed there is a significant difference between students' WTC in the pretest and posttest. The students' WTC in the experimental group boosted at the end of the term in the posttest, since they were exposed to different problem-solving tasks during two months and experienced various situations. So, it can be concluded that WTC is changeable personality behavior depending on different situations, contexts and receivers.

The students in the experimental group seemed to be interested in doing and completing problem-solving tasks that are more enjoyable and tend to increase students' intrinsic motivation. While doing the tasks in the class, the students got involved in different problems in their real life and they eagerly wanted to discuss and solve them and have a perfect conclusion, so because students engaged in doing tasks, they were less anxious and felt more relaxed in the class.

In order to achieve the communication goals, the learners should be encouraged to use the target language for meaningful and effective communication not only inside but also outside of the classroom. So, the language instructors need to put their efforts into persuading the learners to use the target language as much as they can in the classroom. Such being the case, it is true that the notion of Willingness to Communicate (McCroskey, 1987) plays a key role in learning a second/foreign language. In this study, problem-solving tasks were used to persuade learners for increasing their willingness to communicate, so when learners' WTC increased they had a great opportunity for practicing speaking. It is essential to mention that while learners were involved in doing problem-solving tasks, since they were keen on the topics and finding some solutions for them, their anxiety decreased as much as their WTC increased and also their self-perceived communication competence increased too, because they felt a great self-confidence. So it would be concluded that for improving learners' speaking, some suitable tasks should be chosen to increase their WTC and decrease their anxiety.

Although there have been a lot of research studies in the literature regarding willingness to communicate in English, the present study could be considered as an additional support for increasing WTC level in second/foreign language classroom. Since willingness to communicate is a fundamental element of successful L2 interaction and is therefore a vital part of the language-learning classroom, it's really important to know how WTC can increase. This study successfully showed that by involving students in some enjoyable and real life tasks, their level of WTC improved because they got motivated enough to take part in the class activities.

This study can support other confirmatory or exploratory studies on the issue of doing tasks and learners' WTC considering the context in which it was carried out. However, some of the implications of this study are presented below.

Willingness to communicate is a fundamental element of successful L2 interaction and is therefore a vital part of the language-learning classroom. Teachers need to consider how they can provide the best environment to promote students' willingness to interact in the L2. Using problem-solving

tasks in the classroom reduces students' anxiety and increases students' motivation to interact in the L2, giving learners more opportunities and effectively enhancing students' willingness to communicate. So the result can help the teachers how to set the activities and to use what kind of tasks in the class to motivate learners to speak more with high level of willingness to communicate in English. Based on the results, as anxiety decreases and perceived communicative competence increases, WTC increases too. So teachers should provide an anxiety-free environment for the students so that they can communicate effectively. Yamini, Rashidi, and Shafiei (2010) state that because "anxiety is prevalent in Iranian EFL classrooms, teachers must pay more attention to it". Moreover, learners should feel secure enough to speak in whole class discussion and activity in doing for example problem-solving tasks, by the help of teachers.

Since one of the responsibilities of materials developers is to provide and sequence the content of teaching materials, especially the tasks, designing communicative tasks such as problem-solving tasks to provide opportunities for communication and using second/foreign language in the class and increasing willingness to communicate in one of the recommended ways seems very much advisable. By setting some tasks like problem-solving tasks, decision making tasks, etc., in the learning materials, we can foster students' WTC to use L2 for communication and practicing speaking in the class.

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