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**Language editors:**

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mr. sc. Snježana (Nevia) Močinić, Italian

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## Interactive Communication in Education

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Pula, 2005

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**Dr. sc. Moira Kostić-Bobanović**

Sveučilište u Rijeci, Fakultet ekonomije i turizma "Dr. Mijo Mirković", Pula

## **Willingness to Communicate**

### *Summary*

*This study examined the willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language. It was carried out among the students of the Faculty of Economics and Tourism 'Dr. Mijo Mirković', Pula.*

*We investigated the willingness to communicate among the students who attended the first year during the academic year of 1999/2000. The questionnaire was reused with the same sample of students, now attending the third year of studying.*

*Key words: willingness to communicate, English language, students of economics.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Talk holds a central place in interpersonal communication. While a very large portion of all the meaning people generate in others' minds through interpersonal communication stems from nonverbal messages, the fact remains that, without talk, most interpersonal communication would have little reason to exist.

Although talk is a vital component in interpersonal communication and development of interpersonal relationships, people differ dramatically from one another in the degree to which they actually do talk. Some people talk very little; they tend to speak only when spoken to and sometimes not even then. Others tend to verbalise almost constantly. Many people talk more in some contexts than in others. Most people talk more to some receivers than they do to others.

To a major extent, verbal communication is a volitional act. People have the ability to choose to communicate or to choose not to communicate. Nonverbal communication is subject to far less volitional control in human interactions.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) point to the importance of the amount of talk in the initial stage of an interpersonal relationship. Interpersonal relationship must pass through this stage before reaching more intimate stages, but most never go beyond the stage. Since such uncertainty is generally non-reinforcing to interactants, they would desire to reduce this uncertainty. The authors note that, as both amount of verbal communication and nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increase, the levels of uncertainty of both interactants decreases. The reduced levels of uncertainty lead to higher levels of intimacy and liking. The development of strong interpersonal relationships is then heavily dependent on the amount of communication in which interactants are willing to engage. The more a person is willing to talk and to be nonverbally expressive, the more likely that person is to develop positive interpersonal relationships.

Few things are more basic to the description of communication of an individual than the amount that person talks. Simply describing an unknown person as 'quiet' or 'talkative' will evoke very different images in people's minds.

## THE PROCESS OF RESEARCH

Data were collected for this study from the students enrolled at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism 'Dr. Mijo Mirković' in Pula. The study examined the willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language. It was carried out among the students who attended the first year during the academic year of 1999/2000. The questionnaire was reused with the same sample of students, now attending the third year of studying. A total of 64 students completely used the instruments in this study.

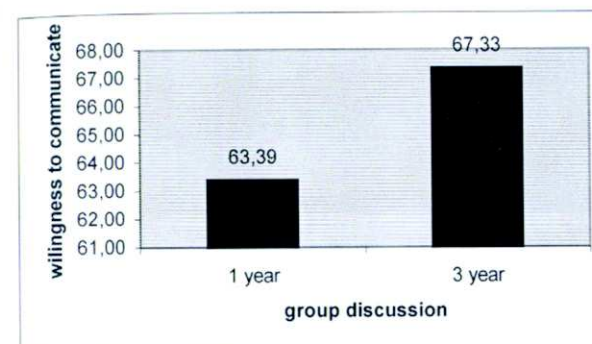
Willingness to Communicate - WTC scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) was administered to measure students' willingness to communicate related to four communication contexts (small groups, large meetings, interpersonal conversation and public speaking) and three types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends).

Twenty situations were presented to the students, those in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. They were asked to presume that they had a completely free choice to indicate the percentage of time they would choose to communicate in each type of situation. The percentage of the time they would choose to communicate was between 0 –never and 100-always.

## THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The results of the research are the following:

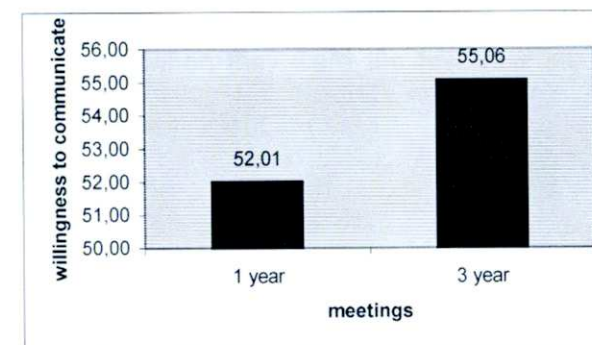
Graph 1: Willingness to communicate – group discussion



Norms for WTC scores

Group discussion >89 High WTC; <57 Low WTC

Graph 2: Willingness to communicate – meetings

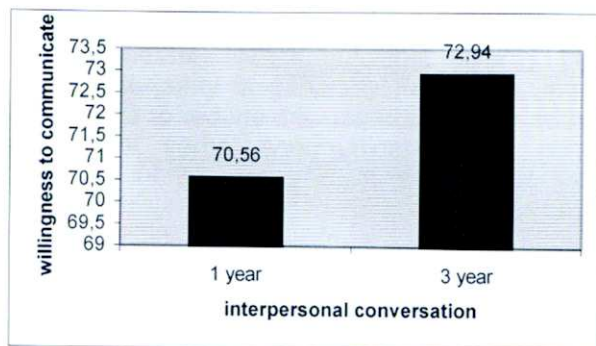


Norms for WTC scores

Meetings >80 High WTC; <39 Low WTC

According to the results on the graphs no. 1 and no. 2, we can see that our students are willing to communicate in group discussions and during meetings. There is a slight difference in % of the time they would choose to communicate between the students according to the academic years. Nowadays, the third year students are more willing to communicate in group discussions and at meetings in comparison to the time when they were the first year students.

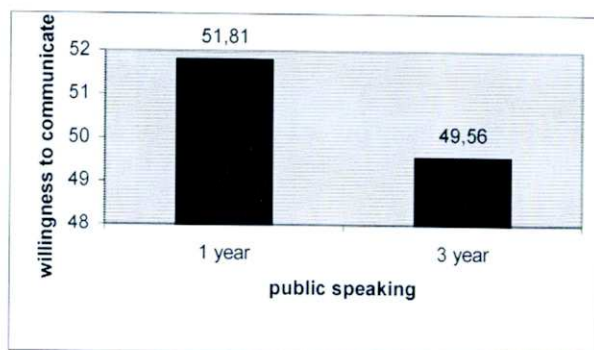
Graph 3: Willingness to communicate – interpersonal conversation



Norms for WTC scores  
Interpersonal conversation >94 High WTC; <64 Low WTC

According to the results, our students are willing to communicate in an interpersonal conversation. In the above-mentioned type of communication, the first year students were more willing to communicate than nowadays, when they are the third year students.

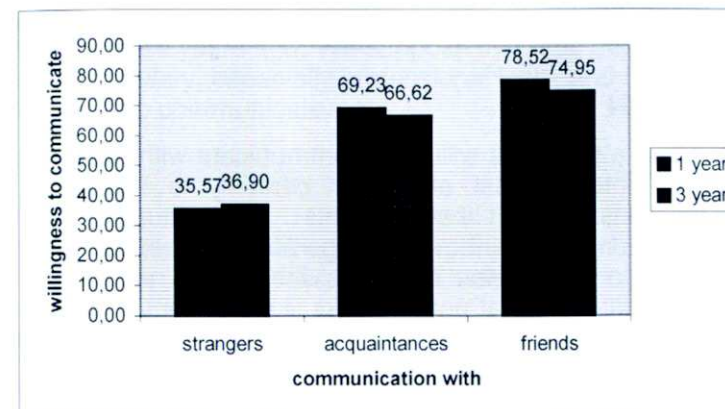
Graph 4: Willingness to communicate – public speaking



Public speaking >78 High WTC; <33 Low WTC

From the graph, it is seen that our students were more willing to speak in public when they were younger, three years ago, than nowadays. According to the Norms for WTC scores, their willingness to speak in public is medium.

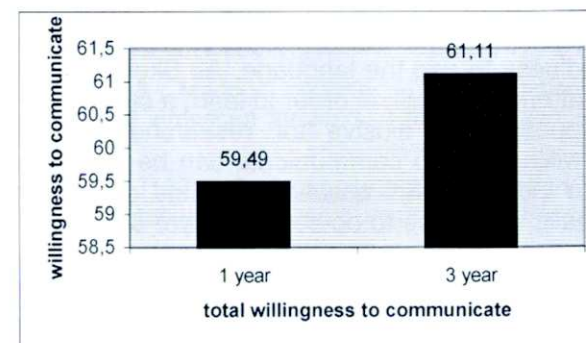
Graph 5: Willingness to communicate – with strangers, acquaintances, friends



Norms for WTC scores  
Communication with:  
Stranger >63 High WTC; <18 Low WTC  
Acquaintance >92 High WTC; <57 Low WTC  
Friend >99 High WTC; <71 Low WTC

The results are very interesting. According to them, our students are more willing to communicate with strangers nowadays than three years ago. But when they were the first year students, they were more willing to communicate with acquaintances and friends in comparison to the present days.

Graph 6: Total willingness to communicate



Norms for WTC scores  
Total WTC >82 Higher Overall WTC; <52 Low Overall WTC

The graph shows that our students are willing to communicate. In the third academic year, the willingness to communicate is higher than it was in the first academic year.

## DISCUSSION

Whether a person is willing to communicate with another person in a given interpersonal encounter certainly is affected by the situational constraints of that encounter. Many situational variables can have an impact: how the person feels that day, what communication the person has had with others recently, who the other person is, what that person looks like, what might be gained or lost through communicating, and other demands on the person's time.

Recent research related to person's willingness to communicate (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986) has pointed to the importance of person's perception of her/his communication competence. If people do not perceive themselves as competent, it is presumed that they would be both more likely to be apprehensive about communicating and to be less willing to get engaged in communicative behaviour. It is believed that person's self-perceived communication competence, as opposed to their actual behavioural competence, will greatly affect his/her willingness to initiate and engage in communication. It is what a person thinks he/she can do not what he/she actually could do which impacts individual behavioural choices.

Our students are learning business English as a foreign language. Language learning produces both linguistic outcomes, such as competence in language production and comprehension, and non-linguistics outcomes, such as changes in motivation and attitudes. Communication in the second language depends greatly on psychological readiness to use the language. As Skehan (1989) has noted, the idea that one must talk in order to learn a second language has been presupposed yet elusive for researchers. Filling this conceptual void, willingness to communicate can be defined as the probability that an individual will choose to initiate communication, more specifically talk, when free to do so (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). As such, willingness to communicate can be conceptualised as a goal of second language instruction, a variable that facilitates language learning itself, and an internal psychological event with socially meaningful consequences. Initiating communication represents the culmination of a network of processes at both cultural and individual levels.

According to the norms related to WTC scores, our student are willing to communicate. We must mention that they are in general more willing to communicate nowadays, when they are the third year students than three years ago. We suppose that they are now familiar with more vocabulary, especially professional lexis, and therefore it is easier for them to communicate.

## CONCLUSION

Whether a person is willing to communicate or not, either in a given instance or more generally, is a volitional choice, which is cognitively processed.

Although willingness is seen as relatively constant across situations, situational variables may impact person's willingness to communicate at a given time in a given context. Such things as how the person feels on a given day, previous communication with the other person, what that person looks like, or what might be gained or lost through communicating may have a major temporary impact on willingness.

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## ENCLOSURE: Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale

(Mc Croskey and Richmond, 1987)

Directions: Below are twenty situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. (0 = Never to 100 = Always)

- \_\_\_ 1. Talk with a service station attendant.
- \_\_\_ 2. Talk with a physician.
- \_\_\_ 3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- \_\_\_ 4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- \_\_\_ 5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- \_\_\_ 6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- \_\_\_ 7. Talk with a police officer.
- \_\_\_ 8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
- \_\_\_ 9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- \_\_\_ 10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- \_\_\_ 11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_ 12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- \_\_\_ 13. Talk with a secretary.
- \_\_\_ 14. Present a talk to a group of friends.
- \_\_\_ 15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_ 16. Talk with a garbage collector.
- \_\_\_ 17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- \_\_\_ 18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend).
- \_\_\_ 19. Talk in a small group of friends.
- \_\_\_ 20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

Dr. sc. Rita Scotti Jurić

Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Puli

## Il silenzio ricettivo, ovvero l'ascolto comunicativo

### Receptive silence, i.e. communication audio-reception

#### Summary

*The paper comprises some theoretic as well as analytic considerations on the communicative behaviour of teachers in their communication with a group of pupils in a particular class. The primary aim is to study the types of verbal interaction in order to understand which mechanisms lead to failures, total or partial, within the process of education, and which ones lead to its success. So teachers may do their own research on what is really going on in their classrooms.*

*Key words: communicative behaviour, teachers, pupils, verbal interaction, classroom.*

### PREMESSA

Nella società attuale completamente volta alla comunicazione, si escogitano strategie sempre più raffinate per facilitare la divulgazione di informazioni tra individui, perfezionando le tecnologie al punto da permettere la trasmissione da un polo all'altro della Terra. Una tale esaltazione della comunicazione accorda un enorme valore alla parola e alla scrittura, delegando in secondo piano il suo aspetto contrapposto ma ugualmente necessario, il silenzio. Si tratta di un momento di riflessione, ponderatezza e saggezza nella vita quotidiana. Oggi più che mai è diventato importante il discorso sul silenzio.<sup>1</sup> Ogni volta che ci troviamo davanti ad una richiesta di aiuto,

<sup>1</sup> A questo proposito riportiamo un passo del racconto di Dino Buzzati "La voce di una città" dove l'autore sensibilizza l'opinione pubblica sulla mancanza del silenzio nella nostra quotidianità. "Una città ha una voce che è tante voci insieme. C'è il rotolio delle macchine, il rombo delle automobili, lo squillo