

# Conceptual Underpinnings of Opinion Gap Task and willingness to Communicate

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## ABSTRACT

During different eras, language teaching and learning had lots of shifts. These shifts were in the methodology, approaches, and generally curriculum. In methodology of teaching language, these modifications were from pre-method era to method era and from method era to post-method era. At first we should define method in language teaching. According to Richards and Rogers' (2001) model in teaching language, method is an umbrella term that consists of three sub-categories such as approach, design, and procedures and it is defined as "a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 19). Therefore, each method in language teaching consists of these features that create that method unique. In the past decades, Task-based language teaching was popularized. It is originated from communicative approach. This approach is based on communicative competence that seeks to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities. In other words, tasks play an important in Task based language teaching (TBLT). Opinion gap task is one type of tasks in TBLT. In this paper, based on the purpose which was to examine the differential effects of using opinion gap tasks on extrovert-introvert learners' WTC, the theoretical background of the three concepts as opinion gap task, extraversion-introversion and WTC are reviewed.

**KEYWORDS:** language; communication; WTC; extrovert; introvert

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## INTRODUCTION

As was mentioned in the previous part, Task based language learning was popularized in the past decades. Different scholars defined "task" a language learning goals. In this section, some of these definitions were taken into account. According to Nunan (1989, p. 41), a task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end (Nunan, 1989, p. 41).

According to Crookes (1986), a task is a piece of work or activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, at work, or used to elicit data for research (Crookes, 1986, cited Kris Van Den Branden, 2006). Based on the Bachman and palmer's (1996) definition, a task is an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation (Bachman & palmer, 1996, as cited Van Den Branden, 2006). Furthermore, Ellis (2003) defined the task as a work-plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes (p. 16).

In general, as the above definition revealed, the task is associated with an activity that students require to use the language meaningfully with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective. For providing a better understanding, it is considerable to review the history of task in the next section.

### **The History of Task based Language Teaching (TBLT)**

Nowadays, one of the most comprehensive and prominent methods in teaching methodology throughout the world is Task-based language teaching (TBLT). This method is derived from Communicative Approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, in particular the work of Hymes, 1971; Wilkins, 1976, cited in Richards & Rogers, 2001). The goal of the approach is to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities. This approach was developed particularly by British linguists as a reaction from grammar-based approaches such as Situational Language Teaching and the audio-lingual method.

In Task based language teaching, the purpose is to bring “real-world” contexts into the classroom, and it emphasizes on the completing tasks rather than as a focus for studying. Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) advocate the use of authentic materials in task-based communicative activities and recommend that learners be given opportunities to put their language skills to practice in real life situations (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

For better understanding about this method, Feez (1988) determined six assumptions of task-based instruction:

- a) The focus is on process rather than product.
- b) Basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning.
- c) Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engage in the activities and tasks.
- d) Activities and tasks should be based on real life, and pedagogical purposes.
- e) Activities and tasks of task-based syllabus are sequenced according to difficulty.
- f) Different factors play roles in the difficulty of a task: 1) the previous experience of the learner; 2) the complexity of the task; c) the language acquired to undertake the task, and the degree of support available.

Typically, these six assumptions reveal the main tenets of TBLT.

Engaging learners in task provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities, and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place (Ellis, 2008).

### **The Components of Task in TBLT**

According to Shavelson and Stern (1981), tasks have different components that are listed in the following section:

- a) Content: the subject matter to be taught.
- b) Materials: the things that learners can observe/manipulate.
- c) Activities: the things that learners and teachers will be doing during a lesson.
- d) Goals: the teachers’ general aims for the task (these are much more general and vague than objectives).
- e) Students: their abilities, needs and interests are important.
- f) Social community: the class as a whole and its sense of ‘groupness’ (Shavelson & Stern 1981, as cited Nunan, 2006).

According to Candlin (1987), the components of tasks are input, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback. Here, these concepts are introduced. He points out that input refers to the data presented for students to work on. Roles mean the relationship between participants in a task. Setting refers to where the task takes place – either in the class or in an out-of-class arrangement. Actions are the procedures and sub-tasks to be performed by the learners. Monitoring refers to the supervision of the task in progress. Outcomes are the goals of the task, and feedback refers to the evaluation of the task.

Wright (1987) is also concerned with tasks in language teaching. According to him, minimally, tasks require to include only two elements. These are input data, which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners, and an initiating question, which instructs learners on what to do with the data. The next element is goal that provides direction, not only to any given task, but to the curriculum as a whole.

### **The Criteria of Tasks**

Although different interpretations have been presented with regard to tasks, they were only on the surface. In attempting to promote learners’ language acquisition in a TBLT classroom setting, teachers, curriculum designers, researchers need to have a clear and more detailed idea of what underlies a task. There were some criteria of a task below. A task is 1) a work plan; 2) involves a primary focus on meaning; 3) involves real-world processes of language use; 4) A task can involve any of the four language skills; 5) engages cognitive processes; 6) and has a clearly defined communicative outcome (Ellis, 2003, p. 9). Based on other researchers’ interpretations Skehan proposes five key characteristics of a task (Nunan, 2006, p. 16).

Skehan (1998), drawing on a number of other writers, puts forward five key characteristics of a task:

- 1) Meaning is primary

- 2) Learners are not given other peoples' meaning to regurgitate
- 3) There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- 4) Task completion has some priority
- 5) The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome (as cited Nunan, 2004).

Nunan (1991) views the task as a piece of meaning-focused work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing and in the target language. Specifically, tasks can be analyzed according to the goals, the input data, the activities derived from the input, the settings and roles implied for teacher and learners.

### **Communicative Tasks in the Classroom**

The traditional language classroom has undergone a revolution in teaching method over the past several decades. Teaching approaches which focus on form, negotiation of meaning, and communicative competence have induced teachers to create communicative language tasks instead of the grammar worksheets and translation exercises of the past. The communicative classroom's need for language tasks has led to a creative spurt among foreign and second language teachers who are eager to provide meaningful and useful opportunities for their students to use language. However, using a task-based approach to language teaching does not guarantee that the tasks used are any more helpful for language learning than grammar drills and translation exercises. As a result, these tasks have invited a great deal of investigation in the field of second language acquisition research.

### **Task Types and Their Characteristics**

In constructing tasks in Task Based Instruction (TBI), different scholars have presented a variety of task types to choose from. According to Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993), tasks are categorized into these groups: jigsaw, information-gap, problem solving, decision-making and opinion exchange tasks. Jigsaw tasks have learners construct a whole from different informational parts. Each part is held by a different group of students who cooperatively contribute to constructing the whole. Information-gap tasks encourage groups of students who have different sections of a text to share text information with each other in order to form a complete text. Problem-solving tasks provide a problem and some information and instruct learners to find a solution to a problem. In decision-making tasks, learners are given a problem with a set of solutions, and they attempt to make a joint decision by negotiating and discussing these solutions. Finally, opinion exchange tasks also promote discussions among learners. Learners are expected to share their own ideas and understand others' opinions in regards to some topics. However, learners do not have to come to common opinion.

Willis (1996) categorized six different types of tasks: listing, ordering, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. In listing tasks, learners collectively try to generate a list according to some task criteria-countries of Europe, irregular English verbs, and world leaders. Task participants brainstorm, activating their own personal knowledge and experiences and undertake fact-finding, surveys, and library searches. Ordering and sorting tasks require four kinds of processes: ranking items or events in a logical or chronological order, sequencing them based on personal or given criteria, grouping given items and classifying items under appropriate categories not previously specified. In comparing tasks, learners are involved in three processes, matching to define specific points and relating them, finding similarities and differences. Problem solving tasks encourage learners' intellectual and reasoning capacities to arrive at a solution to a given problem. In sharing personal experience tasks, learners are engaged in talking about themselves and sharing their own experiences. Lastly, creative tasks are often viewed as those projects in which learners, in pairs or groups, are able to create their own imaginative products. Groups might create short stories, art works, videos, magazines, etc. Creative projects often involve a combination of task types such as listing, ordering and sorting, comparing and problem solving.

A somewhat different categorization of tasks is Nunan's (2001) description of task types as pedagogic and real-world tasks. Pedagogic tasks are communicative tasks that facilitate the use of language in the classroom towards achievement of some instrumental or instructional goal, whereas real-world tasks involve "borrowing" the target language used outside the classroom in the real world. According to Prabhu (1987), there are three main categories of task; information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap. In the following part, these three main types are elaborated.

Information-gap activity, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. In other words, The Information Gap is a kind of structured output activities. These are like completing a task by obtaining missing information, conveying telephone message, and expressing an opinion. It sets up practicing on specific items of language. It is more like drills than real communication. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and

attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example is completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. The activity often involves selection of relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer (ibid).

Reasoning gap, reasoning-gap activity, which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as in information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two (ibid).

Opinion gap, opinion-gap activity, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions (ibid).

Generally, the common point among these types of tasks is to have an interaction. Based on the above-mentioned explanations, in the present study, opinion-gap task is taken into account.

### **The Significance of Opinion-gap Task in ELT**

In recent years, tasks and specifically opinion-gap tasks have been popularized and have been recommended as a way forward in English language teaching. Some experts point out the merits of applying opinion-gap tasks in teaching English language skills. According to Prabhu (1987), opinion-gap activities can provide chances for learners to utilize English inside or outside the class. These types of activities are based on the communicative value. Based on Doughty and Pica's (1986) view, opinion-gap activities can promote real communication and facilitate language acquisition. They provide a chance for teachers and learners to express the opinions and comments. Rees (2002) believes that by keeping the notion of a gap between students in mind, it is easy to come up with speaking activities that often require very little preparation but can increase the total amount of student talking time in any lesson (Rees, 2002).

According Kayi (2006), in opinion-gap tasks, learners are assumed to be working in pairs or in groups. It means that learners with different opinions have an interaction together to express their ideas independently and share their comments and this can be a useful way to solve the problems or collect information. According to the above issues, these activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language. Raptou (2002) believes that the learners were all happy to do the activity because it was fun and they knew that it was helping them to increase their confidence in interacting (Raptou, 2002). In addition, these activities can motivate the learners to speak because the learners can be free to respond their opinions without memorizing the dialogue.

In addition, Harmer (1991) listed some advantages of opinion gap activities:

- a) Opinion-gap activities can be a helpful device to express different ideas. Foreign language learning is always a process of collaboration as well as individual endeavor. In these activities, the learners are free to interact with one another to gather information from their peers, and creating an unimportant atmosphere. In this atmosphere, the learners feel comfortable and non-threatened to offer their contributions. Opinion gap activities lead to unpredictable, diverse, meaningful, interesting and vivid output.
- b) These activities are suitable for different learners in different levels; from the elementary to the advanced.
- c) These activities can not only prove to be useful at the productive stage in the classroom, but also for the receptive stage as well. Or "it possesses a nature of communication both for input and output stages".

Hess (2001) also categorized the advantages of opinion-gap activities:

They can be as tools to share a task jointly and help to establish a kind of atmosphere that encourages learners to help one another or ask for help from their peers with their opinions. The next advantage is that these activities can supply comprehensive feedback from the learners such as opinions, references, and values. Moreover, these activities can enhance a learner-autonomous learning style. The learners are allowed to have a sense of self owing to the following four factors: collaboration, personalization, individualization and so on. As a result, opinion-gap activities will provide valuable contributions to students. Personalization activities provide the learners with opportunities to express their opinions, suggestions, or taste, to share their real life experiences or ideas, and to apply these issues or concerns to some controversial issues. Thus, teachers need to actively engage students in speaking activities that are enjoyable and that are based on a more communicative approach.

### **The Roles of Teachers in Opinion-gap Tasks**

As similar as other activities and tasks, in this type of tasks, the teacher has some roles that will be considered in the following parts:

- a) Designer and organizer: in these tasks, the teacher is as like as a director in a movie, to design the structure of the class. According to Brown (2001), the teachers keep the learning process flowing smoothly and efficiently (Brown, 2001). According to Nunan and Lamb (1996), the teachers' roles are dynamic, not static, and are subject to change according to the psychological factors brought by the participants.
- b) Participants and prompter: according to Liao (2008), the teacher's role is not as equal as learners. He believes that the teacher can offer his information, stimulate and present new language. Based on Harmer's view (2001), the teacher is as a prompter. It means that the teacher suggests discrete recommendations or lets students struggle out of a difficult situation.
- c) Investigator and assessor: the teachers want to develop their own skills and try to find the ways to foster language learning. The feedback can help the teachers enrich their understanding, pedagogical devising techniques, and activity designing diversities. Teachers should be assessors. They monitor feedback of the performance of the learners, evaluate the appropriateness of the activities and adapting teaching situations with the real situations (Harmer, 1991).

### **The Principles of Opinion-gap Tasks**

Naturally, a lot of communicative activities and tasks are mechanical and have little communicative value and the reason is that there is no real information being exchanged and also the learners cannot express their opinions and attitudes. According to Bastrukmen (1994), the problem was associated with the same information that the learners had accessed.

Opinion-gap activity is a meaningful and questioning technique in which the learners answer to a question and give their opinion and ideas and also they can receive other's information. On the other hand, the learners can exchange and share their opinions to achieve a goal.

### **Willingness to Communicate**

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is an important construct in first, second and foreign language. This construct in the first language can be imagined as the likelihood of an individual taking part in communication when presented with the chance to carry out so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Thus, in first language (L1), WTC can be considered as a comparatively steady tendency principally a personality trait. Although, a distinction is made between WTC in the native language and in the second language. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noel (1998, p. 547) presented a definition of WTC in second language (L2) as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2". Thus, rather than being a simple indicator of the person's personality, willingness to communicate can be considered as a demonstration of a number of various variables in a second language. The difference between second language WTC and first language WTC may be caused by the inherently different natures of L1 and L2, as there is a level of uncertainty in L2 that interacts in a more complicated manner than the variables influencing L1.

Furthermore, for being applicable to contexts where written or oral communication happens, the willingness to communication definition involves contexts where communication does not practically happen but where the person possesses and expresses the willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al. 1998, p. 547-548). A classic instance of such situation is learners raising their hand in class when a teacher asks a question. In this type of scenario verbal communication might only occur with some of the students, but all the learners that raised their hand expressed their willingness to partake in communication and thus are considered as having WTC.

### **The Pyramid Model and the Situational WTC Model**

A distinction is made by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) between two different types of affecting factors: immediate situational factors that are more temporary and dependent on the context of the communication, and enduring factors that are relatively stable and that would be applicable to almost any situation the person in question encounters. Examples of such factors could be, on the one hand, the desire to speak with a specific person and knowledge of the topic in question as more context-related factors, and, on the other hand, personality and intergroup relations as long-term, enduring factors. In order to visually explain the different variables affecting WTC in L2, MacIntyre et al. (1998, p.547) have created a pyramid model (Figure 1) with altogether six different levels and twelve different variables. In that model they have included both situational factors as the first three layers and enduring factors as

the three lower layers. The higher the factor is in the pyramid, the more situation-specific it is. Consequently, the factors that are regarded as the most stable are at the very bottom of the pyramid. As the model illustrates, personality is considered to be a part of willingness to communicate, in fact, it is at the very foundation of it, but there are many other factors that come into effect as well.

In this model, willingness to communicate is on the second layer, right before the actual use of the second language because it represents the likelihood of a learner using the language in interaction with another person or persons when the opportunity arises. It has been suggested that increasing WTC should be a goal of L2 learning and teaching, as only by creating willingness to communicate can authentic communication in L2 occur (MacIntyre et al. 1998, p. 547). (Figure, 2.1)

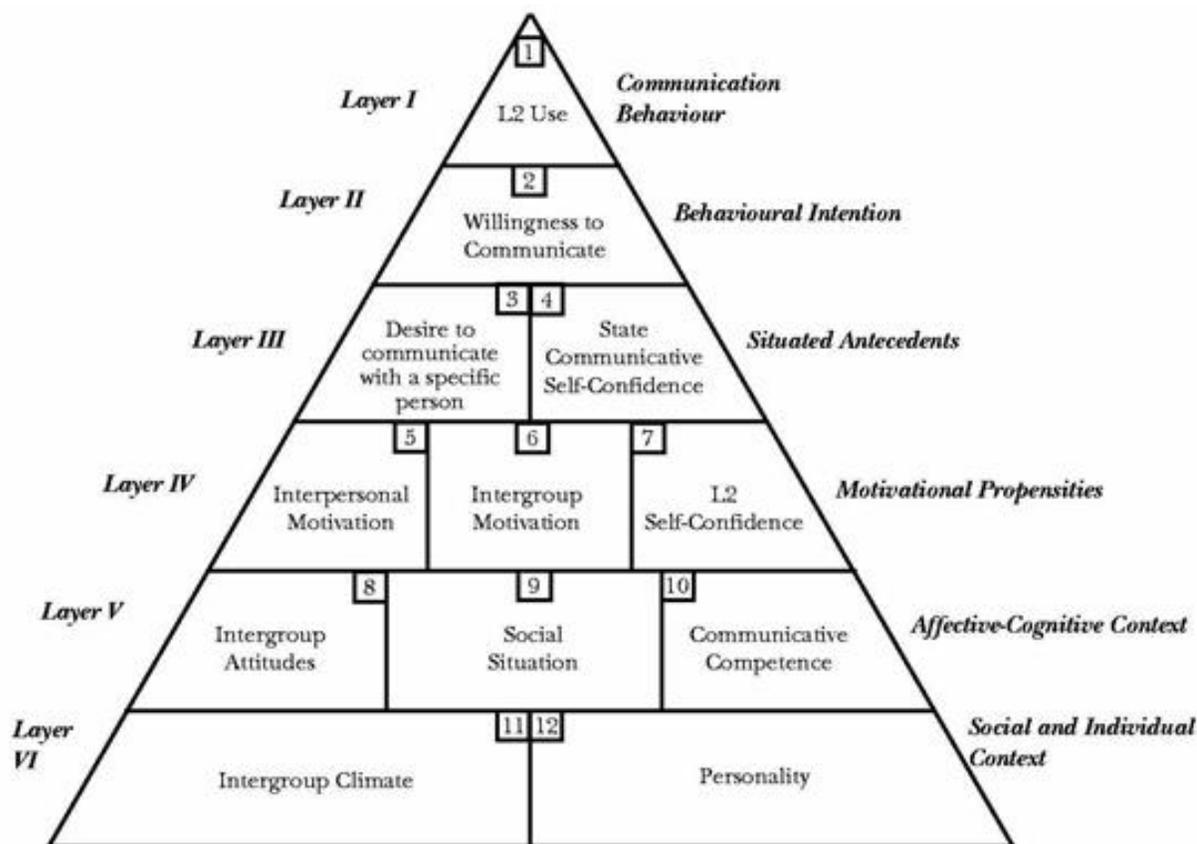


Figure 1. Pyramid model of WTC (MacIntyre et al. 1998, p. 547)

Kang (2005, p. 288) has proposed that the situational nature and the dynamic emergence of WTC in L2 could be emphasized even more than it is in the model by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) and has therefore created a preliminary construct of situational WTC. In this model the layers of the construct are 'Situational Variables Affecting Situational WTC', 'Psychological Antecedents to Situational WTC', 'Emergence of Situational WTC' and 'Ultimate WTC'. In the construct, the solid line boxes and the solid lines demonstrate how situational WTC develops through the joint function of multilayered variables. The dotted lines and boxes illustrate the potential factors affecting WTC.

Kang (2005, p. 288) has divided the situational variables affecting situational WTC into categories of topic, interlocutors and conversational context. This categorization is supported by the findings of other studies and these variables have been found to have relevance in the context of a classroom setting as well (Cao & Philip 2006). The psychological antecedents to situational WTC have been divided into three: security, excitement and responsibility and each of these variables are interacting with the situational variables as well as each other. The result of the co-construction of these multiple variables will lead to situational WTC and eventually ultimate WTC.

### **WTC in EFL Classrooms**

Teacher's effect on learners' WTC in L2 is a strand of research that has not yet been studied very thoroughly on its own, as most of the studies that have paid attention to this topic have viewed teacher's effect as one of several factors (e.g. Cao & Philip 2006, Kang 2005, Wen & Clement 2003). Still, some findings have been made about variables contributing to and reducing WTC in the context of classroom and several of those variables are in teacher's control. For instance, research has indicated a substantial impact on students' WTC made by teacher's methods, attitude and involvement (Kang 2005, Wen & Clement 2003). Wen and Clement (2003, p. 28) point out that "at least in a Chinese EFL classroom students' engagement and willingness to communicate are influenced by teacher involvement and immediacy".

It has also been found that students' perceptions of topic and language, task types, familiarity of interlocutors and interaction between interlocutors affected learners' WTC in the context of EFL classrooms (Cao & Philip 2006, Kang 2005). Cao and Philip (2006, p. 487-488) concluded that, for instance, the effect of group size, interlocutor familiarity and interlocutor participation on occurring WTC could be explained by the situational nature of WTC. Kang (2005, p. 290) suggests that "teachers should seek to create a supportive environment for students so that the fear of making mistakes would be minimized. This could be done by paying attention to what students are saying, smiling and by responding actively". More recently, Zarrinabadi (2014, p. 294) concluded that teachers can influence their students' willingness to communicate and participation in classroom activities by giving more power to students to negotiate topics, focusing more on students' knowledge, being aware of and adapting methods of error correction, giving more time for consideration and reflection before answering questions, and by creating a learning environment where the learners' feel supported.

### **Extraversion/Introversion**

The literature on second language acquisition (SLA) deals with two different issues which both have been central to second language acquisition research. On one hand, researchers are interested in discovering universal aspects of SLA that deal with factors which are the same for all learners like input or output. On the other hand, researchers are also interested in knowing whether the process of language learning, which has universal aspects, may vary among learners depending on their individual differences. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the role of individual differences in second language learning. The variation among learners is considered to be important, since it has been regarded as a factor affecting learners' ways of approaching second language learning. There are two dimensions of SLA which are claimed to be influenced by individual differences. As Ellis (2008, p. 99) states, the first aspect of SLA, which is hypothesized to be affected by individual differences, is "the sequence or order in which linguistic knowledge is acquired". He argues that "differences in age, learning style, aptitude, motivation, and personality result in differences in the route along which learners pass in SLA."

To Ellis (2008, p. 99), the second aspect of SLA, which is affected by individual differences, is "the rate and ultimate success of SLA". According to the above explanations, one individual difference among language learners in the classroom context is the continuum of extraversion/introversion. In the following section, extraversion/introversion continuum is elaborated.

### **Definitions of Extraversion and Introversion**

Among the myriad personality traits and individual differences recognized and explored in relation to learning and pedagogy, lie the fundamental concepts of extroversion and introversion. The contention that introverts and extroverts have different priorities in selecting their favorite activity to learn the language skills is now endorsed by educationalists. According to Jung (1933), Extroversion and Introversion are as two dimensions of personality factors (Jung, 1933, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extroversion and Introversion are often viewed as being bipolar, but in fact, it takes place along a continuum which reveals the degree of one's outgoingness; people who fall at either extremes have clear preferences (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), extrovert learner is "a person whose conscious interests and energies are more often directed outwards other people and events than towards the person themselves and their own inner experience" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 195). According to Eysenck and Eysenck (1985), a typical extrovert is characterized as a person who tends to be sociable, needs people to talk to, takes chances, is easy-going, and optimistic. Unlike extroversion, a typical introvert is quiet, retiring, reserved, plans ahead, and dislikes excitement (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985).

When Jung (1921) first coined the term extraverted, individuals with this personality type were described as friendly and accessible people who are on good terms with the world. More recently, the facets of extraversion have been adjusted to include gregariousness, warmth, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking, and happiness, which

all still reflect one's aptitude and tendency toward being sociable (cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992). In a related theory of extraversion proposed by Eysenck (1981), arousal is considered a key facet of extraversion in that extraverts are motivated to engage in stimulating social activities because of their inherent under arousal. By contrast, he states that introverts are disinclined to engage in stimulating social activities either because such actions are unnecessary or may cause introverts to quickly become over-stimulated.

### **Characteristics of Extraversion and Introversion**

Taylor (1998, p. 10) provides the general properties of extraverts and introverts as follows:

General Properties of Extraverts:

- a) Talk more and tend to take actions with less reflection.
- b) Are good at interpreting body language and facial expressions.
- c) Are good at tasks involving short-term memory.
- d) Prefer quicker, less accurate approach.

General Properties of Introverts:

- a) Talk less and reflect more before acting.
- b) Are better at reflective problem-solving tasks and tasks involving long-term memory.
- c) Like to work independently or with one or two other people.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), many second or foreign language teachers believe extrovert learners are more successful than introvert learners specifically in their communicative ability. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) reviewed 30 articles on the issue and came to the conclusion that "in oral communication, extraverts were found to be generally more fluent than introverts both in first and second language learning, but on other aspects of second language proficiency there exists a weak relationship with extraversion" (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 541). According to the research literature on extrovert/introvert reveals that extroverts and introverts have tended to be overlooked from L2 research and has been considered as the "unloved" variable (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999).

### **The Role of Extraversion and Introversion in Language Learning**

Extraversion/introversion plays a primary role not only in the first language learning but also in second/foreign language learning (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). In recent years, a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between extraversion and SLA has emerged. Since extraversion is considered to be stable personality variable, its effect should appear in both L1 and L2 languages. Most studies reveal a positive relation between degree of extraversion and various measures of L1 fluency. This is also shown by some experiments, such as measuring a pictorial stimulus test on a sample of Spanish speaking adolescents who learn English as a second language (Rossier, 1976). There are positive correlations between extraversion scores and utterance length, amount of filled pauses and speech rates. According to Eysenck (1981), extraversion/introversion can be a part of "four strands" supported talking in conversations as a method for receiving meaning-focused input and producing meaning-focused output. Lightbown and Spada (2006) mentioned that a lot of teachers are convinced that extraverted students who interact without inhibition in the second/foreign language will be the most successful learners.

### **The Previous Studies about Task in ELT**

Different studies about the effects of tasks and specifically opinion gap tasks have been conducted. In this section, some of these studies are reviewed. Fallahi, Malayeri and Bayat (2015) studied the effects of information-gap and opinion gap tasks on improving Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. To accomplish the purpose of the study, quasi-experimental design was applied. Three groups were selected for this study (two experimental groups and a control group). The experimental groups received special treatment by using two different tasks while the control group received question-answer activity. Treatment lasted 12 sessions or about two months. The results of the pre-test and post-test in data analysis through statistical procedure such as One Way-ANOWA confirmed the superiority of the experimental groups to the control group, and task based instruction helped to improve listening comprehension.

Also, Aliakbari and Mohsennejad (2014) conducted a study to observe the efficacy of story retelling opinion gap task on the promotion of Iranian EFL learners. In so doing, 29 students from a private language institute in Khorram Abad, Iran were addressed. Based on their performance in the pretest, they divided into two homogeneous groups. The students in the experimental group received activities through opinion gap tasks while those in the control group received the traditional tasks used to teach speaking. Finalizing the treatment, the researchers gave the final exam and examined the results through t-test statistics. The results indicate that the students in the experimental group out-

performed those in the control group. Accordingly, it can be concluded that implementing story retelling opinion gap task can significantly promote the students speaking ability.

In another study, Marzban and Hashemi (2013) studied the effect of opinion gap task on the speaking ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To achieve this purpose, a null hypothesis was developed: opinion gap task does not enhance significantly Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking ability. To test this hypothesis, the study used a Quasi-experimental design. The subjects consisted of 64 male and female students who were selected from among 90 intermediate EFL learners by applying a proficiency test. The participants in the experimental group received the treatment while the students in the control group received the conventional method. An oral interview was used both as the pretest and posttest. The results indicated that opinion gap task enhances Iranian intermediate EFL learners speaking ability, but not significantly enough to reject the stated null hypothesis.

### **The Previous Studies about WTC in ELT**

Also a large number of studies about the role of WTC have been carried out about in the process of language teaching and learning. In the present section, some of these studies are reviewed. Khorasani and Harsini (2015) studied the relationships among WTC, topic familiarity and Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing ability. Seventy-five male and female EFL learners participated in the study. The participants took Nelson English Language Test (200C) as the proficiency test and filled out MacIntyre et al. (1998) WTC questionnaire. They were also given a list of topics (Malekzadeh, 2011) to choose the familiar and unfamiliar ones for writing tasks. The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation and paired-samples t-test. The results revealed that there was no relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' WTC and topic familiarity. Also, there was a significant relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' WTC and writing ability. Findings also indicated that there was a significant relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' topic familiarity and writing ability. This study claimed a bond between WTC and writing ability with regard to topic familiarity. The findings of the present study suggest that EFL learners outperform in writing when they are more willing to communicate and familiar with the topics.

Also, Ghonsooly, Hosseini Ftemi and Khajavy (2013) tried to examine the Iranian EFL learners' level of willingness to communicate in English, and the relationships between willingness to communicate, communication confidence, and classroom environment. For this purpose, 243 Iranian EFL learners participated in this study. Results of the descriptive statistics indicated that participants were moderately willing to communicate in English inside the language classroom, felt low levels of anxiety, and perceived themselves moderately confident to communicate in English in the classroom. Correlational analyses also indicated that willingness to communicate is positively correlated with classroom environment and perceived communicative competence, and negatively correlated with communication anxiety.

Barjesteh, Vaseghi and Neissi (2012) studied Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of their willingness to initiate communication across four types of context and three types of receiver. The study employed a questionnaire consisting of 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. The study concludes that learners were highly willing to communicate in two context-types (Group Discussion, & Meetings) and one receiver-type (Friend). They were not willing to initiate communication in other situations. The main reason is that majority of Iranians have the experience of communicating in English only in language classrooms in which they can have some group discussion, meetings, and friendly chat. They don't have an access to a native speaker or possibility to travel to an English speaking country. In general, it can be said that Iranian EFL learners are willing to initiate communication in situations experienced before, like group discussion or communicating with their friends. They don't feel confident enough to initiate communication in unfamiliar situations like public speaking. Therefore, context- and receiver-type familiarity is an effective factor for the situation in which a learner initiates communication.

Zarrinabadi and Abdi (2011) studied the relationship between Iranian EFL Learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) inside and outside the classroom and their language learning orientations. Sixty-seven intermediate students (36 males and 31 females) who were majoring in English Literature and Translation at University of Isfahan during the academic year of 2010-2011 participated in the study. The students were bilingual and their age ranged from 19 to 24. Modified versions of likert-type questionnaires developed by McIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrod (2001) were used for measuring students' willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom and language learning orientations. The data obtained from the study indicated language orientations to be more correlated with willingness to communicate outside than inside the classroom.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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