The Relationship between Foreign Language Learning Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate Among Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to find the relationship between FLLA and WTC among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, this study was going to find the role of gender of the participants on the degree of this relationship. In order to achieve this goal, a correlational survey design was employed. The participants of this study were 30 language learners enrolling at intermediate EFL learners of language institutes in Minudasht, Iran. The participants were of both genders (male= 15, female= 15). The participants' age ranged from 20 to 25. The researcher used convenience sampling randomly to select the participants. They were asked to fill out self-report questionnaires about the point of foreign language anxiety they contact throughout their English classes and their WTC in EFL contexts. The first questionnaire, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, (1986).The second questionnaire, developed by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Conrod (2001) was employed to find out how willing the students are in foreign language classrooms. The findings of the analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL learners. The results of the analysis obtained that the participant's gender had a significant role in predicting the degree of relationship between FLLA and WTC. The results of this study have several implications for the language learners, teachers and teacher trainers.

KEYWORDS: Foreign Language Learning Anxiety (FLLA); Anxiety; Willingness to Communicate (WTC).

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language (FL) researchers have long been investigating to answer the great difficulty faced by a number of students when learning an FL where others find it less hard(Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorshy, Skinner & Jon, 1994).Students who have difficulty with FL learning are often described as underachievers, or lack in motivation (Chen & Chang, 2004; Li & Pan, 2009; Tercanlioglu, 2004), or as having language learning disabilities (Grigorenko, 2002; Hu, 2003; Reed & Stansfield, 2004). Affective variables for example attitude, motivation, anxiety, and beliefs about FL learning deliberated as factors that might bear upon FL learning. Out of these affective factors, anxiety has been given much attention in recent years. Lots of investigations have confirmed that language anxiety has an opposing effect on the performance of FL and second language (L2) learners(.Horwitz, Horwitz., & Cope 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Moreover, anxiety has been considered as one of the most instrumental factor of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) particularly in EFL contexts(. Clément, Baker. & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Conrod; 2001). Relating to this, by helping the students to decrease language anxiety and enhance a willingness to use the FL inside the classroom, the focus of language teaching goes away in the face of only linguistic and structural competence to real communication. WTC combines these variables to foretell L2 communication, and a few number of studies have examined the model with EFL students. More ever, Numerous EFL teachers experienced that it was hard to make students speak English in the classroom. Since the unwillingness to speak the L2 in class seems to be a common problem in many countries, the topic has often been contemporary in unlike pedagogical circles.

The main objective of the present Study is to find the relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL learners.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of this study were 30 language learners enrolling at intermediate EFL learners of language institutions in Minudasht, Iran. The participants were of both genders (male= 15, female= 15). The participants' age ranged from 20 to 25. All participants were native speakers of Persian. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants in which each of the students in language institute at intermediate level had an equal and independent chance of being chosen. They were asked to fill out self-report questionnaires as regards the step of FL anxiety them practical during their English classes and their WTC in EFL contexts.

Instruments

In order to come up with a suitable case for the study, the researcher administered two questionnaires given to each participant. Two questionnaires were used in this study.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

The first questionnaire is called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). It is a 33-item, five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The answers to each item can be one of these: strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; and strongly disagree. For each item a score was given ranging from 5 for strongly agree to 1 for strongly disagree. For negatively worded items, namely items number 2, 5, 11, 14, 22, 29& 33.

WTC Questionnaire

The second questionnaire was adjusted from MacIntyre et al. (2001) to evaluate learners' inclination toward coming or keeping away from the communication. The WTC questionnaire asked for students' level of WTC associated to four skills, in event communication was not just seen as oral communication. It had 27 items basis on four skill regions. It was in English. In this observation, a 5-point Likert scale was adopted to ask the students to rate their WTC as follows:

1 = almost never willing, 2 = sometimes willing, 3 = willing half of the time, 4 = usually willing, 5 = almost always willing.

RESULTS

The present study intended to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between foreign language learning anxiety (FLLA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

2. Does the gender have any significant role on the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety (FLLA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

Descriptive statistics and correlation were used to analyze the data. KS test was used to check the normality of data. Then, a test of correlation was employed to test the first hypothesis. Finally, descriptive qualitative analyses were carried out to deal with the second null hypothesis.

The descriptive statistics of the WTC scale, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCA) was summarized in following Table:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Anxiety and WTC

Group Statistics

		Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
anxiety	anxi	male	15	97.60	5.40	1.39
		female	15	95.20	11.42	2.95
	wtc	male	15	143.53	13.89	3.58
		female	15	138.73	19.56	5.05

According to table 1, 15 female and 15 male participants' sores were included in the analysis. The observed mean for the male and female in anxiety are 97.60 and 95.20respectively. Moreover, the observed mean for the male and female in WTC are 143.53 and 138.73 respectively. Additionally, the observed standard deviation for the male and female in anxiety are 5.40 and 11.42 respectively. And the observed standard deviation for the male and female in WTC are 13.89and 19.56 respectively. In order to verify the homogeneity of the groups, an independent samples t - test was run.

Normality of the Distribution of Scores

An assessment of the normality of data is a prerequisite for many statistical tests because normal data are an underlying assumption in parametric testing. First of all, in order to ensure the normality of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) Test and Shapiro-Wilk was used for all the data. It can be seen in Table 4.1 that the data were normally distributed since the value of the KS Test and Shapiro-Wilk is greater than .05, the distribution of the data is normal.

Table2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
anxiety	.162	30	.044	.920	30	.027
wtc	.175	30	.019	.936	30	.070

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As it presented in the table .2 the Sig amount is 0.40 which is higher than 0.05 which means that the test scores were normally distributed.

Analysis for Research Question One

The first research question is as follows:
″Is there any significant relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL learners?″
In order to test this research question the following null hypothesis was formulated:
"There is not any significant relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL Learners? ″
To examine the relationship between two variables, use chi-square method was used in SPSS version 22.
Results are as follows:

Table 3. Chi-Square Tests Anxiety and WTC

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	DF	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	418.500[a]	352	.0008
Likelihood Ratio	148.656	352	1.00
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.104	1	.293
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 391 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .03.

As the table.3 suggests, the P-value = 0.008 and less than 0.05, with a 95% confidence it can be said there is a significant relationship between these two variables. But to infer from the chart below we use the strength of this relationship.

Table 4.Symmetric Measures Anxiety and WTC

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal		Phi	3.735			.008
		Cramer's V	.934			.008
Interval by Interval		Pearson's R	-.195	.165	-1.053	.302[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal		Spearman Correlation	-.175	.185	-.938	.356[c]
		N of Valid Cases	30			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

As can be seen in the statistics marc Cramer is 0.93, which indicates a strong relationship between the two variables.

Analysis for Research Question Two

The second research question is as follows:

″Does the gender have any role on the relationship between FLLA and WTC among Intermediate EFL Learners? ″

In order to test this research question the following null hypothesis was formulated:

"The gender don't has any role on the relationship between FLLA and WTC among Intermediate EFL Learners? ″

Correlation analysis was used to test this hypothesis. The results are shown below:

Table. 5 Chi-Square Tests Anxiety and WTC and Gender

Gender		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	138.750[b]	110	.033
	Likelihood Ratio	66.332	110	1.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	3.337	1	.068
	N of Valid Cases	15		
Female	Pearson Chi-Square	136.667[c]	120	.142
	Likelihood Ratio	65.286	120	1.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	.250	1	.617
	N of Valid Cases	15		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	418.500[a]	352	.008
	Likelihood Ratio	148.656	352	1.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	1.104	1	.293
	N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 391 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

b. 132 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

c. 143 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Table.5 illustrates that, the P-value less than 0.03 for men show a relationship between two variables male gender with anxiety, WTC, but in women p equals is 0.14, which indicates the relationship between genders, women with variable anxiety, WTC. So it can be found that the H2 rejected.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It can be said that there was a statistically significant relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL learners, and the null hypothesis, that is, there was no statistically significant relationship between FLLA and WTC of intermediate EFL learners, was rejected. Based on the findings of the study, the results of correlation analyses for the research question one, it was shown that the null hypothesis was rejected and there was a significant relationship between FLLA and WTC among intermediate EFL learners. In keeping with the results, the relationship between two variables, FLLA and WTC is exactly 100.0% valid. As the results suggests, the P-value = 0.008 and less than 0.05, with a 95% confidence it can be said there is a significant relationship between these two variables. As can be seen in the statistics marc Cramer is 0.93, which indicates a strong relationship between the two variables.

Furthermore, FLLA and WTC show negative correlation in many research studies. (Baker & MacIntyre, 2002; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre et al. 1997; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986). In other words, if FL anxiety is high, WTC is low and vice versa. This would also mean that young learners have strong WTC; for them experience foreign language anxiety of low intensity.

Notwithstanding, the results of the analysis obtained for the second research question showed that the participant's gender has the significant role in predicting the degree of relationship between FLLA and WTC. A sequences of descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, and Pearson Correlation test were run to fund answers to the research questions. The result shows the P-value less than 0.03 for men and 0.05 show a relationship between two variables male gender with anxiety, WTC, but in women p equals is 0.14, which indicates the relationship between genders, women with variable anxiety, WTC. However, the results show that the correlation between two variables male gender with anxiety, WTC. The intensity of the relationship in men is 0.96 times, that is very strong.

These findings are shown to be in line with the previous studies in the field. As the results of this study confirm the findings of Akbarzadeh and Haddad Narafshan (2016) studied on the relationship between EFL learner's anxiety and WTC in language classes. It showed that there is a negative correlation between these variables. The findings of the present research are likely to provide other studies, by declaring that FL anxiety is a common debilitating feeling which affects students in a diversity of ways. Mainly frequent during speaking activities, the researcher think the consciousness of such a feeling should be sensitive and not be underestimated by teachers and learners. This could be realized through workshops or the adoption of certain teaching methodologies meant to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom especially during speaking practices (e.g. Communicative Language Teaching; Natural Approach). Making students relaxed by avoiding activities which rise competitiveness or which threaten students' self-esteem is very significant. Working in small groups and discussing interesting topics are good activities that let students to know each other and to practice the FL. Teachers could use calm and flexible approaches of error correction, being friendly and with a good sense of cheerfulness. At the same time students might deal with their anxiety by talking with their classmates about this problem since they are not the only ones to experience it and by consulting with their teachers, themselves successful language learners for many students, nearby their points of view towards the FL learning process, a process where difficulties and weakening feelings as anxiety are manifest sometimes .

In line with, Williams and Andrade (2008) implemented a study among 243 Japanese students in 31 English conversation classes at four universities in Japan. They dug up that language anxiety was habitually interconnected to the manufacture procedure stages of the language learning process. Additionally, they reached to the mostly students believed that the sources of anxieties associated with teachers and classmates. Similarly, there was relationships among emotional intelligence, foreign language anxiety, and WTC. Moreover, analysis indicated that FL anxiety and some of its subscales were predictors of WTC. (Tabatabaian, 2012).

The results of this study have several implications for the language learners, teachers and teacher trainers. The learners may benefit the results of this study in that they should be aware of the role of FLLA in terms of its contribution to their WTC. According to the findings of this study as well as those of the previous ones in Iran, the

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EFL learners in Iranian context can benefit from high WTC in different educational contexts and along with different age levels in that it helps them to improve their learning outcome and reduce anxiety.

Teachers may also benefit from the results of this study in that they must be aware of the negative correlation between the FLLA and WTC. They have to take care of and help the learners who suffer from FLLA and help them to improve WTC.

Teacher trainers also benefit from the findings of this study in that they should inform the teachers attending in service and also pre-service courses to be aware of the contributing role of FLLA in WTC.

It should be mentioned that this study can be applied to the larger samples in different contexts with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Also, it should be mentioned that speaking cannot be separated from other skills while teaching or evaluating students' performance. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the level of anxiety in students in an integrative fashion of language teaching.

Furthermore, based on the findings of this research the following recommendations are made for the future researchers

1- There is a need for directing a research on the effect of different helpful programs on the development of the learners' WTC and decrease the anxiety.
2- Further research is needed on the mixed effect of FLLA and WTC on the achievement of the learners in English acquisition.
3- Further research is needed on the FLLA with other affective and cognitive factors.
4- This study was carried out among the participants from one geographical area; it is felt to conduct another research concentrating on some participants from a wider range of area.

Conflict of interests
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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