

# FACTORS INFLUENCING ASIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH: A REVIEW OF ASIAN LITERATURE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a vital component in any language as it is a main reason to learn a second or a foreign language. Currently, educators come to conclusion that oral communication skills should be developed properly among students. To communicate in English is not an easy issue as it is found that some learners experience high levels of foreign language apprehension that inhibit their communication (Murad & Jalambo, 2019). Furthermore, reticence, willingness to communicate (WTC), apprehension and anxiety have become topics of research affecting students' WTC (Richmond & Mc Croskey, 1995). In addition, low motivation is found to be a major factor in WTC (Murad & Jalambo, 2019). Although motivation is a key element in learning a new language, it is not enough to be generated intrinsically and should be enhanced by external factors (Matsuoka & Evans, 2005). Further, explaining the factors contributing to WTC, Zrekat et al. (2016) mentioned the following: (1) to be monitored by others. (2) Unfamiliar situations. (3) Lacking information about the issue is being discussed. (4) Having low proficiency. In Asia, Littlewood (2002) added that Asian students are not highly WTC in EFL classes, and that attitude was not inborn, but it was a result of growing up in a cultural and educational environment in which a teacher was not considered as a facilitator of the learning process but as an authority.

In this article, I shed lights on the nature of the factors that affect the Asian university students' WTC. I reviewed some of the literature that was written in this field and reached a list of these factors.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this article I collected some of the recent studies conducted in Asian countries focusing on the place where they were conducted and the results of these studies. Then, I presented the conclusion that summarized the factors. I followed the descriptive analytical approach through analyzing the studies to reach their findings. I used Google Scholar as the main source of the articles.

The first study found was Anh and Tran (2019) which examined the individual and situational factors affecting students' WTC in Vietnam. The study was conducted on a sample of 195 Vietnamese university EFL students and five EFL teachers. They found the individuals' factors (i.e. lacking of English language proficiency, lacking confidence, apprehension to make mistakes, and shyness) and situational factors (i.e. difficult tasks, unfamiliar topics, unfriendly teachers, and teachers' negative feedback) contributed to students' WTC. In the same context in Palestine, Murad and Jalambo (2019) tackled the key factors affecting the Palestinian EFL students' WTC. The researchers applied their study to 140 participants. The following factors were

revealed: Lacking of vocabulary, weak grammar, weak pronunciation, lacking of English fluency and self-confidence, having some shyness and anxiety, and weak role of EFL teachers to promote speaking skills among learners. In addition, In Saudi Arabia, Khan and Salam (2019) concluded that one of the factors contributing to WTC was the students' thinking of English as an alien language. One of the situational factors affecting the Palestinian students' WTC was group discussions (Abutaha & Aburezeq, 2019). Another study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Al-Otaibi (2016) showed that peer comparison, students' perceptions about their ability to speak, English grammar, and difficulties in understanding the teacher were the main factors affecting learners' WTC.

One of the psychological factors affecting students' WTC was apprehension as evidenced by Palestinian researchers; Abutaha and Aburezeq (2019) who investigated the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University. They showed that apprehension was a factor contributing to students' WTC, and it was found moderate among the students. In Pakistan, the study of Soomro et al. (2019) revealed that apprehension was the main barrier of the students' WTC. In Sri Lanka, Rasakumaran, and Devi (2017) showed that higher levels of apprehension were found among females and this negatively impacted their WTC in English. Furthermore, in the context of Thailand, Ka-kan-dee (2017) showed that tourism students suffered from high degree of apprehension which prevented them from speaking English, especially when they presented a topic in English. In Iran, Rahmani and Croucher (2017) showed that apprehension was the main factor preventing Kurdish-Iranian minority groups to speak English. It was revealed that the Kurdish students experienced less apprehension than Iranian counterparts.

Throughout my review, I also found another two psychological factors; anxiety

and motivation as factors affecting university students' WTC. For instance, in Iran, Riasati (2018) investigated the Iranian EFL learners' WTC in English and the relationship between WTC and language learning anxiety and motivation. The results showed that WTC was negatively correlated with language learning anxiety, while positively correlated with language learning motivation and self-perceived speaking ability. Also, two studies in Japan were found, Hashimoto (2002) and Yashima (2002), who showed that the lack of anxiety affected students' WTC. In addition, in Malaysia, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) found that higher levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, and low motivation were the major factors inhibiting students' WTC. In addition, in China, Peng (2007) and Yu (2009) showed that motivation affected students' WTC.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Based on the review of the above literature, I came to a conclusion that the main factors influencing Asian university students' WTC in English were their lacking of proficiency (i.e. weak grammar, lacking of vocabulary, weak pronunciation, and lacking of fluency), some psychological factors (i.e. shyness, high levels of anxiety, low level of motivation, low self-esteem, high levels of communication apprehension, and lacking of confidence), and difficult tasks by teachers.

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