

**THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES ON INTERMEDIATE IRANIAN
EFL LEARNERS' WILLINGNESS TO
COMMUNICATE**

HOSEIN VAFADAR SAMIAN

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by

HOSEIN VAFADAR SAMIAN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer-mediated Communication
CSs	Communication Strategies
DST	Dynamic System Theory
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
HWTC	High-willing to Communicate
ID	Individual Difference
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LWTC	Low-willing to Communicate
MWTC	Mid-willing to Communicate
NIS-O	Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-observer Report
RQ	Research Question
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPCC	Self-perceived Communication Competence
SRS	Self-report Strategy Questionnaire
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TL	Target Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UnWTC	Unwillingness to Communicate
VIS	Verbal Immediacy Scale
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

LIST OF SYMBOLS

df	Degrees of freedom
F	F distribution
f	Frequency
M	Mean
Mdn	Median
N	Total number of cases
n	Number of cases (generally in a subsample)
p	Probability; probability of a success in a binary trial
r	Effect size
SD	Standard deviation
t	Student's t distribution; a statistical test based on the student t distribution; the sample value of the t -test statistic
U	The Mann-Whitney test statistic
Z	A standardized score; the value of a statistic divided by its standard error

**KESAN STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI TERHADAP KESANGGUPAN
PELAJAR EFL IRAN PADA PERINGKAT PERTENGAHAN UNTUK
BERKOMUNIKASI**

ABSTRAK

Pelajar kelas EFL yang mempunyai motivasi mempelajari bahasa seringkali tidak mahu bercakap atau berkata apa-apa, tidak berinisiatif serta tidak cuba berkomunikasi meskipun berpeluang berbuat sedemikian. Oleh sebab pentingnya komunikasi dan penggunaan bahasa dalam pemerolehan bahasa, kesanggupan berkomunikasi sedemikian dianggap konsep penting dari segi pembelajaran dan pengajaran bahasa dalam menghadapi ambivalensi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan rekaan kaedah gabungan, kajian kuasi-eksperimen ini menyelidik kesan strategi-strategi komunikasi terhadap kesanggupan pelajar EFL Iran berkomunikasi. Penyelidikan kesan strategi-strategi komunikasi ini berdasarkan jumlah masa yang digunakan dalam tajuk-tajuk perbincangan yang diperuntukkan, bilangan kekerapan bercakap/bertutur dan pengurangan kesan daripada maklum balas guru. Daripada persampelan sejumlah 245 pelajar EFL peringkat pertengahan, 67 pelajar lelaki dan perempuan yang mempunyai jumlah yang hampir sama rata dari segi campuran kesanggupan tinggi, kesanggupan pertengahan dan kesanggupan rendah berkomunikasi dimasukkan dalam kumpulan eksperimen ($n = 36$) dan kumpulan kawalan ($n = 31$) secara rambang. Kedua-dua buah kumpulan diuji dalam dua sesi persediaan, dua sesi perbincangan praujian dan dua sesi perbincangan pascaujian. Semua sesi tersebut dirakam dalam bentuk audio/video sebelum pengamatan dilakukan. Dalam sesi pembaikpulihan, kumpulan eksperimen menerima arahan eksplisit tentang penggunaan CSs yang dipetik daripada Dornyei dan Scott (1995a,

1995b, seperti yang disitatkan dalam Dornyei & Scott, 1997) ‘Inventory of Strategic Language Devices’. Akhirnya, temu bual rangsangan ingat semula dijalankan agar data dapat diperoleh daripada kumpulan eksperimen. Walau bagaimanapun, kumpulan kawalan tidak menerima sebarang bentuk pembaikpulihan; kumpulan kawalan ini mengikuti kurikulum EFL biasa. Dapatan analisis kuantitatif dan kualitatif menunjukkan bahawa jumlah masa bercakap atau WTC dan bercakap bergilir-gilir adalah nyata sekali lebih tinggi berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Gerak laku guru sebagai angkubah penyerhanaan dalam kajian ini tidak dapat ditentukan. Jenis CSs interaktif dan tidak langsung dikenal pasti sebagai strategi yang paling kerap digunakan dan yang berguna dalam kalangan peserta kumpulan eksperimen. Didapati juga bahawa kompeten berkomunikasi tanggapan sendiri peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen bertambah dengan nyata sekali pada peringkat pascaujian berbanding peserta dalam kumpulan kawalan. Apabila pendekatan situasi-dinamik diterapkan, sejumlah faktor yang saling berkait dalam meningkatkan dan mengurangkan gerak laku peserta termasuklah faktor kontekstual, factor individu dan faktor komunikatif kompeten; faktor-faktor sedemikian dikenal pasti melalui temu bual. Keadaan ini dikenali sebagai model legaran pohon dalam kajian ini.

EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON INTERMEDIATE IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

ABSTRACT

It is too frequently observed that students in EFL classes although motivated to learn a language remain silent and do not initiate or engage in communication when they are free to do so. Due to the importance of communication and language use in language acquisition in the past decade, willingness to communicate (WTC) as the construct to call such ambivalence to account is considered an essential concept in language learning and teaching. Adopting mixed methods design, the present quasi-experimental study investigated the differential effects of communication strategies (CSs) on Intermediate Iranian EFL students' WTC based on participants' amount of speaking time on allocated discussion topics and number of speaking turns while minimizing the teachers' immediacy behaviors effects. Through a purposive sampling from a pool of 245 intermediate EFL learners, 67 males and females with nearly equal number of mixed high-willing, mid-willing, and low-willing to communicate participants were randomly placed in the experimental ($n = 36$) and control group ($n = 31$). Both groups attended two preparatory sessions, two discussion sessions as the pretest, and two discussion sessions as the posttest and all sessions were audio/video recorded and observed. During five treatment sessions, the experimental group received the explicit instruction of CSs adopted from Dörnyei and Scott's (1995a, 1995b, as cited in Dörnyei & Scott, 1997) Inventory of Strategic Language Devices. At the end, the stimulated-recall interviews were conducted in order to elicit data from the participants in the experimental group. The control group, however, received no treatment instead they followed their regular EFL curriculum. The results of

quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that the amount of participants' speaking time or WTC and taking turns in speaking for the experimental group were significantly higher than the control group. The teacher's immediacy behaviors as a moderating variable in this study was not confirmed. The Interactional and Indirect types of CSs were identified as the most frequent and useful strategies applied and perceived by the participants in experimental group. It was also found that the self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) of the participants in the experimental group was significantly increased in the posttest compared with that of participants in the control group. Given dynamic-situational approach to WTC, a number of interrelated factors enhancing or reducing participants' WTC behavior including contextual, individual, and communicative competence factors, what referred to as tree-gyrate model in the present study, were also identified through interviews.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English language teaching trends shows that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is taking the lead in the second and foreign language pedagogy of the present era. Central to the CLT approach to language teaching is the engagement of language learners in communication to allow them to develop their communication competence (Savignon, 2005). Furthermore, as Grubbs, Chaengploy and Worawong (2009) stated, learners need to be skilled in oral communication skills in order to function effectively in the academic and professional setting. Therefore, the understanding and identifying learners' communication orientation and needs provides a basis for language teaching effectiveness. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, however, are different in their communication behaviors, some tend to communicate willingly, some others have a tendency to communicate only with a special person or when it is necessary. It is observed in the classes that some learners do not engage in communication, although they are skilled at language use—rules of making language or communicative meaning of language (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). This is while many others with less English language skill use their language and actively engage in communication. Also, it is observed that some students who are proficient enough to use their English language in the classroom are unwilling to be involved in communication outside the classroom.

Given the fact that the communication and language use have received considerable interest within Second Language (L2) teaching and learning in the past decade (e.g.,

Bernales, 2016; Cao, 2011; Fallah, 2014; Lantolf, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Peng, 2014) as necessary goals of L2 learning, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is considered a crucial concept in L2 teaching and learning. WTC was first conceptualized as the probability that a person will decide to communicate when he/she has no compulsion to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). All too frequently we encounter students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes who possess the essential motivation that prompts one to learn a language, but remain silent and do not initiate or involve in conversation when they have no coercion to do so. WTC is generally accepted by many researchers (Bernales, 2016; Cao, 2011; MacIntyre, 2007; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998; Yashima, 2002, Zarrinabadi, 2014) as the construct to account for such ambivalence on the part of L2 learning. The students' silence is typically referred to as *reticence* in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Katz, 1996; Tsui, 1996; White & Lightbown, 1984).

McCroskey and Baer (1985) defined WTC as "the probability that an individual will choose to communicate, specifically to talk, when free to do so" (p.420), or "the probability of initiating communication, given the opportunity, WTC integrates motivational process with communication competencies and perceived self-confidence" (MacIntyre, 2004, p.2). WTC in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) definition was conceptualized as "a readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2" (p. 547) or "an individual's general personality orientation towards talking" (p.188) that is concerned with communication among two persons and the amount of communication they want to get involved with (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

1.2 Background to the Study

1.2.1 Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

WTC was brought to the literature by McCroskey and Baer (1985), building on Burgoon's (1976) research on Unwillingness to Communicate (UnWTC), Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig's (1977) work on tendency toward verbal behavior, and McCroskey and Richmond's (1982) study on shyness. It is believed that WTC developed from First Language (L1) communication literature (Burgoon's, 1976; McCroskey & Baer, 1985). McCroskey et al. explained that WTC is a personality-oriented concept that illustrates such regularity in persons' tendency toward oral communication (1985, as cited in Peng, 2007). Thus, it appears that learners who are not involved in second language interaction are usually regarded as being passive and unmotivated.

In their definition of WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) considered creating WTC as one of the initial goals for L2 learning by helping students seize communication opportunities and be willing to communicate in authentic situations. They also examined the conditions which were unable to produce WTC in students, as "failed" ones. Owing to the fact that there has been a shift to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology since the 1970s, researchers and practitioners' common goal is to encourage learners to become more efficient and effective in communication.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) considered WTC the essential prerequisite for authentic communication and its facilitative role in learning process. This role is depicted by Skehan (1998) and Swain (1985) as the learners' zeal for communication which provides them with the opportunity to participate in the classroom conversations and produce L2 which rightly refers to Swain's (1985) output hypothesis. Similarly, it is outlined by Skehan (1989) in a way that one must talk in order to learn L2.

Accordingly, it could be argued that if learners are reticent in classes and do not engage in communication, they will fail to be fluent and accurate in their L2 production. Nevertheless, MacIntyre et al. (1998) claim that WTC is considered the main predictor of production and language use.

Primarily, a growing body of research on WTC comes along with two conceptual clarifications in this area: trait-like and dynamic situational conceptualizations, each representing different perspectives (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). The trait-like conceptualization (e.g., individual variables such as learners' personality, inter-group relations) represents stable broad and typical patterns of long-lasting behavior that continue across contexts. Regarding this conceptualization, some investigations have been conducted on the effect of an individual's factors on WTC (e.g., Cetinkaya, 2005; MacIntyre, 1994; Yashima, 2002). For example, Cetinkaya (2005) found that extroverted students compared to introverted ones who perceived themselves as being highly competent in communication led to the increased WTC. Many other factors, as well, have been identified in literature to predict WTC directly or indirectly including learners' motivation (Hashimoto, 2002, MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), learners' attitude and perceptions (Yashima, 2002), the way learners perceive themselves as being competent communicatively (Hashimoto, 2002), and learners' anxiety in communication (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003).

MacIntyre (2007) called for more research examining WTC construct accurately in different contexts besides English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. Consequently, MacIntyre (2007), given to the previous WTC model (1998), suggested a new perspective, dynamic situational conceptualization, regarding L2 WTC, claiming that students WTC fluctuates rapidly with the situation; in other words, “[t]he

process of exercising volition provides a way to specify how motivational tendencies are enacted in the moment-to-moment choices we make, such as choosing to speak up or to remain quiet” (p. 569). Thus, in the dynamic situational conceptualization, as postulated by MacIntyre (2007), the focus is on the concepts that are determined over time and are grown within a context. Given this dynamic situational view, it is believed that the dynamic and non-linear processes of WTC behavior fluctuates and dynamically change over time and emerges through the interdependence among internal and external factors (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; Peng, 2007) such as mood, physiological variables (e.g., arousal levels or capacity and mental factors you have available that help or prevent you to perform well), environmental conditions (e.g., the presence of recording equipment), and many other factors.

The idea of learning through speaking is believed to be central to the role of WTC in L2 (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2003). The present study also considers dynamic approach to studying changes in WTC; in other words, the participant’s own rationale for the changes that occur from moment-to-moment, e.g., by recording participants' communications and playing back, reviewing the recording and discussing the reasons for fluctuations in WTC by participants.

1.2.2 Communication Strategies (CSs)

Grounded in Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) viewpoint, several taxonomies of CSs, especially, interactional view (e.g., Cullen, 2002; Bailey, 2005; Hughes, 2002; Nakatani, 2010; Pica, 2002) and psycholinguistic perspective (Kellerman & Bialystok, 1997; Lafford, 2004; Littlemore, 2001; Nakatani & Gho, 2007) have emerged in the literature. In the interactional view, the way the interlocutors interact with each other and negotiate meaning is emphasized. Despite a role of solving problem in

communication difficulty, CSs also act like pragmatic discourse which helps in conveying message. However, in the psycholinguistic view, CSs are considered a mental activity and a set of activities that are helpful in solving a problem. CSs would assist less proficient learners to compensate their communication breakdowns by receiving further input and improving language skill (Faucette, 2001) and to develop L2 learners' autonomy (Manchon, 2000).

Some researchers (e.g., Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Doughty, 2000; Rababah, 2005; Tarone, Cohen, & Dumas, 1976) believe that students' problem-solving behavior while speaking is considered "communication strategy". However, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) went beyond this definition and added the "consciousness" to the subsequent definition of CSs, based on which they put forward that CS is to apply a conscious method to obtain a goal. In other words, individuals are conscious of the communication breakdowns and deliberately use CSs in order to express their meaning and mutually understand their interlocutor (Lafford, 2004). Further, Tarone et al. (1976) argued that students apply CSs for compensating their inappropriate target language knowledge while speaking or attempting to understand the interlocutor's intended meaning. Tarone (1980) expanded on her prior definition by considering an interactional view and defined CSs as the "mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in a situation where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (p. 420). Argued by Doughty (2000), appeal for help is an example of interactional strategy that has beneficial effects on understanding and learning when the meaning is negotiated.

There has been a growing interest inwards CSs in the communication literature, since Canale and Swain (1980) drew attention to the importance of strategic competence referring only to CSs, which can be used to compensate for breakdowns in communication. As Brown (2000) stated, more recent approaches seem to take CSs

as components of the whole strategic competence which help learners convey and negotiate meanings with interlocutors within particular contexts. Canale (1983) extended the definition of CSs explaining that they are not only strategies to avoid communication breakdowns but also they are used to increase the efficacy of communication with conversers.

Many various types of CSs have been proposed in the literature. For example, in a review of eight English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, Faucette (2001) reported two categories as 'Learning to Learn English' (such as paraphrasing, approximation, word coinage, ask for assistance, foreignizing, and time-stalling strategies) (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989) and 'Nice Taking with You' (such as paraphrasing, appeal for help, time-stalling, and message abandonment strategies) (Kenny & Woo, 2000).

CSs are also classified based on their function in a given situation and they fall into cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies (Oxford, 2008). Metacognitive strategies involve clarification, anticipation, directed attention, self-monitoring, self-management, auto-evaluation, and identification of the problem (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Cognitive strategies refer to strategies as code-switching. Social strategies including cooperation or appealing for help are used at particular social environments. Affective strategies have to do positively with motivation and emotions (Oxford, 2008).

Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas (1976) classified CS into eight strategies: negative transfer from the native language, when learners apply or transfer linguistic features such as structures from their native language to the target language that are not the same in both languages; overgeneralization, when learners apply a rule from the target language (TL) inappropriately to other forms of the TL; prefabricated pattern, when learners know the certain pattern in the TL, but apply them inappropriately- recognized

as a subcategory of overgeneralization; overelaboration, when learners produce an utterance which does not sound native-like; epenthesis or vowel insertion, when learners are unable to produce consonant clusters with which they are unfamiliar and apply schwas between consonants; avoidance strategy like topic and semantic; appeal to help; and paraphrase.

Dörnyei and Scott (1997) suggested the notion of CSs as a conscious strategy applied to achieve a goal. That being the case, they identified different kinds of problems: a) recourse deficits—refers to the knowledge shortcomings that unable speakers to express meanings; b) own performance problems—the speaker realizes that his utterance is not correct, such as self-repair strategy; c) other performance problems—the speaker perceives that something is incomplete or highly unexpected or he is unable to understand a message completely in the interlocutor's speech, such as the strategy of negotiation meaning; and d) Processing time pressure—when the speaker needs time for thinking and planning his message; such as self-repetitions strategy. By this, they grouped CSs into "direct", "interactional" and "indirect" strategies.

According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), direct CSs involves the strategies which are self-reliant, optional, and easy-to-use that speakers use to communicate meaning, such as circumlocution CS. In interactional CSs, speakers utilize troubleshooting exchanges in achieving mutual understanding with their interlocutor (e.g., asking for clarification). Accordingly, both direct and interactional CS categories are oriented with "Resource deficit-related strategies: L1- or L2-based; Own-performance problem-related strategies: L1- or L2-based; and Other-performance problem-related strategies: L1- or L2-based". Indirect strategies, are not strictly considered problem-solving strategies and they are not viewed as a means of providing alternative meaning structures, they help to convey the meaning indirectly by mutual understanding and

keep communication channel open. The indirect CSs categories are oriented with "Processing time pressure-related strategies, Own-performance problem-related strategies, and Other-performance problem-related strategies". Therefore, Dörnyei and Scott's (1995a, 1995b, as cited in Dörnyei & Scott, 1997) CSs categories are of much interest in the present study.

Many researchers (Alibakhshi, 2011; Cervantes, Carmen, & Rodriguez, 2012; Dörnyei, 1995; Ellis, 2003; Maleki, 2007; Nakatani, 2005; Oxford, 2003; Rabab'ah, 2005; Sukirlan, 2014; Wen, 2004) advocate the effectiveness of teaching CSs in developing strategic competence. For example, Dörnyei (1995) advocated a direct approach to CSs teaching and emphasized its effects on awareness-raising tasks. Dörnyei (ibid) considered the CSs teaching in a broader sense and argued it as "teaching L2 reading skills to learners who can already read in their L1" (1995, p. 63).

CSs have been hardly studied from the viewpoint of teaching and their influences on WTC especially in the Iranian context exploring CSs patterns such as the most frequent use, students' perceptions of the most useful CSs, and the effects of CSs on students' self-perceived communication competence. Of the studies relating to CSs in the Iranian context, can be made a reference to a study of the effects of CSs teaching on students' oral production (Alibakhshi & Padiz, 2011; Saeidi & Ebrahimi Farshchi, 2015), teachability of CSs and its influence on students' language learning (Maleki, 2007), learners' perceptions towards explicit teaching CSs (Abdi & Varzandeh, 2014), and the relationship of gender, proficiency level, and task types with CSs (Kaivanpanah, Yamouty, & Karami, 2012; Moattarian & Tahririan, 2013; Tajjedin & Alemi, 2010; Yarmohammadi & Seif, 1992).

1.2.3 Teacher Immediacy

When the teaching and teachability of CSs are proposed, the role of teacher immediacy comes to the fore in communication behavior in which the way teachers communicate to students is believed to be a determinant factor in effective teaching and how this is perceived by students might influence their affective and cognitive learning, willingness to learn, and their feelings and attitudes throughout learning process (e.g., Ainley, 2006; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2005; Pogue & AhYun, 2006; Richmond, 2002; Witt & Wheelless, 2001; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004). The concept of "teacher immediacy" has since been used in the literature mostly with a definition built around the characterization of closeness/intimacy between people, as originally developed by Mehrabian (1971); this term was used to refer to the behaviors in communication that increase closeness between teacher and learners physically and psychologically or reduce the degree of perceived distance between them (Richmond, 2002; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004).

Referring to the approach-avoidance view, Mehrabian (ibid) claims that students are attracted by people and things they favor, like and appraise highly, he continues to suggest that according to the approach-avoidance view, "people approach what they like and avoid what they don't like" (p. 22). Similarly, from the viewpoint of reinforcement theory, teacher immediacy behaviors can be seen as rewarding and served as encouragement for the perceptive behavior and learner's interaction that enhance the willingness of students to the learning process, WTC in class, and ease their pressure (Ballester, 2015), and reduced classroom anxiety (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

The teacher immediacy is explored in the related literature as verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors associated with fostering affinity and closeness in

communication (e.g., Ballester, 2015; Burroughs, 2007; Chanock, 2005; Chesbro, 2003; Fowler, 2009; Waldek, Kearney, & Plax, 2000; Rocca, 2007; Schutt, Allen, & Laumakis, 2009; Uckun & Buchanan, 2009; Wen & Clément, 2003; Witt & Wheelless, 2001). Verbal immediacy refers to the verbal behaviors when teachers apply “we” and “our”, use humor in class, call learners’ first name, show empathy, kindness, praise, feelings of inclusiveness, use personal knowledge, and engage students in communication. Non-verbal immediacy is dealt with the physical and emotional closeness between students and the teacher including behaviors such as eye contact, smiles, nods, facial expressions, vocal diversity, forward body lean, and a relaxed body position (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). Some researchers (e.g., Allen, Witt, & Wheelless, 2006; Chesbro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Fallah, 2014; Hsu, 2005; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2002; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004) claimed positive relationships between teacher immediacy and students’ motivation, instructional outcomes, and significant correlations between teacher immediacy and learners’ WTC in L2. Allen et al., (2006) argued that high degrees of teacher immediacy help learners highly motivate for learning, and the cognitive learning increases consequently.

Due to the teaching and teachability of CSs in a live classroom and the need to interact and use language in the target language to solve the communicative breakdowns and enhance learners' WTC, the interactions between the students and the teacher need to be considered. Accordingly, the role of the teacher immediacy which is referred to as physical and psychological closeness between people (Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004) cannot be neglected and it is taken into consideration in this study as a variable might moderate the effects of CSs on participants’ WTC. As in the Iranian

context, the teacher immediacy behaviors are also believed to be as reinforcement for students that increase the willingness of students to the learning process and their willingness to talk in class (Fallah, 2014; Riasati, 2014). Furthermore, the immediacy behaviors appear to affect communication apprehension and Self-perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) (Yu, 2008).

1.3 EFL in Iran

The official and national language in Iran is Persian (Farsi). Teaching English for students generally starts from primary school level but it officially begins from middle school, a period of three-year education known as Rahnemaei (literally means guidance) which stands for middle school in other countries. However, most of the students prefer to attend English Language Learning institutes to obtain a better English fluency and proficiency due to the unsatisfying quality of English education in public schools.

According to Farhadi, Sajadi, Hedayati (2010), choosing a foreign language to be taught in a country depends on certain factors such as government policy inspired by political, economic, social, and educational components. This holds true in Iran on the ground that a French priest founded the first advanced school in 1839, his major goal could have been religious, though he stated that his intention was to develop advanced sciences and the French language in Iran. Mahboobi (1975) explains that although this advanced school was not established, the French language was considered a social prestige within community and affected the choosing of foreign language instruction later in Iran.

English language started to spread globally and became one of the foreign languages taught in most countries after World War II. The westernization began some years ago with the Qajar Dynasty in Iran and then accelerated during Pahlavi Dynasty

(1925-1979) due to the close political, social, economic, and military ties between Iran and US (Riazi, 1995). Then, army personnel were required to have a good English proficiency in order to go to the US for further specialization and it, therefore, turned out to be an important language to learn even a social need for many people. Following that, English, considered an educational advancement tool in Iran, became a necessary requirement for many job opportunities and its teaching began in many private language schools. Many Iranian students continued their education to achieve higher degrees in US universities and a lot of Iranian universities expanded their close relations with American universities by offering scholarships for students to encourage them to complete their education in American universities (Farhadi et al., 2010).

Iran has been more conservative and unwilling to accept bilingual and multilingual educational system. The reason for this conservation can be accounted for by the fact that Iran wants to maintain national unity and identity among the young generations (Khubchandani, 2008). Khubchandani (ibid) refers to this by stating that after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the language matter has become politicized and English negatively influenced Persian language and Islamic culture. Foreign languages such as German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian were chosen to be taught and learnt due to better political relations with European countries than with US. However, the problem was that the number of teachers was not enough to teach these foreign languages and also the number of applicants for learning them was low. Therefore, English began to attract interest and became the main foreign language in Iran which is taught for educational, scientific, and other purposes like many other countries in the world.

Exploring English language instruction history in Iran shows that different approaches and methods have been taken so far like Grammar Translation in 1950s

and Audiolingual method in 1960s. Approaching the Islamic Republic formation in 1981, the dominant curriculum of foreign language teaching was to focus on the domination of four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing (Tajadini, 2002). As postulated by Dahmardeh (2009) CLT approach in language teaching was then developed as the Iranian national curriculum in 2007, claiming that learners should be exposed to real-life and real-time tasks. Presently, the courses taught in English Language Learning institutes usually concentrate on four main language skills as opposed to many public schools and universities which stress on reading. Keeping up what is most recent, various language learning programs, courses for different age groups, contemporary course books are offered in these English Language Learning institutes. Ghorbani (2009, as cited in Khorasani Moghaddam, 2013) explained that, English is applied as the whole or a small part of education in ESL contexts contrary to EFL contexts, the Iranian context in particular, where English is taught in the context of classroom by textbooks and language use is rarely happened outside the classroom context.

As Jahangard (2007) argues, students' listening and speaking skills are not taken enough into consideration in Iranian prescribed EFL textbooks and they are not tested during exams and the main purpose is to make learners pass their examinations, most teachers put much less effort on teaching these skills. From another viewpoint as stated by Hosseini (2007), the demands of nationwide exams make teachers focus on how students master the textbooks and perform successfully in examinations. Consequently, the teachers teach English for the purpose of testing because they are recognized as good teachers due to their students' good results in final exams.

Since the prescribed textbooks are grammar-oriented, teachers employ grammar-translation methods and also audio-lingual approaches; thus they apply L1 to teach

English and do not use the target language communicatively. This is because teachers do not have enough English communicative competence and also textbooks mostly devote spaces for reading without different communicative teaching tasks and information gap activities (Jahangard, 2007). Furthermore, as put forward by Farhadi et al. (2010), English is considered a foreign language in Iran and the demand to learn communicatively is therefore much lower. However, they explained that in the recent years, Iranians are witnessing a change in ELT textbooks and a rapid increase in learning English communicatively by shifting from a long-established grammar-translation curriculum into teaching language for communicative competence.

1.4 Statement of Problem

Regardless of the ups and downs in ELT in the Iranian context presented in the preceding section, the pivotal role of English as an international language in diverse areas has placed an emphasis on the need for more English language teaching and learning in the Iranian context. To that end, English language has become a mandatory course in the curriculum of secondary schools and higher education in Iran and many bilingual schools and English Language Learning institutes provide for Iranian students with English courses (Pazhouhesh, 2013). Despite these opportunities for learning English communicatively, a large number of students in Iran have still less communicative competence and self-perceived communication confidence to interact and communicate in English (Dahmardeh, 2009; Eslami-Rasekh, 2010; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Furthermore, the focus of teacher-centered approach was primarily to require students to put their efforts on the course so as to obtain a passing score on the grammar tests.

This led teachers and scholars to suggest the teacher-centered approach should give its place to CLT approach in order for students to gain competence and fluency in

English communicatively (Dahmardeh, 2009; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). However, Iranian students being instructed by CLT approach, on the other side, failed to achieve the satisfactory results (Shamsipour & Allami, 2012).

It is hard to claim that CLT approach was unsatisfactory; however, English teachers commonly attributed that failure to the students' reticence to communicate or unwilling to communicate explaining that they do not take a risk of using whatever they have learnt, they just try to respond teachers when they raise a question (Kafipour, Yazdi, Soori, & Shokrpour, 2011; Rashidi & Mahmoudi Kia, 2012; Sorayaie Azar, 2012). This is also because students are not exposed to natural interaction or authentic communicative situations and English learning happens only through formal instruction in classrooms in Iran (Khajavi, et al., 2016). Furthermore, students have little linguistic resources, interaction skills, and needed CSs to make themselves understood which leads into inability of maintaining communication for an extended period of time and as a result unwilling to communicate (Rashidi & Mahmoudi Kia, 2012; Sorayaie Azar, 2012).

Therefore, English language teachers generally perceive students' reticence or unwilling to communicate as a major concern for educational reform in Iran (Khajavi, et al., 2016; Khany & Mansouri Nejad, 2016; Rashidi & Mahmoudi Kia, 2012; Zarrinabadi, 2014) and also other countries (Cao, 2011; Katz, 1996; Tsui, 1996; Walsh, 2011). It is too frequently observed that Iranian EFL students, specially Intermediate learners, who have the necessary motivation that propels one to learn a foreign language remain silent and do not initiate or engage in communication when they are free to do so (Khajavi, et al., 2016). Such ambivalence in L2 communication in the related literature is explored by WTC construct (Baker et al., 2000; Bernales, 2016; Cao, 2011; Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre et al., 2003,

MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Kang, 2005; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Peng, 2007; Yashima, 2002; Yu, Li, & Gou, 2011; Zarrinabadi, 2014). WTC also turns out to be in obvious interest to CLT, which accentuates learning through communicating (Ellis, 2008, as cited in Xie, 2011). This is further emphasized by Ellis (2003) that if students do not use language, they may not be able to obtain necessary skill in order to communicate successfully.

Although communication-oriented teaching is currently prevailing in Iran, it is observed that Intermediate English students, particularly in Ardabil city, are scarcely instructed to being able to communicate and convey the intended meanings. Despite possessing knowledge of forms, meanings and functions, some students are yet reticent or unwilling to communicate which is seen as inability of students in using that knowledge and acquiring strategies to keep the communication channel open and convey the intended meanings appropriately. However, there is a widely held belief that communication strategies (CSs), which are considered strategic competence enhancers, can help solve communication breakdowns, increase interaction and language use in the target language, and deal with reticence (e.g., Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Jackson, 2002; Lafford, 2004; Nakatani, 2010; Rababah, 2005; Zhang, 2005a). Tardo (2005, as cited in Maldonado, 2016) referred to CSs as useful tools for L2 learners to compensate any shortcomings between their communicative needs and the limited resources in the L2, thus leading them to find a balance between what they learn in the classroom, and the resources necessary to better interact in the L2.

Therefore, there is a sense of hope that CSs help EFL students derive some WTC in the Iranian context and develop a sense of self-perceived communication competence or at least being able to do something with what they have learnt so as to convey their intended meanings in an appropriate way.

Therefore, according to the aforementioned explanations, reasons, and evidence, it is observed that learners in Iranian EFL classes are not willing to engage in communication (e.g, Kafipour, Yazdi, Soori, & Shokrpour, 2011; Khajavi, Ghonsooly, Hosseini Fatemi, & Choi, 2016; Khany & Mansouri Nejad, 2016; Rashidi & Mahmoudi Kia, 2012; Sorayaie Azar, 2012; Zarrinabadi, 2014) as the recognized problem for learners in the context, particularly Intermediate EFL learners in Ardabil city in Iran. Nonetheless, as explained above, it is possible to help students further improve their WTC and self-perceived communication competence in class discussions by teaching and providing for them with CSs (e.g., Abdi & Varzandeh, 2014; Fallah, 2014; Maleki, 2007; Riasati, 2014; Saeidi & Ebrahimi Farshchi, 2015), which this study seeks to examine it.

The present study considers a largely unexplored area in CSs research, in particular, WTC as a dynamic-situational construct, the observable behaviors in class and the occasions on which students start or become involved in communication when they have the choice, rather than a trait-like variable. Moreover, so far in the Iranian context, research attempt has rarely been on gathering data to investigate the effects of CSs on students' WTC and its dynamic-situational nature through a mixed-method and most of the existing research have been related only with identifying and classifying the CSs, rather than studying their value as relevant tools to improve students' WTC behavior. In other words, the effect of CSs on fostering learners' WTC is still poorly known. For instance, Saeidi and Ebrahimi Farshchi (2015) investigated the CSs teaching effects on learners' oral production or Abdi and Varzandeh (2014) examined learners' perceptions towards direct teaching of CSs. Therefore, this can be of much help in filling existing research gaps in the literature and to develop the general knowledge base for more studies into WTC field.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study and detailed objectives that the study is expected to achieve are listed below:

1. examining the effects of communication strategies on intermediate Iranian EFL students' willingness to communicate behaviors based on their amount of speaking time on allocated discussion topics and number of speaking turns while minimizing the teachers' immediacy behaviors effects in an experimental group and a control group
2. examining the effects of communication strategies use by intermediate Iranian EFL learners on their willingness to communicate behaviors in an experimental group comparison of low-willing, mid-willing, and high-willing to communicate participants before and after treatment,
3. the most frequent types of communication strategies applied by participants in their conversation,
4. participants' overall perceptions of the most useful communication strategies influencing their willingness to communicate behaviors,
5. detailed examining of low-willing, mid-willing, and high-willing participants' perceptions of the most useful communication strategies influencing their willingness to communicate behaviors, and
6. the effects of communication strategies on participants' self-perceived communication competence.

1.6 Research Questions

This study is conducted based on the main aim of the study which is expressed in the form of Research Question 1 and it is translated into more specific objectives which are expressed in the form of research questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Research Question 1: How would communication strategies use by intermediate Iranian EFL learners affect their willingness to communicate behaviors based on their amount of speaking time on allocated discussion topics and number of speaking turns while minimizing the teachers' immediacy behaviors effects?

Research Question 2: How would communication strategies use by intermediate Iranian EFL learners affect their willingness to communicate in an experimental group comparison of low-willing, mid-willing, and high-willing participants before and after treatment?

Research Question 3: Which types of communication strategies are used most frequently by the participants?

Research Question 4: What are participants' perceptions of the most useful communication strategies influencing their willingness to communicate behaviors?

Research Question 5: What are low-willing, mid-willing, and high-willing participants' perceptions of the most useful communication strategies influencing their willingness to communicate behaviors?

Research Question 6: Does the communication strategies instruction make a significant difference in participants' self-perceived communication competence?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is believed to be of significance to the area of ELT and EFL as it makes a number of important contributions to the field by developing the current knowledge base in that field. Particularly, this study adds to the current literature by examining the effects of CSs on intermediate Iranian EFL learners' WTC, a feature that is missing in the Iranian context and the pertinent literature and a novel element of this study. Many language acquisition theories, second language acquisition research, and pedagogical approaches (e.g., output hypothesis, interaction approach, communicative language teaching, sociocultural theory) pay more attention to communication, language use, and production (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Lantolf, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2007a; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). As Ellis (2003) stated, if language use does not happen, as a result learners do not acquire L2 proficiency to speak effectively. Also, MacIntyre et al. (1998) emphasized that the ultimate goal of learning a language should be to encourage learners' willingness to obtain chances of communication. Moreover, WTC is believed to be the basic predictor of production and L2 use (MacIntyre, 2007; Yu et al., 2011).

The findings of the present study by understanding how and why students apply special CSs might cast light on helping teachers conduct suitable tasks in order for students to learn how to deal with their communication breakdowns. Furthermore, this study may reveal a number of certain CSs which might be applied and perceived by EFL students as fostering their WTC and communication ability and this, accordingly, will help teachers have a better picture of CSs and equip themselves with CSs patterns to promote students' WTC. To that end, this study also considers more specific objectives such as the most frequent use of CSs and the most useful CSs used and perceived by participants, the effect of CSs on participants' self-perceived

communication competence, and participants' self-report of their reticent time during communication and its fluctuation in the Iranian EFL classroom context. Therefore, if the effect of CSs on students' WTC is established in this study, the contextual findings and patterns obtained will be of interest and help to Iranian teachers specifically as well as to the teachers from other EFL contexts who intend to understand what types of CSs are generally effective in fostering students' WTC and solving their communication breakdowns. This will also help teachers design teaching tasks, particularly for communication-based programs, more effectively and furthermore help students effectively apply CSs in order to cope with their communication breakdowns and reticence.

Since the role of differential behavior of teacher immediacy towards learners is expected to influence the strength of a relationship between the independent and dependent variables, though minimized in the present study, its possible influence is examined through participants' perceptions of both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors on their WTC behavior and through the observations by an observant in the class. Therefore, if such relationships or effects are established, the results yielded from the pertinent analyses will increase teachers' awareness of their interactional behaviors and as a result it will be beneficial to practically suggest English language teaching schools to require teachers to reflect more on their immediacy behaviors and effectively interact with students in order to promote their WTC behaviors.

Equally significant, the literature on WTC indicates that the studies conducted so far have investigated the antecedents of WTC behavior and CSs have been hardly ever examined from the viewpoint of teaching and their effects on learners' WTC behavior and its dynamic-situational nature especially in the Iranian context. Therefore, the

findings of this study can be of much help in filling existing research gaps in the literature and WTC field.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Willingness to communicate: According to McCroskey et al. (1985) WTC is defined as "the probability that an individual will choose to communicate, specifically to talk, when free to do so" (p. 420). WTC in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) definition was presented as "a readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2" (p. 547). Later, MacIntyre (2004) defined WTC as "the probability of initiating communication, given the opportunity, WTC integrates motivational process with communication competencies and perceived self-confidence" (p. 2). In this study, WTC behavior is taken into account by referring to the above definitions and adding up a view that WTC is considered not only to initiating communication, but also sustaining communication. It is imperative to note that in this study, the low-willing participants are referred to those who have are willing to initiate or involve in conversation when they have no coercion to do so and high-willing participants are those who have high-willing and tendency to engage in L2 communication when they have no compulsion to do so.

Trait-like concept: The trait-like conceptualization (e.g., individual variables, learner personality, inter-group relations, etc.) represents stable broad and typical patterns of long-lasting behavior across contexts (e.g., Cetinkaya, 2005; MacIntyre, 1994; Yashima, 2002).

Dynamic situational concept: The dynamic situational conceptualization in MacIntyre's (2007) definition is presented as "the concern is for concepts that are defined over time within a situation" (p. 565).

Communication strategy: Dörnyei and Scott (1997) put forward the definition of communication strategy as "being a conscious technique used to achieve a goal" (1997, pp. 184–185). Stated differently, students are aware of the communication breakdowns