THE INDONESIAN STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN VIRTUAL CLASS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract
As one of the keys to quality instructional process, students' willingness to communicate deserves a place to observe especially when it was done by non-English department students when conducting instructional practices virtually during the Covid-19 outbreak. The present study aimed at investigating the students' willingness to communicate during TOEFL preparation classes. The object of this study was 30 students of Economics Education Study Program in their second semester learning in a South-Tangerang based university, Indonesia. The students' patterns in their willingness to communicate were examined using close observation within 3 consecutive meetings. Due to the pandemic outbreak of Covid-19, the instructional process was conducted virtually via Zoom platform. One lecturer acted as the instructor and one passive observant was given an access to record and observe the instructional practices. This study revealed that the students' willingness to communicate depends on the task type given by the lecturer. It indicated the significance of intelligible and feasible instruction in order that the students' willingness to communicate improved.

Keywords: Distanced Learning, TOEFL for Economic Education, Willingness to Communicate

INTRODUCTION

When implementing collaborative works, teaching practitioners mostly find that there are always active and passive students in group discussions, classroom discussion, or other typical activities (Harper, 2016). This is assumed as common yet teacher needs to cope with it in order to obtain quality instructions. One of the keys to quality instructional process is communication frequency amongst teacher and students during learning activities. Researchers in the area of foreign language learning has found intrapersonal difficulties many language students face (Rastegar & Karami, 2015) and one of them is communication. Communication refers to an act of transmitting information and common understanding (Lunenburg, 2010) from one person to another person about needs, affective, desires, knowledge, or perceptions (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). To be specific, central issue in communication is students' willingness to communicate (Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre &

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Doucette, 2009). Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to the tendency of an individual to initiate communication when they do not have to do so (Lahuerta, 2004). In classroom context, WTC is defined as students' readiness to commence communication when they have a wide of choice (Barjasteh, Vaseghi & Neissi, 2011). Practically, WTC is not limited to verbal language, but also non-verbal ones. Students who raise their hands when their teachers address a question are an example of WTC as it is a sign that they intend to communicate (Maryansyah, 2019). Havwini (2019) clearly gives extension to whether or not a student is willing to communicate: (1) degree of classroom anxiety, (2) degree of perceived communicative competence, (3) degree of fear of negative evaluation, (4) degree of general communication apprehension. Other factors such as a student's perceptions concerning the value of oral communication also come into play when the student decides or does not decide to communicate in class.

Students' willingness to communicate (WTC) has been the major concern since 1990s (see Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) and its degree is correlated to some factors such as teachers' attitude and involvement (see Cao, 2011; Cao & Philp, 2006; Zarrinabadi, 2014), teacher's teaching methods (see Zacharias, 2014), teacher's strategy (see Lee & Ng, 2010), task types (see Khatibi & Zakeri, 2014), and task orientation (see Peng & Woodrow, 2010) that mostly take place in English as Second Language (ESL) context.

In EFL context, Havwini (2019) states WTC has been extensively discussed by numerous studies which are subjected to many variables such as teacher factors, task factors, and interlocutor factors. However, when it is specifically subjected to English for specific (ESP) context, very few studies will be found. In fact, one of the goals in ESP is students' ability to communicate within their own community (Sukmawati & Nasution, 2019) to survive in their future career. Accordingly, a study on students' willingness to communicate in ESP class becomes pivotal. As one of ESP, learning English for specific purpose is aimed at empowering the development skill of Economics students to prepare them to work in related profession (Nila & Susanto, 2018). More specifically, the goal is to enable students to develop their professional communication skill as an essential skill for success in academic and work places (Taha and El-Sakran, 2014). To achieve the goal, most ESP practitioners are aware to innovations in the classroom in respect to teaching methods and activities (Milosevic, 2014). However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, teaching practices are shifted to virtual platforms. Its implementation has caused some challenges and it may cause issues to all parties involved (Marinoni, Land & Jensen, 2020) especially in the students' willingness to communicate. This study focuses on the willingness of the students of Economic

Department in an Indonesian university to communicate when learning English for Economics. '

A study on students' willingness to communicate was conducted by Havwini (2019) to junior high school students in Aceh Timur, Indonesia. The study seeks the students' WTC when the 2013 National Education Curriculum is implemented in the school. Using close observation, the study examines the patterns of WTC the students performed. It was found that the students performed willingness to communicate when different task types given by the teacher. This indicates the significance of various task types to promote the students' willingness to communicate.

A study on students' WTC was also conducted by Alqahtani (2015) aiming at examining Saudi students' WTC as well as exploring difficulties the students face when learning English. Using mixed methodological approach to gain the data to 658 participants, the study reveals that the students had a willingness to learn English with other students who share English as a native language. Some difficulties when learning English were motivational level, cultural and social factors.

Ai Siok KHO-YAR, Shameem RAFIK-GALEA, and Elise Ai Hwee KHO (2018) conducted a study on the Malaysian undergraduate students' WTC. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), this study investigated the students' WTC when it is correlated to self-efficacy, motivation, mindset, and performance. It was found that the students' personality is directly to affect their WTC in English. While other elements such as motivation and academic achievement indirectly affect their WTC.

The first study is similar to my study to the extent to the research design used to reveal the objectives of the study. The difference lies on two ideas: she observed it within the implementation of national curriculum 2013 and my study is specific to learning TOEFL for economics education study program. This second study is similar to my paper to the extent to the topic being explored. But the difference lies on the object where the students an ESL and my students are an EFL. Similarly analyzing students' WTC, this study has a significant difference from mine to the extent to the design which seeks correlational factors of some elements to students' WTC. Having seen the mainstream of studies on WTC, this study brings the significance of investigating the EFL students who learn English for specific purpose (ESP). More specifically, it is novel that the students' WTC be analyzed within pandemic where instructional practices must be conducted virtually.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study involves 30 students of Economics Education study program and an English lecturer at an Indonesian university located in South Tangerang. The students are prepared to be a professional economics teacher at junior or senior high schools. The students are ranged in age from 19 to 25 years old. 25 of them are full-time students and 10 of them take side job after school-hours. They came from varied high schools in Indonesia and admitted to have exposure to English subject since junior high school. Before taking this course, all of the students took TOEFL-prediction test and their TOEFL scores were varied from 380-420 which shows that their English proficiency is generally low. On the other hand, the lecturer is a master degree holder from English education study program at a favorite university in Indonesia and already taught English for Economics for 3 years. This is a naturalistic study in which the researcher observed the instructional practices conducted virtually as an aftermath effect of prolonged pandemic Covid-19 outbreak. Further, the researched did not give any intervention to the flow of the instructional process (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000).

The students' WTC was observed during 3 consecutive meetings and only the lecturer who knew that the researcher was one of the participants in the virtual meetings as an effort to maintain naturalness of the instructional process. The instructional practices were recorded to be observed. The duration is, in total, 300 minutes. Then, the researcher selected one meeting to be transcribed verbatim and to be analyzed. The selected meeting was considered representative because the instructional strategies were overall similar where expository teaching strategy continued by classroom discussion was chosen. To analyze the students' WTC, the researcher deployed a coding scheme adapted from Cao & Philp (2006) with some modifications to support the context. The scheme starts from analyzing patterns as follows: (1) students who voluntarily answer the lecturer's questions; (2) students who address the lecturer question(s); (3) students who present their own opinion amidst discussion; (4) students who respond peers' questions; (5) students who help peers recall rarely-used words; (6) students who click 'raise hands' menu to initiate a response. The appearance frequency of each pattern is then calculated to conclude the students' degree of WTC.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The students' willingness to communicate via virtual platform was analyzed by a passive observant who was given access to join the virtual meetings. Using six patterns as suggested by Cao & Philp (2006), the close observation during 3 consecutive meetings of online training came to a finding as portrayed by Figure 1.
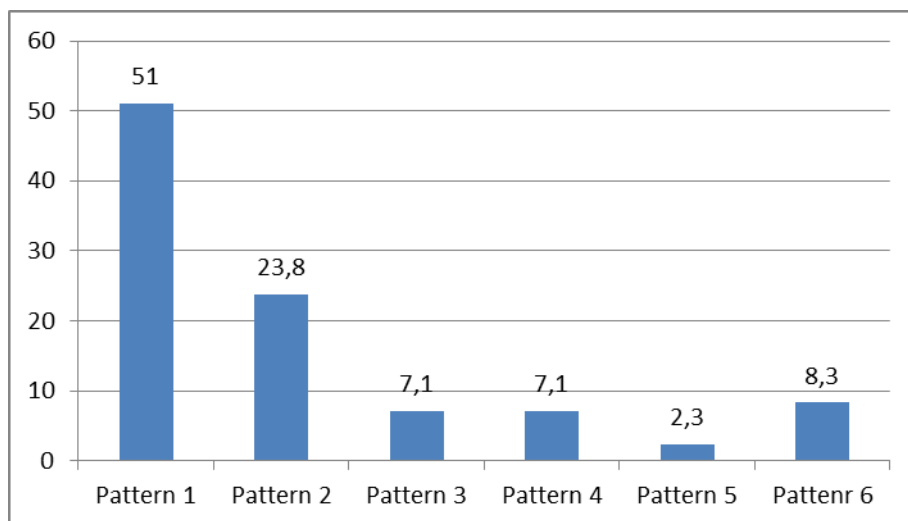

Figure 1. The Rate of Patterns of the Students' Willingness to Communicate (In Percentage)

Figure 1 suggests that the students' willingness to communicate is overall varied with the highest rate of pattern is the students' volunteer answer to the lecturer's questions (51%) and the lowest pattern is to help other students recall hard words. The discussion is presented by elaborating the finding from the highest to the lowest successively.

Pattern 1: The students voluntarily answered the lecturer's questions or instructions

After conducting 3 meetings, it was found that there are 41 conversations between students (coded with 'S') and lecturers (coded with 'L') (51%) that were initiated by the lecturer's giving questions of instruction. This patterns starts with the lecturer addressed a question to all the students and gave them freedom choosing to either respond the question or not.

Excerpt 1

01 L: Well students. Thank you for accomplishing the pretest which actually is designed the same as the real TOEFL Test in scheme. But anyway, has anyone been familiar or ever joined TOEFL test before?

02 S1: Not yet, Pak.

03 03 S3: I took it when I was in senior high school, sir. The school conducted the test. But it was like 6 years ago.

04 04 S4: Not yet, sir. I have no idea at all.

The conversation occurred in meeting 1 where it starts by a question from the lecturer to the students' experience at facing TOEFL test before. One student gave a short answer saying that he has no idea on TOEFL test before. However, another student came with different experience. This is adherent to the same question he voluntarily answered.

Excerpt 2

01 L: What do you say about listening test you have just accomplished?

02 S1: So far so good. The only challenge is less conducive situation where unexpected sounds frequently appear, Pak.

03 L: Yah. That commonly happens in such test-from-home.

The conversation occurred in meeting 1 when it started with an instruction given by the lecturer for the students to tell their experience answering listening section questions in the pre-test. The instruction was delivered in form of interrogative sentence. Among 30 students, one responded with quite complete and relevant answer to the question. The students did not give further response when the lecturer tried to console that it is normal to have signal disturbance.

Excerpt 3

01 L: Well. What about the structure and written text questions. Did you find any difficulties?

02 S1: I really don't understand grammar, Pak. I need to learn about it.

03 S2: Sir. I think the time allocation is too short that I could not finish answering all the items.

04 L: Well. How many questions are there in the section?

05 S2: Less than 50, Pak.

06 S3: 40 exactly.

Conversation above occurred when discussing structure and written expression section in meeting 2. The lecturer asked about the students' experience or impression accomplishing the section. The question is specified in asking difficulties doing the task. Three students involved in the conversation answering two successive questions delivered by the lecturer. In the end of the conversation, one student verified the other student's answer by saying there are 40 questions in the section to make it clearer than the less-than-50 answer from student 2.

Excerpt 4

01 L: Can you see the slide now? It is rather difficult to present it.

02 S1: Not yet, Sir.

03 S2: You may stop sharing first, and try again after, sir.

04 L: Oh ya. OK. Thank You.

This conversation occurred when the lecturer found difficulty in sharing his slide to the students via the virtual platform. It was noted that the lecturer was actually on the right way of sharing but was not sure whether the slide was accepted by the students' screen. One student responded sharply saying that she could not see the slide in her laptop screen. However, another student responded to the question by giving suggestion or direction for the lecturer instead of answering the lecturer's question. Accordingly, the student also applies another pattern in addition to responding the lecturer's question.

Pattern 2: Students raised questions

This pattern started with the students addressing questions to the lecturer related to the material the lecturer presented. The overall number of frequency that performed pattern 2 is 22 conversations or 23.8% out of the all conversations that took place in the virtual meetings.

Excerpt 5

01 S1: I have difficulties in reading section, Pak.

02 L: Oh ya. Could you please elaborate?

03 S1: It was really hard to understand. The time is too short but there are many long texts to read.

04 L: I see. That is OK. We will discuss strategies in answering and coping with the long texts in reading section. How many texts did you find?

05 S1: I think more than 7, Pak.

The conversation occurred in learning reading section in meeting 3 where a student shared her difficulties accomplishing the section for her limited vocabulary and time. The lecturer responded by saying that the discussion will immediately move on explaining strategies to cope with the problem. The lecturer decided not to directly answer the questions because the explanation would take its own time right after he explained some types of questions that frequently appear in reading section.

Excerpt 6

01 S1: Sir, what is meant by second line?

02 L: Good questions. Can anyone answer?

(No one)

L: Well. Second line refers to speaker who responds the question. Why is it important? Because the answer to the question will be found in what the second line says.

This conversation occurred when discussing strategies in answering questions in listening section in meeting 1. One of the strategies is to focus on the second line. The lecturer had not come to explain what it means by second line but an enthusiastic student raised a question on it. The lecturer, on the other hand, did not directly answer the question. He pleased other students to respond to the question but no one did. Finally, the lecturer answered the question.

Excerpt 7

01 S1: How to know the second line if there are long conversation, sir?

02 L: O well don't worry. This strategy only applies to short conversation.

Another conversation occurred in meeting 1 where discussion moved to long conversation in listening section. A student asked how to apply the strategy if it in in long conversation. The lecturer verified that the strategy to focus on second line only appears in short conversation not in long one. This answer is a direct response to the student's question.

Excerpt 8

01 S1: Sir. Why is the answer C? My answer is D. Doesn't it sound more logical?

02 L: Good. OK anyone wants to give opinion?

03 S2: Sir. I agree the answer is C. Answer D has logical but different meaning compared to what the speaker says.

04 l: Yes. It is true.

A dissenting opinion appeared in answering one of the questions in listening section still. One of the students had different opinion to the answer from the lecturer's answer. She thought that the answer should be D with her logical reasoning. However, the lecturer did not directly respond to her argument. He chose to give opportunity for other students to respond. Impulsively, another student responded well and the response is theoretically tru. That is why the lecturer said it is true as a response of support without trying to assault the first student.

Pattern 6: Students raised questions

There is one menu in the platform that allows students to ask for the lecturer's permission to communicate. The menu is called 'raise hand' which is designed to allow all participants to propose a conversation after the lecturer clicked 'yes'. Overall, there were

seven moments when the lecturer opened opportunities for the students to click the menu as a response to questions or instructions given by the lecturer as seen in Excerpt 9 or the lecturer pleased the students to read the question to him as seen in Excerpt 10.

Excerpt 9

01 L: Well. Let's answer question no. 3. What is the synonym of the word 'anxiety'? and in what paragraph can you get the clue?

02 Ss: 2 students clicked *raise hand* menu.

03 L: Yes S2, please.

The conversation occurred in meeting 3 when discussing questions in reading section. The lecturer please all the students to answer what the synonym of the word 'anxiety' is but instead of directly answering the questions, some students clicked menu 'raise hand' showing their interest to answer the question but in need of the lecturer's permission to respond.

Excerpt 10

01 L: Well. Who wants to read the next question?

02 Ss: (3 students clicked *raise hand* menu)

03 L: Yes, S1, please.

Another event when students used the menu is when the lecturer welcomed any students to help him read the questions in reading section. Actually, the same patterns also occurred in meetings one and two where the students tended to wait for the lecturer's permission before they started participating. This also belongs to WTC.

Pattern 3: The students presented their own opinion amidst discussion

This pattern refers to the students' initiatives to express their own opinion without tany trigger. It indicates high level of willingness to communicate because the motive to express is not from external factor. It was boosted from their own.

Excerpt 11

01 S1: Sir. I think the answer should be D. If the subject is their person like he or she, the verb should be added by sor –es. Am I correct, sir?

02 L: Yes. You are. Thank you for the answer.

03 S1: Alhamdulillah sir. Finally I have a correct answer to grammar questions.

04 L: Oh really?

The conversation occurred in the second meeting when the topic of discussion is on structure and written expression as one of sections In TOEFL test. A student proposed a statement to the lecturer by hoping that the lecturer justifies the statement. The student

found himself less confident in answering TOEFL test especially in structure and written expression. It was signified by his pleasure when knowing that the lecturer agreed with his statement.

Excerpt 12

01 S1: But, sir sorry to interrupt. I think the main idea is not stated in the first sentence of the first paragraph. It is in the last sentence. What does it name? I forget , sir.

02 S2: Inductive paragraph

03 S3: Oh ya. Inductive paragraph

The conversation took place in reading section

Pattern 4: The students responded peers' questions

Excerpt 13

01 S1: Sir. I still don't understand the difference of to infer and to imply in reading section.

02 S2: I think they are the same, aren't they?

03 S3: Yes. I think so.

04 L: Yes. Basically inferring and implying are the same. You need to think more and try to think critically to get the answer. You will not find the answer the answer in the text unless you conclude it.

The conversation occurred in meeting 3 when discussing reading section. One student directly addressed a question on the difference of infer and imply as frequently appeared in reading questions. Before the lecturer answered the question, another student responded saying that both are lexically the same. And it was also agreed by another student. This indicates that the students had willingness to respond to their peers.

Pattern 5: The students helped other students recalled hard words

Pattern 6 is the lowest of all pattern that occurred during the three meetings. There were only 2 events when the students helped other students recall hard words they could not express and both occurred in reading section as shown by Excerpt 14.

Excerpt 14

01 S1: But, sir sorry to interrupt. I think the main idea is not stated in the first sentence of the first paragraph. It is in the last sentence. What does it name? I forget , sir.

02 S2: Inductive paragraph

03 S1: Oh ya. Inductive paragraph

One student came to argue that the main idea should be in the first paragraph which is called inductive paragraph. But she could not recall the phrase so she questioned it. Fortunately, another student came with a help recalling that such paragraph is called inductive paragraph.

From the all conversations that occurred during the three meetings of TOEFL training program, it was found that the students' willingness to communicate raise when they were given questions or instructions by the lecturer. It shows that the factor affecting the students' WTC mostly came from external factor; the lecturer. This finding is in line with Havwini (2019) stating that task type given by teacher really influences the students' WTC. This is assumed as normal because the instructional practices occurred virtually where there is a distance and a medium to hamper the interaction among the participants (Onyemah & Deborah, 2019). Accordingly, the lecturer plays pivotal role in improving the students' WTC as one of criteria of success in instructional process (Sukmawati & Nasution, 2020).

Fortunately, virtual learning enables and effectively mediates question-and-answer interactions among the users (Gomez-Rey, Barbera, & Navarro, 2016) even though there is a distance. This is evident that the students' WTC especially in addressing questions is arguably high for they have opportunities to do so. This is in line with Kho-Yar, Galea, & Hwee KHO (2018) that raising questions is considered easy to do that many students are good at. It is also because teachers mentioned in the beginning that questions are welcome during the instructional process.

Further, the least pattern was the students' willingness to help their friends recall hard words. This typical willingness is considered hard to achieve because students have to possess knowledge or experience in helping other students to do so (Havwini, 2019). This is the reason why there were only two students who could help other students recalled hard words as a willingness to help based on their capacity.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Investigating the students' willingness to communicate when learning Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test via a virtual platform has come to some findings. First, the students' WTC was at the highest when the lecturer addressed them questions or instructions to do. This suggests that the students' WTC was triggered by external factor. Further, that virtual meeting mediates question-and-answer interaction, the students showed their willingness in addressing questions. In short, conducting instructional practices virtually allow students' willingness in responding to the lecturers'

questions as well as in addressing questions to the lecturers. This finding indicates that teachers or lecturers need to actively be pro-active in giving questions and instructions to improve the students' WTC as one of criteria of success in instructional practices. A suggestion for researchers who have the same interest to students' WTC is that challenges students face in performing their willingness to communicate when learning virtually should be scrutinized.

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