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Willingness to Communicate:
Tracking Movement through Peer Assessment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of peer assessment on willingness to communicate (WTC) among Iranian advanced EFL learners in the context of classroom. In order to serve the main purpose of the study, two groups of advanced learners participated in this study. Primarily, a pre-test was administered to both groups, then the participants of experimental group received a treatment of 10 sessions. In these sessions the participants assessed their peers according to the peer assessment form. On the other hand, the participants of control group did not receive any treatment. The quasi-experimental, pre-test, and post-test were applied to these two groups. The obtained data was analyzed with two sample independent t-test statistical methods. The results revealed a meaningful significant difference among Iranian advanced EFL learners' willingness to communicate of the participants who assessed their peer's performances, so peer assessment significantly affected their achievement in oral communication. Teachers deal with learners that are willing to communicate orally in their foreign language, while some learners do not use their foreign language, even with high linguistic competence. Peer assessment can be a good form of assessment to enhance willingness to communicate among EFL learners.

Key words: willingness to communicate; communication; linguistic competence; communicative competence; self-perceived communication competence; affective variables; peer assessment

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Introduction

"One cannot communicate in the presence of another" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990, p.20).

To develop physically as well as mentally, a human being is born with a few basic needs, one of which can be stressed as the need to communicate. This need, unlike other certain needs, can hardly be ignored or subjected to noticeable variability. Communication (verbal or nonverbal) is required at almost every phase of life to help a human being fulfill other crucial needs. It can even determine the degree of his success or failure in different stages of life. McCroskey and Richmond (1987) believed that to be a poor communicator or not to be willing to communicate with others is one of the dysfunctional behaviors in society. MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) argued that we normally communicate with people around us for a specific purpose; we either need their assistance, their cooperation or their services. Riffle and Seiffert (1987) believed that, among all human activities communication may be the most important one. How well we communicate, how willing we are to communicate, and the degree of our apprehension about the process of communicating have profound effects throughout our entire lives.

In order to accomplish this enterprise, hence, the human being resorts to many ways from the early ages to get his self-types serve on him. He nonverbally communicates by crying, laughing, sound making, and facial expressions until the language is activated to permeate into his being. He picks up the words and phrases one by one through his folks and by exchange of expressions with other surrounding people and the media. In this way he then gradually masters this fascinating means of communication, i.e., language. This interaction, first in primitive atmospheres and then in broader domains helps him get command of the native language. Context and its role in interaction, hence, has long been the focus of scholarly attention (e.g. Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; MacIntyre, Noels & Clément, 1997) and language-learning contentions (Clément, Dornyei & Noels, 1994) have been constantly recognized in tandem with the context in which they are presented. In a similar way, pedagogically oriented research (Cummins, 2000) has also found the active application of language inside and outside the class a strong predictor responsible for internalized language learning.

The major role of communication has been clearly stressed in modern language pedagogy and its inherent functions covering a range of individual as well as contextual

characteristics have been valued more than the past. Individuals demonstrate invariable tendencies in their amount of first language (L1) talk (Borgatta & Bales, 1953; Chapple & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman-Eisler, 1951, as cited in McCroskey & Richmond, 1987), which suggests that a predisposition toward or away from communicating with others inevitably exists in all individuals' communication orientations given the choice. This personality-based orientation toward communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) represents willingness to communicate (WTC).

Affective variables such as attitudes, motivation and language anxiety are important factors in second/ foreign language acquisition. Willingness to communicate (WTC) is related to affective variables, so it is an important factor in second/ foreign language acquisition as well. The concept was first developed in L1 communication by McCroskey and his associates (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) and was applied to L2 communication by MacIntyre and Charos (1996).

McCroskey and Baer (1985) offered WTC as a stable trait, while MacIntyre et al. (1998) believed that WTC is a situational trait and proposed a conceptual "pyramid" model designed to account for individual differences in the decision to initiate L2 communication.

Assessment is another important pedagogical feature. Assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates. Self and peer assessment have gained much attention in recent years and they emphasize learner independence and learner autonomy. In fact, one of the outstanding features of studies of assessment in recent years has been the shift in the focus of attention, towards greater interest in the interactions between assessment and classroom learning and away from concentration on the properties of restricted forms of tests which are only weakly linked to the learning experiences of students. This shift in classroom assessment will make a strong contribution to the improvement of learning. The number of empirical research studies on peer involvement in classrooms has increased recently. Some researchers have claimed that working with peers in the classroom is a critical means of promoting learning. Brown and Hudson (1998) have found a number of advantages for self and peer assessment such as speed, direct involvement, encouragement of autonomy and increased motivation because of self-involvement in the process of learning.

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Statement of Problem

Language learners when presented with an opportunity to use their second or foreign language (L2), some of them choose to speak up and others remain silent. Why is it that, even after studying a language for many years, some L2 learners will not turn into L2 speakers?

It is not a simple question when we focus on other relevant individual, social, linguistic, and situational factors.

Purpose of the Study

English proficiency is believed to be sufficient for language learners to communicate orally in their second or foreign language; however, facing English-speaking context, this factor is not necessarily sufficient. Willingness to communicate can be a reason in investigating why some learners do not communicate in their foreign or second language even after learning it.

The main purpose of this study is to work on peer assessment and its effect on willingness to communicate between Iranian advanced EFL learners in the context of classroom.

Significance of the Study

Chastain (1988) argued that, given enormous complexity of language and communication skills, each language learner receives a surprisingly small amount of practice in a language class. In addition, the reluctance of many students to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the task of developing second language skills places definite limitations on the possibilities. Hence, peer assessment could be a good solution to these limitations, in which peers are more responsible to focus on the productions made in the classroom.

This study aims to help English learners to improve their oral communication. If the effectiveness of peer assessment could be adequately proved, the teachers' workload could be partly reduced. Teachers could then focus more on enhancing their teaching techniques. Besides, this study aims to help teachers to consider the important role of willingness to communicate in foreign language learning.

Research Question

According to the topic and the purpose of the study as well as the statement of problem, the following question is to be answered:

Does peer assessment increase the WTC of Iranian advanced EFL learners?

Research Hypothesis

H0: Peer assessment does not increase the WTC of Iranian advanced EFL learners.

Theoretical Background

The power of assessment in increasing student learning cannot be ignored. In fact, different methods of assessment exhibit different advantages and disadvantages in measuring particular aspects of student ability and achievement. The assessment method chosen should reflect the skills the teacher wishes to develop. Many teachers wish to encourage students to take a more active role in their own learning and to develop more responsibility and autonomy in their study, so some teachers have adopted peer assessment method (Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 1997). There are many researches about the effect of peer assessment on writing ability, for example Devenney worked on how ESL teachers and peers evaluate and respond to student writing, Murau examined students' perceptions and attitudes of peer review, and Rothschild and Klingenberg worked on self and peer evaluation of writing in the interactive ESL classroom (as cited in Cheng & warren, 2005). Relative to research on peer assessment of writing, there have been many fewer studies on peer assessment of oral presentation skills. Oral presentation is a significant subject in EFL context. Teachers deal with learners that are willing to communicate orally in their second/foreign language, while some learners do not use their second/foreign language, even with high linguistic competence. Peer assessment may be a good form of assessment to enhance willingness to communicate among EFL learners.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

An interpersonal communication advocates the participants to engage themselves in either attentive listening or responsive production of phrases. Although talking is a critical component in interpersonal communication and the opening of interpersonal relations, people are not alike in the degree to which they actually do talk. Some individuals tend to

speak only when spoken to – and sometimes not even then. Others tend to verbalize before being asked to. Context can prove to be so determining in encouraging certain people to embark on a conversation. Briefly put, the underlying tendency of talking to others, which is rooted in a personality variable, is what is referred to as willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Baer, 1985).

The origin of the WTC is related to the first language (L1) communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). WTC was first used to measure the speaker's tendency to approach or avoid starting communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). McCroskey believed that factors such as fear and anxiety play an important role in oral communication and he applied these issues as main elements of WTC in the second language context (McCroskey, Gudykunst, & Nishida, 1985).

Willingness to Communicate; A Personality Trait-Like or Situational State-Like Construct?

Hardly can anyone deny the dominant role of personality constraints in the type of communicative situations one voluntarily engages in. Nevertheless, some perceive situational variables as more determining factors. These variables include: How the person feels that day, whether he is motivated in the topic of discussion, what might be achieved or lost through communicating, type of communication the person has had with the others recently, who their interlocutor is, what the interlocutor looks like, and even the demands of time can all have a major impact, as can a wide variety of other elements. McCroskey and Richmond (1987) held that willingness to communicate is considerably influenced by situation. All the same, individuals are inclined to exhibit consistent willingness to communicate tendencies across situations. Indeed, it is decades that the research literature has been accumulated with records of consistent behavioral tendencies with regard to the frequency and amount of the talk (Borgatta & Bales, 1953; Chappel & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman-Eisler, 1951). This systematic pattern among communication behavior across interpersonal communication contexts suggests the presence of a personality parameter, a tendency, which is known as WTC. This personality orientation enables us to explain why one person will communicate and another will not under identical, or seemingly identical, situational constraints (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

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Individuals proceed in a discernibly regular pattern in their frequency and amount of communication initiation, which is a strong evidence of the trait-like characteristic of WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). This trait-like aspect of WTC was first developed to interpret individual differences in L1 communication and was stable over time and situations. From this perspective, WTC was defined as the tendency to involve in interactions when free to do so (Kang, 2005).

A new perspective of WTC was later presented to the communication literature by McIntyre et al. (1998). They combined communication studies in L1 WTC and motivation studies in L2, and presented a schematic model of the WTC construct showing multiple layers of variables. They believed that some of these variables influence L2 learners' WTC. They defined WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547). According to their heuristic model, immediate situational antecedents –the desire to communicate with a specific person and the state of communicative self-confidence – and more enduring influences, such as interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, self-confidence, intergroup attitudes, social situation, communicative competence, intergroup climate, and personality, affect WTC. Kang (2005), however, argues that the previous studies examined situational variables mainly through a quantitative method using questionnaires, which has not been insightful enough to explore situational characteristics of WTC in an actual situation.

Foundations of Willingness to Communicate Construct

Having its roots in the works of Philips on *reticence* (1965, 1968), the present construct of willingness to communicate has emerged from the endeavors of Burgoon (1976) on the concept of *unwillingness to communicate* and also from Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig's (1977) efforts on *predispositions toward behavior* as well as McCroskey and Richmonds' (1982) focuses on the construct of *shyness*. All of these works place an emphasis on a presumed trait-like tendency toward communication (as cited in McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). According to McCroskey (1997), this construct was operationally defined by Burgoon, which was conducive to developing a self-report measure. This measure consisted of two factors, approach-avoidance and reward. McCroskey held that in place of obtaining a general predisposition of unwillingness to communicate, Burgoon's research only confirmed that fear and anxiety could negatively

affect the communication among interlocutors (as cited in Matsuoka & Evans, 2005). *Predisposition toward verbal behavior,* which was initially introduced to the literature by Mortensen et al. (1977) for the phenomenon of consistency in the amount of communication of individuals across situations, was observed by the data using a self-report scale known as the predispositions toward verbal behavior (PVB) scale. According to McCroskey (1997) this scale does not function as a general predisposition of unwillingness to communicate, but supplies evidence that individuals communicate in regular amounts (as cited in Matsuoka & Evans, 2005).

In 1987, McCroskey and Richmond decided to introduce the antecedents of WTC to the communication literature. They attempted to specify the variables that were most likely to lead to the predisposition of willingness to communicate. In fact, these variables can concurrently develop with WTC and are not necessarily the causes of variability in WTC. Put differently, it is very likely that these variables be involved in mutual causality with each other, and even more likely that both the antecedents and the willingness to communicate are engendered in common by other causal elements. These variables are introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, communication skill level, Perceived Communication Competence, and communication apprehension (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Three of these (anomie, alienation, and self-esteem) were reported to be statistically significant, but very modest correlations with WTC ($r < .25$). Consequently, although quite sensible to presume that people who are anomic or alienated from the people around them or who have low self-esteem are less willing to initiate a conversation, the likelihood of any causal association of WTC with these antecedents would be quite small, taking into consideration the observed correlations, and these variables could be expected to account for very little variance in WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1986). In contrast, we could observe correlations of WTC with introversion, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communicative competence in variety of cultures and in considerable degrees (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

A good number of studies have indicated noticeable correlations of WTC with a variety of trait-like orientations of individuals. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a) found that WTC is negatively associated with communication apprehension, introversion, anomie, and alienation and positively associated with self-esteem

(statistically significant fair correlations). They also found WTC to be associated with self-perceived communication competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986b). Zakahi and McCroskey reported that students who rated high on WTC were considerably more likely to verbally participate in class than were those scoring low on WTC (Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989). In another study, the personality-based variables underlying WTC were investigated by MacIntyre (1994) in a causal analysis. He regarded the sources of WTC among the constructs initially identified by Burgoon (communication apprehension, anomie, alienation, introversion, self-esteem) using a causal modeling. This model focused on the way perceived competence and anxiety influenced WTC separately, whereas in Clement's model (Clement & Kruidenier, 1985; as cited in Yashima, Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004), the two were seen to form a higher order construct, self-confidence in using the L2. The results indicated that communication apprehension and communicative competence were the two most immediate variables responsible for the amount of WTC. In other words, as a person experiences more anxiety for communicating, he will develop more negative thoughts about his own ability to initiate a communication (less self-perceived competence) and this accordingly leads to a decline in willingness to communicate. Further, it was reported that the changes in SPCC were more strongly reflected in WTC while a decrease in CA would increase WTC both directly and indirectly through its impact on SPCC (Yashima et al., 2004).

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in L2

The students' willingness to communicate in a second language has always followed unidentifiable patterns. It is hard to know why some students seek while others evade second language (I2) communication. McCroskey and Richmond (1991) held that the personality variable known as WTC determines why certain individuals initiate a conversation in certain times while others nominate reticence in similar situations. There are many language teachers who have found students high in linguistic competence who do not desire to use their L2 for communication; whereas, other students with only minimal linguistic knowledge have greater tendency to communicate in the L2 in every opportunity they have and without the least apprehensive influences. However, many individuals seem to be taking advantage of their remarkable communicative competence in many ways. Even the people with very minimal language

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abilities are observed to initiate conversations without being the victim of apprehensive restraints. Body language, common gestures, shared words are some of the means they often use to facilitate communication. On the other hand, as mentioned above, linguistically-competent people might be poor interlocutors. Indeed, despite strong communicative competence, spontaneous and sustained use of the L2 is hardly guaranteed.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is another form of alternative assessment in which the learners assess their peers. Brown and Hudson (1998) pinpoint some advantages of self and peer assessment. They believed that direct involvement in such assessment results in increasing motivation and autonomy in learners. They added tasks that are used in alternative assessment represent meaningful instructional activities. They held that scoring in alternative assessment was similar to human judgment in real life.

Chastain (1988) maintained that one definite possibility for improvement is in the area of students' attitudes. Language students often have doubts about their ability to learn a second/foreign language. That is, they have poor, debilitating self-images in this regard. Teachers should create positive attitudes among students. Peer assessment is one way to let students gain better self-images concerning language learning when they are given the authority to assess their peers while knowing that their assessments will be considered. Besides, peer assessment involves students in taking more responsibility for their own learning. While the benefits may not initially be obvious to students, this process offers a means of enhancing the learning experience.

By comparing the peers' production, learners understand the strong and weak points of their production, so learners have the opportunity to correct their own production, which leads to further improvement. Herrera (2007) held that the students involved in effective self-assessment will work toward a positive vision of the instructional goals. He maintains that peer assessment is equally beneficial because it provides students with additional opportunities to identify and evaluate targeted skills related to the established criteria. According to Herrera, peer assessment requires students to consider how examples of other students' work meet the criteria. Such comparisons enable students to discern outstanding elements of both their own and their classmates' performances and

products as well as those components in need of improvement. This type of critical consideration often prompts students to refine their own concept of a quality product. Another advantage of peer assessment is that many students are more apt to engage in dialogue with and accept criticism from peers than teachers and are more likely to do so using language that is uniquely comprehensible to them. Through peer assessment students develop a sense of shared responsibility.

Another important advantage of peer assessment is autonomy. Autonomy can be described as a capacity to take charge of, or take responsibility for, or control over your own learning. Autonomy in language learning means learners take more control over the purpose for which they learn language and the ways in which they learn. According to Brown (2001), "self and peer assessment derive their theoretical justification from a number of well-established principles of second language acquisition. The principle of autonomy stands out as one of the primary foundation stones of successful learning" (p.279). Penaflorida (2002) held that "the process of learner autonomy enables learners to recognize and assess their own needs, to choose and apply their own learning strategies and styles which eventually lead to the effective management of learning" (p.346).

Motivation is another related factor. "Motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn" (Brown, 2001, p.75). There are two forms of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic. But which one is more powerful? Maslow (as cited in Brown, 2001, p.76) claimed that intrinsic motivation is clearly superior to extrinsic: "we always strive for self-esteem and fulfillment, whether there is any reward as an extrinsic motivation or not". Brown (2001) continues that developing intrinsic motivation is at the top of the list of successful acquisition of any skills; and also, cooperative learning is prominent in peer assessment. According to Brown, teachers should help learners take charge of their own learning. Learner-centeredness and cooperative learning are intrinsically motivating; in this case, students feel less like puppets on a string and the teacher involves them in various aspects of looking at their needs and self-diagnosing, of planning lessons and objectives, and of evaluating their learning.

Cheng and warren (2005) in their study compared the students' attitudes assessing both the English language proficiency and other aspects of the performance of their peers. They compared peer and teacher assessments as well. The findings of their study

showed that students had a less positive attitude toward assessing each other's language proficiency but they scored their peers similar to other assessment criteria.

It is believed that self and peer assessment help learners to make judgments about aspects of their own or peer's learning. The advantages of self and peer assessment are:

1- Students can develop lifelong evaluation skills both about their own work and thinking as well as others.

2- They can take their first steps towards independent and autonomous learning by developing learning strategies based on their evaluations.

3- They learn directly by constructively critiquing their own and others' work in parallel ("*self and peer assessment*", 2008, para. 4).

Brown (2004, pp. 276-277) said that peer assessment must be carefully designed to reach its potential purposes. He determined four guidelines to help teachers to use peer assessment in the classrooms.

1. Tell students the purpose of the assessment.

2. Define the task carefully.

3. Encourage impartial evaluation of performance or ability.

4. Ensure beneficial washback through follow- up tasks.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 40 Iranian EFL advanced learners studying at Setareh language institute in Tehran. All were female and aged between 18 to 27, with similar language proficiency. Primarily, a group of 73 EFL learners participated in the study. In order to make sure that the participants were homogenous in terms of their language proficiency level, they all took pre-tests (Oxford English Language Placement Test) prior to the main phase of the experiment.

Instruments

Oxford English Language Placement Test (OELPT): is a 50- item placement test developed by Oxford University Language Centre. Those participants who had 41-50

correct answers out of 50 items were accepted to participate in this study as advanced learners.

WTC Questionnaire: developed by MacIntyre and Baker (2001). It has 2 parts. One part related to the willingness to communicate inside the classroom and the other related to willingness to communicate outside the classroom both parts grouped into four skills areas. The speaking and comprehension parts of willingness to communicate questionnaire inside the classroom were used in this research. Speaking part had 8 and comprehension part had 5 items

Peer Assessment Form: The peer assessment form was developed by Mrudula Patri (2002). It has 14 items and the rating scale was based on a 5-point Likert scale so that each participant would categorize her peer's performance as being: 1 = poor, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good, 5 = excellent.

Ten Conversational Topics: Each session, the learners were required to make oral presentation on a topic given by the researcher. The topics were chosen based on the students' perceived ability, familiarity with the topic and interest.

Video Tape: In the warm up session, the students watched a sample video consisting of a good, an average, and a poor presentation (the evaluation was made in relation to the peer assessment form).

Procedures

The first step was to randomly assign the participants into two groups, control and experimental groups. The pre-test (WTC questionnaire) was given to both groups under the same condition. Prior to the treatment, a warm-up session in the participants' mother tongue was held to familiarize the participants of experimental group with data collection procedures. Then experimental group received the treatment for 10 sessions. Participants of experimental group were divided into groups of two members. At each session a topic was given to the participants and they were asked to assess their peers. During the treatment, peer assessment forms with peer assessment rating scale were given to experimental group to be filled out. During the last session the WTC questionnaire as (post-test) was given to both control and experimental groups to elicit their new attitude. The time set for WTC questionnaire was 5 minutes for 13 items (24 seconds for each item). And the time set for each topic was 12 minutes. In other words,

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each participant in a two-member group was supposed to speak and to be evaluated in 6 minutes by her peer.

Results

All participants of main study (n = 73) took part in the placement test i.e., Oxford English Language Placement Test (OELPT) to pre-test their language proficiency. The purpose of this test was to manifest the learner's homogeneity. Every one of the participants was assigned a number that was fixed until the end of study. The descriptive statistics of the test is shown in table 1. Regarding this table the minimum and maximum of the scores were 31 and 50 respectively. The mean of scores was 41.45 and standard deviation was 5.12. The far distance between the minimum and maximum of scores indicates that the distribution of scores is not normal.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Obtained Scores from OELPT

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
OELPT Scores	73	19.00	31.00	50.00	41.4521	5.12088	-.213	.281
Valid (listwise)	73							

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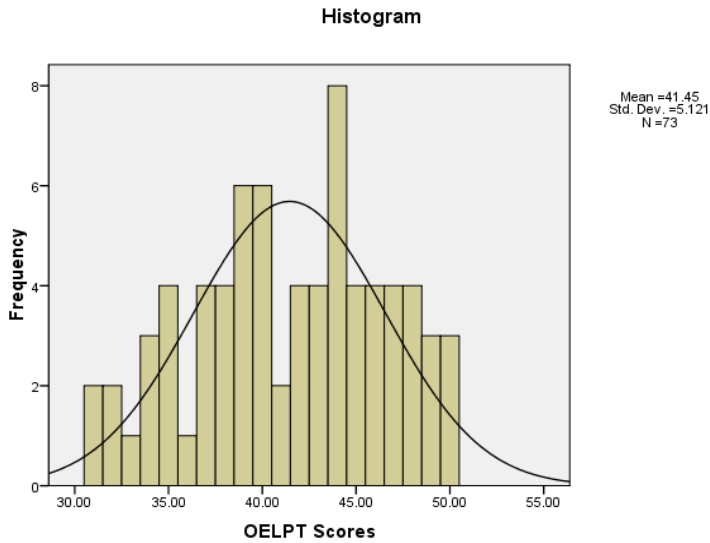
The histogram in Figure 1 clearly shows that the obtained scores are not normally distributed.

Figure 1. Histogram of Obtained OELPT Scores

The participants with scores below 41 were excluded from the study. Thus, the next table shows that thirty-three of participants were excluded from the main analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Homogenized Scores

	N	Range	Minimun	Maximun	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic Error	Std.
OELPT Score Valid (listwise)	40 40	9.00	41.00	50.00	45.3750	2.60854	.204	.374

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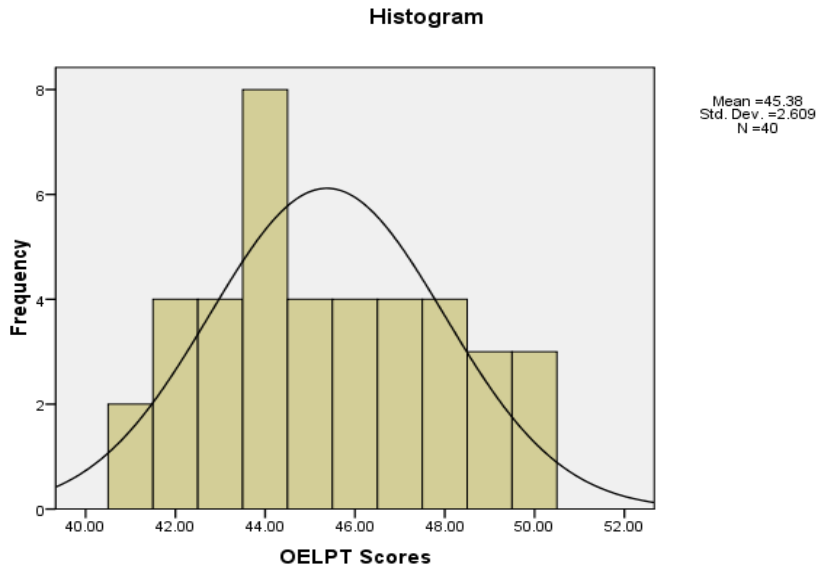The histogram (Figure 2) clearly illustrates the normality of the distribution of selected scores.

Figure 2. The Histogram of Selected OELPT Scores

Analysis of Learners' Performance before Administration of the Treatment

All 40 participants of study were divided into two groups of 20. The WTC questionnaire was administered among two groups. The descriptive statistics of all participants who answered WTC questionnaire are illustrated in the first table. The minimum score is 23 and the maximum score is 45.

Table 3. Performance of Participants on WTC Questionnaire before the Treatment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total of WTC	40	23.00	45.00	1364.00	34.10	4.93
Valid N (listwise)	40					

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Groups

Groups of participants	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total of WTC control group	20	33.70	4.96	1.11
experimental group	20	34.50	5.01	1.12

The descriptive statistics of two groups is also shown in the next table. As you see the mean score of control group is 33.7 and the mean score of experimental group is 34.5. As you see the means of two groups are too close together.

An independent sample t-test was performed in order to find whether there are significant differences between control and experimental group before receiving the treatments of the study. The results of t- test as table 2 indicates, showed that there is no statistical significant difference between experimental and control group in their performance on WTC questionnaire before receiving the treatment, as p-value is 0.61 and it is greater than alpha level, which is 0.05. Thus, both experimental and control group had rather the same ability regarding WTC questionnaire items and the result is statistically non-significant.

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Table 5. One-Sample Independent T-Test of Groups before Treatment

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Total of WTC	Equal variances assumed	.05	.82	-.50	38	.61	-.80	1.57	-3.99	2.39
	Equal variances not assumed			-.50	37.99	.61	-.80	1.57	-3.99	2.39

Analysis of Learners' Performance after Administration of the Treatment

The participants of experimental group received treatment for 10 sessions. The control group did not receive any treatment. Then, both groups filled WTC questionnaire again. The results of all the participants' performance are shown as descriptive statistics in the first table. The minimum score is 27 and the maximum score is 64.

Table 6. Performance of Participants on WTC Questionnaire after the Treatment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TP	40	27.00	64.00	1661.00	41.5250	11.08010
Valid N (listwise)	40					

In the next table you can see the means of two groups. The mean score of control group is 32.2 and the mean score of experimental group is 50.8. The far distance between the mean score of two groups shows that there is a difference between the performances of groups after receiving the treatments.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Groups after Treatment

	group of participants	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TP	control group	20	32.2500	3.49247	.78094
	experimental group	20	50.8000	7.66125	1.71311

In order to detect whether there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their performance on WTC questionnaire after receiving the treatments of the study, One Sample Independent t-test was performed. The results indicated that there is a statistical significant difference between experimental and control group regarding their performance on WTC questionnaire after the experimental group received treatments of study. As the p value is 0 and it is less than the alpha level, which is 0.05.

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Table 8. One-Sample Independent T-Test of Groups after Treatment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
TP — Equal variances assumed	6.988	.012	-9.85	38	.000	-18.55000	1.88271	-22.36	-14.73
TP — Equal variances not assumed			-9.85	26.570	.000	-18.55000	1.88271	-22.41	-14.68

The results, as demonstrated by table 8, indicate that peer-assessment significantly increased the WTC of Iranian advanced EFL learners. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

Conclusion

It was inferred from the results of different statistical analyses that there is a meaningful significant difference among Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate of those who assessed their peers' communicative performance. It was found that peer-assessment increased the willingness to communicate of learners' oral performance. In other words, the peer-assessment significantly affected their achievement in oral ability.

Implications of Study

The findings of this study provided some valuable implications for communicative performance of Iranian EFL learners in language classroom context.

From a theoretical point of view, this study presented willingness to communicate as an affective variable, which brings improvements in foreign language oral ability.

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This study also identified peer assessment as a variable that influences EFL learners' willingness to communicate. Peer-assessment may enhance learners' self-confidence to facilitate oral performance. It may also decline their anxiety as one of the most important barrier in improving oral communication.

The present study provided helpful insights for EFL teachers, learners and educators and syllabus designers.

In EFL context there is no opportunity for exposure to the foreign language out of classroom situation. In this study, peer-assessment was identified as a classroom technique to help EFL teachers solve the complexities of oral communication skills in classroom context.

EFL teachers could consider willingness to communicate to employ in their methodology for overcoming problems in teaching speaking and help learners to make positive changes in oral communication.

For EFL learners, the outcomes of the present study would bring helpful insights in a sense that they can achieve success in language learning simply by developing positive classroom practices such as peer-assessment. Peer-assessment is a variable, which engages learners in the process of communication independent of teacher. Consequently, it provides more responsibility for their learning.

The findings of this study would definitely provide further opportunities to conduct a learner-based classroom and decline the amount of workloads on the teacher's burden.

For EFL syllabus designers and curriculum developers, the findings of this study provide precious opportunities to incorporate peer-assessment criteria in the classroom and course book contents as a useful tool to assess learners' achievement.

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