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The contributing factors that influence the willingness to communicate in the French language among undergraduate French students of years one to three at the U.W.I St. Augustine.

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

A greater number of undergraduate French students are becoming more and more reluctant to speak in French classes, particularly in French conversation classes. However, certain scholars report that a student's success in their target language is dependent on their willingness to communicate in the language. Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand the reasons for which students do not participate in French conversation classes, as well as to find solutions to these obstacles which hinder students from contributing to the class' discussions. Because the context of the research was U.W.I St. Augustine, questionnaires were distributed to 33 students of years 1-3 of the undergraduate French program at U.W.I, 22 of which were completed and returned to the researcher. Furthermore, 5 of these students were interviewed online in order to get quantitative primary data. After analysing the questionnaires and the interviews, the researcher found that the two major reasons for which students were reluctant to speak in class were: their fear of being judged and their belief that the secondary school foreign language syllabus of Trinidad and Tobago does not focus enough on speaking, and therefore decreases the student's communicative competence and therefore makes them less willing to speak in class. Recommendations were made based on the primary data obtained, such as online conversation classes, as well as equal emphasis on each component of the French language at secondary school and the pairing of the listening and oral components at the U.W.I St. Augustine, so as to increase students' communicative competence which should then increase their willingness to communicate. These recommendations should, to an extent, address the issue of the lack of willingness to communicate (WTC) in the French conversation class at the U.W.I St. Augustine. Further study can be done with regard to the ambivert personality type and if it affects individuals' levels of WTC in their target language, as well as possible solutions to the personality types that hinder WTC in a target language.

Key words: willingness to communicate, communicative competence, self-perceived communicative competence, motivation, target language, foreign language anxiety.

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Introduction

Title of Thesis

The contributing factors that influence the willingness to communicate in the French language among undergraduate French students at the U.W.I, St. Augustine.

Rationale

The main objective of this study is to identify and evaluate the major factors of WTC so as to allow French instructors to stimulate greater levels of it amongst the undergraduate French students at the U.W.I St. Augustine. The willingness to communicate can be defined as “the probability of initiating conversation, given choice and opportunity.” (MacIntyre, p. 567) One of the primary reasons for learning a foreign language (L2) is to be able to effectively communicate with it. However, there has been an increase in the amount of language students who refuse to orally participate during language classes, and, according to Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Prof. Mirosław Pawlak, a student’s success may be dependent on their eagerness to communicate in their foreign language of study. Additionally, in a world that is becoming more and more globalized, there is a higher demand, especially in the world of work, for individuals to be able to effectively communicate in a foreign language. Therefore, by evaluating the factors of WTC in an L2, teachers and students will be able to overcome the obstacles that hinder students’ WTC, allowing them to thrive in their foreign language studies and effectively use their foreign language as an asset in the professional world.

Objectives

This study aims to discern the factors that both hinder and encourage French students, particularly at the U.W.I St. Augustine, to communicate in French in their conversation classes, as well as to recommend solutions to those factors that engender student's reluctance to communicate in French classes. These factors can be divided into three main categories: intrapersonal, contextual and cultural. Some of the personal factors are the student's personality, their self-perceived communicative competence (CC) and their levels of communication apprehension. The contextual factors are time and with whom the individual is speaking, On the other hand, some of the cultural factors include the emphasis on the written and grammar components rather than the oral components at the secondary school level. This research can be used by the U.W.I French instructors to better understand the obstacles faced by their students to orally participate, thereby allowing them to conduct their classes in such a way that will motivate their students to speak in French.

Thesis Statement

It can be argued that the major factors that influence WTC amongst the undergraduate French students at the U.W.I St. Augustine are: the fear of being judged by their peers and language instructors and the disregard of the oral component at the secondary school level which engenders low levels of both communicative competence as well as self-perceived communicative competence.

Research Questions

In conducting this investigation, the following research questions will be answered:

- 1) What are the major factors that influence the willingness to communicate in French amongst the undergraduate French students at the U.W.I St. Augustine?
- 2) What strategies can be implemented to motivate these students to communicate in the French conversation class?

Parameters

This research will be divided into three subcategories: the contextual, intrapersonal and cultural factors that influence willingness to communicate in a foreign language and will therefore only examine the oral component of the language and not the others such as listening or writing. The study will focus solely on the undergraduate French students of years one to three (1-3) at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and their experiences with regard to the notion of willingness to communicate.

Methodology

This genre of study can be classified as a social one. In order to obtain quantitative primary data, the researcher distributed a total of thirty-three (33) online questionnaires to the undergraduate French students of years 1-3 at the U.W.I St. Augustine, and 5 semi-structured interviews were also conducted online to get more qualitative primary data from these undergraduate French students, *raison-d'être* some of the questions required the participants to explain at length their opinions and personal experiences with certain concepts such as self-perceived communicative competence. This data collected was compared to the secondary data highlighted in the literary review, and was used to prove, disprove and add to the existing

scholarship on the topic of students' willingness to communicate within the U.W.I St. Augustine undergraduate context.

Chapter One

Literature Review

The intrapersonal, contextual and cultural factors that influence an individual's willingness to communicate.

Factors that influence individual's WTC in their native language:

This section of the literature review will present the reader with the literature that prompted the precursors' interest in the factors that contribute to WTC in a foreign language. In the book, "Willingness to Communicate in Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Combining a Macro- and Micro-Perspective" written by Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Prof. Mirosław Pawlak, the willingness to communicate (WTC) in one's native language was first explored. The precursors who initiated the studies in this particular field, such as MacIntyre, have stated that a student's personality is a determining factor of their desire to communicate in their native language; introversion was attached to low levels of WTC while extraversion was linked to increased levels of WTC. That is to say that naturally, an introvert would tend to shy away from oral interaction while an extravert would gravitate towards socialization. Moreover, they noted that one's level of communication apprehension is another factor of WTC. McCroskey, another precursor of the study into an individual's WTC in his or her native language, proffered the original proposition of the concept "communication apprehension" in the 1970s. He initially viewed this concept as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (McCroskey, 136) The notion "communication apprehension" can also be defined as, "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." That is to say that high levels of communication apprehension in an individual result in low levels of WTC whereas an individual with low levels of said

apprehension would have a remarkably higher level of WTC. The studies, however, do not explicitly say that an introvert experiences higher levels of communication apprehension than an extroverted individual.

In the dissertation entitled “Willingness to Communicate of Foreign Language Learners in a Chinese Setting” written by Miao Yu, McCroskey and Richmond advanced that there are six principal factors referred to as "antecedents" that may influence an individual's WTC in their L1. (19) These antecedents were: introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, communication skill level, and communication apprehension. It can be noted that most of these variables are mainly personality-based, and therefore demonstrate that McCroskey and Richmond were in agreement with McIntyre’s idea that particular personal characteristics of individuals can affect their willingness to communicate. McCroskey and Richmond went even further to state that an individual's level of communication apprehension was the main factor for their WTC in their L1. (19-20)

Furthermore, readiness to communicate equally depends on one’s mood and the time of day. That is to say that certain individuals prefer to communicate at a specific time of day, for example some people may be reluctant to engage in conversation in the morning period and prefer to speak during the afternoon or evening time and vice versa. Additionally, one’s mood can also affect one’s desire to engage in conversation: that is to say that if an individual is in a “sunny disposition” or feels content they will be more open to speaking, whereas if they were to feel dejected they would be more reluctant to speak. One other factor of an individual’s keenness to communicate in their native tongue noted by the precursors is the individual’s self-perceived communicative competence (CC). This means that if an individual believes that he or she has a good command of their native language, they will be more inclined to initiate or engage in conversations, however, if an individual is of the opinion that they do not have a

satisfactory level of their native language, they will be less enthusiastic to engage in oral communication. Evidence of this factor has been observed especially where “Seemingly competent speakers choose to abandon communication while those with low [levels of] CC have high levels of WTC.” (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, Prof. Mirosław Pawlak p. 9). Therefore we see that the majority of the highlighted factors pertaining to one’s WTC in their native tongue is linked to personality trait; such as introversion and extroversion, the level of communication apprehension experienced by the individual, their self-perceived communicative competence and their mood and disposition at a particular time of day.

Factors that influence WTC in a target language (L2):

According to MacIntyre, an individual’s WTC in a foreign language (L2) “cannot be understood as a simple manifestation of WTC in [their native language]” (MacIntyre et al. p. 546). To them, there is a significant relationship between perceived communication competence, communication anxiety and the opportunity to communicate with speakers of the target language (native speakers or speakers with a greater command of the language) and levels of WTC. This demonstrates that there are certain factors that are applicable to the WTC in both one’s native language as well as his or her target language (TL). However, there are other numerous cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and psychological factors that affect or contribute to one’s WTC in a foreign language. Consequently, MacIntyre created a model in order to demonstrate these factors and their influences on WTC in an L2.

Contextual factors:

One of the factors in the model is the “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2.” This variable defines WTC as a context-dependent concept rather than a fixed one or one that focuses on the individual’s personality type. This is

observed when students raise their hands during class time, indicating that they are ready to respond to the teacher's question or contribute to the class's discussion.

Another factor outlined is the "desire to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence." These "particular persons" refer to people with whom an individual is familiar, persons that an individual finds attractive, considers to be similar or wishes to influence. State communicative self-confidence is defined as the confidence that one feels in a particular situation and should therefore not be confused with general self-confidence. This state communicative self-confidence has two variables, state perceived competence and state anxiety. State anxiety can be affected by many factors such as intergroup tension, prior unpleasant experiences with individuals, and therefore is subject to fluctuation. However, state perceived competence is defined as an individual's perception of his or her ability "to enter into communication at [a particular] given moment. It is hypothesized to increase in familiar contexts and decrease in novel situations, with an immediate effect on WTC." (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, Prof. Mirosław Pawlak p.10) Therefore we see that one's WTC in an L2 is subject to change depending on their state communicative self-confidence and is neither fixed nor entirely determined by one's personality type. This brings us to the intrapersonal factors that affect WTC.

Intrapersonal factors:

Many other researchers of WTC agree with the aforementioned hypothesis. For example, in the dissertation "Willingness to communicate of foreign language learners in a Chinese setting" the author made mention that McCroskey and Richmond argued that self-perceived communication competence might be more associated with people's willingness to communicate given that "the choice of whether to communicate is a cognitive one, it is likely to be more influenced by one's perceptions of competence (of which one usually is aware) than

one's actual competence (of which one may be totally unaware)." McCroskey reemphasized that it was not a person's actual communication skills or competence that influenced their level of WTC; it was more likely that their self-perceived communication competence would make the difference. (Miao. p. 27) Additionally, Kelly (1982) found that the communication skills of speakers who claim themselves to be unwilling or reticent were not different from those who claim to be non-reticent. (21) Therefore, the perception of one's own communication skill level might weigh more significantly than the person's actual skill level. Therefore, people who consider themselves competent in communication are believed to be more willing to initiate or participate in communication behaviours.

According to Horwitz, foreign language anxiety (FLA) is "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of [the] language learning process." (p. 128) This process is said to be "a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition," *raison d'être*, according to Guiora, it threatens the learner's concept of self and their view of the world. (qtd. in Kravola p. 112) That is to say that subconsciously, certain students feel as though they have to modify their way of communication and expression, or simply adopt the way in which the natives of the target language communicate (which would challenge their perception of self), in order to succeed in the target language, and either feel incapable or simply refuse to do so. This anxiety, as explained in the study, "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety" tends to influence student's communication strategies employed in the classroom; they use less grammatical constructions as well as shorter or less detailed contributions in class. The study added that these students also manifest "avoidance behaviour" meaning that they may skip class in order to avoid having to participate in class. (Kravola, 117) This suggests that students who experience FLA have lower levels of WTC than those who do not experience this anxiety or those who experience it at a lesser degree. However, it must be noted that there are numerous students who are eager

to learn new ways of expressing themselves, therefore this theory of FLA cannot be applied to these students, but only to those students reluctant to change.

Another belief held by language students that may contribute to FLA is that of perfection. The study mentioned that some students believe that they ought not to speak unless they are certain that what they want to say is grammatically accurate, and that they have the appropriate vocabulary; guessing words is also inadmissible. (Kravola, 112) This would engender anxiety within the students as well as hinder them from orally participating in the classroom, i.e. lower their level of WTC.

The foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) discovered by Horwitz was designed in order to assess three (3) components of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. (Kravola, 113) These three components have been mentioned to have an influence on student's WTC in an L2. The fear of negative evaluation can be linked to the idea that "learners constantly have their personality and ability judged based on their performance in a language not yet developed." (Yashima, 119) Student's personality and overall intelligence are oftentimes judged by both their teachers and their peers based on their capabilities in an L2 in the classroom setting; this is often viewed as a discouragement to students and negatively affects their desire to participate in the classroom.

Cultural Factors:

In the article "A Chinese Conceptualisation of Willingness to Communicate in ESL", the authors, Wen and Clement, explain the concept of WTC in a more cultural context. In China, like many other Asian countries, the "self" or an individual is only significant in the presence of the other (other people) and is defined by their relations with these people. Therefore, Chinese feel more sensitive to judgement by others with regard to their behaviour, including their language behaviours in class, which consequently affects their levels of WTC.

Additionally, in Imperial China, “the whole process of learning and education was oriented to the mechanical memorisation of ideals of antiquity, principally the Four Books and Five Great Classics,” (Pratt, p. 302) Today, memorization still plays an essential role in the Chinese education system. Consequently, great emphasis is placed on the memorization of grammatical rules, which are considered to be the laws of a language, instead of oral fluency. Therefore, generally, their levels of WTC in an L2 are not very high, since oral communication is not the main priority for them. The authors Wen and Clement also made mention that the lack of fluency experienced by the Chinese students, because of their preference to focus on grammatical rules rather than oral communication, also negatively affects the students’ levels of WTC. Additionally, according to the same article, in the Chinese classroom setting, the teacher was viewed as the sole individual with knowledge, and therefore there was no need for the students to orally, or otherwise, contribute in the classroom, i.e. their educative culture was rather mechanical where the teachers taught and the students simply took notes. This equally affects the student’s levels of WTC because of a lack of opportunity to orally practice as well as the engendering of the potential idea that their contributions were of little to no value.

With regard to the teaching methods employed in Trinidad and Tobago, the article “Teaching Then and Now” written by Jennifer Yamin-Ali reveals that Trinidadian teachers tend to educate in the same manner in which they were taught, that is to say in a very traditional and with a “teacher centred” approach as opposed to a “student centred” one. (Yamin-Ali, 1) “Many [teachers] tend to accept modern trends in education as an occupational hazard, or as stipulated requirements of the job. They do not necessarily “buy into” [accept] new approaches or standards.” (Yamin-Ali, 1) Similarly, According to Rhonda D. Dookwah, in her study “A comparison of two teaching approaches at Tertiary level institutions in Trinidad and Tobago: A multiple methods investigation” a “teacher-centred” approach is very similar to that of the Chinese Imperial teaching culture and can be defined as, “The traditional instruction of which

the teacher is the centre of the learning process (Expository Model). He or she holds the knowledge and does the majority of the verbalization about the content [...] Students listen and take notes.” (Dookwah) Moreover, “Administrators who still cling to the “ideal” quiet classroom expect teachers to employ group work where students have to communicate orally. Some teachers often find themselves trying to quell the excitement and enthusiasm of their students because their colleagues may prefer students who work quietly.” (Yamin-Ali, 1) This article demonstrates that even the teachers who wish to employ new methods often find themselves discouraging their students to speak because of the classroom standards enshrined in the Trinidadian teaching culture. This culture that discourages the students’ oral participation and contributions in the classroom stymies their levels of WTC provided that they have been so programmed to be silent in the classroom setting.

Rhonda D. Dookwah, in her study, proposes a student-centred method and particularly a problem-based learning method in order to combat the traditional teacher-centred approach. The problem-based method, according to Boud, is “characterized by the use of ill-structured, complex, real-world problems as a context in which self-directed students learn through facilitated [by the teacher] problem-solving in small groups.” (qtd. in Dookwah) This method takes the focus off of the teacher and places it on the students, which does not only encourage the students to contribute to the class discussion or activity, but also engenders critical thinking within the students.

Motivation:

After examining the factors that decrease one’s WTC, the question of motivating students to speak in a foreign language conversation class arose. According to the study “Motivating Students to Perform Better Orally in a Communicative Language Teaching Framework” written by Chelbi, there are two types of motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic

motivation, according to Noels et al, is “the internal desire to perform an action because it is enjoyable and satisfying,” whereas extrinsic motivation is that which is stimulated by tangible or exterior rewards; the latter deemed less potent than the first by Ramage (1990). (qtd. in Chelbi, 25) The research outlined some examples of how teachers can improve the intrinsic motivation in students: employ a variety of presentation methods for example songs, movies, the invitation of guest speakers, demonstrations, computers, language games, role playing etc. The other suggestion is to give the students an opportunity to choose how to study the topic at hand. (24) This can be linked to the student-centred method proposed by Rhonda D. Dookwah where the students become more autonomous in the classroom while the teacher simply acts as their guide instead of the centre. Finally, the article proposed that the students set their own goals, this will definitely cause the students to become more engaged in the classroom activities and cause them to strive to achieve these goals since it will be more personal to them. (36) Additionally, the review mentions that extrinsic motivation is also useful, for example verbal praise from the teacher when a student succeeds, or other material rewards, however these material awards need to be valued by the student receiving them, otherwise they will not be considered rewards by the student. (43)

In this chapter, the contextual, intrapersonal and cultural factors of the concept of WTC were highlighted. Some of the contextual factors were state communicative self-confidence and the readiness to engage in conversation at a particular time and with specific persons. The intrapersonal factors include self-perceived communicative competence, i.e. whether an individual believes that they speak well or not, which may not necessarily reflect their true communicative competence, the fear of negative evaluation from their peers and their language instructor and foreign language anxiety. The cultural factors include the emphasis on memorization of grammatical rules and the neglecting of the oral component, as well as the discouragement of students from speaking in class because the teacher is viewed as the only

individual with knowledge in the classroom. Additionally, the notion of motivation was also underscored in this chapter, notably intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some recommendations as to how one can motivate students were mentioned, such as the use of a student-centred method where the students choose how a certain topic will be studied and the course is simply guided by the language instructor.

Chapter 2: Findings

This chapter will showcase the primary data obtained by the researcher. The quantitative information obtained from the questionnaire will first be discussed and afterwards the qualitative data gathered through the online interviews that were conducted. Out of the 33 questionnaires distributed to the undergraduate French students of the UWI St. Augustine, 22 of them were completed and submitted, nine (9) participants were from year 3, six (6) from year 2 and seven (7) from year 1. Additionally, five (5) online interviews were conducted via the WhatsApp application. All of the interviewees were undergraduate French students at the UWI St. Augustine, pursuing a double major in French and Spanish. Out of the 5 interviewees, four (4) of them were female and one (1) was male. Two (2) of the interviewees were from year 3, two (2) from year 2 and one was from year 1.

Personality Types

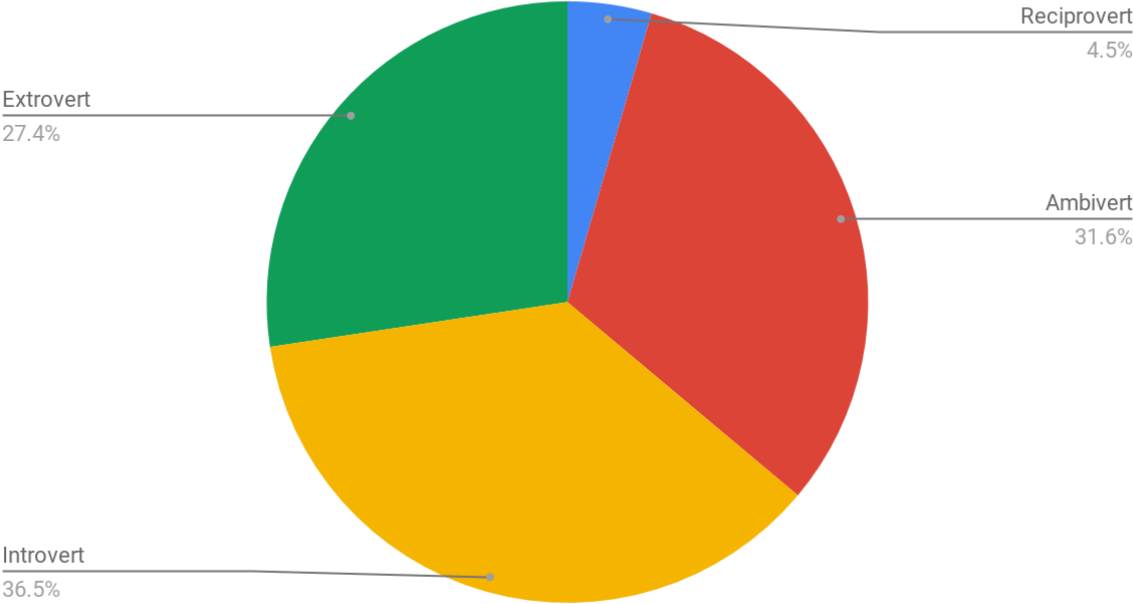


Fig.1

The above diagram shows that of all the participants of the questionnaire, 36.4% stated that they were introverts, 27.3% stated that they were extroverts, 31.5% consider themselves ambiverts; which is a person with a balance of both introverted and extroverted qualities, and 4.5% of them said that they were reciproverts; a person whose level of engagement depends on that of their interlocutor.

My personality type affects my Willingness to Communicate

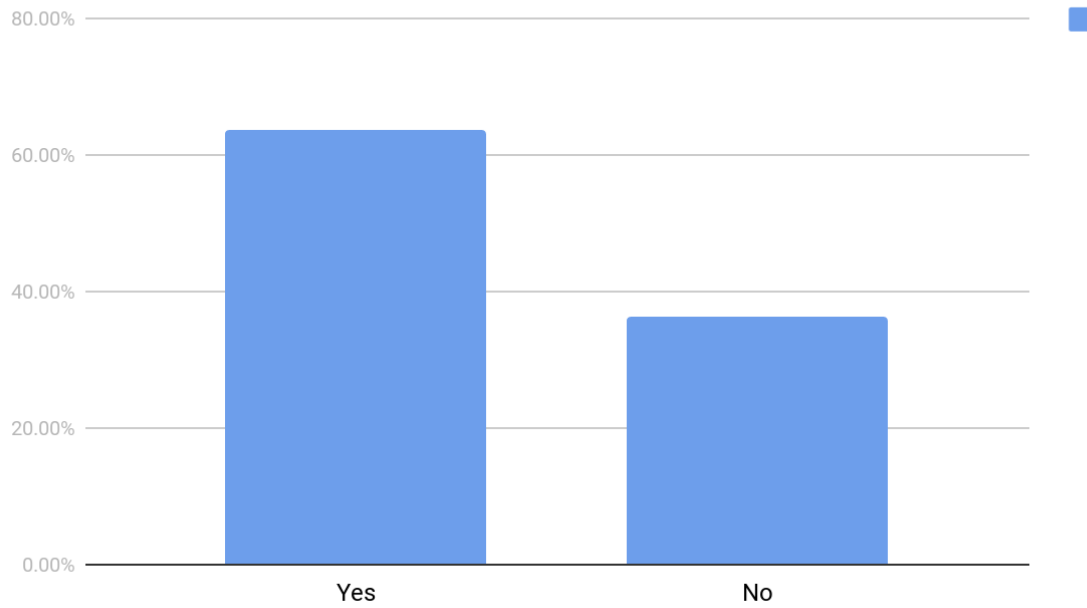


Fig. 2

Figure 2 demonstrates that 63.6% of the participants believe that their personality type influences their willingness to communicate in French in their French conversation class, while 36.4% stated that their personality may affect their WTC, however other factors are more influential, such as fear of making mistakes and self-confidence.

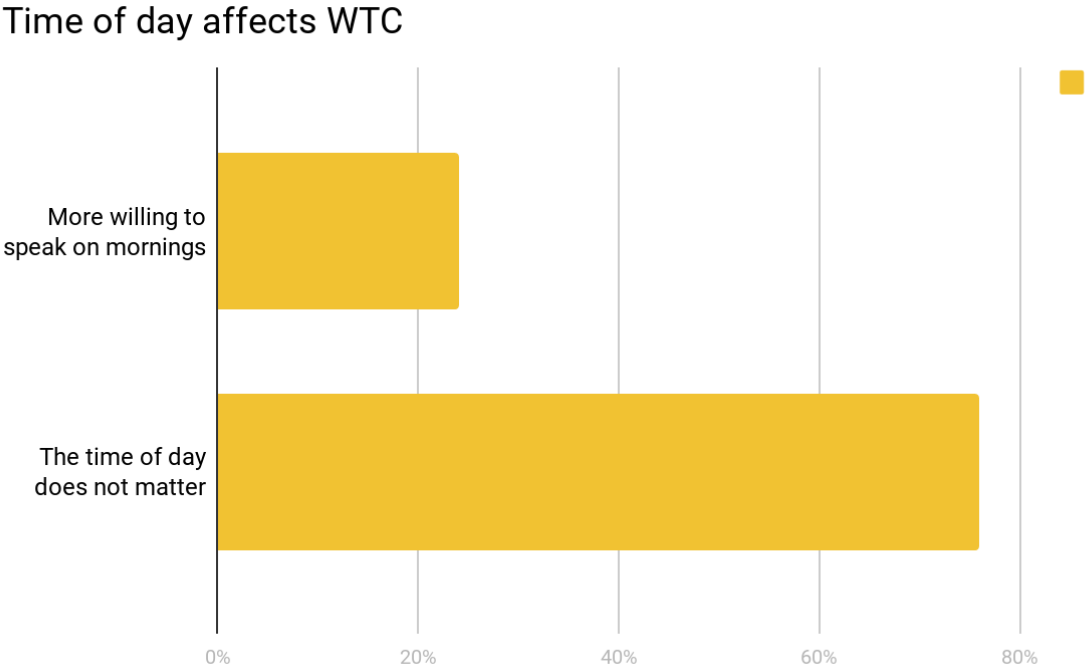


Fig. 3

Figure 3 shows that 24% of the participants indicated that they feel more inclined to speak French in the morning, while the other 76% stated that the time of day does not affect their WTC level.

Familiarity with interlocutor affects WTC.

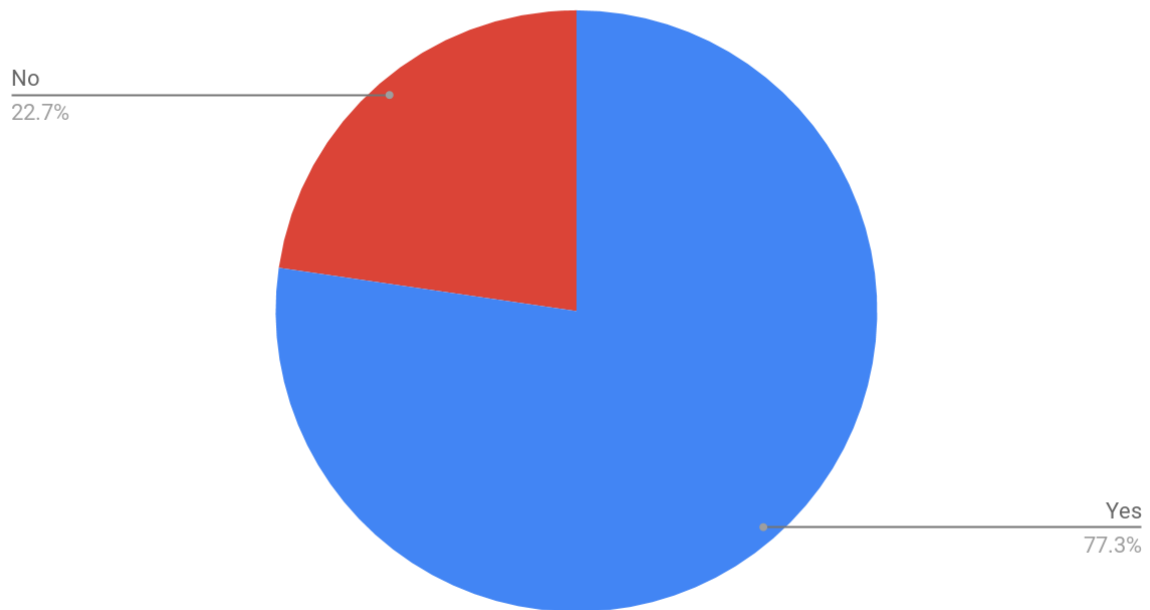


Fig. 4

The above pie chart indicates that 77.3% of the participants confirmed that they prefer to speak to familiar persons in French rather than strangers, while 22.7% of the participants stated that familiarity with their interlocutor does not influence their WTC in French.

Attraction and desire to influence interlocutors increase WTC

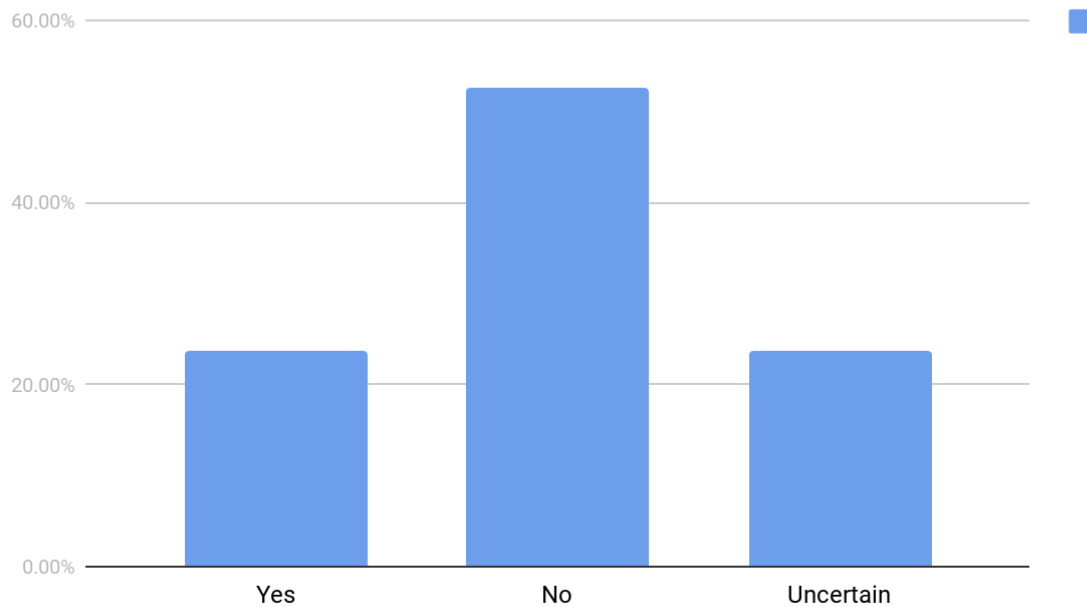


Fig. 5

Figure 5 demonstrates that 52.6% of the participants stated that they would not be more willing to speak to someone that they find attractive or wish to influence in French, 23.6% of them declared that they would be more willing to speak to such a person in French, and 23.8% of them were uncertain, one of which said that they would be willing to speak to someone in order to influence them, however if the reason is physical attraction, they would be reluctant to speak to said person in French.

Students who feel/do not feel judged during conversation class

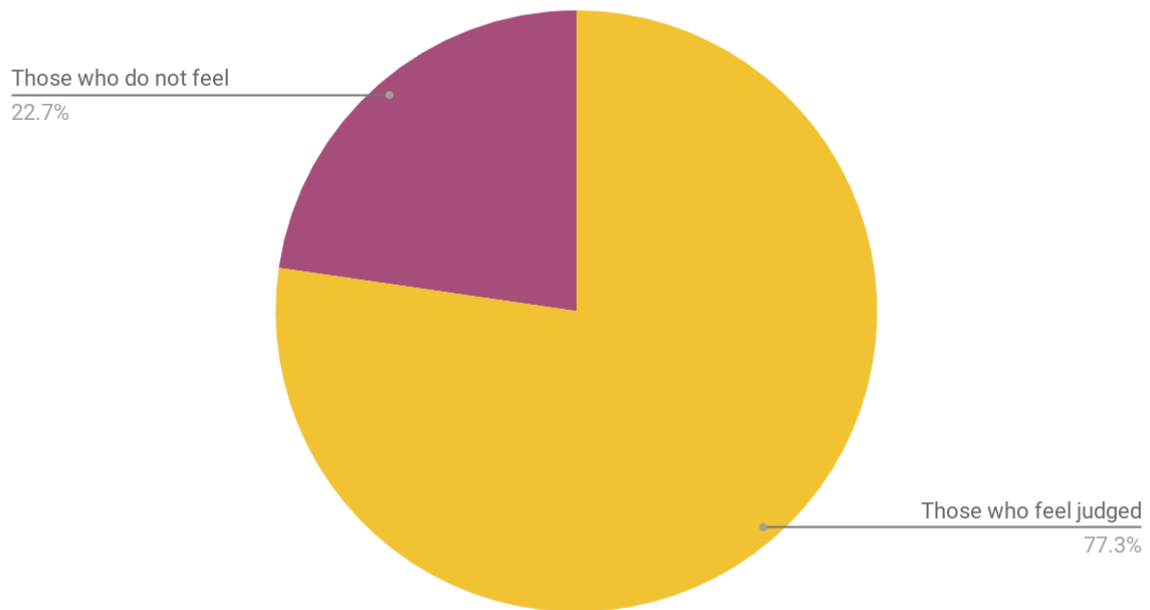


Fig. 6

The above chart shows that 77.3% of the participants said that they feel as though their intelligence and their personality are judged based on their performance in the French conversation class, whereas 22.7% stated that they do not feel that their intelligence and personality are judged based on their performance in the French conversation class.

The effect of the judgment on WTC

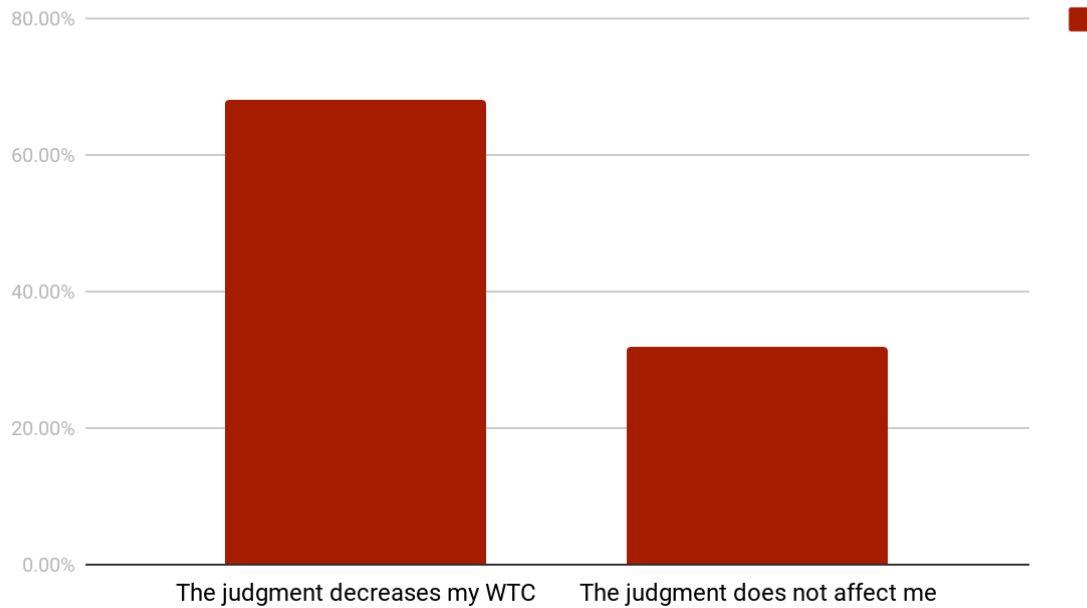


Fig. 7

However, figure 7 shows that 68.2% of the participants said that this judgement has an effect on their WTC levels while 31.8% of them said that it does not affect their WTC in the French conversation classroom. Of the 77.3% of participants who stated that they feel as though their personality and intelligence are judged based on their communicative competence in the French conversation classroom, 21% of them do not think that this affects their WTC.

The encouragement of teachers

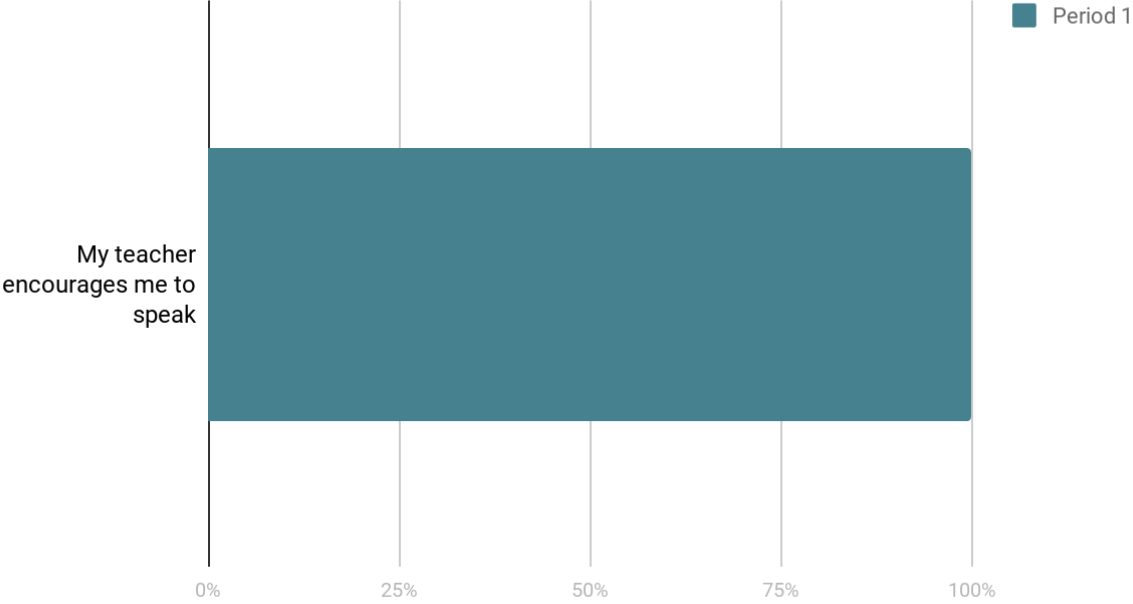


Fig. 8

As seen in the above graph, 100% of the participants believe that their teachers encourage them to speak. However, 14.2% of them believe that motivation to speak in class comes from within the student and not from the teacher.

Does the T&T Foreign Language syllabus at Secondary School focus on writing rather than speaking?

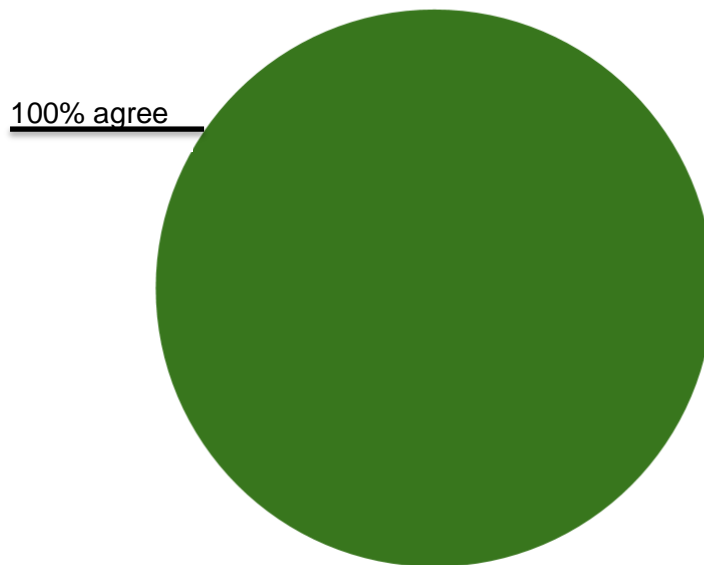


Fig. 9

The above pie chart shows that 100% of the participants believe that the T&T's Secondary school syllabus focuses mostly on writing and grammatical rules rather than oral production in the target language.

The effect of the focus on writing on communicative competence

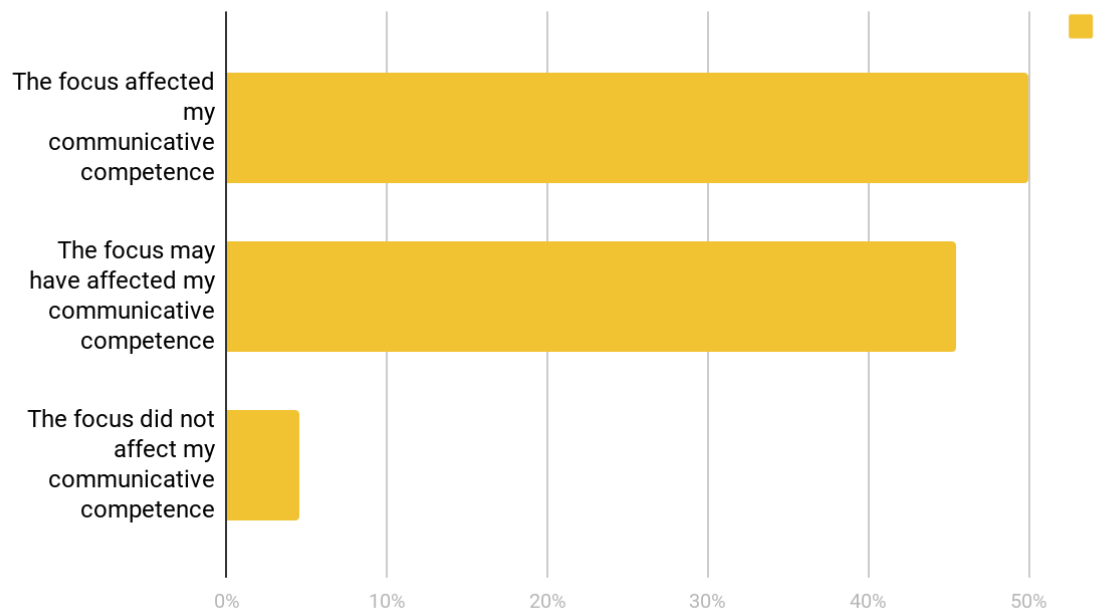


Fig. 10

As demonstrated in the above diagram, 50% of the participants stated that the focus on grammatical rules and writing has affected their communicative competence (CC), 45.5% said that this may have affected their CC and 4.5% said that it did not affect their CC.

The effect of the focus on writing on WTC

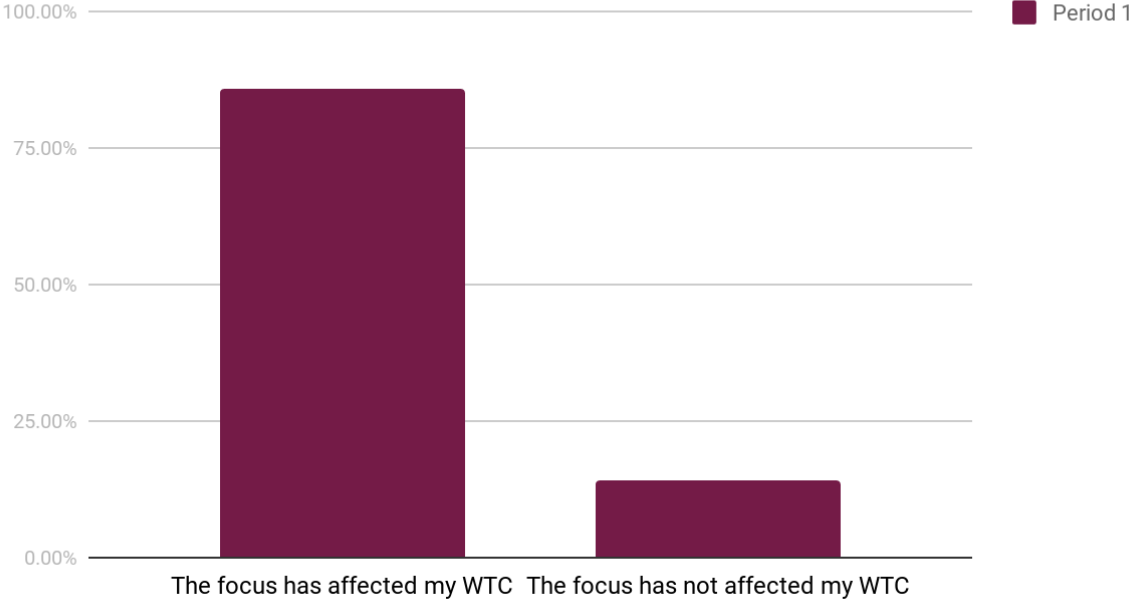


Fig.11

This diagram shows that 85.7% of the participants said that this focus on grammatical rules and writing has affected their willingness to communicate (WTC) while 14.3% of them said that it did not affect their WTC.

Major factors that influence WTC in the French conversation class

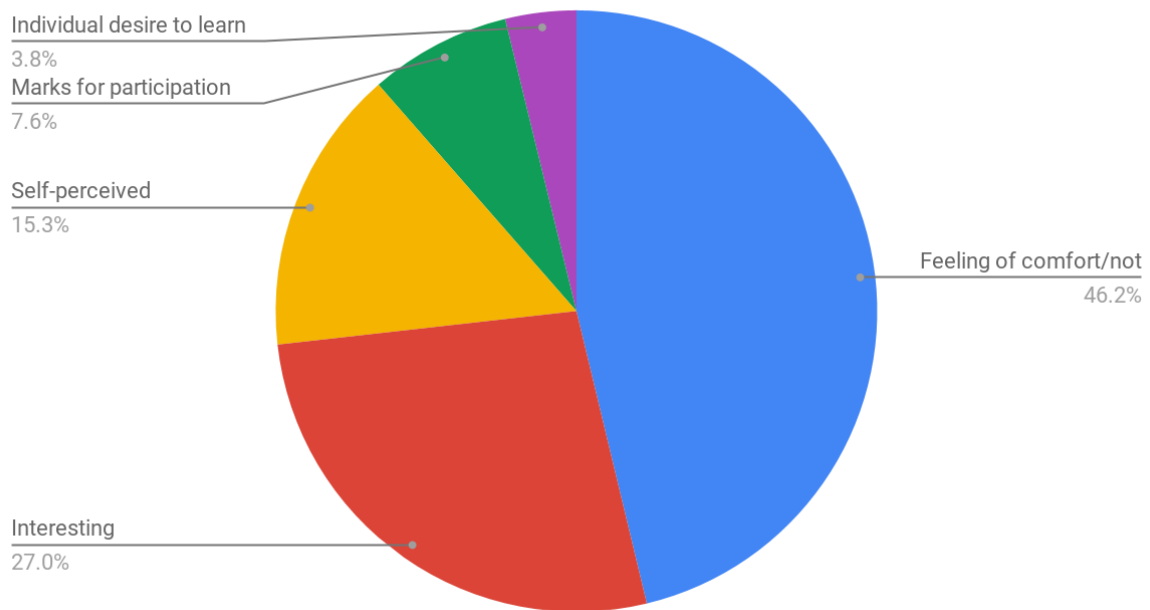


Fig. 12

The above diagram demonstrates that a total of 46.1% of the participants stated that the main factor that motivates them to speak in the conversation class is the feeling of comfort or not being judged based on their communicative competence. 26.9% of them indicated that the choice of topic is the main factor; whether the topic is interesting or not and if they have enough knowledge to speak about the topic. 15.3% said that an individual's self-perceived competence is the main motivating factor. 7.6% stated that marks for participation in class is what encourages them to speak and 3.8% of them said that the individual's desire to learn and improve is the main factor that motivates students to speak in conversation class.

Given that the individual's self-perceived communicative competence was deemed by many researchers as one of, and sometimes the most important factor that influences their willingness to communicate, online interviews were conducted in order to obtain more qualitative data with regard to this.

Participants were first asked to rate their own communicative competence in French on a scale of one (1) to ten (10) (1 being very poor and 10 being excellent) and state why they chose that number. Many of the participants gave themselves eight (8) out of ten (10), some because they are able to clearly express their ideas in French on a wide range of topics, others because they have a good grasp of the French grammar, vocabulary, and their fluency is fairly good, however there is still room for improvement. Others gave themselves six (6) out of ten (10) because of the fact that they cannot express themselves as they would like to because of a lack of vocabulary and a lack of grammatical knowledge. Additionally, some compared their communicative competence in French with other foreign languages and said that they can express themselves better on the same subject matters in the other foreign language than in French. One other participant rated their communicative competence with a five (5) out of ten (10) due to anxiety experienced and not necessarily because of a lack of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

Participants were then asked if this rating affected their confidence to speak in class. Some of the participants who gave themselves the rating 8 out of 10, stated that this self-perceived competence boosts their confidence and makes them more willing to speak in class, it also makes them "less afraid to make mistakes" as they've observed that they learn from their mistakes. Others stated that this confidence does not particularly affect their confidence, but their extroverted personality is what makes them more willing to speak in class. The participants who rated themselves with a 6 out of 10 said that this self-perceived competence

generally decreases their confidence to speak in French, however one stated that because they know that the conversation class seeks primarily to improve one's communicative competence in French, they still feel willing to speak in this class, but not the other French classes such as French literature. The participant who assessed their self-perceived communicate competence with a 5 out of 10 stated that this rating definitely decreases their confidence and willingness to speak in French.

Chapter 3: Discussion

This chapter seeks to compare and contrast the findings of the literature review with the researcher's findings seen in the previous chapter. This chapter, like the literature review, will be divided into three sections: the contextual, intrapersonal and cultural factors.

Contextual factors:

According to MacIntyre's illustration of factors that influence WTC, familiarity with the interlocutor can either positively or negatively affect one's level of WTC, i.e. the more familiar you are with a person, the more comfortable you will feel engaging in conversation with said individual. According to the results obtained from the questionnaire, the majority (77.3%) of the participants agreed that the more familiar they are with a person, the more untroubled they feel when engaging in conversation in French, therefore validating the theory put forward by MacIntyre. MacIntyre also stated that the more attractive someone feels to an individual, the more willing they would be to speak to them in the target language. This theory was however disproved according to the findings which show that the majority (52.6%) of the participants find it more difficult engaging in conversation in French, and even in their native tongue (English) with individuals they find attractive, for fear of making errors and "embarrassing themselves in front of the person they find attractive". This, therefore, contrary to McIntyre's theory, decreases their level of WTC in both their target and native language. The time of day was also one of the factors that influences a person's WTC, although this was with regard to their native language, the researcher decided to investigate whether or not this also affected individuals' levels of WTC in the target language. However, 76% of the participants stated that the time of day does not affect their desire to speak in French, while the minority said that they prefer to speak French in the morning period. Some of the reasons for this were as follows: They feel more alert in the morning, they get tired in the evening and therefore feel susceptible

to making errors. Another also stated the late morning period, for example, 11:00 am, because they would have had another French component before (whether reading or listening) and would feel more competent to speak in French.

Intrapersonal Factors:

The personality type of an individual is said to be, according to both MacIntyre and McCroskey, a primary factor of their WTC in their native language. According to them, the more introverted an individual is, the more reluctant they will be to engage in conversation, and the more extroverted an individual is, the more willing they are to converse. Although this theory was only with regard to WTC in one's mother tongue, the researcher decided to ascertain whether it was also applicable to the notion of WTC in a target language. According to the researcher's findings, this theory also applies to WTC in an L2 considering that the majority of the participants, (63.6%) said that their personality type does, in fact, affect their WTC; where the extroverts admitted to being naturally loquacious in both French and English, and therefore find it easy to speak in the conversation class, while the introverts tend to be more timid and therefore withdraw from conversation if possible both in and outside of the French conversation classroom. Some of the participants identified themselves as ambiverts (a personality type that includes characteristics of both introversion and extroversion). Since there was no existing literature for this personality type, participants had to gauge whether they were more of an introvert or an extrovert in order to say if this personality type encourages or dissuades them from speaking in the French conversation class. Of all the participants who considered themselves ambiverts, 85.7% of them said that this personality type affects their WTC; where 42.9% of them stated that they feel "eager and comfortable" to participate in the conversation class, which is said to be more of an extroverted characteristic. 28.6% of them stated that sometimes they feel comfortable to speak in class, and other times they wish not to speak, and

14.3% of them stated that they only feel comfortable to share their opinions in smaller groups, which leans towards more of an introverted characteristic. The 14.3% who found that this personality type does not affect their WTC, also stated that “If you know your work, you will contribute to the class discussion,” indicating that regardless of one’s personality type, they should be willing to participate in class once they are prepared for the class discussion. These results show that the ambivert personality type varies and cannot be characterized by how willing or reluctant one is to communicate. The other 36.4% of the participants admitted that their personality type may affect their WTC, however they believe that other factors influence their WTC to a greater extent, such as fear and self-confidence.

This brings us to the next intrapersonal factor, self-perceived competence. The literature obtained by McCroskey and Richmond, as well as Miao, shows that this factor is one of and in some cases the most influential factor of one’s WTC. According to the interview conducted by the researcher, most of the participants who have a high level of self-perceived competence feel more confident in speaking in French and less afraid of making mistakes in the classroom, and therefore more willing to speak in the French conversation classroom. The participants who had a lower self-perceived competence stated that this perception decreases their confidence as well as their desire to speak in conversation class. These findings therefore concretise the literature of McCroskey, Richmond and Miao which states that the more competent one perceives oneself to be, the more confident and willing they will be to speak, and the more incompetent one considers oneself, the less willing they will be to speak. Additionally, the fear of being judged in the classroom, a factor put forward by Horwitz and Yashima, was another factor that can negatively influence students’ WTC. The primary data collected by the researcher proves to support this theory, where 77.3% of the participants stated that they felt as though their general intelligence is judged based on their communicative competence in conversation class, and 68.2% of them believe that this feeling of judgement

discourages them from participating in the classroom setting, while the other 31.8% stated that this does not affect them, or that they simply ignore it.

Cultural Factors:

One of the major cultural factors of WTC revealed by Pratt was the emphasis placed on memorization of grammatical rules in the foreign language classroom in the Chinese education system, which leads to the negligence of the oral component of the target language. The neglecting of the oral component ultimately decreases the students' communicative competence, and also engenders the belief that the oral component is not as significant as the writing, and therefore lowers the students' desire to communicate in and out of the classroom. This theory was advanced with the data obtained through the questionnaire, where the participants were asked if they believe that the Trinidadian foreign language syllabus at the secondary school level focuses primarily on writing and grammatical rules, to which 100% of the participants responded yes. Then, they were asked if this approach affected their communication competence (CC), like the Chinese students, to which 50% said it negatively impacted their CC; they are not able to express themselves in French as they would like, and their oral production is not as fluent as they expected it to be after years of study. 45.5% of them were uncertain and 4.5% stated that it did not affect their CC. 85.7% of the participants said that this focus on grammar and writing rather than speaking has affected their WTC, that is to say, because they cannot express themselves as they would like, they prefer not to speak altogether. This can also be linked to the fear of being criticized in the classroom, some participants have stated that when they cannot "clearly express [their] thoughts, [they] feel as though the relevance of [their] answer is being judged," or that others think that they "lack knowledge on the topic," or are "incompetent," and consequently "makes [them] even more unwilling and not confident to speak and [they] mess up even more". Therefore, we can see

that the lack of attention paid to the oral component at secondary school causes students to have lower levels of CC, which in return decreases their desire to speak in class for fear of being judged by their classmates as well as their teachers.

Student's Motivation:

Finally, participants were asked what they thought was the most crucial factor of WTC in the French conversation class. 46% of the participants stated that a comfortable environment where they do not feel judged is what will encourage them to speak. 26.9% of them postulated that the level of interest that they have in the topic will cause them to speak, i.e. if they are interested in the topic they will contribute a lot to the discussion, however if they are not interested they will feel less inclined to speak. Some also added that even if the topic is interesting, but they don't have a substantial amount of knowledge on the topic, they will not be able to contribute to the discussion. 15.3% of them stated that self-perceived communicative competence was the most important factor of WTC. A percentage of 7.6 of the stated that the allocation of marks for participation in class is what would motivate students to contribute to class discussions, which can be linked to the notion of extrinsic motivation, which is exterior or tangible rewards, as mentioned by Rym Ghosn El-Bel in "Motivating Students to Perform Better Orally in Communicative Language Teaching Framework". And finally, 3.8% of the participants stated that an individual's desire to learn is what should motivate them to participate, orally or otherwise, and therefore should not be dependent on external factors, such as the school's syllabus or the judgement of others.

From this chapter, we've gleaned that certain theories postulated by the precursors are applicable to the experiences of the undergraduate French majors at the U.W.I St. Augustine. Such theories include: the increase in WTC when one is familiar with his/her interlocutor, the greater one perceives their communicative competence to be, the more willing they will be to

engage in conversation in French, the disregard of the oral component at the secondary school level leading to a decrease in communicative competence, and therefore a decrease in WTC. New data was found where undergraduate French students' personality types affect their WTC in French at the U.W.I St. Augustine, as well as their belief that an environment in which they do not feel judged is the major factor to their WTC in the French conversation class.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to draw a conclusion based on the findings obtained by the researcher, as well as make suggestions on how to increase students' willingness to communicate in the classroom.

In order to achieve the main objective of this study which is to ascertain and evaluate the major factors of WTC so as to allow French instructors to stimulate greater levels of it amongst the undergraduate French students at the U.W.I St Augustine, we must address the principal obstacles encountered by the students. According to the primary data collected, it is evident that the fear of negative evaluation or the fear of being judged, an intrapersonal factor, is one of the main factors that hinder a student's willingness to communicate in the classroom. This is gleaned from the fact that numerous participants in the research stated that a comfortable environment in which they do not feel judged is the major factor that influences their WTC, which proves that this feeling of judgement is a hindrance to a large number of the French student's WTC at the UWI St. Augustine. Moreover, all of the participants stated that they found that the secondary school foreign language syllabus in T&T focuses a lot more on writing rather than speaking, and the majority of them stated that this neglecting of the oral component in secondary school has decreased their WTC which in most cases is caused by a lack of self-perceived communicative competence. This therefore solidifies the theory and demonstrates that this cultural factor is one of the major obstacles to students' WTC at the UWI, St. Augustine. Consequently, if we are to attenuate the issue of the lack of WTC in the French conversation class, we must first address these two major factors.

Recommendations

In order to mitigate the two main aforementioned factors that hinder student's WTC in the French conversation class, the researcher suggests the following:

- 1) The U.W.I St. Augustine French teachers can conduct online conversation classes via Zoom or another application. It is more probable that students will feel less judged by their peers and by the language instructor when they do not see the facial reactions and the corporal gestures of their classmates and/or their teachers. Additionally, speaking to a computer screen will give the students the impression that they are actually alone and will therefore feel more comfortable and less self-conscious of making mistakes in front of their peers.
- 2) Peer the listening component with the conversation class. During the interviews, most of the students who considered their communicative competence to be low stated that this is so because they cannot clearly express their thoughts and opinions in French as they would like. Peering the listening class with the conversation class will allow students to reproduce what they hear in the audios and videos (use similar and appropriate vocabulary and expressions). This will also make it easier for the students to create their own opinions on the subject matter; they can agree or disagree with what was said in the audio or compare what they have heard in the audio with their own personal experiences.
- 3) With regard to the cultural issue, where the oral expression in French is neglected at the secondary school level, the researcher recommends that those who are in charge of the planning of the secondary school French syllabus mirror the syllabus of the French language department at the U.W.I St. Augustine. The syllabus at the U.W.I values each component (speaking, writing, listening) equally, i.e each component is worth the same

amount of marks; students are therefore obligated to treat each component with the same degree of importance. If this is done at the secondary school level, from forms one to six, the oral component will be viewed as equally important as the written and grammar components, and students will consequently take speaking in French more seriously. This should also address the issue of the lack of self-perceived communicative competence by improving the students' actual communicative competence through a greater level of oral practice at the secondary school level, which should ultimately cause them to be less self-conscious about their oral production as well as better prepare them for the French syllabus at the tertiary level.

Limitations

One major shortcoming encountered by the researcher was the fact that all 33 distributed questionnaires were not returned, therefore the conclusions made based on the information obtained from the 22 questionnaires may not be applicable to all of the undergraduate French students at the U.W.I St. Augustine. Secondly, the majority of the secondary data obtained by the researcher may not be applicable within the Trinidadian context since most of them were based on the Chinese, Japanese and/or the American culture. Furthermore, a lot of the secondary data also dated to the 1980's and may therefore no longer be relevant to the issues faced by language students today, for example the literature that dealt with the intrapersonal factors of WTC did not treat with the ambivert personality type, but only the introvert and extrovert, which would have been the two known personality types at the time. There has also been a change in the teaching techniques employed in the classroom that a lot of the dated literature could not take into consideration, for example the inclusion of ICT and the adoption of a more student-centred approach that may influence students' WTC. Additionally, finding a solution to the intrapersonal factors that dissuade individuals from engaging in conversation, such as an introverted personality, was unfeasible to the researcher considering that this was an internal factor and not dependent on external stimulus. Therefore further study can be done in order to ascertain whether or not the ambivert personality type causes one to be inclined to engaging in conversation in both their native language and their target language, as well as find practical solutions to any personality type that may cause individuals to shy away from conversation especially in a target language.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

My name is Riyad Mohammed, I am a third year undergraduate French student at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. My Caribbean Studies project is entitled “The contributing factors that influence the willingness to communicate in the French language among undergraduate French students at the U.W.I, St. Augustine.” I would greatly appreciate your participation in my questionnaire by honestly answering the questions below. All the information gathered will be kept confidential. Thank you!

- 1) Sex:
- 2) Year:
- 3) Are you more of an introvert or an extrovert? _____
- 4) Do you think this affects your willingness to communicate in French in the French conversation class? Yes. No.

Please explain?

- 5) Do you feel more willing to communicate in French at a particular time of day? If yes, please specify. _____

Please state why?

- 6) Do you find it easier to speak to familiar persons (eg. friends/family) than strangers (eg. a classmate with whom you do not speak often) in French? Yes. No.
- 7) Do you think you would be more willing to communicate in French with someone you find attractive or wish to influence? Yes. No.

8) Do you feel as though your overall intelligence and personality are judged based on your communicative competence in French conversation class? Yes. No.

Please state why?

9) Do you think that this affects your willingness to speak in French in the classroom? Yes. No.

10) Do you think that your teacher encourages you to speak in conversation class? Yes. No.

11) Do you think that our (T&T's) foreign language teaching syllabus focuses more on writing and grammatical rules rather than speaking? Yes. No.

12) If yes, do you think that this affected your communicative competence? Yes. No.

13) If yes, do you think that this affects our desire to orally participate in the classroom at the UWI undergraduate level? Yes. No.

14) According to you, what is the main factor that encourages students to participate in oral class?

Appendix B

Interview

- 1) Can you rate your communicative competence on a scale of 1-10?
- 2) Why did you give yourself this grade?
- 3) (If you are willing) Can you tell me the grades you got for your last two French conversation exams?
- 4) Do you think that the grade that you gave yourself for communicative competence boosts/decreases your confidence to speak in class?