



WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AMONG EFL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A SELECTED SCHOOL IN H CITY, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

In the Chinese education system, there is a notable emphasis on developing reading and writing skills in English, often employing a teacher-centered instructional approach. This focus may inadvertently sideline opportunities for real-world engagement and verbal communication in English, potentially hindering students' confidence and preparedness for oral language use. Recognizing the significance of cultivating a willingness to communicate as a crucial aspect of effective foreign language teaching, this study delves into factors influencing students' communication willingness, specifically exploring the impact of anxiety, self-efficacy, and speech proficiency. The research encompasses 361 participants from H City, China's middle school. The findings reveal a positive classroom environment and favorable experiences among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The reported low anxiety levels indicate that effective teaching methods and gradual exposure to English-speaking activities contribute to a constructive and confidence-building learning atmosphere. Interestingly, though anxiety is found to have a practically negligible impact on willingness to communicate, both speech proficiency and self-efficacy exhibit moderate to strong positive associations with students' willingness to engage in English communication. These results highlight the significance of nurturing speech proficiency and self-efficacy in language learning contexts to foster active participation and confidence in English.

Keywords: *Communication Willingness; EFL Language Skill; Middle School Students' Communication*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Students in second-language classrooms often feel inhibited, leading to lower confidence and communicative competency (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021; Riasati, 2018)
2. English classrooms in China that prioritize written communication, hence it was suggested that incorporating diverse speaking techniques could empower students and enhance language skills (Ding, 2023; Boulton & Cobb, 2017).
3. Language students commonly struggle with fluent communication due to limited practical opportunities, emphasizing the need for increased interactive experiences in language learning (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Research Objectives

RO: To examine the intricate interplay of anxiety, self-efficacy, and speech proficiency in shaping the willingness to communicate among EFL middle school students in H City, China.

Methodology

This study delves into the population of third-grade students in H Middle School, located in H City, Anhui Province, With the assistance of Krejcie and Morgan's calculations, 361 students were determined to be appropriate samples for a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the issues at hand. After a comprehensive review of various literature sources, this study focuses on the link between student anxiety, speech proficiency, and self-efficacy, particularly within the classroom environment. meticulously crafted questionnaires have been developed to gauge students' perspectives and convictions

regarding their inclination to communicate in English. Drawing inspiration from well-established scales, the questionnaire items have been adapted to align with the key variables: student anxiety, self-efficacy, and perceived speech proficiency. This questionnaire seeks to elucidate the intricate interplay between these variables outlined in the framework. A total of 550 participants were involved, with the finalized 361 valid questionnaires chosen for the study. The collected data were displayed in the "Questionnaire Star" database and subsequently exported to Excel and SPSS for analysis.

Results

The finding shows that the correlation between anxiety and willingness to communicate yielded an extremely weak and practically negligible result, with a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.01 ($p = 0.856$). This suggests that there is virtually no linear relationship between anxiety levels and students' willingness to communicate in English classes. The non-significant p -value (0.856) indicates that anxiety does not significantly impact students' willingness to engage in English communication activities.

Findings

While anxiety showed minimal impact on willingness to communicate, speech proficiency and self-efficacy displayed moderate to strong positive associations with students' willingness to communicate in English.

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