Native Hungarian Speakers and Their Willingness to Communicate in a Business English Context

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Abbreviations Used

BE  Business English
CEFR  Common European Framework of Reference
CLT  Communicative Language Teaching
ESL  English as a Second Language
ESP  English for Specific Purposes
L1  Native Language
L2  Second Language
WTC  Willingness to Communicate
Introduction

Whether we like it or not, we live in a more global society than ever. Increased internationalization in various scenes of our lives like business arenas, political and economic stages as well as social participation has led to a greater need for speaking a common language. Every day millions of people use English as the language of their business activities. In the past, international business contact has not always been successful, so English learning has become more and more popular and as a result speaking ‘Business’ as a competence is no longer just a soft skill but is a must for individuals to succeed at work.

As part of the development of how to teach English more effectively, the concept of Willingness to Communicate became more and more essential. Therefore, one of the aims of this thesis work is to find out what factors affect mainly Hungarian adult learners’ motivation or willingness to speak in English. In recent years, language teaching shifted the primary purpose of teaching from linguistic competences to the more practical and reasonable concept, namely to the ability of communicating in a foreign language (Alemi et al. 2013, p.42)

Everyone who has participated in a foreign language class before or has been a part of a foreign language speaking group or community must be aware of the phenomenon that some people are more willing to communicate and be an active participant of the conversation while some people are more embarrassed to speak in front of others. What can be the reason behind these behavioural differences?

We as individuals have to recognize that the best exercise to improve ourselves is the continuous use of our chosen second language. Thus, the best practice is communication and the willingness to communicate is the best predictor of being a proficient learner. (Mirsane & Khabiri, 2016, p.399)

Although the focus language of this study is only English, insights can be applied to any other language a person speaks. The reason why speaking activities are the main focus of this study is because this is the most salient indicator of language use ability.

When I chose Hungarian native speakers’ Willingness to Communicate for my thesis topic, my presumption was that Hungarian people are not really willing to communicate unless they have a very good command of English. I assumed that because we all bring
the same kind of educational background, which rather focused on the rules of grammar instead of fostering speaking skills.  
So when beginning to write the thesis work and started the research, my hypothesis was that Hungarian native speaker adults’ Willingness to Communicate in a second language, namely in English is very limited, and it takes a lot of effort to improve it.  
In the second, empirical part of present thesis the following research questions helped my examinations. The questions I sought to answer were:  
  1) What factors mostly influence Hungarian native speaker adults’ Willingness to Communicate when they are in the Business English context?  
  2) Which teaching formats successfully foster WTC in a Business English training context and which ones are less successful?  
  3) What are the intentions of Hungarian adults learning Business English?  
I have investigated the answers to these questions by reviewing academic literature and conducting a quantitative and qualitative research.
Chapter 1 – Literature Review

1.1 Understanding Willingness to Communicate in L1 and L2

First of all, we have to differentiate between WTC in the native language (L1) and in the second language (L2). WTC in the first or native language was defined by James C. McCrosky and Elaine J. Baer. They stated that we talk about Willingness to Communicate in our native language when we have the opportunity to choose from talking or remain silent and we choose talking freely without force (McCrosky & Baer, 1985). One might think, that WTC in L2 positively correlates with WTC in L1. In actual fact, a study showed a negative correlation between the two. The extent to which language competence influence WTC primarily that has a range from 0% to 100%. So the concept of Willingness to Communicate in the second language was defined by MacIntyre. He uses the term “readiness” when he refers to the moment when a person starts to talk in L2. (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

While WTC in L1 depends on variables like mood, feelings, emotions, the other person’s look, time etc. (McCrosky & Baer, 1985), WTC in L2 depends on more complex variables. MacIntyre and his colleagues worked out a heuristic pyramid model for the better understanding of the factors that influence the WTC in L2 (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC
(MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547)
There are six different layers in the pyramid, which fall into two groups. Layers I-II-III are situation-specific influencers so are dependent on the given moment and Layers IV-VI are permanent process influencers that can be expected to be salient in almost any situation. (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547)

Layers I-II-III can be explained through a very simple example. Let’s suppose that a teacher or a trainer poses a question and an immediate answer is coming from one participant. What happens in this situation? He or she uses L2 (Layer I) because has WTC (Layer II) due to the desire to talk to a specific person because of his or her self-confidence (Layer III). So here, I would state that the student represents what the main goal of language teaching is. In Layer IV, the motivation factors are exercising and reinforcing social roles and establishing relationship with others while L2 confidence is most likely to increase parallel with high command of L2 and most likely to decrease with feeling discomfort while using L2. The affective-cognitive variables in Layer V are the ones that the individual brings with the own background. If there is success and fulfilment while using L2 than WTC is positively affected. On the other hand, if there is fear of assimilation and lack of knowledge of the topic or sociocultural competence than WTC is negatively affected. Last but not least, Layer VI contains the differences between two different cultures that can be found on the individual level as well (Compton, 2007).

1.2. Willingness to Communicate in L2 – Previous Studies

Su-Ja Kang (Department of Learning and Instruction, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York) in 2005, established a framework that provides a more complex approach to understanding the situations influencing Willingness to Communicate. The author was observing if the learners’ Willingness to Communicate changed as a result of changing the situations they had to use the Second Language in. Kang’s subjects were Korean university students who were asked to communicate with native speakers in English. The native speakers were student tutors in the university, while the Korean students were undergraduates. He defined three different situations for his study to examine:

1. Theme of conversation (if they had prior knowledge of it, to what extent were they interested in it, etc.)
2. The interviewer’s nature (first language, social status, attitude)
3. Conversational characteristics (misunderstandings, mistakes)

Kang also examined the psychological state of the participants, and aimed to find a correlation between the situation of the Willingness to Communicate and its influence of the subjects’ psychological responses. The psychological states were:

- Security: when the non-native party isn’t bothered by speaking to a native speaker;
- Excitement: when the non-native speaker feels extremely positive and enthusiastic about talking on his second language;
- Responsibility: when the non-native speaker feels responsible for the perfect presentation of the message he wants to convey and he is also keen on understanding his partner’s message.

These psychological states are rooted in intergroup, interpersonal or personal motives. The author found that when someone is in the state of security, the fear can be a burden influencing Willingness to Communicate, whereas the two other states are rather stimulating, and are seldom apparent in Second Language Learners. Kang also claims that these psychological factors are not exclusive to one type of person. All learners have all factors and their strength and salience are fluctuating all the time, even within one single conversation. This implies that the extent to which these influence the Willingness to Communicate also varies, as Willingness to Communicate related to situation or related to psychological state also fluctuate constantly. The on-going interaction between situation and psychology will define a person’s overall Willingness to Communicate performance, thus the communication itself. Overall, Kang’s findings can be summarised as follows:

1. Non-native speakers tended to get the most excited when they had to talk to native speakers. They found it very useful and they were expecting to learn from them.
2. They preferred the least their fellow language learners to talk to.
3. It gave the participants the feeling of security when the tutors were expressing their interest in what the students wanted to say, and they supported them.
4. The students were willing to speak when there was something they wanted to explain in order to avoid misunderstandings.
5. In case the interviewer of whom English was also a Second Language started to apply more difficult language skills, students started to feel insecure and their Willingness to Communicate decreased.
6. If the students considered the theme interesting, they tended to become more excited. However, they could get bored if the same theme was repeated several times. (Kang, 2005)

Another important study was conducted by MacDonald et al. (2003). The authors observed Second Language speakers and their Willingness to Communicate in different situations. They were collecting data based on focused essays about which were the situations that motivated them to speak and under what circumstances they were not really willing to use their second language. The researchers asked the interviewees to mention a situation that would make them want to speak on their second language and one that would make them feel uncomfortable using it. The majority of the answers highlighted that they felt most comfortable using their second language when the interviewer did not speak their native language, what means that it was not a voluntary choice. They were also willing to communicate on the second language if the question they were addressed with was asked on the second language. The participants also mentioned that it raises their Willingness to Communicate when they feel no threat of being corrected as well as in an environment where they felt that they speak the language as good as the others involved in the situation. However, there were cases when they did not feel self-confidence, or when they had to talk to strangers, what lowered their Willingness to Communicate (MacDonald et al., 2003). Both MacDonald et al.’s study (2003) and Kang’s study (2005) highlighted that many participants did not want to communicate in their second language with those who could speak their native language.

A study by Nagy and Nikolov (2007) examined the situational factors influencing the Willingness to Communicate of English major university students by asking them to write an essay at home about situations when they were the most willing to and were the least willing to communicate in English. Participants were also asked to describe the theme and environment of the situation and provide a rationale for why they reacted the way they did. The authors examined the data in a classroom context that also allowed them to get an insight to pedagogical factors. The authors found that students tended to be less willing to communicate on the class mainly because of the issues with self-confidence they had knowing the language skills of the others in the group. They regarded their fellow students as a threat. They seemed to be sensitive to the teacher’s negative feedback. The theme of the conversation also influenced their performance. If they found it boring they did not want to communicate. Besides, if the topic required skills that they thought
they didn’t have, they became reluctant to talk. The students highlighted that the context of the classroom often made them stressed, what seems to be counterproductive for their learning advancement. They often find topics discussed in the classroom boring and they are aware of the huge differences that exist between peers. Moreover, the impersonal relationships between classmates influence their Willingness to Communicate in a negative way (Nagy & Nikolov, 2007).

1.3. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Due to the fact that students’ WTC is strongly connected with language learning and may affect its outcomes, the following part of the thesis will give a short overview of the related concept Communicative Language Teaching.

CLT started to become popular in the 1970s. The approach was resounded as a tool of developing communication skills in L2 learning. Today it greatly influences language teachers’ as well as students’ way of thinking about language learning. The reason why CLT is a pioneer among all approaches is that it defines language as a product and a process of communicating (Newby, 2012). This means that students begin to get involved in more communicative tasks. So role-plays and simulations have become very popular and have started to foster real communication in the classroom; and the communicative task itself has become as important as the accuracy of language use itself (Harmer, 2015, p.57). Clearly, one of the strengths of this approach is the real-life-like communication practice. However, critics have questioned its effectiveness. The main worries discuss that accuracy in grammar is just as important as speaking skills; moreover, teachers are not able to manage large-sized classes and cannot recreate real-life communication. All in all, they say that language teaching is more than just talking (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016).

In CLT at the beginning of the 21st century there have emerged three major themes:

1. Nowadays, we have to view CLT as a teaching method that characterizes language as an individual identity and a social behaviour. This means that a language specifies the community and this community dictates the forms and uses of the language.
2. The concept of a ‘native speaker’ became the ideal for language learners. This is mostly driven by the multilingual reality of the 21st century where language is understood as culture.

3. Assessment is a key factor when defining curriculum. Plus, there is a growing need for responsibility in having a common guideline and syllabus when determining the form of language test that is necessary for further education. In my point of view this is what CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference was designed for.

(Savignon, 2006)

1.4. Communicative competence

The aim of any L2 acquisition is to become competent while communicating in that given L2 language. The term, communicative competence was introduced by Hymes in the 1960s and the term itself refers to the individual’s grammatical and social knowledge about how and when to use utterances in the right way (Hymes, 1972).

Later, the explanation of communicative competence became deeper. Canale and Swain claimed that the factors of communicative competence consists of grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competence components (Canale & Swain, 1980). A new definition came into force with the publication of CEFR. The new and broader categories are:

1. Linguistic competences

This competence mainly includes the knowledge and skills of the language system. This competence also has several sub-competences that are described as follows:

- Lexical competence: knowing and being able to use the vocabulary of a language;

- Grammatical competence: knowing and being able to use the grammar of a language;

- Semantic competence: awareness and control of the ways meaning is organized in a language;

- Phonological competence: being able to recognize and produce sounds and phonetic features of a language;

- Orthographic competence: being able to recognize and produce symbols from
a writing system of a language.
(CEFR, p.109).

2. Sociolinguistic competences
This competence mainly refers to the ability of a person’s use of a language in social situations. This includes addressing someone, greeting people, being polite etc.
(CEFR, p.118)

3. Pragmatic competences
Pragmatic competences deal with the user or learner’s knowledge of the principles according to the following:
- Discourse competence, dealing with ways of organizing, composing and arranging messages;
- Functional competence, dealing with ways of performing communicative functions;
- Design competence, dealing with sequences and schemata.
(CEFR, p.123)

Thus, we can look at the communicative competence from a totally different viewpoint. We can examine the question of why the individual’s behaviour is important. If a person convinces him or herself that he is highly competent in communication, i.e. the knowledge a person has, than most probably it will affect his or her performance in L2 communication in a positive way, which means that he or she will use the language more freely. In this case the WTC is much higher. For this reason, the opposite should be true as well. If a person does not trust his or her own communicative competence, then performance in L2 is less likely to happen (Barraclough et al., 1988).

1.5 Communication Apprehension

Communication Apprehension (CA) is a related term to speaking activities with another person or persons which refers to the individual’s fear or anxiety (McCroskey & Beatty, 1986). This anxiety has a great effect on the communicative competence of the individual, thus as a result has a great effect on Willingness to Communicate as well (McCroskey, Beatty, 1986). In everyday life, we would call it simply stage fright (Burgoon, 2012). There are four types of Communication Apprehension:
1. **Trait-like CA**: defined as a “relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward oral communication across a wide variety of contexts” (McCroskey, Beatty, 1986)

2. **Generalized-context CA**: not so long-lasting, related to personality type but only in given type of context such as public speaking, speaking in meetings and in small groups.

3. **Person-group CA**: relatively enduring orientation, but this time toward communicating with a specific person or group of people. It is a reaction to situational constraints connected to the participants of the communication – age, relationship etc.

4. **Situational CA**: the only type of CA defined as a temporary or changeable attitude. It derives from previous experience of communicating with an individual or group of people.

(McCroskey & Beatty, 1986)

### 1.6. Motivation

In the next part of this paper I will examine the motivation factor, as I believe it has a key role in language learning as well as in Willingness to Communicate. As much as motivation is very important, I think it can be very vulnerable as well, because once it is attained it has to be maintained during the L2 learning process and should be improved if possible (Harmer, 2015). Recent research into the issue is now summarized below.

Motivation can also be provided by assuring students that classroom performance is not a competition (Schindler, 2009). This suggests that students should understand that language learning is a continuous process and everyone proceeds in a different pace, something which is perfectly normal. Dörnyei (2014) claims that students seem to forget that everyone progresses in different rates during language acquisition. However, teachers should always be aware of this and should constantly assure students that they should not be too hard on themselves when making mistakes, and if they perceive themselves worse than the others in the group. Teachers should motivate them by explaining that the more hardworking they are, the quicker they will get to the level where quicker learners are. They should also be explained that those who get ahead in a faster pace does not represent threat to them. They should rather be considered as an opportunity and a resource, peers
that they can learn from. Students should understand that motivation is the most important factor in the learning process, while speed is rather marginal (Harmer, 2015). Waugh (2013) explains that if language teaching is communicative, there is no emphasis on correcting mistakes, hence students will not feel frustrated about not talking with immaculate grammar, as a matter of fact, pragmatics are far more important in the communication of L2 (Waugh, 2013). Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that has been defined as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1997, p.301).

Mistakes cannot be avoided, therefore should be accepted. It is unnecessary to expect learners on any level of learning to have a native level accuracy. However, while making mistakes should be accepted in order to reduce the stress factor in the classroom, learners should also receive feedback, so they will learn the correct way. The corrections and feedback should be focusing on how a student can better express himself and techniques that help avoiding certain errors during communication. However, the correction should never embarrass them. The motivation behind students’ willingness to correct mistakes should be the achievement of more efficient communication skills. The teacher should be aware of this when correcting. The teacher missing to correct mistakes can lead to the student repeating it over and over again, what is not the desirable outcome of the learning continuum. Besides, correcting in the appropriate manner may contribute to the students developing a self-monitoring system with which they learn how to correct themselves on the long run, or prevent certain mistakes. (Harmer, 2015) However, as LoCastro puts it (2012), language teaching should not focus merely on performance errors, but it should rather motivate the creative application of language, where language should be regarded as a means with what students can reach their goals during the interactions. This approach is capable of contributing to creating a stress free environment in the classroom, as too much focus on mistakes can destroy creativity and implants criticism to everyone involved, what can result in seeing threat in the peers. Students should be encouraged to express themselves by using their own tone.

Locastro (2012) adds the importance of involving cultural aspects in foreign language teaching as an important motivational element. She argues that learners should not only learn the language itself, but should be familiar with the cultural context. If one learns a language but is not aware of the culture it is rooted in, it becomes hard, or even impossible
for one to socialize in the context of the second language. Language is inseparable from culture. Knowing vocabulary, syntax and grammar does not carry knowledge of culture, politics, economy, etc. (LoCastro, 2012, pp.4-5).

Dörnyei expressed an important view that says that all factors involved in the process of Second Language Acquisition presume the existence of a certain amount of motivation. Thus, motivation seems to be the most important factor in language learning. This suggests that maintaining the motivation in the students is among the most important tasks of the language teacher. By understanding how motivation affects student’s learning, we can get closer to finding tools for maintaining their motivation (Harmer, 2015).

1.6.1. Factors Affecting Motivation

In 2010, Oyserman and Destin created a framework that aim to understand the complex nature of the versatile identity of the individual and its correlation with motivation in learning. According to the authors, students prefer actions that correspond to their identity instead of people who correspond. This premise is what defines their interpretation of certain challenges they experience in the class. If they find challenges they are faced not corresponding to their identity, they are likely to withdraw and give up, as they will find the task irrelevant, and will think that those are for different people. This means that they will not be motivated in situations what do not correspond to their identity (Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

Mutluoglu (2016) examined the question whether if a person’s individual motivational elements can predict that person’s Willingness to Communicate on the person’s Second Language. These elements are:

- Intercultural Communicative Competence: communicative competence refers to what, when and how a person expresses himself. In addition to this, the successful communication incorporates the ability to effectively convey one’s cultural identity through conversation in a culturally diverse world.
- Academic self-concept: the person’s perception and knowledge about himself in situations that hold a challenge inside the classroom.
- Ideal L2 self - is an idea about the person’s wish to become somebody and the need of others to perceive them in that role.

Mutluoglu found statistical evidence that the above described units of motivation do have an effect on learning efficiency. The most significant correlation was apparent in the relationship between the concept of the academic self and the ideal self. He also
investigated if these factors were suitable to predict the Willingness to Communicate of the learner. The author found that it was the ‘ideal self’ that could predict most significantly the Willingness to Communicate, followed by the ‘concept of the academic self’. According to the study, if the teacher is aware of the student’s ideal self it is more likely that he can practice empathy and also to predict the learner’s Willingness to Communicate. If the teacher has this knowledge it is possible to make adjustments and enhance the student’s motivation. For example if the learner's ideal self is a proficient speaker, the teacher can use this as a motivational force (Mutluoglu, 2016).

Oz (2015) tried to find correlation between the ‘ideal self’ and the ‘intercultural communicative competence’. If yes it could be used to predict and indicate the Willingness to Communicate in the classroom. Oz claims that Intercultural Communicative Competence is not necessarily an element of identity, it still influences the identity of the student by having an effect on how a learner can integrate to the cultural context of the Second Language. The research found evidence that Intercultural Communicative Competence is capable of motivating learning of the Second Language by predicting the learner that he will not only be competent in speaking and understanding the second language but can be traveller between cultures. Those with a higher level of Intercultural Communicative Competence and the concept of an ideal self were aware of how important Intercultural Communicative Competence was in the communication in intercultural context. (Oz, 2015).

Overall, the aforementioned studies strongly support that the identity of the student has a substantial effect on motivation in the Second Language classroom. Besides, a correlation can be detected between the various aspects of identity, what implies that the units can predict if a student will be motivated or not to communicate in the classroom.

1.7. A Special Language Field – Business English

Business English is a mixture of everyday English, general Business English and ESP – English for Specific Purposes. So it can be considered a special field in the English language.

When people decide to study Business English they have different intentions. For some of them it is necessary for their careers, some people just want to be better at English and some of them look at it as an investment for possible financial rewards in the future. When
we study or teach Business English the strict rules of grammar do not play such a significant role but vocabulary of the different fields of business and developing communication skills are much more important (Frendo, 2005, p.1-7).

The following example gives a clearer view of special vocabulary that explains how Business English becomes ESP:

- Can we go through the ledger tomorrow? I have to leave now. (Accounting)
- With no growth likely this year, the budget deficit has been revised up to 11.9% of GDP, excluding the bank bail-out costs. (Banking)
- WANs (Wide Area Network) have no geographical limit. (Computing)

(Frendo, 2005, p.6).

The next example here is to present how everyday English can become Business English.

- A: So you have chosen a manual Ford Focus 1.6.
- B: Yes, that’s right. What’s the rate?
- A: It depends on the type of car, number of days and additional services.
- B: Ok, I understand.

(Frendo, 2005, p.6).

We have to see that this conversation could be between a person renting a car and the agent. In this case, we are talking about everyday English. But if the very same conversation happens between two business people in a business context, then we are talking about Business English. So we have to see that there is a thin line between the two and as a result, I think we can say that when we investigate the WTC in a Business English context then we are investigating WTC in General English at the same time.

1.8. **The Business English Learner**

While examining the field of Business English, we also need to consider the Business English learner. In so doing, it is helpful to distinguish the following aspects:

**Experience**

One group is secondary school and university students. However, in this paper I do not examine this group, it is worth it to take a look. This group is called *the pre-experienced learner* who have very little or no work experience at all. They study Business English, because they know that they will commence a business career and they will need this knowledge. The second group consists of those people who already have some work
experience. They are the *job-experienced learners*. These learners have good understanding of the nature of business and often have special requests or want to deal with narrow areas of the language. They do not expect teachers to help them understand the nature of business world, because they know it themselves (Harmer, 2015). The third group might be a between the previous ones. They are the *general-business experienced learners*. These students already have work experience, but they need Business English in order to be able to start a new career.

**Hierarchy of the organization**

Usually, there are different ways of learning at different levels of the company. For instance, senior managers might prefer one-to-one trainings while at junior levels there is no possibility of choosing from different training methods.

**National culture**

In a multi-cultural environment, culture, tradition and values might often differ. That is why it is more efficient if learners with different backgrounds, therefore with different styles of communication are separated from each other.

**Student needs**

Students might have different needs. First, students might have to focus on a very special field, like to join an international team. This requires them to strengthen a narrow field of the language. Others might just want to improve their knowledge of English and last, but not least we have to differentiate among different roles, like secretaries, IT people, etc. So people from different companies, but in the same role can be grouped together.

**Language level**

Usually an entry test can tell the level of the student (somewhere between beginner and advanced).

(Frendo, 2005)
Chapter 2 – Empirical Study

2.1 The Research Context

The Hungarian English-speaking context is still behind of the majority of other European countries even though the attitude and the motivation has changed in a positive way in the last few decades. Besides people’s growing willingness and motivation to acquire a foreign language, even Hungary’s National Core Curriculum favours the education of individuals that are able to speak 2 foreign languages besides their mother language. (Magyar Közlöny, 2012). According to the below map that was made in 2014, we still have a lot to bring in compared to other EU countries.

![Figure 2: Percentage of Population Able to Have a Conversation in English in the EU by Countries. (2014)](image-url)
2.2. Research Method

As a matter of fact, when reading the already existing literature about WTC I have not really found Business English related studies or research especially in Hungarian aspect. So I decided to investigate this field.

The study I conducted, had three basic research questions as it was already explained in the beginning:

1. What are the factors that mostly influence Hungarian native speakers’ Willingness to Communicate when they are in Business English context?
2. Which teaching formats successfully foster the WTC in a Business English training and which ones are less successful?
3. Why do Hungarian adults want to learn this special field of ESP, the Business English?

To find the best answers to these questions, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. The two can be differentiated the best when we consider the ways of how we collect data. Qualitative data collection instruments include interviews, diaries and observations (Dörnyei 2007). On the other hand, quantitative data collection is a much more exact instrument because we use data that are collected through numbers and statistics, which gives the researcher a straight-forward result in scientific research. The choice, whether to design the investigation through qualitative or quantitative methods or both, highly depends on the scale of the research. In practice, however, this is not a black or white question and a deep research should consist of both (Dörnyei, 2007).

For the qualitative research I used interviews with 2 Business English teachers. One of them has been teaching Business English for 10 years now. Her students prefer 1-to-1 lessons mainly because most of them would like to be trained for either a language exam or a job interview. Later she is referred as Trainer #1. The next trainer has been working at a training centre where corporate language is taught to employees in the steel industry. Later he is referred as Trainer #2. As an additional tool of qualitative information in some places I included my personal observations as well.

As regards the quantitative method, I designed a totally anonymous questionnaire in order to have numerical data for designing statistics. In the following section of this thesis I will work with the data collected from the questionnaire and the interview answers in a
combined way. I will evaluate how the data from the quantitative part is supported and confirmed by the qualitative part.

2.3. Research Results

2.3.1 Participants
As I mentioned previously the questionnaire I designed was anonymous and there were 125 native Hungarian speaker individuals who were willing to fill out on a voluntary basis. However, when they were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire they were informed that only those should participate in this survey who use English as a second language at their workplace.

The first part of the questionnaire contained general questions like age, gender, the nature of work and the respondents’ English level. The average age of all respondents was 38. The deviation is pretty big because the youngest responder was 19 and the oldest was 67 years old. Out of them 60% is an employee, 27% has own businesses and the rest stays in some other positions, mainly they are still students with a part-time job.

All responders’ level of English is strongly in the advanced scale. However, regarding the result we can only rely on each individual’s own account, because there are limits of knowledge measurement in such questionnaire conditions. But from the topic’s point of view it was necessary to know.

![Figure 3: Proportion of level of English knowledge of all respondent of the questionnaire](image)

2.3.2. Factors of Willingness to Communicate in L2
The second part of the questionnaire was designed to investigate the main factors that might influence the Willingness to Communicate.
The answers were given based on the following scale where the numbers are to indicate the following answers:

- 1 - strongly disagree
- 2 - moderately disagree
- 3 - mildly disagree
- 4 - neutral
- 5 - mildly agree
- 6 - moderately agree
- 7 - strongly agree

#1: Preparation is the key factor when I have to speak in English.

32% of the people asked declared that they need some kind of preparation for speaking in English, 13.6% stayed neutral and 54.4% said they do not prepare before speaking in English.

#2: My willingness to speak in English highly depends on the topic.

53.6% of the people asked declared that they do not care about the topic when have to speak in English, 15.2% stayed neutral and 31.2% said they prefer talking when the topic is interesting for them.

#3: I feel comfortable when talking with native speakers of English.

60% of the people asked said they like when they have the chance to talk to native speakers of English, 14.4% stayed neutral and 25.6% said they are not too comfortable with a conversation with native speakers.
#4: I feel comfortable only when I have to speak to people who have the same level of English.

57.6% of the people asked declared that the peer in conversation does not have to be at the same level, 12.8% stayed neutral and 29.6% said that they are more comfortable in communication when the peer has the same level of English.

#5: I am comfortable when I have to deliver a speech or do a presentation in English.

40.8% of the people asked said that they do not like delivering speeches or presentations in English, 8% stayed neutral and 48.8% declared that they are comfortable in such situations.

#6: I like using my English regardless of the topic or situation because I have the chance to practice speaking and to improve myself.

23.2% of the people asked said that they do not believe in “practice makes perfect” theory, 10.4% stayed neutral and 66.4% like using their English knowledge for self-improvement.

#7: I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes while speaking in English.

44% of the people asked do not think it is embarrassing to make mistake while speaking in English, 13.6% did not want to decide on this and 42.4% declared that they feel ashamed while communicating in English.

#8: I use English in front of others only if it is inevitable.

71.2% of the people asked said that they use their English knowledge not only in situation of inevitability, 11.2% stayed neutral and 16.6% would speak English only if there are no other solutions.
#9: I want to improve my English in order to become more confident when speaking.

68.8% of the people asked said that they are open for self-improvement in English, 12.8% of the stayed neutral and 18.4% do not think there is need for self-improvement.

#10: All in all, I am satisfied with my English speaking skills. I feel free to communicate regardless of the topic or situation.

24.8% of the people asked are not satisfied with their current knowledge, 10.4% could not make up their minds and 64.8% is satisfied with their English knowledge.

As a summary of the Willingness to Communicate in L2 factors we can say the following. The highest positive answer (71.2%) proved that Hungarian adults are willing to use their English knowledge in a lot of situations. The referring question was designed to investigate whether people speak English only in the last resort or not. More than half of the responders (53.6%) said that they are willing to engage themselves in various topics and not only on those that are their favourites. When I investigated all answers given one by one, I found a positive correlation between learners’ willingness to speak freely about any topic and their level of English. Almost all respondents having an advanced level of English, do not care about the topic. There is a positive correlation between respondents’ age and their Willingness to Communicate, regardless of the topic. However, in this case the curve is be so steep; there is still a correlation, but it is not as strong as with the level of English. However, WTC in English only when it is inevitable correlates more strongly to age than to level of English. I consider this to be a social issue, which was confirmed by Trainer #1 as well. She says that the younger the trainee is the less he or she is willing to communicate regardless of the topic.

It has been stated by MacIntyre et al. (1998) that background knowledge of the topic being discussed is determining in the level of WTC. Regarding my study, it can also be confirmed, however in this case the borders of age and topic are more blurred in relation with topic. On the other hand, level of L2 is priority among Hungarian adults when we discuss their Willingness to Communicate.
A native speaker as a peer in the communication can be motivating because 60% of the people like to talk to native speakers of English which they find to be a good occasion to improve themselves (66.4%) and improve their self confidence (68.8%). Self-improvement and self-confidence are very motivating to people. Here, we have the justification of the hierarchical layers that influence WTC. Here we can refer back to MacIntyre et al. (1998) again and say that interpersonal motivations are very specific to the individual and that these motivational factors show interrelation between the individual’s relationship and native speakers of L2 as well as L2 itself.

2.3.3. Participants’ Intentions

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to find what the respondents think about Business English training programmes and what are their intentions to participate in one. What type of BE training would they prefer and what kind of expectations are there when they decide to commence BE training. 75% of all respondents said that they definitely would or they maybe would participate in a Business English training. The most favoured form would be the private lesson. The proportion of preferences was the following:

I tried to find the reason behind why a 1-to-1 private lesson might be so demanded with the help of those 2 BE teachers/trainers who I interviewed. Private lessons are the most effective way of learning, says Trainer #2. The attention of the teacher is not divided and the student has the opportunity to lead the lessons according to his or her own needs. On the other hand, there are teachers who prefer small group trainings to 1-to-1 lessons, says Trainer #1 who belongs to this party. She claims that according to her experience, students can learn a lot from other students’ mistakes and inaccuracies. Such way of learning can be just as effective as a private lesson.
On the other hand, one should be aware of the fact that a BE training focuses on improving personal skills just as much as means of the language (vocabulary, grammar, fluency etc.). In small groups participants have the opportunity to learn and pick up very good and useful ideas. Such small group training can take place in a language school as well as in an in-company training. In a language school students arrive from different destinations thus bring in different experiences, while in an in-company training participants have the same root, so they know corporate depths. Trainer #1 claimed that both can be fostering for the participants from the point of view of idea sharing as well as from the point of view of Willingness to Communicate. However, according to her 10 years of experience, Hungarian students’ WTC is not so flourishing. Business English learners still have a great tendency of sticking to coursebook solutions. She thinks that all foreign language learners should learn first how to learn a foreign language. She emphasizes that more creative (real-life impulses) learning habits should be picked up following only coursebooks is not enough. Once this kind of creativity is reached WTC would reach a much higher level. She thinks that forcibleness and pressure has a great deal of influence on students’ WTC. On the other hand, she agrees that as individuals’ level of English is higher and higher the more instinctive the willingness becomes. Trainer #2 deeply agrees that creativity is an essential factor in successful language learning. However, he also thinks that a teacher have a primary role in building and supporting students’ self-confidence which is the number one element of WTC. A student must feel that he or she can work together with the teacher and than it is the teacher’s obligation to build up confidence. It is especially valid when there is a lack of motivation on the student side. If a teacher is able to encourage the student can reach good results. Communication willingness has a lot in relation with the above explained thoughts. The other determining factor is the topic. According to his experience he can reach high communication participation when the topic is preferred by the students or trainees. And he refers back to creative ways of learning. He believes that learners should read books, articles, watch videos, listen to podcasts in L2. Sooner or later the student will be able to form an opinion regarding a preferred topic. This is what sets the path of increasing Willingness to Communicate which later will expand to various topics as well. But the process needs continuity, because once it is broken for shorter or longer time periods, than such process needs to be started from the beginning.
I consider both opinions very useful. After considering both sides, I think I agree with the respondents. The highest achievement can be reached when you have the focus as an individual. The time management, problem solving, speed of the class, nature of exercises, skill developments and so on, are all tailored to individual needs.

The following section will introduce the results of each question related to BE training expectations by the respondents. The scale is the same as before:

- 1. strongly disagree
- 2. moderately disagree
- 3. mildly disagree
- 4. neutral
- 5. mildly agree
- 6. moderately agree
- 7. strongly agree

#1: It will help me better perform at work.

24.8% of the people do not think that a BE training would result in better work performance, 16.8% stayed neutral and 58.4% thinks it would be helpful in work performance.

#2: I would like to communicate more with my international colleagues or partners.

26.4% of the people do not think it would improve communication with international peers, 17.6% stayed neutral and 56% think it is a good opportunity to improve one’s communication skills with international partners.

#3: I would like to become more confident when talking to my boss.

32.8% of the people think that a BE training would not help in confidence when talking to a boss, 17.6% stayed neutral
and 49.6% thinks that it would improve confidence when he or she would talk to a boss.

#4: I would like to become more confident when delivering a speech or do a presentation.

20.8% of the people asked do not think that BE training would help in presentation skills, 12.8% stayed neutral and 66.4% thinks that his or her presentation skills would be improved by such training.

#5: It would help me to become more successful in business.

19.2% of the people do not agree with the statement that it would help the success in business, 16.8% stayed neutral and 64% perceive a correlation between success and BE trainings.

#6: It would help me to get a better paying job.

26.4% of the people do not think BE training is of the keys to better paying jobs, 17.6% stayed neutral and 56% believes that investments in BE training will pay off.

#7: It would make me a more knowledgeable person.

15.2% of the people do not expect to be more knowledgeable after finishing a BE training, 12% stayed neutral and 72.8% hope to become more knowledgeable.

#8: It would help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook.

16.8% of the people do not agree that new ideas might be borne by BE training, 16% stayed neutral and 67.2% of the people agree that BE training might bring new ideas and might broaden the outlook of the individual.
#9: It would help me to become more effective when travelling for business.

20.8% of the people does not become more effective after BE training, 14.4% stayed neutral and 64.8% hope to end up with more effective business travel.

#10: It would help me to learn about myself.

33.6% people do not believe that BE training could be an instrument of the self-assessment process, 18.4% stayed neutral and 48% believes that BE training helps the individual to discover individual values.

#11: It would help me to get rewards or recognition.

30.4% of the people does not find it a relevant statement regarding rewards, 22.4% stayed neutral and 47.2% think BE training can help them get recognized at the workplace.

#12: It would help me to get into better position.

29.6% of the people do not think BE training helps acquiring a better position at the workplace, 12% stayed neutral and 58.4 % of the people agrees that a BE training is one of the ways to better work positions.

2.4. Mindsets of Business English Learners

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to find out what the expectations are about a BE training. Based on the responses the following observations were made:

1. The most important consideration for the majority of the respondents was to become a more knowledgeable person, meaning being well educated and well informed in the field of ESP.
2. The second most important factor is acquiring new ideas and broadening one’s outlook, which I think strongly correlates to the first factor.

3. Self-confidence in presentation skills is also important here, so there might be a double justification of how important a factor self-confidence is in WTC.

4. More effective business travels mean mainly improving meeting skills.

5. Become more successful in business can also be related to meeting skills as well as communication skills.

6. Better performance at work and better positions reached the same rank.

7. Better communication with colleagues and better paying jobs again are at the same level. Communication skills here might refer for example to small talks which might be a key factor in team building.

8. Becoming more confident when talking to a boss, to learn more about the self and getting reward and recognition are the file-closers.

The first 3 factors justify my own observations regarding the language learning. Adults have a complex life. They have very limited time to engage themselves in traditional learning. But BE learners have already realized that language learning is a never-ending process, so a Business English training could help to improve skills primarily which is essential for building self-confidence. Widening vocabulary has only secondary importance.

Here we can have a justification from Carol. S Dweck’s study (2008). Her thesis, which is becoming ever more widely acknowledged, is that students have a mindset regarding achievement in their studies. Learners fall into two groups. About 40% of the students believe that ability is fixed for individuals and they cannot exercise control over their achievements. The other group, also about 40% of students, believes that abilities can be improved by the appropriate instruments, and that these can be applied to each individual. The rest, some 20% of students, do not want to commit themselves to either side (Dweck, 2008).

In the questionnaire I designed the last question was oriented to the respondents mindsets regarding language learning (#13 I think the ability to learn languages is a talent, some people are good at it and some are not). The result almost turned out to be the same as in Dweck’s study. However, 48.8 % of Hungarian adult learners’ have a fixed mindset regarding language learning abilities. They agree with the statement that the ability is fixed, there is no chance to change it. 19.2% stayed neutral and 32% of all respondents
have a growth mindset. They believe that language learning abilities can be improved, therefore, each individual can be successful in the language learning process. Dweck in her study states that a significant number of research demonstrates that the “fundamental aspect of intelligence and even intelligence itself can be altered through training.” (Dweck, 2008, p.1). I strongly agree with the statement, because I do believe in life-long learning since I pledged myself to it. So that is why I would be the most eager to find out why people stayed neutral at answering this question of the questionnaire since their number one priority turned out to become a more knowledgeable person through participating in a BE training. This is another significant point of this thesis paper that could be a good start for additional research and investigation.

2.5. Theoretical and Practical Consequences

In earlier section of this paper, I summarized 3 studies from Kang (2005), from MacDonald et al. (2003) and from Nagy & Nikolov (2007). All three studies scoped university students. My thesis paper scoped only working people. I have found two major conformities between university students’ WTC and working people’s WTC:

1. Both groups prefer to talk to native speakers of L2. When they are aware that the communication partner has good command of L1, their Willingness to Communicate drops.

2. Self-confidence is very important factor when communicating in L2. If it is harmed in any ways than there is a chance of lower Willingness to Communicate or even the avoidance of communication in L2.

Interestingly, these two factors can be found in Layer III of the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing Willingness to Communicate introduced by MacIntyre et al. in 1998. So we have to state that the Willingness to Communicate factors do not vary much among the groups examined here.

However, one major difference among the factors that influence WTC is the topic. While university students prefer having the background knowledge of a topic, adults are open to gain new knowledge from the interlocutor in L2. They do not find it uncomfortable as long as the interlocutor is a native speaker and the self-confidence is present. I also found that adults find language practice through speaking very important because they wish to improve themselves continuously in L2. I believe that this need originates from the fact
that when entering the labour market individuals tend to finish the traditional way of language learning. However, they still have the desire to stay relevant and they find speaking activities in L2 an elemental tool to acquire such associations with L2 native speakers. In my opinion, this is the reason why they are open to conduct Business English trainings. What I have found about their intentions is that they want to refresh their existing knowledge and want to improve skills in order to remain competitive in the labour market. They also find trainings useful for self-confidence which is a key to success in business life.

2.6. Limitations of the Study

Although I tried to provide a valuable insight of the factors affecting Willingness to Communicate, I consider it very important to mention that this study has several limitations. First of all, the reader should keep in mind that the results I introduced are only valid for a short period of time due to the fact that the situation is never stagnating. Generalizations should be made only to a certain extent. Secondly, respondents of the questionnaire were allowed to stay neutral. If I had time to repeat this part of the study, I would definitely avoid the neutral option. In the part that was designed to measure the factors of WTC, an average of 12.7% stayed neutral. In the second part that was designed to measure the Business English training participation, an average of 16% stayed neutral. If these participants would have been more particular, we would have a better insight now. Finally, we also have to remember that 125 participants represent only a very small sample from a significantly larger population.
Conclusion

Before I started to write this thesis paper I was very sceptical regarding Hungarian native adult speakers’ Willingness to Communicate in a second language, namely in English. What regards my previous experience, people have not been too willing to speak in most of the situations. But by the time I had finished my thesis work, I changed my mind. Hungarian adult learners of English can be called life-long learners of the language. They are aware of the fact that in order to succeed in effective second language communication they have to engage themselves in speaking activities with native speakers of English. They also consider self-confidence very important in this process, so they are open to train themselves.

Within the first part of this thesis paper, it became straightforward that Willingness to Communicate is very complex with several factors influencing it. The most salient indicator is obviously speaking. Communicative language teaching became very popular in the last couple of decades, and language learners’ ability of using second language became an important factor for both learner and teachers.

In the second part of the paper I conducted a research to find out about Hungarian adult learners Willingness to Communicate. Here an important identification was made. Hungarian adult learners have a much higher level of Willingness to Communicate than it was supposed by me. I found that they consider it very helpful to talk to native speakers and that they are eager to improve themselves to become more and more self-confident.

Deriving from above finding, I would like to draw language teachers and trainers attention to the following. As a future trainer, I suggest to all language teachers and trainers to strive and foster a positive association to speaking. I recommend also to be very careful and constructive when giving feedback about mistakes. Students, on the other hand, should refrain from viewing it in a negative way, they rather should acknowledge them as a possibility of learning and use them a tool of improvement.

As Willingness to Communicate is a broad field of science with several factors influencing, it and can be investigated from several point of views, as a final thought of my thesis work I would like to make some remarks for any possible future research. I already stated the limitations of this study, they should be considered and possibly evaded.
On the other hand, there are some points of this study that could have been further investigated. From theoretic point of view such directions could be the motivation or teacher and student relationship. From a much practical approach, I think the investigation of mindsets in language learning could be another very interesting thesis.

As a closing thought, I do believe that the fundamentals of Willingness to Communicate should be laid down and developed in elementary school and should be supported and fostered throughout high school and university years.
Bibliography


Didenko, Anastasia V., Pichugova, Inna L. (2016). Post CLT or Post-Method: major criticisms of the communicative approach and the definition of the current pedagogy. 1 Tomsk Polytechnic University, 634050 Lenin Avenue, 30, Tomsk, Russia. SHS Web on Conferences 28 (Downloaded: May 09, 2018)


Internet sites used:

https://www.skillsyounneed.com/learn/research-methods.html
APPENDIX 1 – Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous and the data collected will be used only for purposes of writing a research paper about willingness to communicate in English as a second language.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

AGE: GENDER: M F YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE:

I AM AN EMPLOYEE I HAVE MY OWN BUSINESS MY POSITION:

1. What is your level of English?

   beginner lower intermediate intermediate advanced

2. Do you use (only speaking) English at your work? YES NO

   (if your answer is yes, how often:………………………………………………..)

3. Grade the following statements about your willingness to speak in English at work.

   1-strongly disagree
   2-moderately disagree
   3-mildly disagree
   4-neutral
   5-mildly agree
   6-moderately agree
   7-strongly agree

   Preparation is a key factor when I have to speak in English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   My willingness to speak in English highly depends on the topic.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   I feel comfortable when talking with native speakers of English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   I feel comfortable only when I have to speak to people who have the same level of English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   I am comfortable when I have to deliver a speech or do a presentation in English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   I like using my English regardless of the topic or situation because I have the chance to practice speaking and to improve myself.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes while speaking in English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I use English in front of others only if it is inevitable.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I want to improve my English in order to become more confident when speaking.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
All in all, I am satisfied with my English speaking skills. I feel free to communicate regardless of the topic or situation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. If there would be a Business English training available near me, I definitely would participate.

YES  MAYBE  NO

5. Which form of a training would you prefer?

LANGUAGE SCHOOL  IN-COMPANY TRAINING  1-TO-1 LESSONS

6. Grade the following factors why you would participate in a Business English Training.

1-strongly disagree
2-moderately disagree
3-mildly disagree
4-neutral
5-mildly agree
6-moderately agree
7-strongly agree

It will help me better perform at work.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I would like to communicate more with my international colleagues or partners.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I would like to become more confident when talking to my boss.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I would like to become more confident when delivering a speech or do a presentation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would help me to become more successful in business.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would help me to get a better paying job.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would make me a more knowledgeable person.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would help me to become more effective when travelling for business.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It would help me to learn about myself.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It would help me to get rewards or recognition.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It would help me to get into better positions.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I think the ability to learn languages is a talent, some people are good at it and some are not.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thank you for your time and help 😊
If there is something you would like to add, please feel free to do so.
APPENDIX 2 – Interview Questions

1. Since when have you been teaching Business English?
2. Where do you teach Business English?
3. Students are adults or young adults?
4. Do you think that people are aware of the aim of a Business English Training? What are the expectations usually they arrive with to the training?
5. What is the level of WTC of Hungarian native speaker students? What is your experience in training and out of training?
6. In questionnaire designed by me, 46.4% of all respondents would choose 1-to-1 training. What do you think the reason is for such result? (there were 125 respondents, 60% is an employee, 27% has own businesses)
7. According to your experience, what factors influence WTC the most?