An Inquiry into Turkish Academicians' Willingness to Communicate in English*

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Abstract

Willingness to communicate (WTC hereafter) concept has caught the interest of many studies in the field of second language acquisition. Although some studies examined the relationship between WTC and foreign language proficiency, none of them was conducted with the participation of academicians. Therefore, this study aims to examine the WTC levels of the academicians working at Faculties of Education in Turkey, and the relationship between their willingness to communicate and proficiency as determined by YDS (Foreign Languages Examination). Another aim of this study is to obtain the views of the academicians towards their willingness to communicate in English and explore the factors affecting it. A total number of 450 (53.1% female and 46.9% male) academicians working at the faculties of education different parts of Turkey participated in the questionnaire which was administered online and from these participants, eight (three female and five male) of them participated in the interviews. In the light of the study, personal and situational factors affecting the academicians' willingness to communicate are presented.

Keywords: a*cademician, faculties of education, willingness to communicate*

1. Introduction

To date, English remains to be an unmatchable language in terms of growth; about a quarter of the world's population (1.5 billion) is fluent or competent in English and one of the main reasons as to why English is growing is that it is currently the most widely taught foreign language in schools (Crystal, 2012). In their study which describes the history of teaching English as a foreign language, Howatt and Smith (2014) claim that, from 1970, the basic common purpose of teaching English began to shift away from the acquisition of skills to the use of these skills in the real world during what they call The Communicative Period (1970-2000+). Language teachers, researchers and administrators are not the only actors included in these shifts in language teaching; learners are perhaps those who are affected in greater measures. It can be stated that every learner is a representative of the effectiveness of the techniques, methods, approaches of their time.

It has been long observed that when presented with the opportunity, some people choose to speak up and some remain silent (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, Noels, 1998; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; 1990). To examine this condition among language learners, there emerged an interest in Willingness to Communicate which was conceptualized by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) as an instrument to measure a person's personality-based, trait-like predisposition to engage in communication in different type of contexts such as public speaking, talking in meetings, and interpersonal conversations with regard to different type of receivers such as friends, strangers and acquaintances. The introduction of WTC in L2 was included in a paper published by MacIntyre et al. (1998), and they claim that a suitable goal of L2 learning is to increase WTC and proposed many situation-specific and enduring variables affecting it. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) also draw the conclusion in their study that there is a need for a comparable knowledge with regard to other cultures than American, calling for an intercultural research on WTC. They further claim that language learning could bring the cultures closer and nations with the help of bringing willingness to communicate forward.

The variability of the human behavior is a vital factor to be taken into consideration in the study field of second or foreign languages. From this point of view, it can be stated that in addition to general theories and universalistic aspect of L2 acquisition, the study of individual differences carries importance as well. Not all speakers of a foreign language engage in communication at the same level; there are many variables affecting their use of L1 and L2. When it comes to speaking a foreign or second language, individual differences, which in definition "are characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other" play an important part (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 1). Dörnyei lists some variables such as anxiety, creativity, and finally, willingness to communicate. Brown (2007) also argues that "how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of second language acquisition" and includes WTC under these affective factors in second language acquisition (p. 154).

Defined as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using an L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547), the basis of Willingness to Communicate was the communication construct which was initially referred as 'unwillingness to communicate' by Burgoon (1976), who defined the construct as "chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication" (p. 60). McCroskey and Richmond (1987) define WTC as "a personality-based predisposition toward the initiation of communication" (p. 73).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) aimed to adapt WTC in English as L2 and they argued that there were situational variables and enduring influences affecting a person's WTC in English. Many studies examined variables affecting WTC while taking this model into consideration (Çetinkaya, 2005; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002; Yu, 2009). MacIntyre et al. (1998) state that, in a broad sense, "a correlation between WTC and communicative behaviour" can be expected (p. 548). Moreover, foreign language proficiency was included in many studies that examined WTC (Alemi, et al., 2011; Altıner, 2018; Biria & Jouybar, 2016; Rostami, et al., 2016).

In Turkish academy context, an academician is required to have foreign language knowledge, and the reason for this requirement emerges from the importance of foreign languages, especially English, in academic life. The Council of Higher Education (CoHE or YÖK) also designates a prerequisite of foreign language, which is a certain minimum score of Foreign Languages Examination (YDS) for academicians (Council of Higher Education [CoHE], 2019). This exam is taken by more than over 350,000 people every year in the country. As of 2018, for the most academic titles, the minimum YDS score is 55, and for the

language instructors and other titles in departments related to foreign language this score may even be as high as 80. Though it is an official exam accepted by governmental institutions, it is noteworthy to state that the exam comprises of vocabulary and grammar items tested by cloze tests, paragraphs, and translation questions. Studies which examine the validity of the test emphasize that the exam does not assess the test-takers' proficiency in a communicative manner; for example, Toksöz and Kılıçkaya (2017) reviewed the studies conducted on YDS, ÜDS (Üniversitelerarası Kurul Yabancı Dil Sınavı) and KPDS (Kamu Personeli Yabancı Dil Sınavı); which are former variations of YDS, and they found out that these high-stake foreign language proficiency exams mainly concentrated on reading and ignored writing, listening and speaking.

As determined by Karakütük, Tunç, Özdem and Bülbül (2008), most (75.6%; 1,534 individuals) of the academic members in faculties of education have high proficiency in English; however, a considerable amount of academicians have difficulties with foreign languages. In another study conducted at Nevşehir University, Yavuzer and Göver (2012) reported that majority (62%) of the academicians scored higher than 65 (minimum score required at the tame=-) points on YDS and some of them (38%) scored lower. In the same study, one of the views of the academicians was that "most people who score high from proficiency exams cannot read, write, comprehend or speak the language." (p. 151). Moreover, Kılıçkaya (2010) also puts forward that even some academicians who publish articles in English cannot score higher than 65 on foreign language tests in Turkey.

Many studies can be found in the literature on WTC; yet, its relation to foreign language proficiency was examined in limited number of studies (Alemi, Daftarifard & Pashmforoosh, 2011; Altıner, 2018; Biria & Jouybar, 2016; Rostami, Kashanian, & Gholami 2016). Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the related literature and examine the willingness to communicate levels of the academicians working at the faculties of education in Turkey and the relationship between their willingness to communicate and foreign language proficiency as determined by YDS exam (Foreign Languages Examination) and obtain the views of the academicians towards their WTC in English and explore factors affecting it. In line with these aims, the research questions which were addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between the willingness to communicate in English levels and foreign language proficiency (YDS scores) of the academicians working at Faculties of Education in Turkey?

2. What are the academicians' views towards their willingness to communicate in English and the factors affecting their willingness?

2. Methodology

2.1. Design

In order to find out if there was a relationship between the WTC levels of the academicians and their YDS scores and gather the views of the academicians towards their WTC and what affects their willingness, the present study benefited from sequential explanatory design as a mixed research method which involves using more than one method of gathering data. Creswell (2014) describes explanatory sequential design as "two-phase project in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase" (p. 274). In this study, the quantitative results were collected first, and then a qualitative research plan was made in order to build up on the findings. Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) argues for the use of sequential explanatory design as a mixed research method, by stating

that the qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth. Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) also suggest the use of different methods of data collection to acquire more integrated assessment and validity of the results in educational research. For the quantitative data collection, this study also made use of the principles of correlational research design which aims to "investigate the possibility of relationships between two variables" (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011, p. 328). The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms and the participants were invited via e-mail.

2.2. Participants

As defined by Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, and Demirel (2014), population is a large group constituted from living or non-living entities which help obtain the needed data in order to answer the questions of a research. The population of the study was 8,710 academic members at 94 faculties of education in Turkey in the year 2018. The sampling frame was generated by creating an e-mail distribution list of the academicians in faculties of education in Turkey. Moreover, the minimum number of sampling needed for N=8,710 was calculated to be s=368 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

The participants of this study were 450 (reduced from 492 after the removal of staff working at English language teaching departments) academicians working at faculties of education in Turkey.

Table 1. *Regional Distribution of the Questionnaire Participants and the Population*

	Aegean	Black Sea	Central Anatolian	Eastern Anatolian	Marmara	Mediterranean	South eastern Anatolian
Participant numbers	49	75	114	57	76	39	41
Population	1019	1524	1987	1141	1670	808	545

As seen in Table 1, the distribution of the questionnaire participants showed similarity to the regional distribution of the population.

Table 2. *Characteristics of the Questionnaire Participants*

Gender	Male		Female		
Frequency	211 (46.9%)		239 (53.1%)		
Academic Title	Research Assistant	Instructor	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor
Frequency	220 (48.9%)	23 (5.1%)	126 (28.0%)	41 (9.1%)	40 (8.9%)
Age	≤ 25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-51	51 ≥
Frequency	22 (4.9%)	102 (22.7%)	128 (28.4%)	66 (14.7%)	51(11.3%)	35 (7.8%)	46 (10.2%)
Being Abroad	Never	Less than a Month	1-6 Months	6 Months - 1 Year	More than a Year
Frequency	123 (27.3%)	139 (30.9%)	75 (16.7%)	40 (8.9%)	73 (16.2%)
Preparatory Classes	Only at High School	Only at University	Both	None	
Frequency	173 (38.4%)	41 (9.1%)	41 (9.1%)	150 (33.3%)	
Presentation in English	1-5 times	5-15 times	15+	Never	

Frequency	175 (38.9%)	76 (16.9%)	33 (7.3%)	167 (37.1%)

As seen in the first row of Table 2, 53.1% of the participants are female whereas 46.9% of the participants are male. 48.9% of the participants are Research Assistants, 28.0% are Assistant Professors, 9.1% are Associate Professors, 8.9% are Professors, and 5.1% are Instructors. It is also noteworthy to state that 38 of the Research Assistants and 5 of the Instructors hold a Ph. D. 4.9% of the participants are 25 year old or younger, 22.7% of them participants are between the ages 26-30, 128 (28.4%) of the participants are between the ages 31-35, 14.7% of the participants are between the ages 36-40, 11.3% are aged 41-45, 7.8% are between the ages 46-51, and 10.2% are 51 or older. Most of the participants (30.8%) were abroad less than a month; while a similar number of participants were never abroad (27.3%). Moreover, while 16.6% of the participants were abroad for more than 1 month and less than 6 months, 8.8% were abroad for more than 6 months but less than a year, and finally, 16.2% were abroad more than a year. Moreover, 38.4% of the participants received English preparatory classes only during high school education, while 19.1% received at only university and 9.11% received both and 33.3% did not receive any. Finally 38.8% of the participants made at least one or fewer than 5 English oral presentation at a conference,16.8% made more than 5 but fewer than 15, 7.3% made more than 15, and 37.1% never made a presentation in English at a conference.

Table 3. *Characteristics of the Interview Participants*

Participant	Gender	Age	YDS Score	Experience Abroad
A	F	33	67	Twice for academic purposes
B	M	39	94	Studied post-graduate program abroad
C	M	51	70	Has been abroad for academic purposes
D	F	29	76.25	Has never been abroad
E	F	30	80	Once for traveling and once for academic purpose
F	M	31	92.50	Once for academic purpose
G	M	38	80	Has been abroad but did not communicate in English
H	M	30	71.25	Has never been abroad

In addition to Table 3, Participant A is a 33-year-old female working in the field of computer and technological instruction at a state university in Aegean region. She has never had English preparatory classes during high school or university. She has been abroad twice in order to present a paper in English at conferences. She mainly feels positive towards English since it is a part of her job. Participant B is a 39-year-old male working in the field of pre-school teaching at a state university in Southeastern Anatolian region. He studied abroad for some years and he has had English preparatory class for one year during middle school. He does not feel fully competent towards foreign languages in general; yet, he uses English frequently; mainly writing academic articles. Participant C is a 51-year-old male working in the field of educational sciences at a state university in Eastern Anatolian region. Although he likes English, he does not believe he is competent in speaking due to lack of practice. He has been to many conferences abroad in order to present papers and he wishes to have a permanent governmental duty abroad in the future. Participant D is a 29-year-old female working in the field of mathematics teaching at a state university in Central Anatolian region. She has received an upper-intermediate certificate from a private language school.

Reportedly, she has an overall high perceived English proficiency; yet, she has a fundamental problem about communicating in English. Although she had preparatory classes during both high school and university and private courses in English, she never felt ready to speak in English. Participant E is a 30-year-old female working in the field of science teaching at a state university Eastern Anatolian region. She feels positive towards learning English language and she talks to tourists when she has a chance; additionally, she has been abroad twice; once for travel and once for academic purpose. Participant F is a 31-year-old male working in the field of guidance and psychological counseling at a state university in Marmara region. His attitude towards English is extraordinarily positive; he wanted to study English language during high school, and he had many interactions with foreign students during his undergraduate years; moreover, the medium of instruction of his undergraduate program was English. Participant G is a 38-year-old male who works in the field of music teaching at a state university in Black Sea region. His attitude towards English is extremely positive and he improved his foreign language proficiency by himself, he actively speaks English as a common language with his foreign wife, and he casually reads news and hobby-related materials on a daily basis in English. Although he has been abroad, he did not communicate in English during his stays. Participant H is a 30-year-old male who works in the field of special education at a state university in Eastern Anatolian region. He had preparatory English classes during high school and undergraduate education. While he has never been abroad, he believes he is competent in English since he communicates with tourists.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

In this study, the willingness to communicate levels of academicians were tested by Çetinkaya's (2005) Turkish translated version of the original WTC scale (McCroskey, 1992). In Çetinkaya's version, 12 items in the scale are taken from McCroskey's (1992, p. 135-136) and the validity and reliability of the original scale were determined in a study conducted by McCroskey (1992). The validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the scale prepared by Çetinkaya (2005) were also established through a pilot study which was administered to 28 freshman students at Çanakkale University.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. The interviews aimed to further investigate the WTC construct and the participants' views on additional factors affecting their WTC.

2.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire were processed and analyzed on IBM SPSS 24.0 Statistics Data Editor software. Through analyzing descriptive statistics; the means, and standard deviations, the quantitative findings of the data were presented in tables. The characteristics of the participants were analyzed on SPSS software and presented in tables in the findings chapter. Moreover, the relationship between WTC and YDS was investigated through Pearson correlation was administered after normality tests, and the results were presented in tables. For the qualitative aspect of the study, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and imported to MAXQDA Analytics Pro 12 Software and the transcripts of the interviews were coded within the software. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) describe codes as "labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information" (p. 73). Miles et al. (2014) states that there are two cycles to coding; the first cycle can constitute a word, a sentence or a paragraph or even a page, and the second cycle can constitute the coded portions which can be the same units or a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far. In this study, the responses of the participants were coded into segments which represented the main ideas during the first cycle of the coding

process, and during the second cycle, these codes were re-categorized into more generalized codes.

3. Findings

Table 4. *WTC Levels of the Participants by Receiver and Context Types*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D.
Receiver Types					
Friends	450	0	100	65.06	27.79
Acquaintances	450	0	100	64.82	27.63
Strangers	450	0	100	62.43	28.03
Context Types					
Interpersonal Conversation	450	0	100	65.62	27.99
Group Discussion	450	0	100	65.48	27.02
Public Speaking	450	0	100	63.94	27.41
Meeting	450	0	100	61.37	27.99
Total WTC	450	0	100	64.10	26.58

As seen in Table 4, for context types, Interpersonal Conversation (M=65.62) was determined to be the most preferred, Group Discussion (M=65.48) was above overall average. While Public Speaking (M=63.94) was below average, Meeting (M=61.37) was the least preferred context type. Of receiver types, Friends (M=65.06) was the most preferred, Acquaintances (M=64.82) was the second, and Strangers (M=62.43) was the least preferred.

Table 5. *Correlation between YDS scores and WTC levels*

Spearman's rho	
	Correlation Coefficient
	YDS Score
YDS Score	1.000
Friends	.34**
Acquaintances	.34**
Strangers	.37**
Interpersonal Conversations	.33**
Group Discussions	.35**
Public Speaking	.38**
Meetings	.36**
Total WTC	.37**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 5, there is a correlation between YDS scores and Total WTC of the academicians at the .37 level. Similar correlations were observed between receiver types and YDS, between friends and YDS at .34 level, between acquaintances and YDS at .34 level, and between strangers and YDS at .37 level. Moreover, similar correlations were also observed between the context types, more specifically, interpersonal conversations and YDS (r=.33),

group discussions and YDS (r=.35), meetings and YDS (r=.36), and public speaking and YDS (r=.38).

Table 6. *WTC Levels of the Interview Participants*

Levels of WTC Types (H= High, L= Low)	Participants (Age, YDS Score)							
	A (33, 67)	B (39, 94)	C (51, 70)	D (29, 76.2)	E (30, 80)	F (31, 92.5)	G (39, 80)	H (31, 71)
Total	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Friends	H	H	H	L	H	H	H	H
Strangers	L	L	H	H	H	L	H	H
Interpersonal conversations among friends	L	L	L	H	H	L	H	H
Interpersonal conversations among strangers	L	L	L	H	H	L	H	H
Group discussions among friends	H	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Group discussions among strangers	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	H
Public speaking among friends	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	L
Public speaking among strangers	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	L
Meetings among friends	L	H	H	L	L	L	H	H
Meetings among strangers	L	H	H	L	L	L	H	H

The codes regarding the WTC levels of the academicians were used to create a table of their WTC. Half the participants (n=4) stated that they had high WTC in English in general. These participants stated that they were willing to communicate in English, they did not hesitate to communicate, they were eager to speak, and they saw a situation where they communicate in English as an opportunity since it did not occur often and they mostly did not face any difficulty when they engaged in communication in English with a foreign person. Some of the responses of the participants were as follows *(all following excerpts from the interviews were translated into English by the researcher)*:

> "In general, I do not hesitate, I would be willing if I was to communicate in English. It is not a chance I get often." (Participant E, Age:30, YDS:80)

Half the participants (*n*=4) stated that they had low WTC in English in general. The unwilling participants noted that they did not feel comfortable and they were stressed or tense when they were to communicate in English with a foreign person. It is also important to note that one of the participants stated that his willingness to communicate was low in both Turkish and English. Moreover, they stated that they preferred to speak in Turkish if they could:

> "I would be much stressed, I would not want to be in such a situation. I do it if only I have to; but I would not be willing." (Participant D, Age:29, YDS:76.25)

Almost all participants (*n*=7) stated that they had *high willingness among friends* and more than half the participants (n=5) stated that they had *high willingness among strangers*. They associated their high willingness among friends with having more to talk about and being in a more informal setting and communicating among strangers were associated with touristic situations. Examples of the responses were as follows:

> "Well, of course if they there is acquaintance it would be easier to communicate since we would have common framework of reference; this is the basic principle of communication. My preference would be to be among friends even if they are a foreigner." (Participant H, Age: 31, YDS:71,25)

> "Recently I made contact with two tourists… there was a misunderstanding about their tickets they said they did not understand, and I said I could help, I talked to them with ease about their tickets. I really liked it even though they were strangers." (Participant E, Age:30, YDS:80)

Half the participants (*n*=4) stated that they had *high willingness* and the other half stated that they had *low willingness in interpersonal conversations*. While some of the participants related the setting with being left to their own resources, the others stated that in interpersonal conversations since this setting of communication tended to be informal; therefore, easier.

> "In one-to-one conversation you may be left to your own resources; other than that, it is more comfortable in a group of people you know" (Participant F, Age:31, YDS:92.5)

> "It may be more comfortable to be in groups of 3-4 because you can complete each other." (Participant F, Age:31, YDS:92.50)

Some participants (n=3) stated that they had *low willingness in group discussions among friends* and some (n=4) stated that that they had *low willingness in group discussions among strangers*. One participant stated specifically that he had difficulty communicating in small groups:

> "When I was in a group study it (communicating) was a little harder." (Participant B, Age:39, YDS:94)

> "… if the communication was in small groups with questions and answers, there it would be different. I might struggle more." (Participant D, Age:29, YDS:76.25)

Almost all the participants (*n*=7) reported *low willingness in public speaking* regardless of the receiver types. They stated that among all context types, they preferred public speaking the least as the following statement illustrated:

> "I cannot do what key-note speakers do at conferences. They talk about a topic for one hour, I do not believe I can speak fully in English, I do not have the skills to it in such an environment." (Participant C, Age:51, YDS:70)

Only a few participants (*n*=3) stated that they had *high willingness in meetings* regardless of the receiver types. They associated meeting context type with classrooms or a setting involving eight to ten people in which they talked or gave a presentation. One participant specifically noted that he preferred speaking in meetings (large groups) more than the other contexts; as the following response demonstrated:

> "When I was in a class abroad I felt more comfortable, for meetings I imagine classes as a large group and I had no problem while speaking in a classroom… in large groups I imagine myself as though I am speaking by myself and I do not have to worry about others." (Participant B, Age: 39, YDS:94)

When asked about what affected their willingness, the interview participants listed many factors. While some of these factors were related to personal characteristics, others were related to situations.

Table 7. *The Factors Affecting Interview Participants' WTC in English*

Factors	Participants	Frequency	Percentage
Personal factors	(A,B,C,D,E,F,G)	7	87.5%
Foreign language anxiety *(Pronunciation anxiety, speaking accuracy or fluency, fear of making mistakes, and concern for being understood)*	(A,B,C,D,E)	5	62.5%
Foreign language proficiency	(F,G,E)	3	37.5%
Situational Factors		8	100%
Formality of the situation *(formal or informal setting and hierarchical position)*	(A,B,E,H,G,F)	6	75%

Characteristics of the Interlocutors *(Mother tongue, attitude, proficiency and nationality)*	(A,B,C,E,G)	5	62.5%
Assistance of a peer	(A,B,D)	3	37.5%
Content of the talk	(E,G)	2	25%
Being tested	(E)	1	12.5%

As seen in Table 7, there were two personal factors stated during the interviews. Foreign language anxiety included participants' responses related to the effect of their anxiety regarding their pronunciation, speaking accuracy and fluency, their fear of making mistakes, and concern for being understood on their WTC in English. Foreign language proficiency included the participants' responses regarding the effect of their English proficiency on their WTC in English.

More than half the interview participants (*f*=5) gave responses regarding the influence of *foreign language anxiety* on their willingness to communicate. The participants stated that how their communication skills (their oral fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation) were perceived by others in the setting hindered their willingness to communicate. In relation, they also stated that because they were academicians, they felt they *had more at stake* if they made a mistake; thus, leading to self-consciousness and anxiety about making a mistake while speaking English. The participants also stated that being understood was one of the most important factors which affected their willingness; if they could see that other people in the setting understood them, they became more willing and confident and in contrast, if they sensed that the other person showed signs of not comprehending the gist of their talk, they felt less willing as the following comments illustrated:

> "I cannot express myself since I am at a particular point in my academic career... if I make a mistake the people are going to think about how I cannot speak English after achieving so much, getting a Ph. D. and becoming an academician." (Participant D, Age:29, YDS:76.25)

Some participants (*f*=3) stated that language proficiency was a factor influencing their willingness to communicate. They stated that during the times that they had low foreign language proficiency their willingness to communicate was lower. They added that as their foreign language proficiency improved, they became more willing to communicate in English. They exemplified their responses by giving instances from their own lives and compared their current willingness with the times when they had lower proficiency. They concluded that with time, their willingness raised as their proficiency increased, as the comments showed:

> "I did not achieve this proficiency out of a sudden, of course there was a time when I had lower proficiency… Of course, I was not bold enough with foreigners when I had low proficiency, when there had been such a case." (Participant G, Age:39, YDS:80)

Majority of the participants (*f*=6) stated that formality of the situation affected their willingness. Three participants who opted for informal situations stated that in such situations they feel more comfortable since the talk is usually about daily topics. In contrast to the views of these participants, the other three participants favored formal situations and stated that formal or professional talks are generally about their field which they could easily talk about.

> "If it is professional and if the person is in my field it might be better since he/she can understand better what I am talking about. Even if there is a hindrance with pronunciation, the person can close the gap with the common knowledge." (Participant B, Age: 39, YDS:94)

> "I see myself sufficient in informal settings." (Participant F, Age:31, YDS:92.50)

More than half of the participants (*f*=5) stated that characteristics of the interlocutors in a setting affected their willingness to communicate. Their responses were mainly related to the attitude, nationality, and mother tongue of the interlocutors in the setting. To describe in detail, the participants commented that their willingness to communicate was high when the other people in the setting had a positive and comforting attitude. Moreover, nationality of the interlocutors, as well as the interlocutors' view towards the nationality of the academicians were also considered a *characteristic of the interlocutors* factor. Furthermore, they stated that in a setting which English was a foreign language for all the interlocutors, they were much more willing to communicate. In addition, one participant stated that she cared about the views of other people towards her nationality. Moreover, one participant also stated that the foreign language proficiency of the interlocutor also affected her WTC as the following comments illustrated:

"The other person should not be strict or harsh. If they show they understand, smile and give positive feedback, my self-confidence also rises." (Participant C, Age:51, YDS:70)

"If the other side smiles and shows understanding when I make a mistake and says 'No problem', this affects me positively." (Participant A, Age: 33, YDS:67)

A decent number of participants (*f*=3) gave responses regarding the effect of peer assistance on their willingness to communicate. As the following statements showed, in situations which their peers linguistically supported them, they were more willing:

"If I am to communicate, someone needs to help and comfort me. For example, during an exam, the instructor noticed that I was quite anxious and helped me and that made me more willing. In a group, if someone among the group communicates with me and gives me support it might be better; otherwise, I would be alone, and my willingness would be low." (Participant D, Age:29, YDS:76.25)

Some participants (*f*=2) gave responses about the influence of the content of the talk on their willingness to communicate. They stated that they were more willing when talking about daily topics or topics related to their field of science:

"If we will talk about a topic in detail, I would feel more negative whereas if I have to talk about science education to foreigners, I would feel much more comfortable and willing since I am more capable in this topic." (Participant E, Age:30, YDS:80)

A participant stated that in situations where she was tested or assessed, she felt less willing to communicate:

"If I know that it will not be assessed, I mean if there is no test while I am speaking, I would feel more comfortable. Similarly, if the people listening to me do not try to criticize me I would feel more willing and comfortable." (Participant E, Age:30, YDS:80)

4. Discussion

As stated in descriptive statistics, the quantitative findings of this study indicated that academicians working at the faculties of education in Turkey have willingness to communicate at moderate (M=64.10) level. Despite the difference in participants, there are many studies in the literature which share similar results to this finding. Many studies in the literature examined the WTC levels of university students and found out that they had moderate WTC in English (Altıner 2018; Bergil, 2016; Hişmanoğlu & Özüdoğru, 2017; Orhon, 2017, Öz, Demirezen & Pourfeiz, 2015; Şener, 2014). As the statistical analysis of the questionnaire indicates, among the receiver types, the academicians have the highest willingness among friends (M=65.06) and among the context types, the academicians have the highest willingness in interpersonal conversations (M=65.62), and group discussion (M=65.48) at almost the same level. These findings are in line with those of Bergil (2016) and Asmalı, Bilgi and Duban (2015) found out that the students preferred to communicate among friends and in small groups. In addition, when the questionnaire items are examined individually, the academicians seem to prefer most

having a small group conversation with acquaintances (M=67.28) and the lowest score among the items is talking in meetings among strangers (M=59.48).

The first research question of this study sought to determine if there was a relationship between WTC levels and YDS scores. The quantitative results of this study confirm the hypothesis that there is a relationship between WTC and YDS. However, Green, Salkind and Akey (2000) claim that "for behavioral sciences, correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50, irrespective of sign, are, by convention, interpreted as small, medium, and large coefficients, respectively" (p. 256). Therefore, the relationship between WTC and YDS found in this study can be considered moderate (r=.37). This finding shows similarity with the findings of Biria and Jouybar (2016) who examined the relationship between WTC and foreign language proficiency and provided similar results. In their study, they found out high positive correlation between Iranian students' WTC and Oxford Placement Test of proficiency. Moreover, this finding is also in partial agreement with the findings of Rostami et al. (2016) and Alemi et al. (2016) who both found out that advanced level university students (determined by TOEFL exam) were more willing to communicate in English than the lower-proficient students in Iranian context, and Altıner (2018) who also determined that advanced level preparatory school students at a state university in Turkey had significantly higher WTC in English than lower proficient students.

The results of the interviews indicated an even distribution of high and low willing participants. The high willing participants stated that they valued a situation where they could speak English since it did not occur often; whereas, the low willing participants stated that they usually hesitated to speak in English. Moreover, another finding of the study was that one participant had low willingness to communicate regardless of the language he was speaking. This finding indicated that a person's general tendency to avoid communication could determine their WTC in L2. Öz (2014) argues that WTC is highly correlated with personality types such as extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness; meaning that friendly, extraverted, or sociable individuals are more likely to be willing to communicate in L2. From this point of view, it can be argued that determining the personality type of academicians and their WTC in L1 can be beneficial.

When asked about the reason for their level of willingness, the participants gave responses regarding their concern for how others perceived their language skills, if they were understood correctly by others, and their fear of making mistakes. These responses were included in the factor foreign language anxiety in this study. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994, p.284) defined foreign language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language learning contexts". Dewaele (2012) argues that high level of foreign language anxiety can freeze learners and hinder production or comprehension of foreign language. Moreover, since they choose to communicate less often or not communicate at all, the lack of communication itself may also cause anxiety. Due to this vicious cycle of anxiety and lack of communication, the place of foreign language anxiety as a factor affecting WTC was included in many studies in the literature. MacIntyre at al. (1998) include MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) advocate for the effect of foreign language anxiety on WTC. They claim that there is a strong negative relationship between WTC and foreign language anxiety; meaning that when anxiety rises, WTC of an individual decreases. MacIntyre et al. (1998) also claim that lack of anxiety and self-confidence are among the most immediate determinants of WTC and these factors may show high correlation with each other. This finding was in alignment with the findings of Baran-Łucarz (2014) who found out negative relationship between WTC and pronunciation anxiety. Moreover, when the participant demographics and the factors are examined, it can be seen that among the participants who stated that foreign language anxiety affected their WTC, four had low WTC and one had high WTC. This finding indicated that foreign language anxiety was more likely to affect low willing participants and may also be the

reason for their low willingness. Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015) claim that individuals experience less anxiety in assessment-free contexts. They associate the level of anxiety of the students with the traditional language teaching methods used in Turkey in which the teacher is the source of information and authority in the classroom. Moreover, they also emphasize that in Turkey assessment is generally a pass or a fail which may be the cause of the anxiety reported in their study. Similar to their findings, being assessed was a factor stated by the participant of this study. This finding shows similarity to the findings of Riasati (2012) who found out that when students knew they were being graded they were less willing to communicate. Moreover, in their review, Zhang, Beckmann and Beckmann (2018) also include assessment as a situational factor which could affect WTC in L2. In addition to foreign language anxiety, the participants also stated that their foreign language proficiency was a factor affecting their WTC. This finding supports the quantitative findings of this study. Many studies in the literature claim that there is a relationship between foreign language anxiety and foreign language proficiency. Kang (2005) argues that language proficiency affects a person's WTC. He claims that low proficiency can lead to insecurity which in turn leads to foreign language anxiety.

All but one participant stated that they had high WTC while communicating among friends and they preferred communicating among friends. This finding contradicts the fact that some participants expressed dissatisfaction towards having Turkish friends in the context of the communication. Despite the high preference towards communicating among friends, some participants do not prefer to communicate in English with a Turkish friend. Since most Turkish people rarely ever have the chance to communicate with a foreign friend, this situation may be linked to their desire to practice English or make new social connections. Similar to this finding, Molberg (2010) claims that learners who have personal interest for target language and its culture also have high level of oral interaction. MacIntyre et al. (1998) also argue that affiliation, in other words connecting or associating with a person, "may be the most important motive" for communicating with a person in a foreign language (p. 549). They further claim that intergroup attitudes, more specifically, integrativeness in a group is a factor affecting a person's WTC. They argue that desire to affiliate with people in a community or desire to be a part of the said community can be a factor promoting better relations; thus, affecting WTC. Similarly, assistance of a peer was a factor stated by the participants of this study. They stated that being linguistically supported by others in the context was a positively affecting factor towards their WTC. This factor may be attributed to the participants wanting to create better social ties by having some linguistic support.

Moreover, the participants in this study stated that they preferred an environment in which the interlocutors were the speakers of English as a second of foreign language. This finding shows similarity to the factor 'desire to communicate with a specific person' included in the L2 WTC model by MacIntyre et al (1998). In their review on the antecedents of WTC, Zhang et al. (2018) also include interlocutors' demographic features as a situational factor. Moreover, many other studies can be found in the literature regarding the effect of interlocutor characteristics on a person's WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2011; Kang, 2005; Riasati, 2012; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

The type of context is also an important factor to be considered when examining a person's WTC. In WTC concept, the context types are categorized in four (group discussion, interpersonal conversations, meetings, and public speaking). During the interviews, some participants stated that as the number of people in a setting increased, their WTC decreased. This finding is similar to findings of Cao and Philp (2006) who found out that students in their study preferred small number of interlocutors (three or four) in the communication setting. In line with the statements of the interview participants in this study, interpersonal conversation context type should be considered most favorable; however, more participants had high

willingness in group discussions than interpersonal conversations. This may be attributed to the fact that they viewed group discussion context as more likely to be informal and the talk in group discussions is generally related to daily topics. Their views also indicated that they valued group discussion contexts because of the potential linguistic support or encouragement that the others in the setting may provide.

Moreover, meetings context was not also preferred by half of the participants. Since the number of the interlocutors increases, the communication is more likely to become a monologue. In a large group, when a person speaks, the interlocutors only listen to that person or the communication setting becomes a large group of people having conversations. Due to this fact, the participants associated this context type with an academic conference where they made a presentation in front of eight to ten people. Academicians often make presentations in conferences and most of the interview participants in this study are experienced in making presentations in English; (see Table 2) however, half the participants stated that they had low willingness in meetings. This finding indicates that they may be motivated in a professional sense; yet, they may not have a high level of WTC. In other words, they may have the motivation to present their research in English and advance in their career; but still do it with a low willingness.

All but one participant stated high willingness in public speaking. When asked about their willingness in public speaking contexts, the participants mostly described their willingness in a more formal setting where there are more than ten listeners. Most participants gave negative responses and stated that they were be much willing. This finding may be attributed to the fact that public speaking, in its nature, is fearsome (Stein, Walker & Forde, 1996).

Formality of the situation was the most frequently stated situational factor in this study. This factor was also included in the model prepared by MacIntyre et al. (1998) who stated that "the degree of acquaintance between communicators, the number of people present, the formality of the situation… can influence a person's WTC." (p. 546). Moreover, they also emphasized the difference between formal and informal situations with the following statement:

> …a university professor may confidently lecture in the L2, yet become extremely shy when talking on the phone to an L2 speaker; another professor might find it easy to use the L2 with his or her peers in a casual conversation, but become blocked in a more formal context (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 553).

Content of the talk was a factor affecting academicians' willingness. MacIntyre (1998) also stated that "the topic of discussion, and other factors can influence a person's WTC." (p. 546). In their review, Zhang et al. (2018) also include topic as a situational factor. Similar to this finding, Riasati (2012) also includes topic interest as a factor affecting WTC and he argues that the more information a person has about a specific topic, the more willing the person will be to communicate.

5. Conclusion

The results indicated that the academicians were moderately willing to communicate in English and their willingness to communicate was moderately correlated with their language proficiency as determined by YDS exam. The results of the interviews indicated that the willingness levels of the participants were affected by various factors. The personal factors were foreign language anxiety and foreign language proficiency, and the situational factors were formality of the situation, interlocutor characteristics, assistance of a peer, being assessed, and content of the talk. These factors showed similarity to the findings of some studies in the literature.

Opportunities for using the language, interaction and frequency of L2 use greatly affect one's WTC in L2 (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Moreover, the relationship between willingness to communicate and foreign language proficiency suggests that an increase in foreign language proficiency may trigger an increase in willingness to communicate, and vice versa; thus, an increase in foreign language proficiency carries an importance for academicians working at the faculties of education. Depending on these statements, it may be suggested that providing opportunities where people, more specifically academicians, have the chance to experience natural communicative interaction with other speakers of English is of a vital importance. It might also be stated that abroad experience can be advantageous for academicians. The academicians also suggested that it may be beneficial to engage in communication in English in a setting where interlocutors are neither native speakers of Turkish nor English (English as a foreign language setting), and they stated that such communication settings can increase their willingness to communicate in English. The fact that such communication settings are hard to come by suggests that additional actions should be taken by administrative institutions. Depending on this conclusion, it may be proposed that promoting international interactions among academic staff could lead to an increase in willingness to communicate in English. Not all academicians have the opportunity to experience such interactions, and as stated in the findings, the lack of experience in international settings carries an importance towards their willingness. It may be proposed that the universities promote and encourage abroad experience for the academicians and provide them with sufficient opportunities towards international mobility.

4.1. Limitations and Recommendation for Further Research

It is important to note that this study investigated the trait-like predisposition of the academicians and more research is needed in order to find out the state-specific willingness of the academicians. This study only explored the factors which affect the academicians, and their attitudes towards their willingness. It is also noteworthy to state that the attitudes may fluctuate, and they may change in time; therefore, it is important to gather more data through other means of data collection instruments such as observing or evaluating an academician's WTC in an actual performance. Furthermore, in line with the discussion of the findings of this study, it is important to state that investigating the possible relationship between a single factor included in this study and WTC levels (receiver types or context types) of the academicians can be significant in terms of contribution to the literature.

As MacIntyre et al. (1998) state, there are enduring and situational variables affecting a person's willingness to communicate in English. The quantitative aspect of this study only examined the relationship between WTC and language proficiency, and the qualitative aspect of this study only explored the factors affecting the willingness of academicians working at the faculties of education in Turkey.

Further research is needed to examine the relationship between the factors included in this study. Future studies can examine the effect of other various personal and situational factors (e.g. personality types, motivation and self-confidence) on the willingness of academicians. MacIntyre and Charos (1996) also suggest that regardless of foreign language proficiency, having the ability to communicate may affect a person's WTC in L2. In line with this statement, it may be suggested that the relationship between academicians' perceived communicative competence and willingness can be investigated. Furthermore, this study only collected the WTC in English levels of the academicians through items in questionnaire or questions included in the interviews. Future studies may also analyze the linguistic elements, structures, subjects or emotional qualities in the speech of the participants through conversation analysis as a research methodology. In relation, future research may also include different data collection methods such as observing actual willingness to communicate in a specific situation or a task.

The factors which were included in the qualitative aspect of this study can be evaluated further with quantitative data collection tools in the future studies. In addition to willingness to communicate in oral mode, further research could also take into consideration other modes of willingness including writing in English. The findings of this study showed that general tendency to avoid communication in mother tongue may also affect a person's WTC in English; therefore, future studies may also investigate the effect of WTC in L1 on WTC in L2.

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