Iranian EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate, Self-Perceived Communication Competence, and Communication Apprehension in L1 and L2: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The present study investigated the relationships among willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communication competence in Persian (L1) versus English (L2). A total number of 235 adult native Persian EFL learners were selected through convenience sampling to participate in the study. The population consisted of 118 intermediate learners and 113 upper-intermediate learners. The transferability and predictability of these communication variables across L1 and L2 was checked through correlational analyses and linear regression. The findings showed that among these variables communication apprehension was more of a trait-like predisposition which was transferred across first language and foreign language. WTC in Persian had little predictive effect on WTC in English; also, self-perceived communication competence in Persian predicted only 15% of SPCC in English. Implications of findings could provide teachers insight into the extent to which these communication variables are trait-like or situational.

Keywords: communication apprehension, self-perceived communication competence, willingness to communicate

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), whose essence is the engagement of language learners in communication to allow them to develop their communication competence, has taken the lead during the 21st century (Savignon, 2005). In the communicative era, the purpose of teaching the language has shifted from the mastery of structure to the ability to use the language for communicative purposes and interaction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Maintaining communication requires interaction on the side of the learners and in order for interaction to be effective and productive, willingness to communicate (WTC) is indispensable. MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) define L2WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse, at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using L2" (p. 547). Making learners talk is still demanding for teachers, as research has frequently showed that most EFL learners, especially Asians, are passive, quiet, shy, reticent, and unwilling to answer (Cheng; Tsui; Liu, as cited in Nazari & Allahyar, 2012).

In order to determine the relative importance of the different variables which contribute to the L2 WTC construct, researchers have examined both immediate and distant variables (Weaver, 2009). The more immediate situational variables such as self-confidence in communication and anxiety while communicating have traditionally been the focus of most L2 WTC researchers (Weaver, 2009).

Furthermore, literature review in WTC shows two trends of studies towards this field: attention to a trait-like predisposition for WTC and attention to the situational construct for WTC (Kang, 2005); nonetheless, WTC construct is regarded as having a dual characteristic (Cao & Philp, 2006), and should be considered as complementary (MacIntyre, Babin, & Clement, cited in Khaki, 2013). Variables that influence trait-like and situational WTC are "antecedents" of WTC among which culture is an important one. The relationship between WTC and various variables might be substantially different in one culture than in another (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990a).

A body of research has been carried out in different cultures; For example, in Sweden (McCroskey, Burroughs, Daun, & Richmond, 1990), Micronesia (Burroughs & Marie, 1990; Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003), Finland (Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1991), Korea (Kim, 2004),

Turkey (Cetinkaya, 2005), Japan (Matsuoka, 2005; Yashima, 2002), and China (Wen & Clément, 2003; Hsu, 2005; Yu, 2008) to explore the interrelationship among different communication orientations in different countries in first language communication. However, little research has been conducted in Iran, where a large number of individuals are learning English as a foreign language.

Given their importance in the literature of WTC, the present study, thus, aims at investigating the relationships among WTC and self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and communication apprehension (CA) in Persian (L1) and English (L2) through a correlational analysis. Checking the predictive power of these communication variables in a cross-linguistic manner would provide an insight into the reasons that might cause Iranian learners to remain silent and unwilling to initiate communication. Also, it would determine the extent to which each communication variable is more of a trait-like predisposition or a situational related construct. It can further be explained whether or not willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communication competence are transferable from native language to second language.

The concept of willingness to communicate was introduced to the communication literature by McCroskey and his associates in the mid-1980s (McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) with reference to L1 use and speaking as its focus, based on three researches (Matsuoka & Evans, 2005) on 'Unwillingness to Communicate' (Burgoon, 1976), 'Predisposition to Verbal Behavior' (Mortensen, Arnston, & Lusting, 1977) and 'Shyness' (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). All of these works place an emphasis on a presumed trait-like tendency towards communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990b).

Willingness to communicate was referred to by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) as an individual's general personality orientation or in other words a personality-based predisposition towards talking. This personality orientation explained why one person would talk and another would not under similar circumstances.

McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a) found that L1 WTC was negatively associated with communication apprehension, introversion, alienation, and anomie. They also found WTC to be positively associated with self-esteem and

self-perceived communication competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986a, 1986b).

McCroskey and Richmond (1987) examined a series of variables, which they referred to as the "antecedents" of willingness to communicate. Six variables were addressed by them: introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, communication skill level, and communication apprehension. They pointed out that the level of an individual's communication apprehension was "probably the single best predictor of his or her willingness to communicate" and "the most potent of the antecedents of willingness to communicate" (p. 142).

With the identification of these six antecedents, studies which focused on expanding the WTC construct by examining different variables and possible interrelationship in L1 communication environments as a personality-based predisposition, were conducted during 70s, 80s, and the early 90s (Barraclough, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988; MacIntyre, 1994; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987, 1990a, 1990b; Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1991). Other researchers found that communicative competence and communication anxiety were significant predictors of WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001). MacIntyre (1994) found that communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence were the only two immediate variables responsible for the variation of an individual's WTC. McCroskey (1997) argued that WTC seemed to be the best predictor of people's actual communication behaviors, whereas "communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence appeared to measure the factors that make the major contribution to prediction of a person's WTC" (p. 105).

When WTC was extended to L2 communication situations, it was proposed that it is not necessary to limit WTC to a trait-like variable, since the use of an L2 imposes some significant situational differences on the speakers; differences which are based on wide variations in competence and inter-group relations (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998).

Considering that WTC in L2 could not simply manifest WTC in L1, MacIntyre et al. (1998) pointed out that "it is highly unlikely that WTC in the second language is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1" (p. 546). In fact,

although the studies contributing to the comparison of WTC between L1 and L2 are scarce, the limited findings have revealed consistent results. The rationale behind the lack of transferability of WTC from L1 to L2 was justified by greater difference in L2 users' communicative competence and social factors influencing L2 use (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Cao & Philip, 2006).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualized WTC in an L2 in a theoretical model in which social and individual context, affective cognitive context, motivational propensities, situated antecedents, and behavioral intention are interrelated in influencing WTC in an L2 and in L2 use. Regarding WTC as a situational construct, they defined L2 WTC as ''readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a[n] L2'' (p. 547).

The main purpose of doing cross-linguistic comparison study on willingness to communicate as well as other communication orientations was to examine the trait of constancy of the communication orientations in different language-speaking settings. Cross-linguistic studies on communication orientations focused on the predictive effect of a certain communication orientation in an individual's first language to the person's second/foreign language.

The notion of Communication Apprehension dates back to the early work of Clevenger (1959) on stage fright and Phillips (1968) on reticence. McCroskey advanced the original conceptualization of communication apprehension in the 1970s and defined communication apprehension as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (McCroskey, 1982, p. 136). McCroskey (1997) redefined communication apprehension as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 192). He emphasized two main concerns of communication apprehension: its oral communication focus and its trait orientation.

McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) defined communicative competence as "adequate ability to pass along or give information; the ability to make known by talking or writing" (p. 109). Self-perceived communication competence might be more linked to people's willingness to communicate since the choice of whether or not to communicate is rather a cognitive choice; that is, one is more apt to be influenced by how he/she perceives himself/herself to be

competent than his/her actual competence (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990a). As McCroskey (1997) stated, it was not a person's actual communication skills or competence that influenced their willingness to communicate; rather, it was more likely that the individual's self-perceived communication competence would make the difference. On the basis of this notion, people who consider themselves competent in communication are believed to be more willing to initiate or participate in communication behaviors.

The following research questions guided the present study:

1. Is willingness to communicate in Persian (L1) a significant predictor of willingness to communicate in English (L2)?

2. Is self-perceived communication competence in Persian (L1) a significant predictor of self-perceived communication competence in English (L2)?

3. Is communication apprehension in Persian (L1) a significant predictor of communication apprehension in English (L2)?

Method

Participants

Participants of this research were adult native Persian speakers who attended three language institutes in Tehran to learn English as a foreign language. A total number of 235 learners participated in the study, consisting of 118 intermediate learners and 113 upper-intermediate learners, with four participants failing to mark their level. The learners' ages ranged from 20 to 49 with the age range of 20 to 29 being the most frequent of all (80.9%). The population consisted of 132 male learners and 102 female learners, with one participant failing to mark his/her gender.

The participants of the present study were selected through convenience sampling. They attended classes which were designed to develop students' communicative competence in English. "Top Notch 3" and "Summit 1" were the books taught in all of these classes. Top Notch 3 catered to intermediate-leveled learners while Summit 1 was suitable for upper-intermediate-leveled learners. There were two criteria taken into consideration to ensure the proficiency level of learners: First, for the newcomers, the placement procedures of the institutes were considered. Second, for the students who had

already been attending the courses, the Top Notch/Summit assessment programs were taken into account.

Instrumentation

This descriptive research was a quantitative study, with an ex post facto or causal-comparative design, using questionnaires, all of which being self-report scales. Four instruments were used in this research. The instruments, in the sequence they were arranged and handed out to the participants, included: (1) Participants' Background Information, (2) Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Persian and English, (3) Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) in Persian and English, and (4) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) in Persian and English. All the instruments were translated into the participants' native language (Persian) to avoid any misunderstanding. Back translation method was used to verify the compatibility of the translation into Persian.

Participants' Background Information Form. The participants' background information form was designed to gather some background information on the participants' proficiency level, gender, age, and intentions of learning English. This instrument did not require the participants to provide their names.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Questionnaire. Willingness to communicate scale was taken from McCroskey's (1992) study. This instrument measures a person's willingness to initiate communication. There were 20 items on the instrument, eight were used to distract attention from the scored items. The 12 remaining items generated a total score which was related to four context-type scores (i.e., group discussion, meetings, interpersonal, public speaking) and three receiver-type scores (i.e., strangers, acquaintances, and friends). The participants indicated the percentage of time they would choose to communicate in each type of situation when they are completely free to do so, by using a number between 0 and 100. All scores, total and sub-scores, fell in the range of 0 to 100. The values 82 and 52 were used as the two cut-points for high WTC and low WTC spectrums. If a total WTC score was higher than 82, it indicated a high overall WTC and if the total WTC score was lower than 52, it indicated a low overall WTC. The face validity of the instrument was strong, and the results of extensive research indicated the predictive validity of the

instrument. In the present study, the reliability of WTC scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha and it was .93 in Persian and .96 in English.

Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) Questionnaire. Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale, taken from McCroskey and McCroskey (1988), was a questionnaire developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel they were in a variety of communication contexts and with various types of receivers. This was a 12-item questionnaire, developed to obtain information in a variety of communication contexts (i.e., public, meeting, group, dyad) and with various types of receivers (i.e., stranger, acquaintance, friend). This was not a measure of actual communication competence but a measure of perceived competence. The participants estimated their communication competence on a 0-100 scale. The reliability of this instrument, measured through the Cronbach's alpha, was .95 in Persian and .96 in English in the present study.

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) Questionnaire. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) questionnaire, taken from Jung and McCroskey (2004), encompassed statements concerning feelings about communicating with others. It was composed of 24 statements including feelings about communicating with others. It permitted one to obtain sub-scores on the contexts of public speaking, dyadic interaction, small groups, and large groups. Each situation had six items. The questionnaire used a Likert scale ranging from one to five; one representing strongly disagree and five representing strongly agree. The reliability estimate of this instrument which was calculated by Cronbach's alpha was .89 in Persian and .93 in English in the current study.

Procedure

The permission for data collection was requested from the supervisors and/or the teachers of all the institutes where the study was conducted. One of the researchers along with two teachers distributed the questionnaires to the participants. All the data were collected from evening classes which were held either twice a week or three times a week; the former lasting about three hours and the latter lasting an hour and forty minutes. The data collection was conducted on the very last session of all courses, which was either the 14th

session, the fifteenth session or the sixteenth session, depending on the policy of each institute.

Before distributing the questionnaires, the participants were informed about the intention and purpose of the study and that their responses would be kept anonymous. This stage usually took about three to four minutes. The participants were then given the questionnaires and asked to answer them thoroughly, within the class time. The approximate time of responding to the questionnaires was about 20 to 30 minutes depending on whether the participants answered the questions themselves or were being asked.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all the variables which were willingness to communicate (WTC) in L1 and L2, self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) in L1 and L2, and communication apprehension (CA) in L1 and L2 were computed. Also, the skewedness and kurtosis of the data was checked to ensure normal distribution of the population. Moreover, the reliability indices for all the questionnaires were computed using Cronbach's alpha. Furthermore, KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were calculated; the former to ensure the adequacy of the sample, and the latter to confirm the strength of the relationship among variables.

The descriptive statistics (mean score, minimum and maximum values, standard deviation) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
WTC-E	235	.00	100.00	38.57	27.68
CA-E	235	24.00	116.00	66.22	14.86
SPCC-E	235	.00	100.00	44.76	26.84
WTC-P	235	.00	100.00	69.97	27.06
CA-P	235	24.00	99.00	59.63	15.41
SPCC-P	235	.00	100.00	73.91	25.48

Note. WTC-E=willingness to communicate in English; CA-E= communication apprehension in English; SPCC-E=self-perceived communication competence in English; WTC-P=willingness to communicate in Persian; CA-P= communication apprehension in Persian; SPCC-P=self-perceived communication competence in Persian

As indicated in Table 1, according to the measuring band of WTC, the participants' willingness to communicate in English fell in the low zone of WTC ($M = 38.57$, $SD = 27.68$) while their willingness to communicate in Persian fell in the higher part of the average zone ($M = 69.97$, $SD = 27.06$). Regarding communication apprehension, the participants' levels of anxiety in both English ($M = 66.22$, $SD = 14.86$) and Persian ($M = 59.63$, $SD = 15.41$) was neither high nor low with the mean score of communication apprehension in Persian being closer to the low zone. Also, the participants' self-perceived communication competence in English ($M = 44.76$, $SD = 26.84$) fell in the low zone of the measuring band spectrum, while self-perceived communication competence in Persian ($M = 73.91$, $SD = 25.48$) was considered average.

Initially, correlational analyses were run to determine the relationship among the variables and confirm the interdependency of the variables (Table 2). Linear regression was, then, employed to clearly determine the predictability among the variables. The four assumptions underlying Pearson product-moment correlation were all met. These four assumptions include normal distribution, independence of samples, continuous measurement scale, and linear relationship between scores of each variable (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Moreover, the assumptions for running linear regression were also met.

These assumptions were homogeneity of variances, which was checked through inspection of residuals plots, and multicollinearity checked through inspection of numerical matrix of correlations.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix for L1 vs. L2 Communication Variables

	WTC-E	CA-E	SPCC-E
WTC-P	.197(**)		
CA-P		.652(**)	
SPCC-P			.382(**)

Note. WTC-E=willingness to communicate in English; CA-E=personal report of communication apprehension in English; SPCC-E=self-perceived communication competence in English; WTC-P=willingness to communicate in Persian; CA-P=personal report of communication apprehension in Persian; SPCC-P=self-perceived communication competence in Persian
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 2, all the correlations between L1 and L2 communication variables were significant at the .01 level (2-tailed), with CA in L1 and CA in L2 having the highest correlation ($r = .65$, n = 235).

Moreover, linear regression (Table 3) was employed in order to answer the first research question of whether or not willingness to communicate in Persian (L1) is a significant predictor of willingness to communicate in English (L2).

Table 3
F Test Results for the Regression Model of L1 vs. L2 WTC

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6948.036	1	6948.036	9.390	.002
Residual	172413.072	233	739.970		
Total	179361.108	234			

Note. Predictors: (Constant), WTC in Persian
Dependent Variable: WTC in English

As shown in Table 3, the results of the F test indicated that the assumption of regression analysis is confirmed and the model has explanatory power (F (1, 233) = 9.39, $p < .05$).

Table 4 depicts that willingness to communicate in Persian significantly contributed to WTC in English ($t = 3.06$, p = .002, $p < .05$), however, it had little predictive power on WTC in English with a Beta Coefficient of .19.

Table 4
T-test for Individual Slope of Each Variable in L1 vs. L2 WTC

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	24.479	4.929		4.967	.000
WTC_P	.201	.066	.197	3.064	.002

Note. Dependent Variable: WTC in English

The R square which is an indicator of model fit showed that this regression model only explained about 4% of the variance in willingness to communicate in English (see Table 5). In other words, willingness to communicate in Persian was not a good predictor of WTC in English and other factors were at play.

Table 5
Model Summary of L1 vs. L2 WTC

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
.197	.039	.035	27.20

Note. Predictors: (Constant), WTC in Persian

To scrutinize the second research question of whether or not self-perceived communication competence in Persian (L1) is a significant predictor of self-perceived communication competence in English (L1), linear regression was

employed. As shown in Table 6, the results of the F test indicated that the assumption of regression analysis is confirmed and the model has explanatory power, $F(1, 233) = 39.85$, $p < .05$.

Table 6
F Test Results for the Regression Model of L1 vs. L2 SPCC

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24631.702	1	24631.702	39.850	.000
Residual	144019.066	233	618.108		
Total	168650.767	234			

Note. Predictors: (Constant), SPCC in Persian
Dependent Variable: SPCC in English

Table 7 depicts that self-perceived communication competence in Persian significantly contributed to SPCC in English ($t = 6.31$, $p = .000$, $p < .05$), and it had some predictive power on SPCC in English with a Beta Coefficient of .38.

Table 7
T-test for Individual Slope of Each Variable in L1 vs. L2 SPCC

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	15.009	4.984		3.011	.003
SPCC_P	.403	.064	.382	6.313	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: SPCC in English

The R square that indicates the model fit was .146 which showed that this regression model explained about 15% of the variance in self-perceived

communication competence in English (see Table 8). In other words, self-perceived communication competence in Persian predicted only 15% of SPCC in English; thus, was not a strong predictor.

Table 8
Model Summary of L1 vs. L2 SPCC

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.382	.146	.142	24.86

Note. Predictors: (Constant), SPCC in Persian

To deal with the third research question of whether or not communication apprehension in Persian (L1) is a significant predictor of communication apprehension in English (L2), another linear regression analysis was employed. As shown in Table 9, the results of the F test indicated that the assumption of regression analysis is confirmed and the model has explanatory power (F (1,233) = 172.46, $p < .05$).

Table 9
F Test Results for the Regression Model of L1 vs. L2 CA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	21997.574	1	21997.574	172.464	.000
Residual	29718.920	233	127.549		
Total	51716.494	234			

Note. Predictors: (Constant), PRCA in Persian
Dependent Variable: PRCA in English

Table 10 depicts that communication apprehension in Persian significantly contributed to CA in English ($t = 13.13$, $p = .000$, $p < .05$), and that it had fairly strong predictive power on CA in English with a Beta Coefficient of .65.

Table 10
T-test for Individual Slope of Each Variable in L1 vs. L2 CA

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	28.714	2.950		9.735	.000
CA_P	.629	.048	.652	13.133	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: CA in English

The R square indicates that the model fit was .425 which showed that this regression model explained about 43% of the variance in communication apprehension in English (see Table 11).

Table 11
Model Summary of L1 vs. L2 CA

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.652	.425	.423	11.29

Note. Predictors: (Constant), PRCA in Persian

As illustrated in Table 11, communication apprehension in Persian predicted about 43% of CA in English which was a fairly high amount; thus, CA in Persian was a good predictor of CA in English.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggested that WTC in Persian had little predictive effect on WTC in English. As MacIntyre et al. (1998) put it, a rather complicated pattern exists among variables influencing WTC in L2 in comparison with variables influencing WTC in L1; thus, L1 WTC would not simply generalize to L2 WTC. This means that this construct was rather affected by social, cultural, motivational, situational, affective, and behavioral factors than simply being a trait-like predisposition. L2 WTC might be

somewhat of a pre-disposition trait existing in a person; that is, if an individual is always willing to communicate in his or her first language, he/she is likely to communicate in another language providing high perception of communication competence, opportunity, and lack of anxiety (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). However, the large degree of independence between L1 WTC and L2 WTC suggested that there are a plethora of other variables at play, such as those suggested in the heuristic model of variables influencing WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998), which could affect a person's willingness to communicate hence lead to discrepancy between the person's L1 WTC and L2 WTC orientations. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2003) found non-significant correlation between the participants' WTC in English (L1) and French (L2) and suggested that there was some degree of independence between WTC in L1 and WTC in L2. However, another study conducted by Baker and MacIntyre in the same year found that the participants' WTC in first language (English) and second language (French) were significantly correlated for both groups with or without immersion experience. Teachers should bear in mind that language learners' willingness to initiate a conversation in Persian does not necessarily guarantee the same tendency in English. In other words, if a learner seems unwilling to communicate in his/her L1, he/she should not be considered as having the same tendency in L2. Hence, the WTC construct is more of a situational one rather than a trait-like construct and given the opportunity, any learner, regardless of his/her communication tendencies in L1, can feel ready to initiate communication in L2.

The findings of this study also indicated that self-perceived communication competence in Persian predicted only 15% of SPCC in English. This finding was in line with Baker and MacIntyre's (2003) study which showed that for the participants without immersion experience, the relationship between their L1 (English) and L2 (French) self-perceived communication competence was significant. However, the finding was inconsistent with the results reported for the participants with immersion experience, which showed that correlation between L1 and L2 self-perceived communication competence was not significant. It should be noted that the range of communication competence in L2 for adults could range from 0 to 100, while the same measure in L1 would be most probably above a certain level for normal adult L1 communicators (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Moreover, logically speaking, the extent to which individuals perceive themselves competent in L2 in Iran, where English is a foreign language, is for the most part a function of L2 classroom environment, while the perception of one's native language ability could be influenced by

numerous factors; thus, the degree of dependability and predictability between L1 SPCC and L2 SPCC would differ considerably.

The current study also showed that communication apprehension in one's native language (L1) might be to a considerable extent the determinate of the minimal level of communication apprehension in the person's second language (L2). This meant that if a student tended to feel nervous in native language communication, he/she would most likely feel the same in English communication as well; thus, this construct is a trait-like predisposition which is transferred across first language and foreign language. This trait-like predisposition of communication apprehension found in the present study was consistent with the results in McCroskey, Fayer, and Richmond's (1985) study, in which they found positive and moderate correlation between the participants' communication apprehension in Spanish and English; thus, "the predictions based on the theory of CA as a generalized trait are supported" (p. 190). Similar consistent relationship for communication apprehension in first and second languages was also found in studies conducted on Japanese students (McCroskey, Gudykunst, & Nishida, 1985), Micronesian adult students (Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003), international students who were attending a university in the United States (Jung & McCroskey, 2004), and Chinese college students (Yu, 2008). The obtained result could be rationalized in terms of the definition of CA by McCroskey (1997) who held that communication apprehension encompassed both enduring orientations towards communication and a transitory one with a given person or group of people; thus, the degree of CA which is transferred across L1 and L2 can be interpreted as the enduring orientation towards communication.

On the basis of the findings, it is suggested that language teachers should primarily have concerns about language learners' communication apprehension level in first language communication context. Hence, the study may lead to the conclusion that the awareness of an individual's communication apprehension level in first language would help language teachers understand and predict the possible level and range of the individual's communication apprehension in a second/foreign communication setting. This understanding and expectation could, then, enable language teachers to take more effective measures aimed especially to reduce the person's communication apprehension in L2. For instance, task-based pair work is usually suggested as a more effective way to reduce language learners' communication anxiety in L2 compared to class-fronted activities. However, for an individual who has always a high communication apprehension in first language communication, simply putting him/her into a pair conversation may not be a panacea for reducing his/her communication apprehension in L2.

Suggestions for future studies include investigations which focus on the same topic in different linguistic and cultural settings to test and verify the results of the current study. It is also suggested that other studies be conducted in other regions of Iran having different cultural backgrounds, with different proficiency levels, and with participants across different age ranges.

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