

## Turkish Students' Willingness To Communicate In English

### Türk Öğrencilerinin İngilizce İletişim İsteği

Yeşim Bektaş\*

#### ABSTRACT

The aim of English teaching has been identified as fostering communicative competence rather than merely mastering structure of the language. Thus, the communication aspect of language teaching and the factors that affect language learners' willingness to communicate have gained importance. The objective of the present study was to propose a comprehensive Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model for Turkish students, and to test it to understand whether this model could adequately explain the relationships among the socio-psychological, linguistic and communicative variables in Turkish context to predict one's willingness. Data was collected via a questionnaire and analyzed by using Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis. The results have revealed that Turkish students' willingness to communicate in English is directly related both to their attitude toward the international community and their perceived linguistic self-confidence.

**Keywords** Relative Clauses, Accessibility Hierarchy, Difficulty Level

#### ÖZET

İngilizce eğitiminde amaç öğrencilerin sadece dilin gramerine hâkim kılınması değil daha ziyade bu dili iletişim kurmak için kullanabilmelerini sağlamak olarak belirlendi. Bu durumda İngilizce eğitiminin iletişimsel yönü ve öğrencilerin iletişim kurmalarında etkili olan faktörler önem kazanmış oldu. Bu çalışmanın amacı kapsamlı bir WTC (iletişim kurmaya isteklilik) modeli oluşturmak ve bu modelin öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurmaya istekliliklerini tahmin etmekte sosyal-psikolojik, dilbilimsel ve iletişimsel faktörler arasındaki ilişkileri Türkiye şartları içerisinde yeterli düzeyde açıklayıp açıklamadığını araştırmaktır. Veriler anket yöntemiyle toplanıp SEM yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucu öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurmaya istekliliklerinin derecesinin uluslararası topluma olan tutumları ve kendi İngilizce dil düzeylerini algılayışları ile direkt olarak bağlantılı olduğunu göstermiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İlgili Tümceleri, Erişim Sıralaması, Zorluk Derecesi

#### INTRODUCTION

English has been taught all around the world and is used for communication purposes by both native and non-native speakers of the language. English learners are expected to use the language for communicative purposes rather than merely mastering the structure of the language. Thus, the focus of language learning has shifted from a mastery of the structure to using English for communication. However, little research has been conducted on language learners' communication behavior in EFL context. We know very little whether language learners are willing to use English for communication purposes and what factors are related to the students' willingness to do so.

When the purpose of teaching English is defined in terms of communication, the issues of whether the learners will communicate in English when they have the chance, and what will affect their willingness to communicate, gain importance. Recently, a "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) theoretical framework, which integrates psychological, linguistic, and communicative variables to describe, explain, and predict second language (L2) communication, has been developed by McIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998).

The objective of the present study is to propose a WTC model for Turkish context, depending on the WTC theoretical framework, and examine whether this model describes

\* Yeşim Bektaş Çetinkaya Öğr.Gör.Dr., DEÜ, Buca Eğitim Fakültesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü, İzmir

accurately the relations among Turkish students' willingness to communicate and the linguistic, socio-psychological, and communicative variables.

### THE WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

The construct: "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) was first used by McCroskey and his colleagues in relation to communication in native languages (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). McCroskey and Richmond (1990) treated WTC as a personality trait and defined it as "variability in talking behavior". They argued that even though situational variables might affect one's willingness to communicate, individuals display similar WTC tendencies in various situations. Later, MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) applied this notion to second and foreign language teaching field and defined WTC as "the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (p. 546). However, MacIntyre et al did not treat WTC in second and foreign language as a personality trait but as a situational variable, which had both transient and enduring influences. They integrated linguistic, communicative and socio-psychological variables into explaining one's WTC using a second language.

MacIntyre et al (1998) used a pyramid figure to illustrate the WTC theoretical framework, which explains the probable causes of willingness to communicate in second and foreign language. According to this framework, both "enduring" and "situational" factors affect one's willingness to communicate in a second language, which is quite different from one's WTC in her native tongue. Enduring influences are identified as the personality of the language learner, the social context in which she lives, inter-group attitudes between native speaker and second language groups, general self-confidence of the learner, and her motivation to learn English. Situational influences are identified as one's desire to communicate with a specific person, and the self-confidence that one feels at a specific situation. In the WTC theoretical framework, it is hypothesized that all these social, affective, cognitive, and situational variables influence one's willingness to communicate in the second language, which in turn predicts one's actual use of that second language.

Although WTC is a recently developed theoretical framework, several studies have

already been conducted to test it ( MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, Conrod, 2001; Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Kim 2004; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004 ). Some studies have illustrated that students' perceived language competence (rather than their actual competence) and/or lack of communication anxiety are directly related to their WTC in a second language (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996); therefore, recent studies (Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Yashima, 2002) combined the notions of perceived language competence and lack of communication anxiety to form a notion of linguistic self-confidence.

It has been recognized that students' motivation is directly (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, Donovan, 2002; MacIntyre, Baker, 2001; Baker, MacIntyre, 2000) or indirectly (MacIntyre, Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002) related to their WTC. Similarly, studies have illustrated both direct and indirect relationships between WTC and attitude. While Yashima (2002) indicates a direct relationship between students' WTC and their attitude toward the international community in the EFL context, Clement et al. (2003) show an indirect relationship, through linguistic self-confidence, between WTC and attitude toward the other language group, in the ESL context. Finally, an indirect relationship between the language learner's personality and their WTC has been demonstrated (MacIntyre, Babin, Clement, 1999; MacIntyre, Charos, 1996). MacIntyre et al. (1999) illustrated that the personality traits of introversion/ extraversion are related to WTC through communication apprehension and perceived language competence.

### RESEARCH QUESTION:

Depending on the theoretical framework of WTC (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1998) and the results of the studies that were conducted to test this theory in various contexts, it has been hypothesized that Turkish college students' attitude toward the international community, their motivation to learn English, and their linguistic self-confidence would be directly related to their willingness to communicate in English. Their attitude toward the international community would also be indirectly related to their willingness to communicate through motivation to learn English.

Finally, the language learners' personality would be indirectly related to their willingness to communicate through linguistic self-confidence.

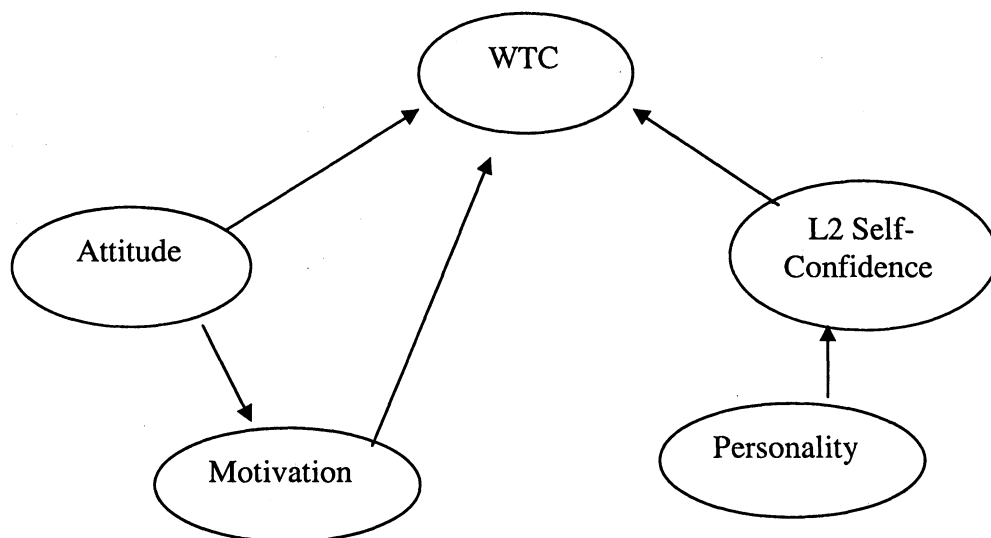


Figure 1: Proposed structural model of WTC

This study is conducted to test whether the proposed model of willingness to communicate in English can explain the relations among language learners' willingness to communicate in English and socio-psychological and communicative variables in Turkish context.

## METHOD

### Participants:

The participants were 356 Turkish college students who were taking one-year compulsory English preparatory courses at Dokuz Eylül University before starting to take their major area courses. For the structural equation model analysis, data from 304 (63% males, 37% females) participants with no missing value was used. According to the proficiency test that they were given at the beginning of the semester, the majority of these students (83%) were at an intermediate or low intermediate level of English proficiency. Participants majoring in business related fields (46%), engineering (36%), arts and science (6%), architecture (5%), education (3%), and nursing (3%).

### Materials:

A questionnaire was designed to measure students' willingness to communicate, linguistic self-confidence, motivation, attitudes toward the international community, and personality. Twelve items that McCroskey (1992) had identified served as the measure of WTC. Ten items adapted from Goldberg (1992) constituted the measure of personality. Linguistic self-confidence was defined in the terms of lack of communication anxiety (Twelve items from Yashima, 2002) and perceived communication competence (Twelve items from MacIntyre and Charos, 1996). The latent variable, motivation, was defined by three indicator variables: (1) the desire to learn English (six items from Gardner, 1985), (2) motivational intensity (six items from Gardner, 1985), and (3) attitudes toward learning English (five items from Gardner, 1985). Similarly, four indicator variables were used to define the students' attitudes toward the international community: (1) integrative orientation (four items from Yashima, 2002), (2) approach-avoidance tendency (seven items from Yashima, 2002), (3) interest in international vocation/activities (five

items from Yashima, 2002), and (4) interest in foreign affairs (two items from Yashima, 2002).

#### **Procedure:**

The data was gathered during the spring semester of the academic year at Dokuz Eylül University. The researcher randomly selected 25 English preparatory classes out of 100 and administered a questionnaire to 356 students during class hours. The data from 304 participants with no missing value was used for analysis. The comparison of respondents and non-respondent groups indicated that these two groups did not differ in terms of research, or demographic variables.

The software, Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 4.0., was utilized to conduct multivariate analysis, termed the Structural Equation Model (SEM), which allows the researcher to examine "a series of dependence relationships simultaneously" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 578). "Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory (i.e. hypothesis-testing) approach to the analysis of a structural theory bearing on some phenomenon" (Byrne, 2001, p.1). Before testing the proposed WTC model with SEM analysis, it was established that all the assumptions of SEM (independent observation, random sampling, and linearity of all relationships) were met, and the data was normally distributed.

### **RESULTS:**

#### **The Initial Model**

The proposed SEM model of willingness to communicate has two essential components: (1) measurement model and (2) structural model. The measurement model estimates the relationships between the indicator variables (represented by squares) and latent variables (represented by ovals). The structural model is the path model, which illustrates the hypothesized pattern of relationships among latent variables.

The evaluation of the initial model, which was analyzed by AMOS 4.0 using maximum-likelihood estimation, indicated that the model poorly fit the data. In other words, the model could not adequately describe the sample data. Since chi-square is sensitive to sample size, number of categories in the response variable, and many other factors (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998), the decision on model-data fit was made in reference to Root Mean

Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) in addition to chi-square goodness of fit index. The chi-square goodness of fit index (180.81) with 61 degrees of freedom was significant at .01 level. In this case significant chi-square indicates poor fit. While RMSEA (.08) indicated mediocre fit and GFI (.91) an acceptable fit, TLI (.87) and NFI (.85) indicated poor fit.

Examination of the measurement model revealed that the path from communication anxiety to linguistic self-confidence (c.r. value - 1.150) was not significant at .05 level. Although previous research in the EFL context (Kim 2004, Yashima 2002) revealed that communication anxiety is negatively correlated with perceived competence and formation of the construct of linguistic self-confidence, in this study communication anxiety did not correlate with perceived competence and did not lead to the linguistic self-confidence construct.

Examination of the structural model indicated that all of the paths were significant at either the .05 or .01 level. While the path from attitude toward the international community to willingness to communicate (c.r. 4.41) was significant at .01 level, paths from motivation (c.r. 2.29) to willingness to communicate, and from linguistic self-confidence (c.r. 2.26) to willingness to communicate were significant at .05 level. However, the high standardized residuals (such as 5.02, 4.04, 3.78, etc.) among the indicator variables of personality, and attitude toward the international community suggested a correlation between these latent variables. Moreover, a high value of modification indices (25.30) suggested the same correlation between personality and attitude toward the international community as well. At this point, it was decided to improve the model through modification. From this point on the nature of the study became exploratory rather than confirmatory (Byrne, 2001).

#### **The Final Model:**

In light of statistical results, and that of the relevant literature, the initial model was modified. The researcher added a path between personality and attitude toward the international community. In addition, following the results of previous research in the EFL context (Yashima, 2002; Kim, 2004), the researcher decided to delete the path from motivation to willingness to communicate and to add a path from motivation to linguistic self-confidence. Analysis of

Moment Structures (AMOS) version 4.0 was then used to analyze this modified model. The Maximum Likelihood (ML) procedure was utilized to estimate each parameter. The results of the modified model are given in figure 2.

Although the chi-square value (106.33) was still significant at .01 level with 60 degrees of freedom, it decreased from 180.81 to 106.33. The RMSEA value (.05) indicated a good fit (Byrne, 2001). Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) values range from 0 to 1.00 and values closer to 1.00 indicate a good fit (Byrne, 2001). For this model the GFI value was .95, the TLI value was .95, and the NFI value was .92, all of which indicate a good fit with the data. When compared to the first proposed model, the values of both the modified models' absolute fit indexes and incremental fit indexes indicate a much better fit with the data. Again, the path from communication anxiety to linguistic

self-confidence was not statistically significant at the .05 level. In this context, it appears that communication anxiety does not contribute to the construction of linguistic self-confidence.

According to this final model, the Turkish college students' willingness to communicate in English was directly related to their attitudes toward the international community and their linguistic self-confidence. The students' motivation to learn English and their personality, in terms of being an introvert or extravert, was indirectly related to their willingness to communicate through their linguistic self-confidence. Finally, their attitude toward the international community was correlated with their being introverted or extraverted.

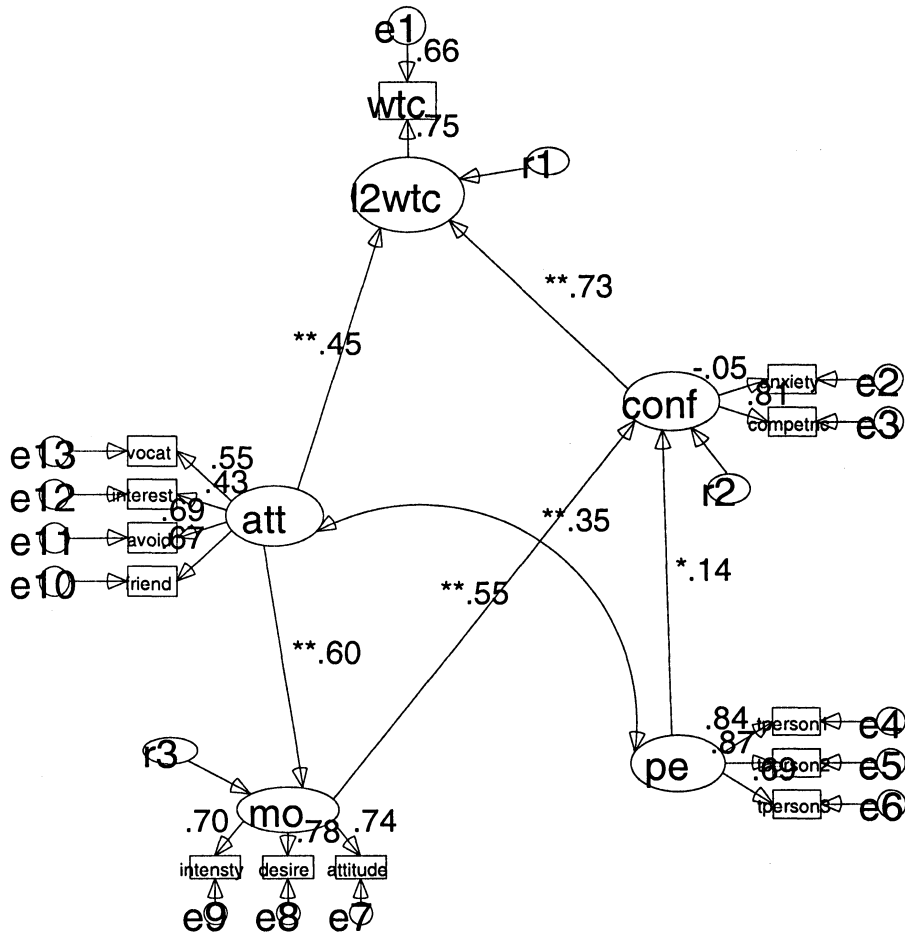


Figure 2: SEM results of modified WTC model  
 \*significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level  
 wtc: willingness to communicate, att: attitude towards international community, mo: motivation to learn English, pe: personality, conf: linguistic self-confidence, e: error, r: residual.

**DISCUSSION:**

The students' willingness to communicate was found to be directly related to their attitudes toward the international community and their perceived linguistic self-confidence. Students who have a positive attitude toward the international community are willing to communicate in English. Language learners who are interested in international activities and foreign affairs, have an intercultural friendship orientation, and a tendency to approach foreigners are more open to communicate in

English with foreigners. While the learners with a positive attitude will be willing to communicate, the ones with a more negative attitude will be less willing to communicate in English. Similarly, students who had higher perceived communication competence were more willing to communicate in English than the students who perceived their communication competence as low.

The students' motivation to learn English and their personality, in terms of being an introvert or extrovert, was found to be indirectly

related to their willingness to communicate. The students' motivation to learn English was related to their perception of communication competence, which in turn influences their willingness to communicate in English. Motivated students seem to perceive that their language proficiency is high and this perception leads to the willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, the students' attitudes toward the international community were related to their motivation to learn English. It appears that students who have a positive attitude toward the international community are more greatly motivated to learn English and their higher level of motivation leads to a greater willingness to communicate by affecting their perceived competence in English.

Results indicate that language learners' personality, in terms of being introverted or extraverted, is related to their willingness to communicate through their perception of communication competence. Extroverted students seem to have a higher perception of their competence, which in turn leads them to have a greater willingness to communicate in English. Extroverted students assess their communication competence positively compared to their introverted classmates. When a student perceives that her English proficiency is high, she seems to be more willing to communicate in English. Moreover, in the current study the data driven path indicated a relatively high positive correlation (.55) between students' personality and their attitudes toward the international community. Extraverted students seem to have a positive attitude toward the international community. Since extraverts seem to be more "people oriented," and more sociable (McCroskey, Richmond, 1990), it is not surprising that they are interested in international activities. Results seem to suggest that extraverted language learners are more open to the international community and react positively to different people. This result appears to be consistent with the theory of the WTC framework (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, Noels, 1998) which suggests that personality plays a role in whether a person reacts positively or negatively to foreign people and thus in the formation of positive and negative attitudes.

In conclusion, the WTC model is a useful one to predict language learners' communication activities in Turkish context. It is of even more importance when we define English as an international language, required for use in international communications. When

the ultimate aim of language learning is to be able to communicate in that language, it is undoubtedly very beneficial for language teachers to know the factors that effect their students' willingness to communicate in that language. This study indicates that language learners' attitude toward the international community and their perception of their language proficiency are the best predictors of their willingness to communicate in English.

## REFERENCES

1. Byrne, B.M. (2001). *Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
2. Clement, R., Baker, S. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2003). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The effects of context, norms, and vitality. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 22, 190-209.
3. Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall
4. Hashimoto, Y. (2002). Motivation and willingness to communicate as predictors of reported L2 use: The Japanese ESL context. *Second Language Studies*, 20(2), 29-70.
5. Kim, S.J. (2004). *Exploring Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English among Korean EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Students in Korea: WTC as a predictor of Success in Second Language Acquisition*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Columbus: Ohio State University.
6. MacIntyre, P., Babin, P. A., & Clement, R. (1999). Willingness to communicate: Antecedents and Consequences. *Communication Quarterly*, 47, 215-229.
7. MacIntyre, P., & Baker, S. C. (2001). Willingness to communicate, social support, and language-learning orientations of immersion students. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 23, 369-388.
8. MacIntyre, P., Baker, S. C., Clement, R., & Conrad, S. (2001). Willingness to communicate, social support, and language-learning orientations of immersion students. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 23, 369-388
9. MacIntyre, P., Baker, S. C., Clement, R., & Donovan, L. A. (2002). Sex and age effects on willingness to communicate, anxiety, perceived competence, and L2 motivation among junior high school French immersion students. *Language Learning*, 52, 537-564.
10. MacIntyre, P., & Charos, C. (1996). Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 15, 3-26.
11. MacIntyre, P., Clement, R., Dornyei, Z. & Noels, K. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82, 545-562.
12. McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P. (1990). Willingness to communicate: Differing cultural perspectives. *Southern Communication Journal*, 56, 72-77.
13. McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P. (1990). Willingness to communicate: A cognitive view. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 5, 19-37.
14. Yashima, T., Zenuk-Nishide L., & Shimizu, K. (2004). The influence of attitudes and affect on willingness to communicate and second language communication. *Language Learning*, 54:1, 119-152.
15. Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86, 54-66.



## APPENDIX A

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1-MI	1	.59**	.48**	.26**	.11	.11	.24**	.36**	.37**	.01	.04	.16**	.05
2-MD		1	.58**	.33**	.17**	.10	.28**	.40**	.31**	.03	.09	.16**	.06
3-MA			1	.40**	.26**	.12*	.43**	.41**	.34**	.00	.12*	.20**	.12*
4-AAT				1	.34**	.36**	.43**	.38**	.28**	-.11	.26**	.23**	.29**
5-VA					1	.33**	.40**	.32**	.24**	-.02	.16**	.13*	.22**
6-FA						1	-.24**	.20**	.15*	-.06	.09	.10	.12*
7-FO							1	.43**	.28**	.01	.15*	.17**	.17**
8-WTC								1	.57**	.03	.16**	.22**	.17**
9-PC									1	-.08	.12*	.23**	.17**
10-CA										1	-.10	-.10	-.08
11-PE1											1	.74**	.58**
12-PE2												1	.60**
13-PE3													1

Table 4.17 Correlation matrix

MI: Motivational Intensity, MD: Desire to Learn English, MA: Attitudes toward Learning English, AAT: Approach-Avoidance Tendency, VA: Interest in International Vocation/Activities, FA: Interest in Foreign Affairs, FO: Integrative Orientation (Intercultural Friendship Orientation), WTC: Willingness to Communicate, PC: Perceived Communication Competence, CA:

Communication Anxiety, PE1: Personality1, PE2: Personality2, PE3: Personality3.

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

\* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The reliability of each instrument is as follows: WTC (Cronbach's alpha = .942), PC (Cronbach's alpha = .95), CA (Cronbach's alpha = .93), MD (Cronbach's alpha = .60), MI (Cronbach's alpha = .74), MA (Cronbach's alpha = .74), FO (Cronbach's alpha = .88), AAT (Cronbach's alpha = .77), VA (Cronbach's

alpha = .62), FA (Cronbach's alpha = .80), PE (Cronbach's alpha = .87)