Increasing Student Willingness to Communicate in Oral Interpersonal Communication

by

Ameeta Danielle Schmitt

B.S., University of Pittsburgh, 2012

MAT, University of Pittsburgh, 2013

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This dissertation was presented

by

Ameeta Danielle Schmitt

It was defended on

May 18, 2020

and approved by

Myriam Abdel-Malek, Instructor, Department of Linguistics

Heather Hendry Annegan, Assistant Professor of Practice, Department of Instruction and Learning

Brett Wells, Senior Lecturer, Department of French and Italian

Dissertation Director: Richard Donato, Professor, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading

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Ameeta Danielle Schmitt, EdD

University of Pittsburgh, 2020

This investigation explored the construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) in the second language (L2) on a traditional foreign language classroom of an urban school district. The study took place in a 9-12 high school Italian 2 classroom. The study focused on activities the ecological and content factors that influence student willingness to communicate in interpersonal oral communication tasks. By using classroom observation, student-self reports, and questionnaires, this study investigated how to develop instructional activities that promote willingness to communicate to increase student participation in oral interpersonal communication. From the questionnaire results and initial observations, it was possible to identify features of task design and task procedures that increased student interpersonal oral communication within the classroom. Findings from this study suggest the importance of developing classroom ecologies where students have input into the contents of the communicative task, a classroom environment that tolerates error, support from the teacher, and cooperative peers with whom to work with. Several implications for classroom teachers derive from this study -- the importance of meaningful contexts, the importance of sufficient time during communicative tasks, meaning making as opposite to grammatical accuracy, teacher guidance and support, and the influence of L1 in the L2, all part of what makes up the classroom ecology.

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1.0 Problem of Practice

1.1 Topic

I work in a school district that strives for all students to reach proficiency in their foreign language by their third year of language instruction in high school. Proficiency in Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) is measured through the district developed assessment, the PPS Orals. Proficiency in Pittsburgh Public Schools is equivalent to a rating of Intermediate Low on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages scale. Intermediate Low speakers can handle straightforward conversations and basic topics, which include talking about, "[themselves] and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, and some needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases" (ACTFL, 2012).

Over the past three years, there has been a significant decline in students scoring at the proficient level on the PPS Orals in my school district. Therefore, I was concerned with understanding how to increase student oral interpersonal proficiency in foreign language classroom. This problem has grown increasingly challenging as the number of foreign language programs within the district continues to diminish. Additionally, our school added several magnet programs, which is making it difficult for students to include s foreign language courses in their schedules.

The school has changed, so too should the teaching practices which need to focus on student achievement. For my problem of practice, I investigated how using the construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) influenced student oral communication in a foreign language classroom, and how developing instructional activities targeting WTC engaged students in oral

interpersonal communication. In simple terms, WTC provided a way to increase student participation in interpersonal activities.

1.2 Significance of the Problem

Although research has shown that learning a foreign language is beneficial for students and teachers within the district have worked hard to support student proficiency on the PPS Orals, student language proficiency in my district continues to decline. Furthermore, students in my classroom appeared reluctant to talk in the target language. Achievement student participation in whole class discussion was challenging and in small groups or pairs was nearly impossible. I knew that my students could not achieve proficiency on the district assessment, PPS Orals, unless I changed something. Students were unwilling to take risks, make guesses, or raise their hands. As my concern about student participation mounted and the decline in proficiency increased, the importance of investigating the situation grew.

MacIntyre, Zoltán, and Noels (1998) described the construct of willingness to communicate and the barriers students often perceive that impede their communication in the foreign language classroom. Willingness to communicate is the probability of a learner to engage in communication when given the choice in situational variables. The construct seeks to identify factors that encourage and hinder communication such as self-perceived competence, interest in the task, and familiarity with the interlocutors (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

A study by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002) considered other factors that influenced student willingness to communicate in the foreign language classroom. Their findings posited positive correlations between willingness to communicate and self-confidence increasing

student participation in the classroom. Zarrinabadi (2014) identified contributing teacher factors that impacted student willingness to communicate. The results of their study revealed that student willingness to communicate in the target language was driven by wait time, error correction, influence on the topic, and support (p.294). These studies support the notion that willingness to communicate is a contributing factor to student proficiency in the target language. Another study conducted by Tavakoli (2017) analyzed willingness to communicate into three categories, including (a)communication with the teacher, (b) their classmates, and (c) with a stranger. What emerged was that learners were more inclined to speak in the target language with their instructor more than anyone else. Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) sought to identify causes for fluctuations in WTC with different interlocutors based on an analysis of performance on speaking tasks on a variety of topics. The researchers found that WTC varied depending on the situation. Learners were influenced by topic, planning time, cooperation, and familiarity with the interlocutor. Understanding the situational nature of WTC and finding studies that have already been conducted were influential is designing my own investigation.

1.3 Scope of Inquiry

I investigated WTC in my current work setting. I am employed in an urban 9-12 high school. The student demographics of my building have changed significantly over the past decade. Notably, in the last three years, the school has seen a five percent increase in English Language Learners bringing it to 20% of our student body. My high school has three times more ELLs than the district average. Of the remaining student body, 20% of the students have IEPs. School enrollment was 41% Black, 35% White, 7% Multi-Ethnic, 9% Asian, and 7% Hispanic. 75% of

the students are described as economically disadvantaged and 39% of students are chronically absent (A+ Schools, 2018).

Proficiency scores on the PPS Orals have been decreasing over the past three years. In 2014, 22% of students scored proficient on the PPS Orals. In 2016, 19% of students scored proficiency on the PPS Orals.

My investigation took place in my Italian 2 class. I chose to use this class, because students in year three of language instruction take the district assessment for proficiency, the PPS Orals, in March. By picking a class that had another year and a half to grow, I hoped the outcome of my study would yield findings that could support student willingness to communicate in interpersonal oral communication. I also chose this classroom, because it was smaller with 15 students. While smaller classes, generally allow for more opportunities to participate, in my classroom, I found long silences often occurred. I would introduce a prompt and silence would ensure. More often than not, I would call on students, because students would rarely volunteer, or the same three students would contribute. My typically vibrant classroom felt dull. Learning in my classroom appeared cumbersome to students instead of engaging. When developing my problem of practice, I wanted to address my classroom's ecology and improve student participation in interpersonal communication activities.

1.4 Driving Questions

The following questions guided my review of the literature.

- What is meant by the construct of willingness to communicate and how does the construct offer new ways to investigate and support student participation in interpersonal oral communication?

- What are the identifiable features of activities that have been found to promote students' willingness to engage in oral interpersonal communication in the target language?

- What are the situational factors in classroom contexts that support or hinder students' participation in interpersonal communication?

2.0 Literature Review

For my problem of practice, I plan to investigate how to develop instructional activities that target willingness to communicate (WTC) to increase student participation in oral interpersonal communication. Willingness to communicate is the probability a learner will engage in communication when given the choice in various classroom contexts. Furthermore, WTC seeks to identify factors that encourage and hinder communication such as grouping, interest in the task, and familiarity with the interlocutors (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

I intend to use the construct of WTC to increase student oral interpersonal communication within my current work setting. I am employed in an urban 9-12 high school. Student demographics for my district very considerably from school to school. Notably, within my school, we have seen a five percent increase in English Language Learners bringing it to 20% of our student bod, which is four times higher than the district average. Of the remaining student body, 17% of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Lastly, 64% of the students are described as economically disadvantaged (A+ Schools, 2017). Within my classroom, my focus is on oral interpersonal communication. My classes have an average of twenty-five students. I will focus my study on my French 3 classes, because year three students take the district assessment for proficiency, the PPS Orals, in March and receive results in early May.

Through the literature on Willingness to Communicate, I hope to first, develop a better understanding and definition for the construct of willingness to communicate. Second, I seek to identify tools to investigate tasks and classroom factors that influence student willingness to communicate. Lastly, I look to develop instructional tasks that can increase student oral communication within the classroom.

This purpose of the present literature review will be to examine studies that investigate the construct of willingness within Foreign Language classrooms and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Moreover, I am eliminating articles prior to the year 2000, unless they are the primary sources of the construct of willingness to communicate. Newer studies often have classroom contexts that resemble mine more than older articles. Through the literature, I seek to answer the following questions:

- What is meant by the construct of willingness to communicate?

- What are the classroom factors that support or hinder students' participation in interpersonal communication?

- What are the identifiable task features that have been found to promote students' willingness to engage in oral interpersonal communication in the target language?

From the selected literature, three themes have emerged. The literature review will be organized thematically to include; the construct of willingness to communicate, task and classroom factors that affect WTC, and activities that support willingness to communicate within the foreign language classroom.

2.1 What is Meant by the Construct of Willingness to Communicate?

The construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) was originally conceptualized by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in relation to first language (L1) communicative competence. McCroskey and Baer (1985) believed L1 willingness to communicate remains consistent across situations. MacIntyre, Zoltán, Clément, and Noels (1998) reconceptualized WTC for L2 communication arguing WTC in L2 is situational and cannot be presumed to transfer from one

situation to another. MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined willingness to communicate as "the probability of [a student] engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (p. 546). This model was proposed by MacIntyre four years earlier. He asserted that using this model, they could determine predictors of a student's willingness to communicate in L2 based on multiple variables with correlating features. Consequently, MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a pyramid to visually represent the construct of willingness to communicate to demonstrate what it takes for learners to gain "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using L2" (p. 547). Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) emphasized the "significance of the concept [of willingness to communicate] lies in the fact that it integrates psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative dimensions of language that traditionally have been investigated separately" (p.1).
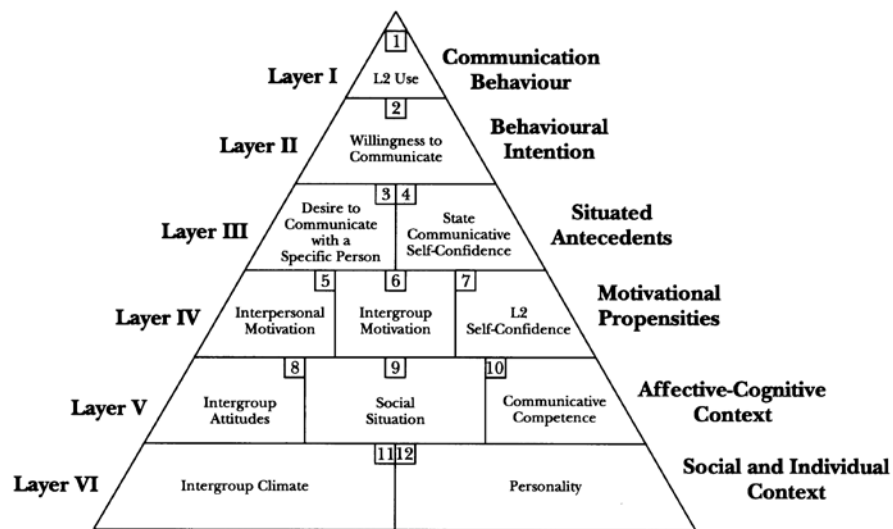
Figure 1 Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC

The pyramid includes twelve variables that are categorized into six layers. The layers build to achieve L2 use starting with social and individual context, leading to communication behavior.

For the purpose of my study, I am looking at Layer II, behavior intention, which is willingness to communicate. However, it is important to note that all preceding layers (VI-III) are meaningful for my study, because they help develop the ideal circumstances in which a student is willing to communicate. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), the two most influential variables were "a combination of communication apprehension and perceived communication competence" (p. 546). These two variables had other elements that contributed to how a student develop communication apprehension and perceived competence.

In a later study, MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002), conducted a study that confirmed communication apprehension and perceived competence as two key variables. MacIntyre et al. (2002) suggested the use of language anxiety instead of communication apprehension, because it can help explain the negative effects produced by the anxiety. Language anxiety causes a "cognitive disruption and its consequences can occur within an individual without a single act of communication behavior; simply being aware of potential future communication with another person can create distraction and disrupt the language learning process" (p. 539). The study conducted by MacIntyre et al. (2002) cautioned others from disregarding other variables and emphasized perceived self-competence as another influential factor. Perceived self-competence is particularly important, because it demonstrates a learner's perception of themselves and their communicative abilities. MacIntyre Noels, and Clément (1997), found that L2 competence can be influenced by the learner's language anxiety. As a result, a learner's perceived competence is lowered. The two variables, communicative perceived competence and communication apprehension (language anxiety) are interrelated and should be kept closely in mind when looking at factors that influence student willingness to communicate.

Subtirelu's (2013) study introduced language ideology, which contributes to the development of my study. He defined language ideology as "the networks of beliefs that language user hold, either tacitly or overtly about language and its assumed relation to other aspects in their environments, especially other individuals and social groups" (p. 121). This concept is important when considering the power and privileges of language, which are ingrained within classroom settings through its participants, their practices, and the curriculum. Language ideologies can contribute to a student's willingness to communicate in a classroom, because according to MacIntyre et al. (1998), learners build upon their past experiences. Attention to language ideology can create instructor awareness in the classroom to address differences in their learners' language ideologies to better support WTC.

Peng (2012) also built upon the work of MacIntyre et al. (1998). In his study, he expounded on the notion that students who have a high L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al. (1998) are likely to "seek out more opportunities to engage in L2 communication" (p. 203). This is of note, because students who engage more often in L2 communication, will have more opportunities to increase their language acquisition. Peng's (2012) study suggested the importance of a classroom ecosystem to promote student willingness to communicate. Furthermore, it identified factors within the classroom that influenced WTC, which he categorized into three strands: 1. learner beliefs and motivation; 2. cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors; 3. classroom environment. (p. 207). These strands could be expanded to include Subtirelu's (2013) language ideology, because they affect student WTC. This study presented the importance of classroom environment in mesosystemic level, exosystemic level, and macrosystemic level. The mesosystemic level explored the influence of other settings where the participants engage as influential to the classroom setting. The exosystemic level identifies how the curriculum can have an effect on the

classroom setting. The macrosystemic level consisted of "overarching social, educational, and cultural factors that influence" the classroom and the three strands identified by Peng (2012). I found this study relevant to my own study development, because of how Peng (2012) described the importance of awareness to the ecosystem being developed within a classroom. This concept honors the complexity of humans and the variety of influential elements students bring to the classroom, before the course even started. Moving toward an ecological understanding of WTC can increase student WTC in L2.

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┌──────────────┐
│  Perceived   │
│Communication │──┐
│ Competence   │  │      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
└──────────────┘  │      │ Willingness  │      │  Frequency   │
                  ├────▶ │     to       │────▶ │     of       │
┌──────────────┐  │      │ Communicate  │      │Communication │
│Communication │──┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
│   Anxiety    │
└──────────────┘
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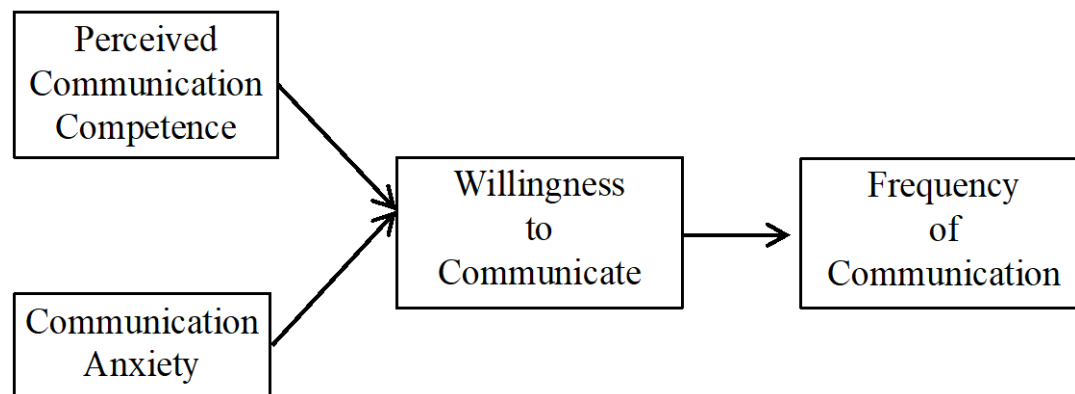
Figure 2 Portion of MacIntyre's (1994) Willingness to Communicate Model

2.2 What are the Classroom Factors that Support or Hinder Student Participation in Interpersonal Oral Communication?

In order for students to develop second language communicate competence, students need to be willing to communicate. Through a review of the literature, it is apparent that there are factors influencing WTC within the classroom. For the purpose of this literature review, it is necessary to

distinguish factors from variables. Factors are discreet components in a classroom that can support or hinder student participation, whereas variables refer to the elements within the pyramid developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998).

Peng and Woodrow (2010) explored the significance of an ecological classroom. "From the ecological perspective, a language classroom represents a social environment in which students and the teacher negotiate their subjectivities as social members" (p. 842). The study investigated the influence of learner beliefs, classroom environment, willingness to communicate, motivation to learn, and communication confidence. The most significant predictor of WTC was communication confidence. This remains consistent with findings from MacIntyre et al. (1998) that showed communicative competence and anxiety as the two most significant predictors. Finding showed that the "classroom environment directly influenced WTC, communication confidence, and learner beliefs" (p. 856). In their discussion, Peng and Woodrow (2010) described that cultural factors may be influential when asking students to evaluate their teachers and cautioned future research to be attentive to the potential influence of cultural bias. The researchers suggested the collection of additional data points for more significant findings, which could include classroom observation.

Peng (2012) as mentioned above, introduced the three strands of factors that influence WTC. The strands included learner beliefs and motivation; 2. cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors; 3. classroom environment. (p. 207). However, for the development of my study, I am looking to further dissect those three strands to more precise factors. Zarrinabadi (2014) conducted a study that investigated the effect teachers have on a learners' willingness to communicate. Her findings showed teachers influenced learners' WTC with their wait time, choice of topic, the way they corrected errors, and the level of support they offered. Furthermore, she found that students

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with a higher WTC in L2 were results of situations in which they "negotiated topics, [had] student choice, focus on student knowledge, awareness and adaptation of error correction, allotment of time for consideration and reflection prior to answering questions, and creating a supportive learning environment" (p. 204). From her study what emerged was the importance of student influence in the classroom environment and tasks. Student influence positively impacted WTC.

Vongsila and Reinders (2016) also investigated the influence teachers have on learner WTC. Vongsila and Reinders (2016), built their study upon the research of Cao and Phillip (2006), Peng (2012) and Peng and Woodrow (2010). These researchers have been included within my literature review, because of the significance of their contributions in investigating the construct of willingness to communicate. The study sought to identify teacher beliefs that influenced WTC and strategies they could use to encourage WTC. The perception questionnaire developed, explored group size, cultural backgrounds, self-perceived speaking ability, class atmosphere, selection of task type, reducing shyness, self-confidence, familiarity with interlocutors, reducing anxiety, and topic familiarity. This study is particularly helpful because it offers strategies used by teachers to encourage student WTC. One common area of weakness was discovered; teachers expressed the importance of interactions outside of the classroom, but few provided opportunities or avenues to enable students to communicate in L2 outside the classroom.

Similarly, Ketsman (2012) focused attention on the influence teachers have on a learner. The study investigated the role expectations play in foreign language classrooms. The case study determined commonalities between the teaching practices of practitioners. The research yielded qualitative results that demonstrated high expectations positively impact student achievement. The study determined that expectations are important when shaping the learning process, because they contribute to high student achievement. The two teachers approached expectations in considerably

different ways but yielded similar results. Thus, demonstrated within this study that the specific expectation was not of importance, but rather the presence of clearly expressed expectations for learners.

Yashima (2002) like Vongsila and Reinders (2016) used a perception questionnaire to investigate factors that influenced student willingness to communicate. Moving away from the teacher focused approach of Vongsila and Reinders (2016), Yashima's (2002) perception questionnaire was administered to the learners within the classroom. The perception questionnaire sought to identify how nine factors influence student communication in L2. The learners' native language was Japanese (L1) and their language of study was English (L2). The measures included: Intercultural friendship orientation, Motivational intensity, Desire to learn English (L2), Approach-avoidance tendency, Interest in international vocation/activities, Interest in foreign affairs, Willingness to communicate in English (L2), Communication anxiety in English (L2), and perceived communication competence in English (L2). This article concluded that lower anxiety and lower perceived competence led to increased WTC, although the authors hypothesized it would be those with a higher confidence and lower anxiety that would thrive. This study provided a clear explanation for each measure for investigation. It also provided an example of a perception questionnaire and methods for interpreting the data. This study suggests the potential for using "an interdisciplinary approach to account for L2 intercultural communication" (p. 63).

Cao (2011) agreed with Peng and Woodrow (2010) that trait-like WTC and situational WTC are underexplored in conjunction with one another. Furthermore, Cao (2011) used multiple data points such as: classroom observations, journals, and stimulated-recall interviews to investigate where situational WTC emerges in L2. The use of stimulated-recall interviews was new to me. After each observation, "the participants were played excerpts of audio-recorded

classroom interaction and asked to make comments on any factors affecting their WTC" (p.470). The study further concluded the dynamic ecological environment of a classroom as playing a large role in student WTC. It further emphasized the importance of keeping trait-like and situational WTC as a coexisting presence. "Interaction and interdependence between various individual, environmental, and linguistic factors and the effect of that interaction on situational WTC" (p. 477). Lastly, Cao (2011) warned educators to not fall victim to using only a previous learner's experience as the predictor of a future situational WTC. Cao (2011) recommended using studies to plan tasks keeping in mind the factors influencing WTC.

2.3 What are the Identifiable Task Features that Promote Students' Willingness to Engage in Interpersonal Communication in the Target Language?

Cao and Philp (2006) investigated trait-like WTC and situational WTC. Trait-like WTC was defined by McCroskey and Baer (1985) as behaviors that encourage or hinder WTC that would remain static across situations in L1. Whereas, situational WTC can change from context to another (McIntyre et al., 1998). Through the use of a perception questionnaire, Cao and Philp (2006) found they could identify trait-like and contextual factors that influenced a learner's decision to communicate in the target language (p. 487). The study found that behaviors were influenced by group size, self-confidence, familiarity with interlocutors, and interlocutor participation. The implications of this study, reported by Cao and Philp (2006), questioned the use of "a generic questionnaire" and urged others to develop new instruments that could allow a more accurate window into the interlocutors' minds.

Tavakoli and Davoudi (2017) study found students worked most productively when working with their teacher or a more proficient speaker. The study also discovered students were least likely to communicate with their peers in a dyad versus a peer group of three to four. The author also suggested that this could be attributed to the supportive classroom environment created by the teacher and students. Therefore, when developing tasks, it is important to create heterogenous groups and provide groups with opportunities to interact with their instructor throughout the task. Tavakoli and Davoudi (2017) also expressed the need for instructors to be "more sensitive about their crucial role in providing a more communicative atmosphere" (p. 1524). This includes the need to develop a community where students feel willing to "initiate and maintain conversations" (p. 1524). The authors suggested the use of real-task communicative activities as a means to provide opportunities the leverage student WTC.

On the other hand, Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) cautioned instructors on how they structure their role during tasks. The study's finding showed that when students were asked to engage in oral interpersonal tasks, they felt the teacher's presence decreased their willingness to communicate. The students also reported that when they had difficulty understanding their partner it made them unwilling to communicate. From their questionnaire responses students identified topic choice, their partner's contributions, and the level of dialogue created between partners whether they agreed or disagreed, as factors that increased willingness to communicate. For the purpose of my study, Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak advocated for the use of less restrictive tasks, because they are counterproductive to student WTC. Discourse was sustained when students were given tasks that allowed them to share their perspectives. Students also participated in tasks that allowed them to be creative and inventive. Therefore, when creating my own tasks, it would be important to bear in mind this study's findings and implications.

As suggested, Vongsila and Reinders (2016), there are identifiable task features that have been found to promote a students' willingness to communicate in L2. Their study identified one particular factor: group size. From Cao and Philps's (2006) study, Vongsila and Reinders (2016) offered a focused approach to task design. When developing group tasks, creating groups of three to four has shown an increase in WTC. However, for the purpose of my literature review, I feel it is important to investigate ways in which multiple factors (identified by Cao and Philps (2006) or Vongsila and Reinders (2016) could be compounded within tasks, instead of looking at them only in isolation. Supported by the literature review, it appears reasonable to engage the factors influencing willingness to communicate in conjunction with one another.

2.4 Considerations

Through the literature review it became evident there are many studies that have shown the significance of Willingness to Communicate. The literature review provided me with clarity around the potential impact the construct of Willingness to Communicate could have within my classroom. The studies mentioned found that the two most influential variables are communicative competence and perceived anxiety, which remain interconnected with cultural factors (MacIntyre et al., 1998). When planning tasks, it is important to keep in mind way in which to decrease perceived anxiety and increase perceived communicative competence.

By framing my work to address perceived anxiety and communicative competence. The hope was to develop tasks that addressed those variables to increase student interpersonal oral communication within my classroom. Based on the literature review, I created tasks that intentionally sought to address classrooms ecology. For my problem of practice, I investigated the

three factor strands identified by Peng (2012) which looks at cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors in conjunction with learner beliefs. Studies showed the importance of specific task features that decrease perceived anxiety and increase student communicative competence. Some factors I considered when developing tasks for my problem of practice were grouping, opportunities to interact with the instructor, designing less restrictive tasks, and creating more imaginative tasks. In doing so, students were given increased opportunities within their classroom to practice their interpersonal oral communication.

3.0 Applied Inquiry Plan

3.1 Problem of Practice

For my problem of practice, I investigated how to develop instructional activities that target willingness to communicate (WTC) to increase student participation in oral interpersonal communication. MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined willingness to communicate as "the probability of [a student] engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (p. 546). Furthermore, WTC seeks to identify factors that encourage and hinder communication such as grouping, interest in the task, and familiarity with the interlocutors (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

I used the construct of WTC to increase student oral interpersonal communication within my current work setting. By increasing student willingness to communicate I showed an increase in oral interpersonal participation. Through the literature review it is clear there are many studies that have shown the significance of the construct of Willingness to Communicate. The literature review emphasized the two most influential variables are communicative competence and perceived anxiety, which remain interconnected with cultural factors (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

By framing my work to address perceived anxiety and communicative competence. It was possible to develop tasks that address those variables, which in turn increased student interpersonal oral communication within my classroom. From the literature review, studies showed the importance of specific task features that decrease perceived anxiety and increased student communicative competence. When developing tasks for my problem of practice, it was important to create heterogenous groups, increase opportunities to interact with the instructor, and design less restrictive tasks and more imaginative tasks. In doing so, students were given increased

opportunities within their classroom that addressed their personal preferences by addressing perceived anxiety and communicative competence.

3.2 Stakeholders

When envisioning ways to address the decrease in student interpersonal oral proficiency, it is important to identify the key actors who have an invested interest and who were impacted. Within my place of practice stakeholders included; teachers, administrators, students, and their families. I conducted my research within my own classroom, but the outcome of my study, could potentially influence other teachers and change our approaches to instruction within classrooms. Secondly, our administrators are influenced by this problem, because it is challenging to justify foreign language positions when students are not reaching benchmarks. If the study shows increases in student participation, maybe in time we will see increases in proficiency. The primary stakeholders are the students. This study sought to identify approached that directly impact their participation in the target language. This study identifies concrete ways to increase student interpersonal oral communication within the classroom. By increasing student opportunities to engage in the classroom, students have more chances to practice the language. When considering my study, it was important for me to keep my students at the forefront to develop inquiry questions, methods, design, and timelines. The changes made within my classroom directly impacted their learning, changed the classroom environment, and increased their influence on the content.

3.3 Inquiry Questions

The literature review demonstrated there are many studies that have shown the significance of Willingness to Communicate. The literature review provided me with clarity around the potential impact the construct of Willingness to Communicate can have within my classroom. The studies addressed found that the two most influential variables are communicative competence and perceived anxiety, which remain interconnected with cultural factors (MacIntyre et al., 1998). When planning tasks, it was important for me to bear in mind ways in which to decrease perceived anxiety and increase perceived communicative competence.

By framing my work to address perceived anxiety and communicative competence, I then developed approaches to observe their presence in students, conducted a perception questionnaire to gain further insight from students, and developed tasks to track their participation and perceptions directly after the tasks. I designed a questionnaire survey to find the identifiable factors that influence student willingness to communicate. From the questionnaire results and baseline observations it became possible to identify strategies and activities that best addressed those variables, which in turn increased student interpersonal oral communication within my classroom. Based on the literature review, I created tasks that intentionally assessed interpersonal oral participation. From the literature review, I determined my driving questions for my study:

1. What reported ecological and content factors support or hinder student participation in my classroom?
2. Based on the literature review and student survey responses, do the chosen identified strategies and activities increase students' willingness to engage in oral interpersonal communication?

3. Which strategies produced the greatest increase in student WTC in interpersonal oral activities?

3.4 Inquiry Design

The study used action research for the inquiry design. Action research "[brings] together action and reflection, theory and practice, …in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern" (Buss and Zambo, 2016, p.140) to my classroom. As an action researcher, I sought to "understand multiple co-realities that [exist] in a specific context, or [foster deep] understanding of [my] specific situations among various stakeholders" (p.140). The inquiry design of action research enabled me to take deliberate actions within my classroom to influence student participation. Furthermore, due to the iterative and reflective nature of action research, I was able to monitor, reflect, and adjust at each step. Within my context, I investigated how I, as a teacher, could design specific tasks to increase student willingness to communicate. Informed by the literature, baseline data collection, and by student perception questionnaire responses, I implemented classroom strategies that leveraged high student participation in my foreign language classroom. The outcome of the study improved my effectiveness as a foreign language educator and provided me with pedagogical tools that I can use to increase student participation in my classroom.

3.5 Evidence, Methods, and Analyses

Inquiry Question	Evidence	Method	Analysis
What reported ecological and content factors support or hinder student participation in my classroom?	Evidence of student preferences about classroom environment and pedagogy	This was evaluated in the form of a questionnaire and through the use of student self-reports on willingness to communicate at the end of each task.	Action Research enabled me, the researcher, to explore the problem of practice which was informed by my place of practice. To best develop interventions that match student needs, I needed to collect, analyze, and interpret student responses.
	Student Perceptions **&** **Interest Questionnaire**		
	Student Perception Questionnaire asked students to identify factors from the construct of willingness to communicate that contributed to their learning experience in class. The questions sought to gain insight on student perceptions of their willingness to communicate and their preferences within the classroom. The perception questionnaire also focused personal and ecological factors that support or hinder a student learning experience.	The perception questionnaire was given administered to students after the baseline data was collected.	The student perception questionnaire was influenced by Tavakoli & Davoudi's (2017) survey. I wrote the perception questionnaire myself as open-ended prompts for students to answer during class. I analyzed the data using response frequency to determine areas of focus.

Student Self-Reports

The student self-reports provided immediate student feedback after an activity. The report asked students to document if specific factors encouraged or discouraged their willingness to communicate.	The student self-reports were administered after each task during the baseline and intervention.	Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2015) study influenced the student self-reports on willingness to communicate that I developed. Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak suggested the seven factors which I investigated with the self-reports that I created. Students were asked to report on seven factors: 1) topic, 2) their partner's contribution, 3) whether they agreed with their partner, 4) whether they disagreed with their partner, 5) their difficulty to understand their partner, 6) my presence, and 7) the length of time for the activity. Zarrinabadi (2014) and Vongsila & Reinders (2016), suggested an intentional analysis of the data could identify specific interventions. For their studies, they used a Likert-Scale and from the data. For my study, I assigned a positive response with a score of 1 and for a negative response a score of -1. If a student had no preference it was assigned a 0. By assigning a value to each response, I could chart how

			students felt about each factor for each task. The results of the student self-reports helped identify factors that encourage or hinder student willingness to communicate. The identified factors were influential in the design of the intervention tasks. Analysis of the generated data informed interventions and strategies that targeted student needs and preferences and determined if it necessary to address multiple factors.
Based on the literature review and student surveys, do the chosen identified strategies increase students' willingness to engage in oral interpersonal communication?	Evidence of student preferences about classroom environment and pedagogy will then influence the chosen interventions and strategies introduced.	Evidence collection occurred throughout the semester. Evidence included student participation in Sitcoms, Info-Gap Activities, and Categories. Measurement of student participation was captured using an observation tool during classroom interactions.	Student participation during activities were captured using the observational tool. Analysis of student participation identified the frequency of student talk.
	Observation Tool		
	An observational tool was developed to define and measure student participation in the classroom. Student participation was measured based on the frequency of student talk and hand raising. This is a necessary	The tool will be used to observe the frequency of student talk and hand raising during the Info-Gap Activities and other determined portions of class time (likely the Think-Pair-Share warm ups,	Krepel & Sinclair (2019) analyzed student participation over a series of activities and suggested development of a tool to analyze student talk more closely during interpersonal

	clarification, because the construct of WTC asserted that for a student to demonstrate WTC, does not necessarily mean they have to speak. It is a student observably demonstrating their willingness to communicate even though they may not be called upon each time. (MacIntyre et al., 1998).	which occur daily in class, because it allows the distinction between student to student talk vs. student to teacher talk).	communication activities. An observational tool allowed me to analyze the number of times a student participated in the classroom and identify how the student participates/ attempts to participate throughout the observation period. The observational tool was developed based on Cao & Philp's (2006) model. Findings from the generated data suggested which types of activities generated the most student talk and which activities increased student participation.
Which strategies produced the greatest increase in student WTC in interpersonal oral activities?	Evidence of activities that produced the greatest increased in WTC will examined across three task types; 1) Info-Gap activities, 2) Sitcomms, and 3) Categories.	These activities are designed to generate student talk. The tasks were designed to address their areas of interest and preferences in order to promote their Willingness to Communicate.	Analysis of student talk during this activity demonstrated the frequency of student talk, attempts to talk (student may get caught off by a more dominant partner), and whether over the series of activities student talk increases. Results from the observational tool during the tasks can show student participation across activities. Results provided insight into which types of activities produced increased willingness to communicate

	Info-Gap Activities (Task based assessment)	Info-Gap Activities are typically done in pairs or triads. Each person does not have the same information. The group has to work together to complete the task. Students participated in a series of Info-Gap activities to measure the frequency of student participation.	Information-Gap activities require partners to work together to gain information to ensure both members have complete information (Shrum & Glisan, 1994). Student responses for the study are measured based on the number of utterances the students make.
	Sitcomms (Task based assessment)	Sitcomm are a whole-class activity. The task is completed in a 10-minute period of time and serves as a warmup.	Sitcom activities provide the whole class with a prompt to respond to. Students raise their hands and share responses that fit the prompt. Students are given a point for every response they provide. Student responses for the study are measured based on the number of utterances the students make.
	Categories	Categories are a small-group activity (3-4 students). Students work together to develop a list of vocabulary words based on a category in a minute and a half.	Categories activities have students work in groups to identify as many vocabulary words as possible within the allotted time. Student responses for the study are measured based on the number of utterances the students make.

3.6 Proposed Deliverable Products

As a result of my inquiry project, I produced deliverable products which included: the student perception questionnaire, a pre- and post-speaking assessment, info-gap activities, Sitcomms, an observational tool to measure student participation, and a student self-report tool. The deliverable products are particularly valuable, because they are tangible resources that could be reused within my context and could be useful to other educators within my content area.

Currently, in my district there are few resources available to track student participation in the target language. Having an observational tool that is easy to use, is beneficial for all foreign language teachers. Within the district, across all content areas, we are asked to provide data to students to help them better understand their performance in class. These tools provide students with a better understanding of their level of participation in class, which would help them understand their grade better and increase their ability to self-identify their strengths and areas for growth.

The speaking assessment served as an additional assessment option for teachers to use for their Student Learning Objective in their classroom. Info-Gap and Sitcomm activities take time to develop and sharing such resources within my department is beneficial to my colleagues. We generally share our resources, and this could offer new contributions on my part.

Lastly, the perception questionnaire could offer others a resource to identify early on in the semester, ways in which to help encourage student willingness to communicate. Development of perception questionnaires is often challenging and time consuming. By providing a professional

learning about my work, I can show my colleagues the impact the framework of willingness to communicate had on my classroom and offer others the resources I developed.

4.0 Baseline Exploratory Tasks and Findings: Preparing for the Intervention Study

The construct of willingness to communicate suggests that there are contextual and individual factors that support and hinder student classroom participation. For the purpose of my study, I wanted to look at the relationship between the contextual and individual factors in the room that combine to determine the classrooms ecology. *Contextual factors* as defined by Peng (2012) are "classroom atmosphere, which refers to the mood, emotions, or climate" (p. 308) and also includes teacher factors such as "teaching style, methods, and classroom procedures" (p.308). *Individual factors* that contribute to student willingness to communicate include interest in the topic, teacher support, language anxiety, risk-taking, and difficulty understanding others (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The combination and interaction of individual factors and contextual factors make up the classroom ecology. The ecological perspective "sees a web of intertwining relationships between students, teachers, and their surrounding micro classroom contexts and institutional environments" (Cao, 2011, p. 469). While authors have suggested possible factors, for my study, I needed to determine the factors that interplay within my classroom. By collecting baseline data, I was able to determine the contextual and individual factors, establish baseline levels of student participation, and identify changes that needed to be made to the activities in class to promote students' willingness to engage in interpersonal communicate. The baseline data was collected through observations using the observation tool, Sitcomms (situation for communication) scores, student perception questionnaires, and self-reports after specific interpersonal communication tasks (adapted from MacIntyre, Zoltán, & Noels, 1998).

4.1 Task Selection

Before collecting baseline information, I selected the tasks to observe using an observational tool (see Figure 3). Bearing in mind the emphasis and frequency of interpersonal communicative tasks, I decided to observe whole group participation, small group participation (3 or more students working together), and paired work. The observations focused on three types of activities: 1) Sitcomms, 2) Categories, and 3) Info-Gap activities. These activities were chosen, because they also reflected the three types of grouping; Sitcomms are whole class, Categories are completed in small groups, and Info-Gaps are accomplished in pairs. Sitcomms are situations for communication in which students are asked to provide possible responses to a scenario. Categories is a game where students are asked to identify as many single vocabulary words that they can related to a topic. Info-Gap activities are tasks that give each member of the pair pieces of the information that when put together completes, for example, a picture. Together, the students must communicate with each other to accomplish the task. For each activity, observations were recorded, and students were asked to complete a self-report about their willingness to communicate for each activity.

4.2 The Influence of Contextual and Individual Factors on Classroom Ecology

4.2.1 The Observational Tool

After completing baseline data collection using the observational tool (Figure 3), students were then given the *student perception questionnaire* to identify which contextual and individual

factors supported and hindered their participation in class. Additionally, the self-report took place immediately after each activity to promote student reflection on their participation in the activity. From the observations, the instances of talking were coded for frequency and compared to one another. The observations were then compared to the classroom self-reports to determine which factors played influential roles. Student responses on the self-reports were coded for a "yes" to be a value of 1 and a "no" as a value of -1. If all students said "yes" to a factor contributing to their willingness to communicate, it receives a score of 11. If all students said "no" the score is -11.

			→	→	→
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

*Tally marks will be used to determine frequency of each type of interaction

Figure 3 Observational Tool of Student Utterances

4.2.2 Self-Reports

To obtain additional data during the study and the baseline, students were asked to complete *self-reports* (see Figure 4). Students were given the self-reports at the end of each activity to reflect on ways in which the activity encouraged or discouraged them to participate. The self-

reports, provided me with information about how students willingness to communicate was affected during each task based on seven factors: 1) topic, 2) their partner's contribution, 3) whether they agreed with their partner, 4) whether they disagreed with their partner, 5) their difficulty to understand their partner, 6) teacher presence, and 7) the length of time for the activity. The self- provided students with an opportunity to communicate what made them more or less willing to participate in activities. The self-reports data differed from the perception survey, because the *self-reports* asked students about their reactions to specific activities whereas the *student perception questionnaire* provided more general information about the students' preferences and willingness to communicate.

Assigned number: #_____

Factor	Encouraged Me	Discouraged Me
Topic		
Partner's Contribution		
Agreeing with the partner		
Disagreeing with partner		
Difficulty in understanding the partner		
Presence of teacher		
Time (length of activity)		

Additional Comments to the teacher:

Figure 4 Student Self-Report of Willingness to Communicate

4.3 Exploratory Tasks and Insights

4.3.1 Situations of Communication: Baseline

Task
Monster Project

Your host sister Angelica loves monsters. You decide to draw her a monster. Describe the monster to Angelica.

• Tell her the monster's name
• Describe each body part
   • How many
   • Color
• Describe the monster's personality
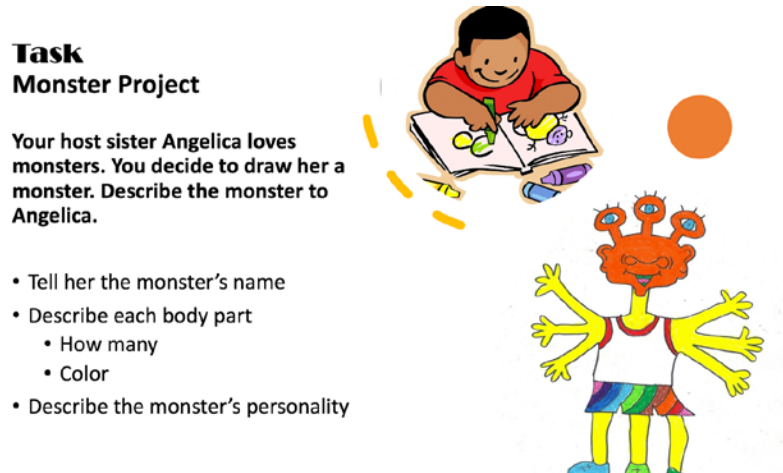
Figure 5 Baseline Sitcomm Prompt

The students were already familiar with the process of Sitcomms. Sitcomms stand for situations for communication and are conducted with the whole class and completed in class twice a week for ten minutes each. Students are given a sticker for each sentence they make. To earn a sticker, the student must respond with a statement that is appropriate to the prompt. For example, the prompt that was used for each of the four days of Sitcomms was to describe a monster to your host sister. A task appropriate response would be, "the monster has three eyes", "the monster is blue", or "it has a square head". Students have been participating in this type of activity for two years now, so the procedure is not new to them. The prompt for this baseline activity for each of four days was to describe a monster of their choosing in detail (see Figure 5). Overall, every student but one participated in the activity (see Table 1).

34

Table 1 Baseline Student Sitcomm Utterances (10 minutes each)

Student	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Totals
11	0	1	2	3	**6**
10	0	0	1	1	**2**
6	2	2	2	2	**8**
30	2	2	3	2	**9**
9	2	3	3	4	**12**
8	0	0	1	1	**2**
24	0	0	0	0	**0**
5	2	3	3	3	**11**
15	2	3	4	4	**13**
20	0	0	0	4	**4**
16	0	0	2	4	**6**
					73

The student self-reports provided me with baseline data to understand how students felt about Sitcomms before making any necessary changes to this whole-group classroom task. Students were moderately interested in the topic of describing a monster to another person, but the difficulty of the task dissuaded them from wanting to participate as did the amount of time allotted for composing their replies (see Table 2). It is also possible that the topic contributed to the difficulty of the task. 8 out of 11 students reported teacher presence positively contributed to their willingness communicate. I used the baseline data to inform the development of an intervention to increase student willingness to communicate. Although students reported time to be a discouraging factor, I chose to keep the timeframe of 10 minutes. I made this choice, because the Sitcomm serves as a warm-up activity in my classroom. What I chose to change for the intervention, for this task, was the topic. I chose this change, because from the student perception questionnaire and the student self-reports, students emphasized topic as influential when determining their willingness to communicate.

Table 2 Baseline Student Sitcomm Perceptions

Student	Topic	Difficulty	Presence	Time
11	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	-1	-1
6	0	0	0	0
30	-1	-1	1	-1
9	-1	-1	1	-1
8	1	1	1	-1
24	-1	-1	1	1
5	1	0	1	1
15	1	-1	1	1
20	1	0	-1	1
16	1	-1	1	1
	4	-2	6	2

4.3.2 Information Gap Activities: Baseline

Nome: Nome del tuo compagno:

Create a monster using different body parts and colors. Be prepared to describe your monster in Italian to a classmate using as many colors, numbers, and different body parts as possible.
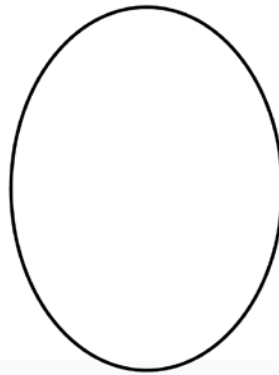
Figure 6 Baseline Monster Info-Gap Activity

The Info-Gap activity is a task that required students to work together to accomplish the activity. Each student in the pair is provided pieces of the information and the two students must

work collaboratively to get a complete picture. I observed my students' interpersonal communication in two different Info-Gap activities while collecting baseline data. The first Info-Gap required my students to draw their own monster without showing one another (see Figure 6). Once finished, they had to describe their monster to a peer in detail, which included describing the number of body parts, sizes, and colors. This task was linked to the curriculum and to the area of study during this time (e.g., body parts and numbers). Their partner had to draw the monster and ask clarifying questions when necessary. At the end, students showed their monsters to one another.

An unexpected outcome of this activity for me, was in listening to the students' interactions, it became clear that they were committed to completing the task in Italian, but when they felt stuck, they used English with one another to facilitate language in the L2. For example, student 15 asked "how would I say *to the right side*?". Their use of their L1 was to access the language to communicate in L2. Research on the use of English during pair work task has been conducted and it was found that the use of L1 facilitates the use of L2 (Martin-Beltrán, 2014). For this reason, the use of the L1 was considered as part of the construct of willingness to communicate. This use of English is referred to as metatalk, that is, talk about talk, and is often constructed in the students' L1. During the information gap task, students often use the L1 to reorient themselves to the purpose of the task. Brooks and Donato (1994) described this interaction; "what might appear on the surface as non-relevant task talk is in fact mediating the participants' control over the language and procedures of the task, each other, and ultimately the self" (p. 271). Brooks and Donato (1994) further highlight the importance for teachers to consider the "impossibility of discussing L2 performance apart from cognition" (p.271). This is consistent with my findings. Students used their L1 to communicate when it facilitated, in this case

accelerated, their understanding of the purpose of the task to return to accomplishing the task itself in the L2. Therefore, the students' use of English during base-line data collection was considered a sign of their willingness to communicate and of the desire to sustain participation in the task.

The second Info-Gap activity used two versions of the same house and students had to describe either an activity or object in different rooms for them to find the missing elements of each of their pictures (see Figure 7). The activity required students to use rooms in a home, directions, household objects, and activities to accomplish the task.
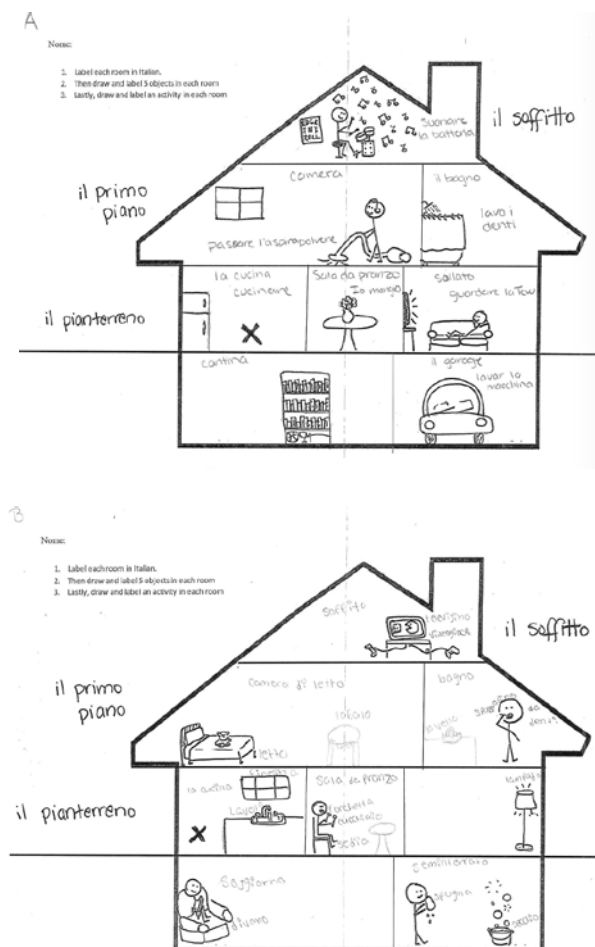
Figure 7 Baseline Home Info-Gap Activity

Student utterances in the info-gap tasks were much higher than those they produced during the Sitcomms (whole group responses to a well-defined prompt). The communicative nature and task design (i.e., they need to share information to complete the task) of Info-Gaps generates a high number of speaking opportunities (see Table 3). The lowest number of student utterances being 0 and the highest being 41. In Table 3, "Clarifications" captures the number of student utterances for clarification. Therefore, I expected that number to be low. Overall, the Home Info-Gap generated the most utterances of the three info-gap tasks. When comparing the utterances across tasks, the Sitcomms produced a total of 73 utterances, whereas the Info-Gaps produced 351 (see table 3), a notably higher number of utterances for pair work tasks as compared to whole class tasks. Both tasks were completed in the same length of time and, from the data, it is clear that task design and number of participants (whole class vs. pair work) effects the amount of student talk generated, as will be discussed below.

Table 3 Baseline Info-Gap Utterances (10 minutes each)

Student	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home	Totals
11	18	2	20	**40**
10	15	0	26	**41**
6	12	0	0	**12**
30	9	0	30	**39**
9	20	2	41	**63**
8	0	0	0	**0**
24	10	5	0	**15**
5	13	12	20	**45**
15	24	2	40	**66**
20	8	3	0	**11**
16	19	0	0	**19**
	148	26	177	**351**

Student perceptions, recorded on the student perception questionnaire, of the Info-Gap showed the least willingness to communicate for the Home description task, despite the fact that it produced a higher number of utterances,148 compared to 177 (see Table 4). Students felt the topic and difficulty of the Home description task discouraged their participation, as did the amount of time they had for the task. This reaction might have been because the home description info-gap task was more complex and required several linguistic elements (e.g., rooms, direction prepositions, furniture, household objects, activities) than the monster info-gap task (e.g., body parts, number, and a few adjectives). My presence during the task, however, appeared to encourage their willingness to communicate. In summary, student perceptions of the Monster Info-Gap were generally positive and across all categories they felt the activity promoted their willingness to communicate, i.e., 8 and 9 for the monster task compared to 2 on the home information gap task (see Table 4).

Table 4 Baseline Student Perceptions of Info-Gap Activities

	Topic				Difficulty		
Student	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home	Student	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home
11	1	1	1	11	1	1	1
10	1	1	-1	10	1	1	-1
6	1	1	0	6	-1	-1	0
30	-1	0	-1	30	-1	0	-1
9	1	1	1	9	-1	-1	-1
8	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
24	1	1	0	24	-1	0	0
5	1	1	1	5	1	1	-1
15	1	1	1	15	-1	-1	-1
20	1	1	0	20	1	1	0
16	1	1	0	16	1	1	0
	8	9	2		0	2	-4

As an overall reaction, students claimed that task difficulty for info-gaps discouraged their participation scoring it 0, 2, and -4, respectively (see Table 4). Students stated the Monster activity was more interesting than talking about homes. This finding led me to understand that when considering factors that influence willingness to communicate, topic and student interest in the topic are highly influential in encouraging or discouraging student interpersonal oral communication. Additionally, the teacher's role in the activity can be influential as well.

4.3.3 Categories: Baseline

The last baseline activity observed was the Categories game. Categories is a game where students are provided a topic and are asked to write single vocabulary words associated with the prompt in a fixed amount of time. For my classes, I use a minute and thirty seconds for each round. Students only receive points for words that no other group produced. Students were placed into small groups of 3-4 students for this activity. They were given a paper for their responses. When ready, the students were told the topic and given a minute and thirty seconds to write as many words related to the topic as possible. This activity across all three topics--body parts, home, and school-- produced low numbers of utterances, which ranged from 20-37 per topic (see Table 5). Utterances for this task were only word level given the nature of the task. Depending on the task, the distribution of those utterances relied heavily on the word production of individual students. The Categories activity data showed that it was the activity where the fewest students produce utterances. While observing, I realized that the student who wrote down student responses were often producing the highest number of words, but rarely said anything aloud, because they did not need to speak and share information since they were recording the words in writing. In other

words, this task was not useful as a valid task for assessing willingness to communicate or for capturing each students' verbal output in the small group setting.

Table 5 Baseline Word Utterances of Categories (1.5 minutes each)

Students	Body Parts Categories 1	Home Categories 2	School Categories 3
11	0	0	1
10	0	0	1
6	x	2	0
30	8	1	3
9	0	4	7
8	3	1	2
24	3	0	1
5	7	3	1
15	6	4	2
20	2	2	8
16	8	3	0
	37	20	26

Students felt strongly the Categories task made them less likely to participate (see Table 6) They rated the activity with negative scores for three factors (i.e. -8 for topic, -2 for disagreeing, -5 for difficulty). When asked about their self-reports, students said they felt uncomfortable disagreeing with vocabulary shared by their classmates and therefore remained silent.

Table 6 Baseline Student Perceptions of Categories

Topic

Students	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6
11	-1	-1	-1	1	1	1
10	-1	-1	-1	1	1	-1
6	-1	-1	-1	1	1	0
30	-1	1	-1	1	1	1
9	-1	-1	-1	1	1	1
8	-1	-1	-1	1	1	0
24	-1	0	0	1	1	-1
5	1	1	-1	1	1	1
15	1	1	1	1	1	1
20	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	0
16	-1	1	-1	1	1	1
	-7	-2	-8	9	11	4

Disagreeing

Students	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6
11	-1	0	-1	0	0	1
10	-1	1	1	1	1	-1
6	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
30	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	1	0	0	0	0	1
8	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	0
24	1	0	0	1	1	-1
5	1	1	1	1	1	-1
15	1	1	1	-1	-1	-1
20	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
16	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	1
	-2	-1	-2	0	0	-1

Difficulty

Students	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6
11	1	-1	1	1	1	1
10	-1	-1	1	1	1	-1
6	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	0
30	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	0
9	-1	1	-1	1	-1	-1
8	1	-1	1	1	1	0
24	-1	0	0	1	1	-1
5	-1	1	-1	0	-1	-1
15	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	1
20	-1	-1	1	1	1	0
16	1	-1	1	1	-1	1
	-5	0	0	4	-1	-1

Findings from the data reflect my own personal view of the Categories task; the task is beneficial for a quick review of vocabulary and for brainstorming, but the nature of the task does not require students to collaborate, but rather to say words that fit the topic. In order for them to work collaboratively, students need to listen to each other and acknowledge each other's contributions. When listening, I rarely heard students acknowledge or respond to one another, because they were frantically trying to produce a high quantity of words. For many students, the lack of affirmations from their classmates made them reluctant to speak. As a result, it is evident from the baseline data that this task is not communicative in nature and therefore not a valid task for this study.

4.4 Student Perception Questionnaire and Self-Reports

Students were given a perception questionnaire to better understand what contributes or discouraged their willingness to communicate (see Figure 8). In the student perception questionnaire, the students reported that there were classroom activities that promoted their willingness to communicate such as, the self-assessment tool, student self-report, and the longer timed activities (see Table 7). Student responses in the self-report varied most was when it came to topic, because students had many unique interests. Most students consistently said the topics in the baseline data discouraged them. When asked to provide topics that interest them only 2 out of 11 students mentioned topics from the baseline tasks used for collecting data to be used for developing and implementing the intervention intended to improve students' willingness to communicate.

Date: Assigned Number: 30

Willingness to Communicate Student Perception Questionnaire

1. When participating in classroom speaking activities, which activities do you like to participate in the most?

2. What topics most interest you to talk about in Italian?

3. When asked to do speaking activities, how do you prefer to be grouped? Would you prefer a whole class activity, a small group activity (3-4 people), or a paired activity?

4. In class, do you prefer to ask questions or wait for someone else to ask you a question?

5. Given the choice, who would you like to work with in class? (Your response could include other classmates or Ms. Schmitt)

6. Do you find it easier or more challenging to work with a friend?

7. What are some reasons you are willing to communicate in Italian class?

8. What are some reasons why you are unwilling to communicate in Italian class?

Figure 8 Willingness to Communicate Perception Questionnaire

Although previous studies often found grouping to be influential for increasing communication, based on the student perception questionnaire responses and their self-reports, grouping with this particular group was not influential. This could be attributed to the fact that many of my students this year have known one another for over a year. Even though, some of the activities initially discouraged participation, I maintained them throughout the study to see if by increasing the factors that support participation, it might change student perception of factors that initially hindered their willingness to communicate. The positive factors cannot be considered in isolation and should be treated in conjunction with one another to maximize opportunities to support student willingness to communicate. When considering the positive factors, it is important to remember the classroom's ecology; changing one factor has a potential impact on another. For example, topic has an influence on how students perceive task difficulty. Another example is the need to consider both the task and the allotment of time for task completion (see Table 7). Lastly, the influence of teacher presence remained a factor that supported students' willingness to communicate throughout the baseline observations. To monitor my role within the activities, I continued the use of the student self-reports to measure student perceptions of teacher presence on their willingness to communicate.

Table 7 Baseline Student Perception Questionnaire Responses

Supported Participation	Discouraged Participation
Info Gaps	Categories
Sitcomms	Time (shorter)
Time (longer)	Topic
Self-Assessment	Agreeing with partner
Topic	Disagreeing with partner
Teacher Presence	Difficulty of task
Student Input	
Partner Contribution	

**Grouping had no negative effect

Based on student feedback and the baseline data, I developed my next unit of work carefully considering student interests expressed in the perception questionnaire and the other factors that supported participation throughout my observations, such as student suggestions for the topic, the role of teacher presence, the use of the self-report tool, and longer time allotments to complete tasks. I also realized the Categories activity is not a truly communicative task, but a good way to assess the students' breath and retention of vocabulary. From the baseline information, I chose not to continue use the Categories activity for this study but focused on improving the Sitcomms and Info-Gap activities for the intervention, to which we now turn.

5.0 Beyond the Baseline: Implementing the WTC Intervention and Findings

Based on the baseline data, student perception questionnaire, and self-reports, I carefully planned communicative tasks for the next unit by implementing findings from the baseline data, which is the focus of this study. Due to the consequential nature of the topic on their willingness to communicate, I selected a topic based on their responses in the student perception questionnaire. I planned a unit about animals around the world because (8 of 11 of students picked animals as a topic that interested them). I introduced the context for the unit by telling the students to imagine we were visiting the Pittsburgh Zoo, when suddenly the power goes out. As visitors, we are told to take shelter in the Discovery Pavilion and are asked to report descriptions of animals that we were able to see. It's dark outside and hard to see the exact animal, but we have to try our best to help identify the animals during the power failure by using only physical descriptions. The PowerPoint that ensued was developed to teach students how to describe animals. Students had previous experience with description from the unit about travel, where they were asked to describe places they go. The purpose of developing their description skills is to enhance their ability to use circumlocution. The type of circumlocution student might use was to describe features of animals instead of identifying them when they could not remember the name of the animal in Italian. Circumlocution was appropriate for this task because students had learned unique details of each animal to identify them without naming them. The unit on animals was also chosen because it connected to previously learned vocabulary, such as body parts, numbers, colors, and directions (from the home chapter) which was also used during baseline tasks.

5.1 The Zoo Sitcomm

Figure 9 Zoo Info-Gap Prompt

The Zoo Sitcomm, a whole-class communication task, asked students to describe animals they see at a zoo without revealing the animal (see Figure 9) and used a guessing game format. Student talk generated over four days in the post-baseline Sitcomm showed an overall increase in utterances for all students (students #8, #24, and #20 were absent) (see Table 8). The overall utterances increased from 73 utterances from the baseline Sitcomm (describe a monster) to 141 in the Zoo Sitcomm. Thus, the Sitcomms showed an increase in the number of utterances that the students created by nearly double. This is particularly interesting because the time allotted for the baseline and the intervention was held constant, i.e., 10 minutes for each whole class Sitcomm.

Table 8 Study Student Sitcomm Utterances (10 minutes each)

Student	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Totals
11	2	6	4	4	**17**
10	2	3	5	4	**14**
6	4	A	5	4	**13**
30	3	3	5	7	**15**
9	4	4	5	4	**17**
8	2	A	A	A	**2**
24	1	4	3	A	**8**
5	4	5	6	4	**19**
15	4	4	7	7	**22**
20	3	A	A	A	**3**
16	3	4	A	4	**11**
					141

Student perceptions of the revised Sitcomms also showed change. The Sitcomm task developed for the intervention based on student feedback was more effective in increasing willingness to communicate because students were more encouraged to participate based on the topic, the task difficulty, and the time given for completing the task (see Table 9). Their feelings about teacher presence remained the same at a score of 6, which denotes students felt encouraged to participate even if the teacher was present. During baseline data collection using the Sitcomms, some students did not participate in the task and were silent; during the intervention Sitcomm, *all* students participated. Students coded with an "A" were absent and therefore were not present to participate. Student perception survey data showed a significant shift in student willingness to communicate. Students responded that the topic, task difficulty, and teacher presence, encouraged their participation. Students also found the task to be challenging rather than difficult to complete. The challenge did not discourage their participation; rather, the challenge encouraged them to participate. I explain the effects of task difficulty versus challenge in the discussion below. The variety of ecological factors that encouraged students to participate further confirms the

importance of the influential role that classroom contextual and individual factors play on one another and the need to avoid considering these factors in isolation when trying to understand what prompts or hinders willingness to communicate during interpersonal communication tasks.

Table 9 Comparison of Student Perceptions of Sitcomms

Student	Topic		Difficulty		Presence		Time	
	Baseline	Study	Baseline	Study	Baseline	Study	Baseline	Study
11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
6	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
30	-1	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	1
9	-1	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	-1
8	1	0	1	0	1	0	-1	0
24	-1	0	-1	0	1	0	1	0
5	1	1	0	-1	1	1	1	1
15	1	1	-1	1	1	-1	1	1
20	1	0	0	0	-1	0	1	0
16	1	1	-1	1	1	1	1	1
	4	8	-2	6	6	6	2	6

5.2 The Zoo Info-Gaps

Two Info-Gap activities were developed for the intervention and were carried out in student pairs. For the Info-Gap Intervention, I used the same task structure and functions of the baseline task, but changed the topic to animals, which students reported they enjoyed. In changing the topic to animals, I wanted to see if student's perceptions of task difficulty shifted, because they enjoyed the topic.

The first intervention Info-Gap activity asked students to draw and describe an animal of their choosing. The activity was constructed to reflect similar language and communicative functions as the Monster Info-Gap. Therefore, students were asked to describe the animal's body parts in number, size, and color. The second intervention Info-Gap asked students to use directions and descriptions to determine where animals were located in the zoo. The second Info-Gap required similar communicative functions, such as determining the location of animals in relation to one another at the zoo, similar to the Home Info-Gap used for baseline data in which students determined the location of rooms and items in a house. Students were given a picture of a map, person A had a half of the total number of animals, and person B had the other half. Together, they had to "walk" around the zoo and describe the animals to help their partner figure out what was missing (see Figure 10).
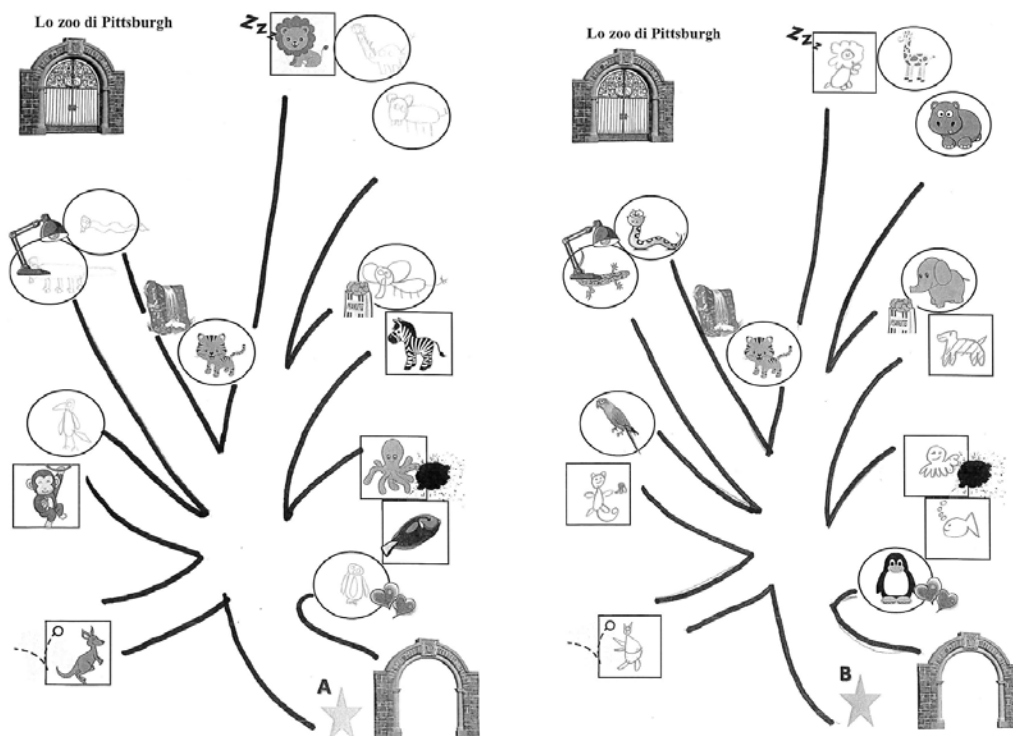
Figure 10 Zoo Info-Gap Activity

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The Zoo info-gap activity also required students to use directional words (e.g., go straight, stop, turn left, pass by, next to, on the right, on the left, etc.). Notably, these activities generated a lot of student talk. Nine of 11 students participated in the activity (2 students of the 11 were absent) (see Table 10). All students who were present showed a considerable increase in student talk as shown in Table 10, suggesting a willingness to participate. From the Zoo Unit, the Zoo Info-Gap produced a total of 356 utterances. The findings from the intervention Info-Gap activities demonstrate the importance of developing communicative tasks that require students to work collaboratively in pairs with one another about topics they enjoy and about which they want to talk.

Table 10 Comparison of Student Info-Gap Utterances (10 minutes each)

Student	Baseline				Study			Increase
	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home	Totals	Zoo	Animals	Totals	
11	18	2	20	40	30	50	80	40
10	15	0	26	41	43	47	90	49
6	12	0	0	12	39	40	79	67
30	9	0	30	39	36	61	97	58
9	20	2	41	63	82	65	147	84
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	10	5	0	15	46	30	76	61
5	13	12	20	45	43	59	102	57
15	24	2	40	66	0	126	126	60
20	8	3	0	11	0	0	0	-11
16	19	0	0	19	37	0	37	18
	148	**26**	**177**	**351**	**356**	**478**	**834**	**483**

For the intervention Info-Gap tasks, I clarified to students how they would be graded. Students would earn full credit for accurate completion of the task in target language, not based on their accuracy of their language. In this way, students were encouraged to take risks, use circumlocution to talk around words they did not know, and to ask for help when necessary. By

clarifying the purpose of the task, students understood that my role was not to grade their accuracy of language use, but rather to serve as a facilitator to help when they were stuck and to support them as they navigated their way through the task.

When comparing the initial baseline tasks to the two revised info-gaps, students continued to report that the Zoo Info-Gaps were difficult and discouraged their willingness to communicate. It surprised me that students continued to perceive the task as difficult even though their willingness to talk increased based on the topic. Student perceptions of the activities also showed shifts in student perceptions of the topic which were generally positive across the tasks. Student perceptions of the difficulty also shifted to -1 and -2. Students scored the Zoo and Animals Task Topics as an 8 and 6 (see Table 11). From the baseline data, students said the monster topic encouraged them to participate, but the difficulty of the task discouraged them. Findings from the intervention, continued to support that students were more willing to participate because they liked the topic, but still less willing to participate due to the difficulty of the task. What may be the case here is that students are not perceiving the difference between what is difficult and what is an achievable challenge. Task difficulty versus challenge as a factor affecting participation will be discussed further in the discussion.

Table 11 Comparisons of Student Perceptions of Info-Gap Activities

	Topic						Difficulty				
	Baseline			Study			Baseline			Study	
Student	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home	Zoo	Animals	Student	Monster 1	Clarifications	Home	Zoo	Animals
11	1	1	1	1	1	11	1	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	-1	1	1	10	1	1	-1	-1	1
6	1	1	0	1	1	6	-1	-1	0	-1	-1
30	-1	0	-1	1	-1	30	-1	0	-1	1	-1
9	1	1	1	1	1	9	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
8	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
24	1	1	0	1	1	24	-1	0	0	0	-1
5	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	-1	-1	1
15	1	1	1	0	1	15	-1	-1	-1	0	-1
20	1	1	0	0	0	20	1	1	0	0	0
16	1	1	0	1	0	16	1	1	0	1	0
	8	**9**	**2**	**8**	**6**		**0**	**2**	**-4**	**-1**	**-2**

Findings from the student perception survey showed 8 out of 11 students said the topic made them more willing to communicate. Three out of 11 said the difficulty of the task made them willing to communicate, a seemingly contradictory statement. Similarly, for the Animals Info-Gap, 6 out of 11 students said the topic made them more willing to communicate, while 3 out of 11 said the task difficulty increased their willingness to communicate. When reflecting on these findings, as stated above, students reported that task difficulty made them less willing to communicate, when their scores showed quite the opposite and an increase in student utterances. Therefore, the findings encourage caution when considering difficulty of the task as a dissuading factor. For future activities in my classroom, I intend to connect rigorous tasks with other factors that I know will increase my students' willingness to communicate such as topic, time, and teacher presence. This will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section of this research report.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Activities the Increased Student Willingness to Communicate

The research question asked whether based on the features identified in the literature review and student preferences reported in perception questionnaire responses, do implementing these features increase students' willingness to participate in oral interpersonal communication? Based on the findings, student talk increased considerably in comparison to the baseline data in both the Sitcomms and Info-Gap activities (see Table 12 & Table 13). Student talk increased with baseline activities producing 72 utterances and intervention activities producing 141 utterances, close to double the number of utterances observed in the baseline Sitcomm task. For the Info-Gap activities student utterances increased. The total baseline utterances for the Sitcomm were 351utterances, whereas during the study, utterances numbered 834. Students expressed increased willingness to communicate in these two activities because of their interest in the topic and because they perceived the time given as sufficient compared to the baseline data which showed their decrease in willingness to communicate based on the topic and the time constraints of the task. The tasks required students to use communicative functions such as requesting clarification, using confirmation checks, and circumlocution.

Table 12 Comparison of Sitcomm Student Utterances

Student	Baseline	Study	Increase
11	6	17	**11**
10	2	14	**12**
6	8	13	**5**
30	9	15	**6**
9	12	17	**5**
8	2	2	**0**
24	0	8	**8**
5	11	19	**8**
15	13	22	**9**
20	4	3	**-1**
16	6	11	**5**
	73	141	68

*Chronically absent

Table 13 Comparison of Info-Gap Utterances (10 minutes)

Student	Baseline	Study	Increase
11	40	51	40
10	41	51	49
6	12	18	67
30	39	69	58
9	63	72	84
8	0	8	0
24	15	39	61
5	45	50	57
15	66	81	60
20	11	31	-11
16	19	35	18
	351	834	483

6.2 Factors that Increased Student Willingness to Communicate

Student self-reports provided me with feedback immediately after activities. When students were asked to share what factors in the intervention study (the Zoo Unit) encouraged or discouraged their participation students responses varied from the baseline (see Table 14). Student self-reports showed topic, time, difficulty of the task, and agreeing with their partner positively encouraged student willingness to communicate. These findings suggest students do not mind a challenging task if other factors are working to support student participation (i.e. topic, sufficient time, and partner contribution). The self-reports offered opportunities for me to seek insight from students that I would otherwise not have been able to capture. Students enjoyed the self-reports and I plan to continue using them within my classroom. Findings from the student self-reports also relate back to the role teachers play in preparing challenging tasks. As a teacher, I need to push myself to create challenging activities for students and prepare them with tools to help them navigate the challenge in a way that encouraged participation. It is also important to consider the role task familiarity and topic familiarity can contribute to increasing student willingness to communicate. As the students became more familiar with the task structure it is possible the difficulty to understand the task decreased while the challenge of the task purpose increased their willingness to communicate.

Table 14 Post-Intervention Student Perception Questionnaire Responses

Supported Participation	Discouraged Participation
Topic	Disagreeing with partner
Partner's Contribution	Chronic Absenteeism
Agreeing with partner	
Teacher presence	
Time (short)	
Time (long)	
Difficulty of task	

**Grouping had no negative effect

The development of Info-Gaps can take time, because educators need to consider the communicative needs of students to accomplish the task, for example, students need to know how to communicate when difficulties arise, requiring verbal strategies for negotiating meaning. Negotiating meaning involves knowing how to ask for clarification, use confirmation checks, and use circumlocution to describe words they do not know in the target language. If teachers prepare students with these communicative functions, students can use them for a variety of communicative task. If teachers connect instruction of communicative functions for negotiating meaning with a well-constructed info-gap, student opportunities for robust participation in interpersonal oral activities increase considerably.

6.3 Strategies that Increased Student Willingness to Communicate

Conducting this study allowed me to gain a better understanding for my classroom ecology. Throughout this study, I was able to identify specific aspects of interpersonal communication tasks that increased student willingness to speak the target language. Students found their willingness to

communicate increased when they had input into the contents of the communicative task, the ability to make mistakes, their teacher nearby for help, and peers with whom to work.

Perhaps what was most impactful to me was realizing how influential it was to ask students for their opinions about the design of communicative tasks. By merely shifting the topic of tasks used in this study based on student interest, the willingness to communicate increased in my classroom. Students shared that they felt my asking for input was sincere and that I followed through by picking a topic they liked.

6.3.1 Topic

Student feedback also helped me understand the importance of pushing students to try activities, they may not initially be drawn to. I was curious if by addressing the factors that discouraged them if student willingness to communicate would increase. However, my findings suggest a more complex system that makes up the classroom ecology. Students who feel comfortable in their classroom are less likely to have a negative affect and are more willing to take risks and participate in classroom activities (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). By simply asking for and responding to student ideas, students felt a sense of belonging in the classroom. Students also shared they liked being able to provide me with their perceptions and reactions to every activity. Two students noticed that from their feedback about factors that encourage or discourage them that I shifted my approach to the tasks to include a more meaningful contexts for student learning. It may be that the Pittsburgh zoo and power outages are more realistic contexts for the students than describing a monster indicating the importance of authentic contexts for language learning (see 7.1 Meaningful Contexts). When I read their response to the perception questionnaire for topics that interested them, students generally requested topics that would be easy to layer over

existing units simply by using a little creativity when planning interpersonal communication tasks. Student suggestions included: animals, foods, family and food culture, and family and Pompeii, again suggesting authenticity of contexts as a factor effecting students' willingness to engage and participate. Their input has already influenced a future unit featuring family and food culture in Pompeii. Ultimately, student input allows for teachers to be responsive to student needs and interests and is worth considering for all aspects of the curriculum and not in isolation for a single activity, lesson, or unit.

6.3.2 Communicative Tasks

The development of a communicative task can be challenging, but when well-crafted can create opportunities for students to communicate and tap into many of their previous learned communicative skills such as asking questions, reacting, and helping one another by completing or repairing their partner's sentences. For future activities in class, it is important for me to consider the nature of the task more carefully. A brainstorming vocabulary task, such as Categories is a valuable activity in a foreign language classroom for helping students access the vocabulary they know, but it is not one that promotes interpersonal communication. In other words, speaking tasks are not created equal and may have goals that are not associated with developing oral interpersonal communication. The findings from this activity emphasized the need for specific elements necessary for the design of successful tasks that promote students' willingness to communicate, such as a meaningful context, an exchange of information, longer lengths of time, the ability to make mistakes while still being comprehensible to a classmate. Therefore, when planning future communicate activities, the findings encourage incorporating these elements to increase student willingness to communicate.

6.3.3 Making Mistakes and Meaning-Making

I did not anticipate was how important it was for students to be able to make mistakes without worrying about fully forming accurate utterances. When I reflected on this finding, I realized that at times in my classroom, I am too focused on form rather than meaning making. For the information gap activities, I told students that the goal was to try and complete their pictures by talking to one another and that their grade was based on their participation in the activity, not based on the accuracy of what they said. As a result, I heard students trying to use circumlocution when they could not recall a word and partners helping each other by offering suggestions. While there is a time and place for accuracy, when practicing the language, as a teacher I want students to try to use the language. By removing the pressure of the grade students were more willing to communicate. I found regardless of my proximity, students were trying to be understood by their partners and were mutually contributing to complete the task.

6.3.4 Teacher Presence

When I developed the student self-report, I included teacher presence, because as an educator I wanted to know whether my presence was promoting or hindering their willingness to communicate. The findings from student self-reports showed students preferred having their teacher present. I believe this reaction relates back to the classroom environment that I have tried to create. As a teacher, I try to let students make mistakes when speaking during informal activities such as the warm-up, Sitcomms, info-gaps, and general class questions. In doing so, I have found students are open to asking questions when I'm nearby to help them move beyond a potential obstacle. For example, one student asked me to tell her how to say "vegetarian" during the info-

gap at the zoo. I helped her get to the answer. I recognized that for this student by answering this one question, she could continue her verbal participation in the task. The relationships that I have built in my classroom have positively contributed to student willingness to communicate. My presence during tasks did not discourage their participation, because they viewed me as a support and a potential source of information. Student perceptions of teacher presence remained consistent throughout the study. This contextual factor of teacher presence influenced student willingness to communicate and should be given careful consideration for future activities.

6.3.5 Classroom Ecology

Lastly, the classroom environment that developed within my room promoted students' willingness to communicate with one another regardless of who they were working with. Creating an environment where students get to know one another contributed to their willingness to work with anyone. In most studies cited in the literature review, authors mentioned the importance of grouping, but for my students grouping did not seem to be a factor. Students felt their peers were willing to work collaboratively to accomplish the task. Students mentioned at times they felt discouraged to participate, because they had difficulty understanding their peers or were reluctant to disagree with them. When working together, it is important for students to reaffirm the value of their peers' responses, because without affirmations students tend to feel their input is not valued or incorrect resulting in a lack of participation. As a teacher, this made me realize how important it is for students to provide each other with reactions so students receive feedback when they speak. The findings from this study have important implications for foreign language education. In the following section, implications are discussed in detail.

7.0 Implications

Several implications for classroom teachers derive from this study -- the importance of meaningful contexts, the importance of time during communicative tasks, accuracy versus meaning making, teacher influence, the influence of L1 in the L2, and classroom ecologies.

7.1 Meaningful Context

The study findings and the student's responses suggest the important of meaningful contexts. Glisan and Donato (2017) defined context as "the concrete circumstances for social and cultural discourse practices" (p.29). A meaningful context provides teachers an opportunity to engage students in content by making it valuable for students. Meaningful contexts provided students with a reason for why we are learning the material, demonstrates how the material would be useful to them, and can show students the applications of their learning beyond the classroom. Glisan and Donato suggested "the more relevant the purpose and its relationship to learners' interests, the more learners will be willing to accept target language use for instruction" (p.30). During the baseline, classroom instruction was presented without a well-constructed meaningful context. For the intervention, I created the story of going to the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium and the power going out to interest my students in the lesson. Based on the data provided from student self-reports, the differences between the information gap activities and Sitcomms from the baseline and the study showed the incorporation of a meaningful context increased student interest. Students were also aware of our upcoming field trip to the zoo where they would be asked to

complete a scavenger hunt. By providing students with a meaningful context, student not only become interested in the topic, but they understand why the learning is valuable both within the context of the zoo and outside of it by drawing connections to previously learned material and future applications.

7.2 Honor Mistake Making

Findings suggest exercising caution when implementing time limitations and requirements for accuracy when encouraging student to participate orally in the foreign language classroom. This does not imply that accuracy is not important but suggests accuracy does not need to be the focus at all times. There are assessments for evaluating accuracy; interpersonal speaking tasks may not be one of them. However, it is important to create tasks that encourage students to communicate without fear of making mistakes. The findings of this study also suggest telling students their success in the activity is in working through the task, that mistakes will occur, and that the purpose of the activity is to encourage students to talk through the activity without concern for always needing to produce grammatically correct utterances. By removing the fear of a bad grade, students are more likely to create utterances, use fragments, participate in meaning-making, and negotiate meaning with one another. Will their work be perfect? No, but what they will gain from the activity is a rich experience in practicing the language and attempting to use structures they might be unwilling to try if they think their grade will be based on accuracy. When I listened to students talking during the study, I noticed a shift in their communication. Students were no longer attempting simple, but accurate sentences, but instead were trying to communicate with their partner how they would in English. Students attempted complex structures to convey their

thinking to their partner. As student willingness to make mistakes increased, their utterances increased, because they were trying to make meaning and their partners were helping them to construct their utterances. Relinquishing control within a classroom can be challenging. However, by removing the time restraints and strict monitoring for accuracy, student willingness to communicate will increase.

7.3 Moving Away from the Traditional Approach

Teachers hold a high level of influence on student willingness to communicate. Within my study, I was able to understand elements of my classroom that promoted my student's willingness to communicate. Some of those factors were related directly to me and my presence during activities. Students in my classroom felt my presence during activities promoted their willingness to communicate. Teachers establishing themselves as sources of support rather than the evaluator of student performance encourage students to take risks and make mistakes. As a result, teacher presence in activities did not dissuade students for communicating. When establish classroom policies, procedures, and ecologies, the teacher has a choice to either be a facilitator or critic of learning. This study has shown which choice is the correct one if increasing students' willingness to communicate is the goal. In this way, teachers will no longer need to ask the question "How can I get my students to communicate in the classroom?"

7.4 L1 as a Facilitator of L2

Another way in which teachers can create obstacles to a student's willingness to communicate is in their insistence on using the target language. During the Info-Gap activities shying away from discouraging use of the L1 to facilitate L2, increased student utterances. The findings from this study are also consistent with recent work on translanguaging, which shows the use of L1 can support the learning and use of L2. Martin-Beltrá (2014) conceptualized "the goal of L2 learning as multicompetence—which recognizes the knowledge of two or more languages as resources for learning and thus moves away from the monolingual" (p. 211). Within my context, our school serves a large number of ELLs who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Therefore, when consider L1, it is important to bear in my it might not be English and that when given space to use it effectively to reorient to the purpose of the task can increase student willingness to communicate. This can directly address equity issues in educations when educators fail to recognize barriers that exist for ELLs. Canagarajah (2011) defined translanguaging as "the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system" (p. 401). As an educator, I was presented with an opportunity to access their multilingualism to enhance their willingness to communicate in Italian during the study. Teachers have been trained to discourage the use of L1, but from this study, teachers could shift their focus to analyze how students are using the L1. If students are using the L1 to help them sustain participation in the task in the L2, it could be worth letting them use it. This requires restraining constantly saying "solo italiano".

From the study, I understand the benefits of using L1 and would like to further explore its implications within my classroom. Many studies have been conducted on translanguaging, but as an action research project, I would like to analyze its role within my classroom.

7.5 Promoting a Healthy Classroom Ecology

Developing a healthy classroom ecology is important for student learning, development, and achievement. Classroom ecologies are made up of individual and contextual factors that influence student willingness to communicate. As an educator, through this process, I learned that my classroom ecology is like a unique fingerprint that fits my class. When considering my other course sections that were not included in this study, I recognize that their classroom ecology is different, because individual factors differ and are unique within each section. From this study, there are tools that have helped contribute to the classroom's ecology in a positive way such as the student willingness to communicate perception questionnaire and the self-report, which helped me understand my influence as the teacher and to better understand the students' preferences and needs. By using those two tools to inform instruction, I can begin to understand other classroom ecologies, start to address barriers to their willingness to communicate, and encourage their participation in the foreign language classroom.

8.0 Dissemination Plan

I intend to apply to present at PSMLA in 2020 and NECTFL in 2021 to share the findings of my study. Action Research posits that action begins with the practitioner (add citation). Therefore, I think it is of value to share the findings of this study with other educators. There are components of the study that could be shared and used by others such as the Sitcomms, the Info-Gap activities, the student self-reports, the student perception questionnaire, and observational tool. Findings from this study reinforce the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and suggest ways in which educators can deepen their knowledge of students. Four years ago, I presented at PSMLA about the use of Sitcomms in the classroom and received positive feedback from educators who encouraged I present about it again. This study builds on that work and I think the findings would be of interest to others.

From my study, I developed a series of tools for classroom teachers to use. Moving forward, I plan to develop a tool for teachers to consider and to identify factors that relate to classroom ecology and highly communicative tasks that contribute positively to student willingness to communicate. The purpose of the tool is to remind and help inform teachers about classroom ecologies, which are unique to each classroom, and thus should be investigated and planned for independently of one another to best address the needs of the students.

9.0 For Future Study

From my current study, I have had many ideas flourish for future work. In the next year, I would like to conduct a longitudinal study to observe the effects of increasing the challenge for interpersonal activities over time. I would also like to use the findings from my study to implement a second study to show improvement and scale up study context and participants across my course sections. Additionally, I would like to look at the change in student performance on interpersonal oral activities across time when using the tools from this study to identify factors that support or hinder student willingness to communicate.

Lastly, within this study, I hoped to create tasks that intentionally sought to address language ideology and classrooms ecology. At the conclusion of my study, I recognized that classroom ecology became the forefront of the study, pushing language ideology out of the focus of my study. For future work, I would like to look at the influence of language ideologies within my classroom and identify ways to address them particularly because of the culturally and linguistically diverse nature of my school.

10.0 Concluding Thoughts

Action research takes time to develop and I found it challenging to shift the study to fit the needs of the students in my classroom this year. My study development began three years ago and the students I worked with this year were very different from the time I began to conceptualize this project. This further highlights the importance of classroom ecology being unique to each class. For a future study, I want to continue investigating the construct of willingness to communicate because of the way that this study has had an impact on my current approach to foreign language education. As a practitioner, I am unable to step away from this study and put it on a shelf. Findings from this study have already sparked ideas of other studies I could conduct within my classroom. For example, I would like to observe Info-Gap activities across a year of study to deepen my understanding of the influence of content and contextual factors on student willingness to communicate and the role of translanguaging and the use of L1 in interpersonal communication tasks. Info-Gap activities offer many opportunities for students to practice communicative competence and develop their foreign language interpersonal oral communication while simultaneously keeping in mind the facilitating role of L1 on L2.

The memory that is with me most from this study is the way my classroom sounded during the study. While I collected the baseline data, students sounded frustrated, discouraged and bored. In the second half of the study when I showed students the topic of study and the considerations I took from their responses, student talk was filled with laughter. This reaction is not to be taken for granted. Students were having fun while communicating. With high stakes tests in most content areas, students have expressed the feeling that school is not fun or engaging. During my study, my

classroom became a dynamic space for communication. As an action researcher, this unanticipated outcome is one that I hope to continue to promote within my classroom.

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