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English Philology students' willingness to communicate as a reflection of learner autonomy

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Abstract

The present study investigates first-year English Philology students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in integrated skills classes over a period of one semester as a reflection of their autonomy and decisions to speak, as well as such factors as motivation and anxiety. Given the complex nature of willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998), it was decided to conduct a long-term study in order to observe the students' willingness to communicate on a variety of topics. Simultaneously, as WTC constitutes a volitional process (MacIntyre, 2007), it was assumed that WTC was to some extent a reflection of learner autonomy. Throughout the semester, some students would speak more often and more willingly, others less so, but, arguably, the decision to practice speaking English could result from planning one's learning and thus some degree of autonomy. However, in order to investigate the students' own perception of their WTC and their attitudes towards speaking English in class, the observation was complemented with a questionnaire carried out at the end of the semester, yet taking into consideration the possibility that the responses could be partly subjective (cf. Wilczyńska, 2011, p. 61). As the results show, despite the participants' awareness of the importance of good speaking skills, their WTC varies greatly from one topic to another and from one student to another, which, on the one hand, confirms Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2015) observation that L2 willingness to communicate is dynamic in nature. On the other hand, as some students regularly show more WTC than others, to some extent it seems to be a trait which is related to their autonomy as learners and speakers, but also to anxiety, which differs considerably within the group.

Keywords: willingness to communicate; motivation; anxiety; learner autonomy

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, one of the main goals of foreign language learning is the acquisition of the ability to communicate in a particular language. However, speaking is a highly complex skill which combines the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and rapid access to them in order to ensure fluency, background knowledge, as well as listening comprehension skills, which allow one to understand the interlocutor. It is thus no wonder that learners who have difficulty integrating all those skills also feel anxiety when they have to speak and their willingness to communicate (WTC) is, consequently, lower. Yet, as the acquisition of every skill requires practice, it can be assumed that, despite the difficulty, learners should profit from every opportunity to speak English. At the same time, an increase in speaking ability could be supposed to be conducive to increased WTC, as learners would then have more vocabulary and structures at their disposal, as well as increased fluency, which would allow them to express themselves more freely without any need to be afraid of a communication failure. However, this cannot be taken for granted, as planning one's utterances on the one hand and the whole learning process on the other requires considerable metalinguistic awareness. As the present author observed elsewhere (Włosowicz, 2012), even advanced students of English, such as MA-level students of English Philology, may lack the necessary language awareness and autonomy to control their learning process and improve precisely those components of linguistic knowledge which need improving.

It can thus be seen that learner autonomy, especially at a more advanced level, where learners are expected to participate in discussions and express their opinions in a foreign language, is indispensable, as not all information, particularly lexical information, can be provided by the teacher.[1] Certainly, it is not suggested that vocabulary should be the only object of learner autonomy, as students can also practice grammar, listening comprehension, etc. on their own, but, being vast and heterogeneous, vocabulary requires especially much individual effort and simultaneously it is particularly important for the expression of different ideas and views. As Wilkins (1972, p. 111, as cited in Singleton, 1999, p. 9) once remarked, "[w]ithout grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." Still, in order to convey information properly, learners should be aware of both language rules (in a general sense, including grammatical rules as well as the appropriate vocabulary use) and of what they still need to learn. This is compatible with James's (1996) distinction between language

[1] Following Meara (1996), it is assumed here that a well-developed L2 mental lexicon contains a variety of links between L2 words, such as synonyms, antonyms, collocations, etc., and that limiting vocabulary knowledge to links between L2 words and their L1 equivalents is insufficient.

awareness as "the possession of metacognitions about language in general, some bit of language, or a particular language over which one already has skilled control and a coherent set of intuitions" (pp. 139-140) and consciousness of language, or "the ability to locate and identify the *discrepancy* between one's present state of knowledge and a goal state of knowledge" (p. 141, his emphasis).

Moreover, autonomy cannot be reduced to studying at home, as students' participation in classes is also largely driven by their autonomous decisions. As Kozieł (2011, p. 36) has observed, autonomous learning is interactive by nature, as it involves interactions between the students and their teacher, among the group, as well as between the students and the material. In fact, as shown by Khaki (2013), there is a relationship between learner autonomy and willingness to communicate. Simultaneously, according to Kang (2005, p. 278), increased WTC can make learners more autonomous and more capable of learning the language through interaction. It can thus be assumed that WTC and learner autonomy are largely interdependent. Especially WTC, observable on the basis of students' decisions to speak, can be regarded as a reflection of autonomy; as observed by Benson (2010, p. 79), autonomous learners may take control of their participation in learning activities. However, the interplay between these factors can be highly complex. Gałajda (2017, p. 109) emphasizes the link between a positive classroom atmosphere, reduced anxiety and increased autonomy and, consequently, higher WTC. It is also possible that autonomy in seeking out opportunities to speak results from WTC, but that would be more difficult to prove in the classroom, as the investigation would also have to include the use of English outside the classroom, which goes beyond the scope of the present study.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate first-year English Philology students' willingness to communicate in English as a reflection of their autonomy as language learners. Factors related to WTC, such as motivation and anxiety, are also taken into consideration. In order to obtain a more detailed picture of the participants' WTC, this is a long-term study conducted throughout the semester, observing the WTC of the different students in the group, and ending with a survey of the students' own attitudes towards the importance of English speaking skills, their motivation, anxiety and the speaking activities proposed by the present author. By exploring WTC with respect to various topics with the use of different materials, the study also aims to draw some conclusions concerning the choice of topics and materials in order to stimulate students' WTC and, possibly, their autonomy as learners.

Certainly, research on English Philology students' WTC has been conducted by other authors, notably Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2014), Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015), and Gałajda (2017). However, the studies by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2014), and Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak

(2015) were limited to single sessions during which the students were supposed to discuss particular topics selected by the researchers and which were followed by questionnaires regarding the participants' WTC and anxiety, and shifts in WTC during the activity they had just performed respectively. Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's study (2015, p. 4) also involved a beep interrupting the students' conversation to make them mark their current level of WTC on a grid. While these studies investigated fluctuations in WTC in a short-term activity, the present study involved long-term observation of students' WTC in the classroom. On the other hand, Gałajda (2017) combined three kinds of research tools: questionnaires, reflective essays and long-term classroom observation. Still another difference between these studies is the participants' year of study. While Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2014, p. 251) conducted their study with second- and third-year students, Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015, p. 3) with third-year students, and Gałajda (2017, p. 62) with fifth-year students, whom she regarded as the most experienced and thus the most capable of reflecting on their native and foreign language communication (p. 62), the participants in the present study were first-year students. It was assumed that, as the least experienced university students, they were still in the process of adapting to the requirements of English Philology and of developing their autonomy as learners to a higher degree than had been the case at secondary school. In contrast to secondary school, where their English teachers had had to cater to students choosing different careers, not necessarily related to English, at university the students had to focus on English as their major and to perfect their skills in that language, including speaking skills, which rendered WTC particularly relevant to their studies.

2. The notion of learner autonomy

It has long been emphasized that an important role in foreign language learning is played by learner autonomy, or a learner's capacity "of taking charge of his own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3), which involves making such decisions as setting learning objectives, specifying the contents, choosing methods and techniques, monitoring one's own progress and evaluating the results of one's language acquisition (p. 3). However, the purpose of all these activities is to increase the efficiency of learning. According to Benson (2001, p. 2) the most important claims about autonomy are, first, that autonomy stems from a natural tendency to take control of one's learning, second, that autonomy can be developed, and third, that "[a]utonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning."

Still, as mentioned in the introduction, autonomy does not necessarily imply self-study only, as it is also applicable to communication with others. Following the definition proposed by Dam et al. (1990, p. 102, their emphasis), learner

autonomy "entails a capacity and willingness to act independently *and* in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person." Consequently, in order to be both an active participant in classroom learning and to interpret new information in the light of what he or she already knows, an autonomous learner needs awareness as well as critical thinking skills (Dam et al., 1990, p. 102).

Moreover, as Wilczyńska (2011, p. 49) has pointed out, autonomy is relative. Even though it tends to be associated with full independence, such an approach may neglect the social aspects of foreign language learning. According to Wilczyńska (2011, pp. 49-50), autonomy also depends on individual maturity and the same situation may be perceived differently by different learners, autonomous behavior requires self-determination and responsibility and, last but not least, foreign language learning and use constitute largely social processes, so a particular person's autonomy should not be in conflict with that of other learners. Wilczyńska (2011, p. 51) stresses the importance of self-determination combined with responsibility for one's own decisions, which is a consequence of internal autonomy, or a set of psychological and mental processes related to one's decisions, goals and standards of behavior. She proposes a model in which autonomy, which "takes into consideration one's own style of action" (p. 53, translation mine) is influenced by three constructs: competence, or a learner's potential, experience, or what the learner can do, and motivation, understood as goal-orientedness. On the basis of the interrelationship of these factors, Wilczyńska (2011) assumes that autonomous learning and communication behavior results from conscious decisions, is connected with the learner's goals and long-term plans, and involves personal engagement to the extent allowed by the institutional context, the learner's maturity and potential, etc. Since foreign language learning is a process lasting at least several years, all these factors must remain considerably stable. Therefore, autonomy is often associated with long-term motivation, which gives learners' actions durability and prevents them from becoming discouraged in case of failure.

In a similar vein, Littlewood (1996, p. 428) defines "an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions." As the main components of autonomy, he distinguishes ability and willingness, which may occur together, but they do not have to: for example, despite the ability to make choices, one may lack the willingness to do so (p. 428). According to Littlewood (1996, p. 429), the most important aspect of language learner autonomy is his or her "autonomy as a communicator." Indeed, the focus of the present study is also on students' autonomy in oral communication and their conscious decisions to participate in classroom discussions. However, learner autonomy is not the only kind of autonomy involved in the development of communication skills. Littlewood (1996, p. 431)

divides autonomy into the following three areas: "autonomy as a communicator," which involves two abilities: creative language use and the choice of the appropriate communication strategies; "autonomy as a learner," based on "the ability to engage in independent work (e.g. self-directed learning)" and the use of the appropriate learning strategies, and, finally, "autonomy as a person," which involves the ability to express meanings in the foreign language and to create one's own learning contexts, for example, by profiting from different opportunities to use the language outside the classroom.

Consequently, Littlewood's (1996, pp. 431-432) model of developing autonomy in foreign language learning highlights the overlap between the different areas of autonomy in communication, learning as well as in personal life. Among others, linguistic creativity is associated with a learner's autonomy as a communicator and as a person, as it serves to express one's personal meanings. Communication strategies, which are most likely associated with one's autonomy as a communicator, also contribute to one's autonomy as a learner, as they allow one to cope with different texts and social situations in the process of language learning. Similarly, learning strategies, related to one's autonomy as a learner, contribute to the development of one's communicative repertoire and thus one's autonomy as a communicator. Last by not least, independent work, which involves the creation of learning contexts (as part of autonomy as a learner), contributes to the development of autonomy as a person. At the center of his framework, Littlewood (1996, p. 432) puts motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills, as factors common to all three types of autonomy.

Certainly, as has been mentioned above, autonomy can be developed (Benson, 2001, p. 2). As Nunan (1997) points out, there are several degrees of autonomy and a particular learner's degree of autonomy may depend on such factors as his or her personality, language learning goals, as well as the cultural and institutional context. He distinguishes five levels of implementation of autonomy: (1) awareness, where learners are made aware of the course contents and goals and identify their own learning strategies and styles; (2) involvement, where "[l]earners make choices among a range of options" (p. 195), (3) intervention, which involves the adaptation and modification of tasks, (4) creation, i.e. the creation of learners' own tasks and (5) transcendence, which allows learners to "go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond" (p. 195) as researchers and even teachers. However, unlike other proponents of learner-centered learning, Nunan (1997) emphasizes the role of the teacher, because most learners do not know what is best, especially at the beginning of the learning process. In fact, the teacher's role requires a considerable degree of teacher autonomy. As Pawlak (2011, p. 70) observes, even though the teacher's autonomy does not guarantee the achievement of

learner autonomy, it is indispensable for learner autonomy development. In a similar vein, Macaro (2008, p. 53) observes that autonomy "is far from being a withdrawal by the teacher but an active dialogue between teacher and learner about how to improve."

However, it must be remembered that autonomy is difficult to measure. Dam and Legenhausen (2010, p. 123) emphasize the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning, which includes *awareness* of one's linguistic competence, language needs, preferred activities and the social aspects of language learning, *involvement* in one's decisions, and *control*, including the capacity for planning, organizing the learning process and evaluating one's learning strategies and progress. In fact, control seems to be a particularly important component of autonomy. As Benson (2010, p. 79) remarks, "[a]utonomous language learners are (. . .) learners who are in some sense 'in control' of important dimensions of their learning, which might otherwise be controlled by others or by nobody at all." Still, as Dam and Legenhausen's (2010) research has shown, learners' self-evaluations, as compared with marks given by the teacher, are reliable and valid. This suggests that tools investigating learners' subjective perceptions of their autonomy and its components, such as questionnaires, can actually yield reliable results.

It can thus be concluded that possessing at least some degree learner autonomy is indispensable for communication in a foreign language, as communication requires the planning of utterances and the expression of one's own meanings. At the same time, as pointed out by Littlewood (1996) and Wilczyńska (2011), an important role is played by motivation, which, as will be shown below, also constitutes an inherent component of willingness to communicate. Therefore, autonomy, especially autonomy as a communicator, and willingness to communicate can be assumed to be to some extent interrelated.

3. The complexity of willingness to communicate

The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) was defined by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2." In fact, it can vary between WTC in the native and in the foreign language within one and the same person, as L2 communicative competence may be limited, which provokes uncertainty (MacIntyre et al. 1998). However, the distinction between L1 and L2 WTC would be an oversimplification, as L2 WTC is also prone to both enduring and situational influences. The former, such as personality, intergroup relations, etc., apply to almost every situation of language use, whereas the latter (e.g., one's knowledge of the topic or the desire to talk to a particular person) vary from one situation to another (MacIntyre et al. 1998). Taking into consideration a variety of both enduring

and situational factors, MacIntyre et al. (1998) have proposed the pyramid model of variables which can influence WTC (see Figure 1). They describe it as heuristic, as "it allows us to begin our discussion at the moment of communication" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). Communication behavior (producing speech in L2) is situated at the top of the pyramid, but reaching the top requires the operation of a number of factors.

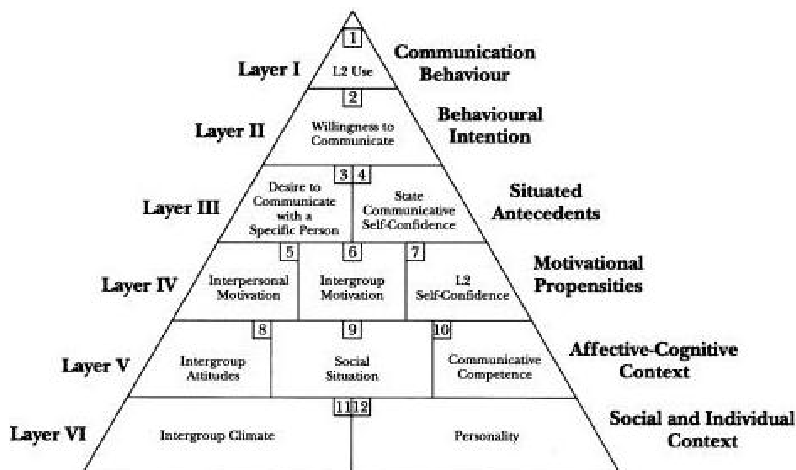

Figure 1 The heuristic model of variables influencing WTC, proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547)

As the model shows, the pyramid consists of six layers, from the most durable influences at the bottom to the most immediate ones at the top. As MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) remark, "[a]uthentic communication in a L2 can be seen as the result of a complex system of interrelated variables." In their view, the aim of language learning should be the development of WTC, so that the learners themselves seek out opportunities to communicate in the foreign language, but at the same time, their definition of communication behavior is very broad, as it includes not only speaking and writing, but also reading in the L2, watching L2 TV programs, etc. Even raising one's hand in the classroom is a communicative behavior, albeit non-verbal.

In order to display some communicative behavior, for example, to talk in the classroom, one needs self-confidence, both in relation to the teacher and the group and to the language. At the same time, this requires some motivation, which can combine affiliation (in this case, the desire to please the teacher) and control motives (to get a good mark). A role is also played by the student's personality, which influences his or her approach to language learning, and the social context (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Still, some of these factors vary from one

situation to the other, and as a result, WTC can also be regarded to some extent as a state and to some extent as a trait. For instance, self-confidence may be a state or a trait. While self-confidence, defined by Clément (1980, 1986, in MacIntyre et al. 1998, p. 549) as a combination of perceived competence and a lack of anxiety, was conceptualized by Clément as a relatively durable trait, it can also be momentary and related to a given situation. Even perceived competence can fluctuate with time, that is why MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 549) talk about "state perceived competence," or "the feeling that one has the capacity to communicate effectively at a particular moment." Similarly, anxiety can be divided into state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety, which is a feeling of tension and apprehension in reaction to a particular situation, can change with time and influence self-confidence and, consequently, WTC (p. 549). In fact, MacIntyre (2007) distinguishes even three types of anxiety: trait anxiety, for example, in a neurotic person, situation-specific anxiety (e.g. experienced while speaking the L2 but not the L1) and state anxiety, felt at a particular moment.

Another important factor discussed by MacIntyre (2007) is motivation, which is influenced by a complex set of attitudes towards the language and its native speakers, the learning situation, etc. As MacIntyre (2007, p. 566) concludes, "[t]he major motivation to learn another language is to develop a communicative relationship with people from another cultural group." Certainly, motivation is not stable but changes with time. As MacIntyre (2007, p. 567) puts it, "[t]he manner in which motivation affects language learning changes as the time under study changes."

However, speaking the L2, in the classroom or outside of the educational context is, first and foremost, an act of volition, which may result from the interaction of opposing forces. According to MacIntyre (2007, p. 571), "[s]tudying volitional choices demonstrates that opposing processes (e.g. approach and avoidance) converge to affect L2 communication." In other words, one may simultaneously feel "motivated to learn and inhibited by anxiety" (p. 572). Therefore, it can be concluded that if motivation to communicate wins out and a learner speaks the foreign language, he or she overcomes anxiety, which can be regarded as an autonomous decision in that he or she feels in control of his or her linguistic competence and exercises that control, taking responsibility for possible errors and misunderstandings.

In fact, apart from bearing the consequences of a possible error, responsibility can also "refer to a feeling of obligation or duty to deliver and understand a message, or to make it clear" (Kang, 2005, p. 285). In Kang's view, it is accompanied by a feeling of pressure, because if the message is not delivered, it might bring a loss to the speaker or another person or group. Responsibility is influenced by such factors as the topic (the more important or useful it is, the greater the pressure is to deliver the message), interlocutors (their interest, attention, etc.) as well as the conversational context, for example, the need to clarify a misunderstanding.

The other factors discussed by Kang (2005) as antecedents of WTC are security, or "feeling safe from the fears that nonnative speakers tend to have in L2 communication" (p. 282) and excitement, which Kang (2005, p. 284) defines as "a feeling of elation about the act of talking," which also fluctuates in the course of a conversation. Like responsibility, also security and excitement are influenced by the topic, the interlocutors and the conversational context.

The dynamic nature of willingness to communicate and its fluctuations in the course of one discussion have also been demonstrated by Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015). In their study, eight Polish students of English Philology performed dialogues in pairs on a topic related to the upbringing of children. Their results can be supposed to be compatible with Kang's (2005) in that the students' WTC was influenced by the topic (it decreased when they ran out of arguments), the interlocutor (one participant had problems understanding her partner) and the context (for example, the teacher's presence, which proved to be motivating). However, the topic was not engaging enough for all of them, so their WTC decreased as they grew bored, and, as Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015, p. 8) observe, "the choice of a suitable topic is not as straightforward as it might seem," and even prompts, instead of helping students, may limit their language production. Similarly, group composition plays an important role, as a more proficient and more talkative student may dominate the whole discussion.

In a way, the fact that prompts can limit students' creativity and thus WTC suggests that WTC is to some extent connected with autonomy: autonomous learners know what they want to express and limiting the content of their utterances to what the teacher thinks they should say may be counterproductive. Certainly, the topic may not seem equally interesting to all students and, indeed, it may be difficult to choose, but they should be given some freedom in order to participate in the discussion as autonomous learners. On the basis of a statistically significant relationship between Iranian learners' autonomy and their willingness to communicate in English, Khaki (2013, p. 106) concludes that "learner autonomy significantly predicts WTC." Therefore, in Khaki's (2013) opinion, teachers should help students to develop both their autonomy and WTC, and thus to become independent language users. However, the choice of particular techniques, materials and topics in order to optimize this process still requires considerable research and the present study, using a number of topics and a variety of materials (texts, videos, images, etc.), aims to contribute to this research.

4. The study

As mentioned in the introduction, the study aimed to investigate willingness to communicate in a group of first-year English Philology students, using different topics and materials. It was therefore a long-term study, observing fluctuations in the

participants' WTC. As was stated in the introduction, fluctuations in students' WTC had been investigated either in single interaction sessions by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2014), and by Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) with second- and third-year students, or in a long-term study with fifth-year students by Gałajda (2017). Moreover, the single sessions involved a more limited number of topics, namely discussing pictures and the choice of objects for a time capsule (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014, p. 252) or parenting (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015, p. 3-4), while Gałajda (2017) does not specify the topics she covered with her students in the period of her classroom observation. Therefore, what contributes to the relevance of the present study is the long-term investigation of first-year English Philology students' willingness to communicate on a variety of topics. In fact, as remarked by one of the participants in Gałajda's (2017) study, the topic of a conversation does influence WTC, so it could be assumed that the students' WTC could fluctuate not only with time but also with the topic of a particular class. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: First, which topics and materials are particularly likely to trigger the participants' willingness to communicate and what are the implications for English language teaching?

RQ2: Second, in this group of students, which kind of WTC plays a more important role, WTC as a state or as a trait, and in what way can it be associated with the participants' autonomy?

4.1. Participants

The study was carried out with a group of ten first-year full-time English Philology students over the winter semester of the academic year 2017/2018, whom the present author was teaching integrated skills at the Mysłowice branch of Ignatianum Academy in Cracow, Poland. Nine of them were female and one was male.

The students' levels of proficiency in English could be assumed to vary between B1 and B2, but to be generally closer to B2. The syllabus assumed the possession of the B2 level as a prerequisite condition of taking part in the course, but the students' competence could differ, for example, from one skill to another (some could be better at grammar, others at speaking, still others at reading comprehension, etc.). The profile of their studies was practical, which meant an increased number of hours of practical English language classes in comparison to the general academic profile. The practical subjects included practical grammar, phonetics and phonology, listening and speaking, reading and writing, and integrated skills (called "advanced language skills" there), which combined grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing, listening and reading comprehension.

4.2. Method

The data collection procedure combined two methods: long-term observation of the students' participation in classroom discussions, and a questionnaire constructed by the present author on the basis of earlier studies on WTC and related factors (see Section 3), as well as classroom observation, and completed by the students at the end of the semester. The questionnaire, including questions about their evaluation of their own speaking skills and language needs (and thus related to autonomy) as well as their anxiety and motivation to talk during the integrated skills classes (as antecedents of WTC), is presented in Appendix A at the end of the article. Most of the items were presented in the form of a five-point Likert scale (1 – *I completely disagree*, 5 – *I fully agree*), though the students could also add comments of their own. There were general questions which introduced particular factors being investigated in connection with WTC, such as motivation (for example: "What motivates you to talk in integrated skills classes? Please, indicate to what extent each of the factors listed below motivates you to talk. (1 – it does not motivate me at all, 5 – it motivates me very strongly)"), followed by specific items, such as the activities that could potentially motivate the participants, for instance: "Describing and discussing photos, "Describing and discussing cartoons, especially if they are funny," "Pair work. Discussing certain questions in pairs" (for all the items see Appendix A).

On the other hand, the long-term observation used the form presented in Appendix B. It used different "conversation triggers," or materials chosen with the aim to make the students participate in the conversation. Unlike topics, which were more general (e.g. "fashion," "women in science and technology," etc.), the "conversation triggers" involved a combination of materials, for example, images (also cartoons), a text used in a reading comprehension task (which could have a different aim in itself, such as cross-text multiple matching or inserting missing paragraphs) and a video of a recording from the CD accompanying a textbook. It might be argued that both videos and CDs served to practice listening comprehension, but videos were assumed to be more attractive because, first, they combined images with spoken text and, second, as authentic materials they could appeal to the students more than the CD accompanying the textbook. Sometimes only one type of trigger was used, such as a text, a video or a collection of photos and cartoons. If a conversation trigger was pair work, it only prepared the students to take part in the group discussion, as pair work, first, obliged them all to speak and, second, the level of anxiety was lower, since the teacher could not notice all of their mistakes. In total, ten classes were devoted to the observation of students' WTC, but this is due to the fact that integrated skills involved not only speaking, but also reading combined with vocabulary activities, listening and writing, and some time had to be devoted to written tests as well. The topics and conversation triggers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The topics and conversation triggers used in the study

Class	Topic	Conversation trigger(s)
1	Reasons for studying English Philology	Reading comprehension: The relationship between the study of literature and job prospects (O'Dell & Black, 2015, pp. 80-81).
2	Overwork	Nine images (five cartoons and four photos) connected with overwork and its effects.
3	Social networking and social media	Listening comprehension (Bell & Gower, 2014, p. 28, and the accompanying CD): an interview with a psychologist on the impact of social networking.
4	Juvenile delinquency	Listening comprehension: a second chance (Bell & Gower, 2014, p. 31, and the accompanying CD).
5	Women in science and technology	Reading comprehension: How the concept of software was invented (O'Dell & Black, 2015, pp. 182-183). Listening comprehension: The self-cleaning house (Bell & Gower, 2014, p. 140, and the accompanying CD). Nine images: six photos of women in science, technology or management, two cartoons and one infographic.
6	Native-like vocabulary development	A YouTube video: Stop translating in your head & think directly in English.
7	Consumerism	Seven images: six cartoons related to consumerism (e.g. Santa Claus shouting: 'I want YOU to spend a lot', or a man in prison behind the bars of a bar code) and a photo of African children collecting scrap metal at a landfill.
8	The educational value of toys	Pair work: 1. What are the best toys for children, in your opinion? 2. Can toys be harmful and, if so, in what ways? 3. How can one increase the educational value of toys, in your opinion? A YouTube video: Tree Change Dolls.
9	Fashion	Pair work: 1. The positive and negative sides of fashion. 2. The influence of fashion on culture. A YouTube video: Fast Fashion Industry Documentary Reading comprehension: A career in fashion (O'Dell & Black, 2015, pp. 140-141).
10	a) Travelling and volunteer work	Reading comprehension: Volunteer Tourism (May, 2014, pp. 16-17). Pair work: 1. The advantages and disadvantages of volunteer work. 2. Have you experienced a culture shock? Can a culture shock have positive sides too? 3. What kind of souvenirs do you like to buy for yourself and for your friends?
	b) Travel	A YouTube video: British holidays Reading comprehension: Expats in New York (Burgess & Thomas, 2014, pp. 82-83).

The criteria focused on WTC and, on its basis, on autonomy, rather than on the correctness of the students' utterances. On the one hand, a distinction was made between self-initiated responses (marked by a plus sign) and a response encouraged or prompted by the teacher (marked Enc). On the other hand, a scale was introduced to rate the responses: zero – no answer, despite

encouragement; one point – single words, stereotyped answers ("yes," "no," "I agree"), little fluency; two points – an acceptable answer, an attempt at argumentation, or a longer answer which contained too many errors to be acceptable, and three points – good argumentation and a fairly fluent answer. To ensure anonymity, the students' names were encoded (S1, S2, etc.) in order not to use their real names. Thus, particular students' willingness to communicate could also be taken into consideration, apart from the groups' willingness to communicate on the different topics.

4.3. Results and discussion

First of all, the results of the long-term classroom observation were analyzed, taking into account the meaningfulness and complexity of the students' answers on the one hand and the character of their utterances (self-initiated or encouraged by the teacher) on the other. As the results show, there were more self-initiated responses (81 altogether) than encouraged ones (20), and more meaningful answers (78) or at least attempts at argumentation (16), than single-word answers (3) and avoidance (4). The students' overall performance as a group is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The numbers of self-initiated and encouraged responses on the different topics

Topic		0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
1	Self-initiated			1	9
	Encouraged			1	2
2	Self-initiated		1	3	9
	Encouraged				1
3	Self-initiated			2	5
	Encouraged			2	1
4	Self-initiated			3	5
	Encouraged	1			1
5	Self-initiated			3	4
	Encouraged				1
6	Self-initiated				2
	Encouraged				2
7	Self-initiated			1	6
	Encouraged				
8	Self-initiated		1		10
	Encouraged	1			1
9	Self-initiated		1	1	10
	Encouraged	1			1
10a	Self-initiated				3
	Encouraged				3
10b	Self-initiated				2
	Encouraged	1			
Total	Self-initiated	0	3	13	65
	Encouraged	4	0	3	13

First of all, the students' general performance as a group on the ten topics indicates that, if they had something meaningful to say (that is, meaningful enough to obtain two or three points), they mostly gave self-initiated responses. Thus, 65 self-initiated responses were given three points each and 13 self-initiated responses obtained two points. Only three self-initiated responses were poor enough to be given one point, and no self-initiated response obtained zero points (which would have taken place, for example, if a student had raised his or her hand to answer and kept silent). Therefore, all four "zeros" were given to students who had been encouraged to talk by the teacher, but who had not provided an answer. However, it is noteworthy that only four such situations occurred, as the students addressed by the teacher usually had something to say. In fact, as many as 13 three-point responses were encouraged, which suggests that some students who lacked the self-confidence to speak actually had enough competence in English to provide meaningful and exhaustive answers.

Table 2 also shows that certain topics elicited more answers than others. The topics which evoked the most answers were: Topic 8 (10 self-initiated, exhaustive answers), Topic 9 (10), Topic 1 (9), Topic 2 (9) and Topic 7 (6). On the other hand, the fewest self-initiated, exhaustive answers were given to Topics 3 (5 answers), 4 (5), 5 (4), 10a (3), 10b (2) and 6 (2). Interestingly enough, both Topics 8 and 9 involved pair work and videos as conversation triggers (in 9, there was also reading comprehension), Topic 1 was based on a reading comprehension task and Topics 2 and 7 involved the discussion of images. By contrast, Topics 3 and 4 were based on listening comprehension tasks, Topic 5 combined reading comprehension, listening comprehension and discussing images, 10a combined reading comprehension with pair work and 10b combined a video with reading comprehension, whereas Topic 6 was based on a video only.

This suggests that the content was a more important factor than the actual activities. While pair work seems to have prepared the students for the group conversations on Topics 8 and 9, it did not have the same effect in the case of Topic 10a. Similarly, videos proved effective conversation triggers (preceded by language activation in the form of pair work) in the case of Topics 8 and 9, but certainly not in the case of Topics 10b and 6. Discussing images proved to be a fairly good conversation trigger (Topics 2 and 7), but it did not work so well in the case of Topic 5. Even reading comprehension, which might be supposed to be a less exciting activity, worked well with Topic 1, but not with Topics 5, 10a and 10b. This suggests that topics which were more familiar or relevant to the students, such as studying English Philology or fashion, elicited more responses than, for example, juvenile delinquency or the place of women in science and technology. However, it might be surprising that the educational value of toys and the video on Sonia Singh, who transforms second-hand Barbie and Bratz dolls into cute, girlish ones, should have provoked a relatively meaningful

discussion. It is possible that, as some of the students were planning to become teachers and to work with children, the topic of upbringing may have been interesting and relevant enough. A little surprisingly, travel was not a popular topic and it might be supposed that it is so often discussed in different language courses that the students already found it quite boring, while volunteer tourism was something new and unfamiliar to them. Finally, the video on how to stop translating in one's mind was obviously unpopular because it apparently clashed with some of the students' approaches to vocabulary learning. In fact, the present author played it on purpose, to convince those students who insisted on translating every single new word into Polish that it was better to learn words in context, in combination with other English words, in order to reduce negative transfer (indeed, negative transfer, such as assuming the same polysemy in English as in Polish, could be found in the students' essays). Even so, the video did not elicit much discussion afterwards.

These findings provide an answer to the first research question: "which topics and materials are particularly likely to trigger the participants' willingness to communicate and what are the implications for English language teaching?" The topics that elicited the most self-initiated, exhaustive utterances were the educational value of toys, fashion, reasons for studying English Philology, overwork and consumerism. However, the same cannot be said for the types of materials used, as, for example, videos or cartoons could or could not provoke a discussion, depending on the topic.

As for the individual students' performance, the analysis shows that they differed considerably in WTC and, apparently, also in autonomy. These findings can thus provide an answer to the second research question: "in this group of students, which kind of WTC plays a more important role, WTC as a state or as a trait, and in what way can it be associated with the participants' autonomy?" The results obtained by the particular students are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 The individual students' WTC as reflected by their self-initiated and encouraged responses

Student	0 points		1 point		2 points		3 points	
	Self-init	Enc	Self-init	Enc	Self-init	Enc	Self-init	Enc
S1			1		5		27	
S2							5	2
S3			1		3		20	1
S4		2				1	1	1
S5					1	1	3	2
S6			1		1		7	
S7							1	1
S8		1						3
S9		1			1	1	1	2
S10					2			1

Unlike Table 2, Table 3 more clearly shows the differences between the students in the group. Students S1 and S3 were the most willing to communicate, as they provided the most meaningful, exhaustive, self-initiated answers, followed by S6, S2 and S5. Indeed, S1 and S3 were generally active, willing to communicate and quite autonomous, as they had, for example, a fairly rich vocabulary which went beyond what was done in class. By contrast, though S8 provided three exhaustive, meaningful answers, they were all elicited, and she also once failed to answer when addressed directly by the teacher. This indicates that, though she may have actually had enough competence in English, she lacked the necessary self-confidence and, possibly, was not autonomous enough to make the decision to speak.

On the other hand, the least WTC was displayed by students S7, S10 and S4. They made few contributions to the classroom discussions, needed encouragement and, even when encouraged to talk, S4 failed to answer the teacher twice. S7 rarely took the floor, but her two answers recorded in the observation forms were rated at three points, so, rather than competence, she lacked self-confidence, WTC and, possibly, the necessary autonomy to make the decision to speak. A borderline case is student S9, whose responses varied from zero to three points, although only one of her three-point answers was self-initiated and the other two were encouraged by the teacher.

These results suggest that WTC, as the product of a combination of motivation, self-confidence and also autonomy and responsibility for one's utterances, is largely a trait, since some students showed WTC regularly, while others needed to be encouraged. However, the role of the topic and the activities connected with it cannot be neglected either. Still, a student who is willing to communicate and to learn by communicating may try to contribute to a discussion on a topic less familiar or less interesting for him or her than a student with low WTC. In fact, in the present study, the participants were not expected to talk about unfamiliar matters, as the "conversation triggers," such as texts, videos, recordings and images, always provided them with some information and the pair work, serving as a warm-up, could also give them ideas of what to talk about.

Similarly, the results of the questionnaire also show considerable differences between the students' perceived needs and attitudes. In fact, the perception of their current language proficiency, including the skills in need of improvement, can be regarded as a reflection of learner autonomy (Benson, 2010; Dam & Legenhausen, 2010). Table 4 shows the students' perceptions of their language competence and needs.

As can be seen from the table, all the students recognize the importance of improving their English-speaking skills (M = 4.75), they want to enrich their vocabulary (4.8) and to speak English more fluently (4.7), and they are quite unanimous about it. They also want to communicate with native speakers without any

problems and to express in English as many meanings as in Polish (*M* = 4.6, *SD* = 0.699). They generally want to speak in a grammatically correct way (4.5), but their attitudes towards grammar are more varied (*SD* = 0.85). Even though they think they can communicate with native speakers well enough (4.2), their self-evaluations vary (*SD* = 1.32). However, they are not so sure that their English is fairly good but there is still room for improvement (*M* = 3.5, *SD* = 0.97). Apparently, being able to communicate well enough does not yet mean that one's English is really good. In fact, they recognize that their English speaking skills are probably not yet good enough for all kinds of communication (*M* = 3.33), though they also differ considerably in this regard (*SD* = 1). This shows that, as increasingly autonomous learners, they can evaluate their English language skills and pinpoint those areas which need improvement.

Table 4 The students' perceived competence and language needs

Question or statement	*M*	*SD*
How important is it for you to improve your speaking skills in English?	4.75	0.46
I want to speak English more fluently.	4.7	0.48
I want to improve my pronunciation.	3.9	1.197
I want to enrich my vocabulary and have quicker access to it.	4.8	0.42
I want to be able to express in English as many different things as I can express in Polish.	4.6	0.699
My English speaking skills are good enough for all kinds of communication.	3.33	1
I want to speak in a grammatically correct way without having to think about the rules.	4.5	0.85
I want to be able to communicate with native speakers in English without any problems.	4.6	0.699
I can communicate well enough with native speakers.	4.2	1.32
I want to be a good English language teacher in the future.	2.33	2
I want to use spoken English in my future work, for example, as an interpreter.	3.89	1.45
It is safer to be perceived by native speakers as a foreigner.	2.89	1.69
My English is fairly good, but there is always room for improvement.	3.5	0.97

Table 5 Different activities as factors motivating the students to talk in integrated skills classes

Activity	*M*	*SD*
Describing and discussing photos.	3.5	1.35
Describing and discussing cartoons, especially if they are funny.	3.1	1.37
Pair work. Discussing certain questions in pairs.	3.6	1.65
The need to talk in front of the whole group; sharing my thoughts and ideas with the group.	2.6	1.58
Discussing videos we have watched on YouTube.	3.56	1.42
Discussing texts we have just read.	3.1	0.88
Discussing the topic of an essay we are going to write.	2.9	0.99
Discussing listening comprehension exercises.	3.4	1.17
Discussing combined sources of information, for example, if we watch a video and read a text on the same or a related topic.	4.1	0.88

Attitudes towards the use of English in their future work varied considerably, probably because they were still in the first year; in fact, not all the participants

answered these questions. Anyway, they do not generally think that is it safer to be perceived as a foreigner (assuming that native speakers would then forgive their language errors), as the mean is only 2.89, though the responses vary considerably (*SD* = 1.69). Here, three students marked "five" and two of them explained that one might fall victim to fraud and one wrote that a foreigner had better pronunciation. On the other hand, the students were less convinced about the motivating role of different activities than about the need to improve their English-speaking skills.

Apparently, the most motivating activity, in the students' opinion, is the discussion of information from combined sources (*M* = 4.1, *SD* = 0.88), which is also one of the present author's preferred activities to use in class. By contrast, the need to talk in front of the whole group is the least motivating (*M* = 2.6), but the students' attitudes also vary (*SD* = 1.58), which can be attributed to the differences in their WTC. Not very surprisingly, the second most favorite activity is pair work (*M* = 3.6), but again, the students' attitudes are different (*SD* = 1.65). They also find discussing videos, photos and listening comprehension exercises relatively motivating, while discussing essay topics does not seem motivating (*M* = 2.9) and they are quite unanimous about it (*SD* = 0.99). These findings, though more subjective than those in Table 2, partly provide an answer to research question 1. In fact, while the results in Table 2 were based on specific topics, such as fashion, consumerism, etc., Table 5 shows the students' preferences for particular types of activities. Arguably, while preparing conversation classes, it is advisable to bear in mind both the topics and the types of activities that are likely to motivate students and increase their willingness to communicate.

Since the study of WTC cannot ignore language anxiety, there were items in the questionnaire which addressed this problem, taking into consideration a number of its sources, as perceived by the students. The participants were asked about both their general levels of language anxiety and possible reasons for it (fear of bad marks, of being laughed at, etc.) as well as factors counterbalancing language anxiety, such as helpful feedback from the teacher and satisfaction with one's progress.

Table 6 The students' language anxiety and different factors underlying it

Language anxiety and its causes (or the causes of its lack)	*M*	*SD*
General level of language anxiety.	3.33	1.22
I enjoy speaking English and I think it is good enough, so there is no reason to be afraid.	4.1	0.74
I enjoy speaking English, even though I make mistakes; feedback from the teacher helps me to eliminate my mistakes.	4.3	0.82
I am afraid to speak English because I am afraid of bad marks.	2.2	1.398
I am afraid to speak English because other students may laugh at my mistakes.	1.78	0.97
I enjoy speaking English because the progress I make gives me satisfaction.	3.5	0.97
I am still afraid to make mistakes, but I realize that only by speaking can I improve my speaking skills.	3.5	1.78

The students' general level of language anxiety is relatively low (3.33), but it also varies considerably (*SD* = 1.22). However, what is comforting is that the students enjoy speaking English and feel there is no reason to be afraid (*M* = 4.1, *SD* = 0.74), and feedback from the teacher helps them to eliminate mistakes (*M* = 4.3, *SD* = 0.82). On the other hand, they are not afraid of bad marks, nor of other students laughing at them, which confirms, first, their low levels of anxiety and, second, a good classroom climate. It can thus be stated that the role of anxiety as a factor diminishing WTC is not significant here. Moreover, the fact that personal factors (enjoying speaking English, making progress, eliminating mistakes, etc.) are more important to them than external ones (bad marks, other students' laughter) suggests that they possess a certain level of autonomy.

Last but not least, the students were asked to evaluate the speaking activities performed during the integrated skills classes: whether they enjoyed them, to what extent they found them interesting, motivating, difficult, etc. In fact, as autonomous learners, they should be able to evaluate the classes and materials and even, following Nunan (1997), to modify some materials. Therefore, their opinions could be assumed to provide feedback for the teacher and possible suggestions on how to conduct such classes with that group so as to meet their expectations.

Table 7 The students' evaluation of speaking activities in the integrated skills classes

Statement about speaking activities	*M*	*SD*
They are too difficult for me.	2.1	0.99
They are difficult but interesting and motivating.	3.11	0.60
They are boring.	2.3	0.48
They are too easy for me.	2.4	0.97
They are not very difficult, but interesting and even fun.	3	1
They are too schematic and based on the textbook.	2.6	1.51
The fact that they are often based on authentic materials motivates me to use English in class.	3.375	0.74
I would rather use fewer authentic materials and stick to the textbook.	1.89	1.05
That depends. I like some of the activities, but not the others.	2.67	0.87

As the above results show, the activities are neither too difficult (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 0.99) nor too easy (*M* = 2.4, *SD* = 0.97), and definitely not boring (*M* = 2.3, *SD* = 0.48; here, the small standard deviation reflects exceptional unanimity). One student even remarked that we might speed up a little, though, as a teacher, the present author had to take the whole group into consideration. The most motivating factor is the use of authentic materials (*M* = 3.375) and the students are relatively unanimous about it (*SD* = 0.74). One participant even remarked that she was glad that they did not have to buy books, since, as shown above, the present author combined materials from different sources to make the classes more interesting.) Only one person expressed the opposite opinion that the students should perhaps buy books because photocopies could be lost.

It can thus be seen that the students' opinions and attitudes vary, and that their WTC, as reflected by their subjective evaluation (low anxiety, enjoying speaking English) differs to some extent from their actual performance in class. However, the fact that there were more self-initiated than encouraged responses suggests that communication is indeed a volitional act, and the students' responsibility for their utterances is a proof of a certain level of autonomy.

5. Conclusions

To answer the research questions, it can be stated, first, that, for the topics and materials to trigger the participants' willingness to communicate, they should certainly be mixed and adapted to create interesting activities, which constitutes an implication for English language teaching. This finding supports Wilczyńska's (2011) observation that teacher autonomy constitutes a necessary condition of learner autonomy. On the one hand, the students enjoy pair work as a warm-up and a brainstorm before the actual group conversation, so pair work is undoubtedly advisable. Indeed, while talking in pairs, they were generally more active than while speaking in front of the class. However, though pair work motivated them to speak, it also considerably hindered feedback from the teacher, who could not control their correctness very well. According to the questionnaire, the students enjoy listening and watching videos as well as discussing images, but as actual conversation triggers, listening comprehension tasks seemed less effective than images, given that Topics 2 and 7 elicited more self-initiated utterances than Topics 3 and 4. In fact, videos, which also proved quite effective, as in the case of *Tree Change Dolls* and *Fast Fashion Industry Documentary* (Topics 8 and 9), are a combination of image and sound, rather than sound alone. It is possible that, firstly, images are regarded as more pleasant and easier to discuss, but, secondly, it might also be the case that during listening comprehension exercises students concentrate on the main goal of the activity (for example, finding the target words) and miss out other information that might be useful in the discussion afterwards. Nevertheless, in the case of Topics 8 and 9, pair work as a warm-up before watching the videos appears to have had an additional positive effect on the students' WTC, as they practiced discussing the topics in a way they found enjoyable. This confirms that mixing different materials and activities can be more effective than basing classroom conversation on a single material or activity.

Second, given the differences between the participants in willingness to communicate, with some students being regularly active and others needing encouragement, WTC as a trait plays a more important role, at least in this group of students. However, state WTC can also be observed, as the topic of a particular

conversation could motivate the students to talk or not. This confirms Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2015) observation that WTC is dynamic and changes with time, and that is also difficult to choose a sufficiently motivating topic. While planning the classes, the present author thought over the choice of topics and activities carefully, aiming to make the classes interesting and effective. Yet, the students' reactions were varied and not always predictable (for example, counter-intuitively, a reading comprehension exercise was able to trigger more talk than an authentic video). Even though they perceive the importance of good speaking skills, not all of them possess enough WTC to practice speaking in class, especially in situations that involve feedback from the teacher. While the decision to speak is largely autonomous, learners – not only the students in this study – should increase their self-confidence in order to exercise that autonomy more fully and thus to practice their English through communication. The relationship between WTC and autonomy is most strongly reflected in the participants' decisions to speak and in their responsibility for the message. They tended to speak when they had something meaningful to say, that is why most of their utterances were self-initiated and were exhaustive enough (three points) or at least constituted attempts at argumentation.

Nevertheless, the study has some limitations. First, the group was quite small, as it consisted of only ten people. For the results to be more reliable, a larger-scale study would be advisable. Second, it was a form of action research, integrated into actual classes which had to be based on a syllabus and on which the students had to be tested. Therefore, the speaking activities could only take up a relatively small part of the integrated skills classes, alongside reading, listening, writing and vocabulary exercises. Thus, on the one hand, a more extensive study might be carried out in conversation classes, where there would be more speaking activities to observe. On the other hand, as suggested above, combining the activities, though interesting, might make the speaking task more difficult, as concentrating on a listening comprehension task might prevent learners from remembering certain information. Hence, some listening tasks might be adapted in such a way as to serve as auditory information for a speaking task, without the need to listen for target words or the right options in a multiple-choice test.

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APPENDIX A

The questionnaire used in the study

QUESTIONNAIRE
Sex: F__/M___

1. How important is it for you to improve your speaking skills in English? (1 – completely unimportant, 5 – very important) 1 2 3 4 5

Please, indicate why you find it important (or not) to improve your speaking skills in English: (1 – I completely disagree, 5 – I fully agree):

- □ I want to speak English more fluently. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to improve my pronunciation. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to enrich my vocabulary and have quicker access to it. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to be able to express in English as many different things as I can express in Polish. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ My English speaking skills are good enough for all kinds of communication. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to speak in a grammatically correct way without having to think about the rules. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to be able to communicate with native speakers in English without any problems. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I can communicate well enough with native speakers. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to be a good English language teacher in the future. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to use spoken English in my future work, for example, as an interpreter. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ It is safer to be perceived by native speakers as a foreigner. 1 2 3 4 5

  If you think so, please, explain why: ____
- □ My English is fairly good, but there is always room for improvement. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ I want to improve my speaking skills for another reason (please, specify): ____________
____

2. What motivates you to talk in integrated skills classes? Please, indicate to what extent each of the factors listed below motivates you to talk. (1 – it does not motivate me at all, 5 – it motivates me very strongly)

- □ Describing and discussing photos. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Describing and discussing cartoons, especially if they are funny. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Pair work. Discussing certain questions in pairs. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ The need to talk in front of the whole group; sharing my thoughts and ideas with the group. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Discussing videos we have watched on YouTube. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Discussing texts we have just read. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Discussing the topic of an essay we are going to write. 1 2 3 4 5
- □ Discussing listening comprehension exercises. 1 2 3 4 5

□ Discussing combined sources of information, for example, if we watch a video and read a text on the same or a related topic. 1 2 3 4 5
□ Something else (please, specify): ______________________________

3. What is your general level of anxiety when you are expected to speak English in class? (1 – very low, 5 – very high) 1 2 3 4 5
Please, explain why by stating to what extent you agree with the following statements. (1 – I completely disagree, 5 – I fully agree)
□ I enjoy speaking English and I think it is good enough, so there is no reason to be afraid. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I enjoy speaking English, even though I make mistakes; feedback from the teacher helps me to eliminate my mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I am afraid to speak English because I am afraid of bad marks. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I am afraid to speak English because other students may laugh at my mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I enjoy speaking English because the progress I make gives me satisfaction. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I am still afraid to make mistakes, but I realise that only by speaking can I improve my speaking skills. 1 2 3 4 5
□ For another reason (please, specify): ______________________________
____

4. How do you evaluate the speaking activities in the integrated skills classes in general? (1 – I completely disagree, 5 – I fully agree)
□ They are too difficult for me. 1 2 3 4 5
□ They are difficult but interesting and motivating. 1 2 3 4 5
□ They are boring. 1 2 3 4 5
□ They are too easy for me. 1 2 3 4 5
□ They are not very difficult, but interesting and even fun. 1 2 3 4 5
□ They are too schematic and based on the textbook. 1 2 3 4 5
□ The fact that they are often based on authentic materials motivates me to use English in class. 1 2 3 4 5
□ I would rather use fewer authentic materials and stick to the textbook. 1 2 3 4 5
□ That depends. I like some of the activities, but not the others. 1 2 3 4 5
□ Other (please, specify): ______________________________
____

5. Would you like to add a comment of your own?

Thank you.

APPENDIX B

The form used during the classes for recording the students' communicative behavior

Topic ___: ______________Triggers: ____

S1									
S2									
S3									
S4									
S5									
S6									
S7									
S8									
S9									
S10									

+ – self-initiated
Enc – encouraged
0 – no answer
1 – single words, banal/stereotyped answers, little fluency
2 – an acceptable answer, attempts at argumentation
3 – good argumentation, fairly fluent

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