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## SPREMNOST NA KOMUNIKACIJU

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WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

Graduation Thesis

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## ***Abstract***

This thesis deals with willingness to communicate (WTC). To be more precise, it deals with how WTC is related to age and level of proficiency. Participants in the present study were native speakers of Croatian. They belonged to three age groups: elementary, high-school students, and English majors. They differed in their levels of proficiency accordingly. The instrument we used for collecting data was a questionnaire. The results of our study showed that language anxiety differed significantly across the three age groups. English majors expressed greater anxiety than high-school students. Another finding was that elementary-school students liked communicating with other peers in class more than high-school students and English majors. The study showed that there was no difference between the groups concerning motivation, which might be explained by the fact that English is nowadays a *lingua franca* and most of the people are aware that mastering English gives many opportunities. And finally, our findings showed that the higher the mark, the more willing to communicate our participants were.

Key words: willingness to communicate, language anxiety, perceived competence, motivation

## ***Introduction***

The idea for this research came from our own experience, as it usually happens. We went to Spanish classes in a private school which organises courses of different foreign languages. We were eight in our group. When we did grammar exercises, everybody would participate. But when our teacher wanted us to talk about, for example, our daily activities or the current situation in our country, suddenly only a few of us would speak voluntarily. In other words, even when the teacher asked some students to speak, they would feel uneasy and would hesitate to speak. We would like to draw attention to the fact that we were not beginners, so it went without saying that we were supposed to express our thoughts easily. What was even more surprising was the fact that the students were not unwilling to speak out of class, which meant that when they had to speak in Croatian, they would not hesitate at all. Our question was: how come that those Spanish learners would speak Croatian out of class with no hesitation at all and hesitate to speak Spanish in class? If they had hesitated in speaking Croatian out of class, it would not have been a surprise. We would have related that to their personality, that is to their being introverted. Since the situation was quite the opposite, it gave us some food for thought.

What also inspired us to examine this phenomenon was an article written by Mihaljević Djigunović and Letica entitled *Spremnost na komunikaciju i učenje stranog jezika* [Willingness to communicate and FL learning] published in 2008. The authors measured willingness to communicate (WTC) of 127 Croatian FL students, and came to the conclusion that it is necessary to reconceptualize this individual difference, and proposed a new one: willingness to communicate in class. After reading this article, we realised that this could be the explanation for our co-students being unwilling to communicate in Spanish classes, and willing to communicate when they were not in class.

The purpose of our research was to examine WTC in the EFL classroom. We examined this individual difference by correlating it to the age of the students and their levels of proficiency. We also wanted to examine the relationship of language anxiety to age and level of proficiency. We assumed that those students who were supposed to have mastered English at the advanced level would express the lowest level of language anxiety. We also assumed that students with higher marks would express higher WTC. But before we start giving a brief theoretical overview of individual differences in general and what WTC represents, we would

like to say a few words about English as a universal language of communication and how it differs from the English taught in the classroom.

### ***English as a lingua franca***

The English language is nowadays considered as the international language that everyone should be able to speak at least at the basic level. Seidlhofer (2005) states that some linguists say that English is a *lingua franca*. This term was once used for Latin or Ancient Greek. If we say that English is a *lingua franca*, this implies that English is used to establish communication between persons whose mother tongues are not the same (Seidlhofer, 2005). English has become the international language thanks to the development of technology and science. One of the reasons for English being an international language is the fact that its cultures are among the richest cultures of our times.

Since 2003 English has been taught from the first grade of elementary school in Croatia. Previously it started to be taught in the fourth grade. Even if English is not the first foreign language that pupils study, they have to study it at some point during their education in elementary school. This means that no student finishes elementary school without having had English lessons. One proof of English being an omnipresent language in Croatia is the fact that there are many words related to tourism for which no equivalent has been found yet (e.g. leisure tourism, lost and found department, to do the check-in). There is another side of the coin, though. Some estimate that English represents a menace to local languages and cultures. This is the reason why Europe is advocating plurilingual education. The Council of Europe language education policies (Council of Europe, 2006) aim to promote plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship and social cohesion. Europe is a multilingual territory where all languages are supposed to have the same status. All languages are worth learning because this incites stronger social cohesion among Europeans. Learning other languages promotes mutual understanding, not only in the sense that two persons can talk, but in the sense that they can understand and accept cultural differences between them. Apart from that, mastering more than one foreign language means that one might have a big advantage over other people who do not master them or might have bigger chances for working abroad, which is always a good reference back home.

### ***English in the classroom***

Given that our research examines WTC in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) classroom, we would like to say a few words about the classroom as one of the forms of communication environment. The classroom might be considered as a specific type of communication place since it has two major features: it is an artificial communicative environment and it imposes its own rules of language behaviour. In the classroom teachers often ask pupils for a piece of information which is known to teachers. In a natural environment, i.e. out of class, if someone asks a question, it is mostly because he or she does not know the answer to it. In other words, the authentic purpose of posing a question is generally not accomplished in the classroom. Apart from asking a question, teachers use other speech acts, such as giving instructions and explanations to pupils. Teachers also correct their pupils. And finally, teachers evaluate pupils' answers. All of these speech acts are needed in order to make pupils talk, and to verify at the same time whether pupils have learnt what they have been taught. The accent is mostly put on the correct use of language, that is on the linguistic component of communicative competence. By doing this teachers are usually convinced that they are practising with pupils how to communicate. Research has shown that the speech acts used by teachers are aimed at using a standard variety of a foreign language (Vrhovac, 2001).

### ***What are individual differences (IDs)?***

Dörnyei (2005) defines IDs as features which help us to differentiate between individuals. Let us stress that in this context it does not apply to physical appearance of individuals, but rather to their behaviour. We have to specify that this particular behaviour has to be stable over time and situations. Human behaviour is widely influenced by the environment, i.e. human behaviour is a combination of genetics and stimuli coming from the environment.

IDs play an important role in people's lives. Furthermore, they considerably contribute to language learning. Dörnyei (2005) states that it has been found that there is an existing relationship between IDs and a successful L2 learning in instructed settings. It is hard to tell the

exact number of IDs, but most researchers would agree that these are: personality, language aptitude, language anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, and WTC. The latter will be examined in our research.

Before we start talking about WTC, let us briefly introduce and explain some major terms which we will be mentioning when talking about WTC. These terms are *first* and *second language*. First language, usually referred to as L1, is the first language that we acquire. L1 is what is known as a mother tongue. L2 is any language that is not L1. Some researchers refer to it as a target language. Having this distinction in mind, we can also mention that in applied linguistics there is a distinction between foreign language learning (FLL) and second language acquisition (SLA). FLL refers to mastering an L2 in school with limited or no contact with its native speakers, whereas SLA refers to mastering an L2 in the environment of the L2, i.e. it is not limited to school context, but rather to the natural context (Dörnyei, 2005). Acquisition implies that mastering the language is happening spontaneously. We have to bear this distinction in mind because our participants were all foreign language learners, that is they *learned* English, rather than *acquired* it.

### ***Willingness to communicate (WTC)***

WTC, originally conceptualized with reference to L1 communication, was introduced to the communication literature by McCroskey and Baer (1985), building on the earlier work of Burgoon (1976) and others. McCroskey and Baer conceptualized WTC as the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so. When this ID was first conceptualized, it was considered essentially as a personality trait. Nevertheless, McCroskey (as cited in MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément & Noels, 1998) noticed that WTC is related to other IDs such as communication apprehension, perceived communication competence or introversion and extroversion. Further research proposed to consider WTC as a situation-based variable, too (MacIntyre, 1994; Mihaljević Djigunović & Letica, 2008). MacIntyre et al. (2003) state that WTC can be predicted, or shall we say influenced by a combination of communication apprehension and perceived communication competence. This is the reason we have also included these two variables in our study. Let us just say that McCroskey's work on WTC focuses on speaking, but MacIntyre and associates propose to extend this ID to other parts of

linguistic performance, such as writing and comprehension of both spoken and written language. Our research sticks to what McCroskey researched, and that is spoken language.

There are many variables that have the potential to change an individual's WTC, such as the degree of acquaintance between communicators, the number of people present, the formality of the situation, the topic of discussion, etc. These are all variables that influence communication in L1. The influence of these variables may be even stronger when it comes to communication in L2 (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998).

### ***WTC in the second language***

If L2 learners are willing to communicate in their L1, it does not mean automatically that they will be willing to communicate in their L2. The IDs that we have enumerated above may interact with L1 WTC in a different manner if compared to the interaction with L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998). We have already mentioned that communication in an L2 might already be a problem for some language learners. No need to add to it their self-consciousness and anxiety which might influence negatively their L2 WTC (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). This is exactly what happened to us in the Spanish classes from the beginning of the paper. Our situation in the Spanish classes does not confirm the assumption made by MacIntyre et al. that L1 self-confidence may reinforce decreased L2 WTC of some language learners (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003).

WTC is a complex ID. As already stated, many other IDs influence it. MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) came up with a pyramidal model representing WTC. This model is designed as a multi-layered pyramid which includes all the IDs that influence WTC. Figure 1 shows that the pyramid model contains six sections which are called *layers*: communication behaviour, behavioural intention, situated antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context and, finally, social and individual context. These six layers may be grouped further into two categories: situational and enduring influences. Situational influences comprise top three variables, which means that they influence WTC at a particular moment in time. Enduring influences comprise bottom three variables. MacIntyre (2003) proposes also another terminology for situational and enduring influences. He terms situational influences *proximal*, and



enduring influences *distal*. This distinction is in relation to the notion of “time”. We will now briefly present each of the layers, starting from the bottom and climbing to the top.

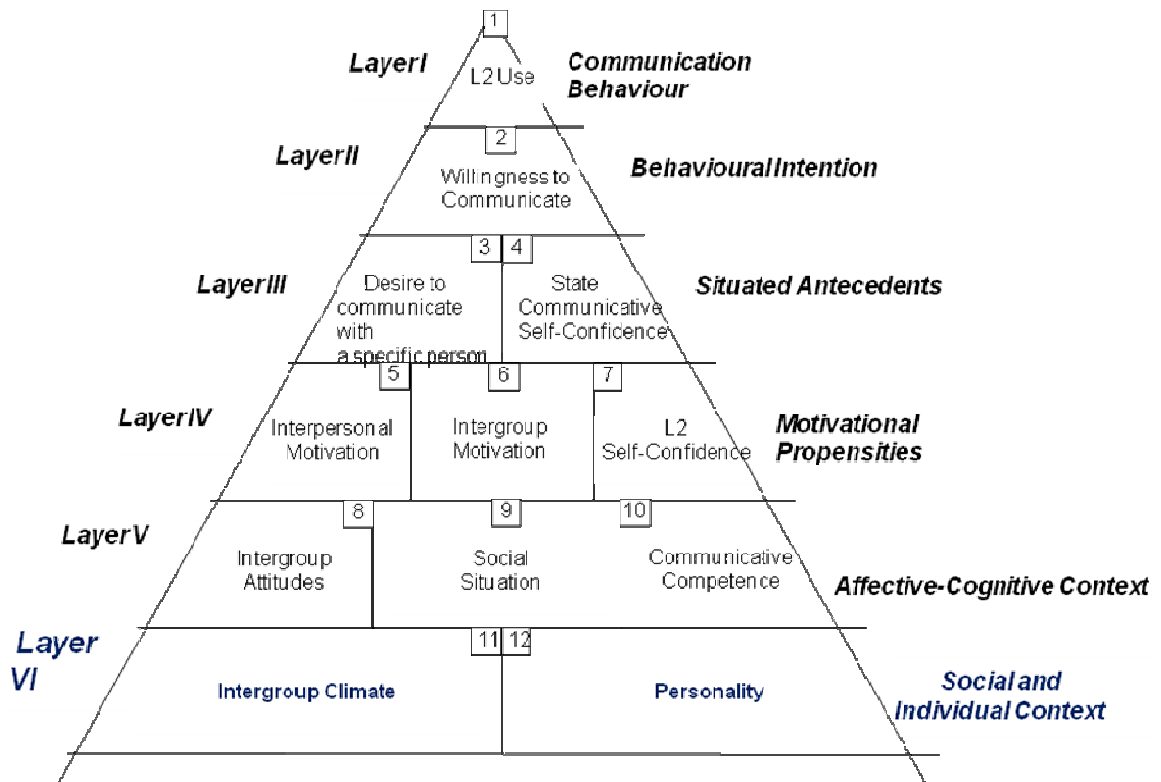


Figure 1

Pyramid model of variables influencing WTC (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p.547)

The last layer, or the sixth one, represents social and individual contexts. Social and individual contexts are crucial to establishing communication. The social context implies the environment in which particular communication is in process. The individual context refers to stable personality characteristics relevant to communication. When it comes to intergroup climate, it is conditioned by ethnolinguistic vitality and personal communication networks. Ethnolinguistic vitality refers to the relative socioeconomic power of two communities and the extent to which they are presented in social institutions. Languages with high ethnolinguistic vitality retain greater prestige and attract more speakers (MacIntyre et al., 1998). English is

definitely a language with high ethnolinguistic vitality. Personality patterns predict reactions to communication, other people, stress, etc. Individual dispositions will affect whether one reacts positively or negatively to a different ethnic group (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Our study does not examine the attitudes towards English-speaking communities. The reason why MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) mention ethnolinguistic vitality is due to the fact that their research was conducted in Canada, which is a bilingual country where official languages are English and French. Historical events have led to Canada being a bilingual country. Englishmen and Frenchmen always had fights between them in conquering territories. These circumstances have to be taken into consideration when discussing attitudes one language group has towards the other. In the Croatian context, we suppose that no hard feelings are evoked in respect to England (or France), which means that there is no place for resentment or bad feelings that would affect learning English negatively.

The fifth layer, the affective and cognitive context, is comprised of three variables: intergroup attitudes, social situation and communicative competence. Intergroup attitudes are influenced by integrativeness and fear of assimilation. Integrativeness is related to increased frequency and quality of contact with L2 community. Once again, in the Croatian context, we cannot talk about integrativeness in this sense since Croats do not live within an English-speaking community. Fear of assimilation predicts less contact with L2 community. The same comment might apply to Croatia since most pupils have no direct contact with L2 community. They might have some contact with native speakers of English through the Internet, but this is probably quite rare. The second variable in this layer is social situation. It is composed of five factors: the participants, the setting, the purpose, the topic and the channel of communication. The most important participant variables are their age, gender and social class. Our study examined the age and gender of our participants, but not their social class. The relationship between participants is equally important. In our study we also look into this relationship (*I think it is more fun to study in a group than alone, I like talking to the teacher and other pupils in English*). Concerning the setting, communication between persons occurs in the first place within three general environments, which are school, organizational and social environments (MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to this distinction, our environment is undoubtedly school environment since we examine WTC in the EFL classroom. The purpose of social situation is its

third factor. When it comes to our context, the purpose of discourse in the classroom is to transfer information about English grammar, vocabulary, cultural references. The transfer is usually addressed to pupils. The topic of communication will substantially influence language use. If pupils are familiar with the topic being discussed, they will be more involved in the discussion. We also examined how topics influence our participants' WTC (*I don't like discussing complicated topics in English classes*). Finally, the communication channel involves the medium chosen for communication, and these are speaking and writing. Since our research deals with WTC, there is no need to stress that it sheds light on speaking, rather than writing. The last variable composing the fifth layer is communicative competence. There are five types of competencies: linguistic (knowledge of syntactic and morphological rules, lexical resources, and the phonological and orthographic systems), discourse (selecting, sequencing, and arranging words, structures, sentences and utterances), actional or pragmalinguistic (matching communicative intent with linguistic form), sociocultural (knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall cultural and social context), and finally strategic competence (verbal and nonverbal devices allowing a speaker to compensate for deficiencies when he or she cannot remember a word, or when his or her mind goes temporarily blank) (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

The fourth layer of the pyramid model is related to motivational propensities. Three variables are vital to motivation: interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and L2 self-confidence. There are two aspects that we have to mention when discussing interpersonal motivation: control and affiliation. Both of them explain the majority of communication episodes. MacIntyre et al. (1998) claim that control limits the cognitive, affective and behavioural freedom of the persons involved in communication. Examples of this type of communication are encounters between doctors and patients, teachers and students, supervisors and employees. This hierarchical communication is not a one-way communication, though. Both sides may encourage or discourage the flow of communication. The second aspect is affiliation, i.e. the amount of interest needed to initiate communication with the interlocutor. The interlocutor plays an important role because his or her personal characteristics (attractiveness, or physical proximity) attract the other to start communicating. It should be noted that individual differences exist with respect to the need for affiliation (introversion and extraversion). Let us

now present the second variable influencing motivation, and that is intergroup motivation. Unlike interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation is derived directly from an individual's belonging to a particular group. The basis for contact is the maintenance of power and the desire to begin or maintain a relationship with a member of another group precisely because this person belongs to another group (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The third and last variable in this layer is L2 self-confidence. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) L2 self-confidence means that persons believe they can express their thoughts efficiently in the L2. It is determined by two components: self-evaluation of L2 skills and language anxiety. When it comes to self-evaluation, in our study we also included this component (e.g. *I like talking in English without having to think about minor grammatical errors, I don't like discussing complicated topics in English classes*), but we also took into consideration the final mark of the previous school year that our participants achieved in English. Therefore, we combined both subjective and objective evaluation of L2 skills. Concerning language anxiety, we asked our participants to evaluate how strong their fear of English was (*Assess your language anxiety in English classes on a scale from 1 to 5*).

The third layer comprises two variables: the desire to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence. The desire to communicate is fostered by affiliation and control motives, which we have already mentioned above. Affiliation is, on the one hand, the most important motive in starting a conversation in informal situations with an attractive, L2 interlocutor. Control, on the other hand, may result in L2 usage only if interlocutors are comfortable in that language. State communicative self-confidence has two fundamental components. The first is state anxiety, which varies in intensity, fluctuates over time, and most undoubtedly reduces WTC. The second is state perceived competence. It will be greater if a person has previously encountered a particular situation and has developed language knowledge and skills. In our study we also include this aspect (*I panic when I have to talk in class without preparation*). In other words new situations may affect WTC negatively (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

The second layer, unlike the previous ones, has only one variable, and that is WTC. Since this is one of the three top layers, it means that it is a situational variable. We have already defined WTC as a readiness to enter into conversation with a person or persons at a particular moment. The key-word is "readiness", since moments for communication might be numerous,

but this “readiness” might be absent. The conclusion is that opportunity to communicate is not necessary for WTC to exist. An example is when a teacher asks a question, not all of the pupils will raise their hands. What is also mentioned in this second layer is “behavioural intention” because WTC strongly implies a behavioural intention. In other words, the way we act is the consequence of our willingness to act (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

The final layer, or the most top one, is L2 use. Communication behavior entails a broad range of activities, such as speaking up in class, reading L2 newspapers, and watching L2 television. Unfortunately, language teachers do not have the possibility to create all these activities. We have already touched upon it when we talked about teaching a language in the classroom. The ultimate goal of L2 learning process should be to create WTC, so a program that fails to produce WTC among students is a failed program (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

## **THE STUDY**

### ***Aim***

The aim of the present study was to see how age and level of proficiency are related to WTC in the EFL classroom. Let us stress that we wanted to look into how age and level of proficiency are associated with some of the variables already described above, that is language anxiety, perceived competence and motivation.

### ***Sample***

Participants in the present study were native speakers of the Croatian language. They belonged to three age cohorts: elementary, high-school students, and English majors. They differed in their levels of proficiency accordingly. In other words, elementary-school students are supposed to master the basic level of English, high-school students the intermediate level, and English majors are supposed to master the advanced level of English.

Forty-one elementary-school students participated in the study (22 females, 19 males). These students were in Grade 7. They had English classes three times a week. Fifty-one high-school students from Grade 3 participated in the study (41 females, 10 males). They were students of a languages-oriented grammar school and English was the first foreign language they studied in school, which means that they had four English classes per week. And finally, the last group included 42 English majors (37 females, 5 males) who were in their second year of university studies. In their case all the items in the questionnaire related to their classes of the Contemporary English Language 3 course, which were language classes held four times a week.

### ***Instruments***

Our questionnaire (see Appendix) consisted of two parts. The first part aimed at eliciting data on language anxiety and motivation in class. The second part included items developed by Mihaljević Djigunović and Letica (2008), consisting of 12 statements concerning different aspects of participating in the classroom. The accent was put on communication.

### ***Procedure***

Teachers of elementary and high-school students, as well as lecturers of English majors, were contacted and asked for permission to conduct the research in their classes. Participants were informed that participation was anonymous and that they were chosen by chance. Testing was carried out during regular English classes. It took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Not all participants completed our questionnaire correctly, so the number of participants, unfortunately, diminished. This means that in the end the sample was reduced to 36 elementary-school, 46 high-school and 41 university students. Before participants started to fill in the questionnaire, we had explained to them what motivation and language anxiety were. We found that important, especially in case of elementary school participants.

### ***Results***

As stated in the Aims section, the objectives of this study were: 1. to examine the relationships between age and language anxiety; 2. to look into the relationships between age and perceived competence; 3. to examine the relationship between age and motivation; 4. to see how marks correlate with language anxiety.

#### 1. Relationship between age and language anxiety

In order to examine how language anxiety varies according to age, a one-way ANOVA was used. What we took into consideration was participants' own evaluation of general language anxiety they experienced in English classes (*Assess your language anxiety in English classes at school on a scale from 1 to 5*). Table 1 shows that language anxiety differed significantly across the three age groups.

**Table 1**

**Relationship between age and language anxiety –  
difference in age groups**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	12.822	2	6.411	5.086	.008
Within groups	151.243	120	1.260		
Total	164.065	122			

We then used a post-hoc test to see how language anxiety varied between groups. Table 2 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in language anxiety between high-school students and English majors ( $p = .009$ ) which indicated that English majors expressed greater anxiety than high-school students.

**Table 2**

**Multiple Comparisons. Dependent Variable: Language  
Anxiety in English Classes and Age**

(I)Age	(J)Age	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
Grade 7	Grade 3	-.495	.145
	English majors	-.754	.009

We did not only take into consideration our participants' own evaluation of general language anxiety. Our questionnaire also included statements related to language anxiety in class. It turned out that there were three situations in which our participants behaved differently. The first one is as follows: *Before I start using a word in English, I want to be sure I know how*



to use it correctly. As can be seen in Table 3, among high-school students the mean was 2.48, and when it comes to English majors the mean was 1.83. The difference between the means of these two groups was .649. Following this row across, we see that this difference was statistically significant ( $p = .049$ ). Tables 3 and 4 show these results.

**Table 3**

**Comparison between high-school students and English majors concerning the following statement: Before I start using a word in English, I want to be sure I know how to use it correctly**

	N	Mean
Grade 3	46	2.48
English majors	41	1.83

*Note.* Judgments were made on a 5-point scale (1 = It completely applies to me, 5 = It doesn't apply to me at all).

**Table 4**

**Before I start using a word in English, I want to be sure I know how to use it correctly**

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
	Grade 7	.339	.458
Grade 3			
	English majors	.649	.049

Other scores that proved to be significant are related to the following statement: *I feel uncomfortable volunteering in class*. Means displayed in Table 5 show that elementary-school students ( $M=4.28$ ) felt less uncomfortable volunteering than high-school students ( $M=3.35$ ) and English majors ( $M=3.24$ ).

**Table 5**

**I feel uncomfortable volunteering in class**

	N	Mean
Grade 7	36	4.28
Grade 3	46	3.35
English majors	41	3.24

Table 6 shows that the means difference between elementary-school and high-school students was .930 and that difference is statistically significant ( $p = .011$ ). The same goes for the means difference between elementary-school students and English majors. This difference turned out to be statistically significant ( $p = .005$ ).

**Table 6**

**The means difference between elementary-school and high-school students concerning the following statement: I feel uncomfortable volunteering in class**

(I)Age	(J)Age	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
	Grade 3	.930	.011
Grade 7			
	English majors	1.034	.005

The last scores which turned out to be significant were those related to the following statement: *I panic when I have to speak in class without preparation*. There was a difference between elementary-school students and high-school students. The means difference between the groups was .702 and was statistically significant ( $p = .047$ ). Table 7 shows these results.

**Table 7**

**The means difference between elementary-school students and high-school students concerning the statement: I panic when I have to speak in class without preparation**

(I)Age	(J)Age	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
	Grade 3	-.702	.047
Grade 7			
	English majors	-.333	.514

## 2. Relationship between age and perceived competence

Our questionnaire included some statements which we could classify as indicators of perceived competence. The first, fourth, and eighth items are examples of perceived competence. Only one item showed significant difference between the groups: *I like communicating with other students in class*. Students in Grade 7 liked communicating with their peers more than high-school students or English majors did. The means difference between elementary and high-school students was statistically significant ( $p = .005$ ), as well as the means difference between elementary-school students and English majors ( $p = .026$ ).

## 3. Relationship between age and motivation

We asked our participants to evaluate how high or low their motivation in English classes was. Table 8 shows that there was no significant difference among the three groups.

**Table 8****Relationship between age and motivation –difference in age**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	4.625	2	2.312	2.540	.083
Within groups	109.245	120	.910		
Total	113.870	122			

#### 4. Correlation between level of proficiency and WTC

We asked our students to write down their final marks in the previous school year. We took marks as indicators of their level of proficiency. It is the objective indicator since this was the result of their written and oral exams, and participation in class. On the one hand, we correlated final mark and strength of general language anxiety. It turned out that correlation between mark and general language anxiety was low. On the other hand, we correlated mark and the questionnaire items concerning WTC (items 1, 4, 8, 12). The correlation coefficient showed that between these two variables there was a significant positive correlation, i.e. the higher the mark the participants gained, the more willing to communicate they were ( $R = -.259, p = .004$ ).

#### *Discussion*

Among the present sample which included elementary, high-school students, and English majors there appears to be a difference concerning language anxiety. As stated in the introductory part, we assumed that English majors would express the lowest level of language anxiety since they were the ones who were supposed to have mastered the English language at the advanced level. Our research showed that English majors expressed greater anxiety than elementary and high-school students. We believe that elementary and high-school students perceive English as just one of the subjects, which means that a lack of success will not decrease their self-confidence, because they might excel at other subjects. Therefore they do not feel

anxious if they make mistakes while talking in English. In addition, teachers appreciate when students volunteer even if the answer is not grammatically correct. If one chooses to study English at the university, it means that English is not just one of the subjects. According to our assumption, English majors should be at the advanced level of English, so they might think that they should speak perfect English. The more one knows the more one is aware of the mistakes he or she might make. Our findings are in accordance with the concern expressed by McCroskey and Richmond (as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998) that there are many persons who are objectively incompetent communicators, but who are convinced that they are competent and in consequence show a high level of WTC. In contrast to incompetent communicators, there are competent communicators who tend to underestimate themselves, and therefore they appear apprehensive. We suppose that elementary and high-school students are less anxious because the level of knowledge expected in school cannot be compared to the knowledge of English at the academic level. The statement *Before I start using a word in English, I want to be sure I know how to use it correctly* showed that English majors would do this more frequently than high-school students. We are convinced that English majors tend to be perfectionists, and perfectionists usually are likely to underestimate themselves and they set high standards for themselves in language competence. Whatever they say or write must be flawless, and their pronunciation should be native-like. They would remain silent and passive, rather than uttering an incorrect sentence (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

Concerning motivation, our research showed that all students were motivated (total mean was 3.70). This proved our assumption which is based on the belief that English is indeed a *lingua franca*. Anglophone cultures enjoy a high status nowadays. English speaking films, music, and art are omnipresent. Much of the merit has to be awarded to the Internet, social networks, and video games, which come from the Anglophone world. Apart from that, English is not like other subjects, meaning that being successful in English means that one masters another language, an important foreign language. It might give new opportunities to someone, for example going abroad to go to college or to work. Even if they stayed in Croatia, they would more easily find work: English is taught from the kindergarten until the end of secondary education. Books in English are known worldwide, so the need for translating them is bigger. Those students are instrumentally motivated.

The last assumption was also confirmed. As stated in the introductory part, we assumed that those learners who were successful, i.e. had high marks, would be more willing to communicate. Marks as an objective measure of students' knowledge boost students' self-confidence. We suppose that the same applies for English.

### ***Conclusion***

The centre of the present paper was willingness to communicate (WTC). WTC is a concept that emerged within the field of language acquisition. Firstly, it was observed in the context of first language (L1) communication, and then it was examined within second language (L2) communication. The reason we dealt with WTC was a real-life situation. To be more precise, we went to Spanish classes during which we came to the conclusion that WTC in L2 (the Spanish language) differed from WTC in L1 (the Croatian language). This was just a trigger. Then we decided to do the research in Croatian schools and at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb to examine WTC in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) classroom, i.e. to examine whether there was a correlation between WTC and age and level of proficiency. Our research was based on the research previously done by Mihaljević Djigunović and Letica (2008).

The present paper consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part we presented the English language as a *lingua franca*. Then, we presented how English is taught in the classroom, since all of our participants learnt English in the classroom, which is just one type of learning a language. Another one is learning it in a natural environment, i.e. acquiring it. Since WTC is not the only individual difference (ID) in language learning, we firstly defined what IDs were, and then we defined WTC. As already stated, WTC, as a concept, emerged originally within L1 communication, and afterwards the concept was reconceptualized within L2 communication. The important thing to say here is that individuals who are willing to communicate in L1 are not necessarily equally willing to communicate in L2, as was the case during the Spanish classes we took.

WTC in the second language is represented by the pyramidal model conceived by MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998). The pyramid includes all the IDs that influence WTC and they are grouped into two categories: enduring and situational influences. Enduring influences influence WTC all the time, whereas situational influences influence WTC at a

particular moment in time. Enduring influences are: intergroup climate, personality, intergroup attitudes, social situation, communicative competence, interpersonal and intergroup motivation, and lastly, L2 self-confidence. Situational influences are: desire to communicate with a specific person, state communicative self-confidence, willingness to communicate, and L2 use.

In the practical part we presented our study. As already stated in the first paragraph, we did the research among elementary, high-school students, and English majors. We chose to examine those three groups because they differed in their level of proficiency, and the aim of our research was to see how level of proficiency and age were related to WTC. During the research we used a questionnaire which consisted of two parts. The first part elicited data on language anxiety and motivation in class, while the second part included 12 statements concerning different aspects of participating in the classroom, and the 12 statements were developed by Mihaljević Djigunović and Letica (2008).

The results of our study showed that age and level of proficiency proved to be related to WTC. English majors were more anxious than elementary and high-school students. We assumed that that was because English majors thought that they had to speak perfect English since they studied it at the academic level. Elementary and high-school students might think that English is just one of the subjects, so they feel less anxious when using it. Those findings were in contrast to our hypothesis that English majors would express lower level of anxiety because they are the ones who are supposed to have mastered English at the advanced level. When it comes to motivation, the results showed that age was not related to motivation. It proved to be stable however old the participants were. Those findings were in accordance with our hypothesis. Being successful in English might not only bring good marks, but also new opportunities like going abroad for work or for studies. And lastly, the level of proficiency was positively related to WTC, meaning that those participants who were more successful were more willing to communicate. Those findings also confirmed our hypothesis that those participants who had high marks in English felt more self-confident, and therefore more willing to communicate.

## *Sažetak*

Ovaj diplomski rad govori o individualnoj razlici u učenju pod nazivom spremnost na komunikaciju (SnK). Točnije, ovaj diplomski rad proučava u kakvoj je vezi SnK s dobi i razinom znanja sudionika. Sudionici istraživanja su bili izvorni govornici hrvatskoga jezika i pripadali su trima dobnim skupinama: učenici osnovne škole, učenici srednje škole i studenti engleskog jezika i književnosti s Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu. Svaka dobná skupina se razlikovala od druge po kriteriju razine znanja. Koristili smo upitnik kao instrument za prikupljanje podataka. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazala da se strah od jezika značajno razlikuje od jedne dobne skupine do druge. Studenti engleskog jezika su pokazali veći strah od jezika u usporedbi s učenicima srednje škole. Nadalje, u usporedbi s učenicima srednje škole i studentima engleskog jezika, učenici osnovne škole više vole komunicirati sa svojim kolegama. Kad je u pitanju motivacija, istraživanje je pokazalo da među trima skupinama nema razlike u stupnju motivacije što se može objasniti činjenicom da je engleski jezik u današnje vrijeme *lingua franca* te da mnogi smatraju kako poznavanje engleskog jezika otvara mnoge mogućnosti. I naposljetku, istraživanje je pokazalo da što su sudionici imali višu ocjenu, to su bili spremniji na komunikaciju.

Ključne riječi: spremnost na komunikaciju, strah od jezika, percepcija vlastite kompetencije, motivacija



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## APPENDIX

Upitnik o spremnosti na komunikaciju na nastavi engleskog jezika

Spol: M    Ž

Razred:

Zadnja zaključena ocjena iz engleskog jezika:

Učiš li engleski i izvan škole: DA    NE

Ako je tvoj odgovor na prethodno pitanje DA, koliko dugo učiš engleski izvan škole?

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Gdje? (zaokruži)

Tečaj u školi stranih jezika    Privatni sati

Procijeni svoju motivaciju za učenje na nastavi engleskog jezika (na skali od 1 do 5).

1   2   3   4   5

Ako engleski učiš i izvan škole, procijeni svoju motivaciju za učenje engleskog izvan škole (na skali od 1 do 5).

1   2   3   4   5

Procijeni svoj strah od jezika na nastavi engleskog jezika u školi (na skali od 1 do 5).

1   2   3   4   5

Ako engleski učiš i izvan škole, procijeni svoj strah od jezika izvan škole

(na skali od 1 do 5).

1   2   3   4   5

**OKRENI STRANICU**

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Ovaj se upitnik sastoji od niza tvrdnji o osjećajima pri učenju i komunikaciji na engleskom jeziku na nastavi engleskog jezika u školi. Odredi koliko sljedeće tvrdnje dobro opisuju tvoje osjećaje. Zaokruži odgovarajuću brojku prema ovoj legendi:

- 1= potpuno se odnosi na mene
- 2= djelomično se odnosi na mene
- 3=ponekad se odnosi na mene, a ponekad ne
- 4=većinom se ne odnosi na mene
- 5=uopće se ne odnosi na mene

Volim se na engleskom jeziku izražavati bez razmišljanja o sitnim gramatičkim pravilima.	1	2	3	4	5
Mislim da je zabavnije učiti u grupi nego sam/a.	1	2	3	4	5
Prije nego počnem koristiti neku riječ na engleskom, želim biti siguran/a da točno znam kako se koristi.	1	2	3	4	5
Volim razgovarati s profesorom i ostalim učenicima na engleskom jeziku.	1	2	3	4	5
Ne volim na nastavi koristiti komplicirane rečenice na engleskom.	1	2	3	4	5
Pri formulaciji rečenica radije se držim osnovnih struktura kako ne bih pogriješio/la.	1	2	3	4	5
Ne volim na nastavi raspravljati na engleskom o kompliciranim temama.	1	2	3	4	5
Volim komunicirati s ostalim učenicima na nastavi.	1	2	3	4	5
Neugodno mi je javljati se na nastavi.	1	2	3	4	5
Nije mi ugodno kad moram govoriti engleski pred drugim učenicima.	1	2	3	4	5
Često mi se ne da biti na nastavi engleskog.	1	2	3	4	5
Uspaničim se kad na nastavi moram govoriti na engleskom bez pripreme.	1	2	3	4	5