# BACK TO BASIC: THEORIES AND MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:**

Communication plays a vital role in our everyday lives. Communication that is effective can aid in the resolution of numerous issues and problems. Therefore, effective communication skills are required. To be able to interact with others, it is necessary to develop communication skills and the ability to express one's thoughts and connect with others. This paper aims to look into communication theories and models in order to gain a deeper understanding of communication's origins. The purpose of this paper is to present the origins of communication and how this may influence students' willingness to communicate in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and on digital platforms.

**Keywords:**

Theories, Models of Communication, Communication

## Introduction

More than 350 million people speak English as their first language (L1), and more than 430 million speak English as a second language (Will, 2018). In addition, according to Professor Ambigapathy Pandian's inaugural professorial lecture (2006), English is the lingua franca of

international commerce, science, engineering, and technology sectors, which provide higher income and job productivity. Therefore, employees involved in the industrial revolution 4.0 will be unable to effectively contribute to global and local knowledge production if they do not master English (Surya, 2021).

Even though English is widely spoken in Malaysia, educationists and employers have observed that graduates are unable to use the language proficiently, resulting in a high unemployment rate among graduates (Ting, Marzuki, Chuah & Jerome, 2017). According to Ting et. al (2017), the high unemployment rate among college graduates is frequently attributable to their lack of English fluency and communication skills. The minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (Medac), Datuk Seri Dr. Wan Junaidi Jaafar, corroborates this claim by stating that a lack of English proficiency has reduced the market demand for graduates (Hani, 2021).

Communication refers to all human activities that combine verbal and nonverbal communication (Novak, 2019). According to Novak (2019), communication theory is the scientific process of sending and receiving information. It describes the concepts, strategies, and components that can affect a message's reception. Communication skills are one of the most crucial abilities required for professional success. We engage in face-to-face communication and attentive listening when others are speaking. In addition to email and report writing, we also review incoming documents. Therefore, communication involves at least two individuals: the sender and the recipient. To be effective, the recipient must comprehend the message as the sender intended.

**Early Influences of Communication Model**
Some of the early influences of the communication model are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Early Influences of Communication Model**

| Oral Communication Model | Description | Components |
|---|---|---|
| Shannon and Weaver (1948) | Linear model one-way communication (2 people) | Sender Encoder Decoder Receiver Noise |
| Lasswell (1954) | Liner model one-way communication (In a group) | Communicator Message Medium Receiver Effect |
| Newcomb (1953) | Social relationship | Sender Receiver Topic Relationship between sender and receiver |
| Schramm 1954 | Encoding and decoding message | Encoder Decoder Interpreter Message |

In academia, social scientists such as Shannon & Weaver (1948), Lasswell (1948), Newcomb (1953), and Schramm (1954) have developed several theories and models of oral communication. There are also two schools of thought in communication studies: the semiotics school and the process school (Fiske, 1990). These are among the early influences of communication theories.

According to Fiske (1990), the semiotics school focuses on three general areas of study: syntax (the study of the relationship between symbols), semantics (the study of the relationship between symbols and referents), and pragmatics (the study of the relationship between people and symbols); while the process school views communication as a process, a simple transmission of messages and meanings between sender and receiver.

One of the early models of communication was developed by Shannon-Weaver (1948). It was developed to explain effective communication between sender and receiver. The model is a one-way communication model consisting of the sender, encoder, decoder, receiver and noise. Noise refers to uninvolved distractions that could interfere with the reception of the transmitted message. Another model of oral communication is Lasswell's (1948) model. The difference between Shannon-Weaver (1948) and Lasswell (1948) is that Lasswell focused on mass communication as opposed to a simple conversation between two people in Shannon-Weaver's (1948) model. Lasswell's model stated that in order to understand the mass communication process, each of the stages must be understood. Lasswell's model consisted of five components, namely the communicator (who), the message (what), the medium (which), the receiver (to whom), and the effect (what effect). Lasswell's model focused on the effect rather than the message itself. Effect in this context implied on an observable change in the receiver. It also stated that any change in the elements changes the effect.

Even though Lasswell's communication model is considered the most influential model, it can be argued that the model does not consider the aspect of social context in communication. This is because this model is a linear model that only works in one direction when passing messages. This model is commonly used in mass media because Lasswell wanted to achieve effective mass communication for a large number of people. However, Shannon and Weaver's (1954) model also has its weaknesses. Similar to Lasswell's model, this model is also a one-sided model that did not include feedback, as pointed out by Wang and Li (2017). In other words, this model has its limitations as it is too general and was mainly intended for telecommunication purposes.

The next model is the model of Newcomb (1953). It was the first of the models that proposed the function of communication in a society. The main function according to Newcomb was to maintain balance in a society. This model consisted of 3 elements namely the sender, the receiver and the subject. The sender and receiver can consist of individuals or groups, and the subject is part of the social environment of the sender and receiver. Unlike the former two models, Newcomb's model of communication was one of the first models to introduce the role of communication in a society and focused on maintaining balance in society. Although the model incorporated the social aspect, Newcomb's model lacked the element of feedback from the sender and receiver.

Another model of oral communication comes from Schramm (1954). In his model, Schramm stated that communication is something that people do. A message only has the meaning that people put into it. Therefore, to understand the human communication process, one must know how people relate to each other. Since some elements were missing in the model, Schramm's model was modified and some changes were added to it. These included the context of the relationship and how this relationship affects communicator A and communicator B.

These are just some of the early influences that communication models have, and they provide an overall summary of the components that are involved in communication. In terms of the WTC, these models would constitute the structure of the first three layers of the WTC, which is connected to the situated momentary variables as determinants of the application of L2.
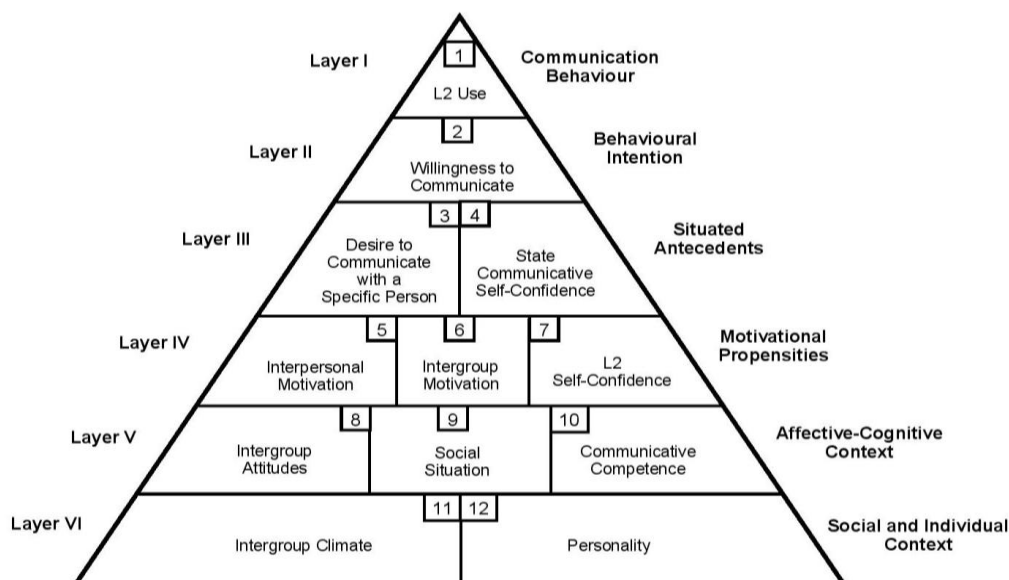
**Origins of Willingness to Communicate (WTC)**
In the late 1950s and early 1960s in North America (McCroskey, 1997), the concept of WTC emerged as a result of communication research in which interpersonal communication in the native language is highly valued (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). McCroskey & Richmond (1990) and McCroskey (1997) discovered that differences in communication behaviours were conceptualised as consistently occurring across situations, as a result of particular personality traits. This concept was called "communication willingness" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). It was subsequently defined as "a stable disposition toward communication when free to do so" (McCroskey & Baer, 1985, cited in MacIntyre & Charos, 1996: 7).

In the beginning, WTC was developed to indicate a consistent tendency of communication behaviours in the native language (L1) across interpersonal communication situations (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; McCroskey, 1997). It was conceptualised as a cognitive process of volitional choice to speak, which is determined by an individual's personality (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). Based on McCroskey's research and a review of other studies on L1 WTC, McCroskey (1997) argued that WTC in L1 is highly dependent on two major antecedents: *Communication Apprehension* and *Self-Perceived Communication Competence* (McCroskey, 1997). Communication Apprehension (CA) is viewed as *"an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons"* (McCroskey, 1997: 82). It was found that people with a high level of CA are likely to be less willing to communicate. Also, researchers (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) found that WTC is more highly related to Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) more than actual competence (McCroskey, 1997). Self-Perceived Communication Competence refers to the perception of one's ability to communicate appropriately in a particular situation. However, McCroskey and Richmond (2007) argued that there are other significant antecedents of WTC apart from CA and SPCC which are Motivation, Personality and Content and Context.

The original construct of WTC implies its trait-like nature that remains stable across time and situations. However, researchers (e.g., McCroskey and Richmond, 1990) have acknowledged that WTC is also dependent on specific situations which is known as state-like, where it can change according to situation and context. Based on this, MacIntyre, Clement, Dơrnyei, Noels (1998) have developed a heuristic model of WTC in a L2 context. The examination of the WTC L1 by McCroskey and Bear (1935) suggest that there was no WTC L1 model designed. Therefore, this study focuses on the L2 WTC model introduced by MacIntyre et. al (1998).

**Willingness to Communicate L2 Model**
Willingness to communicate in a second language is a theoretical model based on McCroskey and Baer's (1985) original conceptualization of WTC as a personality orientation toward oral communication in the native language (L1).



**Figure 1 : Willingness to Communicate in L2**
Source: MacIntyre, Clement, Dơrnyei, Noels (1998)

MacIntyre proposed in 1994 that WTC be measured by combining personality traits and situational data (p. 140). This is due to the fact that these two variables are interrelated and influence the WTC of students. In order to achieve this objective, one of the earliest influential models of L2 WTC (WTC, 1998), which would have a significant impact on second language research, viewed WTC as a combination of "transient and lasting impacts" (MacIntyre et al., 1998: 546). L2 WTC is defined as "a willingness to engage in conversation with a specific person or persons at a specific time using an L2" (MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, & Noels, 1998: 547).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) are the ones that came up with the idea of WTC. They presented a range of personality, affective, and situational factors that might be included in a six-layer theoretical model, with each layer influencing the usage of the target language. The authors showed that both long-term and momentary effects drive communication willingness in this model. According to MacIntyre et al., a language learner develops more control over the act of communicating in the target language as they progress up the pyramid.

The preceding model by MacIntrye et al. (1998) depicts the Willingness to Communicate in the classroom. The six-layered model contains a total of twelve constructs. In their model, MacIntyre et al. positioned communication behaviour as the top layer, which includes not only speaking activities, but also reading newspapers and watching television in L2.

The Behavioural Intention in Layer II refers to Willingness to Communicate. This denotes whether the student is willing to communicate with other people using L2 as a medium of communication.

Apart from that, the variable in Layer III indicates situated antecedents which immediately influence the WTC which consist of *Desire to Communicate with a Specific Person* as well as *State Communicative Self-Confidence*.

Pattapong (2010) stated that *the Desire to Communicate with a Specific Person* is dependent on two types of motives. These are the Affiliation and Control motives. Affiliation refers to a need to establish a relationship with the speaker that stems from integrative motives such as attractiveness, similarity, and familiarity, whereas Control refers to a type of communication that relies on instrumental motives, such as more powerful speakers, with the intention of trying to influence each other when communicating by requiring their assistance, cooperation, or services.

State Anxiety and State Perceived Competence influence, *State Communicative Self-Confidence.* State Perceived Competence refers to how a person perceives their ability to communicate at the moment of speaking, whereas State Anxiety refers to levels of anxiety in a specific speaking situation, which can be influenced by many factors, such as negative past experiences. According to MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) and MacIntyre & Charos (1996), these two situationally dependent variables are the most influential antecedents of WTC, which was confirmed by McCroskey & Richmond (1990; 2007).

In Layer IV, MacIntyre et al. defined Motivational Propensities as consistent individual characteristics demonstrated in a variety of contexts. This layer is composed of three variables. Interpersonal Motivation is the first variable, which is determined by either Control or Affiliation. The following variable is Intergroup Motivation, which is directly influenced by the group to which a person belongs, is influenced by Intergroup Climate and Intergroup Attitudes in the layers below, and is also dependent on either Control or Affiliation. The final variable is L2 Self-Confidence, which consists of cognitive and affective components. State communicative self-confidence at the situational level is less stable than L2 self-confidence at this level.

Layer V, *Affective-Cognitive Context* in the WTC model includes three variables which are *Intergroup Attitudes, Social Situation,* and *Communicative Competence*. With regards to Intergroup Attitude, Gardner (1985) mentioned that in order to learn L2, the speaker will mix and identify with other members of the L2 community. Moreover, feeling anxious to assimilate and losing identity would be a strong reason to void from learning and applying the L2 (Clement & Krudenier, 1985).

As for Social Situation, one's experience in a social situation may result in the positive or negative influences of one's WTC in the L2. Positive experience results in increasing one's confidence in initiating a conversation in the target language whereas negative experience may hinder one to WTC in the target language. Communicative Competence refers to the speaker's grammatical and social knowledge and skill on how and when to use utterances appropriately.

Lastly, model layer VI, Social and Individual Context, consists of two variables: Intergroup Climate and Personality. Intergroup Climate reflects the unique characteristics of the bilingual context, where the availability of the language or linguistic vitality (community structural characteristics) and attitudes toward ethnic groups (perceptual and affective correlates) become significant. According to Koggila (2018), this layer is the most significant because it illustrates the interaction between the individual and society. This is enhanced by Clement's (1986) observation that the opportunity to use the L2 can be realised through societal context. With regard to intergroup climate, Gardner and Clement (1990) stated that comprehensive intergroup relations promote L2 learning, whereas inferior intergroup relations may have an impact on the motivation to learn and communicate in L2. Personality traits, such as whether a speaker is an introvert or extrovert, can influence the extent of L2 acquisition and their WTC in the target language (MacIntrye & Charos, 1996).

Personality is another factor that helps to explain how people interact and communicate with members of their own cultural group and with out-group members. Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience are a few personality traits that impact second language learning and the desire to speak in that second language (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Lalonde & Gardner, 1984). Ehrman and Oxford (1990) added that different personalities may have varying degrees of willingness to learn a second language, as well as varying degrees of competence and/or conscientiousness.

**Conclusion**

Communication is regarded as essential to the acquisition of a foreign or second language. Students must be able to clearly communicate their message so that the recipient can comprehend it. The increasing importance of communication skills in modern society has prompted educators to improve students' communication skills as they learn. The current emphasis is on communicative competence: for a learner to be proficient, he or she must know how to use language, as the ultimate goal of language learning is for students to be able to communicate using the target language in a variety of real-world situations.

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