Relationship among Self-perceived Oral Competence, Communication Apprehension, and Iranian EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate: Cooperative teaching in focus

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Abstract
Speaking is deemed by many scholars as a fundamental skill in second language (L2) learning. From the myriad of factors playing a role in willingness to communicate (WTC) in a foreign language, communication apprehension and self-perceived competence have attracted a good deal of interest in recent decades. Furthermore, it is generally agreed that cooperative teaching can enhance learners' linguistic and psychological variables. To unravel the aforementioned dilemmas, 60 male and female EFL learners within the age range of 19 to 25(i.e., 30 each) were selected out of 100 participants via double sampling from several English institutes in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan province and were assigned equally to an experimental and a control group. Subsequently, the treatment started where the experimental group was taught based on cooperative teaching, while the control group received conventional treatment. Before and after the treatment, three questionnaires (WTC, communication apprehension and self-perceived competence) were given to all the participants in three different phases. After collecting the data, they were analyzed descriptively. Finally, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run. The findings of the study highlighted that there is a negative correlation between communication apprehension and WTC as well as a positive correlation between self-perceived competence and WTC of Iranian EFL learners in post intervention. The findings further indicated that cooperative teaching can influence learners' WTC, self-perceived competence and communication apprehension.

Keywords: Self-perceived oral competence, communication apprehension, willingness to communicate (WTC), cooperative teaching

Introduction

Studying about speaking is an interdisciplinary enterprise which involves the psycholinguistic and interpersonal factors of speech production, the forms, meanings, processes involved and how these can be developed. (Kaplan , 2002). Speaking is a multilevel and hierarchical skill which requires more than knowing grammar and semantic rules (Brown, 2001). The act of speaking is remarkably complex. According to Brown (2001), this complexity can be attributed to a number of factors:" clustering (i.e., speech is segmented into thought groups rather than single words, and even single words maybe contracted); hesitation makers and pausing, colloquial language, including slangs and idioms; and supra segmental features including stress, rhythm, and intonation" (p.106). A study done by Urrutia and Vega (2006) suggests that speaking is the most difficult skill to be developed.

The ultimate goal of many methods and approaches in second language (L2) teaching is to enable learners to communicate in a target language (Mehrgan, 2013). The extent to which a learner displays a willingness to communicate (WTC) has surged a good deal of interest in the literature. According to McCrosky (1982), WTC in L2 is a variable with a dynamic, multifaceted construct .A good deal of studies (e.g., Kang, 2005; Kim, 2004; Wen & Clement, 2003) have been conducted over the last 20 years to isolate possible affective/individual and social variables (e.g., self-confidence, personality, gender and age) which might have an influence on WTC. In Iran, WTC research has mostly concentrated on motivation as one possible significant component of WTC, hence paid little or almost no attention to many possible factors (e.g., communication apprehension). Given this, communication apprehension (CA) is defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons"(McCroskey, 1978, p.192). Another equally important issue in L2 learning is self-perceived competence. Self-perceived competence (SPC) refers to one's assessment of his/her own competence for spoken communication in a particular context (McCroskey, 1984). Finally, cooperative language teaching based on what Bayat (2004) points out is now widely recognized as a facilitative teaching technique which can provide a more learner-centered environment in which learners actively control the learning pace.

Finally, as no published studies, as far as the present researcher is aware, have investigated the WTC of Iranian EFL learners in relation with communication apprehension and self-perceived competence, a gap is observed here and this study aims at exploring the possible relationship between communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners. Furthermore, this study investigated the possible correlation between self-perceived competence and learners' WTC. Finally, the role of cooperative learning was also explored. Thus, the following research questions were addressed:

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC of Iranian EFL learners?

Q2: Is there any significant relationship between communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners?

Q3: Is there any significant relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners in respect to cooperative teaching?

Review of Literature

There has been a good deal of research in all aforementioned areas in SLA and applied linguistics. WTC and communication apprehension are well-established areas in the state-of-the-art literature. For example, Liu (2006) conducted a study on anxiety in Chinese undergraduate non-English majors at three different proficiency levels. By way of survey, observations, reflective journals, and interviews, the study revealed that the more proficient students tended to be less anxious.

Matsuoka (2009) conducted a study on communication apprehension of Japanese college students and found a negative relation between proficiency level and CA. students with higher proficiency level were more apprehensive because of the fear of negative evaluation from others. In a similar vein, Jamshidnejad (2010) reported that in some such situations, and also when interlocutors' proficiency and social status were perceived as higher, some language learners simply give up speaking through anxiety.

Mehrgan (2013) explored WTC in an Iranian context. In his case study, he also explored the role of socio-affective learning strategies as the tools which could alleviate the problems of language learning. To this aim, 20 L2 learners were given the WTC questionnaire. Then, the two

participants whose scores in WTC questionnaire were higher than the rest were selected. The two selected participants were male and female adults. The male was 27 and the female was 23 years old. Then, the researcher interviewed them to see which socio-affective strategies they used. The results of this case study revealed the fact that the individuals with WTC acted differently in the use of socio-affective strategies.

Rashidi, Yamini, and Shafiei (2010) explored oral communication apprehension and affective factors, with particular emphasis on self-esteem and introversion and extroversion. The study intended to propose a causal model of factors to predict oral communication apprehension among Iranian EFL learners. To collect the data necessary for the study, a language proficiency test and three questionnaires were used. They researchers found that learners' self-esteem, introversion/extroversion, gender, and proficiency level predicted the communication apprehension of Iranian language learners, with extroversion was found to be the strongest predictor of communication apprehension.

Shahbaz, Seemab Khan, Ishtiaq Khan, and Mustafa (2016) explored the effects of self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) and communication apprehension (CA) on WTC of Pakistani university students. They focused on quantitative data using three questionnaires from 88 language learners. Results suggest that acquaintance level with the participants and contexts of language use may be the important factors to affect WTC of learners for first/foreign language use. Findings of this research in formal context offer strong evidence that strong CA in one language can result in positive SPCC in the other language and becomes a reason to enhance WTC in that particular language. For informal context, there exists a positive relationship between SPCC and WTC in any particular language. If learners have a positive SPCC in one language, they demonstrate a strong WTC in the same language. Moreover, relationship of SPCC, CA and WTC depends a lot on degree of acquaintance that interlocutors share in formal context.

In sum, given the state-of-the-art studies, very few studies can be found which explored the role of cooperative teaching in enhancing students' willingness to communicate and developing learners' self-perceived competence; in other words, this study is unique in its own way as there has been no single study dealing with these three factors (WTC, self-perceived, and communication apprehension). This study, in line with current surge of interest in linguistic and psychological variables and their influence on learners' speaking competence, explored the role of cooperative teaching in enhancing the aforementioned variables.

Method

Participants

In order to conduct this study, 60 male and female EFL learners within the age range of 19 to 25 (i.e., 30 males and 30 females) were selected out of 100 participants via double sampling from English Institutes in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan province, Iran. All the participants in the study were from Bandar Abbas and Persian was their native language.

The learners who were selected as the participants in this study were at intermediate level of proficiency. First, they were selected conveniently and then they were homogenized based on their scores on the Nelson test. That is, they had proceeded into this level after passing the Nelson English Proficiency Test. Nelson (400 A) is an intermediate-level exam which tests the language skills needed to survive in an English speaking environment.

To ensure for the homogeneity of the participants, 60 participants, among the 100 test takers, whose scores on the homogeneity test fell one standard deviation (i.e., SD=8.834) above and one standard deviation below the mean (i.e., mean = 31.62) were chosen as the participants

of the study. Accordingly, 40 test takers who had extremely high, or extremely low scores on the test were disqualified for the present study. Therefore, the selected 60 EFL learners formed the representative sample of the study. Having selected the participants, they were divided to an experimental group (i.e., cooperative teaching) and a control group. In this study, participants were both male and female and their gender was not taken as a variable.

APA ethical guidelines for subject selection and participation were all taken into account. These included informed consent, and confidentiality. The participants all voluntarily participated in the study and the confidentiality of their identity and performance on the tests were maintained throughout the study and thereafter. However, in order to encourage the language learners to attend in this study, it was announced that the treatment would be free and selected participants would be given a prize. It was attempted to group the participants randomly.

Instruments

In this study, in order to inspect the possible correlation among communication apprehension, self-perceived competence, and WTC of Iranian EFL learners, four different instruments were used: Nelson Proficiency Test (400A), WTC questionnaire, self-perceived competence questionnaire, and communication apprehension questionnaire.

a. Nelson Proficiency Test (400 A)

Nelson English language proficiency test (400 A) (Fowler & Coe, 1976) (Appendix A) was administered to the participants prior to treatment to compare the means and make sure that the participants were homogeneous in terms of proficiency. It consists of 50 multiple-choice items organized in four parts: grammar (two sections), vocabulary and reading comprehension. The time allotted was 40 minutes. The reliability of Nelson proficiency test has been found to be 0.87 (Abdollahzadeh, 2011).

b. WTC Questionnaire

For measuring participants' willingness to communicate in second language, WTC questionnaire (Appendix B) developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001) was used. The questionnaire includes 27 items on Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (almost never willing, sometimes willing, willing half of the time, usually willing, and almost always willing). Participants were asked to indicate how much they were willing to communicate in class tasks focusing on all four language skills: speaking (items 1-8), reading (items 9-14), writing (items 15-22), and comprehension (items 23-27). The reliability of the questionnaire has been found to be .90 by MacIntyre (2001), which is considered to be an acceptable index. The time allotted was 30 minutes.

c. Communication Apprehension Questionnaire

In order to assess communication apprehension, Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) (Appendix C) developed by McCroskey (1978) was used. PRCA consists of 24 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses for answers range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Every six items of this instrument measures individuals' level of fear or anxiety across a different context. The PRCA questionnaire usually exhibits reliabilities above .90 (McCroskey, 1984). The time allotted was 30 minutes.

d. Self-perceived Competence Questionnaire

To assess the participants' self-perceived competence, self-perceived communication competence questionnaire (Appendix D) developed by McCroskey and McCroskey (2013) was

used. The self-perceived communication competence scale was developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel they are in a variety of communication contexts. It contains 12 statements. The responses for answers range from 0 to 100.

It is worth mentioning that this is NOT a measure of actual communication competence; it is a measure of PERCEIVED competence. While these two different types of measures may be substantially correlated, they are not the same. This measure has generated good alpha reliability estimates (above .85) and has been reported as reflecting strong face validity. It also has been found to have substantial predictive validity (McCroskey & McCroskey, 2013).

Materials

To conduct the present study, the researcher used the following materials: *New Headway* (Fourth Edition, Intermediate) by Soars and Soars (2013) published by Oxford University Press, *Select Readings* Intermediate by Linda Lee and Gundersen (2013) published by Oxford University Press. According to the authors, these books are specially designed for intermediate-level students and contain appropriate texts which boost students' communicative skills. Furthermore, the above mentioned textbooks which contain engaging speaking tasks, may seem fruitful for many speaking classes.

Procedures

At the beginning and before the administration of aforementioned questionnaires, the Nelson Proficiency Test (400 A) was given to a population of 100 learners in order to ensure that there was no significant difference between the participants. The students were informed in advance how to respond the Nelson Proficiency Test. After scoring the homogeneity tests, the data were analyzed and 60male and female EFL learners(i.e., 30 males and 30 females) aged 19-25, whose scores fell one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean, were selected to serve as the participants of the study.

Then, each participant was asked to answer three questionnaires in three different phases. This can be explained in the light of the fact that the administration of all questionnaires in one session would have bored the participants. Therefore, the questionnaires were given to the participants in three separate sessions. In the first week, Self-perceived questionnaire was administered. In the second week, Communicative Apprehension questionnaire developed by McCroskey (1978) was distributed among the same participants. Finally, in the last week, WTC of language learners was measured through the distribution WTC questionnaire developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001).

In each session, before distributing the questionnaires, the participants were briefed on how to fill out the instrument so that they could complete the questionnaires attentively and accurately. That is, although the required instruction was given on the front page of the questionnaires, the participants were provided with further explanation on how to complete them. They were also informed that there would be no time limit for completing the questionnaires. Therefore, after the introduction which took about 5 minutes, the questionnaires were distributed among the students. The process of completing the questionnaire lasted for almost 20 minutes for each session.

The participants were then assigned to an experimental (i.e., cooperative) and a control group. A range of cooperative activities were implemented in the experimental group (e.g., Jigsaw, Think Pair Share, Round Table). Students in the cooperative group were asked to form small sub-groups. This gave the students a chance to closely work together, share the information and help each other. The students in the cooperative group was given a passage to practice the

text cooperatively within their sub-groups. The students worked in small sub-groups, discussed the material together, shared their understandings and helped each other when they were in trouble. The first foremost key for successful implementation of cooperative teaching is a well-managed cooperative classroom. The Effective management of the cooperative classroom is often dependent on a cluster of factors including successful group work and pair work, clear directing, well-formed groups, optimal group size and cohesive groups

The teacher's role was mainly based on providing adequate supervisions and clear directions throughout the treatment sessions. This took into account a variety of the roles, including introducing the tasks and activities, monitoring learners' speaking performance in the sub-groups, assigning roles, dealing with any difficulties related to the text. As an example, a typical session is illustrated below:

The teacher introduced the topic from the selected passage and gave the students clear instructions on what they were supposed to do at this stage. The students were encouraged to lead in to the topic by discussing the main theme, and brainstorming key information connected to the topic in their sub-groups. The instructor helped the students to recall some lexical items that may seem fruitful to them. It is important to note that the preparation given at this point helped the participants to break the ice and came to have a more prominent role in the following stages. Then, in groups, the passage to be read was divided among group members into parts and each individual was asked to read a particular part of the text and share their findings with their group member (i.e., Jigsaw).

A useful activity at this point was asking the students to predict the content of the reading text, or share their reaction when they read the text with their teams. Furthermore, the instructor used the photos given for each passage to elicit a range of instant comment. This involved showing the participants photographs and nominating the students to say the first thing that came into their mind. Another useful activity at this stage is Think Pair Share. The students were asked to reflect on a topic individually and then discuss the findings in their teams. Finally, a member from each team was nominated to provide the findings with other teams. Finally, the language learners proceeded by answering follow-up questions.

The students in the control group were taught based on the conventional teaching approaches common in many traditional English classes in high schools and universities in Iran. First, the topic was established and some background information was given to the students. Having provided background knowledge to warm up the participants, the instructor asked the language learners to provide their comments. Then, the instructor read the selected text from the course book which was identical to the experimental groups. The teacher translated the key vocabulary items of the text, supplying some synonyms and antonyms for the students, if it was needed. Finally, students answered the follow–up questions. The intervention was practiced for 7 sessions, each an hour long for both groups. After the treatment, the abovementioned questionnaires were distributed again among the participants to capture any potential difference.

Data Analysis and Results

The data was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). First, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed to descriptively summarize the students' responses to the self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and willingness to communicate questionnaires. Then, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run to investigate the relationship between the students' self-perceived scores and their WTC scores. The same data analysis was run to explore the relationship between the students' communication apprehension scores and their WTC scores to see if the two were

positively or negatively correlated. At first, the normality assumptions were analyzed. Next, the data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics included a variety of statistical procedures such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. Next, parametric statistics assumption were carefully inspected which included normality assumption and linearity. Finally, inferential statistics included the analysis of research questions. For this purpose, Pearson correlation was run.

Inspecting Parametric Statistics assumptions for Correlation Analysis

Before analyzing the data of the study and making inferences about the results, some underlying assumptions related to these analyses must be met. First, normality assumptions were carefully scrutinized. In the present study, interval data were used. The observation resulted from participants' performance must be independent from each other. This observation was met given the fact that the participants were selected randomly. Also, the distribution of scores for dependent variables should be normal for each value of the independent variable. To check this assumption, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. Table 1 shows the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 1. *The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality of the Distribution of the Data*

		WTC	Self-perceived Competence	Communication Apprehension
N		60	60	60
Normal Parameters	Mean	2.8812	3.3333	3.8073
	Std. Deviation	.83314	.43918	.85557
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.108	.102	.085
	Positive	.067	.102	.085
	Negative	-.108	-.080	-.060
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.836	.788	.659
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.487	.564	.779

Table 1. shows that the assumption of normality of test scores was observed (P>.05).

Descriptive Statistics

This part reflects on mean and standard deviation for the control and the experimental groups. Actually, the participants' performance is explicitly provided in terms of mean and standard deviation. The results of which are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics*

		Control			Experimental		
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
WTC	Pre intervention	30	3.1327	.38065	30	2.7037	1.06985

	Post intervention	30	3.5617	.45023	30	3.2007	.50138
Self-perceived Competence	Pre intervention	30	3.2578	.38307	30	3.3775	.44376
	Post intervention	30	3.1219	.30280	30	4.4604	.37443
Communication Apprehension	Pre intervention	30	3.6550	1.13744	30	4.0317	.43953
	Post intervention	30	3.2937	.38176	30	3.2247	.88160

To answer the first research question, Pearson correlation was run, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Results of Pearson Correlation to answer the First research question*

			Self-perceived Competence
WTC	Pre intervention	Pearson Correlation	-.107
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.416
		N	60
	Post intervention	Pearson Correlation	.326
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
		N	60

Table 3 displays the results of Pearson correlation test, inspecting the potential correlation between self-perceived competence and WTC. The results clearly illustrated that there was a meaningful relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC in post intervention to the extent of 0.326 (p<0.05). In other words, the more a participant is self-perceived competent, the higher he has willingness to communicate. That is, self-perceived competence is positively correlated with WTC in post-intervention but there was not a meaningful relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC in pre-intervention (p>0.05).
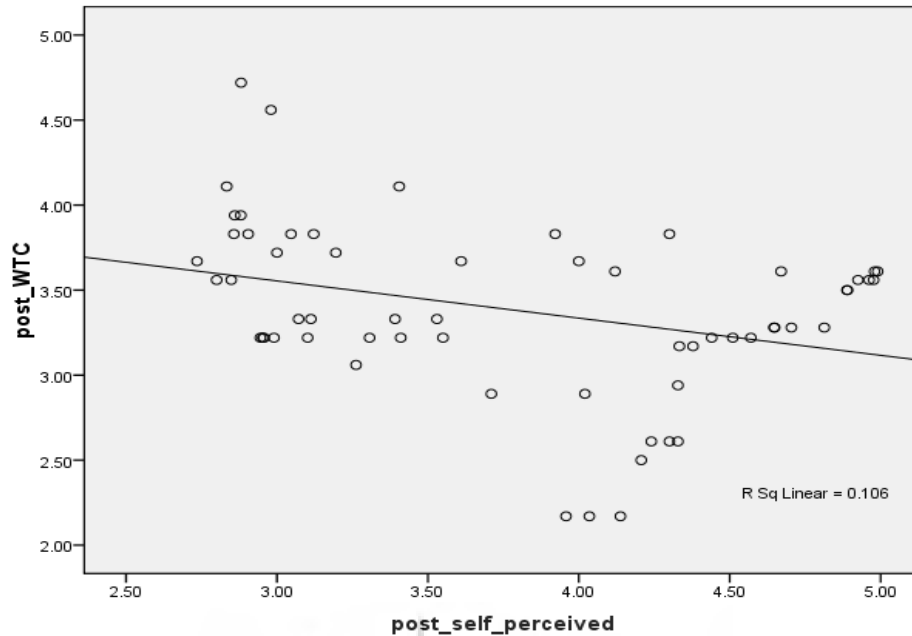
Figure 1. *Positive linear relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC in post-intervention*
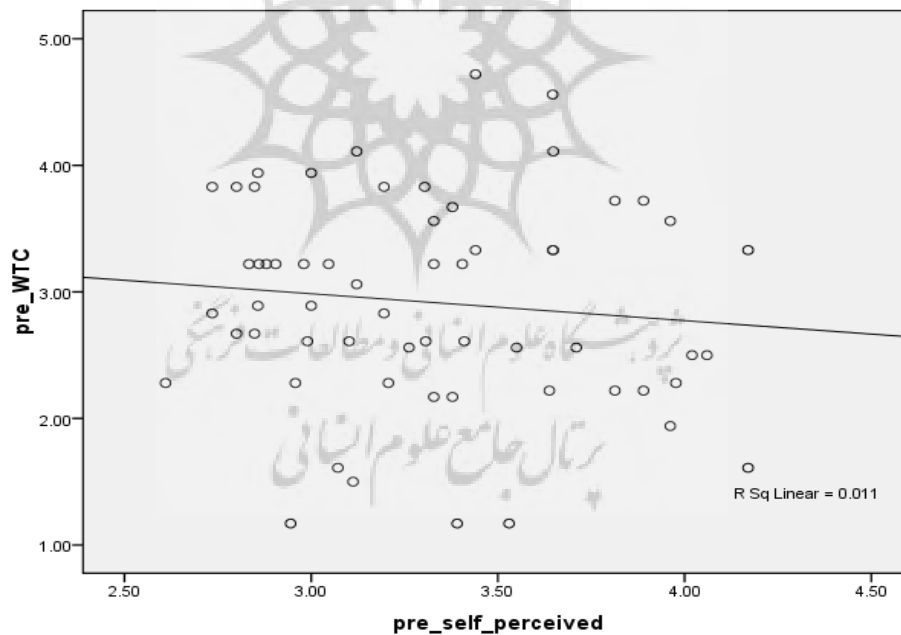

Figure 2. *Positive linear relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC in pre intervention*
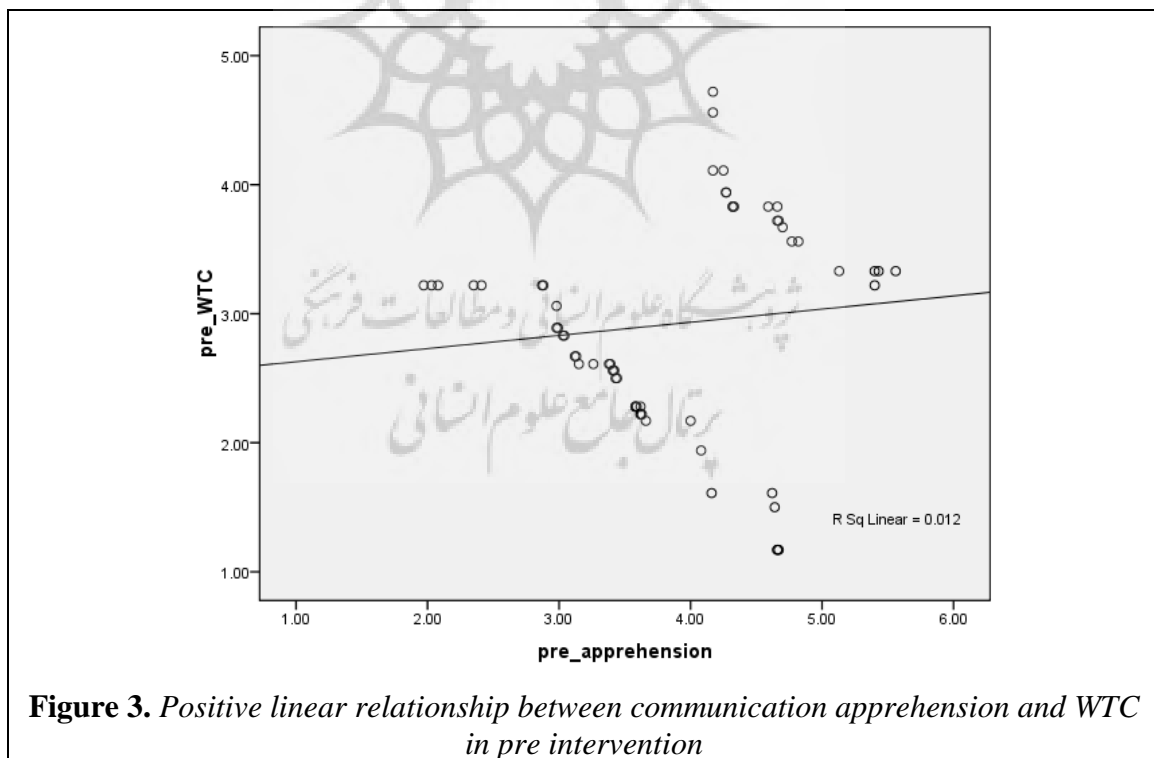
As Figure 2 shows, the scatter of dots is relatively narrow, indicating that the correlation is high in post intervention. The slope of the scattered dots lies in a relatively straight line, indicating that it is a linear rather than a curvilinear relationship.
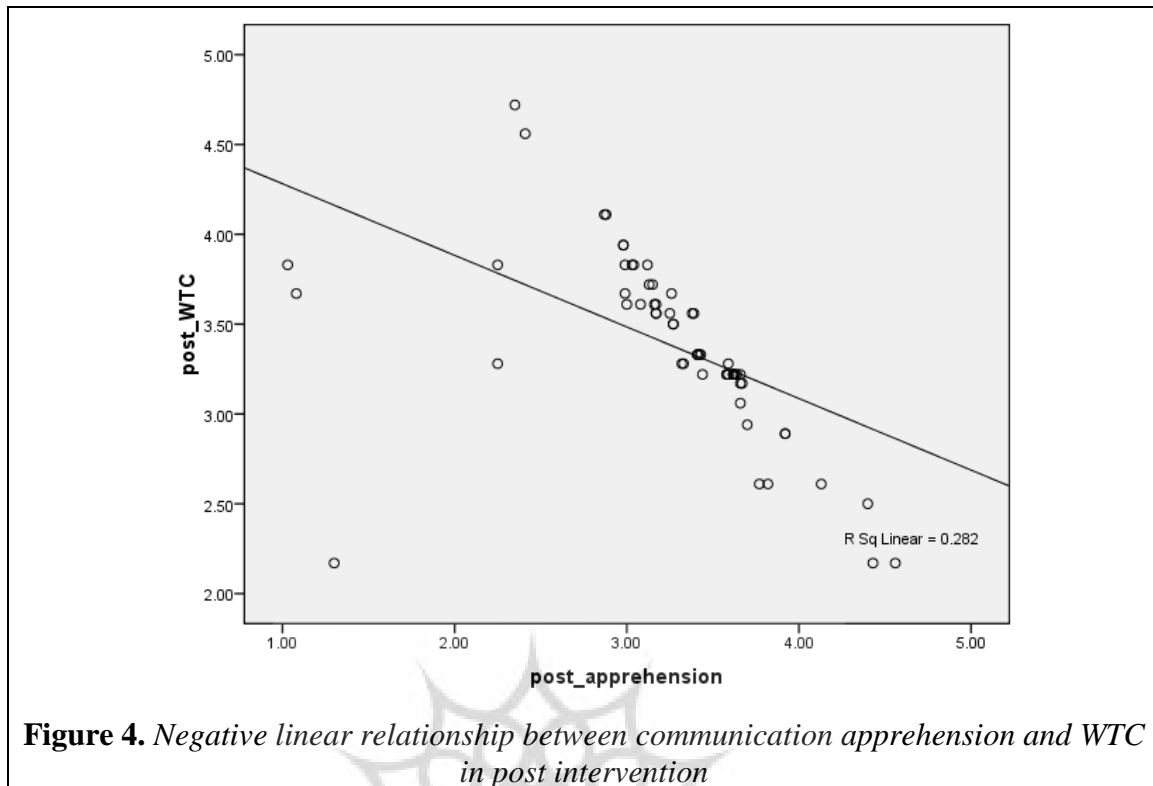
To answer the second research question Pearson correlation was run, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *The Results of Pearson Correlation to test the second research question*

			Communication Apprehension
	Pre intervention	Pearson Correlation	-.108
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.410
		N	60
WTC	Post intervention	Pearson Correlation	-.531
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	60

Table 4 displays the results of Pearson correlation test, inspecting the potential correlation between communication apprehension and WTC. The results clearly illustrated that there was a meaningful negative relationship between communication apprehension and WTC in post intervention to the extent of-.531 (p<0.05). In other words, the more a participant is communication apprehensive, the lower he/she is willing to communicate. This means that, communication apprehension is negatively correlated with WTC in post intervention; however, there was not a meaningful relationship between communication apprehension and WTC in pre intervention (p>0.05).

Figure 3. *Positive linear relationship between communication apprehension and WTC in pre intervention*

Figure 4. *Negative linear relationship between communication apprehension and WTC in post intervention*

As Figure 4 shows, the scatter of dots is relatively narrow, indicating that the correlation is high in post intervention. The slope of the scattered dots lies in a relatively straight line, indicating that it is a linear rather than a curvilinear relationship.

To answer the third research question Pearson correlation was run, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *The Results of Pearson Correlation to answer the third research question*

			Self-perceived Competence	WTC
Experimental	**Communication Apprehension**	Pearson Correlation	.539	.789
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000
		N	30	30
Control	**Communication Apprehension**	Pearson Correlation	.111	.236
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.561	.122
		N	30	30

Table 5 displays the results of Pearson correlation test, inspecting the potential correlation between self-perceived competence, communication apprehension and WTC across groups. The results clearly illustrated that there was a meaningful relationship between self-perceived competence and communication apprehension in the experimental group (p<0.05). In other words, the more a participant is self-perceived competent, the higher he has willingness to

communicate. Furthermore, there was a meaningful relationship between communication apprehension and WTC (p<0.05). That is, the more a learner is communication apprehensive; he/she is less willing to communicate.

Given the observations stated above, it can be acknowledged that there was a meaningful relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate in respect to cooperative teaching. It is worth mentioning that there was not a meaningful relationship between communication apprehension and self-perceived competence in the control group (p>0.05). Moreover, there was not a meaningful relationship between communication apprehension and WTC in the control group (p>0.05).

Discussion

Regarding the first research question, which explored whether there is a significant relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC of Iranian EFL learners, the findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC in post intervention to the extent of 0.326. That is, the findings of this study revealed that the more a participant is self-perceived competent, the higher he has willingness to communicate. This means that self-perceived competence is positively correlated with WTC.

One plausible explanation is that self-perceived competence can play a driving force in foreign language learning given the fact that accurate/inaccurate self-beliefs can yield a strong assistance or pose a challenging hindrance to foreign language learning (Mercer, 2011). Therefore, it is agreed that being aware of one's weaknesses and strengths may help language learners to adjust their connive capacities to diverse tasks and this facilitates learning (Pintrich, 2002).This finding is in line with those of other researchers (e.g., Horwitz& Young, 1991; Mercer, 2011; Shahbaz, Seemab Khan, Ishtiaq Khan, & Mustafa, 2016), who concluded that self-perceived communication competence plays a significant role in learners' tendency to initiate conversations with others.

It should be noted that this finding must be interpreted with caution because self-perceived communication competence may seem deceptive considering the observation that at occasions it is difficult for language learners to explain their true competency level. Usually, learners weigh themselves higher and better than what they actually are (Shahbaz, Seemab Khan, Ishtiaq Khan, Mustafa, 2016). Another equally important point is that self-perceived competence is a necessary condition for learners' tendency to communicate in L2 context, but it is not a sufficient one. That is, a high level of communicative ability does not necessarily correspond with a high self-competence. Therefore, MacIntyre et. al. (1998) proposed a number of cognitive and affective factors that underlie WTC, among which situational self-esteem (or 'state communicative self-confidence') which resembles self-competence, and an overall global self-confidence which is termed as 'L2 self-confidence'. Given this, a person who has a high degree of self-communicative competence does not necessarily mean that he has L2 confidence to successfully execute tasks in L2 setting.

Considering the second research question, which explored if there is a significant relationship between communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners, the findings of this study showed that there was a negative linear relationship between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. That is, the more a participant was communication apprehensive, the lower he/she would be willing to communicate. There are several possible explanations for this finding. Firstly, according to McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, and Plax (1985), if a student is communication apprehensive, it is much probable he will avoid communicating with others and as a result fails to experience the practice so necessary to the

development of true competence in the language. Secondly, it is also believed that communication apprehension may be attributed to a learner's fear of negative social evaluation. When a language learner frets over how his actions will be perceived by others in a social setting, this would largely influence his communicative orientations. This finding corroborates with those of others (e.g., Ebrahimi, 2013; Park & Lee, 2005; Philips, 1992), who found that communication apprehension is negatively correlated with willingness to communicate. In a similar vein, Philips (1992) showed that there is a relationship between language anxiety and oral performance. He observed that the more apprehensive the students were, the weaker performance they displayed in the oral test. The results of this contradict the findings provided by Hashimoto (2002). In that study, Hashimoto conducted a study to find out how WTC of Japanese learners of English as a second language and their motivation to use English were related. The findings revealed that motivation and WTC together could predict the frequency of communication in classroom contexts.

Regarding the third research question, which sought to explore whether there is any relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate in respect to cooperative teaching, the findings of this study revealed that there was a meaningful relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate in respect to cooperative teaching. This finding corresponds with what Mclean and Anderson (2009) and Machida (2001) observed. They believed that cooperative teaching can develop learners' willingness to communicate in L2 learning. These findings can be explained in the light of the fact that in cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other; to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other understands. This would, in turn, facilitate learners' willingness to communicate and subsequently reduce learners' apprehension. The findings are also in line with what Olsen and Kagan (1992) observe about cooperative teaching. They believe that is in cooperative teaching, each learners is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. This might foster learners' self-perceived competence.

Conclusion

In the present study, some questions were proposed as the focus of the study. The first question concerned whether there is a significant relationship between communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners. The findings revealed that there is a negative correlation between communication apprehension and WTC of Iranian EFL learners. This means that apprehensiveness may hamper successful second language learning and can have an impact on students' willingness to initiate the conversational exchanges with others.

The second research question sought to determine whether there is a significant relationship between self-perceived competence and WTC of Iranian EFL learners. It was found that there is a positive correlation between self-perceived competence and WTC of Iranian EFL learners. It goes without denial that since speaking essentially takes place in public; this poses a threat to learners' self-concept. Communicative interactions enhance the chance of exposing learners' deficiencies and language imperfections and hence it is likely to cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners. This might heavily influence learners' willingness to communicate. Given this, when a learner possesses a good level of self-perceived competence, he enjoys a good level of communicative orientations to engage in conversational exchanges and this in turn would accelerate his learning process.

Finally, the last research question sought to explore whether there is any relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate in respect to cooperative teaching. The findings of this study revealed that there was a meaningful relationship among self-perceived competence, communication apprehension, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate in respect to cooperative teaching. This finding is in line with what Brent (2007) observes and believes that cooperatively taught students tend to exhibit greater persistence through graduation, lower levels of anxiety and stress, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve, greater ability to view situations' from others' perspectives, more positive and supportive relationships with peers, more positive attitudes toward subject areas, and higher self-esteem

As a concluding remark, WTC is potentially a fundamental concept for effective interaction and production. It seems that many variables (e.g., cognitive factors, cultural, social, psychological, etc.) are at work, which may have an influence on WTC. Therefore, more research on this topic need to be undertaken.

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Appendices
Appendix A: Nelson Test (400 A)
Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.

" I can't understand ....1....... " Mark Said. " The couple had lived in this house for a long time. Their relatives lived next door to them and in another .....2...... Hadley, the ......3..... called in to see them five minutes after the postman delivered a letter. But they had already disappeared." The house ....4........ had ......5......... surprises for Mr. Bolton. It was exactly as he had imagined it. ....6........ in the hall and front room, but the kitchen and dining room were clearly used ......7....... And possessed .....8..... . Someone without much money, but ....9........ nice things, had lived there. He or she and he thought it was probably she had been generous, too ....10........ her efforts to save, if the packets of little things obviously bought at the door were anything to go by. The thin detective ....11........ wandered through the house. There was no sign of flight, packing, ...12........ violence. He looked at everything but ....13......... seemed to interest him was a photograph ....14........ when the couple had got married. It was an ordinary picture but he ......15...... it. Nora looked rather frightened, and Alex, the husband, although he seemed determined, had a worried expression ......16....... Smiled confidently. "I don't think Hadley is the sort of man who imagines things," Mark said. "When he says he felt the couple had been in the house that morning ....17......., I believed him. But here's another photograph of Alex. He ....18....... someone I knew in the army, ...19....... in normal circumstances but ....20........ quickly if necessary." "They seem ....21........ just after the postman called," Bolton said. "I wonder if they won the football pools and the news of their win ....22....... in the letter. They may have gone away quickly away in case ......23.....perhaps Alex knew his wife was generous and ....24....... a decision ....25....... the money with her relatives."

1) A: that which happened B: that which did happen C: what did happen D: what happened
2) A: house nearby B: near house C: facing house D: house in the way
3) A: wife brother B: brother wife C: wife's brother D: brother's wife
4) A: by its own B: as itself C: for itself D: itself
5) A: little B: a little C: few D: a few
6) A: It wasn't much furniture B: there wasn't much furniture C: there weren't many furniture D: there weren't many furniture
7) A: a great deal B: a big lot C: much D: the most of the time
8) A: its proper character B: a character of its own C: their proper character D: a character of their own
9) A: which liked B: who liked C: what liked D: to whom liked
10) A: in spite of B: although C: nevertheless D: however
11) A: with the glasses of horn rims B: in the glasses of horn rims C: with the horn-rimmed glasses D: of the horn-rimmed glasses
12) A: or B: nor C: but D: neither
13) A: the only thing that B: the only thing what C: the single thing what D: the only which
14) A: done B: made C: caught D: taken
15) A: did a careful study of B: made a careful study of C: did a careful study from D: made a careful study from
16) A: The whole of the relative B: All relatives C: The relatives all D: The relatives they all
17) A: as happy as never B: as happy as ever B: so happy as never D: so happy as ever
18) A: remembers me of B: reminds me of C: remembers me
to D: reminds me to 19) A: enough calm B: so calmly C: calm enough D: just calmly
20) A: able for acting B: was able to act C: capable to act D: capable of acting
21) A: to leave B: to be leaving C: to have left D: that they left
22) A: was B: were C: it was D: they were
23) A: the rest of the family found out B: the rest of the family would find out C: the others of the family found out D: the others of the family would find out
24) A: should do B: should make C: had to do D: had to make
25) A: for not sharing B: in order not to share C: so as not to share D:not to be shared
Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.
On the main road
" Slow down, darling. You're driving much too fast."
"I know. But by the time we ....26..... to the church, the marriage service .....27..... started. If you ......28...... such a long time to get dressed, we'd have been there by now. I finished .....29..... an hour before you did." "It's not my fault. You ......30...... we were in a hurry." " Now there's a police car behind us. It's signaling. I .....31..... stop."
"would you .....32..... me your driving licence, sir? You realize that you were driving at a hundred miles an hour, don't you?" "No, officer, I .....33..... Oh, well, I suppose I was. We're going to a wedding. You see." "Not now, sir, I'm afraid. You're coming to the police station."
26) A: shall get B: shall arrive C: get D: arrive
27) A: shall have B: will have C: has D: must have
28) A: hadn't taken B: wouldn't have taken C: weren't taking D: wouldn't take
29) A: dressing B: to dress C: being dressed D: my dressing
30) A: must have told me B: ought to tell me C: had to tell me D: should have told me
31) A: had rather B: would rather C: had better D: would better
32) A: mind to show B: mind showing C: matter to show D: matter showing

33)A: didn't need to be B: may not have been C:couldn't have been D:needn't have been
Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.
34) He .... The letter carefully before putting it in the envelop.
A: folded B: bent C: turned D: curved
35) I .... you to go to the Town Hall and ask
them for information about it.
A: advertise B: announce C: notice D: advise
36) He wasn't admitted to the club because he wasn't a ....
A: partner B: member C: social D: representative
37) You must.............. facts and not run away from the truth.
A: look B: sight C: front D: face
38) I .... to him for the error.
A: excused B: apologized C: pardoned D: forgave
39) She's bought some lovely ....to make herself a dress.
A: material B: clothing C: costume D: pattern
40) He's staying in the youth ....in Market Street.
A: home B: lodge C: hostel D: house
41) It's no use ringing me at the office this week because I'm ....
A: by my leave B: at leave C: in holidays D: on holidays
42) .... at the Town Hall, the queen was welcomed by the Mayor.
A: On reaching B: at arrival C: On arrival D: At reaching
43) He .... working till he was seventy years old.
A: kept on B: kept C: followed D: succeeded
44) The meeting .... at midnight and we all went home.
A: broke through B: stopped off C: stopped up D: broke up
45) He's not as honest as he.............
A: makes up B: makes out C: gives over D: gives away
In this series of questions, three words have the same sound but one does not. Choose the one that
does not Example: A: go B: so C: show D: do
46) A: drum B: thumb C: home D: come
47) A: abroad B: load C: scored D: board
48) A: bush B: brush C: crush D: rush
49) A: worm B: storm C: form D: norm
50) A: cast B: classed C: passed D: massed

Appendix B: Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire
Directions: Sometimes people differ a lot in their speaking, reading, and so forth in class and
outside class. Now we would like you to consider your use of English outside the classroom.
Again, please tell us the frequency that you use English in the following situations. Remember,
you are telling us about your experiences *outside* of the classroom this time. There are no right or
wrong answers.
1 = Almost never willing
2 = Sometimes willing
3 = Willing half of the time
4 = Usually willing
5 = Almost always willing
Speaking outside class, in English

1. Speaking in a group about your summer vacation. ……
2. Speaking to your teacher about your homework assignment. ……
3. A stranger enters the room you are in, how willing would you be to have a conversation if he talked to you first? ……
4. You are confused about a task you must complete, how willing are you to ask for instructions/clarification? ……
5. Talking to a friend while waiting in line. ……
6. How willing would you be to be an actor in a play? ……
7. Describe the rules of your favorite game. ……
8. Play a game in English. ……

Reading outside class, in English
1. Read a novel. ……
2. Read an article in a paper. ……
3. Read letters from a pen pal written in native English. ……
4. Read personal letters or notes written to you in which the writer has deliberately used simple words and constructions. ……
5. Read an advertisement in the paper to find a good bicycle you can buy. ……
6. Read reviews for popular movies. ……

Writing outside class, in English
1. Write an advertisement to sell an old bike. ……
2. Write down the instructions for your favorite hobby. ……
3. Write a report on your favorite animal and its habits. ……
4. Write a story. ……
5. Write a letter to a friend. ……
6. Write a newspaper article. ……
7. Write the answers to a "fun" quiz from a magazine. ……
8. Write down a list of things you must do tomorrow. ……

Comprehension outside class
1. Listen to instructions and complete a task. ……
2. Bake a cake if instructions were not in Persian. ……
3. Fill out an application form. ……
4. Take directions from an English speaker. ……
5. Understand an English movie. ……

Appendix C: Communication Apprehension
PERSONAL REPORT OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION (PRCA-24)
by James C. McCroskey, West Virginia
DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applied to you by marking whether you:
(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided,(4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree.
Please record your first impression.
_____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions
_____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
_____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
_____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
_____ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.

_____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
_____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
_____ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
_____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
_____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
_____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
_____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
_____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
_____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
_____ 15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
_____ 16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
_____ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
_____ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
_____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
_____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
_____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
_____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
_____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
_____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

The PRCA permits computation of one total score and four sub-scores. The sub-scores are related to communication apprehension in each of four common communication contexts: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking. To compute your scores merely add or subtract your scores for each item as indicated below:

Sub-score Area   Scoring Formula
_____ Group Discussion   18 + (scores for items 2, 4, and 6) - (scores for items 1, 3, and 5)
_____ Meetings   18 +   (scores for items 8, 9, and 12) - (scores for items 7, 10, and 11)
_____ Interpersonal   18 + (scores for items 14, 16, and 17) conversations   - (scores for items 13, 15, and 18)
_____ Public Speaking 18 + (scores for items 19, 21, and 23) - (scores for items 20, 22, and 24)
_____ TOTAL SCORE

Add the four sub-scores together. Your score should range between 24 and 120. If your scores are below 24 or above 120 you have made a mistake in computing.

Scores on the four contexts (Groups, Meetings, Interpersonal conversations, and Public Speaking) can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. Any score above 18 indicates some degree of apprehension. If your score is above 18 for the public speaking context, you are like the overwhelming majority of Americans.

Communication Apprehension Goals:

Look over the four sub-areas on the PRCA (Group Discussion, Meetings, Interpersonal Conversations, and Public Speaking) and try to state specific situations in which you wish to reduce your apprehension. For example, "I want to be able to speak up in meetings instead of remaining quiet.

    1._____

_____

2._____

_____

3._____

_____

Appendix D: Self –Perceived Communicative Competence Scale
Directions: Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left of the item what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. (0 = Never to 100 = Always)
_____1. Talk with a service station attendant.
_____2. Talk with a physician.
_____3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
_____4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
_____5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.
_____6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
_____7. Talk with a police officer.
_____8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
_____9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
_____10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
_____11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
_____12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
_____13. Talk with a secretary.
_____14. Present a talk to a group of friends.
_____15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
_____16. Talk with a garbage collector.
_____17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
_____18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend).
_____19. Talk in a small group of friends.
_____20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.