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How Teachers' Perceptions of Learners' Willingness to Communicate Affect Frequency and Method of Turn Allocation

Negah Allahyar¹, Nourollah Zarrinabadi², Hayo Reinders^{3*}

Department of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Department of English, University of Isfahan, Iran

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand

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Abstract

Previous research on willingness to communicate (Henceforth WTC) has shown that several teacher factors can affect learners' WTC. However, the effect of teachers' perceptions of learners' WTC on teachers' communicative and instructional behavior has remained understudied. This study aimed to examine how teachers' perceptions of learners' WTC affected the frequency and method of their turn allocations. The in-depth study was conducted with three teachers in Iran over a period of one semester. Qualitative data were obtained from observations, audio and video recordings of classroom interaction, and interviews with teachers. Analysis revealed that teachers gave more voluntary turns to those whom they perceived to have a higher level of WTC. Also, the method of turn allocation was different for such students. These findings are important because they can raise awareness among teachers and enable them to ensure all learners are given opportunities to participate.

Keywords: *Willingness to Communicate, Turn Allocation, Turn Taking, Communication, Teachers' Perceptions*

Introduction

Communicative approaches in second language (L2) instruction consider interactive language use as a prerequisite for language learning and propose that interaction is a crucial component of the curriculum (Goody, 1977; Self, 1969; Van Lier, 1996). The importance ascribed to interactive and communicative language use has generated research in L2 learning and teaching to particularly

attend to the factors affecting the amount and quality of L2 communication. WTC is among those dynamic factors that are shown to influence the frequency of communication and proficiency through seeking chances to speak (Clément et al., 2003; Darasawang & Reinders, 2021; Zarrinabadi & Tanbakooei, 2016). WTC creation is a central goal of current L2 instruction (Kang, 2005).

The determinants of WTC (e.g. grit and self-mindset, emotion, trust, L2, self-image, anxiety, and emotional understanding) in real, virtual, and multi-cultural contexts have been the subject of several studies by academics (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022; Kruk, 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Lee & Liu, 2022, MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022).

A growing literature has conclusively demonstrated that teachers contribute to learners' WTC and the amount of communication in the classroom. For example, teacher and classroom-related factors such as praise, feedback, real-life conversation, autonomy support, error correction, and wait time affect students' L2 WTC (e.g., Alam et al., 2022; Tavakoli & Zarrinabadi, 2018; Zarrinabadi, 2014; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021a; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021b). Previous research shows that individuals form implicit theories (perceptions) and use them to make sense of the world around them and employ such perceptions to take action in different situations (Molden & Dweck, 2006; Ross & Nisbett, 2011). While several studies have been conducted on the way through which teacher-related factors influence learners' L2 WTC, few studies have tried to examine how teachers' classification of their students in terms of L2 WTC (WTC or UnWTC) influences the frequency and method of their turn allocation. Previous research shows that teachers tend to form some lay theories about learners' characteristics and act upon these perceptions in their classroom activities (Allahyar, 2021; Ross & Nisbett, 2011). Teachers frequently link UnWTC to avoidance, a lack of sociability, and self-disclosure (Allahyar, 2021). While we agree with a dynamic view of WTC, we argue that language teachers form stable perceptions about learners' WTC and use them to interact with them in class. In this article, we argue that, contrary to WTC researchers who believe in a dynamic view of WTC, language teachers tend to classify learners categorically as shy and talkative and use their perception of learners' willingness to take part in classroom activities. However, there has been little debate thus far on whether teachers' perception of learners' WTC and the way they categorize students in terms of their WTC influence their interactional patterns and the frequency and method of their turn allocation. This is a crucial research area because it can demonstrate the role of teachers in learners' classroom communication and provide insight into how to enhance learners' talk as a necessary factor for learning a language (Skehan, 1989). In this study, we attempt to focus on the nexus between teachers' perceptions of L2 WTC and teacher-student interactional patterns and investigate whether — and if so, how — teachers' frequency and methods of turn allocation differed for WTC and UnWTC students.

Literature Review

Teachers' Perceptions and Classroom Practices

Borg defines the term perception as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (Borg, 2001, p. 186).

Previous research has also indicated that appreciating the links between teachers' perceptions and actions is important for understanding and improving the quality of language teaching (Farrell, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Masuda, 2012). These studies have reported that teachers' perceptions and their teaching practices are closely connected (Borg, 2001, 2006; Johnson, 1992), noting that those who have clear theoretical beliefs are more inclined to teach in a way that is aligned with their perceptions (Youngs & Qian, 2013; Zhang, 2013).

Available studies have shown that teachers' perceptions affect areas such as the selection of topics and classroom practices and assessment (Borg, 2001), instructional decisions (Borg, 2006; Ng & Farrell, 2003), and the use of new approaches, activities, as well as techniques (Donaghue, 2003; Li, 2008). Moreover, literature has shown that teachers' perceptions are tightly associated with the approaches they take toward teaching (Johnson, 1992), as well as instructional techniques and time management (Harcarik, 2009). As for teaching skills and methodology, recent research in the field shows that teachers' perceptions significantly influence the ways they teach pronunciation (Buss, 2016), listening (Karimi & Nazari, 2017), communication (Li & Walsh, 2011; Waring, 2018), or implement the tenets of communicative language teaching in their classroom practices (Rahman et al., 2018). Moreover, in regard to classroom interaction, Taguchi (2002) found that teachers' perceptions were generally in favor of communicative and interactive language teaching. Harmer (2007) reported that teachers believed that they should be enthusiastic, active, and creative to facilitate classroom interaction and participation.

In this study, we argue that teachers' perceptions about learners' WTC might exert an impact on the way they assign turns to their students. In the next subsections, we first present a detailed review of WTC and the contribution of teachers to learners' WTC. Then, we present our definition of turn taking.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in L2

The definition of WTC in target language was proposed by MacIntyre and his associates in 1998. This term was conceptualized as 'a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2' (p. 547). They proposed a six-layered pyramidal model consisting of situational and enduring influences on WTC. Situational factors (e.g. desire to communicate, self-confidence, and anxiety) directly affect the individual's WTC in communication. These factors may vary in a given context based on who is being talked to, the topic of conversation, and who is present. Enduring influences include social, motivational, emotional, cognitive, and individual propensities (e.g., interpersonal motivation, intergroup attitudes and communicative competence, and disposition).

Researchers have emphasized the cross-cultural (Lee et al., 2021) and dynamic aspects of this variable (Kruk, 2022; Lee & Liu, 2022). They have also examined its link with a variety of factors such as grit and self-mindset (Cheng, 2021), perception of target language accent (Zarrinabadi & Khodarahmi, 2017), trust (Ito, 2022), L2 self-image (Lee et al., 2021), anxiety (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022), emotion (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021), emotional understanding (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022), social support (MacIntyre et al., 2001; Zarrinabadi, 2014), the amount and quality of opportunities for using the target language (Clément et al., 2003), speaking situations and tasks (Weaver, 2010), students' mood, their attitude towards the lesson, and

perception of the suitability of the opportunity to communicate (House, 2004). Also, studies have indicated that teacher's wait time and feedback (Zarrinabadi 2014; Tavakoli & Zarrinabadi, 2018), the interaction between excitement, responsibility, and security (Kang, 2005), teacher's praise (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021b), group size (Cao & Philp, 2006), teacher's autonomy support (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021a), classroom contextual conditions and linguistic factors (Cao, 2011) could influence WTC. Some researchers have attempted to show how a lot of factors work together to produce WTC (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021) through models (Lan et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Teachers' Roles in Learners' WTC

Previous research on WTC shows that teachers can influence learners' WTC in several ways. These studies show that teachers employ different strategies, such as actively using group work and pair work (Ewald, 2004; Zhong, 2013), adjusting group size, taking learners' cultural backgrounds into account, creating a friendly class atmosphere, enhancing self-confidence, and increasing topic familiarity, all of which can help enhance L2 learners' WTC (Riasati, 2014; Tavakoli & Zarrinabadi, 2018). Zarrinabadi (2014) also found that delayed error correction, extended wait time, and teacher support significantly influenced EFL learners' WTC. Finally, Philp et al. (2013) showed that certain interactional patterns could improve L2 communication and enhance L2 WTC. It should be mentioned that there is no research on how teachers deal with UnWTC students. Particularly, we do not know whether teachers' perceptions of learners' WTC and UnWTC influence the ways they allocate turns for speaking.

Classroom-Based Studies

The selection of the next speaker was interactionally and multimodally negotiated and was affected by the students' gaze towards or away from the teacher, which showed their willingness or unwillingness to talk. Sert (2013) studied recorded classroom interactions and analyzed them through conversation analysis to see how the teachers' interpretations of their students' lack of knowledge based on their nonverbal gestures (e.g., gaze, gestures) affected turn-taking patterns and reported that the display of lack of knowledge interpreted by students' non-verbal cues encouraged the teachers to assign the turn to another student. Moreover, Sert (2015) found that long periods of silence and students' marginal contributions were interpreted as a lack of knowledge, showing students' unwillingness to participate. Unwillingness was displayed by gaze withdrawals, movements of the head, smiling, and covering the face with hands. In another study, analyzing recorded data from the classroom, Sert and Jacknick (2015) attempted to understand how students' use of smiles may help them to address interactional problems. They found that smiles and epistemic concerns were tied up. (i.e., when students' problems in interaction were caused by epistemic access, their smiles helped them to keep talking). In addition, Evnitskaya and Berger (2017) examined the way learners show their WTC in classroom activities wherein the selection of the next speaker was not done by the teacher. They reported that WTC was a dynamic and multimodal concept shown by the participants in the interaction. Drawing from a variety of sources (e.g., observations, conversations, interviews), Kubanyiova and Yue (2019) examined the verbal and nonverbal interactional behaviors that indicated WTC and realized that WTC was the developing ability for participants to engage in collaborative L2 meaning-making.

While several studies exist on the ways through which teacher-related factors influence learners' L2 WTC, few studies have tried to examine how teachers' classification of their students in terms of L2 WTC (WTC or UnWTC) influences the frequency and method of their turn allocation. Previous research shows that teachers tend to form some lay theories about learners' characteristics and act upon these perceptions in their classroom activities (Ross & Nisbett, 2011). While we agree with a dynamic view of WTC, we argue that language teachers form such stable perceptions about learners' WTC and use them to interact with them in class. The goal of this study, therefore, was to understand whether—and if so, how—teachers' frequency and methods of turn allocation differed for WTC and UnWTC students. To this end, the following research question was posited:

RQ: How do teachers' perceptions of students' WTC affect the frequency and method of their turn allocation?

Method

This study aimed to examine whether teachers' perceptions about learners' level of WTC affected the frequency and method of their turn allocations. In this study, turns were operationalized in two ways: voluntary and designated turns. Voluntary turns include the students' deliberate and self-initiated responses to teacher discourse (e.g., questions), while designated turns refer to the language students produce following teachers' requests for a response from a particular student. Frequency in our study referred to the total number of voluntary or designated turns for each student.

Participants

This research was a multiple case study including three Iranian EFL teachers and their students. It also included quantitative data to provide an in-depth interpretation of qualitative data. The WTC and UnWTC students were chosen from a medium-sized private language school in Tehran, Iran through a purposive sampling method. The school offers general English courses as well as ESP courses, such as English for tourism and business. There were 19 students (6 male and 13 female) between 19 and 26 years old ($M = 22.85$). The number of students in each class ranged from 6 to 15; an average size for intermediate-level English conversation classes at this institute. Students in the study were in a general English course, which lasted seven weeks and involved 18 classes of 90 minutes each. Moreover, three teachers also took part in the study. The teachers (one male and two females) hold BA degrees in English and had three to five years of teaching experience. The purpose of the study was explained to teachers and students and they were ensured that the confidentiality of the data and their anonymity would be protected. Then, they were asked to read the consent forms carefully and sign them.

Teachers Identifying WTC and UnWTC Participants

Before conducting the study, the teachers were asked to classify their students based on their perceived WTC level. This was done because the research attempted to examine the ways through which teachers' perceptions of learners' WTC level affected the frequency and method of turn allocation. Participants were identified through the information provided from a WTC checklist and interviews with teachers. Cao and Philp's (2006) interaction observation checklist was used

as a source of data for identifying different levels of WTC. A growing body of L2 WTC research has adopted this observation checklist to measure situational L2 WTC (Cao, 2011). It comprises two sections; the first focuses on students' WTC level in a whole-classroom setting and the second on students' WTC in pairs and groups (Appendix A). In this study, we only focused on interaction in whole-class EFL settings. The teachers were instructed on how to use and complete the checklist, received feedback on how they used it, and were then asked to do it with regard to their students. Moreover, to elicit information about their perceptions of students' WTC, the teachers were asked to talk about their experience in teaching learners with different WTC levels and describe the characteristics of students with different levels of WTC and the ways through which they deal with such students. The second author conducted the interviews at the language school. The interviews were in Persian and lasted for 30 minutes on average.

Design and Procedures

The study involved collecting data through observations as well as audio and video recordings. Each of these data collection methods is described in detail in the following subsections.

Instruments

Classroom Observations

The first author conducted 15 observational classroom visits of 90 minutes in each class, starting from the beginning of the course, to accustom the students to the observer's presence and the recording of the class. In the observations, the researcher tried to familiarize herself with the classroom atmosphere, attempted to understand the ways through which learners expressed their WTC (such as hand-raising or nodding), and paid attention to the ways the teacher initiated and followed teacher-student interactions. To minimize the impact of the researcher's presence, the observer sat at the back of the classroom and avoided participating in the lesson. While observing, the researcher took analytical field notes of the interactions between teachers and students and then documented explanatory reflections. The field notes were about various issues such as the classroom environment, topics of the discussion, and the way the teacher treated WTC and UnWTC students in terms of wait time, reaction to errors, and reaction to their contributions.

Audio- and Video-Recordings

Audio- and video recordings were complementary to the observations. Two digital video recorders were placed in the corners of the classroom, near the ceiling, enabling the teacher and all students to be captured. All audio-video data were transcribed verbatim by the second author.

Data Analysis

We used Verplaetse's (1995) turn allocation system for coding turns (Appendix B). This is a modified version of a system developed by Allwright (1980). Verplaetse's system (1995, 2000) examines turn-allocation in the IRF (Teacher Initiation –Teacher Response – Teacher Feedback) moves. It also includes scaffolding initiation moves (i.e. The teacher challenges the student who is currently being interacted with by posing another question when the previous exchange is pedagogically completed). This system allows one to code the interactions initiated by a student (i.e., a student asks his/her teacher a question) in response moves (i.e. Rather than answering their student's questions, the teacher issues a question and helps them fix their incorrect or insufficient

answers). When coding designating patterns, both verbal and nonverbal designations were taken into account.

To ensure the data was accurately coded, two colleagues of the first author, who were familiar with classroom interaction research, were asked to code 10 percent of randomly selected transcripts (moves, acts, and turn allocation) separately. Using Cohen's kappa, the agreement rates related to discourse analysis were as follows: the rate of agreement for moves (i.e. IRFSI) was 0.96 for acts, and it was 0.95 for turn allocation. The same randomly selected transcripts were coded by the second rater. The inter-rater reliability between the researcher and the second rater was 0.94.

Results

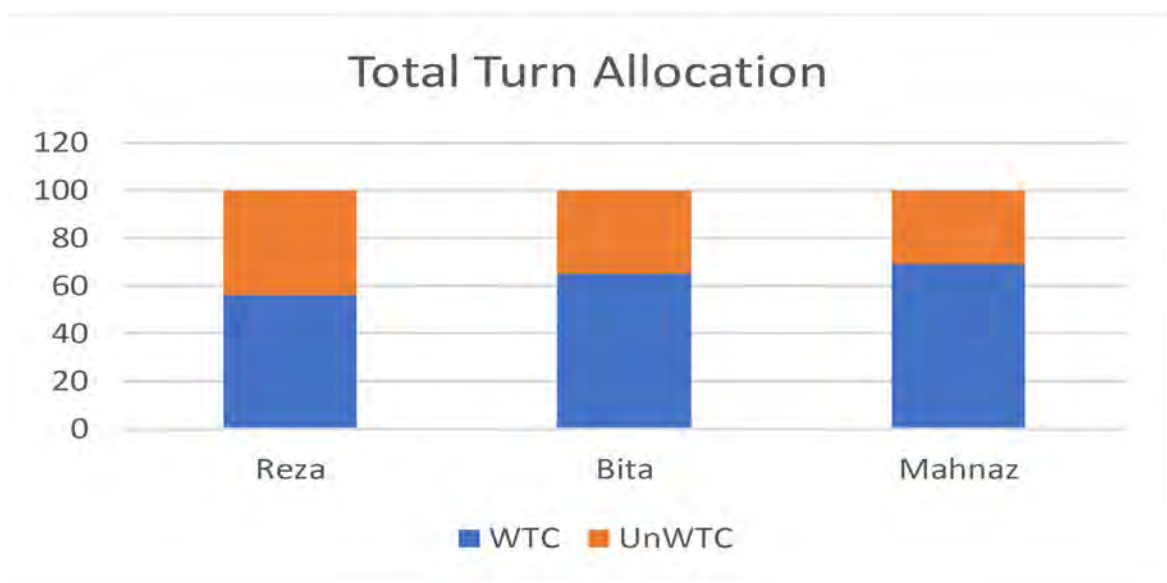
This section presents the interaction patterns in each class and compares the frequency and method of turn allocations for WTC and UnWTC students in each class. The excerpts taken from the recorded class visits are presented as they are. We did not correct the grammatical errors in either the teachers' or students' authentic voices. In describing each class, we use some terms such as "usually," "often," or "sometimes" to refer to teachers' actions. The term *usually* means that most of the time, except once or twice, the classroom was observed. Often *means* that more than half of the time, the classroom was observed. *Sometimes* means almost half of the time the classroom was observed.

Teachers' Use of Volunteered and Designated Turns

Figure 1 presents the total turns for all three teachers. As seen in the figure, WTC students took more turns than the UnWTC ones for all three teachers.

Figure 1

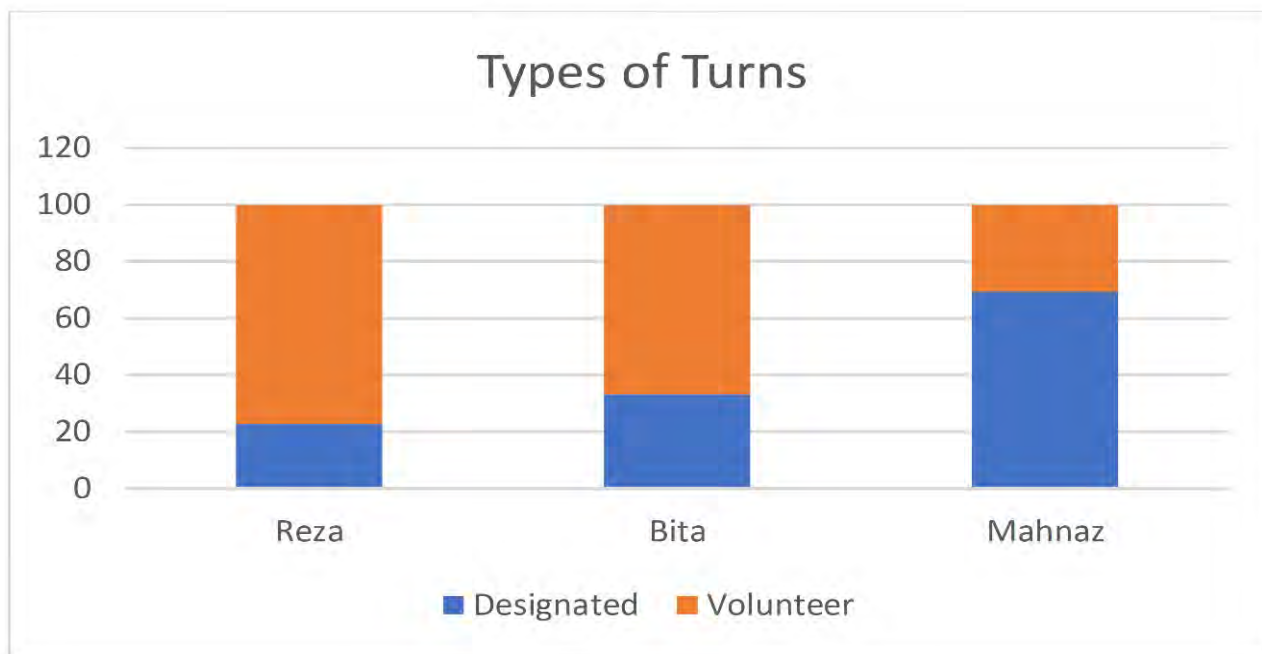
The Total Turn Allocations for the Three Teachers



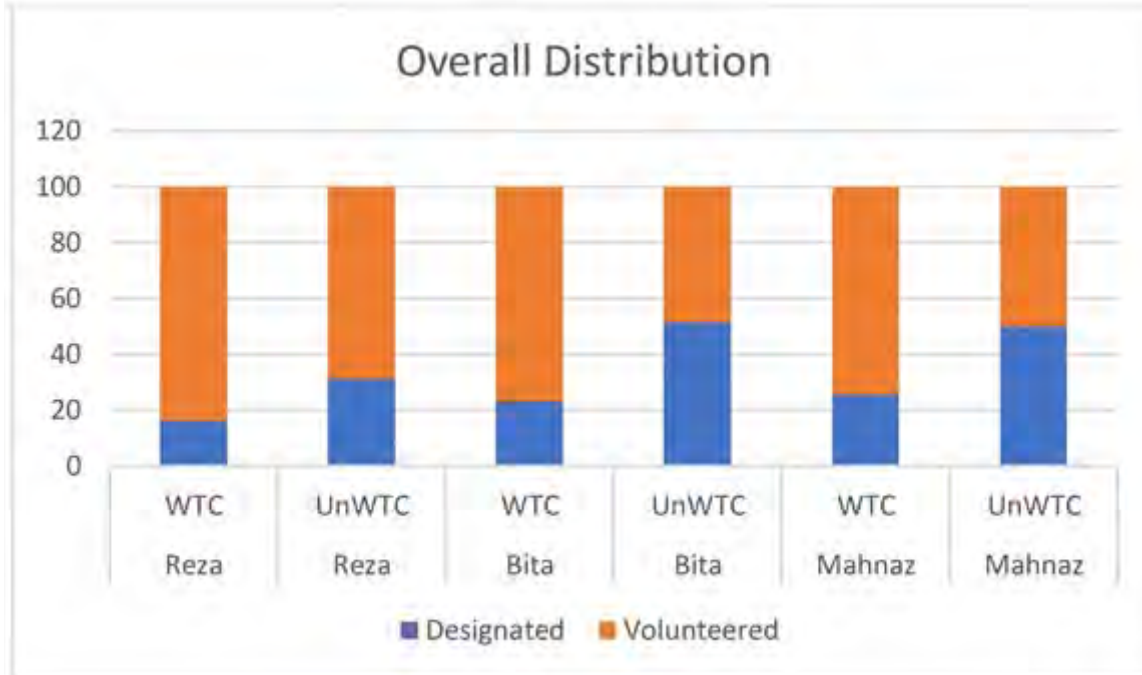
Moreover, our analysis indicated that Reza and Bitra tended to use volunteered turns more than designated turns (see Figure 2). However, Mahnaz used significantly more designated turns than volunteered ones.

Figure 2

The Types of Turns for the Three Teachers



Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3, Reza used volunteered turns more than designated ones, significantly for both WTC and UnWTC ones. Bitra tended to use volunteered turns for WTC students but she used approximately the same number of volunteered and designated turns for UnWTC students. Similarly, Mahnaz used volunteered turns more for WTC students and a balanced number of volunteered and designated turns for UnWTC students. As compared to Reza, Bitra and Mahnaz used designated turns for both WTC and UnWTC students. Additionally, Bitra and Mahnaz were approximately similar in regard to assigning volunteered and designated turns to WTC and UnWTC learners.

Figure 3*Overall Distribution of Volunteered and Designated Turns for WTC and UnWTC Students***Reza's Class**

Students' participation in Reza's class often happened in a consecutive rather than a concurrent manner; a few students from the WTC group initiated most of the turns and were then followed by UnWTC students, who voluntarily participated or were nominated by Reza at times. Perhaps the reason for consecutive turn-taking patterns could be the lack of competitive bidding on the students' part as they were not asked to raise their hands. Often the students were left on their own to formulate their answers to each other freely. Thinking and helping each other, rather than competing for the right answer, seemed to increase students' WTC. Furthermore, the interactional patterns were different when the activities were completed collaboratively. When the floor was collaboratively held by more than one participant (e.g. in-group role-play), UnWTC students were more encouraged to cooperate in the interaction management and take more lengthy turns. Allowing his students to self-select as a way of turn-taking seemed to provide the opportunity for both WTC and UnWTC learners to get feedback from their peers, particularly when class discussions were held about topics that seemed to interest the students (Kang, 2005). Therefore, the dominance of the WTC group was occasionally reduced. In this less stressful environment, the class was not just a question-and-answer session; sometimes, UnWTC students provided the WTC students with useful information about the topic and challenged them. The following example describes this situation.

1. T: Thank you for sharing your news with us; today we will have a very nice discussion about food. Have you heard of this?

2. T: A food pyramid, this is the pyramid, look at its shape? Do you know what is it for?
3. Mani (WTC student): I think it is good for anything, really useless.
4. Nastran (UnWTC student): No Mani, it is guide which tell us food should we eat and food should not eat in every day.
5. T: Oh, I have never realized that, I thought it shows nutritious food. It is really interesting but how it works?

In this excerpt, after Reza's questions in line 1, Mani (WTC student) calls out his answer but the teacher does not take the floor and Mani receives disagreeing appraisal on his answer from Nastran (UnWTC student), who seems to be knowledgeable in this area, Nastran carefully corrects her friend's wrong information related to the content in Line 4. Later, Reza's recognition of Nastran's role as a primary knower in line 5 seems to raise Nastran's confidence to be a major interlocutor with Reza soon. Using the checks, Reza often attempted to ensure that he was not calling attention to the UnWTC students when they did not know the answer (See the following example).

1. T: (Calling one of the UnWTC students)
2. Mm, Can you help us with the next one?
3. Yas (UnWTC student): Sure
4. T: What is the answer?

In the case of a negative response to the checks, before moving to another student, Reza sometimes used a prompt such as "Think more, I'll back to you later". The observation also showed that UnWTC students tended to respond to Reza's questions mostly when they were designated to take a turn talking.

Bitá's Class

Bitá gave most of the class time to WTC students and contributed to the creation of dominant (WTC) and subordinate (UnWTC) conversation groups and different response opportunities. It appeared that as WTC students participated more at the beginning of a new lesson, the rest were hesitant to join the discussion later. This hesitation was apparent as some members of the UnWTC group were observed to half-raise their hands. Bitá chose those whose contributions included a response to her initiation. It appeared that the more a student was designated a turn, the less was he or she allowed to take a voluntary turn. Also, being aware of the uneven distribution of turn taking, to balance such an inequity, she did not accept WTC students' requests for the floor at all times. For example, on the first recorded classroom visit, Bitá addressed one member of the WTC group and said "Mohamad you had your own share of speaking". However, if any of the UnWTC learners offered a comment, and called out an answer, Bitá indicated having heard the utterance to encourage them to participate. The observation showed that the interaction between Bitá and WTC learners involved some of the UnWTC learners due to the interruptions which Bitá allowed from the UnWTC group. However, this rarely happened in early class meetings. During the observation,

Bitra tried to shelter UnWTC students from embarrassment in front of the whole class. She did this by depriving the UnWTC students of spontaneous language use as the observation showed. On some occasions, Bitra even minimized her students' opportunity to talk unintentionally by supplying the answers to them. As can be seen in the following example, in the first line Bitra tries to elicit from Maryam what she hates but as soon as Maryam pauses (second line), Bitra feeds her words.

1. T: What do you hate eating?
2. Maryam (UnWTC student): I hate garlic because...
3. T: Because you cannot stand its smell?
4. Maryam (UnWTC student): Yes

Bitra's designation of UnWTC students was not face-threatening even though they had not been bidding for a turn. Examination of the extracts showed that Bitra often encouraged UnWTC students to participate in the inquiry, but she did not encourage them to justify or extend the ideas. As can be seen in the following transcript when the teacher is using a picture as a prompt to encourage her students to guess about the conversation they are going to listen to. When in response to the teacher, Rahil says maybe. The teacher repeats Rahil's answer without showing interest

1. T: Where are they?
2. Rahil (UnWTC student): Maybe, they are in a coffee shop.
3. T: Maybe.

Mahnaz's Class

Mahnaz initiated most of the interactions by giving instructions or posing questions. Every so often, she invited all the students to respond, or repeat chorally. Other than choral repetition, like Bitra and Reza, she usually addressed the whole class, leaving the floor open for a bid to encourage the students to talk. However, compared to Bitra and Reza, Mahnaz not only led but also dominated the interaction. Except for the time her students were asked to work in a group or pairs, Mahnaz was the only one who determined the interaction quantity, interaction direction, and interaction distribution.

There was no evidence that volunteers, whether WTC or UnWTC, had called out their answers prior to Mahnaz's nomination or while their classmates were talking. Often, after posing a question, Mahnaz used eye contact with those who asked for the floor, then nodded or sometimes called on him or her. The students knew that they had to wait for the nomination before answering. It was apparent that Mahnaz had already established some norms of participation for her students in class. This strict turn allocation method restricted students' chances to interrupt each other either for arguing, supporting, or expressing their agreement or disagreement. Mahnaz often designated those who volunteered first. Accordingly, students' involvement in the classroom was dependent on how fast they could show their interest in participation by raising their hands. As Mahnaz did not wait for others, only a few students could show their accessibility as probable respondents.

This was even more evident when Mahnaz issued display questions (questions for which only one answer is accepted) because some could not get any opportunity to take a turn at all. The reason was that as soon as Mahnaz acknowledged the right answer of the turn holder, the others lost the chance of taking a turn. The chance was only re-gained if the answer was wrong. Mahnaz's strategy in turn allocation seemed to prioritize those who were quick to contribute verbally rather than those who volunteered or were willing to communicate at that moment. In such an environment, the dominant places in classroom activity were typically taken by WTC students.

Mahnaz created a competitive rather than cooperative environment wherein there was little student-student support. WTC learners tended to give fewer opportunities to UnWTC students to participate in classroom activities. This seemed to push UnWTC students into a more passive role. From the observations, it was also clear that Mahnaz was not tolerant of inaccuracy or lack of fluency on the part of her students. She intervened often and sometimes while students were still talking. This usually happened to UnWTC students.

Discussion

This study aimed to contribute to WTC in classroom literature by examining the way teachers' perceptions of learners' WTC affect the frequency and method of their turn allocations. The results of the study revealed that teachers' turn allocations differed for WTC and UnWTC students. For all three teachers, WTC students had more volunteered turns and the UnWTC students received more designated turns than the WTC ones. In line with the finding of Walsh (2011), the teachers were mainly responsible for controlling the interaction in the classroom by determining who could talk, for how long, which contributions to recognize, and whom to interrupt. This echoes the dominant role of teachers in managing turn-taking (Mortensen, 2008b). In contrast with studies conducted by Sert and Jacknick (2015) and Mortensen (2008b), the selection of the next speaker was not interactionally and multimodally negotiated. This could be because teachers often associate UnWTC with avoidance and a lack of sociability and self-disclosure (Allahyar, 2021) which might influence the negotiations of turns. To ensure the involvement of UnWTC students, teachers designated them additional turns. The rigid control of the interaction pattern was easily broken during the class interaction in Reza's class and encouraged the UnWTC students to volunteer. Reza's students were allowed to take the initiative to talk at any time without raising their hands. However, in the classrooms of Bitu and Mahnaz, students were granted the opportunity to talk only if they bid for the floor or nominated the student to talk. In so doing, the students had to wait to be called upon by the teacher. Opportunities to talk in all observed classes were not accessible to all students. Perhaps, not directing questions to individual students raises the chances for a few volunteers and leaves non-volunteers in a passive position (Kauchak & Eggen, 2007). These results are in line with previous studies (Mortensen, 2008a; Sahlström, 2002) which found that allowing self-selection was more efficient than hand-raising as it gave the students more chances to take control of their turns. However, allowing students to self-select did not provide equal opportunity for talking; only a few students self-selected to participate. The turn-taking method used by teachers in this study involved only a handful of WTC students and deprived the rest of the students of the opportunity to talk. This practice reinforced UnWTC students to rely on

more vocal students to comment or respond to teachers' questions. Another reason behind this practice could be linked to teachers' perceptions of UnWTC. Teachers believed that WTC has an external cause and can be influenced by their strategies while UnWTC has an internal cause (Allahyar, 2021).

The results for Bita and Mahnaz's class showed that the WTC students had access to the floor and volunteered more frequently than the UnWTC and dominated class interaction. Not only students but also the teachers relied on only a few vocal students in their classrooms to answer questions. Gaining access to the floor in the class was more challenging for UnWTC students. The reason was that students had to be fast in raising their hands. Therefore, the short wait time between Mahnaz's questions, her nomination, and answering the questions herself brought unequal opportunities for the UnWTC who were often slower to show their availability (Zarrinabadi, 2014). In addition, stress on the accurate use of the language form tended to keep the UnWTC in a passive role (Walsh, 2011). Rarely did they decide to make themselves accessible to be nominated by bidding.

Except for Reza, the other two teachers allowed for less voluntary participation by the UnWTC group. Also, the results showed that there were cases where students from the UnWTC group interacted with their peers in the WTC group, perhaps because they experienced a lack of support from the teacher. Conversely, feeling support from Reza and other students, the UnWTC voluntarily interacted with their peers in her class. In addition, they were nominated by their WTC counterparts in that cooperative atmosphere. Recognizing such turns, Reza could somehow compensate for the reticent students' lack of participation in the whole class.

Our results also indicated that the three teachers created very different spaces for the support of UnWTC students. Past research has indicated that support from teachers can positively influence language learners' WTC (Allahyar, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2001). As literature shows probably, different factors work together to affect WTC (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021). In other words, when the students, particularly UnWTC, feel that they are supported by their teacher, they would possibly participate in classroom activities with less anxiety and more self-confidence (Allahyar, 2015; Kang, 2005). The support can be given either by purposefully providing speaking opportunities for UnWTC students to participate or by giving them the feeling that their ideas are respected and the teacher is there to help them improve their language ability.

Finally, the findings showed that, despite the teachers' best intention to balance turn allocation, the students exhibiting WTC were advantaged in the quantity and quality of interactions received from the teachers. These results are similar to previous studies in that teachers often have a tendency toward those who bid for a turn or showed that they were willing to be selected (Mortensen 2008a; Sahlström, 2002). The reason is that teachers can secure a response when students self-select and they do not put their students at risk when they are unprepared or unwilling to talk (Griffin & Humphrey 1978).

Conclusions

This study took teacher perception as its underlying theoretical framework (Borg, 2003, 2015) to examine whether teachers' frequency and method of turn allocation differed in regard to WTC and

UnWTC students. This did indeed turn out to be the case; WTC students had more voluntary turns while UnWTC students were not. Teachers' frequency and method of turn allocation mostly favored WTC students in the class and not the UnWTC ones. As such, it can be concluded from this study that teachers' perception of learners as WTC and UnWTC influences the way turns are allocated and the method in which they are delivered. However, we acknowledge that the relationships between teacher perception and students' WTC are not unidirectional.

This research includes several implications for research and practice in education and language teaching. Firstly, for language teachers, this study is a reminder of the influence their perceptions have on what happens in class. In particular, students who are perceived to be higher in WTC are given more opportunities, and teachers are therefore encouraged to carefully consider attempting to find a balance across Teachers should refrain from taking control of the conversation and enforcing a rigid turn-allocation method. This may limit students' opportunities (whether perceived to be UnWTC or not) to react to one another and voice their agreement or disagreement. To encourage UnWTC students, they need to create a more cooperative rather than competitive classroom where students' participation is not based on how quickly they indicate their interests in participation. To protect UnWTC students from embarrassment, teachers should not ignore them or limit their opportunities to talk but they make sure that their UnWTC students are ready to participate.

We want to acknowledge some limitations of the study. Firstly, the distinction between willing and unwilling students could be seen as somewhat arbitrary. Students are not always one or the other and some may be 'somewhat' or 'partially' willing. For the purpose of our study, however, we decided to create two broad categories. Based on our observations of students in this course - at least during our observation period- the students did seem to fall into two distinct groups. By grouping them, we were able to carry out the analyses we selected, which would otherwise have been difficult. Researchers may closely observe how WTC varies over time and how teachers' actions affect this. However, that was not the intention of our study. It will be interesting for future researchers to see how teachers' ideas about students' WTC/UnWTC can influence teachers' communicative behavior, teaching strategies, and instructional practices. In addition, this study has focused on whole-class EFL settings where teachers interact with WTC/UnWTC students.

Another limitation of this multiple case study is the size of our sample. Clearly, it is impossible to generalize from such a small sample to a wider population. Nonetheless, we believe that the setting where this study was conducted is representative of language classes in the region and as such that the results do give useful insights into the patterns of teachers' perceptions and the relationship with their practice, instantiations of which are likely to vary across contexts, but underlying patterns of which are likely to be similar. In other words, although, for example, the specific behaviors and perceptions will be different in other schools or other countries, the overall relationship between the perception of WTC and the teacher's interaction is likely to be similar. The results highlight the significance of investigating such patterns, as this study has shown that they can have direct consequences on the L2 produced in class. As the opportunity to produce and interact in the target language is such an important element in successful language acquisition, especially in an EFL setting, this type of research has important implications for classroom practice

that may help to incrementally increase our ability to provide optimal conditions for all students to actively participate in their learning.

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Appendix A

WTC Classroom Observation Scheme

Instructions for Teachers

These checklist items which are designed by Cao and Philps (2006) measure the behaviors associated with being “Willing to Communicate in English” (WTC), in the presence of the teacher: Place a checkmark in the blank next to each item describing the student’s WTC behavior.

| WTC Classroom Observation Scheme * | |
|---|------------|
| WHOLE CLASS | S1 (Rahil) |
| 1. Volunteer an answer (including raising a hand) | |
| 2. Give an answer to the teacher’s question. | |
| 2a. Provide information – general solicit | |
| 2b. Learner- responding. | |
| 2c. Non-public response. | |
| 3. Ask the teacher a question. | |
| 4. Guess the meaning of an unknown word. | |
| 5. Try out a form in the target language | |
| 5a. Lexical | |
| 5b. Morphological | |
| 5c. Syntactical | |
| 6. Present own opinions in class. | |
| 7. Volunteer to participate in class activities | |

Note *: (Adopted from Cao and Philps, 2006, p.491)

Appendix B

Moves in Verplaetse’s System

| Utterance | Moves in Sinclair and Coulthard's System (1975) | Moves in Verplaetse’s System (1995) |
|--|---|---|
| T: What is the genotype of the father, Bill? | Teacher Initiation | Teacher Initiation |
| B: Pure dominant. | Student Response | Student Response |
| T: Pure dominant, correct. And the mother? | Teacher Follow--up Teacher Initiation | Teacher Follow—up Teacher Scaffolding Initiation |
| B: Homozygous recessive. | Student Response | Student Response |

Note*: Adopted from Verplaetse (1995, p.59), a modified version of Sinclair and Coulthard's move (1975).

Guidelines to Turn Allocation Coding

| Code | Turn Allocation Description* |
|-------------|---|
| P | Teacher responds to an individual bidding for a turn, selecting one person in particular, or Teacher continues a transaction with the student currently involved in the transaction |
| P* | Teacher designates one person who has not requested the floor |
| G | Teacher solicits to full class in general, opening up a bid for the floor |
| G* | Teacher solicits to full class in general, opening up a bid for the floor and designates someone who has not requested the floor |
| G | Teacher solicits to full class in general, opening up a bid for the floor and designates someone who has not requested the floor, and allows a student to self-select |
| > | Teacher gives way to interruption or allows a student to self-select |
| nom | Teacher gives the floor to a student at the student's request |
| In | Teacher initiates a transaction without an elicitation |

Note: Adopted from Verplaetse (1995, pp-61-62), a modified version of Allwright's (1980, p. 169) turn allocation System

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Ethics Declarations

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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