

## **WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE OF EFL LEARNERS AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES**

Luluk Khasanah<sup>1</sup>, Senowarsito<sup>2</sup>, Siti Nur 'Aini<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>UPGRIS Semarang

<sup>1</sup>lulukhasanah98@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>senowarsito@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>sitinuraini@upgris.ac.id

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Study of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has an important role in language learning, in this context English as Foreign Language (EFL). Research on students' WTC has been researched by other researchers with different variables. The research on students' WTC in the context of English language learning in the classroom. The participants of this study were twelfth grade students. To collect data, the researcher used the instrument of observation sheet, questionnaire and interview. This study aims to find out what factors influence students' WTC and how these factors can affect students' WTC in the classroom. The data questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS and interview results were analyzed grouped what factors affect students' WTC and the challenges and strategies applied. The result obtained students' WTC has reached the level based on the heuristic model of WTC developed by (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The result proved that the factors that affect students' WTC were work in group, sex interlocutor, topics, personality, seating location, given score, perceived speaking opportunity, task type and classroom atmosphere. The result showed that these factors can be challenges and strategies in learning English as EFL related to students' WTC.*

*Keywords: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Challenges and Strategies, Senior High School, EFL*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

English is a recognized passport to better education and employment opportunities. It demonstrates that English is an important rule in human life because it has influenced certain aspects of human life. One of the goals of studying English is students have capability speaking using English with both another students and teacher. To promote students' capability using English is not easy because sometimes they still feel shy

to speak up. The teacher has to motivate them in order to have willing to communicate.

The importance of WTC in English has been widely accepted and highly valued as a crucial component of today's L2 education. First, WTC in English in the classroom may help students become more proficient speakers, which is essential to enhancing the overall efficacy of studying the language. Secondly, enhanced communication

willingness helps students acquire the language more easily, which increases their opportunities for practice and real-world application of the language (Zeng, 2010).

The concept of WTC by MacIntyre and the theory has been adopted by some researches in education research. Meanwhile, (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) specified this concept as "a stable prediction when given the option, toward communication to do so". Few people who refrained from participating in such a communication event believed that the communication process was pointless or that they were at ease with it overall (Ningsih et al., 2018). Promote students in WTC in English is very important part in learning English because it becomes one of the benchmarks for the success of English language learning.

The concept Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was first introduced by McCroskey and Baer 1985 to be "the individuals' tendency to initiate communication when they are free to do so" (Fahim & Dhamotharan, 2016). The willingness to communicate (WTC) construct was originally proposed to identify the trait-like personality that people

reveal when communicating in their first language (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) (Huseyin et al., 2014). Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has been defined as the intention initiate communication given choice (Macintyre et al., 2021).

It is described as pupils' readiness to engage in speech or writing at a designated period in conversation with a specific person or individuals who communicate in a second language (Saidah, 2021). Students that are willing to communicate in English are ideal for a communicative language classroom (Riasati M. J., 2012). The first language (L1) communication context and acquisition introduced the concept of Willingness to communicate (WTC), as proposed by McCroskey and Baer (Saidah, 2021).

Components of communication are essential in the classroom setting to help students grow in their ability to communicate as well as in their desire to participate actively in it (Amalia et al., 2019). In a language classroom using the communicative approach, having students who are willing to communicate in English is crucial. Students that are willing to communicate in English are ideal for

a communicative language classroom (Riasati M. J., 2012). WTC components (Yousef et al., 2013) suggesting that language acquisition communication techniques can be used with ESL communication.

Interaction in the classroom is linked to language learning, and speaking in a second language is regarded as practicing the target language. As a result, students who communicate more in the target language will obtain better levels of communicative competence (Bernales, 2016). Based on study of (Jia, 2013) there are several ways to promote classroom interaction. These include: (1) strengthening questioning techniques; (2) considering students' language proficiency; (3) enforcing cooperative learning techniques; (4) cultivating a favorable rapport between the instructor and students; and (5) lowering anxiety levels in the classroom.

## **B. Research Method**

The setting of the research is mixed method. In most cases, quantitative research the data are quantified and further numerical analysis (Mackey, 2016). Mix method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) defined

as integrating or combining data and research from both qualitative and quantitative sources in a study.

The research used quantitative data, which is followed by qualitative data that aims to elaborate and supplement the quantitative data. The data got from observation in the classroom, questionnaire, and interview the participants. The questionnaire and interview form were adopted from (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018).

The first step was the researcher observed the situation of the EFL classroom while teacher conduct teaching learning process. Then researcher used questionnaire to measure willingness to communicate of the students. The questionnaire is adopted from (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018). The questionnaire consists of 25 item point with 5 points Likert Scale and for each one, score is given: 5 for certainly willing, 4 for willing, 3 for moderately willing, 2 for not willing, and 1 for absolutely not willing. Secondly the research will calculate the data which obtained from questionnaire through SPSS to assess the participant replies and answer the research questions

(Tuyen & Loan, 2019). Researchers used interview to collect data and insight from participants on various topics, such as experiences, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors.

### C. Findings

Part of the observation was the teacher has good capability conditioning the class. The students were looked comfort and pay attention seriously. They always give good respond for every question and instruction. However, demographic characteristics of the students showed variations that could influence their participation in the classroom.

**Tabel 1. Demographic Characteristics of Students.**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	56	58.30%
	Male	40	41.70%
Age	15 years old	1	1.00%
	16 years old	16	16.70%
	17 years old	64	66.70%
	18 years old	15	15.60%
Grade	12th grade	96	100%

The situation only view students initially answer questions from teacher or convey their opinions. As the feedback of the teacher, the students got some appreciations such

as getting additional score, getting compliment etc.

The teacher gave activity to complete some exercise at the textbook. While the students were working, the teacher keeps monitoring to check the students' understanding. Some who discuss with their friend exchange opinions. It turns out that there are students who are familiar with the topics that were done based on the books they have read.

**Tabel 2. Factors Influencing Students' Willingness to Communicate**

Number	Factor	Percentage of Students	Interpretation
1	Willingness to answer teachers' questions	48.9% somewhat willing	Students are moderately active in answering questions.
2	Willingness to speak in large groups	40.6% somewhat willing	Students tend to be more active in smaller groups.
3	Willingness to speak in small groups	29.2% somewhat willing	Students are more comfortable speaking in small groups.
4	Willingness to ask questions in class	44.8% somewhat willing	Students are moderately active in asking questions.
5	Willingness to express opinions	40.6% somewhat willing	Students are fairly confident in expressing opinions.
6	Willingness to respond to teachers' questions	34.4% somewhat willing	Students are moderately responsive to teachers' questions.
7	Willingness to help friends answer questions	39.6% somewhat willing	Students are moderately helpful to their peers.
8	Willingness to speak more than listen	38.5% somewhat willing	Students tend to prefer speaking over listening.
9	Willingness to speak with the opposite gender	41.7% somewhat willing	Students are fairly comfortable speaking with the opposite gender.
10	Willingness to speak with older people	36.5% somewhat willing	Students are moderately comfortable speaking with older individuals.
11	Willingness to speak with younger people	34.4% somewhat willing	Students are moderately comfortable speaking with younger individuals.
12	Willingness to speak on familiar topics	42.7% somewhat willing	Students are more comfortable speaking about familiar topics.
13	Willingness to speak on interesting topics	30.2% somewhat willing	Students are moderately interested in speaking on interesting topics.
14	Willingness to speak individually	36.5% somewhat willing	Students are moderately confident speaking individually.
15	Willingness to speak after preparation	47.9% somewhat willing	Students feel more comfortable speaking after preparation.
16	Willingness to discuss differing opinions	46.9% somewhat willing	Students are fairly open to discussing differing opinions.
17	Willingness to speak from the back of the class	34.4% somewhat willing	Students are less comfortable speaking from the back of the class.
18	Willingness to speak from the front of the class	34.4% somewhat willing	Students are less comfortable speaking from the front of the class.
19	Willingness to speak when being assessed	49.0% somewhat willing	Students are moderately motivated to speak when being assessed.
20	Willingness to speak on controversial topics	39.6% somewhat willing	Students are less comfortable speaking on controversial topics.
21	Willingness to speak on comfortable topics	33.3% somewhat willing	Students are moderately comfortable speaking on comfortable topics.
22	Willingness to speak when no one else does	32.3% somewhat willing	Students are less likely to take initiative in starting conversations.
23	Willingness to speak when confident in answer	41.3% somewhat confident	Students tend to speak when they are confident in their answers.

The result of questionnaire was calculated by SPSS 24 version. The students respond the teacher's question (46,9 %) moderately willing. But some of the students had not strong enough willingness to answer teacher's question. It's proved only (8.3%) certainly willing is choose by students. The item of the questionnaire of students' WTC figure out that students answer teacher's question based on level of difficulty.

Speaking in groups makes students more confident because there are friends who help each other in giving answers or responses and expressing opinions. It proved that students' WTC about (15.6%).

The students' awareness to ask a question during the lesson dominated moderately willing 44.8%. In the contrary there were students not at all ask a question to the teacher (9.4%). The students' WTC absolutely willing (3.1%) ask a question during the lesson.

The students' brave presented the opinion frequently willing (26.0%). The highest of the percentage is moderately willing (40.6%). The lowest of the percentage is students vote (4.2%) absolutely willing. The data proved that the average of

students have willingness to convey their opinions.

The respond of the students implied that their willingness to respond the teacher's question relatively high. The percentage is moderately willing (34.4%) and willing (35.4%). The rest is not willing (18.8%) for this item of questionnaire. The lowest is absolutely not willing (5.2%) and absolutely willing (6.3%). The students answered a question from the teacher frequently is moderately willing (39.6%). It was the highest percentage of the item. Some of the students gave the respond willing (25.0%). The same percentage is absolutely willing and absolutely not willing, it's about (8.3%).

The students preferred to speaking than listening to conduct a conversation (38.5%). There were students absolutely not willing (11.5%) to speak in a conversation. The fact was gotten that only (3.1%) students preferred speaking than listening a conversation.

The students were more confident to talk to students of the same gender because they socialize more in their daily lives. They preferred absolutely willing (36.5%). And it was only (2.1%) absolutely not

willing. The rest (32.3%) gave respond willing.

The students were speaking with older than them dominantly (36.5%). Students' WTC to older students has a good influence so that students are motivated to participate in speaking. The students' willingness in speaking to younger students quite enough (34.4%). Students' WTC is dominant with younger students than older students.

A subject which familiar with the students made them interested in to discuss in language learning. The students were interested in discussing it because they were confident in their opinions and answers. They were moderate willing active speaking with the familiar subject (42.7%).

Students' interest in the subject makes them have a high willingness to communicate. Students' WTC increase with the interesting subject (25.0%). Students' willingness to communicate about a subject prepared frequency (25.0%). Their willingness to discuss a subject make the same their opinions (36.5%).

The students who sit at the first row mostly less of speaking enthusiasm. Their willingness is

inclined low (4.2%). They have their own reasons why they are not willing enough to speak up in class. The students mostly active speaking in particular time when they knew speaking activity in evaluating (15.6%). In another words a reward become a motivation to student for active speaking. The percentage showed (20.8%) student merely keep silent when nobody else around speaking. All of the student will respond confidently when they believe the answer is correct. The frequency students assured to speak when they knew the respond is correct (31.3%).

The students answered their teacher's question in Indonesian mixed English. They argued that they did not know how to say it, they still shy to convey their answers or opinions. They answered in English when they sure what they know. Otherwise they answered in English shortly.

The students afraid made mistake what they said incorrect meaning or inappropriate words. Anxiety in speaking sometimes coming when they did not have any idea or did not know what the meaning. They also argue that they

are lack motivated speaking in English. In EFL learning, there are no requirements or duties for language learners to use English in their daily lives (Khoiriyah & Ciptaningrum, 2020). Only for some situations they were motivated speaking English. Such as examination, presentation, or quiz. Another several factors that make students want to speak English are classroom atmosphere, they are influenced by other students who is good speaking English, and reward given in return.

Speaking English fluently need a self-confidence in order to support someone's performance. Students felt confidence in case they mastered the materials and convinced the way to talk. They argued that students more practice make perfect then it can spur them speaking English. It can improve self-confidence while learning English in classroom. So that students felt confidence while learning English especially for presentation or another task given by the teacher while learning English in the classroom.

Classroom situation as long as learning process could influence students' WTC. The students feel more comfortable studying in quite

classroom. They argued that noisy classroom made them difficult to focus on speaking. They don't like if there were other friends disturb them.

The teacher encourages the students active speaking during the lesson. The teacher involved the students to active communicate by giving questions. The teacher let the students to giving their opinions.

Invited to communicate as if asked a question. We are given the opportunity to express opinions or answers by the teacher.

The teacher gave the opportunity to the students to participate as long as learning language. The teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are aware that giving students the time to reflect can increase their readiness to communicate in the foreign or second language (Barjesteh et al., 2012). The teacher never stop encourages them however the students less of speaking. The teacher never minded anything students' answers. She appreciated her students as their effort to participate as long as language learning.

### **Factors Influencing Students' WTC**

Some factors influencing students' WTC as long as learning

English for some activities. Those factors came from personality of the students, classroom activity related to task type, setting of the classroom and materials of the subject. Willingness to Communicate in the Indonesian classroom context done (Anwar et al., 2021) to examine factors influencing WTC in the L2 classroom such as motivation, anxiety, and language learners' beliefs to their level of WTC.

**Tabel 1. Factors Influencing Students' Willingness to Communicate and Their Interpretations**

Number	Factor	Description
1	Language Proficiency	Students' level of English proficiency directly impacts their confidence and willingness to speak.
2	Self-Confidence	A strong sense of self-confidence is crucial for overcoming language anxiety and taking risks in communication.
3	Anxiety and Fear of Mistakes	Fear of making mistakes can hinder students' willingness to speak, especially in public settings.
4	Motivation	Curiosity, can drive students to engage in language use. Extrinsic motivation, such as grades or rewards, can also play a role.
5	Classroom Environment	A supportive and encouraging classroom environment can foster students' willingness to communicate.
6	Teacher's Role	Teachers can significantly influence students' WTC through their teaching methods, feedback, and encouragement.
7	Peer Interaction	Positive peer interaction can create a supportive learning environment and motivate students to speak.

Work in group defined as students did assignment together such as discussion. Group discussion was prepared to communicate in the classroom. (Said et al., 2021). The

most common and most significant variables impacting group discussions in various activities are a means by which EFL learners in higher education. Working on tasks in pairs or groups can make students more enthusiastic and energized. Most students would actively to speak in front of the class (Khanh, 2016). In other words, the students' WTC level is low to high.

Talking with friends of the same sex give a sense of comfort. Students felt more relaxed because there were no things that need to be hidden because they can both understand. Whereas talking with the opposite sex still arises a sense of lack of confidence and embarrassment because they were afraid that they will be ridiculed for giving the wrong answer.

Topics for learning materials were taken from textbook or other sources which familiar with students. Teachers encouraged students' WTC by using familiar topics and easily understood assignments, which relieved them of the burden of dealing with language barriers (Hoang & Bui, 2023). Meanwhile topic comfort is a topic that students can feel comfortable discussing. The topic is



often heard by students and is also easy to understand. Students' willingness to speak becomes more because of these factors. Teacher did not give unfamiliar topics so that students lack of vocabulary, grammar as a barrier, fear of others' negative reactions, lack of bravery when speaking in public, and anxiety when speaking English are the five primary topics that have been connected to the difficulties that students face when speaking English (Farhani et al., 2020).

The location of the seat for some students is quite important because it can provide a sense of comfort when learning in class. The front seat sometimes makes it uncomfortable because if the teacher asks a question, it must be the front who is asked first. Students' willingness to speak is quite high if they sit in the middle or back position. Meanwhile, students' willingness to speak is quite low when they sit in the front row.

Whenever there was an assessment of student work, students will compete to be active and do the best of what they can do to get a good score. So, students will actively

speak or engage in learning activities if there is a reward.

Speaking opportunities are given by teachers to make students always actively convey their ideas or ideas. So that students who are less active in speaking can get the opportunity to participate in learning in the classroom. Teachers provide opportunities as a method of increasing students' ability and willingness to speak in class. Speaking opportunities are given by the teacher to make students always actively convey their ideas or ideas. So that students who are less active in speaking can get the opportunity to participate in learning in the classroom. Teachers provide opportunities as a method of improving students' speaking ability and willingness in the classroom.

The types of questions or tasks given by the teacher are of course different. Each type of task has a different level of difficulty. Students' ability levels also vary. Students will give a lot of responses and actively speak for tasks that they consider easy and according to their abilities.

The last factor is classroom atmosphere. The state of the class has an influence on the second

learning process in the classroom. The state of the classroom also determines how successful the learning methods used by the teacher are. Quiet conditions have a more favorable influence on the learning process in the classroom. Students are more comfortable learning in a quiet classroom. Quiet classroom conditions affect students' willingness to speak in class. They are more comfortable speaking during the learning process with a quiet classroom. Because it makes them able to concentrate without any interference from other students. (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018) have proved during their research that students' desire to speak up was discovered to be impacted by several of variables, comprising the topic of conversation, the interlocutor's impact, shyness, self-confidence, the teacher, and the environment of the classroom.

### **Challenges and Strategies of Students' WTC**

The challenges of students' WTC come from their personality, their friends, and classroom environment. It same with previous study of (Hoang & Bui, 2023) six primary approach groups were used

by the teachers: grouping, warm-up, topic selection, corrective tactics, classroom environment, and motivational strategies. Motivation influences the two elements of communication confidence and indirectly affects WTC through the variables of communication anxiety and self-perceived communication competence (Rihardini et al., 2021). Strategies to promote students' WTC that applied by teacher through selecting topics, group size, error correction (Khank, 2016).

Challenge of students' WTC was personality factor such as students' anxiety to speak especially they who sat at first row. They are not confident because they though other students pay attention to them (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018).

The students' WTC was less because of seating position. They felt embarrassed if they gave the wrong answer and would be the center of attention because of their front seat position. The students were less to speak with another student who is not the same gender. They were less of confident with their way of speaking or the idea. For example, female students will talk more with female friends too.

The interaction between female students and male students in the classroom looks different. Female students interact more with fellow female students. Likewise, male students interact more with male students. In doing group or paired tasks were more comfortable talking with fellow students of the same gender. Because there was a tendency to feel comfortable in interacting.

The type of task given by the teacher can influences students' WTC in class during the learning process. The teacher had strategy so that students were enthusiastic about doing the exercise questions and actively speaking. The teacher's strategy was to give practice that can be done in groups or pairs. Since they may support one another, students with high and low academic achievement should be in the same group (Hoang & Bui, 2023). Students claimed to be confident enough to speak in front of the teacher and their friends because the answers submitted were the result of discussion. So, students didn't need to worry whether the way of conveyed was not right there were another students who will help answer.

Some students admitted that the crowded class situation interfered with their concentration to answer questions, express opinions, provide rebuttals and ask questions. CE, L2 emotions, and WTC showed substantial associations, with effect sizes varying from modest to big (Li et al., 2022).

The teacher applied some strategies to increase students' WTC motivated students to remain optimistic and never give up trying in every talk given by the teacher. Students who were more eager to communicate and who are more motivated to learn the language report speaking it more often in class (Hashimoto, 2022). Teacher's motivation gave impact of self-confidence of students to increase students' WTC (Fallah, 2013).

Teacher gave opportunity to the students so that they desire to speak as long as language learning. So, the teacher gave the opportunity to speak was a stimulation for students to continue to actively participate in classroom learning. The teacher gave opportunity speak in English away from the stress of curriculum-based activities linked to credits and grades by altering the classroom

environment, grouping students, and offering opportunities outside the classroom for communication in English through English language clubs, travels to native speaking countries, debates, drama, songs, and free writing competitions (Fahim & Dhamotharan, 2016).

In every material that students learn must be followed by working on problems. Students work on different types of problem every language learning. There were tasks that were done individually and in groups. Students' WTC also depends on the type of task given.

The teacher's strategy to equalize the abilities of the students who have low and high abilities is by giving assignment in group or pairs. Students' WTC is positively impacted by group work (Anwar K., 2016). The students who have less ability can be taught by students who have good abilities. The students can be more comfortable learning with fellow friends without any embarrassment to ask or to be taught materials that has not been understand. If there was a wait period, the kids were more or more inclined to speak up (Khanh, 2016).

Giving score can be one of the ways used by the teacher to motivate students to take the task seriously. In fact, students will only take practice seriously if they get score or rewards in the form of praise or prize. Every student thought that receiving praise may inspire them and boost their self-esteem (Hoang & Bui, 2023)

### **E. Conclusion**

Some factors influencing students' WTC related to some activities as long as learning English. Those factors came from personality of the students, classroom activity related to task type, setting of the classroom and materials of the subject. Challenges and strategies of students' WTC come from their personality, their friends, and classroom environment.

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