

Original Research

Insights into Indonesian Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in the Classroom

Maria Maranatha ¹, & Virginia Gabrella Sengkey ²

¹ Perguruan Advent XII, Sukabumi, Indonesia

² Universitas Klabat, Manado, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received 25 January 2023

Revised 21 April 2023

Accepted 14 May 2023

Keywords:

English classroom

Linguistic factors

Non-linguistic factors

Secondary students

Willingness to communicate



Abstract

English learners need to be willing to communicate in English for them to learn the language successfully. Considering that English has been taught since elementary school in Indonesia, it is interesting to identify how willing students are to communicate in English, especially in secondary school. Thus, this study aimed to know the secondary school students' willingness to communicate in English in terms of using English in the classroom and linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Furthermore, this study identified whether there was a significant difference based on gender and grade levels. This study used a quantitative method with a descriptive and comparative design. This study was conducted at a private secondary school, with 95 respondents recruited via *convenience sampling*. As a result, students' WTC to use English in the classroom was medium, indicating that students were willing enough to communicate in English. Specifically, the students' willingness to communicate in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic factors was medium. This shows that students were willing enough to use English regarding linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Moreover, there was no difference based on gender but a significant difference based on grade level, with the highest mean score of 75.55 in grade 7. Thus, since students are willing enough to communicate in English, teachers need to find strategies to help the students to be very willing to communicate in English, especially secondary school students at higher grade levels. Also, future studies on WTC must be done in different regions in Indonesia by considering WTC other factors such as parental involvement, teachers, socio-economic status, anxiety, motivation, or other environment-related factors at various levels or schools.

Corresponding Author: Sengkey, virginia.sengkey@unklab.ac.id

1. Introduction

In learning English as a foreign language, learners need the willingness to communicate (WTC) in English because it is an essential element of learning. Pakpahan and Sada (2017) stated that language knowledge is crucial to every learner. Still, the key to achieving language learning is when every learner is willing to communicate using the language. WTC is vital for the foreign language learner. Alimorad (2021) explained that "willingness to communicate (WTC) in English is specifically important because L2 (foreign/second language) communication is considered to be a key factor in L2 learning" (p.1). Besides that, having a strong WTC in English is beneficial. Prihartanti (2017) proposed that students easily communicate using English with others only when they have a strong will to use the language. Therefore, even though teaching or learning English in non-English speaking countries is not easy, as long as learners are willing to communicate using that language, it can help them learn it.

WTC in English helps learners improve their speaking skills, which is also needed in education or career. In this modern era, communication is vital to interact with others. According to Astuti, as cited in Rihardini

(2021), classroom interaction determines the success of the teaching and learning process and students' language ability. Interaction in the classroom will happen if learners are willing to communicate, as interaction and communication could refer to learners' participation in the classroom. Moreover, the more students are trained to speak or interact in class using the language, in this case, English, the better would be their communication competence (Bernales, 2016). Moreover, a language can be learned successfully and effectively only if learners try to communicate with others; in other words, the lack of language use may result in weak interaction and learning. As argued by Rihardini (2021) that "the lack of using the language caused an ineffective interaction and language production" (p.75). Therefore, every student must have WTC and be able to improve their communication skill in English, especially in the classroom.

Nowadays, students seem unwilling to communicate in English in the classroom even though they are in English class. MacIntyre (2007) argued that even experienced students might possess both high motivation to learn and increased anxiety to communicate, resulting in unwillingness to communicate. Hence, many English teachers often face students' reluctance to use English during class activities. For instance, this case was informed by an English teacher at a private secondary school in North Minahasa. This is supported by several studies conducted at the college and secondary school levels. Sembiring (2003) found that Indonesian learners are less willing to communicate in English. Similarly, Rihardini (2021) also found that senior high school students' WTC in English is low. Also, according to research conducted by Rindiana and Wulandari (2021), the willingness of students to use English as their language to communicate, especially during English class, is very low. This is because there are factors that affect their WTC. For instance, Fukuta (2018) believed that some factors contributing to students' unwillingness to communicate in English might include no cooperation or interactions, such as no one willing to communicate in English and low social abilities. This includes students only interacting with students who are also unwilling to communicate in English rather than with students who are willing to communicate in English.

Willingness to communicate consists of two factors, namely linguistic and non-linguistic factors. For instance, linguistic factors are related to grammatical competence and vocabulary mastery. When students only have a limited vocabulary, they might become unwilling to speak English because they cannot find the words to communicate their ideas or feelings. In comparison, non-linguistic factors include confidence, motivation, interlocutor, social interaction, the topic of interest, and anxiety. Nowadays, students with poor grammatical competence, lack of vocabulary or low confidence in English pronunciation have a problem with how much they are willing to communicate in English in the classroom. Ramli (2021) argued that having a limited vocabulary causes students to be reluctant to speak English, which hinders them from speaking in English. Thus, linguistic and non-linguistic factors contribute to students' willingness to communicate.

Moreover, knowing that WTC using English is needed or has a crucial role in studying English, the researchers were interested in determining whether there is a statistically significant difference in students' WTC in English based on gender and grade level. This is so teachers can try to find strategies for helping students and consider whether or not different strategies and techniques need to be implemented in the other classes. Moreover, regarding the difference based on grade level, Matuzas (2021) found no significant difference in students' WTC. However, this study was conducted on elementary students. Furthermore, Arshad (2015) conducted a similar study and found no significant difference in students' WTC based on gender. However, the study was conducted at the university level and outside Indonesia. Hence the researchers were interested in determining whether the same result would be obtained when conducted on secondary school students in Indonesia, specifically in the North Minahasa region. This is because studies on WTC considering gender and grade levels conducted in Indonesia are still inadequate. More specifically, the researchers have not found any studies conducted in the North Minahasa region regarding secondary school students' WTC based on gender and grade level.

Therefore, since students were found to have low WTC in English, the researchers were interested in confirming the results of previous studies and the observation of the English teachers by conducting this research. In addition to that, since previous researchers have found no significant difference in students' WTC in English based on gender and grade levels, the studies were conducted in primary and higher education. Thus, the researchers would like to conduct a similar study with students at a private secondary school in North Minahasa to know the level of students' WTC. It also includes the levels of students' WTC in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic factors. In addition, the researchers were also interested to know whether there was a significant difference in their WTC based on gender and grade levels.

More specifically, this study aimed to know the students' level of WTC in terms of using English in the classroom and in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC. Also, this study sought to identify the students' WTC in English based on gender and grade levels. To be exact, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' WTC in terms of:
 - a. Using English in the classroom?
 - b. Linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC in English in the classroom?
 - c. Non-linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC in English in the classroom?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in students' WTC based on gender?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in students' WTC based on grade levels?

This study is expected to give information about students' willingness to communicate using English in the classroom. Since being actively involved in the classroom learning process is crucial, this study may help teachers understand how male and female students are the same regarding their WTC in English based on gender. However, this study may help provide information to teachers on how they may vary their teaching approach and activities in the class to help students at all grade levels to improve their WTC. Thus, the results of this study are expected to give insights not only to teachers but also to students to find ways to improve their WTC. In addition, the researchers have gained information on the secondary school students' WTC level and how they differed based on class level. Lastly, this study is expected to contribute to other researchers who might want to conduct similar studies at different class levels and regions by considering other variables such as parental involvement, teachers, socioeconomic status, environment, or students' motivation.

2. Literature Review

Every learner needs to be willing to speak up or communicate with others in studying a language. For the language to be effective and more advanced, it requires the willingness to speak using it. [Susanti \(2019\)](#) defined WTC as students' free decision whether to talk during the learning process. According to [Alemi et al. \(2013\)](#), "willingness to communicate (WTC) is a potentially fundamental concept for effective interaction and language production" (p.43). Speaking English is not a compulsion but the choice of every student, which is undoubtedly for the progress of their learning the language. Opportunities are always there to communicate, but not all students want to use the opportunity well. Although students can communicate in the language they are studying, some students choose not to do so. However, other students are willing to speak the language ([Manipuspika, 2018](#)). Thus, WTC is important in learning English.

When discussing the willingness of each student to speak English in the classroom, not all are willing, and maybe only a few are eager to speak English. For example, when the teacher asks a question in English, they are unwilling to answer it in English. Furthermore, regarding students' WTC, there are linguistic and non-linguistic factors that contribute to their WTC. The theory used in this study is adopted by [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#). The linguistic factors include poor grammatical competence, lack of English vocabulary, and English pronunciation. Furthermore, non-linguistic factors include social situation, anxiety, motivation, interlocutor and topic of interest.

Previous studies have been done on students' WTC in English. For instance, [Rihardini \(2021\)](#) researched student perceptions of willingness to communicate using English in the classroom. The researchers used a quantitative approach as the research design. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire developed by [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#) was used. The participants consisted of 115 students from SMK Negeri 10 Malang. The results show that their WTC level is quite low, which is a serious problem. Moreover, another similar research was conducted by [Prihartanti \(2017\)](#) aimed to describe the willingness of Indonesian students to communicate in English. Also, the researcher wanted to identify the correlation between anxiety and willingness of students to use English to communicate. Different with [Rihardini \(2021\)](#), [Prihartanti \(2017\)](#) focused on 426 students from Bachelor's Degree in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS). The research methods used were quantitative and qualitative. The instruments used to collect the data were questionnaires (regression analysis (ANAREG)) and interviews (using descriptive analysis). The results show that higher education students have a very low level (scored 14.21 on WTC scale) to communicate using English. Moreover, [Idzni and Setiawan \(2021\)](#) investigated students' WTC in English to determine the factors that make students reluctant to communicate in English. The data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The participants were from eighth grade at

SMPN 69 Jakarta, comprising 25 students. The result from this study shows that secondary students have a low level of WTC using English. Therefore, these three studies show that both secondary and university students have low WTC using English. Additionally, Idzni and Setiawan found four factors that make students reluctant to speak or communicate in English. These factors might help explain why students have low WTC. The factors include self-confidence, motivation, anxiety, and personality. Thus, their low WTC might have been affected by those factors.

In addition, a study on students' WTC as a predictor of pushing vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive was conducted by [Heidari \(2019\)](#). The participants were 104 students from Iranian EFL. The instrument was a questionnaire developed by [McCroskey \(1992\)](#), a receptive vocabulary test. It was found that 55 students turned out to have high WTC and 49 have low WTC. Furthermore, it was revealed that learners with high WTC had more productive vocabulary knowledge than those with low WTC. Hence, this indicates that productive vocabulary knowledge could contribute to students' WTC.

Furthermore, studies on students' WTC in English based on gender were conducted by different researchers. To begin with, [Arshad \(2015\)](#) conducted a study about WTC in English based on gender to investigate the willingness of male and female students to communicate. The data was collected using questionnaires with participants 353 students in BS final year from public sector university in Pakistan. The study used a quantitative method. The result showed no significant difference in their WTC using English based on gender. The next study is from [Maftoon and Najafi \(2015\)](#) who investigated the correlation between Iranian EFL students' gender and their willingness to communicate (WTC). The participants of this study consisted of 30 Iranian advanced EFL learners (15 males and 15 females) selected randomly from an English Language Institute in Asadabad, Hamedan. The instrument in this study was WTC questionnaire developed by [MacIntyre et al. \(2001\)](#). A separate t-test revealed that Iranian female EFL students are more communicative than their male counterparts. Finally, the outcomes of a Two-Way ANOVA showed that the communication readiness of Iranian male and female EFL students inside and outside the classroom was the same. Thus, according to this study, there is no significant difference in their WTC based on gender. This shows that among university students, both male and female students did not differ in their WTC. However, these results were taken from the respondents at the higher education level. The results might be different when similar research is conducted to primary and secondary students.

Moreover, [Gholami \(2015\)](#) studied students' WTC and its relationship with emotional intelligence and gender differences at Urmia University, with 100 participants majoring in TEFL, English literature and English translation. This quantitative research investigated the potential relation between students' emotional intelligence and their willingness to communicate across gender. Participants based on gender were 50 males and 50 females. The researcher used two types of instruments to collect the data. First is [McCroskey's \(1992\)](#) WTC scale and the second is [Bar-On's \(2004\)](#) Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). As a result, there is a significant difference between males and females in their WTC, as evidenced by the total p-value of less than 0.05. Interestingly, a significant difference was found in students' WTC based on gender. Comparing this result to the ones obtained by [Arshad \(2015\)](#) and [Maftoon and Najafi \(2015\)](#), it is interesting that these studies were all conducted on higher education students in Pakistan and Iran, respectively, generated different results. Therefore, further similar studies can be conducted in different countries and to different education levels to provide insights and, at the same time, enrich the literature on students' WTC based on gender.

Regarding students' WTC based on year levels, researchers found incompatible results. To begin with, [Matuzas \(2021\)](#) studied the factors influencing communication readiness (WTC). The respondents were 39 children in grades 1-6 who partied in an after-school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. This research also was conducted at a public elementary school in Seoul, South Korea. To ascertain how at ease students felt taking part in different communicative activities in class and observing patterns by gender and year level, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was gathered through an online survey that consisted of 20 items that use a five-point Likert Scale. The results showed that every student was willing to speak English if the teacher gave good instructions and preparation before communicating in English. Moreover, it was found that there is no significant difference of their willingness to communicate using English based on year levels. Furthermore, [Rizvić and Bećirovića \(2017\)](#) conducted research entitled WTC in English as a foreign language in Bosnian-Herzegovinian EFL context. This study aimed to explore their willingness to use English. 193 students from three institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina—two universities in Sarajevo and one in Zenica—made up the sample for this study.

According to year levels, there were 40 new students, 38 second-year students, 51 junior students, and 64 seniors. The instrument was a questionnaire constructed by McCroskey and Richmond (1990). The result shows a significant difference in their willingness to speak English as a communication tool based on year levels. Hence, these results show that students at primary school have the same WTC regardless of their year level, while for higher education students, their WTC might differ based on their year level.

There are several similarities and differences between the previous studies and this study. The similarity is that current and prior researcher are interested in learning how willing students are to communicate in English and how this varies by gender and year level. The difference is that secondary school is the level the researchers have chosen for this study as opposed to previous studies that were done mostly at the primary and higher education levels. Since there were only a few studies on students' WTC conducted at secondary school students and no similar study conducted on secondary school students in North Minahasa, the researchers deemed it important to conduct this study to enrich the literature on secondary school students' WTC.

3. Method

This study used a quantitative method with a descriptive and comparative design. The descriptive design is to determine the students' levels of WTC in terms of using English in the classroom, linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors. The comparative method was for questions two and three to determine the significant difference in their WTC in English based on gender and year levels. Thus, these were the research designs used to identify the level of students' WTC in terms of using English in the classroom, the linguistic and non-linguistic factors and the difference in their WTC in English based on gender and year levels.

This study was conducted at a private secondary school in North Minahasa from three classes: year 7A, year 8A, and year 9A. The total number of respondents consisted of 95 students. These students were chosen as the respondents since the researchers were informed by their English teachers that not all of these students were willing to communicate in English in the classroom. Thus, the researchers were interested to find out these students' level of WTC using English. In this research, the researcher used the *convenience sampling* method. Taherdoost (2020) explained that convenience sampling is only choosing the participants because of they are ready and easy to find. Thus, the researchers only chose the available respondents at the data gathering time. For this reason, the samples might not fully represent the population being studied. Hence, the result of this study cannot be generalized to the population of this study. As for the instrument, it adapted the questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) which focused on foreign language classroom anxiety, so the researchers adapted only items related to students' WTC with some modifications to suit the purpose of this research. The researchers translated the questionnaire, which was checked by four English teachers of a private university in North Minahasa.

In collecting the data, the researchers first met the school understudy's principal to ask for permission for data gathering. After getting permission from the principal, the researchers informed the class subject teachers about the purpose of the study and made an appointment for the questionnaire distribution. During the data gathering, the researchers explained the purpose of the research and gave instructions to the respondents. The respondents took around 25-30 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. The researchers re-checked the collected questionnaire to ensure all questions were answered.

Validity is a vital aspect of this study. Validity is "the extent to which any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure" (Thatcher, 2010, p. 5). Validity is good for this research to prove that this research made orderly, clear, and systematic. Reliability also is another crucial aspect of this study. Reliability is "the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials" (Thatcher, 2010, p. 36). To know whether the instrument is valid, the researchers used *Pearson correlation* to measure the items in the questionnaire, and if the item is valid, the *value p* will not reach more than 0.05. After the researchers conducted the pilot study, there were two invalid items, and the researchers had removed them before conducting the actual study. Moreover, the result of the reliability score was 0.88 showing that the questionnaire is reliable to be used as, according to Heale and Twycross (2015), "an acceptable reliability score is one that is 0.7 and higher" (p. 67).

The researchers used the MEAN score to determine the level of willingness of each student to communicate using English and the levels of linguistic and non-linguistic factors that contribute to their WTC in English. Additionally, the researchers employed the *t-test* to determine whether there was a

significant difference in students' WTC in English based on gender. Lastly, *One-way ANOVA* was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' WTC in English based on year levels.

4. Results

Descriptive statistic was used to answer this question about the level of students' WTC using English in the classroom. The mean score was in the range of 3.26 (Table 1). This result was interpreted as medium.

Table 1. The mean score of WTC in using English in the classroom

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
WTC	95	1.5	5	3.26	0.65
Valid N (listwise)	95				

Moreover, descriptive statistics was used to determine the level of students' WTC in English in the classroom regarding linguistic factors. As seen in Table 2, the mean score was 3.31. The result showed that the level of students' WTC in terms of linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC in English in the classroom was not at a high or a low level but at a medium level. Despite being at a medium level, the linguistic aspect is still present in their WTC. As found in this study (Table 2), Grammar (M = 3.06) and Pronunciation (M = 3.18) had the lowest mean scores. In contrast, Vocabulary (M = 3.42) had the highest mean score. Some examples of the questionnaire items in linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC include: "*Saya tidak takut membuat kalimat yang salah*", "*Saya tidak mengalami kesulitan mengucapkan kata-kata bahasa Inggris*," and "*Mudah bagi saya untuk menemukan kata bahasa Inggris yang paling cocok*". The results show that the students are quite confident with their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in communicating in English and are knowledgeable enough of the grammar and pronunciation in English, especially regarding English vocabulary. Thus, although the students may not be highly competent in English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, these aspects still contribute to their WTC.

Table 2. The mean score of linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC in English in the classroom

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistic factors	95	1.30	5.00	3.31	0.70
Grammar	95	2.54	3.29	3.06	0.18
Vocabulary	95	2.00	3.64	3.42	0.18
Pronunciation	95	2.50	3.63	3.18	0.12
Valid N (listwise)	95				

Furthermore, Table 3 shows the mean score of students' WTC in English in the classroom regarding non-linguistic factors. The result of 3.23 showed that the level of students' WTC in English in the classroom in terms of non-linguistic factors was medium. The contribution of non-linguistic factors is moderate, possibly due to the lack of students' situations around them. This refers to the motivation from the environment or social situations which are needed for them to improve their WTC in English. As also found in this study (see Table 3), the level of Social Situation had the lowest mean score (M = 2.88). For instance, compared to other non-linguistic factors, the social situation is the least element non-linguistic factor that contributes to students' WTC. An example of questionnaire item related to this element is: "*Saya berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris dengan teman-teman di kelas*." In other words, students do not communicate in English with their friends in the class." Moreover, as seen in Table 3, the non-linguistic factor with the highest mean score is the Topic of Interest (M = 3.57), followed by Motivation (M = 3.43). Questionnaire items related to this topic are: "*Saya bersedia berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris jika topik yang dibahas menarik*" and "*Saya memiliki motivasi yang cukup untuk berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris di dalam kelas*" respectively. It indicates that students will be more willing to communicate in English when the topic of conversation is of interest and when they are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to

communicate in English. For example, when the topic of conversation is related to what they like such as what is trending at present or if the topic is related to their hobbies, they are more willing to communicate in English than when the topic is not what they know or like. Moreover, when they know students know that communicating in English will benefit their future or help them succeed, they are more willing to communicate in English. Therefore, the topic of interest and motivation plays an important role in their WTC in English.

Table 3. The mean score of non-linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC in English in the classroom

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.
Non-linguistic factors	95	1.50	4.60	3.23	0.68
Interlocutor	95	2.33	3.29	3.07	0.10
Motivation	95	3.02	3.79	3.43	0.10
Anxiety	95	1.53	3.15	2.93	0.20
Social Situation	95	2.00	3.33	2.88	0.14
Topic of Interest	95	3.14	4.05	3.57	0.12
Valid N (listwise)	95				

As for the difference in students' WTC based on gender, an independent sample T-test was used to answer this research question. The mean scores showed that females were more willing to converse in English (Table 4), which may also be because female students are more engaged in class than male students. However, as shown in Table 5, the result showed no significant difference in students' WTC based on gender because the significant value (value p) is 0.45 and $0.45 > 0.05$. If the significance value p is less than the significance level = 0.05, a significant difference is discovered within the variables, as explained in the interpretation of the data. This means that the hypothesis stating "there is no significant difference in students' WTC based on gender" failed to be rejected.

Table 4. Mean score based on gender

Variable	Gender	Group		Statistics	
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Male	44	70.32	12.858	1.938
	Female	51	72.39	13.522	1.893

Table 5. Difference in WTC based on gender

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Willingness to Communicate	Equal Variances assumed	0.805	0.372	0.76	93	0.45	2.07
	Equal Variances not assumed			0.77	92.097	0.45	2.07

Lastly, the researchers used One-way ANOVA to interpret the data for this question. According to the interpretation of the data, if the significance value p is less than the significance level = 0.05, the result is significant. The results in Table 6 show a statistically significant difference in their WTC in English based

on the grade levels. The value $p = 0.026 < 0.05$. Thus, the hypothesis stating “there is no significant difference in students’ WTC based on grade levels” is rejected.

Table 6. Differences in WTC based on grade levels

Source	DF	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Grade Level	2	1251	625.6	3.81	0.026
Error	92	15102	164.2		
Total	94	16353			

As seen in Table 7, comparing grade 7A, grade 8A, and grade 9A, grade 7A students appeared more willing to converse in English. This might be because students in year 7A who are new to the school feel more confident, challenged to try new things, and less embarrassed if they make language errors. They avoid communicating to avoid being judged, which is very different from year 8A and year 9A, which are sophomores and even seniors whose level of anxiety may be higher.

Table 7. The mean score of students WTC in English based on grade levels

Grade Level	N	Mean	StDev	95% CI
VII A	33	75.55	12.34	(71.12; 79.98)
VIII A	30	66.63	13.73	(61.99; 71.28)
IX A	32	71.69	12.40	(67.19; 76.19)

5. Discussion

It is interesting to know that the students are generally willing to communicate in English as their WTC level is moderate. This finding refutes the information obtained by the researchers from the English teacher of the school understudy, who said that the students are unwilling to communicate in English, and also the results of the previous studies (Idzni & Setiawan, 2021; Rindiana & Wulandari, 2021) that found secondary school students have low WTC. However, this study suggests that although students are still willing to use English to communicate, other factors might prevent them from doing so as effectively as students with high willingness. It could be because the respondents in this study somehow experience fear and shyness or have limited grammar knowledge and lack of pronunciation skills, resulting in a medium level of WTC in English. As Nadila et al. (2022) explain, students believe that English is essential but do not use it often since they occasionally experience fear and shyness. Additionally, Ramli et al. (2021) argued that “they became unwilling to speak English due to having very little English vocabulary so that this condition made them stuck in making their English communication on going” (p.103). Not only that, Wulandari (2015) also found that students are unwilling to communicate in English because they are afraid of pronunciation errors. Hence, students’ WTC is affected by fear, shyness, limited vocabulary and fear of pronouncing English words incorrectly. Thus, English teachers must find strategies to develop the students’ WTC.

However, compared to previous studies which were conducted in university and high school level that found students have low WTC (Idzni, 2021; Prihartanti, 2017; Rihardini, 2021), this study found that secondary school students are willing enough to communicate in English, whether in terms of using English in the classroom or in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Hence, there seems to be a marked difference of WTC levels between educational levels. Comparing the result found in this study with similar previous studies shows that secondary school students studying in different regions of Indonesia might have different levels of WTC. The different results obtained by the previous researchers could be due to the school understudy's characteristics. For instance, Idzni and Setiawan (2021) and Rindiana and Wulandari (2021) conducted their study on secondary students at secondary schools in Java, while the current study is conducted in Sulawesi. Moreover, the present research was conducted at one of the private secondary schools in North Minahasa, while Idzni and Setiawan’s study was conducted at a public secondary school.

Furthermore, since [Idzni and Setiawan \(2021\)](#) also interviewed the students in addition to administering the questionnaire, their results might provide a more detailed explanation of students' WTC. Moreover, the present study only used convenience sampling, which might affect the result obtained. For instance, the samples taken might not represent the whole population, and the students' responses through the questionnaire might not fully reflect their WTC. Yet, despite the current study's limitations, the current study shows that secondary school students in Sulawesi are more willing to communicate in English compared to secondary school students in Java. However, further investigation is still needed since the samples taken in this study cannot be generalized to all secondary students in Sulawesi. Thus, the result of this study can contribute to the literature review on Indonesian students' WTC, especially by giving insights into the WTC of secondary school students in Sulawesi since studies on WTC in Sulawesi are still lacking.

Furthermore, the level of students' WTC regarding linguistic factors is medium. The students are willing enough to communicate in English, considering their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This result differs from [Prihartanti \(2017\)](#), who found that the students have very low WTC in English in the classroom. The possible contributing aspects of linguistic factors to students' WTC students at the medium level found in this study could relate to their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, more specifically, it was found that students might not be very willing to communicate in English because they do not always practice using English but rather Indonesian or their mother tongue. As found in this study, *Grammar* and *Pronunciation* had the lowest mean scores. This might be because the students find that grammar in English is complex and the pronunciation of English words particularly challenging, making them unwilling to communicate in English. After all, English and their mother tongue have distinct methods of pronouncing things, and they also have limited communication skills in English. [Rihardini et al. \(2021\)](#) argued that students favour speaking Indonesian and their mother tongue, which is the local tongue. Additionally, *Vocabulary* has the highest mean score. This shows that vocabulary contributes more to their WTC in English in the classroom than grammar and pronunciation. Therefore, the students favouring more in speaking Bahasa Indonesia more because of the challenge they find in terms of English pronunciation and grammar could be why in this study, the level of students' WTC in terms of linguistic factors was at a medium level.

Similarly, the level of students' WTC regarding non-linguistic factors is medium. [Rihardini \(2021\)](#) explained that students' WTC is related to the classroom environment. For instance, if the classroom environment is unpleasant for the students or if the person they are speaking to (the teacher or friends) does not motivate them to use English, they will not be inclined to communicate in it and vice versa. Moreover, as can be seen in the result, among the non-linguistic factors, *Topic of Interest* has the highest mean score, indicating that students will be more willing to communicate in English if the topic is familiar to them and is of their interest. In fact, based on the interview result, [Latifah et al. \(2020\)](#) found that students will participate more in the discussion if they are familiar with the topic or if it is related to their personal experience. They further explained that when the topic discussed is related to their experience or knowledge, it prompts students to be excited to participate. Thus, the non-linguistic factors contributing to students' WTC, namely interlocutor, motivation, anxiety, social situation, and topic of interest, can be further considered to help maximize students' WTC in English.

Moreover, since previous studies conducted mostly at primary and higher education levels found no significant difference in students' WTC based on gender, a similar result was also obtained in this study. For instance, [Arshad \(2015\)](#) found no significant difference in students' WTC in English based on gender. The findings indicate that gender does not play any role in students' WTC in English in the classroom. [Maftoon and Najafi \(2015\)](#) explained that the willingness to communicate is not influenced by gender. This shows that both male and female students in Indonesia with different education levels have the same WTC. Hence, this study can add information on how secondary school students also do not differ in their WTC based on gender, as found by previous researchers who conducted similar studies at primary and higher education levels.

However, a significant difference was found in students' WTC based on grade levels. The result shows that -graders are more willing to communicate in English. [MacIntyre \(2007\)](#) research supports the idea that students who are reluctant to communicate are those who typically struggle with communication anxiety. Most frequently, anxious students will probably avoid speaking to others so that those others will not judge them. Therefore, it can be claimed that students at lower-grade levels are more receptive to communication than students at higher-grade levels. It is also supported by [Rizvić and Bećirovića \(2017\)](#), who found that lower-year level students are more willing to communicate in English than the higher year level students.

Hence, this can help explain why the students' WTC significantly differs based on their grade level. When comparing the result of this study to a similar previous study conducted at a higher education level, Rizvić and Bećirovića (2017) found that students' WTC differs based on their year levels. However, unlike Matuzas (2021), who conducted their study at primary schools in South Korea, they found that the primary school students have the same WTC. The result found by Matuzas could be because when students are still in primary school, they can express themselves freely without being afraid of making English errors. There might also be other factors that cause students' WTC at secondary or higher education levels to have different WTC based on the grade or year level. For instance, fear of making mistakes or being negatively evaluated might be why their WTC differs based on grade level. This is because as they get older, they are more aware of how they might be negatively evaluated when they make mistakes. Therefore, the present study sheds light on how secondary school students differ in their WTC based on grade levels. Based on the result, it could be seen that the higher their grade or year level, or the older they get, the less willing they are to communicate in English. However, this assumption of the researchers needs to be confirmed by conducting further studies on how age or grade level affects students' WTC.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that secondary school students are willing enough to communicate in English. Hence, not all Indonesian students are unwilling to communicate in English, as found by many researchers. Moreover, secondary school students' WTC in English in the classroom can be influenced by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. This must be noted by English teachers at secondary schools. More specifically, teachers need to help the students with English grammar and pronunciation since limited knowledge may prevent them from communicating in English. Furthermore, in terms of non-linguistic factors, teachers need to carefully considerate the social situation, the anxiety of the students, and the interlocutor to make sure that the social situation supports the students to communicate in English and that they do not need to be anxious in speaking English because their environment supports them for improvement. Moreover, students need English-speaking partners or friends to help them develop their speaking skills. Thus, these linguistic and non-linguistic factors that contribute to students' WTC can be further examined to confirm how these factors contribute to secondary school students' WTC, especially to secondary school students in different regions in Indonesia.

Moreover, since both male and female secondary school students have the same WTC in English in the classroom, adding information about how Indonesian students have the same WTC regardless of gender. The result obtained in this study confirmed the results found by previous researchers who conducted similar studies at primary and higher education levels. Hence, this result helps enrich the literature review on secondary school students' WTC based on gender since previous studies on students' WTC based on gender were mainly conducted on primary and higher education students. Furthermore, regarding grade levels, students' WTC differs for each class. Perhaps, this may imply that lower-year-level students are more motivated to participate actively or converse in English than higher year levels students. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of this and thus try to find strategies to encourage students at higher grade or year levels to be more willing to communicate in English. Additionally, future researchers can try to identify the possible barriers that secondary school students experience, preventing them from being very willing to communicate in English. Lastly, educators must, above all, be role models for students, especially higher-year or grade-level students in terms of communicative abilities since it can motivate them to learn and use English. Also, for students to be acclimated to using English, teachers must remind them to do so both within and outside the classroom. Finally, since this study only covered students' WTC in English, future studies must be done on other aspects of students' WTC and how they relate to or affect other variables related to English learning. Also, similar studies may be conducted at different education levels and schools in different regions of Indonesia and even in other countries to see how EFL learners in different countries may or may not differ in their WTC.

References

- Alimorad, Z., & Farahmand, M. (2021). A case study on willingness to communicate in English in the Iranian tertiary educational context. *TEFLIN Journal*, 32(1), 1-28.
- Alemi, M., Tajeddin, Z., & Mesbah, Z. (2013). Willingness to communicate in L2 English: Impact of learner variables. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 42-61.

- Arshad, Z. (2015). Willingness to communicate in english: A gender-based study. *International Journal of English and Education*, 4(4), 311-319.
- Bar-On, R. (2004). The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): Rationale, description and summary of psychometric properties.
- Bernales, C. (2016). Towards a comprehensive concept of willingness to communicate: Learners' predicted and self-reported participation in the foreign language classroom. *System*, 56, 1-12. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0346251X15001712>
- Bukhari, S. F., Cheng, X., & Khan, S. A. (2015). Willingness to communicate in English as a second language: A case study of Pakistani undergraduates. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(29), 39-44.
- Fukuta, J. (2018). Psychological attributes of unwillingness to communicate and task-based instruction. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 21(3), 1-11.
- Gholami, L. (2015). Willingness to communicate and its relationship with emotional intelligence and gender differences. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 52, 87-94.
- Heale, R., & Twicross, A. (2015). Validity and reliability in quantitative studies. *Evidence-Project Nursing*, 18(3), 66-67.
- Heidari, K. (2019). Willingness to communicate: A predictor of pushing vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 48(4), 903-920.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/327317>
- Idzni, Z. D., & Setiawan, W. (2021). An investigation of students' willingness to communicate in speaking class in online learning. *Project (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 4(6), 909-921.
- Latifah, Z., Sudana, D., & Yusuf, F. N. (2020). Investigating the factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in English. *ISLLAC: Journal of Intensive Studies on Language, Literature, Art, and Culture*, 4(1), 91-100.
- Maftoon, P., & Najafi Sarem, S. (2015). Gender and willingness to communicate. *Iranian Journal of Language Issues*, 1(1), 1-18.
- Manipuspika, Y. S. (2018). Correlation between anxiety and willingness to communicate in the Indonesian EFL context. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(2).
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2007). Willingness to communicate in the second language: Understanding the decision to speak as a volitional process. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(4), 564-576.
- Matuzas, M. A. (2021). Factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in korean elementary school efl classrooms. *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, 23(2).
- McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40(1), 16-25.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1990). Willingness to communicate: Differing cultural perspectives. *Southern Journal of Communication*, 56(1), 72-77.
- Nadila, S., Rozal, E., & Andriani, R. (2022). Students' willingness to communicate in English language: A case study [Doctoral dissertation], UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi.
- Pakpahan, M., & Sada, C. (2017). Factors affecting EFL students' unwillingness to communicate in English in campus. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa*, 6(6).
- Prihartanti, N. (2017). Willingness to communicate in English: A case study of Indonesian university students. *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra*, 25(1), 71-81.
- Ramli, K., Hidayah, J., Edy, S., & Esmianti, F. (2021). Factors of students' willingness and unwillingness to speak English in the classroom. *Journal of English Education and Teaching*, 5(1), 95-109.
-

- Rihardini, A. A., Yaniafari, R. P., & Mukminatien, N. (2021). Students' willingness to communicate using English: a survey study. *Paramasastra: Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa Sastra dan Pembelajarannya*, 8(1), 75-94.
- Rindiana, D., & Wulandari, M. (2021). *Exploring students' willingness to communicate in classroom conversation at 7th bilingual class of SMP Islamic Al Azhar 21 Sukoharjo in the academic year 2019/2020* (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Surakarta).
- Rizvić, E., & Bećirovića, S. (2017). Willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language in Bosnian-Herzegovinian EFL context. *European Researcher. Series A*, 8(3), 224-235.
- Sembiring, B. C. (2003). *Competency-based speaking class: A convergent-typed syllabus design*. Paper presented at the 51st TEFLIN International Conference, Bandung, Indonesia in October 2003.
- Susanti, E. (2019). Willingness to communicate in foreign language acquisition. *Edukasi Lingua Sastra*, 17(2), 56-63.
- Taherdoost, H. (2020). Evaluation of customer satisfaction in the digital environment: Development of a survey instrument. In *Digital Transformation and Innovative Services for Business and Learning*, 195-222. IGI Global.
- Thatcher, R. W. (2010). Validity and reliability of quantitative electroencephalography. *Journal of Neurotherapy*, 14(2), 122-152.
- Wulandari, S. (2015). Factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in transactional speaking courses. [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana].