Exploring Students' Willingness to Communicate in a Tertiary Program

Bir Yükseköğretim Programında Öğrencilerin İletişim Kurma İstekliliğinin İncelenmesi

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the extent to which students are willing to communicate in English within an ESP context, focusing on different context and receiver types, and identifying the types of class activities that encourage more communication. Another goal is to determine if students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English varies based on gender, grade level, major, experiences abroad, and the type of high school they attended. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-method triangulation approach is used, incorporating WTC questionnaires, observations, and interviews for data collection. The participants are first- and second-year students majoring in Civil Aviation Cabin Services, Aircraft Technology, and Ground Handling Services Management. The findings reveal that students generally have a moderate willingness to communicate in English. Grade level, department, and type of high school significantly impact students' WTC in English. Interviews suggest that students hold positive attitudes toward speaking English in class. Observations and interviews indicate that students' WTC in the classroom is dynamic. Additionally, the results highlight the importance of interlocutors for students' WTC in English, with students showing a higher willingness to communicate in English as the number of interlocutors decreases. Most students prefer one-on-one communication with the teacher. Observations also show that the most common WTC act is "volunteering an answer when the teacher asks a question in class," followed by "volunteering a comment" during the lesson. Practical suggestions for EFL classrooms are provided based on students' feedback from interviews and questionnaire results.

Keywords: Willingness to communicate, Speaking English, English for specific purposes, EFL classroom

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, farklı bağlam ve alıcı türlerine odaklanarak ve daha fazla iletişimi teşvik eden sınıf etkinliği türlerini belirleyerek, öğrencilerin özel amaçlı İngilizce bağlamında İngilizce iletişim kurmaya ne ölçüde istekli olduklarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bir diğer amaç, öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliğinin cinsiyet, sınıf düzeyi, bölüm, yurt dışı deneyimleri ve devam ettikleri lise türüne göre değişip değişmediğini belirlemektir. Bu hedeflere ulaşmak için, veri toplama amacıyla iletişim kurma istekliliği anketleri, gözlemler ve mülakatları içeren karma yöntem kullanılmıştır. Katılımcılar Sivil Havacılık Kabin Hizmetleri, Uçak Teknolojisi ve Yer Hizmetleri Yönetimi bölümlerinde okuyan birinci ve ikinci sınıf öğrencileridir. Bulgular, öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurma konusunda genellikle orta düzeyde istekli olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Sınıf düzeyi, bölüm ve lise türü, öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurma isteğini önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. Görüşmeler, öğrencilerin sınıfta İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik olumlu tutumlara sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Gözlemler ve görüşmeler, öğrencilerin sınıftaki İngilizce iletişim kurma isteklerinin dinamik olduğunu göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak, sonuçlar, öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliği için muhatapların önemini vurgulamakta ve muhatap sayısı azaldıkça öğrencilerin İngilizce iletişim kurmaya daha istekli olduklarını göstermektedir. Öğrencilerin çoğu öğretmenle bire bir iletişimi tercih etmektedir. Gözlemler ayrıca, en yaygın iletişim kurma istekliliği eyleminin "öğretmen sınıfta bir soru sorduğunda gönüllü olarak cevap vermek" olduğunu ve bunu ders sırasında "gönüllü olarak yorum yapmak "ın izlediğini göstermektedir. Görüşmelerden ve anket sonuçlarından elde edilen öğrenci geri bildirimlerine dayanarak yabancı dil sınıfları için pratik öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliği, İngilizce konuşma, özel amaçlı İngilizce

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the number of individuals who speak English as a second or foreign language exceeds that of native English speakers. About 75% of English users are non-native speakers (Crystal, 2003, pp. 68-71), leading to interactions predominantly among non-native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005; Yuwita & Ambarwati, 2023). English has served as a communication tool among speakers of various native languages for centuries, establishing itself as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2012; Jenkins & Dewey, 2011). It continues to be recognized as a primary medium of international communication (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Seidlhofer, 2010, p. 147), playing a vital role in connecting people with diverse native languages.

One of the primary aims of learning a second or foreign language is to use the target language effectively, and the effectiveness of second language acquisition is evaluated by this usage (Hashimoto, 2002; Hu & Wang, 2023; MacIntyre, 2020; Weda, Atmowardoyo, Rahman, Said, & Sakti, 2021). Communication serves not only as a facilitator of language learning but also as an essential goal (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Typically, the main motivation behind language learning is to use it for communication (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Developing

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speaking skills is the most crucial aspect of learning a second language (L2), with success assessed based on conversational ability in the language (Nunan, 1991, p. 39).

Due to the absence of an English-speaking environment, students have limited exposure to English outside their foreign language classrooms. As a result, classroom interaction becomes a crucial source for enhancing communicative abilities in EFL classes (Ghiasvand, 2022). Both encouraging students to speak English and teaching communication competence are thus essential in English lessons. Active participation in communication helps learners develop their L2 speaking skills (Nunan, 1991, p. 51), and increased interaction leads to greater language development and learning (Kang, 2005). However, many students in Turkey are hesitant to engage in oral communication during English lessons. They often avoid responding or give brief answers when asked questions in English. Research shows that while some students with high linguistic competence are reluctant to speak English, others with limited linguistic knowledge are eager to communicate frequently (MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). Additionally, even those with high communicative competence may be unwilling to communicate (Dörnyei, 2008). To improve learners' participation in speaking, it is important to understand the reasons behind their reluctance to communicate in English.

As communication increasingly plays a crucial role in L2 teaching and learning, it is essential to explain individual differences in L2 communication, making it essential to investigate the WTC construct as a factor affecting communication outcomes (Taia & Chen, 2020; Weda et al., 2021; Yashima, 2002; Zarrinabadi, Lou, & Shirzad, 2021). Research on L2 WTC is highly significant for understanding learners' communication psychology and fostering classroom communication engagement (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). A key objective of L2 instruction should be to make learners willing to use the language for authentic communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre, 2020), with WTC in an L2 is regarded as the direct antecedent to students' actual participation in L2 communication (Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2012). Moreover, the primary goal for any language learner should be L2 usage, and WTC is the most predictive variable of L2 use (Clement et al., 2003; Zhou, Xi, & Lochtman, 2023).

Given the research underscoring the significance of WTC in L2 teaching and learning, this study provides substantial advantages for researchers, language teachers, learners, and administrators. Language instructors can adapt their teaching methods, techniques, and classroom behavior based on the study's findings. They will better understand the situations where students are unwilling to participate and can work to promote more communication and participation. Administrators can review and adjust foreign language curricula accordingly. Learners can enhance their speaking and communication skills, making them more comfortable with classroom communication and aiding their English learning.

This research aims to contribute to the literature on L2 WTC by analyzing various variables in a different context. There is a lack of research on WTC in the ESP context at tertiary programs and in EFL environments. Conducting this research in this context is also suitable as many students in these programs are generally considered unwilling to speak in English, yet communicating in English is essential for their future jobs. Moreover, there is limited research on the correlation between students' WTC and demographic factors such as gender, grade, major, experiences abroad, and types of high schools attended. Previous WTC studies have predominantly used quantitative methods, especially questionnaires, with few qualitative or mixed-method studies. Increased use of qualitative methodologies is necessary to explore a broader range of situational and individual factors impacting WTC (MacIntyre, 2020). Qualitative methods offer advantages over quantitative ones in providing detailed explanations of WTC building processes (MacIntyre, 2020).

This study aims to assist educators by determining whether students are willing or unwilling to communicate in English and identifying the nonlinguistic reasons behind their willingness or unwillingness to speak inside and outside the classroom. It also seeks to explore the dual nature of the WTC concept, examining it from both trait and situational perspectives. While higher WTC typically correlates with increased L2 use, there has been little testing to confirm whether higher WTC actually results in greater L2 use in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) is a key construct in modern foreign language education, valued for its ability to explain individual communication in both first (L1) and second languages (L2). McCroskey and Baer (1985) developed this term to explain the variations in how frequently and extensively people engage in conversations in their first language. They rephrased Burgoon's concept of "unwillingness to communicate" into its positive counterpart, WTC (McCroskey, 1997). WTC was identified as a personality attribute, defined as a propensity to initiate communication when given a choice (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; McCroskey, 1997). This means it is up to the individual whether to engage in communication, depending on contexts or types of interlocutors.

In the late 1990s, researchers recognized the need to investigate WTC in L2 contexts. Consequently, the construct was adapted for L2, evolving from a purely trait-like predisposition to one encompassing both trait-like and situational elements. In L2, WTC was defined as a readiness to enter a communication situation when the opportunity arises (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The language of discourse significantly alters the communication setting, as L2 communication is markedly different from L1 communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998). For instance, L2 communicative competence among adults can range from 0% to 100%, while L1 communicative competence never drops to 0%. Additionally, social, cultural, and political factors are more pronounced in L2 contexts. Thus, WTC in L1 does not necessarily predict WTC in L2.

The application of the WTC model to L2 began with MacIntyre and Charos' (1996) study. They integrated MacIntyre's (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Conrod, 2001) model of L1 WTC with Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of second language learning, creating a path model of WTC. This study aimed to test this hybrid model by analyzing the relationships between language learning and communication models to determine actual L2 use. It also considered global personality traits and the sociolinguistic context. The study found that WTC in L2 was closely linked to motivation, opportunity for contact, and perceived communicative competence, significantly contributing to the WTC literature.

MacIntyre and his colleagues (MacIntyre et al., 1998) expanded on MacIntyre & Charos' (1996) L2 WTC model by introducing a heuristic model of L2 WTC, comprising twelve variables arranged in a six-layered pyramid. This pyramid model was designed to indicate the linguistic, communicative, and social-psychological elements that might affect an individual's L2 WTC and to illustrate the interrelations among these factors. This was the first detailed attempt to analyze L2 WTC comprehensively. Unlike previous models that treated WTC as a stable trait, this model conceptualized it as more situation-based and extended it to include other forms of communication, such as writing, in addition to speaking. In this model, WTC is positioned in the second layer of the pyramid and is defined as the likelihood that learners will use the target language in authentic communicative interactions when given the chance (MacIntyre et al., 2001). It emphasizes the behavioral intention to engage in communication. Since intention or willingness to act is the strongest predictor of actual behavior, WTC is seen as the final step before starting an L2 conversation. (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

Since the introduction of MacIntyre's (1998) comprehensive L2 WTC model, the construct has garnered significant attention in L2 learning research globally. Various aspects of WTC have been studied, including longitudinal studies of communication apprehension, WTC, and self-perceived communication competence (Croucher, et al., 2024); meta-analyses of the relationship between L2 WTC and factors like perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and motivation (Shirvan, Khajavy, & MacIntyre, 2019); the relationship between WTC, growth mindset, ideal L2 self, and boredom (Zhang, Saeedian, & Fathi, 2022); and the impact of L2 teachers' immediacy behaviors on students' WTC (Hu & Wang, 2023). Other studies have investigated the potential moderating influence of foreign language anxiety on the relationship between L2 competence and WTC (Zhou et al., 2023); the impact of grit and classroom enjoyment on L2 WTC (Lee, 2022); and the effect of language mindsets and L2 WTC on L2 pragmatic acquisition (Wang & Ren, 2023). The influence of digital-storytelling-based online flipped learning on WTC (Luan, et al., 2024) and the correlation between social climate, language mindset, academic emotions, and L2 WTC (Wang, Peng, & Patterson, 2021) have also been investigated. Additionally, studies have examined how students' personalities and past experiences influence their L2 WTC (Freiermuth & Ito, 2020), and WTC from dynamic situational, trait-like and situational, and ecological perspectives (Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2011; Cao, 2014; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Peng, 2012).

METHOD

Methodological framework

The current research seeks to determine the extent to which students are willing to communicate in English within an ESP context, utilizing Cao and Philp's (2006) WTC model as the theoretical framework. Another objective is to identify the types of interlocutors with whom students in the ESP context are more inclined to communicate in English. Furthermore, this study aims to uncover the contexts and classroom activities where students exhibit higher levels of willingness to communicate in English. Besides assessing the students' WTC levels, the research also aims to investigate whether these levels are influenced by factors such as gender, classroom grades, majors, experiences abroad, having foreign friends, attending an English language course, and the types of high schools they attended.

Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How willing are students in tertiary ESP programs to communicate in English?

a. How willing are students in tertiary ESP programs to communicate in English with different types of receivers?

b. How willing are students in tertiary ESP programs to communicate in English in different contexts?

c. In which classroom activities are students more willing to speak in English?

2. Do students' gender, grade, department, type of high school they graduated from, experience abroad, having foreign friends, and attendance in courses outside of school affect their WTC?

A key benefit of using a mixed-method design is the ability to encompass the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Dörnyei, 2007; Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2020). This approach allows for the generalization of findings to a broader population while also developing a detailed understanding of the phenomenon for individuals (Brecht, 2022; Creswell, 2003; Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021).

Triangulation stands as a widely employed technique within mixed-methods research design. This approach entails employing multiple, distinct methods of data collection to explore the same research inquiry, thereby fortifying the study and its conclusions (Campbell, Goodman-Williams, Feeney, & Fehler-Cabral, 2020; Gray, Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 2007; Killett et al., 2023; Mackey & Gass, 2005). The primary objective of triangulation is to bolster the validity and credibility of research findings by gathering data from diverse viewpoints, thus mitigating the limitations of individual measures and maximizing their validity (Campbell et al., 2020; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Marvasti, 2004). Frequently, it serves to corroborate quantitative statistical findings with qualitative data results (Hesse-Biber, 2020; Nielsen, Eden, & Verbeke, 2020). Furthermore, triangulation lends depth and intricacy to the data and analysis process (Marvasti, 2004). Consequently, triangulation was employed in this research. Subsequent to conducting questionnaires, observations, and semi-structured interviews were carried out to validate the questionnaire outcomes and provide additional insights into the emerging descriptions.

Data Collection Tools

Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was assessed using the WTC scale developed by Cao and Philp (2006). This scale was selected due to its high reliability and strong validity as evidenced in the literature. Additionally, seven items were added to the questionnaire to collect background information about the participants, including their grades, departments, genders, the type of high school they graduated from, whether they have traveled abroad, whether they have foreign friends, and whether they have attended a language course outside of school.

Observations were carried out using a systematic observation material, a checklist of different selected factors related to WTC behavior, consisting of seven categories. This instrument was adapted from Cao's (2009) study. The interview questions were formulated by incorporating elements from the WTC questionnaires and adjusting findings from prior studies on WTC.

In conclusion, while the quantitative part of the study aimed to determine the students' overall level of WTC, the qualitative part aimed to understand the students' perceptions or views regarding WTC and the reasons for their willingness or unwillingness to communicate in English.

Data collection procedure

This research was carried out at a foundation university in Turkey. Initially, the questionnaires were translated into Turkish to ensure they fully understood the items and to avoid any potential misunderstandings. The back-translation method was employed for this purpose. Initially, each item of the questionnaire was translated into Turkish by a qualified expert. Subsequently, an English instructor translated the Turkish version back into English. Another instructor then compared the original questionnaire with the back-translated version. Following this, two English instructors and one Turkish instructor, all experts in their respective fields, were consulted to provide feedback on the translations, and necessary adjustments were made accordingly. The Turkish version of the questionnaires underwent piloting to ensure accuracy and clarity.

After obtaining permission from the school principal, the pilot study was carried out. Instructors were briefed on the aim of the study and procedure. In 4 classrooms, 80 students completed the questionnaires. After analyzing the results, the WTC questionnaire remained unchanged. Three weeks later, the questionnaires were administered again to test reliability, yielding a reliability coefficient of r=.98. The satisfactory results led to the use of the WTC questionnaire for the main study.

During the main study, the researcher explained the study's topic and purpose to the instructors. The WTC questionnaires were distributed to 353 students in classrooms not involved in the pilot study. Students were notified that participation was optional, and they had the freedom to withdraw at any point. Completing the questionnaire took about 10 minutes.

Observations were carried out to monitor the real-time behavior of students' WTC within the classroom setting. Two classes from the Department of Civil Aviation Cabin Services were observed over a period of two weeks. Initially, permissions were obtained from both the instructor and the students. Subsequently, the researchers positioned themselves at the back of the classroom, refraining from engaging in any interactions. The lessons were recorded via video. To gain a preliminary understanding and assess the suitability of the observations for the study's objectives, the researcher employed an observation scheme for one week, taking notes but not recording video. Later, participants were observed during regular classroom activities using the observation scheme, with video recordings made. The observed lessons were speaking sessions within professional English classes, each lasting 45 minutes, with observations conducted for two hours per week. Consequently, each classroom was observed for four hours, totaling eight hours across both classrooms. Six students were randomly selected from each of the two classrooms for observation.

Following the identification of students willing and unwilling to engage in English communication based on observations, the researcher arranged interviews with these students. Three students from each of the two classrooms were chosen, while an additional six students were selected from other departments. Consent was obtained from all students, and interview sessions were scheduled. Prior to each interview, the purpose and procedures were explained briefly to the students. They were asked to select a nickname to safeguard their anonymity in the study. One-on-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a total of 12 students. The interviews were administered in Turkish and lasted approximately 20-25 minutes each. Audio recordings were made and subsequently transcribed in full for analysis. In addition to questions about WTC, the researcher also asked questions derived from observation notes regarding classroom interactions.

Participants

Quantitative data were gathered from 353 students studying in the first and second grades of vocational higher education including 208 male students (%59), and 145 female students (%41). The participants of the study were students studying in the departments of aircraft technologies, civil aviation cabin services, and ground handling services management. These students undergo a two-year educational program, which includes both general English and vocational English courses.

For the quantitative part of the study, the random sampling method was employed (Dörnyei, 2007). Lecturers distributed the WTC questionnaires in different classes to students who volunteered to participate.

Interviews were performed with twelve students who had already filled in the questionnaire. Among them, three students (%25) were studying in the Department of Aircraft Technology, three (%25) were from the Department of Ground Handling Services Management and six students (%50) were studying in the Civil Aviation Cabin Services. The interview group included 5 female students (42%) and 7 male students (58%), all of whom were in their second year.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the interviewees. Since only the students in the Department of Civil Aviation Cabin Services had speaking lessons, observations were made in this department. Consequently, students from this department were chosen for the interviews according to these observations.

Data analysis

The quantitative data collected via questionnaires were examined using SPSS 21.0, with significance measured at $\alpha = .05$. For data with normal distribution, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Qamar & Alassaf, 2020; Pallant, 2020) and independent t-tests (Abu-Bader, 2021; Kulas, Palacios Roji, & Smith, 2021; Roussos, 2007) were used. Nonparametric tests were utilized for data with non-normal distribution (Qamar & Alassaf, 2020). Specifically, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA were performed for paired comparisons.

To find out the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in a real classroom setting, observations were carried out. The actual behaviors and interactions of students in the classroom were monitored in terms of WTC. Over a two-week period, each student's participation was recorded according to a specific observation scheme. The frequency of each student's participation was measured weekly. The WTC scores for each student were then transformed into percentages, and six randomly chosen students were compared according to their willingness to communicate in the classroom. Since the lessons were video-recorded, the recordings were reviewed multiple times, and the observational data for each participant were verified. Additionally, an expert reviewed the lessons to assess the students' WTC, thereby enhancing the reliability of the observations.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews were examined by means of the content analysis. Content analysis involves identifying and coding key topics within the data (McKay, 2006). For this study, the interviews were

transcribed and translated into English to prepare them for analysis. Initially, the data were read multiple times to identify key ideas and themes. The responses of individual participants to the interview questions were compared, as well as the responses of all participants to specific questions. Responses relevant to the research questions were chosen, and direct quotes from the interviews were used to validate the participants' assertions. Nicknames chosen by the students were used for direct quotations. The results were then organized based on the themes that emerged from the interviews and described in an interpretive narrative style.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

Results of the Questionnaire

The quantitative results demonstrate that participants generally exhibit a moderate level of WTC, implying that they neither have a high nor a low WTC overall.

The WTC questionnaire was also split into two categories, receiver types, and context types employing McCroskey's (1997) scoring of the WTC questionnaire. Table 1 shows the perceptions of the students' WTC in English in terms of receiver types of WTC:

Table 1: *WTC Subscores according to Receiver Types*

Willingness to Communicate with Acquaintances

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Item 1	353	0.0	100	36.97	29.70
Item 4	353	0.0	100	41.37	27.62
Item 13	353	0.0	100	46.40	28.80
Item 18	353	0.0	100	48.43	28.85
Item 25	353	0.0	100	43.89	29.94
Willingness to Communicate with Strangers					
Item 2	353	0.0	100	35.19	27.64
Item 3	353	0.0	100	33.21	27.60
Item 10	353	0.0	100	40.79	28.11
Item 14	353	0.0	100	37.63	27.99
Item 21	353	0.0	100	35.44	27.94
Willingness to Communicate with Teachers					
Item 6	353	0.0	100	63.03	27.78
Item 8	353	0.0	100	46.02	31.06
Willingness to Communicate with Friends					
Item 7	353	0.0	100	47.31	29.34
Item 11	353	0.0	100	44.92	29.77
Item 17	353	0.0	100	42.05	28.85
Item 24	353	0.0	100	51.18	29.69

Source: Created by the researcher

The results indicate that students are most willing to communicate with their teachers (%54.52) and friends (%46. 47), while they are least willing to communicate with strangers (%36. 45). Among the items of willingness to communicate with acquaintances, item 18: "Talk in a small group of (about 5) acquaintances" had the highest mean score. Among the items of willingness to communicate with strangers, item 10: "Talk in a small group of strangers" had the highest mean score, while item 3: "Speak in public to a group of strangers" had the lowest mean score. Among the items of willingness to communicate with friends, item 24: "Talk in a small group of friends", had the highest mean score, while item 17: "Speak in public to a group of friends" had the lowest mean score.

Table 2: *WTC Subscores according to Receiver Types*

Group Discussion	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD			
Item 10	353	0.0	100	40.79	28.11			
Item 18	353	0.0	100	48.43	28.85			
Item 19	353	0.0	100	49.84	30.89			
Item 24	353	0.0	100	51.18	29.69			
Speak in Public								
Item 3	353	0.0	100	33.21	27.60			
Item 17	353	0.0	100	42.05	28.85			
Item 25	353	0.0	100	43.89	29.94			
Interpersonal								
Item 4	353	0.0	100	41.37	27.62			
Item 11	353	0.0	100	44.92	29.77			
Item 17	353	0.0	100	42.05	28.85			
In the classroom								
Item 6	353	0.0	100	63.03	27.78			
Item 9	353	0.0	100	55.39	30.05			
Item 15	353	0.0	100	51.63	31.47			

Source: Created by the researcher

According to the results demonstrated in the table, students have the highest WTC score in the classroom (%56.68) regarding the context types; however, they have the lowest WTC in public (%39.71). The items of each context type were also examined. Among the items of willingness to communicate in group discussion, item 24: "Talk in a small group (about five people) of friends in English" had the highest score, whereas item 10: "Talk in a small group of strangers in English" had the lowest score. Among the items of speaking in public, item 25: "Speak in public to a group (about 30 people) of acquaintances in English" had the highest WTC score; while item 3: "Speak in public to a group of strangers in English" had the lowest score. Item 11: "Talk with a friend while standing in line in English" had the highest WTC score among the items of willingness in interpersonal communication; while item 4: "Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line in English" had the lowest score. Regarding the WTC in the classroom, item 6 "Volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class", had the highest score, whereas item 15 "Present own opinions in class" had the lowest mean score. Moreover, among the all items of the WTC questionnaire, item 6 "Volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class" had the highest WTC mean score overall.

In summary, the analysis of the WTC questionnaire revealed that students are more willing to communicate with their teachers or friends and prefer speaking English in small groups. As the number of interlocutors decreases, students' willingness to speak in English increases; conversely, they are less willing to communicate in public or large groups. Additionally, students are more willing to communicate when they have a strong connection with the interlocutor, feeling more comfortable in such situations. Interestingly, students show a high willingness to communicate in English in the classroom, likely because of the ample opportunities to practice speaking in English in this setting. They are accustomed to answering teachers' questions, a common classroom activity, which might explain their higher comfort level with this particular interaction.

Results of the Observation

Students' L2 WTC was assessed through classroom observations to determine the percentage of WTC acts performed. According to the observation scheme, in classroom 1 (40%) and classroom 2 (46%), the most frequent WTC act was "volunteer an answer." The second most common acts were "volunteer a comment" (21% - 17%) and "volunteer to participate in class activities" (14%) in both classrooms. The least common WTC acts in both classrooms were "ask the teacher a question" (3% - 7%), "ask the teacher for clarification" (4% - 2%), "talk to a neighbor" (4% - 2%), and "present own opinions in class" (4%). The act of answering to teacher-private response was never observed. Notably, only the two most willing students presented their own opinions in class and asked the teacher questions. Other students used L1 to ask the teacher questions or talk to neighbors in both classes. Additionally, it appeared that the most willing students possessed a larger vocabulary as they frequently guessed the meanings of unknown words.

The observation results align closely with the WTC questionnaire findings, which showed that students were most willing to "volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class," while they were less willing to "present their own opinions in class." This indicates that students prefer answering their teacher's questions as a primary mode of classroom communication but avoid presenting their own opinions, likely due to shyness about speaking in front of classmates. A notable discrepancy between the questionnaire and observation is that, while 51.63% of the students expressed willingness to ask a question in English in class according to the WTC questionnaire, no students were observed asking questions in English during the class observations. This suggests that while students may want to

communicate and ask questions in English, they may lack confidence in their language skills and fear making mistakes.

Results of the Interviews

In the interviews, the analysis of the students' responses revealed that six students (50%) were willing to communicate, three students were somewhat willing, and three were unwilling to communicate. During the interview, six questions were asked regarding the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. The first question, serving as an introduction, addressed the significance of speaking English for the students. The purpose was to determine if the students felt the need to speak English and what their primary motivation for doing so was. All twelve students agreed that speaking English is significant for their departments and future careers. Two students believed that speaking English was crucial solely for achieving their dream profession. Additionally, eight students wanted to learn to speak English since it is a lingua franca and essential for communication.

The second question explored the environments in which students felt comfortable speaking English. This key question aimed to identify the conditions under which students could comfortably speak English, as initiating conversations easily or feeling comfortable communicating in English indicates a willingness to communicate. Five students reported feeling comfortable speaking English in the classroom, and three felt comfortable with foreign people or friends. Two students stated that they could speak English comfortably in any environment, whereas two felt unable to speak English in any setting.

Most students believed there were no environments other than the classroom or a course where they could speak English, as Turkish is spoken everywhere else. For instance, Cansu mentioned that she feels comfortable speaking English in the classroom because there are no chances to speak English outside of it.

The students' responses align with the WTC questionnaire results. Among the context types, students were most willing to communicate in the classroom (56.68%). In the interviews, 5 out of 12 students (42%) also reported feeling comfortable communicating in the classroom, as they believed they had more opportunities to speak English there.

The students were also asked whom they felt comfortable communicating with in English. Seven students said they felt comfortable speaking English with their teachers, believing their teachers did not laugh at or make fun of them when they made mistakes and instead corrected them. Six students felt comfortable speaking English with close friends, and four felt comfortable with acquaintances. For example, Cansu said her close friend understands whatever she says, and it is not a problem if she cannot speak English perfectly. According to Beyazıt:

> *"I speak English comfortably with my close friends because I feel better in informal situations. When I meet a new person, the conversation becomes formal; for example, we cannot speak with the imperative."*

Likewise, according to Ali:

> *"I feel more comfortable speaking with the people I have known before because they know me and I know them. However, I am not relaxed, and I feel nervous about speaking English if I do not know the people in the environment."*

Two students mentioned feeling comfortable speaking English with strangers. One of them stated that he does not feel comfortable speaking English with acquaintances or friends and even feels anxious about doing so due to the potential for being misunderstood or mocked.

Conversely, six students (50%) said they never felt comfortable speaking English with foreigners or tourists. For instance, Jale expressed that although she could understand what foreigners were saying, she struggled to form sentences.

The students' responses aligned with the results of the WTC questionnaire. Over half of the students (58%) expressed in the interview that they felt most comfortable speaking English with their teachers, and half mentioned feeling comfortable speaking English with close friends. Four students (33%) felt at ease speaking English with acquaintances, while only two students (17%) felt comfortable speaking English with strangers. In the WTC questionnaire, students were most willing to communicate with their teachers (54.52%), followed by friends (46.47%). They were somewhat willing to communicate with acquaintances (43.41%) and least willing to communicate with strangers (36.45%). This consistency suggests the reliability of the questionnaire, as the students' interview responses correspond with their WTC scores.

Another interview question focused on the kinds of classroom activities where students felt comfortable speaking English. Half of the learners stated that they felt more at ease speaking English when the teacher asked a question of

the entire class. For instance, Beyazıt conveyed in his comment that he would like to speak English more in class, and by engaging in whole-class activities, the opportunities to speak English increased:

"I feel more relaxed about speaking English when the teacher asks a question to the whole class. Because, on an individual basis, I think that I can express my thoughts more comfortably. When there are more people included, the chances to express my opinions decrease."

In his statement, Onur mentioned that he finds it more beneficial to learn English when he speaks English one-on-one with his teacher during whole-class activities. Otherwise, he and his classmates tend to switch to speaking Turkish during pair-work or group-work activities:

"When the teacher poses a question to the whole class, we make comments and hold discussions, and I feel more relaxed because we speak English much more. If you speak with your friend, after a while, you speak Turkish. Then, we do not get a benefit."

Asuman expressed that she felt more comfortable speaking English one-on-one with the teacher in the classroom because, during pair-work or group-work activities, her partner's English proficiency could be either better or worse than hers, which negatively affected her.

Five learners mentioned that they felt comfortable speaking English during pair-work activities. For instance, Jale noted that she prefers pair-work over group work because if more people are involved, someone might interrupt or laugh while she is speaking, which distracts her. Another student, Cansu, remarked:

"In pair work activities, as two people know and understand each other, it will not be a problem when you cannot speak English or when you pronounce the words incorrectly. But, in group work, some people may disrupt and, you lose your confidence."

In the interview, just one student, Berk indicated that he felt more comfortable speaking English in a group-work activity in his comments below:

"I prefer to speak English in a group. I always like expressing myself in public. Telling something in front of people is enjoyable for me. I feel more comfortable and I enjoy speaking when there are more people involved."

The students' responses to this question are consistent with the WTC questionnaire results and observations. In the WTC questionnaire, 63.03% of students were most willing to volunteer an answer when the teacher asked a question in class. Weekly observations also showed that students had the highest WTC score when they volunteered an answer to the teacher. This suggests that students prefer speaking one-on-one with the teacher, especially when the teacher addresses the entire class. They also enjoy speaking English with their partners during pair-work activities. According to the WTC questionnaire results, students feel more comfortable when the number of interlocutors reduces. They are most willing to communicate in English one-on-one with the teacher, followed by pair work where they feel comfortable speaking with their partners. The WTC questionnaire further demonstrates that students are more willing to communicate in small groups and less willing in large groups.

Another interview question addressed students' concerns about speaking English. The purpose was to identify the difficulties students encounter when speaking English. Understanding the source of these problems can help educators and students find effective solutions to increase learners' willingness to communicate.

Table 3: Students' Responses to the Concerns about Speaking English

Concerns about speaking English	Number of students
Fear of being misunderstood and mocked	6
Incorrect pronunciation	5
Unsatisfying education	4
Lack of vocabulary	4
Grammar mistakes	3
Lack of practice	3
Feel incompetent	2
Context/ Setting	2
Being nervous	2
Not understanding the question	1

Source: Created by the researcher

As shown in Table 3, half of the learners expressed worry about making mistakes when speaking English, even if they knew the correct answer. They felt too shy to speak English, fearing they would be misunderstood or mocked. Additionally, five students were concerned about pronouncing words incorrectly. They avoided speaking English

due to fear of being ridiculed for mispronunciation. Furthermore, four students mentioned insufficient English vocabulary as a barrier to speaking English. For example, Ali shared his concern about recalling the right word when speaking or forgetting it when asked a question by a foreigner or the teacher. Another student, Cansu, remarked:

> *"I know the English verb tenses by heart but as my vocabulary is not sufficient, I cannot make a sentence. Even if I know the verb tenses or grammar, I cannot make a sentence and cannot speak as I do not know the word."*

Mert also expressed:

> *"For example; while I am speaking English, some Turkish words come to my mind and I wish I knew the English equivalent of the word. Because I do not know the word, I cannot ask any foreign person I am speaking to any questions.*

According to four students, the English education they received was insufficient for speaking English, and half of the students believed the school should place more emphasis on speaking skills. Two students, Cansu and Beyazıt, mentioned feeling incompetent to speak English. For instance, Cansu felt she lacked the competence to speak English with foreigners. Additionally, three students felt they made grammatical mistakes when speaking English. For example, İrem felt nervous while speaking English because she worried about making grammatical errors and whether to use the present or future tense. Furthermore, three students mentioned insufficient practice as a reason for their inability to speak English. For example, Mahmut noted:

> *"I still do not feel confident about speaking English. Because we do not speak English in my circle of friends. In the past, I had foreign friends with whom I talked on the internet. In those days I was confident. If I have practice for a while, I feel relaxed. However, I do not have practice currently, so I cannot speak English comfortably in any environment. As I cannot talk face to face with foreign people much in Turkey, I have a lack of self-confidence and this causes nervousness, so I cannot speak."*

According to two students, they feel anxious when a tourist asks them a question since they are caught unprepared. Mahmut commented:

> *"When a foreigner asks me a question suddenly, I get nervous until I understand the question. The problem that people cannot speak English is generally to get nervous, anyway. They cannot speak English in public or with foreign people. We learn so many words or grammatical structures. I have memorized a lot of words but they do not come to my mind at that moment. In fact, I have knowledge of them but they come to my mind later; then it becomes late."*

Two students mentioned that the environment influences their comfort level when speaking English. For instance, Berk states:

> *"I am very confident normally but I sometimes feel nervous depending on the context. For example, when I am together with my friends, I do not think much before speaking, but in situations like this interview, in a formal context, you have to think a lot before speaking just like speaking Turkish."*

One student, Onur, noted that he struggles to come up with ideas or construct a sentence when he does not comprehend the question. Yet, when he understands the question, he feels at ease and can respond.

Based on students' responses, the most prevalent concern regarding speaking English is the fear of ridicule or misunderstanding. Most students are afraid of making mistakes while speaking. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage and motivate students to speak English. They also express concern about their pronunciation, indicating that teaching pronunciation is essential to help students feel more comfortable speaking English. Additionally, students have varying views on the significance of vocabulary and grammar knowledge in speaking. Some struggle to speak English due to a lack of vocabulary, while others fear making grammatical mistakes. Therefore, teaching both grammar and vocabulary is significant in EFL classrooms.

Students were also questioned regarding their verbal engagement in English classes to assess their perceptions of their actual willingness to communicate (WTC) behavior in the classroom. Based on their feedback, six students (50%) indicated occasional participation in English lessons, with their involvement fluctuating based on specific circumstances. For example, two students emphasized that their verbal engagement relied on their grasp of the lesson's content. Cansu remarked:

> *"The better I comprehend the subject, the more I participate in English lessons. But when I do not understand the subject, I do not participate in the lesson much. When the teacher asks me a question, if I understand the*

subject, I can answer it. But if I do not understand the subject, I have difficulty in answering it; I answer hesitantly. My hesitation arises from a lack of understanding.”

Mahmut stated that despite his initial reluctance, he made an effort to participate in English lessons in order to attain a high grade. He also observed that if his responses were accurate when a teacher asked a question, he felt more inclined to participate. Furthermore, three students mentioned that their class participation had risen compared to the previous year. For instance, Sena mentioned that she was participating more in English lessons than the previous year. As she acquired more knowledge, her self-confidence grew, making her more sociable and more willing to speak English. However, only one student reported a decrease in participation since the previous year, attributing this change to the teacher. He said,

“This term, our English teacher usually speaks, we listen and take notes. She should try more to get the students involved in speaking English. Last year, I felt comfortable with my English teacher. When everybody raised their hands, she chose and called on the students, and she tried to get the students involved. She did not always call on the same student. Also, when somebody answers a question, our teacher this year just says “incorrect” and passes, but our teacher last year did not pass; she corrected our mistakes.”

Therefore, based on the students' perspectives, their oral engagement in English lessons is not constant; it is a dynamic process influenced by factors such as understanding the subject matter, types of classroom activities, teaching methods, and acquiring knowledge. The most crucial aspect seems to be building students' self-confidence. If students acquire self-confidence and believe in their ability to succeed in English, they are more likely to participate in English lessons.

Research Question 2

Apart from examining the overall L2 WTC levels of the students, their WTC was also analyzed based on gender, grade, department, type of school they graduated from, and experience abroad. Independent t-test results were used to determine the WTC levels of the participants by classroom grade. The data revealed a significant difference in WTC levels by grade (t (350) = 1.58, p>.05). The WTC level for first-grade students was 105.26, while for second-grade students, it was 130.63, indicating that second-grade students are more willing to communicate in English than first-grade students.

This result suggests that linguistic knowledge influences students' WTC because second-grade students have learned more English than first-grade students, likely increasing their confidence. Consequently, second-grade students are more willing to communicate in English.

Table 4: ANOVA Results of the Differences between Participants' WTC Levels according to Kind of High School They Graduated from

The source of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	P	Significant Difference
Intergroup	67456	3	16483.264	5.483	.001	Anatolian High School-
In-group	879631.42	349	2970.507			Vocational High School,
Total	947087.42	352				Genera High School-
						Vocational School

Source: Created by the researcher

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the WTC levels of participants based on the kind of high school they graduated from. According to the data shown in Table 4, the results indicated significant differences in WTC levels depending on the high school type [F (3-349) =5.483, p<.05]. The English WTC levels were as follows: Anatolian High School (39.742), General High School (36.574), Vocational High School (32.972), Private High School (26.467), and Commercial High School (28.365). The Scheffe test results showed significant differences between students from Anatolian High Schools and Vocational High Schools, and between General High Schools and Vocational Schools. Thus, students from Anatolian and General High Schools are more willing to communicate in English than those from Vocational High Schools.

The analysis suggests that individuals' educational backgrounds greatly influence their WTC. The fact that Anatolian High Schools in Turkey prioritize English courses and have more English courses probably increases students' willingness to speak English.

Additionally, students need high scores on the high school entrance exam to study at many Anatolian High Schools, indicating a relationship between academic achievement and WTC.

ANOVA results also showed that WTC levels vary significantly by department [F (3-349) =6.156, p<.05]. The WTC levels were highest in Civil Aviation Cabin Services (49.77), followed by Ground Services (44.16) and Aircraft Technology (38.83). The Scheffe test revealed significant differences between Cabin Services and Aircraft

Technology departments. Students in the Cabin Services department have higher WTC levels, likely due to more hours of English lessons, including speaking lessons, and different educational backgrounds. Students in this department often come from Anatolian High Schools or private colleges, which offer effective English lessons and tend to score higher on university entrance exams, suggesting a link between academic achievement and WTC.

The Department of Civil Aviation Cabin Services in the tertiary program has more hours of English lessons than the other departments and students have also speaking lessons in this department. This possibly has a substantial influence on their willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, students in this department have a different educational background than students in the Department of Aircraft Technology. Students graduating from Anatolian High Schools or private colleges, which have efficient English lessons, study in the Department of Cabin Services and they usually get higher scores on the university entrance exam. Nonetheless, students who graduate from Vocational High Schools having taken technical lessons generally choose the Department of Aircraft Technology. Thus, we can infer that academic achievement affects students' level of WTC.

Gender analysis showed no significant difference in L2 WTC levels (t (352) = 2.18, p>.05), although male participants had higher WTC levels (144.80) compared to female participants (125.72).

The data also indicated that experience abroad did not show a significant impact on WTC levels, although those with experience abroad had slightly higher WTC levels (138.59) compared to those without (127.61). However, only 26 students had been abroad, while 327 had not, indicating limited influence due to the small number of students with such experience.

The independent t-tests for having foreign friends showed no significant difference in WTC levels (t (353) = 2.15, p>.05), but participants with foreign friends had higher WTC levels (146.75) than those without (120.24).

The final questionnaire item examined the impact of attending courses outside of school. The aim of posing this question was to determine whether increased exposure to English or additional English classes would enhance the students' levels of willingness to communicate (WTC). While 101 students answered "Yes" and 252 answered "No," so there was no significant difference in WTC levels between those who attended external courses (134.68) and those who did not (124.75).

Overall, three variables—grade, department, and type of high school—significantly influence students' English WTC. According to the questionnaire, students in the second grade, studying in the Civil Aviation Cabin Services department, and graduates from Anatolian or General High Schools are more willing to communicate in English. This indicates that educational background, linguistic knowledge, and academic achievement impact students' willingness to speak English. The department a student is in relates to their high school background, with those in Civil Aviation Cabin Services often from Anatolian or General High Schools, while those in Aircraft Technology come from Vocational High Schools and are less willing to communicate.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this study was to determine the willingness of students to speak English in the classroom within a tertiary ESP context. The questionnaire results showed that students have a moderate level of WTC, suggesting they are not highly willing to communicate in English. Observations revealed that students' engagement varied over time but generally showed low WTC, with few students willing to speak English in both classrooms. Additionally, most students in the interviews reported that they sometimes participated in English lessons, indicating that participation is dynamic. The reasons behind the participants' moderate willingness to communicate in English and their fluctuating oral participation were analyzed through interviews, leading to practical recommendations.

If the primary objective in language acquisition is the readiness to actively pursue and engage in communication opportunities (MacIntyre et al., 1998), research on second language willingness to communicate (L2 WTC) must furnish educators with practical suggestions to enhance students' inclination to utilize their second language.

Firstly, this study highlighted the importance of interlocutors for students to communicate in English. Bohlke (2014) suggests that when speakers hold a positive feeling or attitude toward their conversational partners, communication becomes smoother. Moreover, if students feel comfortable, they are more willing to communicate. As indicated in the WTC questionnaire, most interviewees also stated that they felt comfortable speaking English with their teachers and close friends. The results also showed the importance of the number of interlocutors; students feel more comfortable as the number reduces. Most students preferred whole-class activities conducted individually or in pairs. Observations further revealed that "volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question in class" was the most prevalent WTC behaviour, followed by "volunteer a comment" during the lesson.

Based on these findings, teachers should engage students in English discussions about specific topics and ask numerous questions to encourage English conversation. Whole-class discussions, picture description activities, chain stories, and oral games like guessing games can be effective. Pair-work information-gap activities, where students create dialogues with prompts, can also be beneficial. Teachers should allow students to choose their friends for pair or group activities. Mingling activities, where students interact with different classmates, can also promote English speaking. For instance, students can administer questionnaires to one another, participate in "find someone who" activities, or conduct interviews with anyone of their choice. Group activities should have small groups of no more than three or four students. Error correction is crucial; teachers should monitor activities, note mistakes, and provide feedback.

Most students reported that limited opportunities to practice speaking English decreased their WTC, preferring fewer interlocutors as indicated in questionnaires and interviews. Many students see the classroom as the only place to speak English. Thus, teachers should provide more opportunities for students to speak English, ensuring equal participation. Reducing class sizes for English lessons and arranging conversation classes can also help. Schools could invite foreigners to the classroom or organize study-abroad programs. Authentic materials and creative activities beyond the coursebook can enhance engagement.

Although the questionnaire and observation results showed moderate WTC, interviews revealed that students recognized the importance of speaking English and had various reasons for learning it. All agreed on its importance for their future careers. Thus, ESP education is vital for increasing L2 WTC. Curricula should incorporate more ESP education, with professional English lessons and role-plays related to future job scenarios. For instance, practical English phrases and conversations relevant to real-world scenarios can be introduced to students enrolled in the Civil Aviation Cabin Services Department. They can then engage in role-playing activities, depicting both cabin crew and passengers aboard an aircraft. Task-based communicative activities can also be arranged. Authentic ESP materials should be used, and graduates can share their workplace English experiences.

During the interviews, students expressed concerns about speaking English, primarily fearing misunderstanding and ridicule, followed by pronunciation worries. Teaching pronunciation, including stress and intonation, is important and can be addressed with games and exercises such as minimal pairs games, rhyming games, tongue twisters, and reading out loud. Both grammar and vocabulary are also crucial for speaking English; teachers should balance teaching both. Students also need time to think before speaking, especially when questions are asked suddenly. Additionally, listening comprehension is vital for speaking, as understanding questions is essential for responding. Listening activities and watching English videos can help improve these skills.

The quantitative findings showed that students' grades, majors, and types of high schools significantly influence their WTC in English. This indicates that students' educational background is strongly linked to their WTC. Students from Anatolian and private high schools had higher WTC levels than those from vocational or commercial high schools. Additionally, students in the Department of Civil Aviation Cabin Services were more willing to communicate than those in Aircraft Technology. This is also related to their educational backgrounds: most students in the Department of Aircraft Technology graduated from vocational high schools, while the majority in the Department of Civil Aviation Cabin Services graduated from Anatolian high schools. Second-grade students were more willing to communicate than first-grade students, highlighting the impact of academic achievement and the number of English lesson hours. The education system should emphasize English education across all schools, and additional speaking lessons should be added to curricula, especially in departments like Aircraft Technology.

Future studies can focus on similar topics in different contexts, such as secondary or high schools, to validate the results of this study. Different WTC scales, especially those specific to the classroom, can be used to explore classroom interactions further.

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