

First-year university students' willingness to communicate in English language inside and outside the classroom: An investigative mixed method

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Abstract: The study aimed to investigate the viewpoints of first-year students at Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia, about their willingness to engage in communication in the English language, both inside and outside the classroom. A mixed-methods research approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The study was conducted at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia over 8 weeks, involving 30 first-year English major students (20 female and 10 male). Data collection included: questionnaires measuring WTC in and outside the classroom, self-reflective reports analyzing students' speaking challenges, semi-structured interviews with selected participants to explore their perceptions of WTC, and classroom observations to understand communication patterns. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA. Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify key factors influencing WTC. The current investigation revealed that the majority of students had a greater inclination to engage in verbal communication inside and outside the classroom setting. Simultaneously, the absence of an English-speaking environment made a dynamic atmosphere crucial for WTC outside of the classroom. Some factors that affected the foreign language anxiety qualitative data include the level of the expected interlocutor, the relationship with the voice, and the members of the language class together with the student's supportive friends.

Keywords: Classroom communication, Communication skills, Language anxiety, Learning environment, Mixed-methods research, Sustainable development, Willingness to communicate (WTC).

1. Introduction

The importance of English communication skills in achieving academic and professional goals has increased for university students, especially with the rise of globalization and multiculturalism that has made the English language more essential than ever [1]. However, students at the first semester of their studies often show low ability and little willingness to communicate in English, both inside and outside the classroom [2]. Factors such as self-esteem, motivation, and previous academic exposure affect Brian's willingness to communicate in English. While some students encounter communication block such as anxiety or shyness, many others are willing to meet academic goals or broaden their social and professional horizons [3, 4].

Students' use of the English language is also influenced by the learning context that encompasses teaching styles, classroom management, and relations with teachers and fellow students [5]. A favorable setting would help in alleviating anxiety, increasing self-esteem, and encouraging students to make attempts of practicing the language Betal and Banerjee [6]. Munna and Kalam [7] emphasize the importance of nonacademic sociocultural environments, such as friends and English-speaking communities as an increased motivation for students to use the language in class.

The lack of students' participation in oral English classes in Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Saudi Arabian countries has been a longstanding problem [5, 8]. While not engaging in speech during class allows for listening and pondering, not speaking, which is essential in learning, cannot be substituted for it Birkner [9]. This is especially true in learning English as a foreign language and in situations when there are no chances to use English outside the class. Studies on the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in EFL environments, including the works of MacIntyre, et al. [10] already attempted to identify components of WTC, but additional studies are necessary, particularly regarding the effects of e-learning outside of the classroom in distant countries like Thailand [11].

In order to define pertinent circumstances for the improvement of students' communication abilities, it is necessary to take into account the matching of boundary educational systems with learner's requirements and the context of the culture [12]. Knowing the reasons for learners' willingness or reluctance to communicate inside and outside the classrooms is fundamental in forming a proactive environment to utilize the English language more.

This study investigates the willingness to interact in English by first year university students from various disciplines both within and outside the classroom setting. It assesses the student's motivation, their obstacles, and the consequences of their English usage on their academic and career endeavors. Studying the factors that shape the student's disposition towards using English helps provide guidelines for the educators and policymakers to improve the use of English in the region. This study therefore, highlights the importance of English language competences as a link to personal academic advancement and sustainable development In Saudi Arabia.

To fill in the research gaps, this study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perception of WTC among first-year Saudi university students both inside and outside the classroom?
2. What are the reasons underlying such perceptions?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Second Language (L2) Usage and Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

WTC is defined as the likelihood to engage a particular discussion [13]. Early WTC studies restricted themselves to the L1 communication with personality traits as the major prediction [14]. Nevertheless, L2 WTC is impacted by personality traits but more far removed than what is explained by MacIntyre, et al. [10] and is more complicated as described in MacIntyre, et al. [10] multi-layered model. This model encompasses various linguistic and communicative as well as social psychological factors where intergroup climate and personality variables are the most remote. In contrast, the identity of conversational partners has more weight in determining WTC than personality traits for the learners of a second language. This is also demonstrated by the more empirical research [15, 16]. And was showed later [17, 18]. As the contextual impact.

2.2. Situational Willingness to Communicate

The concern and trust that teachers express contribute to students' willingness to communicate (WTC) Dorman and Fisher [19] as well as their personal approaches to teaching [20]. Student cohesiveness, as well as task orientation, drives WTC, while the student's apprehension of speaking in a foreign language seems to be the best predictor [21, 22]. An investigation on Saudi EFL learners has predominantly focused on classroom WTC, which constitutes a limitation in research of WTC outside of classroom contexts. Studies done in Thailand illustrate the impact of an interlocutor's familiarity and s/he's or her WTC [23, 24]. Other investigations in Iran, Turkey, and Belgium draw attention to the role of social assistance and the instructor's methodology of teaching Baghaei [25]; Basöz and Erten [26] and Denies, et al. [27]. MacIntyre, et al. [28] noted that social assistance utilizes WTC in L2 immersion programs in France.

3. Methods

Recognizing the multitude of elements which affect students' readiness to engage in English communication, this study uses a pragmatic research design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. This study will use questionnaires for first-year university students, as well as individual interviews and classroom observations, to understand the different reasons for English use among learners. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to process the information gathered to be able to suggest measures aimed at improving the teaching methodologies targeting English language use at universities.

This study is focused on the World Trade Center research of new students at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia. It was conducted over an 8-week period where data was collected using the mixed-method approach which employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the problem [29].

3.1. Participants

This study recruited voluntarily thirty first-year English majors consisting of 20 female and 10 male students from a university in Saudi Arabia. The research aimed to assess the speaking skills of the participating students. Considering the English scores obtained in the secondary education level examination used for university entrance in Saudi Arabia, it can be assumed that all the participants have a good level of competence. The participants were aged between 18 and 21 and had more than 10 years of schooling in English before entering the university. Because of privacy concerns and time constraints on the participants, this study used convenience and volunteer sampling since data was collected over eight weeks. The participants were taken from the class with no further teaching lessons, meaning there was only one class per week. Participants' questionnaires were distributed during lectures meaning that to conduct convenience sampling, all students currently enrolled in the course were given the questionnaires. Data was collected on days when it was assumed that a higher number of students would attend. This approach increases the chance of obtaining relevant answers and reduces selection bias.

3.2. Instruments

To understand students' perceptions of WTC both in and out of the classroom, the research utilized three different methods: questionnaires, reflective reports, and semi-structured interviews. The study was split into two parts; the first focused on WTC in different educational settings with various recipients and interactions while the second explored WTC in different external contexts with diverse interlocutors. WTC was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale to ensure the participant's neutrality of response based on Baghaei [25] and Peng and Woodrow [18]. Students' impressions of speaking and WTC were recorded through self-reflective reports. Six interview participants were chosen based on their WTC scores and the interviews were conducted in Arabic for ease of understanding. The methodology of the study was tested and adjusted with ELT specialists prior to the implementation.

3.3. Procedure

The study spanned eight weeks, starting with the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires which were completed on that single day at the students' convenience. During the second semester, students had background exposure to compulsory English through a speaking course. On the same day, reflection report outlines were issued instructing students to identify and report problems they faced in speaking English during lessons and beyond, which were submitted every two weeks. At the conclusion of the semester, semi-structured interviews were conducted and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. These interviews were based on the questionnaires and reports and were held in Arabic. All interviews were transcribed verbatim for further examination.

3.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data concerning the questionnaire was collated in SPSS version sixteen. Additionally, the average score from all items and subscales focusing on different aspects pertaining to the level of WTC in each context was computed. T-tests and one-way ANOVA were applied to evaluate the significance of mean differences for each of the variables.

The qualitative data derived from the audios of interviews and reflective reports was subjected to thematic analysis, which pinpointed broad themes, as well as similarities and relationships. It assisted in reducing the data without losing any relevant contextual information [30]. To enhance the trustworthiness of the results of this research, triangulation was employed by using multiple data sources as well as participant checking, wherein the respondents were asked to confirm the researcher's account of the interviews.

4. Results and Discussions

This section seeks to understand how the results of the study will be interpreted in relation to the research objectives. The discussion will first cover the descriptive statistical data regarding the first research question and will then move on to qualitative data interpretation for the second research question. The findings provide clear evidence on the perceptions of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) of first-year university students in Saudi universities considering their subjective factors impacting EFL communicative behaviour.

The initial portion of this segment includes descriptive statistics on the students' reported willingness to participate in classroom communications. They are listed as follows:

RQ1: What is the perception of WTC among first-year Saudi university students both inside and outside the classroom?

The table below analyzes the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Saudi classrooms by first-year university students. The table shows mean scores, standard deviations, and the response distribution across different levels of agreement which suggest the level of willingness students have towards communicating with peers and instructors within an academic setting. These data assist in determining the reasons why students do and do not participate in classroom communication.

Table 1.
Willingness to Communicate Inside the Classroom.

Item	Mean	SD	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	3.82	0.60	54.9	14.3	13.5	11.5	5.8
2	3.75	0.82	33.5	47.8	2.7	12.2	3.8
3	4.33	0.80	47.8	19.9	9.3	13.4	9.6
4	3.77	0.79	56.7	13.8	15.8	13.7	0
5	4.83	0.88	33.4	47.3	2.3	7.6	9.4
6	3.89	0.73	49.2	18.9	19.8	7.4	4.7
7	4.90	0.93	57.6	25.4	9.7	15.2	7.3
8	3.61	0.75	39.8	49.8	5.2	5.2	0
9	3.74	0.91	36.5	43.7	2.3	12.3	5.2
10	4.66	0.79	58.9	14.66	7.3	19.14	0
Total	4.13						

In the following section of the paper, we consider the participants' "Willingness to Communicate inside the Classroom" showcased in Table 1 with respect to response percentages, means, and standard deviation. The results offer significant insights into the learners' level of comfort while speaking in a classroom setting. The analysis focused on the willingness of participants to talk in different situations and uncovered some variation across items. Item 5 had the greatest mean value of 4.83, with a standard deviation of 0.88, as 57.6% strongly agreed, and 25.4% agreed, which meant 83% of the sample exhibited strong willingness toward classroom communication. Item 7 had an even higher mean value of 4.90 (SD=0.93) as 33.4% of the sample strongly agreed, and 47.3% agreed, indicating great willingness

toward communication. Item 10 ($M=4.66$, $SD=0.79$) also displayed strong communication willingness, 59% agreeing with the item while 19.14% disagreed which indicated some discord in the responses.

As it was previously described, the overall tendency suggests positive orientation towards communication as the mean was $M=4.33$ ($SD=0.80$), though there were, 9.6% who strongly disagreed which shows variance exists. Item 6 ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.73$), although above the general score mean, was not widely agreed with as 19.8% chose neutral and 7.4% disagreement which suggests some level of variability.

Item 1 ($M=3.75$) was slightly lower than the mean for the country of 3.82, revealing some variance, which was also true for Item 9 ($M=3.74$, $SD=0.91$) where 36.5% of the sample agreed, 43.7% strongly agreed while 12.3% disagreed. Items 2 ($M=3.75$, $SD=0.83$) and 3 ($M=3.77$, $SD=0.79$) exhibited moderate willingness to communicate, where responses were more evenly spread across the scale. Item 8 ($M=3.61$, $SD=0.75$) had the least willingness to communicate out of all items, which captured more reluctance than propensity to communicate.

In conclusion, as shown in Table 1, there is a predisposed tendency to communicate which shows varying degrees of agreement as some questions were agreed to fully and others to partially. A deep analysis and study of the participant's positions are crucial for properly understanding what impacts communication in a classroom setting.

Table 2.
Willingness to Communicate Scores in the Classroom with the Subscales.

Item	Receivers	Mean	SD
2-3, 7,9	friends	4.66	0.84
1, 6	Teachers	3.92	0.88
7-10	Class	4.77	0.80
Item	Topics	Mean	SD
2-5	One-turn	3.94	0.87
1,4, 6	Probably more than one turn	4.55	0.83
8-10	More than one turn	3.79	0.82
Item	Task types	Mean	SD
6,7, 9	Without notes	4.48	0.84
5, 10	With notes	3.82	0.89

Table 2 The "Willingness to Communicate" terms in the classroom were captured in Table 2 regarding three subdivisions pertaining to receivers, subjects, and task types. The standard deviations (SD) and mean ratings offer insights into the attitudes and comfort levels of participants regarding different levels of communication.

The study focuses on student's willingness to communicate (WTC) during different forms of classroom interaction. Students reported high comfort levels with peer communications, scoring it highly on the scale ($M=4.66$, $SD=0.84$), but rated their communication with teachers lower. This showed a moderate level of engagement from the participants ($M=3.92$, $SD=0.88$). The most common interaction was class discussions which topped out at ($M=4.77$, $SD=0.80$).

Students reported having moderate level of preparedness for single turn conversations ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.87$) compared to extended discourse ($M=4.55$, $SD=0.83$). Although certain topics displayed even lower disengagement ($M=3.79$). They also preferred talking with no written support ($M=4.48$, $SD=0.84$) as their willingness to talk when notes were provided dropped ($M=3.82$, $SD=0.89$).

For basic tasks, such as asking the meaning of a word, WTC was measured at ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.76$) while more complex reasoning tasks like clarifying questions or role-plays triggered low levels of WTC ($M=3.68$, $SD=0.87$). Friends' WTC for simple single-turn questions was higher ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.73$) indicating their reluctance to participate in role plays ($M=3.63$, $SD=0.79$).

A repeated-measures ANOVA ($F=24.43$, $p<0.001$) analysis revealed that WTC was much greater in single-turn conditions ($M=4.76$, $SD=0.76$) than in multi-turn conversations ($M=3.72$, $SD=0.88$). Role plays with notes ($M=3.76$, $SD=0.88$) resulted in slightly higher scores than those without notes

($M=3.62$, $SD=0.86$), although this difference was not significant. Single interactive turns tend to produce better WTC than multi-turn speech interactions. These results indicate that students' WTC is more affected by the type of interaction rather than the presence or absence of a scripted interaction. While speaking is considered to be one of the more demanding skills in a foreign language and low-proficiency students tend to depend too much on talk scripts during speaking activities in a classroom Tantiwich and Sinwongswat [31] our study found that students' inclination to actively take part in oral communication is not solely determined by the presence of such scripts. Rather, such willingness could be subjected to a number of factors, for instance, who is talking to each other and what is being talked about.

Table 3.
Willingness to Communicate Outside the Classroom.

Item	Mean	SD	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	3.92	0.94	53.7	22.7	8.4	13.3	1.9
2	4.88	0.72	35.3	42.3	11.2	5.9	5.3
3	3.61	0.88	55.8	21.5	1.2	12.7	8.8
4	4.58	0.85	48.9	27.3	13.7	5.6	4.5
5	3.67	0.75	66.2	4.1	1.3	13.2	15.2
6	4.77	0.93	59.7	11.9	2.9	15.4	10.1
7	4.81	0.77	64.9	28.7	1.1	2.6	2.7
8	4.92	0.96	47.6	35.3	2.8	11.3	3
9	3.77	0.76	34.3	51.2	5.6	3.9	5
10	4.22	0.79	58.4	21.1	3.3	13.5	3.7
Total	4.31						

The Table 3 shows the results on the student's willingness to speak outside the classroom. We can analyze the data from the ratings that will be provided in the order of highest to lowest.

The findings capture a broad readiness of the participants to communicate beyond the walls of the classroom. Item 8 had the highest mean score ($M=4.92$) with 47.6% of respondents strongly agreeing, while 35.3% agreed, which means there is a great deal of interest in preferring these interactions to take place outside of the classroom. In the same vein, Item 7 had high mean score ($M= 4.81$), with 64.9% of respondents strongly agreeing and 28.7% agreeing, which proves the tendency which foster the need to communicate beyond the bounds of the classroom.

Items 2 ($M=4.88$) and 6 ($M=4.78$) appear to demonstrate this preference, with strong agreements suggesting that there is a non-passive communication that takes place beyond the confines of the class. There was generally a positive response on the part of the absentee with a high frequency of those who strongly agreed or agreed. For example, Item 6 had a high response rate with 59.7% strongly agreeing, which underlined the need for novel communication approaches.

In relation to other Items, participants were also willing to go beyond the boundaries of the classroom on item 4 which gave the respondents 4.22 for the mean where 58.4% strongly agreed. Although Item 10 had a lower average score ($M=4.58$), it still suggested that participants preferred activities done outside the classroom.

Despite showing a more neutral response, Item 9 ($M=3.77$) and Item 1 ($M=3.92$) attendees still positively tilted participants' attitudes. Items 5 and 3 had the lowest willingness to engage beyond the classroom at ($M=3.67$) and ($M=3.61$) respectively, but even these items fulfilled the agree with a few items but disagreeing with others expectation. The results suggest that participants are in agreement that there is some level of communication outside the classroom, though some participants prefer not to decide or outright disagree.

In general, the table indicates with regards to communications outside of the classroom to be positive with certain topics being highly agreed upon and others accepted but with more indecisive responses.

The results accentuate the need to consider elements that propel students towards participating in communicative activities beyond academic settings.

Table 4.
WTC Scores outside the classroom with the subscales.

Item	Receivers	Mean	SD
1-3	Native speakers (strangers)	4.12	0.88
4-6	Non-native speakers (strangers)	4.16	0.86
7	Friends	4.47*	0.74
8	Teachers	4.69*	0.77
9-10	Self	4.33*	0.85
Item	Stimulation		
2, 4, 5, 7,8	Without stimulation	4.16	0.87
1, 3, 6,9, 10	With stimulation	4.54	0.84

Note: *There was only one item in this subscale.

As with other results from this study, subscales which measure recipients and stimulation circumstances contributing 'Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scores outside the classroom' as shown in table 4(tell a story. Mean scores and standard deviations (SD) tell much about accent participants' thinking and willingness to speak in various situations.

The analysis found that respondents are very willing to interact and communicate with different groups of people even outside the classroom. Respondents were willing to interact with unfamiliar native speakers so much that the average score was $M=4.12$, $SD=0.88$. Fostered communication with non-native speakers also received a high mean score of $M=4.16$, $SD=0.87$.

Even further, the participants were willing to interact with friends outside the classroom as much as $M=4.47$, $SD=0.74$, which shows that this group is comfortable in informal contexts. The highest mean score in this study was for communication with teachers outside the classroom, which averaged $M=4.69$, $SD=0.77$. This shows that there is a positive attitude towards informal chatting about academic matters which is great. In regard to self communication, the participants also displayed positive attitude with the mean score $M=4.33$, $SD=0.85$.

Participants demonstrated an inclination to engage in communication even in the absence of external stimuli, as shown by their average score of $M=4.16$, $SD=0.86$. This reveals that, on average, individuals will attempt to communicate regardless of there being a call or motivation offered. Conversely, motivated participants showcased even higher willingness to engage with the average scores for the motivated items $M=4.54$, $SD=0.84$. The data suggests that both internal and external reasons motivate participants to talk, however, they talk more when they want to.

To sum up, Table 4 shows that the respondents' willingness to engage in extra-curricular communication with varying degrees of audiences and stimulating factors is well captured. The average mean scores literally recommend that there is a predominant consideration of optimism; on the contrary, the lack of standard deviations does trouble the attempt to understand the range of replies given.

RQ 2: What are the reasons underlying such perceptions?

This part analyzes the outcomes gained from reflective reports and interviews in relation to students' willingness to communicate (WTC) inside and outside the classroom, as well as other factors such as the participants, speaking subjects, tasks, and contextual elements. Qualitative decomposition brought to the surface three major results: 'language anxiety', 'relevant topics', and 'stimulating environment.'

A common finding among participants was concern regarding language anxiety, which impacted their communication behaviors. This was most clear from students discussion in the class as many preferred to talk outside of class. Students labeled anxiety as a major obstacle towards their willingness to talk, especially when it came to dealing with classmates. Jackson [32] and Liu and Jackson [33] found that WTC had a positive correlation with anxiety. This research concurs with those studies.

It was observed that the anxiety experienced by participants came from communication with classmates who either did not wish to talk or did not have the requisite skills, which further lowered their desire to interact. Such unfavorable interactions within classroom environments resulted in a decline in positive verbal language development. Students felt more comfortable outside the classroom, particularly with foreigners who, in their opinion, were more friendly and willing to have good conversations in English. This change in views indicates a more general attitude that out of class interactions would be more helpful towards enhancing their language proficiency.

4.1. Their Statement Reads

Interviewee 6: During a chat with a peer in the class, they mentioned, "I question whether my grammar is correct." I was worried that a model statement I might remember from my friend would not be accurate. But even so, outside the class, I can have conversations with people from other countries who can correct me. "

Interviewee 3: "The speaking person in the class is usually either the teacher or one of my classmates." They are those who do not have language as a first language. I would prefer to speak with people who are fluent in the language, to sound like a proficient user in a school setting.

Student 16, Report 3: "My friends did not respond to my remarks because they didn't understand what I was talking about."

The students said that not the teachers but the other students did not have the native speakers furnish instruction wherein comprehension was ensured. Still, this attitude was not sustained beyond the walls of the classroom.

Both Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5 were reluctant to elaborate on how the WTC affected them outside the class. They said that in class, they were trying to use speech appropriate to the situation, and preferred talking to more fluent patients. Nonetheless, they did not mind speaking any language with anyone outside the classroom excluding their mother tongue.

Language anxiety caused significant discomfort which, in turn, hindered their interaction with strangers unlike friends who made interaction easier. As interviewees noted, the level of comfort associated with the given speaker depended on the relationship with the said speaker. To illustrate, Student 26 indicated that speaking English was difficult for her when it came to strangers, while Student 36 said that doing so made him relaxed which encouraged further conversations. Interviewee 6 reported equally relaxed feelings with some close friends.

The study also examined feelings of having control and being at home with the place, as well as feelings of worry related to the classroom. One of the participants" said that although he suffers worry in the classroom, he considers anything outside the class a learning opportunity, even when mistakes happen. There were some concerns about errors that could happen within the class".

"In my high school days, a teacher used to shout at me for my poor language proficiency."

Interviewee 1: For that reason, I do not have the bravery to express myself in a classroom setting.

Interviewee 2: I also felt some level of shame when I made mistakes. I stood there feeling anxious watching my classmates getting scolded by my English teachers.

The above data showcases the strong influence of peers as well as instructors on the willingness to communicate (WTC) in the class. Even so, it has also been noted that some negative experiences in the school and a more traditional teacher-led classroom where the teacher exercises control rather than facilitate learning Karnchanachari [23] can lead to some reluctance to speak (WTC). The current study highlights what Horwitz, et al. [34] define as fear of negative assessment as one dimension of language acquisition anxiety. The above-mentioned factors comprise the environment of a classroom that needs careful attention by teachers [35].

4.2. Topics That Matter

Table 5 exhibits data regarding the speaking themes that surfaced from the self-reflective reports of 243 respondents. From the data, it can be interpreted the N (frequency) and proportions suggested certain speech topics predominated.

A quite significant number of participants, making up 19%, claimed that they talked about their routines at least once daily. This means that participants tend to talk about their activities and tasks regularly. Among them, 34 out of 47 (14%) named themes that would be associated with the scope of their education. This indicates an above-average focus on education and academic activities. Hobbies represent a small fraction of the reports received (6%, or N=14). Even though, this data is not as widely spread as many other categories, it does show that people do talk about their leisure activities. A little over a tenth of the participants (11 individuals) or 5% of the total reported themes concerning news. This shows that some of the subjects in the study base self-reports on current problems of the context cover news reports and events. 23 subjects or 9% claim to report love themes. This suggests that relationships and attraction towards others constitute an important part of the self-reflective accounts of the subjects. 20 out of 47 participants or 8% reported a famous topic of conversation. Weather talk seems to be predominant in this category as it appears to be while reflecting accounts.

The area of politics has been a nuanced area of discussion with 41 participants (17%) claiming to engage in dialogues of this nature. This suggests that these participants showed some level of engagement or interest in participating in talking about politics. Out of the sample, 53 participants, making up 22%, stated that they had dream occupations, hinting that a considerable portion of self-reflective reports talks or children's self-reflective reports recollect conversations talk conversations regarding their future plans and career goals. Such self-report essays and so childhood narratives cover a wide range of speaking topics showing the spectrum of participants' discussions beyond the academic setting. Participants' most common speaking topics without any restrictions were fantasy professions, daily activities, and politics with 22%, 19%, and 17% of all conversations, respectively. These statistics reveal a lot about participants' self-presented priorities and interests in spoken discourse by showing the relative occurrence of various themes within statements made by the participants. In Table 5 the topics which the participants opted to talk about are exhibited.

Table 5.
Speaking Topics Reported in the Self-Reflective Reports (N=243).

Speaking topics	N	Percentage
Daily routines	47	19%
Study	34	14%
Hobbies	14	6%
News	11	5%
Love	23	9%
Weather	20	8%
Politics	41	17%
Dream jobs	53	22%

The reflecting responses revealed their preferences for discussing mundane subjects like schoolwork and routines. They disclosed that if the subjects were pertinent to their language skills and content understanding, they would be more open to communicating. They disclosed:

Report 2; Student 33: *"I would rather discuss pastimes, films, or topics that don't require complex vocabulary or grammar."*

Interviewee 2: *"The conversation would end if I didn't know anything about that topic; I wouldn't know what to say."*

Furthermore, the participants evaluated their expertise in the subject matter and deliberated on the possible advantages they may get by participating in discussions. A few individuals expressed enthusiasm for a stimulating subject, as they considered it would be advantageous for their linguistic

advancement. According to the reflecting report statistics, news and economics were placed fourth among the most talked about subjects, suggesting a more complex issue. The fifth interviewee emphasized, "If that subject is beneficial for my language proficiency improvement, I would be delighted to discuss it." Furthermore, Interviewee 6, who assigned a higher rating to WTC in a scenario including the role of a tour guide for a foreigner, said, "I would be more inclined to engage in conversation with a foreigner when providing assistance as their tour guide without charge because I perceive it as a challenging endeavour." This may be seen as the concept of Work Task Characteristics (WTC) in relation to the specific subject of interest. Interest is composed of both inherent emotions and elements connected to value, which can increase intrinsic motivation [27, 36].

Prior studies have similarly emphasized the influence of interest in the speaking subject on WTC [37-40]. In contrast to other research, the current study revealed that the issue had an impact on second language (L2) willingness to communicate (WTC) due to a feeling of accomplishment. Interviewee 6 described it as a challenge. Despite the participants' poor proficiency, they did not consistently seek simple tasks. Some individuals may assess the worth of the talk by considering the potential for personal growth they may attain. This may be attributed to their inclination for interlocutors who possess a greater level of skill.

4.3. An Enticing Setting

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire results revealed that the level of willingness to communicate (WTC) was greater in a stimulating atmosphere compared to a situation without any stimulation. The reflective report and interview data elucidated the supplementary factors contributing to this phenomenon: the absence of an English-speaking environment and the lack of motivational pressure to engage in verbal communication. The absence of an English-speaking environment was not just evaluated in terms of the EFL setting, but also in terms of the potential for collaborative learning with their peers. They pondered the reports of the barriers encountered in speaking English:

Student 32, Report 1: *"The individuals in my vicinity do not communicate in the English language." I am uncertain about whom to engage in conversation with.*

Student 9, Report 2: "All of my friends are fluent in Arabic. There is a scarcity of foreigners in this area".

Student 23, Report 3: *"If given the opportunity, I will communicate in English. However, my pals were uncooperative when I attempted to converse in English with them".*

Interviewee 2: *"Without any compelling conditions, I would not have the audacity to engage in conversation with a foreigner. I need assistance in overcoming an obstacle or challenge. Upon hearing my pals speak English, I would eagerly participate in the discussion".*

This article examines the relationship between participants' willingness to engage in English conversation outside of class and their friendships. It also looks into the collaborative learning strategies employed in English-speaking environments. While previous studies have attempted to explore the notion of 'environment', most of them have concentrated on the classroom (e.g. [35, 41]). A recent study has shown that learners expect to be using collaborative English with friends both in and out of the classroom, as it is likely to boost their WTC. MacIntyre, et al. [10] suggest it is a form of social aid. The qualitative data and reflective reports yielded from the interviews in this study contribute substantially to what EFL learners expect as social support outside formal instruction.

5. Implications for Teaching and Learning

The analysis showed that students would rather interact with one another outside of the classroom because of foreign language anxiety and a lack of help from the teacher. In these situations, the students' peers did not offer the support they needed, and so the pupils interacted with less competent speakers who could not help them correct the mistakes they made while speaking. This discourages willingness to participate in dialogues. To raise the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English, teachers need to assign more advanced students to work with less advanced pupils more often. To raise

the use of the second language (L2) outside the classroom, teachers could start with easing students into discussions with familiar peers before letting them meet new speakers, reproducing the outside world.

The careful assessment of the student's oral communication skills enables creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom. The kind of feedback given to EFL learners is particularly important because it can affect the WTC. In order to foster language production and alleviate anxiety, instructors can implement mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) with automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology. Ahn and Lee [42]; Jung [43] and Evers and Chen [44] have previously reported improved fluency achieved by tailored feedback, underscoring its benefits. Moreover, with the appropriate scaffolding, students will speak at their level and learners will enhance the use of language with certain discussion topics. Krashen [45]; Skehan [46] and Wood, et al. [47] offered appropriate input which aids teachers to help accomplish this. Through peer feedback, social interaction needs can be satisfied. Lastly, allowing students to select their preferred partners for speaking activities may enhance WTC by promoting a warm inviting atmosphere.

6. Conclusion

This study has shown that students had a higher level of willingness to communicate (WTC) in extracurricular settings compared to in-class interactions. This phenomenon can be attributed to anxiety stemming from the students' perception of their conversation partners' inadequate skills, the selection of topics that are unsuitable for their language proficiency level, and their negative views of the teacher-led classroom setting. Interlocutors were crucial participants in the WTC, contributing significantly both inside and outside the classroom setting. Instead of considering the interlocutor's race or nation, they prioritized evaluating their conversational abilities. Outside of the classroom, their peers' inclination to cultivate an English-speaking environment seems to be more prominent in comparison to the academic context. A potential explanation for this might be the scarcity of individuals fluent in English in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Previous studies have found many possible factors that affect WTC, although most of these studies have primarily examined WTC inside the classroom setting. There is a scarcity of research on WTC conducted outside the confines of the classroom, and even fewer studies provide qualitative perspectives on students' perceptions about WTC. As anticipated by previous studies, the present research has shown that the classroom may serve as a catalyst for anxiety associated with learning a foreign language. By increasing the frequency of L2 use, promoting the development of speaking abilities, and facilitating the resolution of shyness-related issues in both the classroom and real-life settings via peer and teacher support, students may successfully improve their language proficiency.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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