



Teacher's Encouragement Factor Influencing EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate in Speaking Class

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates the teacher's encouragement factor influencing EFL students' willingness to communicate in a speaking classroom context. The data in this study involved five EFL students from the English Education Department at a higher education institution in South East Sulawesi who were recruited based on their participation in the speaking class. Data were collected using the reflection of five EFL students and an online interview as a follow-up instrument to dig deeper into the data. The data were thematically analyzed using. Therefore, the researcher used the thematic analysis, then color-coding and categorized based on the willingness to communicate (WTC) framework. The findings indicate that students' WTC in speaking class is closely related to the four factors influencing the teacher's wait time, error correction, support, and teacher's strategy as encouragement elements. Students with self-motivation acknowledged being more encouraged and confident to communicate in the classroom context. This study suggests future research can be conducted with many participants.

Keywords: case study; L2 speaking class; teacher encouragement; willingness to communicate.

INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, English language communication skills have become a ticket to success in different aspects of life (Saadat & Mukundan, 2019). So, helping language learners to get involved in communicative tasks to facilitate their language learning and improve their communicative abilities, a sense of willingness to communicate should be engendered (Amiryousefi, 2016). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence the willingness to communicate is essential to find out how it can be achieved in improving student communication. In the last few decades, there has been a surge in researchers' interest in willingness to communicate (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Öz et al., 2015; Ro & Rue, 2020). Moreover, willingness to communicate (WTC) has been an intensely debated topic among scholars of language learning (Alimorad & Farahmand, 2021).

In the global context, WTC has also drawn the attention of language researchers and practitioners in recent years. The research focuses concerned on the effect of the interlocutor, age, and gender on WTC, the effects of comparison (self-referential vs. normative) and regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention) feedback on EFL learners' WTC, Willingness to communicate in a multilingual context, effect of classroom management in oral communication and willingness to communicate, cross-cultural insights effect in WTC, situational affecting L2



WTC, and the roles of motivation, affective attitudes, the effect of teacher, and willingness to communicate in early English immersion programs (see, Alqurashi & Assulaimani, 2021; Henry et al., 2021; J. S. Lee et al., 2021; Syed & Kuzborska, 2020; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017; Zarrinabadi & Saberi Dehkordi, 2021; Zarrinabadi, 2013). This phenomenon was also developing in the Asian context. The research shows very varied results, such as the role of grit and classroom enjoyment in WTC, willingness to communicate in foreign language acquisition, and factors that influence students' willingness to communicate, and it can be concluded five factors, such as teachers, topic discussions, classroom environment, peers, and types of activities. Willingness to communicate has also become an exciting topic in the EFL student's context. Altiner (2018) stated that willingness to communicate in a second language had gained importance recently with the improving popularity of communicative language teaching.

Meanwhile, because there is still a scarcity of empirical studies that focus on exploring the teacher factors that influence EFL students' willingness to communicate, both in global and Asian contexts, including Indonesia, then, to explore the teacher's factors that influence EFL students' willingness to communicate, the research focuses on gaining the data from the teacher's encouragement factor influencing EFL students' willingness to communicate in class. Thus, the data of this study have investigated teacher encouragement.

Generally, the term Willingness to communicate (WTC) is considered a decision on whether or not a learner will participate or engage in learning activities with specific communication events or other learners (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The WTC notion was first developed in connection with First Language (L1) Communication, conceived as an intention to start communication when given an opportunity (McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990, 1991). Furthermore, the WTC construct, as reported by MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Donovan (2003), offer an opportunity to integrate psychological, linguistic, communicative, and educational approaches to explain why some individuals seek L2 communication, whereas others avoid it. Meanwhile, when and Clement (2003) reported that the involvement of students and their willingness to communicate was in line with the involvement and closeness of their teachers. In addition, MacIntyre (2011) reviewed the teacher's central role and concluded that students generally are willing to communicate with their teachers. In a study conducted in the Iranian context, Riasati (2012) used interviews to investigate Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of factors that affect their willingness to speak English in language classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative design. To be more precise, this study uses a case study (Harland, 2014) to investigate the teacher's encouragement factors that can influence five EFL students' willingness to communicate. This case study research is intended to provide an in-depth overview of new or obscure phenomena while still 'retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (Hartley, 2004 in Phelan, 2011).



Table 1. Demographic Profile Participant

No	Participants' Names	Gender	Age	Semester
1	A	Male	21	7
2	B	Female	19	6
3	C	Female	21	7
4	D	Female	21	6
5	E	Female	20	6

The data for this study were collected using two instruments: reflection and online interviews. Typically, this reflection involves using an open questionnaire by Creswell (2012) via Google form to fill in the participants' answers. Through this reflection, the researcher designed questions without answer choices so that participants could provide in-depth information regarding the research problem by using the answers they provided. Then the questions were designed using Indonesian to make participants easy to answer and avoid misunderstanding in interpreting each question. In addition, it can also help participants express their ideas freely and more broadly in writing reflection. Meanwhile, using an online interview as a second instrument to clarify the data, as expected by the researcher. This online interview was conducted via WhatsApp messenger for each participant.

The data from the reflection and online interview were analyzed by taking the steps of thematic analysis proposed by Creswell (2010), which involved three procedures: collecting data, preparing the data for analyzing, reading through the data, coding the data, and coding the text for themes and description to be presented in the finding section. Therefore, the researcher used the thematic analysis method discussed in a study (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and then color-coding (Bianco, Schettini, & Gasparini, 2014). Of the six questions on student reflection and online interview data, the researcher chose four questions that contained the most relevant and needed responses for analysis. The other two questions become new findings in this study. Moreover, the theory about teacher's wait time, error correction, and teacher support by Zarrinabadi (2014) and teacher's strategy by Vongsila (2016) was used to categorizing the data themes.

RESULT

The finding of the data analysis showed four main themes, namely (1) teacher's wait time; (2) error correction; (3) teacher's support; and (4) teacher's strategy.

Teacher's Wait Time

The teacher's wait time in this context is intended as a form of teacher encouragement in communicating in speaking class. Students use the teacher's wait time to think of ideas or develop vocabulary before speaking. However, the teacher's wait time for EFL students in responding to the teachers gave varying results on their willingness to communicate, such as the teacher's wait time affecting WTC, the teacher's wait time not affecting WTC, and the teacher's wait time depending on the question. As participant P1 revealed:



“... Responding to questions from teachers quickly is very difficult because there are very few ideas in the head. So, the teacher's wait time is very influential, and I need a long time. ...Sometimes the wait time to babble becomes the case that a speech error occurs...” (P1)

The quote admits that the teacher's wait time affects his willingness to communicate. He takes a long time to respond to the teacher because he has to think of ideas before speaking. Thus, it is difficult to respond to teachers quickly. He argues that if the pause time is too fast, it will lead to speech errors.

In addition, one participant responded to the same idea as P1's previous response regarding the effect of a teacher's wait time on their WTC. However, the teacher's wait time is not only for thinking about ideas. Sentence preparation also turns out to require time before speaking. To that, P4 says:

“...wait time to answer questions is certainly more beneficial for students. ...usually, I am better able to compose words or make important points (take notes) before speaking or responding to questions posed by the teacher.” (P4)

Furthermore, the teacher's wait time for students' willingness to communicate depends on the questions. If the question is complex, students need a long time. Meanwhile, if the question is easy, the student immediately answers. However, in this case, students still have the willingness to communicate. As expressed by P2 and P5 in their reflections:

“To answer the teacher's questions in class depends on the questions. If the level is difficult, I need about 1 minute to think about what I will say. However, if the question is easy, I can immediately answer it. ...” (P2, P5)

Meanwhile, the teacher's wait time does not affect the willingness of EFL students. The willingness of students to speak is influenced by themselves, such as having ideas. As stated by P3:

“I do not think the teacher's wait time encourages me to speak in speaking class. Because from experience, I have never been asked a question with a time limit. I'm the only one who sometimes feels uneasy if I linger for a long time, making the teacher wait for me to speak. ... Up until now, I only spoke when I wanted to and had my ideas.” (P3)

In the quote, she admitted that the teacher's wait time did not affect her willingness to speak. Because she was never asked a question with a time limit, however, she quickly responded, so the teachers didn't have to wait long. She desires to speak when he has an idea or is based on her willingness.

Error Correction

Error correction in this context forms a supportive environment in speaking class. This affects their willingness to communicate in speaking class. The study's findings showed that all



students responded positively to the corrections given by the teacher. However, the reasons for the positive responses varied. This is illustrated in the reflection's answer:

“...I feel pleased and usually will record all the entries given. Giving corrections/feedback is always positive and constructive. Thus, I always feel happy and motivated to talk...” (P4)

From her response, she was happy with the correction given by the teacher. It records all the input given. Giving corrections is a positive and constructive thing for her speaking ability. Meanwhile, giving corrections also motivates her to always speak in speaking classes. So, the Feedback or corrections given is beneficial for her.

The same response came from the other three participants. They were happy with the correction from the teacher after they spoke. Some of the reasons that make them happy, such as the corrections given, can explore their potential and develop an understanding of speaking, identify mistakes, and feel cared for by the teachers.

“Feedback is part of my academic life. I am always given criticism of my speech which is always fast when I want to speak in front of the teacher. ...but it didn't stop my enthusiasm to learn and continue to speak in class and explore my potential in developing my understanding of speaking English.” (P1)

“I am thrilled because I can find out where I went wrong when answering questions. So that it can help my speaking. Besides that, I still want to talk because the feedback given is positive. ...” (P2)

“...I think the teacher listened well to my ideas. So I'm happy to get any feedback or corrections.”

Meanwhile, the response to error correction in student communication gave a different response. One student wrote that he classified her response into two aspects: personally and in general. On the one hand, she doesn't like corrections. However, on the other hand, it depends on how much correction is given. As stated by P3:

" I do not like corrections. ...I think the correction only embarrasses me in front of other friends, especially with my substandard abilities. ...if corrections are made in a class with lots of friends watching, I'm not happy. Correction is okay for me in privacy. It will maintain my willingness to learn to continue to develop myself and want to talk. In general, I like correction if it is measured in terms of the number of corrections, the number of people who are corrected, and the type of correction language provided by the teacher. First, if the amount of correction is small, I am satisfied. ...Secondly, if the number of people being corrected is large, I feel at ease. ...Thirdly, if the language used by the teacher is good, I feel a little appreciated...” (P3)

From the expression above, the feeling or response to the correction depends on many things. However, she did not want to be self-corrected or corrected in front of many people. In



addition, good language selection is also essential for her because she feels valued. However, the correction is given still affects her willingness to speak or develop herself.

Teacher's Support

Teacher's support in this context is a form of support provided by the teacher to influence students' speaking desire in speaking class. Several forms of support are provided, such as motivation, Feedback, attention, tips, and good treatment. However, motivational words were the most common support influencing their willingness to speak. As expressed in the reflection:

“The teacher gives motivation. The words used are "come on, do not be afraid to talk, I do not want to be angry," or "let it be the wrong because sir will still love." (P2)

Meanwhile, other participants expressed the same opinion. Words of motivation are a form of support that impacts their WTC. However, it is different from those who express one form of support. These four participants expressed different forms of support. As stated by P1:

“...teachers drive my motivation, oral Feedback, and written Feedback. Motivational words that I will always remember...remind us of our parents and the purpose of our being on campus and the great hope of parents seeing their children be fluent in speaking English. It touched my mind and heart to always explore myself speaking in class. The oral Feedback that I often get is in the form of encouragement to continue speaking using various ideas; that encouragement is what I always use as a benchmark until now to speak when he tells me to. Next, write Feedback; now, I make all of this a powerful impetus for developing my language in his class. The written Feedback is in the form of a review of the results of his learning process in speaking class, ...” (P1)

In the point above, he revealed that three forms of support could encourage his willingness to speak in speaking class. The first is words of motivation. The form of motivation given here is that the teacher reminds the parents of their children's expectations. Second, oral Feedback in the form of encouragement to continue talking using various ideas. Third, written Feedback is a review of the results of the learning process in the speaking class. These three supports became a strong impetus for him.

In addition, P4 expressed other support through tips the teachers gave, and the teachers always reminded the students. As he mentions in his reflection:

“...the encouragement that is always given is usually in the form of motivation and tips for success, such as how to improve public speaking skills in front of people. ...” (P4)

The tips to support students' willingness to speak are tips for success. For example, improving speaking skills, maintaining health, and so on. Meanwhile, teachers provide helpful videos about various things related to self-awareness, patience, and perseverance in learning. All the videos provided are in English.



“...the teacher gives apperception through words. When speaking in speaking class, the motivational words are also different. When I speak well, the words that tend to be spoken are "Excellent, Amazing, etc." whereas when I speak poorly, the words that come out are usually only "Good job." (P5)

She revealed that her support is given through motivation in the points above. In addition, the teacher showed different words of motivation. Motivational words are given differently when he speaks correctly and poorly.

Furthermore, another student also revealed that motivational words affected his WTC. However, he felt the urge when the teacher gave evidence of a good treat. Meanwhile, the teachers in the speaking class were very good at both things. So, he felt compelled to want to communicate in speaking class. As stated by P3:

“I am interested in motivation and will only be interested in motivation if there are good examples to prove and treat. My speaking teacher is very interested in providing motivation. So that both things are heeded and the cause I feel compelled to communicate.” (P3)

Teacher’s Strategy

Teacher strategy in this context is a strategy used by teachers in influencing students' willingness to speak in speaking class. In this study, the teacher's strategies that influence students' WTC include self-perceived speaking ability, group size, self-confidence, selection of task type, topic familiarity, and class atmosphere to build communication in the speaking class. Meanwhile, group size strategy or small groups are used by giving different topics. As narrated by P1:

“...The teacher's strategy is to always make discussion methods in class or group size. Previously he asked us to talk by taking a different theme. We were told to share ideas with our friends and also exchange ideas. ...” (P1)

At this point, he said that two strategies could affect his willingness to speak. The strategy is a group size or small group by giving different topics. According to him, this strategy is advantageous because it can help when he is tired of thinking about what he wants to say so that he can issue many varied ideas.

Furthermore, the same strategy is also felt by P5. The group size strategy is also a valuable strategy for her. As explained in his reflection:

“...the pair work method. So, we are often placed to sit in pairs and discuss with friends. With this method, I want to talk in class because I think they are my friends who are my interlocutors, not teachers, so I don't need to be embarrassed.”

Meanwhile, motivating self-perceived speaking ability and self-confidence is also a strategy that can influence students' willingness to speak. As P2 explains in his reflection:



“1 Providing motivation: speaking teachers often provide motivation such as "in learning, we have to be wrong. No one suddenly becomes smart." 2. Connecting with reality: an example of what the teacher said, "your parents are tired of paying tuition fees, but you were told to talk a little and don't want to." (P2)

Furthermore, the teacher's strategy of giving videos as a selection of task type was the choice of two students. As P4 and P5 explained:

"...Watching videos; usually, before the material is given, the teacher will play a short video in English or with English subtitles. Then, the teacher will ask some questions about the video. In these situations, I'm usually compelled to speak up and reveal what I know (even if it's a little). ...” (P4)

“...the teacher gives a video link to watch... a week before the lecture, which will be discussed at the next meeting. (P5)

However, they did not mention only one strategy. These two students mentioned other strategies. Feedback as a self-perceived speaking ability strategy is also part that influences students' willingness to speak. As stated by P5:

“... Giving Feedback when we finish talking has the same effect on me. So if, for example, I finished speaking in a speaking class and the teacher gave me Feedback, I became excited to talk again because I felt the teacher cared for me. And if, for example, the Feedback given is not good, there is an urge to speak again in the future because there are changes that I have to show on the next opportunity I speak.” (P5)

Furthermore, P4 mentions two other strategies: reporting the results of reading as a topic familiarity strategy and telling daily activities as a class atmosphere. As explained in his reflection:

“...Reporting the reading; On other occasions, teachers will also usually ask questions related to books, articles/journals, magazines, or anything related to student reading. ...3. Telling about a thing; Sometimes, the teacher starts the class by provoking students to talk about their activities, hobbies, hobbies, or anything that can make students talk. We call this a sharing session before class. ...” (P4)

From the statement above, the strategy that can encourage him to speak is when he is tasked with reporting the results of his reading. Or sometimes, he is asked to tell about anything, for example, what he likes, or he calls it a sharing session.

DISCUSSION

Willingness to communicate is vital in facilitating students' language learning and improving their communicative abilities. In addition, their achievement and involvement or participation in class are also influenced by their desire to communicate. Meanwhile, one of the



driving factors for WTC is teacher encouragement. In line with Zeldin & Pajares (2000) stated that teacher encouragement is the most crucial factor contributing to speaking. The results of the study show that the teacher's encouragement includes (1) the teacher's wait time, (2) error correction, (3) the teacher's support, and (4) the teacher's strategy.

Research findings reveal that teachers' wait time influences most students to communicate in speaking class. Students cannot respond quickly to their lecturers because they have to think of ideas before responding to the teacher. Meanwhile, without a wait time or the wait time is only a short time, it will affect speech errors, making the language difficult for listeners to understand. Following the results of previous research (Alsaadi and Atar, 2019), they state that waiting time is the element of the questioning strategy to enhance the students' thinking and valuable interaction in the classroom context fashion. Zarrinabadi (2014) states that the teacher's wait time to receive responses affects students' willingness to communicate and their speaking quality. In this study, the increase in waiting time appeared to be essential for students who tended to think longer about their answers before starting to respond. Meanwhile, the short time allotted to his students seemed to lead to errors in their answers and reluctance to speak.

In addition, the results of this study report that the duration of the required waiting time depends on the quality of the questions. The quality of the question in question is difficult or easy. In this study, it took them a little longer if the questions were challenging to answer, whereas if the questions given were easy, they would immediately answer them. One student wrote that he needed 1 minute to think before responding. In contrast to the results of previous studies (Daslin & Zainil, 2020), which stated that the waiting time given by the teacher was only around 1-2 seconds. In addition, Wragg and Brown (2001) suggest giving students more time to think for 3-5 seconds which will help them to give good answers. The same result was also revealed in Takayoshi and Ittersum's (2018) research that teachers might have to wait longer than 3 to 5 seconds.

Furthermore, one of the motivational factors influencing students' willingness to communicate is error correction. In this study, two different responses were found from the participants' reflections, such as error correction can affect and cannot affect students' WTC. However, the results showed that most of the students got the effect of error correction on their desire to speak that did not get the effect. Four students experienced the results of the study which showed affected by WTC. They gave varied responses. One respondent reported: "Feedback is a part of my academic life; it makes me very worried and sad. However, it did not dampen my enthusiasm to learn and explore my potential in developing my understanding of speaking English." Other students also responded well to the Feedback because they could find out where their mistakes were constructive corrections and felt cared for.

Meanwhile, the results showed the unaffected WTC experienced by one student. She gave a response from two sides, such as personal and general. She feels insecure, especially if she gets Feedback alone. In this case, she seems inferior when corrected in public, so she always tries to give her best so as not to make mistakes. This is in line with Kang's (2005) research that error correction is closely related to whether students feel safe or insecure, and teachers try to create a



safe environment in the classroom so that no one threatens students if they want to make mistakes.

Furthermore, she is generally happy with the Feedback. However, this is felt when measured by the number of corrections, how many people were corrected, and the language used. However, it is not known how practical the effect of Feedback is on their willingness to talk and how much encouragement is given. This study's results align with MacIntyre (2011), who reviewed Feedback from teachers as a factor influencing students' WTC but did not draw general conclusions about the effect of error correction.

Furthermore, teacher support was also affecting students' willingness to communicate. This factor is a determining and significant factor that affects their WTC (Wen & Clement, 2003). In the context of this study, the forms of support provided by the teacher include words of motivation, Feedback, tips, and good treatment. The form of support given through words of motivation is the most common. Most of the participants revealed that one of the supports given by the teacher was words of motivation.

Meanwhile, other participants received motivational words in the form of praise. As stated by P5: "When I speak well, the words that tend to be spoken are "Excellent, Amazing, etc." whereas when I speak less, the words that come out are usually only "Good job." This proves that the choice of good words or praise can encourage students. This is in line with Tse's (2000) research which states that teacher support contributes to language progress and students' interest in language learning.

Meanwhile, three other participants also expressed the same about motivational words as a form of support. He explained that the motivational words were related to parents' expectations for their children's education. So that these words touch his mind and heart, he wants to continue exploring his potential and always wants to speak in speaking classes. However, one student observed that teacher support would have an effect when it was proven by good treatment. If the motivation and treatment are given simultaneously or can be proven, then it can increase their motivation.

Furthermore, teacher support is also provided in the form of Feedback. This Feedback is given orally or in writing, regarding the oral Feedback given in the form of encouragement to continue talking using various ideas. Meanwhile, written Feedback is in the form of a review of the results of the learning process in the speaking class. This encourages students and takes this as a benchmark. In addition, the Feedback provided can be used as evaluation material after students find out the type of error they made.

Meanwhile, a student reported the form of support provided by the teacher in the form of success tips. These tips are given in videos or just telling tips on speaking skills in front of a crowd. In addition, the other tips provided cover various topics such as study tips and maintaining health. However, all the videos provided are in English, so they can learn from them and improve their language skills.

Meanwhile, the teacher's strategy in this context is used by the teacher to influence the students' willingness to speak in the speaking class. The teacher's strategy in this context is the strategy used by the teacher to influence the students' willingness to speak in the speaking class.



In this study, the teacher's strategies that influence students' WTC include self-perceived speaking ability, group size, self-confidence, selection of task type, topic familiarity, and class atmosphere to build student communication in the speaking class.

The results of this study indicate that group size includes think-pair-share and small groups by providing different topics. As told by P1: "The strategy used by the teachers is always to carry out the discussion method in class or think-pair-share. Previously he asked us to talk by taking a different theme. We were told to share ideas with our friends and also share ideas". This strategy is advantageous because it can help when they are tired of thinking about what he wants to say so they can come up with many varied ideas.

Meanwhile, giving motivation as a self-perceived speaking ability and self-confidence is also a strategy that can influence students' willingness to speak. This strategy is included in the effective strategy. As explained by P2 in his reflection: "1 providing motivation: speaking teachers often provide motivation such as "in learning, we must be wrong, no one suddenly becomes smart." 2. Connecting with reality: an example of what a teacher said, "your parents are tired of paying school fees, but you are told to talk a little and don't want to." Furthermore, the strategy of giving videos by teachers is the choice of two students. As explained by P5: "the teacher provides a video link to watch... a week before the lecture and will be discussed at the next meeting".

However, they did not mention just one strategy. These two students mentioned another strategy. Feedback is also a form of self-perceived speaking ability that affects students' willingness to speak. Next, P4 mentions two other strategies: reporting the results of reading as a topic familiarity and telling stories as a class atmosphere strategy. As explained in his reflection: "On other occasions, the teacher will also usually ask questions related to books, articles/journals, magazines, or anything related to student reading, and sometimes the teacher starts the class by inviting students to tell stories about activities, hobbies, or whatever."

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the effect of teacher encouragement factors on EFL students' willingness to communicate in speaking class. The results of this study reveal that there are four principal teacher factors. Meanwhile, there is also one new finding apart from the teacher's factor: students with self-motivation.

Four teacher factors influencing student interest include teacher's wait time, error correction, teacher support, and teacher strategy. In the context of this study, student reflections show that teacher wait time could have an effect and does not have an effect. Meanwhile, students mentioned that the wait time depends on the questions given. Furthermore, error correction affects most students; one cannot be influenced by the error correction given by the teacher. Meanwhile, the teacher's support provided by the teacher is in the form of motivation, Feedback, good treatment, and tips for success. The teacher always reminds and gives appreciation which is shown through words or facial expressions.

Furthermore, one new variable from the teacher factor is the teacher's strategy. Meanwhile, another finding is self-motivation which is encouragement from the students themselves. Based



on the result analysis, there are several strategies used by teachers. In this study, the teacher's strategies that influence students' WTC include self-perceived speaking ability, group size, self-confidence, selection of task type, topic familiarity, and class atmosphere. Meanwhile, self-encouragement factors include potential, self-confidence, preparation, material mastery, and ideas. This study shows that self-motivation also affects their willingness to speak in speaking class.

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