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EFL students' WTC across communicative situations in an instructional context: a quantitative study with focus on a public university in Ethiopia

Dereje Teshome Abebe

Jimma University, Ethiopia

derejetesh@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite its crucial importance and being a topical issue in the current SLA research, EFL students' WTC has received little attention in the Ethiopian educational context. The current study therefore aimed to explore EFL students' WTC across communicative situations in an Ethiopian higher education instructional context. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from a randomly selected sample of 258 first-year EFL students taking "Communicative English skills" courses in Werabe University, one of the public universities in Ethiopia. The data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the target students' WTC varies across communicative situations. While *Topic enticement*, *Off-instruction communication* and *Integrative orientation* were found triggering students' WTC, *low perceived competence*, *communication anxiety*, *low learning responsibility*, and *classroom conditions* (in part) were found hampering the students' WTC in the class. The finding is believed to be useful reference especially for teachers to help achieve the desired goal of ESL/EFL instruction.

Key words: communicative situations; Ethiopian context; first-year EFL students; WTC

1. Introduction

The study of second language acquisition (SLA) has undergone several progressive changes, from the mastery of structures up to the ability to use the target language for communicative purposes. The ability to communicate has particularly been emphasized as active engagement in communication (the actual use of the target language) is regarded as the best way of developing competence in the target L2 (Long, 1996; Swain, 2000). Communicative language teaching (CLT) has therefore become one of the current approaches used in teaching a target second/foreign language. CLT emphasizes the development of oral communicative skill through the inevitable use of authentic inputs and social interactions (Liu, 2005). According to Lue, CLT accentuates oral interactions or process of communication rather than mere mastery of language forms or structures. It essentially prioritizes meaning, as the speaking skill develops through meaningful communications.

Notwithstanding its contribution, CLT does not however take into consideration the impact of L2 learners' individual and situational/contextual variables despite its emphasis on authentic input and social interactions (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This implies that the availability of authentic inputs and social interactions alone is not sufficient for L2 learners to develop the desired oral communicative competence in the target language. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), there should also be L2 learners' desire or willingness to communicate (WTC) in different communicative situations. The learners need to have high level of willingness to communicate or participate in oral communicative opportunities (Dornyei, 2003). The higher is the willingness of the students to participate in oral communications opportunities, the higher is the likelihood of improving their oral communicative skills (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). The degree to which the students are willing or unwilling to communicate when they have the opportunities to do so therefore determines the level of competence desired to acquire/develop in the target language. If L2 learners are more willing to communicate in different communicative contexts, it is highly likely that they will significantly improve their speaking skills (Larsen-Freeman, 2007).

The current SLA approach has therefore given emphasis to L2 learners' WTC, as "engender[ing] in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them" is regarded as both the means and end of a second/foreign language education (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) define L2 willingness to communicate as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2". They also developed a comprehensive pyramid-shaped situational heuristic model composed of psychological, social, linguistic, communication and other

potential variables to describe, explain and predict L2 learners' WTC. The proposed model is composed of six layers grouped into enduring, distal variables (social and individual context, affective-cognitive context and motivational propensities) and proximal, transient variables (situated antecedents, behavioral intention and communication behavior). According to the authors, the convergence of the influences of various enduring and situated variables underpin WTC and, as a result, determine the probability of L2 use at a specific moment (Yashima, 2019).

The model was regarded as "the first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of WTC in the L2" (MacIntyre, et al., 1998, p. 558) as claimed by the authors themselves. This claim seems to have inspired subsequent studies and, as a result, a bulk of studies flourished mostly in the Western and Asian contexts with the intention of examining the comprehensiveness of the model in addressing the issue of L2 learners' WTC in different cultural settings, and at the same time to identify additional culture-specific variables, if any. The results of the studies in general came up with two broad classes of variables (individual and situational) as hypothesized in the heuristic model. Most of the earlier studies focused on the trait-like, enduring, psychological variables following quantitative research design and using psychometric scales. Investigators of the earlier studies focused on the influences of the variables under the lower three layers of the model: the enduring, psychological variables (Henry et al., 2024; Yashima, 2019). The findings of the studies indicate that L2 learners' WTC is associated with relatively stable and enduring psychological predispositions such as motivation, communication anxiety, L2 competence and communicative confidence (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Yashima, 2019). The results in general reveal that the relatively stable long-term psychological variables significantly influence L2 learners' WTC. In addition, further studies have also identified additional contextually relevant variables. Yashima (2002), for instance, identified 'international posture' to describe Japanese L2 learners' attitudes toward an international community. Wen and Clément (2003) also proposed the social and cultural orientations as most significantly describing and explaining factors of the Chinese EFL learners' WTC. Other researchers such as Fushino (2010), Khajavy et al. (2018) and Peng and Woodrow (2010), viewing it from ecological perspective, also identified classroom environment, which includes teacher support, student cohesiveness, task orientation and the like, as significant predictor of L2 learners' WTC.

The latter studies looked into L2 learners' WTC from the micro perspective through a qualitative research approach. The studies have seen L2 WTC as a situationally emerging state of willingness to interact in a specific moment instead of being a long-lasting, stable psychological trait. The first study to be mentioned in this regard is that of Kang (2005). Based on her study conducted qualitatively on four male Korean students at an American university for a period of eight months, Kang identified three antecedents: security, excitement, and responsibility. Security refers to the feeling of being free from fear and being secured. Excitement is a feeling of enjoyment while Responsibility is about having the feeling of obligation to understand and elucidate messages that come from personal, interpersonal, or intergroup communications. According to Kang, L2 learners' WTC is the one that emerges as the interplay of the three psychological factors and the situational variables such as topic, interlocutor and conversational context. Cao and Philp (2006) also studied relationships between the trait-level, psychological WTC and actual communication behavior of Asian and European L2 learners' WTC in three interactional situations: pair work, group work and whole class. The findings revealed that situational WTC is the result of the interactions among the contextual variables such as topic knowledge, group size, self-confidence cultural background and familiarity with interlocutors. The study also revealed no correlation between trait and situational WTC. Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2014, 2015) reported the emergence of situational WTC as a result of the interaction of such variables as presence or absence of teacher, degree of familiarity with interlocutor and having ideas to share with other.

L2 learners' situational WTC has also been approached from a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) perspective after the publication of Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) highly influential book on CDST. MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) developed an idiodynamic method based on a CDST framework to examine the dynamic, moment-to-moment shifting state of situated WTC. The result revealed that the time it takes to search for words in memory significantly lowered L2 learners' WTC. Other studies have also been conducted by different researchers such as Bernales (2016), Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2016), Yu (2015) and Yashima et al. (2018), to mention a few, and came up with different situated L2 WTC. Bernales (2016), for instance concluded that "social, contextual, and individual variables affected learners' decisions to speak up or stay silent when the circumstances called for spoken participation in class" (Jianguang et al., 2023, p. 35). Generally, the earlier studies carried out on L2 learners' WTC focused on the enduring, trait-like L2 WTC while the later ones stressed the dynamic situational/contextual L2 WTC. The combination of the two approaches unarguably brings better and deeper understanding of L2 learners' WTC in a specific moment as a result of the convergence (complex interaction) of individual and situational variables.

The studies carried out so far, from psychological to situational perspectives, in general, have made significant strides, and significantly broadened and advanced our understanding of L2 learners' WTC. However, the geographical limitation of these studies to certain areas, mostly Western and Asian contexts, such as USA, Canada,

Japan, Korea, Turkey and China (Cameron, 2013; Ma et al., 2023), urges the need to expand studies in the other little explored areas, as situational L2 WTC may vary culture to culture. The Ethiopian context is among those little explored areas where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). In Ethiopia, English is a compulsory academic subject in all primary and secondary schools. In addition, it is also used as medium of instruction starting from secondary school up to tertiary levels. Moreover, it is also one of the fields of study in higher educational institutions in the country. Students are expected to have good command (communicative skills) of the language to effectively pursue their academic careers and beyond.

However, as already discussed, despite the crucial importance of L2WTC and being a topical issue in the current SLA research, little is known so far about this construct in Ethiopian unique cultural setting. The extant of scant studies on Ethiopian EFL students' WTC has therefore led to the inception of the current study. Studying L2 learners' WTC in such little explored areas might help to expand and broaden our understanding of the subject matter. In addition, it might also help to address pedagogical issues related to the target EFL students' WTC in the current particular context. Review of literature on the topic (Ethiopian EFL students' WTC) identified only a single study (Welesilassie & Nikolov, 2024). The researchers investigated the relationship among EFL learners' motivational self-system, willingness to communicate, and self-assessed proficiency at an Ethiopian preparatory high school. In this study, the researchers identified self-assessed English proficiency as having "statistically significant positive predictive effects on L2WTC within and outside the classroom" (p. 1). They have also reported that ideal L2 self has no significant effect on the target students' WTC outside classroom. No other study is however found that attempted to explore EFL students' WTC.

Inspired by this gap, the current study, therefore, aimed to explore EFL students' WTC across six communicative situations based on Khatib and Nourzadeh (2015) Instructional Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire (IWTC). The communicative situations included in the IWTC questionnaire are: Communicative self-confidence, Integrative orientation Situational context of L2 use, Topical enticement, Learning responsibility and Off-instruction communication. The study hence examined the target students' willingness in each of the six communicative situations. It specifically focused on answering the research question:

- How willing are the target students to communicate orally in English in different communicative situations in Ethiopian higher education instructional context, and what factors contribute to their willingness or unwillingness?

II. Method

Design

The current study followed a quantitative approach using descriptive research design and collected numerical data using Khatib and Nourzadeh (2015) Instructional Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire (IWTC).

Setting

The study was conducted on the 2023/2024 entry first-year undergraduate students of Werabe University, a public university located in Werabe Town, Central Ethiopia Regional State, Ethiopia. In their first year, students take compulsory communicative English (EFL) courses for two consecutive semesters. The courses are intended to prepare students to have good command of the language for academic (as English is medium of instruction) and social purposes. The study thus focused on first-year students as communicative courses are given during their first year.

Population and sample

Population of the current study were 2023/2024 academic year fresh entry undergraduate students of Werabe University. According to the Ethiopian education policy, first-year (fresh) students are usually streamed in to the natural and social sciences and take common courses such as 'Communicative English skills' before they join their respective departments in the second year. There were totally 35 sections (19 natural science and 16 social science sections) of 2023/2024 fresh entry students, each section with 50 students on average. Five sections (larger than rule of thumb 10% of population) were randomly selected as a sample for the current study. The total number of students in the five sections was 258. The participants age ranges from 18 to 22 with a mean age of 20.3 years.

Instruments

As already mentioned, Khatib and Nourzadeh (2015) Instructional Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire (IWTC) was used for the current study. The IWTC questionnaire consists of 27 items with five-point Likert-style anchors from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), and the items are grouped into six communicative situations: Communicative self-confidence, Integrative orientation Situational context of L2 use, Topical enticement, Learning

responsibility and Off-instruction communication. The scale as a whole was reported to have a high internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha 0.92 and the subscales alphas range from 0.65 to 0.80. The researcher also made a Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis and found that it has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.893$). The content validity was evaluated and validated by an expert judgment. The scale was used as it is except for the name 'Persian' is changed to 'Ethiopian' on item no. 27 to match the study setting.

Data collection

The data was collected face-to-face. The researcher with an assistant first contacted the sample students and explained the purpose and significance of the study. Then, the researcher requested for their willingness to participate in the study, assuring them that no personal data is collected and the information obtained will be kept confidential. Upon receiving their consent, time arrangements were made according to convenience for them to fill the questionnaire. Finally, the questionnaires were distributed for each sample section in respective classroom according to the pre-arranged time schedule, and collected after the filling was completed.

Data analysis

The data collected was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software version 25.

III. Results and discussions

As already set in the objective, the current study examined how willing the target students were to communicate orally in English in different communicative situations and what factors contribute to their willingness or unwillingness in Ethiopian higher education instructional context. This section therefore presents findings of analysis of the data gathered through the IWTC questionnaire, designed and validated by Khatib and Nourzadeh (2015). The first section presents demographic information of the respondents followed by the second section, results of analysis of the main data.

3.1 Demographic information

Tab. 1: Demographic information of the respondents (N=258)

	Sex		Total number of participant	Age range
	Male	Female		
Participant	141 (54.7%)	117 (45.3%)	258	18-22
Study setting	Werabe University (2022/2023 Academic year Fresh entry students)			

As can be seen from Table 1 above, the total number of participants involved in the study were 258 students. Of this number, 141 (54.7%) were male students while the remaining 117 (45.3%) were female students. The study was conducted on 2023/2024 academic year, fresh entry students of Werabe University, one of the public universities in Ethiopia. The students age ranges 18 to 22 with average age of 20.3 years.

3.2 Results of analysis of the data from the six communicative situations

I. Communicative self-confidence

Tab. 2: Communicative self-confidence (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
6	talk in group-work language-learning activities.	3.56	0.712
14	give a presentation in front of your classmates.	2.41	0.742
16	speak even if you know your classmates are better than you at speaking English.	2.31	0.941
21	speak even if your language mistakes are frequently corrected by the teacher.	2.23	0.914
7	speak if other students laugh at your language mistakes.	1.82	0.831

Table 2 above presents the participants' average ratings of their perception of confidence to talk in group work, to speak with peers better in language than them, to keep on speaking even though they are laughed at by peers and corrected by the teacher when making mistakes. As can be seen from the table, the participants showed willingness in only one communicative situation: 'talking in group-work language learning activities' ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 0.712$). In the other situations such as giving presentation in front of the class ($M = 2.41$; $SD = 0.742$), speaking in front of better in language classmates ($M = 2.31$; $SD = 0.941$), keeping on speaking when the teacher corrects their mistakes ($M = 2.23$;

SD=0.914) and keeping on speaking even if other students are laughing ($M= 1.82$; $SD=0.831$), the students were found less willing to participate in those communicative situations.

Compared to the other situations, the students seem to be more confident to speak in group-work English language learning activities than the others. The students have been confident in the group activities because they might be grouped with their friends in pairs or small groups; so, they may feel freedom than in the other situations. This finding is consistent with findings of the studies by Bensalem and Thompson (2021), Cao and Philp (2006), Cetinkaya (2005) and Lahuerta (2014) that stress the influence of group size on L2 learners' WTC.

On the other hand, the students appeared to have lacked confidence in the other situations. This may be due to experiencing anxiety when thinking of speaking in front of their classmates who are better in the language than them. In addition, they may also feel anxiety due to teachers' correction and peers' laugh when they make mistakes. The students' low communicative self-confidence may therefore be associated with high anxiety resulting in low willingness to participate in the above situations. This finding aligns with some studies which identified anxiety as one of the most affecting factors of L2 learners' WTC (Kalsoom et al., 2020; Rastegar & Karami, 2015; Shanti Manipuspika, 2018). In addition, the study also showed how teachers' correction and peers' laugh when making mistakes have negatively impacted the students' WTC. This also aligns with previous studies such as Fatemi et al. (2016), Montazeri and Salimi (2019), Peng and Woodrow (2010), Sa'adah et al. (2018) and Tavakoli and Zarrinabadi (2018) that identified teachers feedback and student cohesion as affecting L2 learners' WTC.

II. Integrative orientation

Tab. 3: Integrative orientation (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
27	discuss cultural differences between English and Ethiopian people in a group.	3.89	0.773
15	talk to your teacher about English literature.	3.45	0.811
24	talk about the lifestyle of English people in a whole-class discussion.	3.31	1.021
23	have a group discussion about the marriage tradition in English cultures.	3.22	0.831
8	talk to your classmates about the history of English countries.	2.87	0.867

As can be seen from Table 2 above, participants seem to be interested or willing to participate in discussions of cultural differences between English and Ethiopian people in a group ($M= 3.89$; $SD=0.773$) and talk to teacher about English literature ($M= 3.45$; $SD=0.811$). They also appear to be somewhat willing to talk about the lifestyle of English people in a whole-class discussion ($M= 3.31$; $SD=1.021$), to have a group discussion about the marriage tradition in English cultures ($M= 3.22$; $SD=0.831$) and to talk to classmates about the history of English countries ($M= 2.87$; $SD=0.867$).

The students' interest or willingness to participate in the discussion of English peoples' culture, literature, lifestyle, marriage traditions and history may indicate that the students have integrative motivation to be integrated with the culture, tradition and history of the people whose language they are learning as a foreign language (English in this case). As intercultural communication is one of the goals of an L2 learning, demonstrating high willingness in this regard shows the instrumentality of 'integrative orientation' in a L2 learning/acquisition. The finding is in line with the findings of the studies by Adwani and Shrivastava (2017), Gardner (2007), Peng (2007), Yashima (2002), Zoabi (2012) that showed integrative motivation as among the most significant factors influencing L2 learners' WTC. In addition, the students appear to have positive attitude toward the target language and speakers of the language as they have exhibited significant integrative motivation. This is also in line with the findings of Dewaele et al. (2013), Ghonsooly et al. (2012), Peng (2014), Yashima et al. (2004) that identified attitudes towards the language, culture and people significantly impacting L2 learners' WTC.

III. Situational context of L2 use

Tab. 4: Situational context of L2 use (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
11	speak even if you are seated at the back of the classroom.	2.21	0.812
25	speak more when a discussion is related to your own personal experiences.	4.11	0.781
26	speak more when you are in the class of the same language teacher over several terms.	3.22	0.911
4	find opportunities to speak no matter how crowded the classroom is.	2.18	0.777

As Table 4 above shows, under the situational context of L2 use, the participants were found to be less willing to speak when they are seated at the back of the classroom ($M=2.21$; $SD=0.812$). They are instead more willing when a discussion is related to their own personal experiences ($M= 4.11$; $SD=0.781$). They also appear somewhat willing to speak when they are in the class of the same language teacher over several terms ($M= 3.22$; $SD=0.911$). They are however less willing to find opportunities to speak no matter how crowded the classroom is ($M= 2.18$; $SD=0.777$).

From the analysis, it is possible to observe that seating arrangements in the class affects the students' WTC in situational communicative activities. When the students are seated in the front and at the back, they may not equally participate in communicative activities. Peng (2007) asserts that classroom organization influences L2 learners' WTC. Al Thowaihi and Alamoudi (2024) also discussed the impact of seating arrangements on students' motivation to speak. On the other hand, the target students found to be more willing to discussion on topics related to their own personal experiences. It is true that people tend to speak when they have sufficient knowledge on a topic and they are interested in it. This finding aligns with the findings of Riasati (2018) and Cao and Philp (2006) which states that topic familiarity influences L2 learners' WTC.

Large class size (crowded class) was however identified as causing less willingness among the students in different communicative situations. Similar results were also reported by Alenezi (2020), de Saint Léger and Storch (2009), de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) and Yashima et al. (2018).

IV. Topical enticement

Tab. 5: Topical enticement (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
3	talk to your classmates about movies and series.	4.45	0.712
10	talk to your classmates about computer games.	4.42	0.735
13	talk about great artists you know in a group discussion.	4.39	0.811
1	talk about your favorite sport in a whole-class discussion.	4.13	0.821

As Table 5 above indicates, under the topical enticement, the participants were found highly willing to talk to their classmates about movies and series ($M= 4.45$; $SD=0.712$), to talk to their classmates about computer games ($M= 4.42$; $SD=0.735$), to talk about great artists they know in a group discussion ($M= 4.39$; $SD=0.811$) and to talk about their favorite sport in a whole-class discussion ($M= 4.13$; $SD=0.821$).

The participants in general were found to be more willing and interested to talk on enticing topics such as movies and series, computer games, great artists and favorite sports. These topics are more interesting to the students because they might have been related to their everyday life. It may be because the topics are what they might experience every day through watching movies, sports; viewing the story of great artists and the like. This indicates that topics that are close to the students' life style such as technology, art, entertainment and the like significantly boost L2 learners' WTC. This finding corresponds to the findings of Sato (2023), Syed and Kuzborska (2020), Zarrinabadi (2014) and Zulkepli and Hussin (2021) who claim that interesting and familiar topics motivate L2 learners' WTC.

V. Learning responsibility

Tab. 6: Learning responsibility (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
22	ask another student to explain a grammatical point to you.	2.31	0.951
9	raise your hand to ask or answer questions.	2.27	0.863
12	ask your classmate about the correct pronunciation of a word.	2.13	0.852
19	ask your teacher to repeat what he or she has just said if you did not understand it.	2.36	0.874

As Table 6 above shows that the participant-students appear to be less willing to ask another student to explain a grammatical point to them ($M= 2.31$; $SD=0.951$). They are also less willing in the other situations such as raising their hands to ask or answer questions ($M= 2.27$; $SD=0.863$), asking their classmates about the correct pronunciation of a word ($M= 2.13$; $SD=0.852$), and asking their teacher to repeat what he or she has just said if they did not understand it ($M= 2.36$; $SD=0.874$).

This finding may indicate that the students had less self-awareness of their responsibility about their own learning. If students are not fully aware of that learning is their own responsibility, they may become less willing to participate in learning situations. Being reluctant and unable to discharge learning responsibilities properly significantly affects L2 learners' WTC. It may be because of this that students exhibit less willingness to participate in different oral communicative situations. This conclusion aligns with the findings of the studies carried out by Amalia et al. (2019) and Mulyaningsih and Banatul (2022) who reported that learning responsibility is a significant predictor of L2 learners WTC in instructional contexts.

VI. Off-instruction communication

Tab. 7: Off-instruction communication (N=258)

Item	You are willing to:	Mean	SD
2	talk to your classmates when the teacher leaves the classroom for a few moments.	4.22	0.881
20	talk to your classmates outside of the classroom.	4.2	0.813
5	talk with your classmates about your weekends.	4.12	0.82
18	talk to the student sitting next to you before the teacher enters the classroom.	3.34	0.92
17	talk to strange students from other classrooms.	2.32	0.924

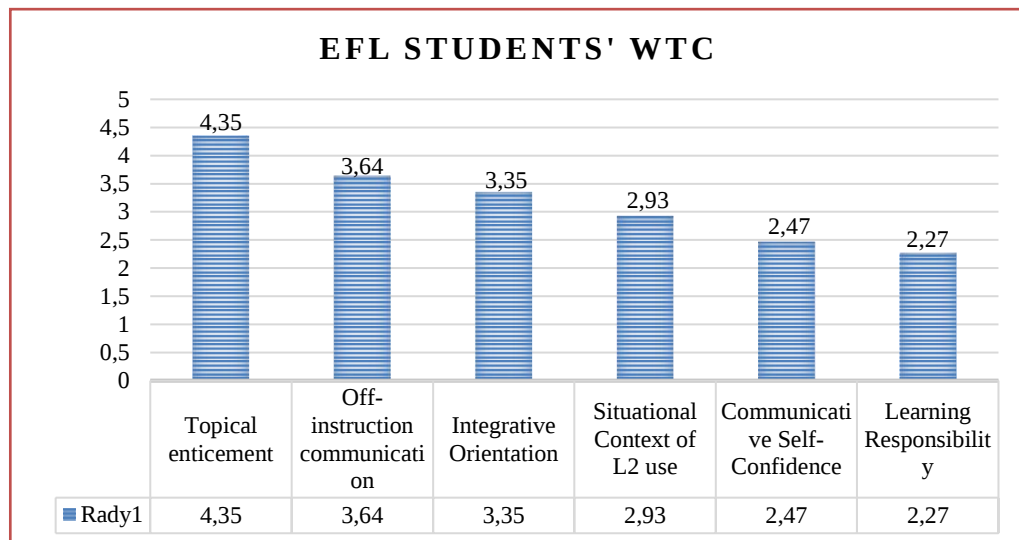
The results in Table 6 above show that participant students are willing to talk to their classmates when the teacher leaves the classroom for a few moments ($M = 4.22$; $SD = 0.881$), to talk to their classmates outside of the classroom ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 0.813$) and to talk with their classmates about their weekends ($M = 4.12$; $SD = 0.820$) when they are off-instructional situations. In the situation of talking to the student sitting next to them before the teacher enters the classroom, it seems that they are somewhat willing ($M = 3.34$; $SD = 0.920$). They are however less willing to talk to strange students from other classrooms ($M = 2.32$; $SD = 0.924$).

When in off-instructional situations, the study participants appear to be more willing to communicate using the target language in different situations except in a situation of talking with a stranger. This may be because of the freedom the students exercise off the formal classroom situations. This implies that the classroom is usually associated with certain level of anxiety which limits the students' freedom and hence willingness to participate in-class communicative situations. Freedom (absence of external deterring factors), autonomy (self-reliance, confidence as a result of freedom) and self-determination (deciding what to do by self without external pressure) are thus significant factors facilitating L2 learners' WTC. On the contrary, lack of freedom, autonomy and self-determination negatively affect L2 learners' WTC. This finding is consistent with the findings of Amalia et al. (2023); Mohammad and Ziba (2019); Muzaffer and Aysel (2021) which claim that learner autonomy and freedom significantly impact L2 learners' WTC.

Tab. 8: Summary of target students' WTC across six communicative situations

No.	Construct	Mean
1	Topical Enticement	4.35
2	Off-instruction communication	3.64
3	Integrative Orientation	3.35
4	Situational Context of L2 use	2.93
5	Communicative Self-Confidence	2.47
6	Learning Responsibility	2.27

Fig. 1: Summary of target students' WTC across six communicative situations



As it can be seen from Table 8 and Figure 1 above, summary of participant-students' WTC across six communicative situations, the target students had varying levels of willingness to communicate in different communicative situations. The students were more willing to participate in oral communicative situations where interesting and enticing topics are raised such as talking about movies, series, favorite sports and renown artists (Topic enticement, $M=4.35$). This may be because these topics are found in everyday life of the students as they usually watch movies, sports and hear the story of celebrities. In addition, this finding also indicates that not only interesting topics but also familiar topics, upon which students have sufficient knowledge, stimulate students' willingness to communicate in an L2 instructional classroom. This suggests the need for teachers to focus on topics that are interesting and familiar to the students and arouse the students' WTC when dealing with interactions or communications in a L2 classroom.

The second situation that the students were found willing to communicate was off-instruction communication ($M=3.64$). As the students feel high freedom with low anxiety in this situation, they are willing to talk using the target language as there is no one they are afraid of and they think that other students are also in similar level of competence in the language. This indicates that oral practice is better exercised in informal settings than the formal classroom conditions. Formal situations are usually associated with some level of anxiety. It is therefore important to lower the formality of classroom situation and facilitate more of informal (friendly) situations. This may help to lower anxiety and increase students' freedom to get involved in oral communicative activities, and hence result in high WTC.

The third situation that the students exhibited willingness to communicate was integrative orientation ($M=3.35$). The students showed interest in talking about the culture, lifestyle, literature and history of the people whose language they are learning as a foreign language (English in this case). This means that the students have an integrative motivation with native speakers of the language. Topics related to the culture of native speakers of the language thus better stimulate students' willingness to participate in communicative situations of such type. In addition, the students appear to have good attitude towards the native speaker and the language as they have exhibited integrative motivation. Teachers need to therefore build on the students' integrative motivation and attitude to advance the students' WTC in different communicative situations.

The fourth situation but students were somewhat willing to communicate was situational context of L2 use ($M=2.93$). This situation includes sitting at the back, finding taking opportunities in crowded classes, taking with same teacher over several terms and taking about personal experiences. The students showed less willingness to talk while sitting in the back, and in finding talking opportunities in crowded classes. On the other hand, they showed interest to talk about personal experiences, and to talk with familiar persons. This indicate that while familiarity of topics and familiarity of interlocuter facilitate L2 learners' WTC, class size (crowded classes) hamper the students' WTC in oral communications.

On the other hand, the students were found having low willingness to communicate in situations such as speaking with peers who are better in language than them, keeping on speaking even though other students (peers) laugh at them when making mistakes, and keeping on speaking while the teacher corrects them when making mistakes. This shows that the students have low communicative self-confidence ($M=2.47$) to communicate in such

challenging situation, which in turn may cause high anxiety. Students' low communicative self-confidence and anxiety are thus among the contributing factors to the students' less willingness (unwillingness) to communicate in different communicative situations. In addition to low communicative self-confidence and anxiety, the target students' poor awareness about their responsibility (inability to take responsibility) for their own learning ($M=2.27$) has been the other factor contributing to the students' low WTC.

Generally, the students' level of WTC was found to be varying from situation to situations due to various factors. In the current study, the students were found more willing and interested in various oral communicative situations such as:

- Where the topics of discussions are interesting, enticing and familiar which include movies, sports, celebrities and the like.
- Where the talks or discussions are made in informal contexts in which the students feel full freedom, autonomy, self-motivation and low anxiety.
- Where the topics of discussion or talks are related to the culture and lifestyle of the native speakers of the language being learnt (English in this case). This arouses the students' integrative motivation resulting in high WTC.
- Where the discussion is made in groups, most likely in pairs and small groups.
- Where interlocutors are friends and closer peers.

On the other hand, as already mentioned, low communicative self-confidence, anxiety, inability to take responsibility for own learning and classroom situations (large class size or crowded class; sitting at the back of the classroom, and talking to strange students coming from other classes) were found to be the factors contributing to the students' unwillingness or reticence to participate in oral communicative activities in instructional contexts.

V. Conclusion

The current study was conducted with the purpose of exploring how willing first-year undergraduate students of Werabe university were to communicate orally in English in different communicative situations and what factors contribute to their willingness or unwillingness in Ethiopian higher education instructional context. The study used Khatib and Nourzadeh (2015) Instructional Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire (IWTC) composed of six components: Perceived confidence, Integrative orientation, Situational context of L2 use, Topical enticement, Learning responsibility, and Off-instruction communication. Overall, it was found out that the target students' willingness to communicate varies across communicative situations. While they were willing to communicate in some situations, they were also found to be unwilling in the other situations. The situations with enticing topics, integrative orientation and off-instruction communications were able to trigger the students' willingness to communicate orally using the target language in the instructional setting.

The most facilitating situation for the target students' willingness to communicate in English is Topic enticement ($M=4.35$). It includes interesting, enticing and familiar topics such as talking about movies, series, favorite sports and renown artists. The second facilitating factor identified in this study is Off-instruction communication ($M=3.64$) where the students exercise freedom, autonomy, self-motivation and low anxiety when communicating off-instructionally or informally. The third enabling situation was integrative orientation ($M=3.35$). This includes topics that focus on the culture and lifestyle of the native people whose language is being learnt by the target students (English in this case). The fourth situation, situational context of L2 use ($M=2.93$), was however found partly facilitating and partly restraining students' WTC. The students were, for instance, less willingness to talk while sitting in the back seat, and in finding talking opportunities in crowded classes. On the other hand, they showed more willingness to talk about their personal experiences, and to talk with familiar persons. Thus, while familiarity of topics and interlocutors facilitate L2 learners' WTC, class size (crowded classes) and seating arrangement (sitting at the back) hamper the students' WTC in oral communication.

The study also identified the situations where the students were less willing to communicate in English in the instructional setting. Situations such as perceived competence (low communicative self-confidence - $M=2.57$, and high communication anxiety), low learning responsibility ($M=2.27$) such as inability to take responsibility for own learning, and classroom situations (large class size or crowded class, sitting at the back of the classroom, and talking to strange students coming from other classes) were found to be hampering the students' WTC.

In conclusion, studies of such kind are believed to be useful references especially for ESL/EFL teachers to help achieve the desired goal of teaching an L2: "engender[ing] in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). Finally, as this study is delimited to only one public university in Ethiopia, further studies are suggested to investigate

more about the factors influencing EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in a specific context and specific situation.

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