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Factors Affecting Foreign Language Teachers' Willingness to Communicate in Second Language

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Abstract

While different models and questionnaires have been devised and used to measure learners' willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC), to date, few scales, if any, can be found to measure foreign language teachers' L2 WTC (FLT WTC). Therefore, the current project was designed to address this gap in the literature through an empirical investigation of the factors affecting FLT WTC. Consistent with an inclusive review of the literature and expert panel consultations, a model of contributing factors to FLT WTC was hypothesized, a representative questionnaire was devised and went through Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis. A large scale of 1044 foreign language teachers participated in different stages of the study. The statistical indices of the study confirmed that the model was fit and the questionnaire established appropriate levels of reliability, and face, content, construct, convergent, and discriminant validity. It was found that teacher perceptions, student traits, classroom atmosphere, classroom settings, and discussion topics play significant roles in FLT WTC. The study can draw the teachers' / institutes' attention to the factors affecting FLT WTC, and the validated questionnaire can be used as an instrument to measure FLT WTC in future studies.

Keywords: willingness to communicate in second language, foreign language teachers, educational psychology, factor analysis, L2 WTC questionnaire

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Concept of WTC

In foreign language settings, where there is not enough opportunity to contact with the target language outside the classroom and the teachers themselves may not be native speakers of the target language, foreign language teachers may use their first language (L1) or second language (L2) to communicate in different situations in their classes (Chambers, 2013; Heller & Grøver, 2021; Molway et al., 2020). Yet, the levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) can be different among different participants in a communication. Proposing the concept of WTC is frequently attributed to McCroskey and Baer (1985), who tried to explicate the reason for people's willingness to speak in their L1. For them, WTC was chiefly a stable trait and part of a person's personality, even though they acknowledged the effect of situational variables on people's WTC. Nevertheless, L1 WTC was later described as the likelihood of starting a communicative act whenever there is a chance to do so (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). In 1996, MacIntyre and Charos first adapted the concept of L1 WTC to L2 communication and learning contexts, detecting several further situational factors, which resulted in a ground-breaking standpoint that considered L2 WTC to be situational (i.e., as a state: changing based on situational factors). Subsequently, MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) defined L2 WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2". They also projected a pyramid-shaped L2 WTC model that outlined different constituents to predict the participants' WTC in L2. Although some researchers (e.g., McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) consider WTC as a stable personality trait, the body of research has recently witnessed a revitalized interest in WTC from a standpoint that regards personality as a changing state (Amirian et al., 2020; Yashima et al., 2018).

1.2. The Significance of the Study

While various studies have investigated the learners' L2 WTC in and outside the classroom (Kruk, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Peng, 2019), the other side of the classroom communication – i.e., the teachers – has unjustifiably been overlooked. To be exact, depending on the situation, foreign language teachers may also represent different levels of L2 WTC for their classroom interactions. Such interactions may not be limited to the instructional input provided by the teachers

as is the case in translanguaging or code-switching (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; Wei, 2018). Rather, teachers may also feel different levels of willingness to communicate in L2 while they want to speak or write to their learners about issues other than the instructional materials (Dhillon & Murray, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Wang & Derakhshan, 2023). However, despite the vast majority of the work on learners' L2 WTC, few, if any, studies have investigated foreign language teachers' willingness to communicate (FLT WTC) and the factors that may contribute to it (Cao & Philp, 2006; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2016; Ayers-Glassey & MacIntyre, 2019). Moreover, Riasati and Rahimi (2018) found that when teachers possess a profound knowledge of the factors that can affect their own and their learners' L2 WTC, they will use more L2 to communicate with the students in the classrooms. Hence, they can create an enhanced L2 teaching and learning context in the classroom.

In addition, in trying to find the factors affecting foreign language teachers' willingness to communicate (FLT WTC), we searched the Internet databases of ERIC, Google Scholar, the British Education Index, and Web of Science up to January 2021, using the keywords "willingness to communicate, second language, foreign language, teachers, questionnaire", and their related terms: "WTC, L2, EFL, English, ESL, instructor, and survey". The search was limited to English-language publications since 1996, the year when MacIntyre and Charos first introduced L2 WTC. It was found that despite a multitude of research on learners' L2 WTC, most of which adopted generic WTC questionnaires like McCroskey's (1992), there was no research, models, or questionnaires to have measured the level of second/foreign language teachers' L2 WTC in different states of foreign language classes. The search results indicated that measuring FLT WTC has long been overlooked both theoretically and practically. Therefore, the present study aims to shed some light on the factors that contribute to FLT WTC by developing and validating an FLT WTC model and questionnaire. Thus, the review of the literature below will first address the factors that affect learners' WTC in order to investigate whether the same variables and/or other factors suggested by the expert panel or the ones found in the process of research can also play significant roles in foreign language teachers' L2 WTC. Then, the studies investigating the factors that can contribute to teachers' use of L2 in the classroom are reviewed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Factors Contributing to Learners' L2 WTC

There is a large body of quantitative and qualitative research that has investigated learners' L2 WTC. Studies have found L2 WTC to be driven by such various factors as self-perceived communicative competence, communication apprehension, ideal L2 selves, learners' L2 proficiency, L2 achievements, gender, international posture, learner beliefs, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, attitudes to the target community, motivation, learners' personality, nationality, L2 linguistic self-confidence, L2 learning experiences, and tolerance of ambiguity (e.g., Abbasi et al., 2021; Kang, 2005; Kruk, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Peng, 2019; Riasati, 2012). All the same, many L2 WTC studies in the last decade have also examined WTC fluctuations in classroom-based contexts and have tried to find the reasons behind the learners' L2 WTC (e.g., Amirian et al., 2020; Dewaele, 2019; Subekti, 2019).

2.1.1. Class Size

It has been suggested that a larger class size can lessen the learners' L2 WTC in classrooms: Aubrey's research (2010), for instance, was conducted in Japanese EFL classes. Class observations of this study confirmed that as the class size increased, students' WTC diminished. The results of data analysis of the interviews used in the study displayed that the students in the larger class had fewer opportunities to communicate than those in a smaller class. Congruently, Khazaei et al. (2012), who compared L2 WTC of Iranian EFL learners in three classes with 5, 10, and 15 members, reported that the participants in the larger class felt more anxious to talk and evaded communication (i.e. less WTC) while students in the smaller classes were more willing to talk as they received more opportunities to build up their confidence and communicate.

2.1.2. The Task

As for students, if they are familiar with and interested in the task topic, their difficulties in carrying out the conversations will be reduced; thus, their confidence will be increased, and their L2 WTC will be higher (Bui et al., 2022; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2016; Tuyen & Loan, 2019). This familiarity with and

attractiveness of the task topic is determined by students' topic-related background knowledge and L2 vocabulary (Heidari, 2019; Peng, 2019). The difficulty level of the task regarding the vocabulary and grammatical knowledge required to do the task can also affect the attractiveness of the task to the learners (Khazaei et al., 2012; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

Another contributing factor to WTC in L2 is task confidence, which is labeled as "state communicative self-confidence" and is defined as "a momentary feeling of confidence, which may be transient within a given situation" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 549). Not all researchers, however, refer to this concept as "confidence". A wide range of nomenclatures related to the same concept has been used in the literature, which can be illustrated by terms such as anxiety (Cao & Philp, 2006; Rastegar & Karami, 2015), ease (Liu & Littlewood, 1997), and security (Kang, 2005). Yet, there is a consensus among WTC researchers that lack of confidence harms learners' L2 WTC while performing the tasks (Bernales, 2016; Kang, 2005).

To explain why most East Asian learners were passive and more likely to be reticent in classrooms, Liu and Littlewood (1997) carried out a survey study in Hong Kong to examine the task-confidence of university instructors and learners. The result of the survey indicated that the students were willing to communicate. Previous experiences of uneasiness when speaking, however, had prompted lack of confidence as an obstacle to their speaking. Such a lack of confidence, which is predominantly attributed to students' anxiety and fear of being negatively judged by others due to making errors, may impede students' speaking in an L2 (Eddy-U, 2015; Riasati, 2012).

Freiermuth and Jarrell (2006), on the other hand, found that students consider instantaneous and face-to-face talk more challenging than written online chats and display a lower WTC for simultaneous discourse. This lower WTC can be explained by students' lack of sufficient time to express their opinions, find appropriate words, and check the grammar in immediate discourse. As Riasati (2012) and Tuyen and Loan (2019) suggested, giving students enough preparation time tends to elevate their confidence and raise their level of WTC in communicative tasks.

2.1.3. The Stage of the Class

Inspecting the learners' L2 WTC, Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2016) observed that

from the beginning to the middle of the class, the participants' WTC was high, but their WTC to engage in the L2 tasks waned near the end of the class. She argued that learners' moderately low WTC at the beginning of the class might have been due to learners' expecting the teacher to provide a plan for the class procedures and to present some tasks. In contrast, the students' declining WTC towards the end of the class session can be caused by the learners' exhaustion as a result of being actively involved in the tasks during the class. Nevertheless, according to Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2017), different groups may exhibit different tendencies to engage in the tasks. They found that while some groups of students show an unfailingly high WTC during the class, another group's WTC may witness a gradual escalation, and other groups may display a slightly declining WTC. Thus, it was concluded that whereas the stage of the class in which the task is presented is important, task interest might be a more significant factor in determining learners' L2 WTC in the classroom.

2.1.4. Sociocultural Factors

That sociocultural factors can affect learners' L2 WTC has also been emphasized by Peng (2012), who discussed that learners' culturally laden beliefs can affect their self-confidence in particular classroom situations and consequently contribute to their L2 WTC. In the same vein, Wen and Clément (2003) found that Chinese learners were typically sensitive to and guarded against communication in public, especially when talking to strangers because they tried to save face and avoid others' negative judgments. In contrast, they felt much more open when communicating with friends. Wen and Clément also believed that such an unwillingness to communicate with outsiders was a contributor to Confucian culture dominant in China in which the students are supposed to be submissive and more mentally rather than verbally active in classes. This confirms that culture is a dynamic phenomenon and is interwoven with such various variables as people's beliefs, attitudes, ethnicity, and nationality (Lee et al., 2020; Sharifian, 2009).

Various other studies have also examined the factors that can contribute to an individuals' L2 WTC, reporting of which is excluded here for the sake of space/word limitations. Table 1, however, can help the reader better understand and classify the variables affecting L2 WTC. We have tried to include almost every variable contributing to L2 WTC based on the numerous studies that have

investigated L2 WTC.

Table 1
Variables Affecting L2 WTC

WTC Type	Category	Variable
Trait	Learner	Attitudes towards L2 Community and Learning
		Beliefs
		Communication Apprehension
		Emotional Intelligence
		Gender
		Ideal L2 Selves
		International Posture
		L2 Achievements
		L2 Learning Experiences
		L2 Linguistic Self-confidence
		L2 Proficiency
		Linguistic Competence
		Motivation (considered as a trait)
		Nationality
		Personality
		Self-perceived Communicative Competence
		Social Intelligence
State	Learner	Tolerance of Ambiguity
		Anxiety
		Culture
		L2 Confidence
		L2 Speaking Goals
		Motivation (as a state)
		Perception of Classmates
		Perception of Interlocutor
		Perception of Task
		Perception of Teacher
		Personality
		Task Background Knowledge
		Vocabulary Knowledge/Retrieval
	Classroom	Classroom Arrangement
		Classroom Atmosphere
		Size

WTC Type	Category	Variable
		Stage of the class
	Group	Group Cohesiveness Group Size (Pair vs. Small–Group vs. Whole–Class)
	Interlocutor	Interlocutor's Age Interlocutor's Being an L2 (non)Native Speaker Interlocutor's Familiarity Interlocutor's Gender Interlocutor's L2 Proficiency Interlocutor's Nationality Number of Interlocutors Interlocutor's Participation and Cooperation Interlocutor's Personality Interlocutor's Reactions Interlocutor's Socio–economic Status
	Task	Task Difficulty Task Effectiveness Task Importance Task Interest Task Preparation Time Task Topic Task Type Task Usefulness Task Variety
	Teacher	Teacher's Enthusiasm and Rapport with the Students Teacher's Error Correction Teacher's Expectations Teacher's Immediacy Teacher's Presence Teacher's Support Teacher's Teaching Method/Style
	Topic	Topic Content Knowledge Topic Familiarity Topic Interest Topic Sensitivity

2.2. Factors Contributing to Teachers' Use of L2

2.2.1. Class Size

One of the various factors reported to contribute to teachers' L2 communications in classroom settings is the class size. It has been found that smaller classes can reduce teachers' stress levels, and encourage the teachers to use more L2 in the classroom, which can lead to more effective teacher–learner interactions in the classes, more teacher scaffolding, and more oral language development in the students (Hattie, 2005; Francis & Barnett, 2019). On the other hand, Aoumeur (2017), using questionnaires in a university in Algeria, reported that the presence of a large number of students in a class can lead to less L2 engagement and lack of opportunities for both teachers and students to interact with each other. Yet, a minority of the teacher participants in the study supported the idea that a large class size can provide opportunities for more effective teaching conditions and more chances of communication in L2. They considered that the variety in large classes may offer the teacher an opportunity to discover new perspectives on the course content. Likewise, a small number of the learners found larger classes more inspiring to communicate in L2 and more challenging. Trying to find an ideal number of students in a classroom, Le et al. (2015) established a threshold level. They posited that a class size smaller than 15 can boost the observed quality of the classroom significantly. In the same vein, Bowne et al. (2017) carried out a meta-analysis on reductions in class sizes of 38 preschool programs. They found that reduction of the class size to 15 students per classroom can increase the cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of instruction and learning.

2.2.2. Topic Familiarity

Although teachers' familiarity with the topic can enhance their willingness to communicate in general (Mumba et al., 2015), task topic familiarity is of particular importance in such courses as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and learning second language skills. That is, the more the teachers' task topic familiarity in these courses is, the higher their willingness to communicate will be (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Dhillon & Murray, 2021; Mulyadi et al., 2021; Yang & Yang, 2021).

2.2.3. The Task

One other variable contributing to L2 WTC is the task (Tuyen & Loan, 2019). Here, we use “task” as an umbrella term including all the activities and exercises conducted in the classroom. Park and Manning (2012) inspected the teachers’ L2 teaching practices in primary schools in Korea. They reported teachers’ familiarity with the task as a significant factor in using the L2 in the classes. They also postulated that maximizing the teachers’ use of L2 (in their case, English) can help build an educational environment that favors optimal language learning and more L2 communication by teachers (Derakhshan & Shakki, 2019, 2020).

As both teachers and learners are involved in communicative and instructional tasks in the classroom, a lack of confidence in performing such tasks will contribute to lower levels of willingness to participate and communicate in L2, which may result in lesser degrees of achievement. However, an increased level of teachers’ topic familiarity, as well as appropriate training, can increase their willingness to participate and communicate (Dhillon & Murray, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Mumba et al., 2014).

Moreover, it has been advocated that the time specified for task preparation can be a contributor to L2 WTC in communicative tasks (Liu et al., 2021; Subekti, 2019; Zarrinabadi, 2014). Instructional and communicative task preparation is considered a determining factor in teachers’ achieving instructional objectives in courses like task-based language teaching (TBLT), CALL, and listening comprehension (Dhillon & Murray, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Mulyadi et al., 2021). For instance, Liu et al. (2021) examined 400 Chinese EFL teachers’ perceptions and implementation of TBLT, using a mixed-method approach. The study results indicated that TBLT in a foreign language setting requires a lot of preparation time. It was also found that functioning and cooperative L2 communication cannot be achievable without spending a lot of time on the task by the teacher to prepare the task for themselves and the students.

2.2.4. The Stage of the Class

The stage of the class in which the instructional task or communicative act is presented to the students is believed to contribute to teachers’ L2 WTC. That is, whether the instructional task or communicative act is presented at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the class time can differentially motivate the

teachers and learners to take part in doing the task (Báez Dueñas & Chacón Vargas, 2013; Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2017). For instance, Báez Dueñas and Chacón Vargas (2013), investigating the teaching techniques utilized by teachers in communicative speaking tasks at a public school in Colombia, found that the stage of the class is an influential factor in teachers' choices of activities, teaching techniques, and their WTC. For example, the teachers who followed the Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) method were more willing to use more L2 to communicate with their students in the initial stage of the class (presentation stage). Yet, they had less communication and interaction with the students in the middle (practice stage) and at the end of the class (production stage) as the latter two stages are more student-oriented.

2.2.5. Sociocultural Factors

Sociocultural factors are considered to be crucial in FLT WTC. For instance, Monzo and Rueda (2001) examined 32 Latino teachers' communication and interaction practices in two large public elementary schools in Southern California for 2 years, where both schools served "low-income Latino language minority children" (p. 452). They found that sociocultural factors did affect the communicative and interactional patterns of the teachers with their students. Teachers' familiarity with the students' culture and language shaped the way they interacted with students. That is, in cases where the socio-cultural status of the learners was known to the teachers, they communicated with the students in ways that were familiar to them, structured the classroom activities according to the students' morals and values, and led to more individual interactions with the students. The teachers' and the school personnel's beliefs were also found to be a determining factor in their L2 communicative practices. While some teachers were more concerned with the cognitive needs of students, the school personnel's believed that the students should feel comfortable enough in the classrooms, pronounced to both the teachers and the students that teachers were to be considered as "a mother or a family member" and argued for the necessity to build a classroom atmosphere that was analogous to that of the classes at their home country.

As can be seen, many of the factors that contribute to learners' L2 WTC can also affect FLT WTC. All the above-mentioned factors considered, given the dearth of research in the literature review that has directly addressed the factors

affecting FLT WTC (see section 1.2), the present study is carried out to find out which of the factors mentioned in the literature review or any other factors recommended by the expert panel (see section 3.2.1) can significantly affect foreign language teachers' willingness to communicate in second language (FLT WTC). Thus, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What are the factors contributing to foreign language teachers' willingness to communicate in second language?

RQ2: Can a model and a questionnaire be developed and empirically validated to investigate the factors contributing to FLT WTC?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted from January 2019 to August 2020. A large scale of 1044 L2 language teachers of English, French, German, and Spanish, with different genders, ages, work experiences, and formal educational levels from different countries participated in different stages of the project voluntarily. The number of participants was 53 for the initial piloting, 291 for the reliability index check, 374 for the exploratory factor analysis, and 326 for the confirmatory factor analysis. Table 2 below represents the demographic data of all the participants in the study.

3.2. The Procedure

3.2.1. Expert Panel Interviews

To develop the FLT WTC questionnaire, we followed the instructions by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) on the development of valid and reliable questionnaires in language teaching and acquisition research. The first step was to review the related literature and relevant theories to establish the theoretical framework for the study. Having reviewed the literature regarding the contributing factors in L2 WTC, we hypothetically drafted several components that may affect FLT WTC. To consider foreign-language teachers' opinions on the issue at hand, we conducted some interviews with some domain experts. The panel consisted of 2 EFL university professors in Iran, two PhD-holding EFL teachers working at

schools in Iran, two teachers of Spanish at schools in the US, two teachers of German at language institutes in Iran and Turkey, and two TEFL Ph.D. students in Iran and Mexico. The interviews were held personally over the Internet and Telegram platform (via voice, written, and picture messages). One purpose behind conducting the interviews was to find out whether the accuracy, appropriateness and representativeness of the components found in the review of literature were also confirmed by the experts to be significant in L2/EFL classroom contexts. Another reason was to discover if there were any other variables that the interviewees would consider to be important in FLT WTC.

The interviews were semi-structured. They began with predetermined questions, allowing both the interviewer and the interviewees to raise related unpredicted questions during the interview process. Each interview took between 35 to 70 minutes. The expert panel was first asked about their definitions of “willingness to communicate” and what they constitute of “the factors’ affecting FLT WTC. Then, they were provided with each of the variables in Table 1 respectively to reflect upon and express their opinions about the role of each variable in FLT WTC. The interviewees offered some valuable insights into the factors contributing to FLT WTC. For example, they added such concepts as students’ socio-economic status, the syllabus, and teacher positioning, which were not included in the literature review and – according to their knowledge and experience – could affect FLT WTC. Then, the content analysis of the interviews was carried out consistent with the guiding principle recommended by Berg (2004).

The results of the content analysis of the interviews corroborated the significance of many of the factors affecting learners’ L2 WTC as being also influential in FLT WTC and led to re-specification and reconfiguration of some of the labels of the components (see Table 3 for the FLT WTC components and their aspects included in the final draft of the questionnaire). Subsequently, we became involved in the rigorous, iterative, and stepwise process of questionnaire development.

3.2.2. Generating and Trimming the Items

Since there were no pre-existing instruments on FLT WTC to consult and review, a pool of items was generated based on the hypothesized components based on the literature and the expert panel’s interview results. The existing questionnaires on

learners' L2 WTC were also reviewed to ensure that our questionnaire includes representative content. Moreover, the expert panel was asked to provide us with their suggestions about the items which could or should be included in the item pool. Thus, 60 items were generated. The number was quite a lot for a questionnaire. Yet, we knew that some or many items would be modified or removed in the pilot study and during the different stages of questionnaire development. It was endeavored to generate simple, intelligible, and short enough items using everyday language while eliminating any ambiguous, double-barreled questions, and any questions loaded with technical words. In addition, following the suggestions by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), 21 non-experts (with no higher education backgrounds) were asked to express their opinions about the items to modify or remove any items that were vague to them. Non-experts' feedback was truly valuable since it helped us eliminate the unjustified jargons or technically loaded words.

Table 2
Demographic Profile of the Participants

%	67.1	9.5	6.1	17.2					100
No	701	99	64	180					1044
L2	English	French	German	Spanish					
%	8.3	43.4	7.9	9.4	10.6	8.8	11.6		100
No	87	453	82	98	109	91	124		1044
Teaching Place	Australia	Iran	Japan	Mexico	Turkey	The UK	The US		
%	14	30	22	21	6.9	6.9			100

%	67.1	9.5	6.1	17.2				100
No	144	312	228	216	72	72		1044
Formal Education	BA Student	BA Holder	MA Student	MA Holder	PhD Student	PhD Holder		
%	13	17	28	13	10	8.2	12	100
No	132	180	288	132	108	84	120	1044
Teaching Experience (Years)	1	1–2	3–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	>20	
%	38	25	24	10	2.4	0		100
No	396	264	252	108	24	0		1044
Age (Years Old)	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	>75		
%	55	45						100
No	576	468						1044
Gender	Male	Female						TOTAL

Table 3*Factors Affecting FLT WTC and Their Corresponding Items in the Questionnaire*

Component	Aspects	Item No.
Teacher Perceptions	Anxiety	20
	Attitudes towards Their Students	12
	Confidence	06
	Goals	09
	Interlocutors' Familiarity	04
	Motivation	05
	Perception of Interlocutors	14
	Preparation Time	03
	Previous Achievements	02
	Vocabulary Knowledge	18
Student Traits	Age	24
	Culture	23
	L2 Proficiency Level	08
	Nationality	19
	Perceived Appearance and Dressing	13
	Social Class	10
Classroom Atmosphere	Class Cohesiveness	17
	Class Cooperation	01
	Class Expectations	27
	Class Reactions	07
Classroom Setting	Class Arrangement	15
	Class Co-educational Setting	21
	Class Size	26
	Class Stage	25
	Teacher Positioning in the Class	16
Topic	Topic Familiarity	22
	Topic Interest	11

3.2.3. Expert Panel's Item Checking

Having generated the items in English, we requested our expert panel to check whether there was any bias in the items and scales and to check the validity and representativeness of the content of the questionnaire items. They rated the items based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated that the item was "not significant" enough to be included in the questionnaire, 2 showed that the item

was “somehow significant”, 3 meant that they were “not sure” about the significance of the item, 4 displayed that the item was “significant” to be included, and 5 signposted that the item was “extremely significant” to be included in the FLT WTC questionnaire. Thirty-three items marked as 4 and 5 by the majority (80%) of the expert panel members were kept, and 27 items were discarded due to their redundancy and insignificance.

3.2.4. Designing and Scoring the Rating Scales

A numeric rating scale from 0% to 100% with specific marks for each 10 percent was designed for each item of the questionnaire so that the respondents can indicate their level of L2 WTC in terms of percentages. This way, we reduced the chance of hedging by the respondents; that is, they were to choose their desired options in the questionnaire items with more certainty about their responses.

3.2.5. Designing the Demographic Information Section

The demographic information in the questionnaire consisted of the respondents’ gender, age, employment status, years of work experience as teachers, the highest level of formal education (from BA student to Ph.D. holding), and the type of place they were teaching at in terms of being in urban, rural, suburb or remote areas of the country. All the questions were designed with pre-determined options with some checkboxes. We put the demographic information at the beginning of the questionnaire on a separate page.

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1. Initial Piloting

For initial piloting, we administered the questionnaire to 53 respondents analogous to the target population, who were foreign language teachers in Iran. The questionnaire was administered in both traditional paper-and-pencil and online “Google Forms” modes. They were asked to write their feedback at the end of the survey or express them orally to the administrator, using the think-aloud technique. It took less than 20 minutes for them to respond to the questionnaire. Their feedback was insightful and resulted in the modification of one item and

discarding one. At this stage, we had a 32-item questionnaire ready to be administered to check its reliability index and construct validity.

3.3.2. First Administration and Reliability Testing

To measure the internal consistency of the 32-item questionnaire, an online version of the scale was designed, and the link was sent to different groups of Iranian EFL teachers on the Telegram platform. The expert panel, also, sent the links to the emails to many volunteer foreign language teachers outside Iran. A total of 291 respondents answered the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha index for the whole questionnaire was good enough (0.83). Yet, respondents' feedback indicated that 3 items were still redundant. So, having discussed with the expert panel, we deleted the items and kept the remaining 29 items. As a result, the reliability of the scale was raised to 0.87.

3.4. Data Analysis

Following the instructions reported by Taherdoost (2016) for the validity of research instruments, the psychometric validities investigated in this study comprised face validity, construct validity, content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Concurrent validity was not in the scope of this study because there were no previously validated questionnaires on FLT WTC. Predictive validity of this scale, on the other hand, can only be determined once different validity indices of the scale are established.

3.4.1. Face Validity

To obtain face validity, we tried to make the questionnaire short enough to appear acceptable to the respondents' eyes. We also juxtaposed the questionnaire with other questionnaires in the field to have a decent layout, margin, font type, color, and so forth.

3.4.2. Content Validity

Concerning the content validity, as mentioned above, all the questionnaire items

were supported by the literature review. Additionally, the panel of experts judged the accuracy, representativeness, intelligibility, wording, interpretations, and other aspects of the questionnaire. Besides, 12 foreign language teachers from the target population were also requested to respond to the questionnaire through the think-aloud technique. Having run each of these stages, some modifications were implemented in the items resulting in rewording and modifying some items.

After going through all these rigorous steps, we had a face- and content-validated 29-item questionnaire with five components ready to be construct-validated via exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Then, the questionnaire was administered to 374 foreign language teachers for EFA.

4. Results

4.1. Construct Validity

4.1.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Before running the factor analysis, one should first measure the appropriateness of the data for EFA. So, it was needed to establish that (1) the sample size was large enough to be suitable for factor analysis, and (2) the associations among the variables were strong enough to match EFA requirements (Ferrando, 2009). Regarding the sample size, there is an apparent discrepancy among different scholars about the best sample size for factor analysis. Nevertheless, there is an agreement among them that there should be at least 5 participants for each of the items (Brown, 2015). Since we had 29 items on the questionnaire and 374 participants, it was possible to ensure that the sample size was large enough for factor analysis (more than 12 participants per item). IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 26.0) was used to run the EFA. In addition, the KMO index for this phase of the questionnaire development was 0.72, which indicated that the sample size was large enough for conducting EFA. The second criterion, the strength of inter-item correlations for factorability of the data, was analyzed through Bartlett's test of sphericity. The $p = 0.00$ index, which is significant at .05 level ($p < 0.05$), depicted that the data was factorable for EFA.

Subsequently, an EFA was run based on Principal Axis Factoring since it was considered that there was some degree of inter-item correlations among items. To decide on the number of factors to be retained, the Kaiser's normalization

criterion was used according to which only the factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 and above were extracted for analysis. Six factors were extracted that accounted for 65.33% of the total variance. We found 2 items with high cross-loadings. So, we excluded those 2 items and reran the EFA. The KMO index for this set of data was raised to 0.75, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was still significant ($p = 0.00$). Thus, 5 factors were extracted.

4.1.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To check the relationships between each of the components with the items and the degree of covariance between the components, and to investigate the model fit of the data, the final draft (27-item) questionnaire was uploaded online on Google Forms, and the link was sent to foreign language teachers' through Telegram groups and emails. Having obtained the data, confirmatory factor analysis was run in AMOS software (version 24). The number of participants was 362. The variable extraction commonalities for all of the items were greater than 0.30, ranging from 0.51 to 0.78. The sample size was also very good: more than 13 participants for each item. Moreover, the KMO index ($KMO = 0.83$) for sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity for factorability of the data (Approx. Chi-Square = 3862.5, $df = 351$, $sig = 0.00$) were significant ($p = 0.00$).

Table 4, on the other hand, shows the questionnaire components, their related items, and the different reliability values of each component.

Table 4

The Questionnaire Components, Reliability Values, and Related Items

Component	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Items (When ...)
Teacher Perceptions	0.96	0.93	(2) I have been successful in using L2 in my classes before (3) I have enough time to prepare before my class (4) I am familiar with my students (5) I am eager to talk in L2 (6) I feel confident about my speaking ability in L2 (9) I have a purpose for my class (12) I like my students in the class (14) I think my students can understand me if I

Component	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Items (When ...)
Student Traits	0.94	0.90	use L2 (18) I know enough vocabulary to talk in L2 (20) I am anxious to talk in L2 (8) My students have the same L2 proficiency level (10) My students are from the upper social class (13) My students are wearing shirts, shoes, etc. appropriate for the class (19) My students have different nationalities (23) My students are from different cultures (24) My students are adults
Classroom Atmosphere	0.90	0.84	(1) My students are active and cooperative (7) I get positive reactions from my students (17) My students are friendly and supportive of each other (27) My students expect me to speak the L2
Classroom Setting	0.91	0.84	(15) The chairs in the class are arranged in a circle (16) I am in front of the class (21) There are both males and females in the class (25) We are in the last 15 minutes of the class (26) There are a lot of students in the class
Topic	0.79	0.80	(11) The topic is interesting to me (22) The topic looks familiar to me

Based on Principal Axis Factoring results, the items had clear loadings on each of the factors. The items were cleanly loaded on the 5 factors; the only exception was item 16 (see Table 5). This cross-loading was justifiable: according to the literature (e.g., Restuningrum, 2018), while teacher positioning is mainly related to the classroom setting, it can also be considered as a component that is related to teacher perceptions, and due to its significance in L2 WTC, we concluded not to remove the item.

Table 5
Factor Loadings of the Questionnaire Items

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Item06	0.95				
Item03	0.86				
Item09	0.77				
Item02	0.77				
Item04	0.76				
Item14	0.72				
Item12	0.70				
Item20	0.68				
Item05	0.68				
Item18	0.66				
Item08		0.88			
Item24		0.82			
Item19		0.76			
Item23		0.76			
Item13		0.76			
Item10		0.74			
Item07			0.80		
Item27			0.78		
Item01			0.77		
Item17			0.70		
Item16	0.31			0.82	
Item25				0.80	
Item15				0.69	
Item21				0.66	
Item26				0.61	
Item22					0.85
Item11					0.79

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor loadings above 0.30 are presented.

4.1.3. Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity

When the average of the loading indices between each factor and its related items is above 0.70, one can verify that the model holds convergent validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values that are equal or higher than 0.50 and greater than Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV) can also signify that each construct can explain over half of the variance in its indicators (Shaffer et al.,

2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Hence, as the average loading indices in the FLT WTC model were all above 0.70 and all AVE values are higher than 0.50 and greater than their corresponding MSV values (see Table 6), one can affirm that the model's convergent validity is established.

Table 6

The Questionnaire Components Average Loading Indices, AVE, and MSV

Component	Average Loading Indices	AVE	MSV
Teacher Perceptions	0.75	0.76	0.45
Student Traits	0.78	0.79	0.45
Classroom Atmosphere	0.76	0.75	0.34
Classroom Setting	0.75	0.74	0.36
Topic	0.73	0.74	0.07

Furthermore, if the correlational loading indices between the main factors are less than 0.8, one can confirm that the discriminant validity of the model is established through the correlational loading method (Fornell, 1982; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As can be seen in Figure 1, the components "teacher" and "classroom setting" have the most correlation (0.67) while "class atmosphere" and "topic" have the least correlational loading on each other (0.10), and none of the correlational loading indices between the factors are larger than 0.80. Besides, having applied the Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015), it was found that all the HTMT ratios were lower than the acceptable threshold level of 0.90, ranging from 0.020 to 0.545 (see Table 7). Therefore, it can be asserted that the model's discriminant validity is also established.

Table 7

The Questionnaire Components HTMT Results

1					
2	0.228				
3	0.545	0.410			
4	0.497	0.510	0.354		
5	0.088	0.020	0.097	0.098	
	1	2	3	4	5

There were also no inter-factor correlations above 0.70 (see Table 8), beyond

which a correlation among two or more factors is not acceptable for any set of data (Brown, 2015). The maximum correlation was between components 1 and 3 (0.49), and the minimum correlation index was for components 3 and 5 (−0.07), both of which were quite justifiable by the literature review.

Table 8*Component Correlation Matrix*

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	1.00				
2	0.21	1.00			
3	0.49	0.36	1.00		
4	0.46	0.46	0.31	1.00	
5	0.07	0.00	−0.07	0.09	1.00

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

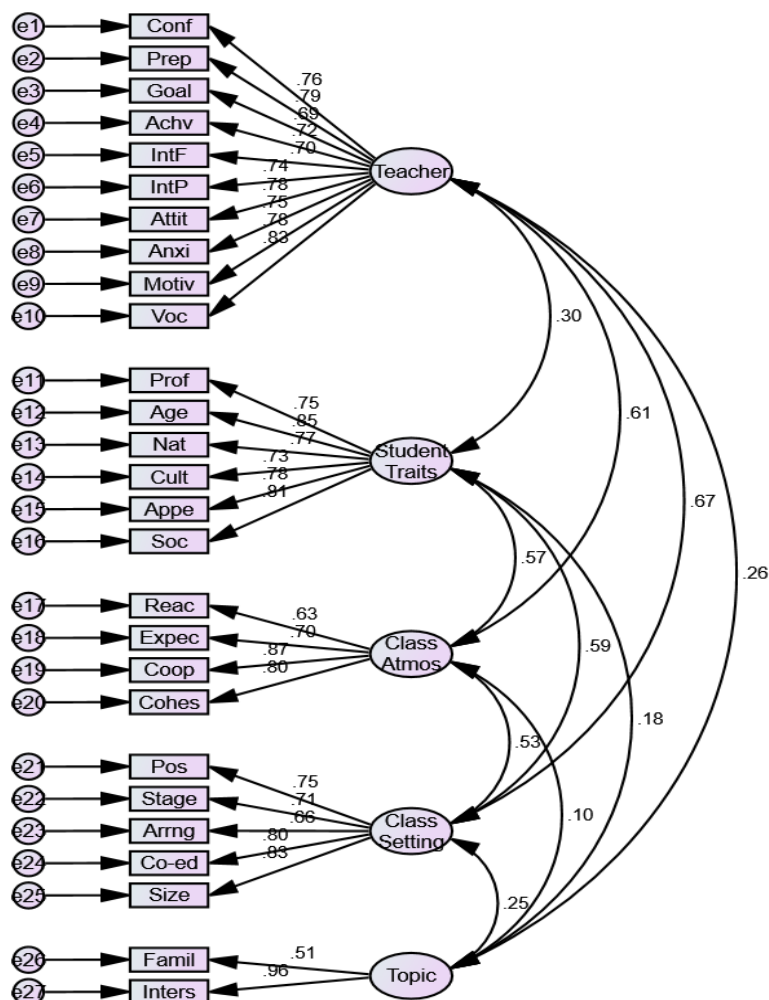
Different indices can be reported to indicate a model fit. They include relative Goodness-of-fit indices such as Chi-Square (CMIN), Goodness of Fit statistics (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit statistics (AGFI), Non-Normed-Fit Index (NNFI), also referred to as Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI). They also include absolute fit indices like Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and effect size indices like Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The SEM indices of the FLT WTC model were all at acceptable levels and represented that the model was fit (see Table 9).

Table 9*Fit Statistics of the Final Questionnaire*

Fit statistics	Obtained	Acceptable threshold levels (Hooper et al. 2008)
CMIN (Chi-Square)	1278.26	–
DF	226	–
GFI	0.98	> 0.95
AGFI	0.97	> 0.95
NNFI (TLI)	0.97	> 0.95
CFI	0.96	> 0.95
RMSEA	0.03	< 0.07
SRMR	0.04	< 0.08

Figure 1

The FLT WTC Model and the Corresponding Items in the Questionnaire



5. Discussion

The CFA results of questionnaire administration (Table 5, in particular) provided answers to the research question. It was found that the 5 components of “teacher perceptions” (with 10 subcomponent factors), “student traits” (with 6 subcomponent factors), “classroom setting” (with 5 subcomponent factors), “classroom atmosphere” (with 4 subcomponent factors), and “discussion topics” (with 2 subcomponent factors) played the most significant roles in foreign language teachers’ L2 WTC.

All the 27 items of the questionnaire (see the Appendix) had significant loadings

on each factor contributing to FLT WTC. Yet, some items proved to be more influential than others. Among “teacher perception” factors, for example, foreign language teachers’ self-perceived “self-confidence” (item 06, with 0.95 factor loading) was found to be the most influential factor in their L2 WTC. That is, if the teachers are confident L2 users, they may be most willing to communicate in L2 in their classes. Such self-confidence can be associated with their previous experiences in using L2. To be exact, when they perceive that they had been successful in using the L2 in their classes before (item 02), they can build higher levels of self-confidence to use L2 in their classroom more often. This self-perceived “previous achievement” may partly be owing to their extensive and practical vocabulary knowledge (item 18), their positive attitudes towards their interlocutors (item 12), their perceptions of their students (item 14), and/or because of being familiar with their students (item 04). This finding is in line with those of Dhillon and Murray (2021) and Mumba et al. (2014), among others, who found that teachers with higher L2 self-confidence exhibited higher levels of L2 WTC.

The second most significant factor in the “teacher perceptions” category is their “preparation time” for communicating in L2 (item 03, with 0.86 factor loading). Indeed, when foreign language teachers recognize that they have enough time to prepare themselves, they can be more willing to communicate in L2 in their classes. This can happen when teachers have a specific goal or purpose for their classes (item 9). Similar findings were reported by Liu et al. (2021). On the other hand, the CFA results indicated that although psychological factors such as teachers’ “motivation” (item 05, with 0.68 factor loading) and “anxiety” (item 18, with 0.66 factor loading) can have a significant effect on FLT WTC, they may not be as influential as other “teacher perceptions” subcomponents. In other words, it seems that communicating in L2 in a foreign language classroom setting can inevitably bring teachers some levels of anxiety, no matter how eager they are to use L2 in their language classes.

It was also found that students’ L2 “proficiency level” (item 08, with 0.88 factor loading) is the most prominent “student trait” factor in determining FLT WTC. That is, when the students have the same L2 proficiency level, the teachers can be most willing to use the L2 in their classes. The second “student trait” that can affect FLT WTC is the “students’ age” (item 24, with 0.82 factor loading). It may be the case that when the learners are adults, the teachers may presume that they can better understand the L2, and that makes them more willing to

communicate in L2. Diversities in students' nationalities (item 19), cultures (item 23), and perceived appearances and dressing (item 13) can also contribute to different levels of FLT WTC. The "social class" of the students (item 08, with 0.74 factor loading), however, was identified as the least contributing to "student trait" that can affect FLT WTC. In other words, whereas the "social class" of the learners is a principal factor in determining FLT WTC, it cannot be as prominent as other "student trait" factors.

"Classroom setting" was another significant component in FLT WTC with 5 subcategories. "Teacher positioning" in the class (item 16, with 0.82 factor loading) was the most effective "classroom setting" subcomponent in foreign language teachers' L2 WTC. Thus, it can be argued that teachers' standing or sitting in the front, in the middle, or at the end of the classroom, can contribute to their L2 WTC. The next important "classroom setting" factor affecting FLT WTC was the "stage of the class" (item 25, with 0.80 factor loading): it was found that the teachers were more willing to communicate in L2 in the last 15 minutes of the class. This can be explained by teachers' preferred method to teach the educational materials and learners' lower WTC towards the end of the class session caused by the learners' exhaustion as a result of being actively involved in the tasks during the class, as reported by Báez Dueñas and Chacón Vargas (2013) and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2016). "Arrangement of the chairs" in the classroom (item 15), "co-educational settings" of the class (item 21), and the "class size" (item 26) were the other significant "classroom setting" factors contributing to FLT WTC, respectively.

The CFA results also showed that students' positive "reactions" to their teachers (item 07, with 0.80 factor loading) was a significant factor involved in the FLT WTC "classroom atmosphere" component. That is to say, when the teachers receive positive reactions from their students in the class, they tend to be more willing to communicate in L2. The other inflecting factor in FLT WTC "classroom atmosphere" component was the "learners' expectations" of the teachers to use L2 in the classroom (item 27, with 0.78 factor loading). Undeniably, if a teacher finds that their students expect him to communicate in L2, s/he may be more willing to use L2 for class communications. The same can be applied to learners: the finding that is congruent with Bernales (2016), who found that teachers' expectation of the learners can lead to students' higher levels of L2 WTC. In addition, students' "being active and cooperative" (item 01) and

their “class cohesiveness” (item 17) were the other two factors affecting the FLT WTC.

Furthermore, it was revealed that “topic familiarity” (item 22, with the factor loading of 0.85) and “topic interest” (item 11, with the factor loading of 0.79) played a key role in determining the component of “discussion topics” in the FLT WTC. Therefore, one can argue that the most ubiquitous evidence for L2 WTC among both learners and teachers can be the “topic interest”. When the topics look familiar and interesting enough to both teachers and learners, they both may exhibit more willingness to communicate in L2 in the class. As an illustration, Kruk (2021), who studied the fluctuations in a student of English philology during one semester, found that the more attractive the topic was, the more willing to communicate was the participant in the study. Such a finding is similarly reported for different learner groups studied by Riasati (2012) and MystkowskaWiertelak (2021).

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to offer a deeper understanding of what factors constitute the foreign language teachers’ willingness to communicate (FLT WTC). Thus, based on an inclusive literature review and extensive expert consultations, the FLT WTC model and questionnaire were carefully developed and went through a rigorous validation procedure. The instrument was empirically reduced to a feasible one using EFA, CFA, and SEM, which candidates the model to be used in future studies. Moreover, given that the study enjoyed an international expert panel and respondents during the development and validation process, the model and questionnaire can be used across the globe to help foreign language teachers of different ages and work experiences scrutinize and deal with the factors that may enhance or hinder their L2 WTC in their classes.

The FLT WTC questionnaire can help foreign language instructors to assess their WTC in the L2 classroom. Language education institutes, schools, and universities can also use the scale, particularly in situations where the instructors are changed, and they need to assess their teachers’ degrees of willingness to communicate in L2 in the classroom. Using the FLT WTC model and questionnaire can help build an extensive repertoire so that we can have a better understanding of the factors contributing to foreign language teachers’ willingness to communicate in second language.

The FLT WTC questionnaire will continue to be an open-access instrument, accessible for language teachers and institutes for such purposes as self-assessment, reflective teaching practices, recruitment issues, and needs analyses in L2 classrooms. As this is the first study to have measured the foreign language teachers' willingness to communicate in second language in the classroom, further research in the area is welcome to utilize or modify the model and questionnaire. Future research can also investigate whether there is any significant relationship between the foreign language teachers' work experience, age, gender, employment status, workplace atmosphere and nationality, and their FLT WTC.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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