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Encouraging Vietnamese Students' Willingness to Communicate Inside English L2 Classrooms

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Abstract
Second language (L2) education researchers have recently been concerned about students' willingness to communicate (WTC) since communication competence is considered an ultimate goal of L2 education. This study examines factors affecting L2 WTC inside the classroom perceived by Vietnamese EFL teachersand their strategies to encourage students' WTC inside the classroom. Data were collected from interviews with 30 Vietnamese EFL university teachers. Results showed that all the teachers believed students' L2 WTC inside the classroom influenced second language acquisition (SLA) and were aware of their role in encouraging WTC. Also, the teachers revealed that they used a wide range of strategies to encourage students' WTC. The findings suggest that L2 teachers use a wide range of strategies to promote students' WTC inside the classroom. It might be necessary for Vietnamese EFL teachers to update strategies to encourage WTC inside the classroom.

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1. Introduction

Recent research has shown a crucial role of communication in second language (L2) classrooms. L2 students' communicative competence should be the ultimate goal of L2 education (Gao & Huang, 2010); therefore, students' language use should be the priority in the EFL curriculum (Bergil, 2016). In addition, in the interaction hypothesis, language proficiency is developed by social interaction and communication; in other words, L2 students learn from interaction with others (Wang, 2021). As such, students' willingness to communicate (WTC) is suggested to be "one of the key concepts in L2 learning and instruction" (Kang, 2005, p. 278). Riasati (2018) also argues that fostering students' WTC inside the classroom should be "a fundamental goal of L2 education" (p. 1287) because students with higher WTC engender more opportunities for L2 practice and authentic language use (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

Given the importance of social interaction in the L2 classroom, teachers are argued to "naturally play a vital role in encouraging learners' WTC" (Vongsila & Reinders, 2016, p. 2). Assisting learners in communication is an onerous duty of L2 teachers in the classroom (Yashima et al., 2018) since various factors might have an influence on one's WTC (Mesgarshahr & Abdollahzadeh, 2014). This means that teachers are advised to use techniques to encourage students' interaction and simultaneously minimize negative factors in WTC (Shi et al., 2019). Overall, students' communication should be encouraged in the L2 classroom to mediate their learning process.

Dörnyei (2003) found that many L2 learners tended to avoid communicating in the target language. Meanwhile, many EFL students worldwide struggle to deal with it as they suffer linguistic, social (Hoa, 2020), or emotional (Pham, 2021) problems. L2 students are not fully aware of the value of WTC if they are less likely to engage in communicative activities and benefit from the advantages of L2 communication.

Applied linguists (e.g., Dörnyei, 2003) argue for teachers' role in enhancing L2 WTC in the classroom. They can diagnose students' problems and then employ strategies, such as scaffolding (Hung & Nguyen, 2022) and motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2003), to encourage students to communicate. In Asian contexts, communication in the classroom is considered to be problematic. Students try to protect their face by all means as it is deemed a social reputation; they may refuse to speak when they find the environment unsafe (Bui & Nguyen, 2022, Park, 2000).

However, little is known about the literature on L2 WTC in Asian contexts, including Vietnam. Given the essential role of L2 teachers in encouraging L2 WTC, this study investigates factors affecting L2 WTC inside the classroom perceived by L2 teachers and their strategies to enhance L2 WTC inside the classroom. Investigations into L2 WTC inside the classroom would give implications for improving L2 classroom practices.

Research Questions

This study uses interviews to explore the determinants of L2 WTC perceived by teachers and strategies employed by teachers to enhance students' WTC inside the classroom in the Vietnamese context. It is driven by the authors' desire to contribute to the literature on L2 WTC in Asian contexts. This qualitative study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the determinants of L2 students' WTC inside the classroom perceived by Vietnamese EFL teachers in higher education?

RQ2. What strategies do Vietnamese English L2 teachers employ to promote WTC inside the classroom?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Willingness to Communicate

L2 WTC is defined as "readiness to enter into the discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons by using L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). It can be determined as a dynamic variable whose existence depends on the presence of the factors mentioned; in other words, the absence of those factors may result in learners failing to meet the WTC. The condition of this readiness is determined by a combination of factors, such as low anxiety and communicative competence, which may increase students' confidence in using the target language and active participation in classroom interaction.

MacIntyre (1994) first aroused concerns about WTC in education by developing a model with two main components: perceived competence and anxiety. Accordingly, a high level of WTC can be predicted by high perceived levels of competence and low anxiety levels. MacIntyre et al. (1998) then modified his WTC model to be multilayered with such variables as personality and behavior. The researchers suggested that the level of WTC can be affected by relationships between interlocutors, group size, environment, and familiarity with the topic. In L2

classrooms, according to Zarrinabadi (2014), speaking in the target language is essential for L2 proficiency. To accomplish this, teachers play a crucial role in assisting L2 learners in improving their WTC in the classroom.

2.2. Factors in EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate

Recent studies have found a number of factors that affect learners' WTC. They have a direct impact on L2 students' communication success. To achieve proficiency in second language communication, learners must possess the necessary skills to overcome these obstacles. A literature survey shows that factors influencing L2 learners' WTC can be labeled learner-related, teacher-related, task-related, and environment-related factors.

Learners' WTC can be affected by their psychological status or perceived competence. For instance, students fear being criticized for making pronunciation, grammar, or content expression mistakes. When criticized, students with high levels of shyness can be prone to distraction (Dörnyei, 2005; Hashimoto, 2002). As a result, they gradually lose self-confidence and reduce their communication with others. Also, according to Yashima (2002), when students are nervous, they are less confident when speaking. Anxiety may make it difficult for students to interact. They may avoid socializing with people since they do not feel comfortable (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Yashima et al., 2018). Speaking in public in a second language may cause anxiety in many learners, even those with low anxiety levels in other aspects of language learning (Kruk, 2019). Nervousness prevents students from communicating effectively or understanding what others say (Akkakoson, 2016). Several studies (e.g., Fallah, 2014; Khajavy et al., 2016) have demonstrated that confidence is a factor that contributes to learners' WTC inside the L2 classroom. Successful students are frequently described as being very self-assured. "Confidence is as crucial as the capacity to speak and listen" (Debbie & Christine, 2007, p. 118; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010).

The teacher may be another a key aspect that modifies learners' WTC. A good teacher-student relationship can make students feel at ease in the classroom. For example, according to Bergmark and Westman (2018), when students like their teacher, they are more available for questions and participate actively in class. Besides, Cao (2011) claimed that the expertise of instructors could help facilitate learners, create a safe classroom atmosphere, and promote L2 communication.

Teachers' classroom management abilities and teaching style, referred to as classroom organization, can influence students' readiness for L2 communication (Myers & Martin, 2018). Hence, if teachers are not dedicated and supportive, students have trouble expressing ideas; thus, they are unwilling to speak out their ideas.

The nature of tasks can motivate the learners' WTC level (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021). Pair and group work in the class usually gives individuals more opportunities to talk than working separately, which increases communication opportunities between peers (Cao & Philp, 2006). As noted by Cao (2011), learners appear to favor scheduled activity that involves group work over teacher-led activities, which may increase communication opportunities and make students feel at ease, which can mitigate nervousness (Kozlowski & Iigen, 2006). The time allotted for a task may influence students' willingness to communicate as it makes students adequately prepared (e.g., linguistic features and fluency) to speak (Zarrinabadi, 2014). As a result, it can advance L2 learners' WTC. The discussion topic is also viewed as a variable impacting students' WTC (Cao, 2011; Zarrinabadi, 2014). Students are usually more willing and active in discussing topics that they find interesting (Bonyadi, 2014).

Another factor impacting oral interaction may be the interlocutor variable. Students prefer to talk with someone they like (Alrabai, 2022). They may be more successful in solving and overcoming linguistic barriers when working with more proficient interlocutors (Kim & McDonough, 2008). Davis (2009) claimed that when lower-level students are paired with a higher-level counterpart, they speak more.

The environment or classroom setting may also influence L2 learners' WTC (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Learner's fancy communicates in a relaxing setting (Khajavy et al., 2016). They may feel easy and confident enough to speak when the environment is safe; in other words, they communicate more when they do not identify any potential threats (Bui & Nguyen, 2022; Dorman et al., 2006; Park, 2000).

2.3. Teachers' Strategies to Encourage L2 Students' WTC in the Classroom

Given the importance of L2 WTC, teachers are advised to turn the classroom into a communicative platform. This plays a role in students' success in the L2 learning process. Consequently, they need to guarantee that the techniques they used in the

classroom promote a dynamic interaction with their students and interactions among students.

According to Illés (2017), offering warm-up activities is an effective way for teachers to help students begin to think in English and review previously introduced material. Various types of warm-up activities make students feel interested, enthusiastic to talk, and comfortable. Therefore, teachers can start a class by providing students with light physical activities, such as casual games and matching pictures with suggested sentences or keywords, which both entertain and help students to review previous knowledge. Instructors may also enable the learners to volunteer to sing a song in front of the class and receive feedback from their peers.

Teamwork is another way to increase WTC effectively in an L2 classroom. Working in groups encourages interaction with one another, reinforces a spirit of support, and stimulates learners to join in the united ideas. The relationship that connects members and the group is called group cohesion (Hung, 2019), in which students share ideas, participate in group activities, and perform tasks together. According to sociocultural theory, mediation in group work can result in learners' development of knowledge and skills (Huong & Hung, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978).

It might be necessary that teachers consider questions to ask. Open-ended questions are essential for facilitating learning to express and raise EFL learners' knowledge and provide explanations for their thoughts (Lee et al., 2012). They can help engage students in challenging discussions and encourage higher-level thinking, but they also help learners develop their linguistic capacity. They assist learners in widening their vocabulary and cognitive abilities. Furthermore, asking follow-up questions reinforces more constructive discussions than asking yes or no questions.

2.4 Research on Willingness to Communicate inside the Classroom in L2 Contexts

MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a heuristic model of L2 WTC. These researchers argued that WTC is a situational variable and fluctuates across situations. In this framework, WTC is deemed to be "a situational variable with both transient and enduring influences" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). This model presents the concept of WTC as a complex six-layer pyramid, including two bigger groups with 12 variables underlying linguistic, communicative, and psychological aspects. According to this model, higher and higher learners move up and more frequently

use the L2. The effects of variables change across situations. Communication in the framework is treated as "a broad sense, which includes such activities as speaking up in class, reading L2 newspapers, watching L2 television, or utilizing an L2 on the job" (p. 547).

Kang (2005) used interviews and observations to investigate four Korean ESL university students' dynamic and fluctuation of L2 students' WTC. Results showed that WTC was influenced by three main factors: the topic, interlocutor, and communicative context. Also, WTC was found as a dynamic situational concept rather than a trait-like predisposition.

Cao and Philp (2006) investigated the dual characteristics of WTC as trait-like and situational on eight international students in a university's intensive General English program in New Zealand. This study utilized classroom observation, participant interviews, and questionnaires to triangulate the data of students' WTC. The findings revealed that the size of groups, communication environment, interlocutors' engagement, self-confidence, familiarity (of interlocutors, topic discussion), and cultural background have impacts on learners' WTC. However, this study had a limited sample size, only eight learners represented the population of the program in an international university.

Öz et al. (2015) investigated 134 Turkish EFL students' perceptions of willingness to communicate and factors in WTC in EFL contexts by using a 20-item questionnaire to examine the participants' beliefs about L2 WTC and a questionnaire about factors in L2 WTC with seven factors: self-perceived communication competence, perceived communication apprehension, integrativeness, attitudes toward learning situation, motivation, instrumental orientation, and ideal L2 self. The results showed that motivation did not directly influence WTC but mediated communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence. However, the framework was not designed particularly for WTC inside the classroom.

Ma et al. (2021) investigated the factors affecting WTC inside a class of four Chinese post-graduate students. The participants included one male and three females and were chosen by a sampling technique called purposeful snowball. Results from interviews and class observations revealed the factors originating from individuals, contexts, social-cultural dimensions, and education. This study also implied that further research should explore the various sources of factors to orchestrate them better for enhancing students' WTC.

Chen et al. (2022) explored the influences of teachers and teaching styles on two groups of English L2 learners' WTC. Group One (Domestic) included 102 male and 46 female Chinese students. Group Two (Abroad) included 39 male and 34 female international students in China. They were asked to complete two online questionnaires. The findings demonstrated that both groups had a comparatively low WTC; besides, there was no significant difference in Abroad Group's WTC inside and outside the classroom. Also, teachers and teaching styles were more closely connected to WTC in the Domestic Group.

Although WTC has arisen as a new interest in recent L2 research, little is known about L2 WTC inside the classroom in Asian contexts. It is crucial to investigate the causes of WTC-related problems and strategies to encourage WTC in L2 contexts. The results would contribute to the literature and improve classroom practices.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study employed a qualitative approach. It used in-depth interviews conducted in Vietnamese with Vietnamese English L2 teachers at different universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The teachers were asked about their perceptions of WTC inside EFL classrooms and their strategies to encourage L2 students' WTC.

3.2 Participants

Thirty teachers (twenty females and ten males) at three universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, participated in this study. They all had a master's degree in Applied Linguistics or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). They were aged 30 to 45 and had an experience of four to 15 years as EFL university teachers. They were willing to participate in the current study and orally consented to interviews. For information confidentiality, they were anonymized as Teacher 1 - 30 in this study.

3.3 Data Collection and Procedure

The interview protocol consisted of three main parts. Part 1 was used to gather the teachers' demographic information (name, affiliation, years of experience, qualification, and contact information). Part 2 gathered the variables influencing L2 students' WTC inside the classroom. In Part 3, the teachers were asked about the strategies they employed to encourage students' WTC. The interview scheme was based on Kang (2005), Cao and Philp (2006), Öz et al. (2015), and Ma et al. (2021). The researchers justified the interview scheme by including contextual factors. For instance, for each category, the participants were asked guiding questions like "What other strategies do you employ?" and "What do you think of the strategies?"

With the Academic Board's approval, the researchers sent an email invitation to teachers at several universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Thirty-one teachers accepted the invitation, but one teacher did not show up for the interviews. One of the researchers with experience in in-depth interviews served as an interviewer. He started with socializing questions, then asked guiding questions, confirmed the participants' responses, and clarified their meanings in the interviews. He employed the interview protocol guidelines proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018) by asking open-ended questions and encouraging the respondents to express their views and describe the relevant practice. The participants were informed of the ethical codes approved by the Ethics Committee. Due to the lockdown in Ho Chi Minh City in 2021, all interviews were administered online and audio-recorded for data analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

The researchers started the analysis after all interviews had already been completed. We employed an iterative inductive procedure with five major phases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hung & Khoa, 2022): transcribing data, coding data, identifying categories, identifying emerging themes and subthemes, and refining the identified themes.

After we checked the data's relevance, the first two authors analyzed the data, and the third author reviewed the results. The analysts first created the initial code. After that, the researchers went on to reread each code. After this procedure, the researchers combined the original codes into new ones and arranged them on the same sheet for similar answers.

4. Results

4.1. RQ1: What are the determinants of L2 students' WTC inside the classrooms perceived by Vietnamese EFL teachers in higher education?

Data analysis showed teachers' understanding of the determinants in L2 students' WTC inside the classroom. While some teachers referred to pedagogy, others revealed sociocultural issues as variables in students' WTC. In general, they showed their awareness of the importance of WTC inside the classroom and their role as to encourage L2 students' WTC.

The teachers admitted the importance of classroom activities and tasks in improving L2 students' WTC, which was believed to develop both students' linguistic competence and L2 WTC. The nature of tasks and activities could encourage students to speak. Some assignments, such as gap fill and sentence completion, did not encourage students to communicate greatly. Tasks and class activities assigned by the teacher were perceived to be an important factor in L2 WTC. Solving a particular problem and working out a scenario were identified by the teachers to encourage students to communicate with peers the most inside the classroom. As noted by Teacher 8, it was important for the teacher to consider the appropriateness of the task to encourage L2 students' WTC.

If the task is too difficult or too easy (language features topic familiarity), students may be unwilling to speak. It is not because they do not want to. In case the task is too difficult, students suffer linguistic problems and generating ideas to discuss. They may also find no reason to discuss if the task is too easy. (Teacher 8)

Time barriers were another factor identified by the teachers. However, most teachers in the interviews revealed that the amount of time was usually given in their instruction prior to the task so that their students could schedule their work. Also, they usually allotted extra time on their students' request. Some teachers were flexible in assigning a task. For example, Teacher 4 said that task giving should be flexible. Her students sometimes suggested a task type (e.g., group games and role play) that they were interested in. The activeness of students in suggesting a task type could contribute to WTC inside the classroom. Teacher 23 said:

I usually observe my students in group work. When I find they are not interested in an assigned task, I try to identify reason. In many cases, students are not keen on a content or a type of a task. It is better for teachers to let students speak out what they want.

Another teacher role proposed by the teachers was training students to be fully skilled and confident communicators. Teachers, therefore, should observe group work and assist those students in need. Also, teachers' techniques were considered important to encourage L2 WTC. It was their confidence level that could make them speak out their opinions. From the teachers' experience, some students' answers were full of grammar errors, incoherent, and irrelevant but they talked much in groups and to the rest of the class. In contrast, other students with good answers were reluctant to speak. They only spoke when they were required to. When asked, they said that they were unconfident.

Encouraging WTC requires teacher training as proper use of encouragement techniques can work properly. Also, students need to be trained to maintain group discussion and become confident communicators. Students may need advice, but they are too shy to ask questions in public. (Teacher 5)

Another factor in WTC inside L2 classroom revealed by the teachers was related to sociocultural issues. In the interviews, some teachers said from their experience that some students did not want to be corrected in public and, therefore, kept silent. Some other students preferred communicating with their peers to teachers as they found safer in work group; they could lose face if they were laughed at, or their answers were found irrelevant. Teacher 28 responded:

To encourage WTC inside the classroom, it is important for teachers to set up a student-friendly environment. Lower-level students may feel unconfident in public as they were aware of their competence. Error correction and peer feedback, if possible, should be conducted deliberately. In a long run, students may be unwilling to speak out their opinions in the classroom.

Amazingly, some teachers found that females were less talkative in public than in small groups, but this phenomenon was not common among males. Asian cultures, from the teachers' perceptions and experience, did not appreciate females' speaking loud in public. This behavior was considered "inelegant" (Teacher 2). In general, male students did not like female students to speak with a loud voice.

The classroom should be equipped with microphones. Female students also need microphones to speak out their opinions when asked. Otherwise, they speak with a very soft voice. It had encouraged my students to speak loud until found that they did not want to. In Asian cultures, females should not speak much and loud in

public. From my observation and experience, female students preferred speaking to peers in a small group while this was not a problem with male students. (Teacher 25)

Several teachers explicitly stated the importance of the classroom environment as another key factor in WTC. Accordingly, preparing a large number of questions, often interwoven with exuberant and hilarious subjects, might create a warm and energetic classroom atmosphere that would assist learners in effectively raising WTC. From their experience, language learning was emotionally charged, and students could be more willing to communicate when they liked the lesson and environment. A classroom with smiles and jokes could encourage students to communicate without any control. As noted by Teacher 7, a relaxing environment could stimulate students to communicate the most.

A comfortable environment, characterized by facility, weather, and friendliness, can drive students in an ongoing communication process. To stimulate L2 WTC, the classroom setting should be dynamic, friendly, and relaxing so that students actively participate in discussions. As language learning is affected by learners' emotions, hilarious anecdotes or sang a song can make my L2 students enjoy talking. (Teacher 14)

Many teachers reflected that self-perceived speaking ability as a learner variable in WTC. Consequently, they attempted to remedy this by providing positive comments and encouraging students' accomplishments. Analyzing students' voices was a good way to help develop their self-confidence and WTC. Some teachers believed that it was important for teachers to prepare students to communicate by providing adequate instruction. They also included student differences as to encourage WTC. Teacher 27 said:

Different students may have different needs; they sometimes ask teachers for help personally, and instruction to the whole class should not be considered insufficient. To facilitate students' communication and WTC in public, L2 teachers should provide adequate preparation. From my experience, teacher instruction to the whole class is not sufficient; while students are working in groups, teachers can circulate to further assist group communication.

In general, in the interviews, the L2 teachers showed their understanding of the importance of WTC inside the classroom. From their perspectives, WTC could help students initiate communication, which was driven by tasks, teachers, confidence,

environment, and emotions. They also demonstrated their understanding of the teacher role to employ strategies to encourage L2 WTC inside the classroom.

4.2. RQ2: What strategies do Vietnamese English L2 teachers employ to promote WTC inside the classroom?

The teachers revealed a number of strategies they used to enhance WTC in the classroom. As they found that these strategies have positively changed the communication of students in their classrooms. The strategies that the teachers used depended on their experience.

Before entering the classroom, many teachers usually prepared a number of warm-up activities. The most frequently used ones were playing mini-games, singing short songs, storytelling, and quizzes. This technique was believed to activate students and make them focus on the upcoming lesson. Students could travel far to school or just have an afternoon nap. Teachers' warm-up activities could direct and lead them in the lesson. For example, Teacher 8 responded:

I used a large number of activities to warm up the class. Sometimes I asked students to recount their weekend activities, such as reading books, learning how to cook more deliciously, expanding their English vocabulary, and going shopping, among others. Mini-games excited students the most. Singing songs are generally powerful in terms of creating sounds in the classroom. (Teacher 17)

To enhance students' WTC, all teachers reported using group engagement. Most of them gave students some time to think individually before joining a group. Relationship between group members was deemed to be crucial as students might refuse to communicate with those they did not like. A prerequisite for group cohesion was assessing the entire group work rather than assessing individual contributions.

I usually assign students into groups for peer interaction. Communication improves substantially in peer interaction. They actively construct their thoughts and come to a consensus as a group. In addition, I frequently assess the quality of each group rather than individual achievement. In general, this technique encourages the highest degree of teamwork and speeds up group communication. (Teacher 13)

However, some teachers said that a group worked well only when the members were aware of the power of group work and the importance of communication skills. Teachers should apply the process of group work to maximize the benefits of group work. Teacher 19 identified problems that occurred in group work that student did not have ideas to communicate. For instance, Teacher 21 added that he applied three main phases of group work that took place before, during, and after group work.

It is better to make all group members get familiar with each other before group work. Students should have some time to brainstorm before communicating with peers. Individual accountability is a key factor. Students should be responsible for their task share.

There were three main trends in choosing a topic for group work. Several teachers allowed students to choose a topic to discuss because students could choose the topic they were interested in and familiar with. Other teachers kept close to the course outline and prescribed materials. The third group gave a board topic and allowed students to narrow it down to their interests. A lack of knowledge of the topic makes students need extra talk time in class.

Most teachers chose to scaffold students' uptake in interaction. They asked open-ended questions and encouraged students to answer. They also asked follow-up questions to maintain communication. For instance, Teacher 10 responded:

The selection of questions for learners is really crucial. The inquiries should be relevant to the lesson's objectives and encourage students to provide multiple responses. Open-ended questions, in my experience, may enable students to talk more, but they are challenging for those learners who are not very proficient in the target language.

Nevertheless, some teachers believe that open-ended inquiries necessitate longer sentences, therefore students are frequently required to speak more. It will also help learners improve their originality in communicating ideas when speaking, as well as substantially enhancing WTC ability in L2.

I prefer to ask open-ended questions rather than closed queries to stimulate WTC in learners. In my opinion, these topics necessitate in-depth research and analysis on the part of students. When they give their responses, it shows a lot of interpretation, which is different from when they answer a monotonous closed question, it requires more talking. Furthermore, since there are so many different points of view, open-

ended questions tend to polarize. As a result, these questions motivate students to talk, and this is critical for them to strengthen their WTC. (Teacher 9)

Concerning the length of answers to open-ended and closed-ended questions: Teachers have observed their classes, and all agreed that students respond faster to closed-ended questions than open-ended ones. Open-ended questions require more choice of words and require a high level of detail and precision in reaction. Closed-ended questions, on the other hand, are more concise, allowing information to be delivered much more speedily.

It is undeniable that students in my class respond faster to closed questions. It does have an advantage when students are asked a lot of open-ended questions. Students are more likely to communicate as they are supposed to speak more in their comments and replies. Closed questions, on the other hand, are answered faster, but because the question is simpler, it does not elicit a lengthy discussion. Active communicators, according to my observations, prefer to respond to open-ended questions and can say ten to twenty minutes in a positive frame of mind, and they do not actively engage in closed questions. (Teacher 20)

From interviews, the teachers reported their experience about the problems that interfered with the L2 students' WTC inside the classroom. Also, they reflected the strategies they used and their self-perceived effectiveness of these strategies. In general, the teachers were aware of their roles in fostering L2 students' WTC inside the classroom.

5. Discussion

This study investigates teachers' experience of students' WTC and their strategies to encourage WTC inside English L2 classrooms in higher education. This was also demonstrated by Lee and Ng (2010), who discovered English teachers' perspective on encouraging students to speak. They assumed that it was the lecturer's duty and obligation to develop and lead students in the development of effective and active communication.

The first question explored factors in L2 WTC perceived by teachers. Teachers reported that students' WTC in English could help develop students' active interaction in the target language. Most teachers divided their students into small groups in order to encourage peer interaction. According to de Saint Léger and Storch (2009), reducing group size is an important factor in anxiety reduction that offers a sense of meaning and purpose for speaking improvement. Furthermore,

Cao and Philp (2006) evidence that assigning students into groups can boost WTC as students may want to talk to peer more than to older people. Zhong (2013), for example, studied five Chinese immigrant WTC learners in cooperative and teacher-led learning settings and found that working with a partner is more beneficial because it allows them to better understand each other, resulting in enhanced interaction.

Also, many teachers in the current study revealed that they let students get acquainted with each other before they formed a group. Some of them let students chose to work with classmates they preferred. Kang's (2005) research concludes that students prefer to attend WTC with familiar interlocutors. This is most likely why many teachers take considerable time to get to know their students. Letting students choose partners to work with may result in disadvantages. Davis (2009) highlights that when low-skilled students are combined with higher-level students, they produce more language. Teachers can use this feature to manage students with varying abilities in order to maximize profits in the WTC. This result is also in line with the study by van de Pol et al. (2019). However, it is important to note that students may feel too shy to communicate if they work with more proficient peers who do not know how to support lower-level students. According to Thanh and Gillies (2010), how students view the relationship is a crucial factor in successful group work. Accordingly, students may speak only when they feel safe enough.

Many teachers reflected that a positive classroom atmosphere promoted WTC for L2 learners. This claim has been supported by a number of previous studies. According to Peng and Woodrow (2010), a relaxing classroom environment reduces students' anxiety about language barriers. In a friendly and supportive environment, L2 students are naturally more willing to talk (Ayedoun et al., 2019). Furthermore, according to Zhong (2013), a relaxing environment increases learner engagement through mutual understanding, an aspect over which teachers have certain control.

The second research question examined teachers' strategies to encourage students' WTC inside the classroom.A finding highlighted teachers' interactive strategies used in L2 class to motivate students' WTC. This shows that many teachers adopted various strategies in their teaching process. First, the warm-up activities might be considered a good strategy for developing communication skills in the classroom. In this way, students no longer feel embarrassed or unconfident in communicating, comfortably immersed in the general atmosphere of the whole

class. This is an effective way to help students start thinking in English and gather knowledge to prepare for the next communication activity.

Teachers also incorporated group cohesion strategies to improve communication efficiency. Their requirements and assessments depended on the team's performance criteria to make all members contribute to group work. Doing so helps promote interaction among students and increases WTC for students (Hung, 2019). From Dörnyei's (2005) perspective, student group participation creates a positive learning environment and increases students' confidence in the classroom. According to the results of this study, this was a general strategy to create a dynamic and fun atmosphere in the classroom for L2 students' best communication practices. In particular, choosing the right topic and knowing how to relate to other topics around a specific knowledge to attract students were considered by the teachers. They provided topics suitable for young people's inclinations and sometimes told funny stories to interest students in the topic raised. This could be seen as a possible strategy to increase student engagement in the conversational task.

It may be necessary for teachers to be aware of the sociocultural factors in WTC. From the findings, Asian female students preferred speaking with a soft voice and in small groups. It is better for teachers to be aware of group size and prepare microphones for students to present their opinions to the rest of the class. WTC can be fostered when students feel at ease to speak rather than they have to. The current literature also explains the process of group work in that it works the best when a group has three to five members and ensure the main principles of group work, including individual accountability and group cohesiveness (Johnson et al., 2014; Hung, 2019).

This study showed two main contributions. Theoretically, the findings can be used as a reference for anyone who wants to learn more about WTC in foreign language acquisition. The current study contains intriguing evidence about the relationship between teachers' strategies for learners' WTC inside the classroom through self-reports. Practically, this study provides real-world evidence reported by teachers about the importance of the instructor's involvement in the classroom practices. It also highlights how important instructors' roles are in fostering students' WTC.

It might be necessary for teachers to encourage students to communicate by using WTC strategies. It is important to note that it is more important to encourage WTC as it is the root explaining students' readiness or eagerness to communicate.

Students may be quiet because of internal (e.g., shyness) or external factor (environment). Understanding the causes of L2 learners' WTC-related problems may help teachers mediate language learning through communicative tasks for development of knowledge and skills.

This study had several limitations. First, the results relied mainly on teachers' self-reports. Future investigations into the use of strategies can include students to triangulate data and provide more insights into students' satisfaction with teachers' strategies. Second, it is lacking evidence about how successful the strategies are. Future research can test the effectiveness of the strategies to enhance L2 students' WTC. Finally, this study confined itself to L2 students' WTC inside the classroom. Future investigations can compare L2 students' WTC inside and outside the classroom.

6. Conclusions

This study shows the teachers' reflections of the importance of WTC in the L2 classroom. In general, they were aware of their role in helping and motivating EFL students' WTC. The results highlighted some of the strategies preferred and used by teachers to increase learners' communicative engagement in the L2 classroom. They seemed to be confident that they could help English L2 learners regarding the variables in L2 WTC, such as warm-up activities, informal atmosphere, topic familiarization, and group cohesion. Situated in a paucity of research on L2 WTC inside the classroom, the results contribute to both local and international literature in the field.

Statement of competing interest

The authors declare no conflict regarding the publication of this article. The article is the authors' original work, except where sources are properly referenced. It has not been submitted anywhere for publication.

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