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## Factors Affecting Nursing College Students' Willingness to Communicate in EFL Classrooms

**A B S T R A C T**

Enhancing students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in classrooms is considered one of the ultimate goals of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL). WTC in a foreign language is defined as a learner's readiness to engage in communication with a certain person or people at a specified time utilizing an L2. It has been established in modern language pedagogy that creating a learning condition for promoting students' interaction in the classroom is beneficial for the learning process. However, the success in creating such learning conditions is highly dependent on the willingness of students to speak the target language. This study explores the factors that affecting EFL students' WTC in English classrooms at the College of Nursing. The participants of the study were second-year students at the College of Nursing/Ninevah University. A mixed-method approach was employed as a research strategy. A developed foreign language WTC (FLWTC) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Validity and internal consistency reliability of the FLWTC questionnaire were ensured. The findings of the study revealed that there are several factors affecting nursing college students' WTC in English inside the classroom. These factors are located under three main categories, namely psychological, linguistic and contextual. In light of the findings obtained, the study ended up with several recommendations and pedagogical implications.

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العوامل المؤثرة على استعداد طلبة كلية التمريض في التخاطب في دروس اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة  
أجنبية

م.د. خالد إبراهيم الأحمد / كلية التمريض / جامعة نينوى

**الخلاصة:**

يعد تحسين استعداد الطلبة في التواصل في الفصول الدراسية أحد الأهداف النهائية لتدريس وتعلم

اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية، ويعرف استعداد الطلبة في التخاطب على أنه استعداد المتعلم للانخراط في التخاطب مع شخص معين أو أشخاص معينين في وقت محدد باستخدام اللغة الثانية ، ولقد ثبت في علم أصول التدريس الحديث أن تهيئة ظروف تعليمية لتعزيز التواصل والتفاعل بين الطلاب في الفصل الدراسي مفيد لعملية التعلم. ومع ذلك، فإن النجاح في خلق مثل هذه الظروف التعليمية يعتمد بشكل كبير على رغبة الطلاب في التحدث باللغة المستهدفة، وتستكشف هذه الدراسة العوامل التي تؤثر على استعداد الطلبة في التواصل باللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في دروس اللغة الإنكليزية في كلية التمريض. وكان المشاركون في الدراسة من طلبة السنة الثانية في كلية التمريض / جامعة نينوى. حيث تم استخدام نهج مختلط الأسلوب كاستراتيجية بحث، كما تم استخدام استبيان الاستعداد للتواصل المطور والمقابلات شبه المنظمة لجمع البيانات، وتم التأكد من صحة وموثوقية الاتساق الداخلي للاستبيان، فكشفت نتائج الدراسة أن هناك عدة عوامل تؤثر على استعداد طلبة كلية التمريض للتواصل في اللغة الإنكليزية داخل الفصل الدراسي. وتقع هذه العوامل تحت ثلاث فئات رئيسية: النفسية واللغوية والسياقية، وفي ضوء النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها انتهت الدراسة إلى عدة توصيات ودلالات تربوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية، اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض محددة، طلبة كلية التمريض، الاستعداد للتواصل.

## 1. Introduction

Recent trends in applied linguistics and second language acquisition have emphasised the importance of creating learning conditions for learners to effectively communicate and interact in English inside and outside the classroom (Lightbrown & Spada, 2021). This emphasis is underpinned by Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which has gained a great deal of theoretical and empirical support (Alahmed, 2017; Ellis, 2015). The Interaction Hypothesis assumes that learners' interaction and communication with one another in the target language (Henceforth, TL) could facilitate their second/foreign language acquisition. Through interaction and meaning negotiation, learners experience authentic communicative situations where they can notice the gap in their knowledge and

become aware of their metalinguistic abilities (Long, 2017). It has been argued that learners will be unable to take part in everyday future authentic discussions if they are not given the chance to utilise the language for meaningful engagement inside the classroom (Ibrahim & Alahmed, 2023; Lightbrown & Spada, 2021). Williams and Burden (1997) also highlight the value of social contact between teachers, students, and their peers, emphasizing how internal and external elements influence the learning process. Since increasing the frequency of learners' communication and interaction in the TL will lead to the development of their communication skills, English language teachers are bound to create learning environments in which students have a greater WTC using their FL knowledge. Therefore, if we concur that communication is a necessary component of language acquisition, students would be required to actively use their still-evolving foreign language skills.

WTC in the TL is a key factor in how well students acquire a foreign language (Peng, 2014). Numerous research projects have been carried out to determine the significance of WTC in the TL and to explore its impact on understanding the communication psychology of EFL learners and promoting in-class communication (MacIntyre, 2007). It has been suggested that WTC could improve FL learning since learners need to use the TL to learn it (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Therefore, to promote more effective language acquisition and to provide more successful instruction, it is crucial to examine the elements impacting the learners' WTC inside the classroom. Although many previous studies have examined the factors affecting EFL learners' WTC in English for academic purposes in different countries, little or no research has been carried out in the Iraqi context on nursing students studying English for specific purposes. Therefore, the current study examines the factors affecting nursing college students' WTC in English.

### **1.1 Aims of the Study**

The present study has two aims as follows:

- 1-Exploring the factors affecting participants' willingness to communicate in English inside the classroom
- 2-Investigating differences in the identified influential WTC factors between male and female participants.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The study tries to address the following research questions:

1. What factors affect nursing college students' WTC in English classrooms?
2. What are the differences in the identified influential WTC factors between male and female participants?

### **1.3 Limits of the Study**

The present study is limited to:

- 1-Investigate the factors that affect students' WTC in English classrooms.
- 2-Second-year male and female students at the College of Nursing, Ninevah University during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Willingness to Communicate**

Before delving into explaining and discussing the concept of foreign language willingness to communicate (Henceforth FLWTC), it is paramount to distinguish it from first language (Henceforth L1) WTC. While the latter is treated as a constant personality trait in all circumstances, the former is viewed as a situational variable that is subject to change across situations (McCroskey & Richmond,1991). FLWTC has been defined as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). WTC does not move from L1 to FL as both are likely to differ in terms of FL communication. This difference is attributed to two reasons. First, most FL users

have varying degrees of communicative proficiency, and second, there are social problems associated with FL use (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The term WTC was initially introduced by McCroskey and Bear (1985) in their work: “The Convention of Speech Communication Association” to show individual distinctions during their communication in L1. Later, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) employed WTC in L2 communication to assess the propensity and level of preparation of FL learners to initiate a conversation in the TL. L2 WTC is the last level before explicit communication performance and comprises both trait-like and situational aspects (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

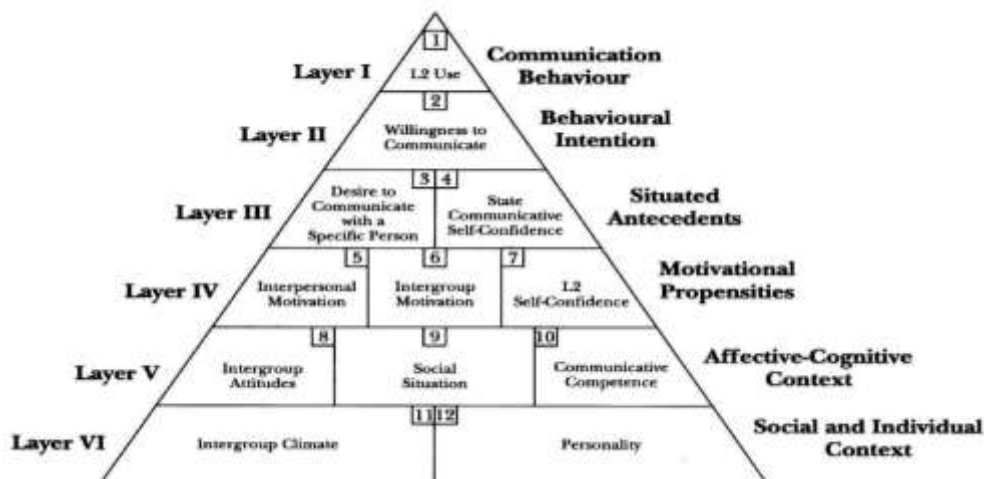
Since its inclusion in L2/FL research, WTC has received significant attention from researchers worldwide. It has been tackled as an independent variable with an essential role in L2/FL teaching and learning initiatives. Numerous research has been conducted to look at how WTC relates to L2 communicative performance and competence (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima et al., 2004). According to theory and practical evidence, FLWTC may accurately forecast the frequency of L2 communications (MacIntyre et al. 1998). In other words, learners with higher levels of L2 WTC engage in L2 communication more frequently than those with lower levels. If the claim that communication is essential to L2 learning is accurate, L2 WTC becomes a crucial factor influencing communication practice and assisting in L2 learning. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), one of the main objectives of education should be to encourage WTC among students. Previous research on WTC has revealed that FL learners with high WTC are likelier to use the FL in real-world interactions and have a greater capacity for speaking in the TL (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). As a result, language competency and fluency would be increased, promoting the development of FL communication skills (Yashima et al., 2004). However, it has been found in the literature that learners’ WTC and their readiness or volition to engage in

communication in the TL may be affected by several factors such as psychological factors, social factors, contextual/ situational factors, physiological factors and linguistic factors. The following section discusses these factors identified as directly or indirectly predictive of FL WTC.

## 2.2 Factors Affecting WTC

Researchers concur that FL/L2 WTC is a multifaceted notion with a large variety of complicated, linked elements. The MacIntyre et al. (1998) heuristic model of variables influencing WTC was developed in a pyramidal structure to identify the different factors that impact L2 WTC (See Figure 1). The model makes it abundantly evident that L2 WTC is a complicated concept that is controlled by several situated and enduring variables. It includes 6 major variables known as layers of the model. While the upper three layers have more situation-specific and stable impacts, the bottom three layers have more consistent and long-lasting effects. The situational variables cover a desire to communicate and state self-confidence, whereas the enduring variables include motivational propensities, affective–cognitive context and social–individual context. The highest pyramid tier symbolizes the last action an individual makes before they choose to communicate in L2. It refers to the specific time and the persons present in that linguistic moment. The remaining layers of the model support this last action but with different impacts. Such effective layers are behavioural intention, situated antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context, and finally social and individual context (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

*Figure 1: The Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547)*



According to this model, MacIntyre et al. (2001) note that at the penultimate layer, having confidence in one's capacity to communicate appears to be more important than just wanting to do so with a particular person. As a result, people could find themselves in a situation where they want to communicate with a certain individual and are even confident that they can, but their WTC is so low that they decide to refuse the chance. The third, fourth, and fifth layers of the pyramid deal with factors that affect a person throughout time and in a variety of contexts but are not specifically framed in a single instant. The pyramid displays certain largely internal personal traits (self-confidence, communicative competence, and personality), and some other traits like intergroup aspects and, eventually, the social context. As a result, the pyramid demonstrates how distinct L2 WTC is from L1 WTC due to a wide range of factors, including L2 competence and the anxiety that frequently accompanies it (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). While researchers have widely used this pyramid model and inspired more studies on WTC, its designers have critiqued it. In particular, according to Dornyei (2005), "it fails to describe the interrelationship and the weighting of the various components" (p. 200). He also adds that communication anxiety and perceived communicative competence were shown to be the two most effective predictors of WTC. In

addition to the identified factors in MacIntyre et al. (1998) model, other variables have been suggested by previous research findings to be either directly or indirectly predictive of L2 WTC. Such variables like attitude, self-confidence, motivation, shyness, social support, the presence of the opposite sex, mood, the topic under discussion, physiological factors, cultural factors, personality, age and gender, interactional and situational classroom context, and classroom environment (Cao, 2010; Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre et al., 2001; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002; Peng 2014; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima et al., 2004). Furthermore, Kang (2005) claims that an individual's WTC in the TL may be affected by certain other variables, such as “the interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables” (p. 291). He also states that security, enthusiasm, and responsibility may all be precursors to a WTC.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Setting and Participants**

The current study was conducted at the College of Nursing, Ninevah University, Iraq. The participants were 247 sophomores enrolled in their English language course during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023. They were 152 females and 95 males aged 20 to 23 years old. A convenience sampling technique was used in the study. The participants were recruited based on their willingness to take part voluntarily. All participants were supplied with informed consent forms and informed that their responses would be kept confidential.

#### **3.2 Research Strategy**

This research used a mixed-method approach as a research strategy. That is, quantitative (An FLWTC questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) methods were employed to gather data about the factors that affect

nursing college students' WTC in EFL classrooms. The reason for employing this approach was to obtain a clear description of participants' FLWTC, since each method has its own inherent biases and limits (Cohen et al., 2008; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Utilizing one method will "inevitably yield biased and limited results" (Greene et al., 1989, p. 256). Therefore, the use of data triangulation for exploring the factors influencing FLWTC may be systematically justified as each method complements the shortcomings of the other.

### **3.3 Methods of Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 The FLWTC Questionnaire**

Based on pre-existing scales, the FLWTC was developed by the researcher to investigate the factors affecting Iraqi nursing college students' WTC in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire comprises two main sections. The first section requests biodata on the respondents, including age, gender, and year of study. The essence of the questionnaire is contained in the second section. It contains 45 items distributed into three main categories. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms. The participants were asked to rate their opinions in response to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being "strongly disagree", 2 being "disagree", 3 being "not decided", 4 being "agree", and 5 being "strongly agree".

##### **3.3.1.1 Validity of the FLWTC Questionnaire**

To establish its validity, the FLWTC questionnaire was first given to six professors at the University of Mosul to prove that the questionnaire's items correspond to the factors and they measure them precisely. Secondly, the questionnaire was tried out face-to-face with 10 second-year nursing college students. The 10 participants, in the presence of the researcher, were required to complete the FLWTC questionnaire. They were instructed to respond to it, point out any areas of uncertainty, and comment on any ambiguous statements in Arabic. After face-to-

face piloting, the FLWTC questionnaire was administered online to 50 participants to establish its internal consistency reliability. Before issuing a final version, amendments outlined by the pilot study were made to the questionnaire. The pilot study results indicated that the FLWTC had some unclear and challenging words. To avoid any potential misunderstandings, the FLWTC questionnaire was written in both English and Arabic translation.

### **3.3.1.2 Reliability of FLWTC Questionnaire**

The Cronbach's Alpha test has been applied to measure the internal consistency reliability of the FLWTC questionnaire. The questionnaire in its final version consisted of 45 items distributed over three main scales with 13 sub-scales. The Cronbach's Alpha values of the questionnaire showed high consistency reliability i.e. ( $\alpha=0.94$ ).

### **3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews with 30 participants to gather detailed information about the factors affecting their WTC. For the interviewees to feel more at ease when responding to the questions, the interviews were conducted in Arabic. Before the interview began, the main purpose of the interview was explained to the interviewees, and they were told that their answers would be kept confidential. With the interviewees' consent, the audio recordings of the interviews were made. Each interview lasted about ten to fifteen minutes.

### **3.3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

#### **3.3.3.1 The FLWTC Questionnaire**

For data analysis obtained from the questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used to characterize the factors affecting students' WTC in EFL classrooms. The FLWTC questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. A link for the questionnaire was created and sent to the respondents to be completed. As for analysis procedures, descriptive statistics was employed through the use of SPSS

version 26. Based on the calculated interval coefficient for four intervals in five points (5-1=4), intervals with the range of 0.80 (4/5) were arranged. The following criteria in the Likert type scale were used to interpret the data: Strongly disagree (1.00-1.79); disagree (1.80-2.59); not sure (2.60-3.39); agree (3.40-4.19); strongly agree (4.20-5.00). Accordingly, the mean score values of the WTC factors were weighted as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Interpretation of Mean Score**

Mean score	Result	Result Interpretation
1.00-1.79	Strongly disagree	Very uninfluential
1.80 - 2.59	Disagree	Uninfluential
2.60 - 3.39	Not sure	Neutral or do not know
3.40-4.19	Agree	Influential
4.20 – 5.00	Strongly agree	Very influential

### 3.3.3.2 Interview Analysis

To examine the data collected from the interviews, it was decided to use thematic content analysis. The first phase is to gather data and get it recorded. Then, using a common content analysis framework, the data are analyzed for theme content. That is, the responses of the participants were grouped into themes so that factors affecting WTC were presented and interpreted. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, data analysis processes were crosschecked by two colleagues as external auditors.

## 4. Results of the Study

### 4.1 Factors Affecting Students' WTC in English Classroom

The data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews are presented and explained according to the three major factors, namely psychological, linguistic, and contextual factors.

#### 4.1.1 Psychological Factors

**Table 2: Means and SD for the Psychological Factors Affecting Students' WTC: Results of the Questionnaire**

Factor	Items	Mean & SD		Influence
		M	SD	
Perceived Competence	Q1 People do not understand me due to my poor command of English.	3.54	1.15	Influential
	Q2 The mistakes I make when I speak English cause a sense of inadequacy within me.	3.87	1.01	Influential
	Q3 I frequently believe that I do not speak English as well as the other students do.	3.38	1.29	Neutral
	Q4 I believe that other students speak greater English than I do.	3.11	1.16	Neutral
	Overall score	3.47	.88	Influential
Anxiety	Q5 I feel anxious when I have to communicate in English.	3.54	1.09	Influential
	Q6 I feel my heart beating fast when I have to respond to a question in the English class.	3.42	1.25	Influential
	Q7 I feel nervous when I have to talk in English without any preparation.	3.93	.977	Influential
	Q8 I experience heightened anxiety that makes it difficult for me to ask the teacher a question in English class.	3.39	1.13	
	Overall score	3.56	.855	Influential
Shyness	Q9 I'm worried that people will think I'm an idiot if I make too many mistakes when speaking English.	3.26	1.14	Neutral
	Q10 I feel embarrassed about making mistakes when I speak English with another person.	3.30	1.19	Neutral
	Q11 I feel that other students will make fun of me when I speak up in class in English.	2.90	1.18	Neutral
	Q12 I experience a sense of shyness when it comes to speaking English in front of my classmates.	3.06	1.20	Neutral
	Overall score	3.13	.938	Neutral
LSC	Q13 My English speaking skill is hindered by a deficiency in self-confidence.	3.01	1.23	Neutral
	Q14 I experience a lack of confidence in my English speaking abilities.	3.09	1.23	Neutral
	Q15 I believe that my limited English proficiency is what keeps me quiet.	3.64	1.17	Influential
	Q16 I never feel entirely confident when I speak English in front of my foreign language class.	3.32	1.11	Neutral
	Overall score	3.26	.933	Neutral
Motivation	Q17 I lack motivation despite my English teacher's encouragement to speak English.	3.33	1.13	Neutral
	Q18 I lack motivation despite my peers' encouragement to speak English.	3.08	1.08	Neutral
	Q19 I am demotivated to speak English due to my dearth of speaking ability.	3.17	1.27	Neutral
	Overall	3.19	.977	Neutral

Table 2 shows the means and SD for the psychological factors affecting students' WTC. It can be clearly shown that most of the psychological factors appeared to influence students' WTC in English classrooms. The results indicated that two out of five have direct impact on their WTC, namely perceived competence and anxiety. Within the perceived competence factor, participants reported in item No.1 and 2 that their WTC inside the English classes is hindered due to their poor command of English which makes people not understand them and that the mistakes they make when they speak English cause a sense of inadequacy within

them. However, the students reported that they are neutral towards item No.3 "I frequently believe that I do not speak English well as the other students do" and item No.4 "I believe that other students speak greater English than I do". Regarding the anxiety factor, all participants agreed that anxiety could be one of the influential factors that affect their WTC in English. They reported in item No.7 that their nervousness becomes higher when they have to talk in English without any preparation. As for the results of the other three factors within the psychological domain, the participants reported that they are not sure about whether the shyness, LSC and motivation affect their WTC. However, in item No.15 within the LSC factor, participants agreed that their limited English proficiency is what keeps them quiet in English classrooms. Regarding the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, participants reported that all the psychological factors have impact on their WTC in English except the motivation factor. Most of the students confirmed that they are motivated towards learning English to be good communicators, however, they do not have good language proficiency to enable them to communicate freely in English.

#### 4.1.2 Linguistic Factors

**Table 3: Means and SD for the Linguistic Factors Affecting Students' WTC: Results of the Questionnaire**

Factor	Items	Mean & SD		Influence
		M	SD	
Pronunciation	Q20 I experience embarrassment when I mispronounce phrases.	3.66	1.11	Influential
	Q21 I am concerned about the quality of my English pronunciation.	3.58	1.04	Influential
	Q22 My idea will not be understood if I mispronounce words and phrases.	3.48	1.02	Influential
	Overall score	3.57	.890	Influential
Grammar	Q23 I'm uncertain about the proper tense to use when I start to speak in English.	3.47	1.06	Influential
	Q24 I avoid communication in English because I'm afraid I'll commit a grammar mistake that people will notice.	3.51	1.13	Influential
	Q25 I encounter challenges in formulating sentences when communicating in the English language.	3.78	.963	Influential
	Overall score	3.58	.858	Influential
Vocabulary	Q26 I am experiencing difficulty in articulating my thoughts using precise vocabulary.	3.89	.984	Influential
	Q27 I experience difficulty in selecting precise vocabulary to articulate my thoughts.	3.89	1.00	Influential

	Q28 I feel that I do not have enough vocabulary to express my thoughts.	3.75	1.04	Influential
	Overall score	3.84	.884	Influential

Table 3 shows the means and SD for the linguistic factor affecting students' WTC. It can be apparent in the table above that the linguistic factor plays a significant role in either increasing or decreasing students' WTC in English classrooms. The participants agreed that their incompetence in English pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary affects their WTC. Within the pronunciation factor, the participants reported in item No.20 that they feel embarrassed when they mispronounce phrases and that in item No.22 their ideas will not be understood if they mispronounce words and phrases. Regarding the grammatical factor, the participants reported that their inability to start communication in English is due to their uncertainty about the proper usage of tenses item No.23; and that in item No.24 they avoid communication in English because they are afraid of committing noticeable grammatical mistakes; and that in item No.25 they encounter problems in formulating correct English sentences. As for the vocabulary factor, the results revealed that the participants' readiness to communicate in English classrooms is inhibited due to their limited vocabulary, which prevents them from expressing their thoughts easily item No.28 as well as that they face difficulty in finding precise vocabulary while speaking item No.26.

Concerning the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, most participants reported that their WTC in English classrooms is affected by their lack of vocabulary, fear of mispronunciation and limited grammatical knowledge in the TL.

### 4.1.3 Contextual Factors

**Table 4: Means and SD for the Contextual Factors Affecting Students' WTC: Results of the Questionnaire**

Factor s	Items	Mean & SD		Influence
		M	SD	
Topic	Q29 The subject matter is not within my area of familiarity.	3.02	1.12	Neutral
	Q30. The subject matter is comparatively unengaging.	2.59	1.04	Uninfluential
	Q31 I did not engage in prior preparation of the subject matter.	3.54	.896	Influential
	Overall score	3.05	.806	Neutral
Teacher	Q32 My English language teacher lacks a commitment to democratic ideals.	2.50	1.06	Uninfluential
	Q33 My English language teacher critiques my linguistic mistakes.	2.32	1.08	Uninfluential
	Q34 How my instructor provides feedback on my errors is characterised by a negative tone.	2.12	1.04	Uninfluential
	Overall score	2.31	.886	Uninfluential
Task Type	Q35 I do not prefer to perform the speaking task in isolation.	3.35	1.14	Neutral
	Q36 I prefer to engage in collaborative work with a partner as opposed to working independently on a task.	3.66	1.06	Influential
	Q37 My preference is to engage in collaborative work in small groups rather than working independently.	3.66	1.03	Influential
	Overall score	3.33	.717	Neutral
Interlocutor	Q38 My mistakes receive criticism from my classmates.	2.67	1.02	Neutral
	Q39 My friends usually correct me badly when I speak English, which makes me feel more anxious about doing so.	2.79	1.12	Neutral
	Q40 My classmate exhibits a lack of cooperation.	2.56	1.13	Uninfluential
	Q41 My classmate is of the opposite gender	2.66	1.02	Neutral
	Overall score	2.67	.841	Neutral
Classroom atmosphere	Q42 Large classes discourage me from using English for practice.	3.30	1.20	Neutral
	Q43 The class time allocated for using English is insufficient.	3.57	1.09	Influential
	Q44 when I'm in the last row in the classroom	3.19	1.11	Neutral
	Q45 when I'm seated in front of the class	2.77	1.13	Neutral
	Overall score	3.20	.733	Neutral

Table 4 presents the means and SD for the contextual factors affecting students' WTC. It can be clearly shown in the table above that most of the contextual factors appeared not to have a significant influence on students' WTC in English classrooms. The participants reported that they are neutral about whether contextual factors could affect their WTC in English. However, the results showed that within the topic factor in item No31, the participants' WTC is reluctant if they do not prepare in advance for the topic to be communicated. The participants also reported that they will be willing to communicate in English tasks if they are asked to work collaboratively with a partner item No36 and in small groups item No37 rather than individually. Within the classroom atmosphere factor, the results

showed that the class time allocated for using English is insufficient to get ready and engage in communication item No43. The participants reported that the teacher factor does not affect their WTC.

As for the data collected from the semi-structured interview, the participants did not mention most of the contextual factors as the reasons that prevented them from communicating in English. However, the participants added four new factors that affect their WTC in English: lack of practice opportunities, the teachers' aim of teaching English at secondary schools, group work, and fear of bullying. The participants reported that they lack language practice opportunities due to class time constraints and the large number of students in each class. This environment would discourage their WTC in English inside the classroom.

## 4.2 Factors Affecting WTC among Males and Females

A t-test for independent samples was used to test gender differences in factors affecting WTC. The results of the FLWTC questionnaire are also described according to the three main factors, namely psychological, linguistic and contextual factors.

### 4.2.1 The Psychological Factors

**Table 5: Gender Difference in Psychological Factors**

Sub-factors	Items	Gender/ Mean (SD)		t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
		Male	Female			
Perceived Competence	Q1	3.47 (1.19)	3.59 (1.12)	0.743	245	0.458
	Q2	3.85 (0.863)	3.88 (1.1)	0.217	245	0.828
	Q3	3.37 (1.29)	3.39 (1.29)	0.116	245	0.907
	Q4	2.92 (1.13)	3.23 (1.17)	2.077	245	0.039
	Overall	3.40 (.825)	3.52 (.922)	1.024	245	.307
Anxiety	Q5	3.45 (1.03)	3.59 (1.13)	0.97	245	0.333
	Q6	3.22 (1.25)	3.55 (1.24)	1.985	245	0.048
	Q7	3.81 (0.982)	4.00 (0.97)	1.487	245	0.138
	Q8	3.29 (1.13)	3.45 (1.12)	1.032	245	0.303
	Overall	3.44 (.773)	3.64 (.896)	1.81	245	0.071
Shyness	Q9	3.24 (1.16)	3.26 (1.13)	0.141	245	0.888
	Q10	3.19 (1.21)	3.37 (1.17)	1.148	245	0.252
	Q11	2.92 (1.18)	2.89 (1.18)	0.136	245	0.892
	Q12	3.01 (1.19)	3.10 (1.21)	0.559	245	0.577
	Overall	3.08 (917)	3.15 (.954)	0.543	245	0.588

LSC	Q13	3.15 (1.28)	2.93 (1.19)	1.367	245	0.173
	Q14	3.11 (1.19)	3.07 (1.21)	0.208	245	0.836
	Q15	3.75 (1.14)	3.58 (1.18)	1.101	245	0.272
	Q16	3.32 (1.12)	3.32 (1.10)	0.045	245	0.964
	Overall	3.32 (927)	3.22 (.938)	.848	245	0.397
Motivation	Q17	3.29 (1.18)	3.35 (1.1)	0.363	245	0.717
	Q18	3.24 (1.07)	2.98 (1.08)	1.852	245	0.065
	Q19	3.06 (1.31)	3.24 (1.24)	1.043	245	0.298
	Overall	3.20 (975)	3.18 (981)	.089	245	0.929

Table 5 reveals the results of the gender differences in terms of the psychological factors. Results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female participants in the overall scores of all sub-factors that are related to the psychological factor. However, within a perceived competence, there is a statistically significant difference between male and female students in item No.4, "I believe that other students speak greater English than I do.", males (M=2.92) and females (M= 3.23),  $t(2.07)= 0.039$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . The results also showed that there is a statistically significant difference between male and female students in item No.6 within the anxiety factor "I feel my heart beating fast when I have to respond to a question in the English class", males (M= 3.22) and female (M= 3.55),  $t(1.985)= 0.048$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

#### 4.2.2 The Linguistic Factors

**Table 6: Gender Difference in Linguistic Factors**

Sub-factors	Items	Gender/ Mean (SD)		t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
		Male	Female			
Pronunciation	Q20	3.61 (1.14)	3.69 (1.09)	0.552	245	0.582
	Q21	3.49 (1.03)	3.63 (1.04)	1.006	245	0.315
	Q22	3.35 (1.15)	3.56 (0.926)	1.588	245	0.114
	Overall	3.48 (924)	3.62 (.866)	1.229	245	0.220
Grammar	Q23	3.53 (1.00)	3.44 (1.09)	0.615	245	0.539
	Q24	3.47 (1.21)	3.53 (1.09)	0.353	245	0.724
	Q25	3.74 (0.94)	3.81 (0.97)	0.574	245	0.567
	Overall	3.57 (.868)	3.59 (.855)	.117	245	0.907
Vocabulary	Q26	3.84 (1.02)	3.92 (0.96)	0.613	245	0.541
	Q27	3.83 (1.1)	3.93 (0.93)	0.782	245	0.435
	Q28	3.63 (1.15)	3.83 (0.961)	1.449	245	0.149
	Overall	3.76 (.973)	3.89 (.823)	1.093	245	.276

Table 6 presents the results of the gender differences in terms of the linguistic factors. Results showed that there is no significant difference between males and females in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

#### 4.2.3 The Contextual Factors

**Table 7: Gender Differences in Contextual Factors**

Sub-factors	Items	Gender/ Mean (SD)		t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
		Male	Female			
Topic	Q29	2.98 (1.22)	3.05 (1.06)	0.5	245	0.618
	Q30	2.68 (1.07)	2.53 (1.02)	1.105	245	0.27
	Q31	3.52 (0.861)	3.56 (0.919)	0.37	245	0.712
	Overall	3.05 (.857)	3.04 (.776)	.108	245	.914
Teacher	Q32	2.57 (1.06)	2.46 (1.06)	0.776	245	0.439
	Q33	2.34 (1.13)	2.3 (1.06)	0.24	245	0.811
	Q34	2.12 (1.1)	2.12 (1.00)	0.019	245	0.985
	Overall	2.34 (.879)	2.29 (.893)	.400	245	0.689
Task Type	Q35	3.28 (1.17)	3.39 (1.12)	0.738	245	0.461
	Q36	3.71 (0.999)	3.64 (1.1)	0.481	245	0.631
	Q37	3.67 (0.983)	3.65 (1.06)	0.165	245	0.869
	Overall	3.34 (.726)	3.32 (.713)	.196	245	0.845
Interlocutor	Q38	2.73 (1.06)	2.63 (0.995)	0.708	245	0.479
	Q39	2.84 (1.12)	2.76 (1.12)	0.581	245	0.562
	Q40	2.62 (1.15)	2.53 (1.12)	0.638	245	0.524
	Q41	2.86 (1.09)	2.53 (0.95)	2.49	245	0.013
	Overall	2.77 (.875)	2.60 (.815)	1.551	245	.122
Classroom atmosphere	Q42	3.43 (1.21)	3.21 (1.19)	1.405	245	0.161
	Q43	3.53 (1.1)	3.60 (1.09)	0.503	245	0.615
	Q44	3.28 (1.17)	3.13 (1.08)	1.089	245	0.277
	Q45	2.67 (1.15)	2.83 (1.11)	1.051	245	0.294
	Overall	3.22 (.712)	3.19 (.747)	.397	245	0.692

Table 7 presents the results of the gender differences among nursing students in terms of the contextual factors affecting their WTC in English classrooms. Results showed that there is no significant difference between males and females in all contextual factors. However, the result showed that there is a significant difference between male and female participants in item No.41 within the interlocutor sub-factor, “my classmate is of opposite gender”, males (M= 2.86) and female (M= 2.53),  $t(2.49)= 0.013$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

## 5. Discussion of Results

This section discusses and interprets the study's findings in the light of literature and theoretical framework. The two research questions have been addressed through the use of the two instruments, namely the FLWTC questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed several factors affecting nursing college students' WTC in English inside the classroom. The factors are located under three main factors: psychological, linguistic and contextual. With respect to the psychological factors, the findings of the current study suggested that self-perceived communication competence, lack of self-confidence, shyness and anxiety have influential effects on students' WTC in English. These findings are in line with the results of previous studies conducted by Cao (2010) which found that shyness hinders learners' WTC, and Baker & MacIntyre (2000), and Sylvia et al. (2020), which suggest that self-perceived communication competence, lack of confidence and anxiety are significant factors in predicting foreign language learners' WTC. Interestingly, the findings of this study revealed that motivation has no influential effect on nursing students' WTC in English. The participants are motivated towards learning English to be good communicators. However, the reason for their non-participation is that they do not have good language proficiency to enable them to speak and communicate freely in English. This result indicates that nursing students may not have a high level of risk-taking to get engaged in English communication in the classroom. In agreement with this finding, Sylvia et al. (2020) also found that motivation does not affect learners' WTC in English in the classroom. Concerning linguistic factors, the present study's finding revealed that linguistic factors such as fear of mispronunciations, lack of grammatical knowledge and limited vocabulary have influential effects on nursing college students' WTC in English in the classroom. These findings can be explained as learners reported that their ideas will not be

understood if they mispronounce words and phrases and they feel embarrassed when they mispronounce phrases. Thus, they prefer to keep silent instead of making pronunciation mistakes when communicating in English. These findings are in line with the results of Hamouda (2013) who found that pronunciation is an important factor that reduces learners' WTC as they feel embarrassed when they mispronounce English words in front of their colleagues. The findings also suggested that the learners' grammatical knowledge and vocabulary play crucial role in determining their readiness to talk in English and initiate a discourse. As for the contextual factors, the findings of the current study showed that topic preparation, group work and class time influence learners' WTC in English. The nursing college students will be willing to communicate in English and actively participate in activities if they prepare in advance for the topic to be communicated and if they are asked to work collaboratively with a partner and in small groups rather than individually. These findings are in line with the findings of previous studies by Peng (2013), (Cao 2010), Cao and Philp (2006), and Sylvia et al. (2020) who found that second/foreign language learners prefer to deliver speech and do their English tasks in pairs or groups rather than in isolation in front of the whole class.

In addition to these results, new contextual factors affect participants' WTC in English have been discovered. They are lack of practice opportunities, teachers' aim of teaching English at secondary schools, and fear of bullying. The lack of language practice opportunities is due to class time constraints and the large number of students in each class. This environment would discourage their WTC in English inside the classroom. The low English proficiency at university is attributed to their secondary school teacher's methods of teaching English. The aim of teachers in teaching English at secondary school is how to assist learners in getting high marks in public examinations rather than developing their

communication skills. The findings of this study are in agreement with Tsui's (1996) and Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, (2015) studies which suggested that if second language learners were given sufficient opportunity to practice the TL their WTC could be increased. The practice opportunities would encourage learners to learn how to use the TL in the classroom.

As for the gender differences between males and females, the findings revealed that female nursing students are more anxious than males when an English language teacher asks them to respond to their questions. This variable has a negative influence on their WTC in English in the classroom. Furthermore, the results showed that female nursing students have less perceived communication competence than males as the former believe that the other students speak English better than them. This belief hinders females from being willing to communicate in English. Within the linguistic factors, the findings suggested that both males and females share equal opinions that the linguistic factor has an influential effect on their WTC in English inside the classroom. Regarding the effect of the interlocutor on the learners' degree of WTC, the findings showed that male nursing students feel uncomfortable when the interlocutor is of the opposite gender i.e. females and thus hide their WTC. This result could be attributed to the cultural variable that Iraqi male students feel shy and reluctant to speak and communicate with females. These findings are in line with Cao's (2011), Kang's (2005), MacIntyre's (2007), Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2015), and Riasati's (2018) results which proved that the sex of interlocutor is relatively important to the students and they prefer to talk to somebody who is of their sex rather than somebody who is of the opposite sex.

## 6. Conclusions and Implications

The present study explored the factors affecting nursing college students' WTC in English inside the classroom. It also aimed to determine the differences between male and female students in the identified factors. In light of the current study's findings, there are three main factors with sub-factors that affect nursing college students WTC in English classrooms. These factors are psychological, linguistic and contextual factors. All the psychological factors have impact on participants WTC in English except motivation. In addition, some contextual factors greatly influence students' WTC in English classrooms. These factors are topic preparation, lack of practice opportunities, the teachers' aim of teaching English at secondary schools, group work, and fear of bullying. Based on these findings, EFL teachers must consider the factors influencing learners' WTC to increase their students' communication skills. Given that the new trends in English language teaching and learning focus on enhancing learners' communication and interaction in the TL, EFL teachers require to select appropriate teaching strategies that enhance their students' attempts to communicate in English. Shyness and anxiety are two crucial factors that hinder learners WTC in English, EFL teachers are advised to create a friendly atmosphere inside the English classes and tolerate learners' mistakes during oral tasks. In addition, the teachers' feedback is recommended to be given after the learners do their oral tasks. Further, students should be given sufficient and equal opportunities for communication to practice their language.

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