التفاعل الصفي واستعداد طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية للتواصل

اعداد

م.م ابتهال صباح غالي

المديرية العامة للتربية محافظة في ذي قار

البريد الإلكتروني Email : ebtehalsabah@87gmail.com

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفاعل الصفي، الاستعداد للتواصل، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية(EFL) ، طلبة الجامعات العراقية، التفاعل بين المتعلم والمعلم، التفاعل بين المتعلمين.

كيفية اقتباس البحث

غالي ، ابتهال صباح، التفاعل الصفي واستعداد طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية للتواصل،مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، تشرين الثاني 2026،المجلد:16 ،العدد:11.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر (Creative Commons Attribution) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نَسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

مفهرسة في Indexed
IASJ

مسجلة في Registered
ROAD

Classroom Interaction and EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate

Ibtihal Sabah Ghali
General Directorate of Education of Dhi-Qar

Keywords : classroom interaction, willingness to communicate, EFL, Iraqi university students, learner-instructor interaction, learner-learner interaction.

How To Cite This Article
Ghali , Ibtihal Sabah, Classroom Interaction and EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate, Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, November 2026,Volume:16, Issue 11.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

ملخص الدراسة: صُممت هذه الدراسة لفحص العلاقة الارتباطية بين التفاعل الصفي والاستعداد للتواصل (WTC) لدى 120 طالباً وطالبة من دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) في المستويين الثالث والرابع الجامعي، وذلك في جامعة ذي قار وكلية الإمام الكاظم (أقسام ذي قار) في العراق. روعي في اختيار العينة التوازن بين المؤسستين التعليميتين وبين الجنسين، حيث ضمت العينة 60 طالباً وطالبة من كل مؤسسة (30 ذكراً و30 أنثى). اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً كمياً ارتباطياً ومقطعياً(cross-sectional) ؛ إذ قِيس التفاعل الصفي باستخدام 11 بنداً من مقياس "ليكرت (Likert-type) "تغطي التفاعل بين المتعلم والمعلم والتفاعل بين المتعلمين أنفسهم، بينما قِيس الاستعداد للتواصل باستخدام 10 بنود تركز على السياق الصفي. وأظهرت النتائج أن مستوى التفاعل الصفي كان متوسطاً (المتوسط الحسابي = 3.35، الانحراف المعياري = 0.52)، في حين تراوح مستوى الاستعداد للتواصل بين المتوسط والمرتفع (المتوسط الحسابي = 3.51، الانحراف المعياري = 0.61). كما أظهر المقياسان اتساقاً داخلياً جيداً (معامل ألفا كرونباخ = 0.887 للتفاعل الصفي، و0.916 للاستعداد للتواصل). وأشارت نتائج

تحليل ارتباط "بيرسون "إلى وجود علاقة إيجابية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين التفاعل الصفي الكلي والاستعداد للتواصل(r(118) = 0.424 ، (p < 0.001. وأظهر تحليل الانحدار البسيط أن التفاعل الصفي يفسر ما نسبته 18.0% من التباين في الاستعداد للتواصل(R² = 0.180 ، F(1,118) = 25.84، (p < 0.001. وفي نموذج الانحدار متعدد المتغيرات (بوجود متغيرين تنبؤيين)، تبين أن التفاعل بين المتعلم والمعلم يُعد مؤشراً دالاً إحصائياً للاستعداد للتواصل (beta = 0.412، (p = 0.003 بينما لم يكن التفاعل بين المتعلمين دالاً إحصائياً عند ضبط أثر التفاعل بين المتعلم والمعلم(beta = 0.025 ، (p = 0.858. وتبرز هذه النتائج أهمية التفاعل الداعم والمحفز للمشاركة بين المعلم والطالب في تعزيز استعداد الطلاب للتواصل باللغة الإنجليزية داخل قاعات الدراسة الجامعية في العراق.

Abstract

The present study was designed to examine the correlation between classroom interaction and willingness to communicate (WTC) of 120 third- and fourth-year undergraduate EFL students from the University of Thi-Qar and Imam Al-Kadhim College (IKC), Thi-Qar Departments, Iraq. The sample was balanced by institution and gender. There were 60 students from each institution (30 males and 30 females). A quantitative correlational cross-sectional design was used. Classroom interaction was measured by 11 Likert-type items that tapped learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction and WTC was measured by 10 classroom-oriented items. Results showed that the level of classroom interaction was moderate (M = 3.35, SD = 0.52) and the level of WTC was moderate-to-high (M = 3.51, SD = 0.61). The two measures showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha= .887 for classroom interaction and .916 for WTC). The results of Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between overall classroom interaction and WTC, r(118) =.424, p <.001. The simple regression showed that classroom interaction accounted for 18.0% of the variance in WTC, R2 = .180, F (1,118) = 25.84, p < .001. In the two-predictor model, learner-instructor interaction was a significant predictor of WTC (beta =.412, p =.003), but learner-learner interaction was not significant when controlling for learner-instructor interaction (beta =.025, p =.858). The results demonstrate the significance of supportive, participation-oriented teacher-student interaction in promoting students' willingness to communicate in English in Iraqi university EFL classrooms.

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2026, Volume: 16, Issue: 11

1. Introduction

Meaningful use of English for communication is one of the key goals of English as a foreign language (EFL) education. However, linguistic competence alone does not ensure that learners will indeed enter into or maintain communication. Willingness to communicate (WTC) bridges this gap by describing a learner's readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a particular interlocutor (MacIntyre et al., 1998). WTC in classroom settings is dynamic and may vary depending on topic, interlocutor, group size, perceived competence, anxiety, teacher behaviour, and the immediate social climate (Kang, 2005; Cao, 2011).

Classroom interaction is particularly relevant in EFL contexts since the classroom may provide students with their most regular opportunities to use English. Interacting with instructors and peers helps learners to produce language, negotiate meaning, receive feedback, solve problems collaboratively and build communicative confidence (Long, 1996; Swain, 2005; Walsh, 2011). A supportive interactional environment can reduce interpersonal risk in speaking and can make participation more predictable and psychologically manageable.

Recent evidence has provided a stronger empirical link between classroom social conditions and WTC. Liu et al. (2025) investigated 623 university students and found a significant positive relationship between classroom interaction and WTC. They found that speaking self-efficacy and foreign language enjoyment mediated the relationship between classroom interaction and WTC. Han and Li (2025) also found that teacher-student relationships, peer relationships and cooperation predicted overall L2 WTC using data from 932 undergraduates, but the pattern differed by activity type. Moreover, recent classroom-environment research has continued to identify social climate, teacher support, emotions, and task conditions as relevant correlates of learners' communicative readiness (Salbaş & Ekmekçi, 2025; Erdel, 2026). But these relationships are context-sensitive and evidence from Iraqi higher education is still relatively scarce.

Thus, this study investigates classroom interaction and WTC among EFL students at two higher education institutions in Thi-Qar, Iraq. It studies general classroom interaction and learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction to identify the extent of the association between the dimensions and the students' tendency to use English in classroom communication.

1.1. Problem Statement

In university EFL classrooms, students may have sufficient knowledge of English but may vary greatly in their readiness to speak. Some students

answer questions, volunteer ideas, and participate in discussions, but some do not, regardless of whether they have the linguistic resources to contribute. This difference indicates that classroom communication is influenced not merely by proficiency but also by the interactional context in which communication takes place. While the classroom environment and interaction have been associated with WTC in international research, this linkage warrants more research in the Iraqi university context. The present study aims to address this problem by investigating if students who report more classroom interaction also report higher willingness to communicate in English.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What is the perceived level of classroom interaction among the EFL students in the study?
2. What is the students' willingness to communicate in English?
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between classroom interaction in general and WTC?
4. To what extent do learner–instructor and learner–learner interaction uniquely predict students' WTC?

1.3. Research Hypotheses

H1. EFL learners' willingness to communicate is positively and significantly related to overall classroom interaction.

H2a: Learner-instructor interaction is a significant predictor of EFL students' willingness to communicate. H2b. Learner-learner interaction significantly predicts EFL students' willingness to communicate.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study provides contextual evidence of Iraqi higher education to the growing literature on situational WTC. From a pedagogical standpoint, it helps to clarify what types of classroom interaction are most associated with students' readiness to speak. The results can be instrumental for EFL teachers who want to create classroom settings that encourage participation; they can also be a foundation for future research about interaction-based interventions in Iraqi universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language

L2 WTC was defined by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as a readiness to participate in discourse in a second language in a specific situation. The heuristic model proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualizes L2 willingness to communicate through a layered system involving self-confidence, interpersonal motivation, social situation, personality, and broader social and individual factors. Recent research has supported the

view that WTC is not a fixed learner trait. Situational WTC has been defined as being emergent in nature (Kang, 2005) and can be influenced by the interactional context and group composition (Cao & Philp, 2006). More recent work has explored WTC at increasingly fine-grained temporal levels. For example, Li, Xu, and Wang (2024) used an idiodynamic approach in a naturalistic group task and found that WTC varied as a function of interacting linguistic, motivational, affective, teacher-, interlocutor-, topic-, and group-related influences. Thus, classroom WTC should be viewed as a context-sensitive disposition which is subject to change as the immediate communicative environment changes.

2.2. Classroom Interaction in EFL Learning

Interaction is central to the communicative language learning approach, as it facilitates language production, gap noticing, meaning negotiation, feedback, and testing of emerging linguistic resources (Long, 1996; Swain, 2005). Research on classroom discourse has also noted that teacher questioning, wait time, feedback, treatment of errors, turn allocation and interactional space can be used to increase or decrease opportunities for students to participate (Walsh, 2011). In the present study, classroom interaction is represented by learner-instructor interaction and learner-learner interaction, the two interpersonal channels through which students most directly experience classroom interaction. This distinction is relevant from a pedagogical perspective, as teacher-student interaction can affect perceived safety, support and participation norms, while peer interaction can offer rehearsal, cooperation and lower risk opportunities for meaning-focused communication.

2.3. Classroom Interaction and WTC

Many studies have found that classroom factors are associated with WTC. Peng and Woodrow (2010) showed that classroom environment was one element of a larger model of WTC in an EFL context and Peng (2012) emphasised the ecological and situational qualities of classroom communication. Selecting topics, providing wait time, and response patterns are some of the teacher behaviours that can affect learners' willingness to communicate (Zarrinabadi, 2014). Li et al. (2025) also built the link between classroom environment and WTC through learners' emotional experiences. Taken together, these studies suggest that WTC develops at the intersection of learner characteristics and the social conditions in which communication is invited, supported, or assessed.

2.4. Recent Empirical Studies

More convincing evidence for the role of classroom interaction and social climate in WTC has been provided by recent empirical studies. Digital

communication activities were found to enhance EFL learners' WTC and engagement (Han et al., 2024), indicating that interactional opportunities can be intentionally structured through pedagogical design. Li, Xu, and Wang (2024) reported considerable moment-to-moment fluctuations in WTC during a group communicative task and identified teacher, interlocutor, topic, group atmosphere, and affective-cognitive factors as interacting influences. In a large-scale study, Han and Li (2025) examined 932 university EFL learners and found that teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and cooperation were positive predictors of overall WTC. Importantly, the strength and direction of the predictors differed across meaning-focused and form-focused activities. Similarly, Salbaş and Ekmekçi (2025) investigated the classroom environment in terms of WTC and highlighted the significance of communicative classroom conditions. Most relevant to the present study, Liu et al. (2025) reported a significant positive relationship between classroom interaction and WTC and demonstrated that speaking self-efficacy and foreign language enjoyment acted as mediatory mechanisms. Erdel (2026) examined the relationship between classroom social climate and WTC in a Turkish EFL context, and more recently, examined L2 grit as a mediating learner variable. A common thread in these studies is that communicative willingness depends not only on personal disposition but also on the quality, structure and emotional meaning of classroom interaction.

2.5. Iraqi EFL Context and Research Gap

There is emerging research on WTC in Iraqi EFL contexts but it is still less prolific than work in a number of other EFL contexts. For example, Mutar et al. (2024) examined WTC of Iraqi undergraduates within the framework of psychological adjustment and offered evidence of WTC as a relevant construct in Iraqi higher education. However, comparatively less attention has been paid to the classroom interaction as an immediately modifiable instructional factor, and in particular to the relative contribution of learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction within the same predictive model. The recent international literature increasingly distinguishes teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, cooperation, classroom climate and affective mediators (Han & Li, 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Erdel, 2026). However, these patterns cannot automatically be assumed to operate in the same way in Iraqi university classrooms. This study fills this contextual gap by investigating the overall CI-WTC relationship in two institutions in Thi-Qar and separating learner-instructor from learner-learner interaction for

predictive analysis. This provides locally grounded evidence, but also enables direct comparison with emerging international findings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional correlational design was used to examine levels of classroom interaction and WTC and to estimate the strength of association between them. The statistical relationships are interpreted as associations, not proof of causation, because the design is correlational.

3.2. Setting and Participants

The sample included 120 third and fourth year EFL undergraduate students from two higher education institutions in Thi-Qar, Iraq: Thi-Qar University and Imam Al-Kadhim College (IKC), Thi-Qar Departments. The questionnaires were distributed to accessible students during their regular lectures, so a quota-based convenience sampling procedure was applied. To ensure institutional and gender balance, 60 students were included from each institution, 30 males and 30 females from the University of Thi-Qar and 30 males and 30 females from Imam Al-Kadhim College. So, the total sample consisted of 60 male and 60 female students. Students were selected from the third and fourth years of study. The analyses were on classroom interaction and WTC. Institution and gender were used to describe the sample, rather than as predictors in the main regression models. Each case was assigned an anonymous code (S001–S120) and no student's name was included in the analysed dataset.

3.3. Instruments

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended self-report questionnaire comprising two Likert-type measures: classroom interaction and willingness to communicate (WTC). All items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher composite scores indicated stronger perceived classroom interaction or a greater willingness to communicate in English. Classroom interaction was measured through 11 items covering two dimensions of interaction that are relevant to EFL classroomss. Learner–instructor interaction was measured using seven items that tapped students' perceptions of communication, opportunities to participate, responsiveness, and interaction with the instructor.

The other four items measured learner–learner interaction, which represented learners' perceived interaction and communication with peers. The conceptual and empirical literature on classroom interaction and its relation to L2 communication (especially studies on classroom environment, teacher–student interaction, peer interaction and willingness to communicate; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Han & Li, 2025; Liu et al.,

2025) informed the choice and wording of the items. Willingness to communicate was measured with 10 classroom-oriented items that assessed students' reported likelihood of using English in typical classroom communicative situations.

The measure was developed on the basis of existing conceptualisations of situational L2 willingness to communicate and previous classroom-based WTC research (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The items were interpreted as measures of perceived willingness to initiate or participate in English communication in the classroom, rather than measures of actual speaking behaviour. Composite scores were derived by averaging the corresponding item responses for each measure. Composite scores were also computed separately for learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction in addition to the overall classroom interaction score to explore their respective relationships with WTC. Instead, internal consistency was computed from the present sample data, not assumed from prior studies. The overall measure of classroom interaction demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .887$) and the WTC measure demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .916$). These coefficients showed acceptable reliability of the composite measures for the statistical analyses in the present research.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaires were administered to third and fourth year EFL students during their usual lectures at the two universities. The data collection was structured to have 60 usable responses from each institution with gender being equally represented by 30 males and females from each institution. Completed questionnaires were coded, not identified by student names; thus the analysis used the anonymous case identifiers S001-S120. All classroom-interaction and WTC items had identical response formats. The resulting dataset was then prepared for descriptive, correlational, reliability and regression analyses.

3.5. Score Interpretation

Equal width intervals were used for descriptive interpretation of the five point composite means: 1.00-2.33 was low, 2.34-3.67 was moderate, and 3.68-5.00 was high. These cut-offs were used solely for summarisation of score distributions; inferential analyses were conducted with the continuous composite scores.

3.6. Reliability and Data Analysis

Internal consistency was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics consisted of means, standard deviations, and frequencies and percentages. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between classroom interaction and WTC.

Simple linear regression was used to estimate the proportion of variance in WTC accounted for by overall classroom interaction, and multiple regression was (correct) used to investigate the unique contribution of learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction when entered simultaneously. Statistical significance was assessed at the .05 alpha level. Multicollinearity was directly examined because learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction were highly correlated (r =.794). The observed inter-predictor correlation results in a tolerance of about .370 and a variance inflation factor (VIF) of about 2.71 for two predictors, which do not suggest severe multicollinearity by commonly used diagnostic cut-offs. But the simultaneous regression coefficients are interpreted as unique associations after accounting for the variance shared between the two interaction dimensions. The design is cross-sectional and correlational, and therefore all regression coefficients are interpreted as predictive associations in this sample, not causal effects.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics and internal consistency estimates for the principal measures and interaction subscales.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Overall classroom interaction	120	3.354	0.521	.887
Learner-instructor interaction	120	3.333	0.551	-
Learner-learner interaction	120	3.390	0.542	-
Willingness to communicate	120	3.510	0.608	.916

The mean of overall classroom interaction was 3.354 (SD = 0.521) and the mean of WTC was 3.510 (SD = 0.608). The internal consistency of both overall scales was high, with alpha =.887 for classroom interaction and alpha =.916 for WTC. Learner-learner interaction (M = 3.390, SD = .542) was slightly higher than learner-instructor interaction (M = 3.333, SD = .551).

4.2. Distribution of Overall Scores

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents across the predefined low, moderate, and high score categories.

Level	Classroom Interaction n (%)	WTC n (%)
Low	5 (4.2%)	3 (2.5%)
Moderate	81 (67.5%)	64 (53.3%)
High	34 (28.3%)	53 (44.2%)
Total	120 (100%)	120 (100%)

According to the predetermined equal-width score bands (low = 1.00-2.33, moderate = 2.34-3.67, high = 3.68-5.00), most of the students were classified in the moderate classroom-interaction category (67.5%), with 28.3% in the high category. For WTC, 53.3% were moderate and 44.2% were high. This pattern suggests that WTC scores were slightly more skewed toward the higher end of the scale than were classroom-interaction scores. These categories are descriptive summaries and did not enter into the correlation or regression analyses.

4.3. Institutional Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 reports descriptive scores separately for the two participating institutions.

Institution	N	CI Mean	CI SD	WTC Mean	WTC SD
University of Thi-Qar	60	3.324	0.507	3.510	0.607
Imam Al-Kadhim College, Thi-Qar Departments	60	3.383	0.538	3.510	0.614

The two institutional groups presented very similar descriptive profiles. The mean WTC was the same, to two decimal places (M = 3.51) for both groups. However, the average of classroom-interaction was a bit higher for the Imam Al-Kadhim College group. The descriptive differences were not the main focus of the study.

4.4. Correlation between Classroom Interaction and WTC

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlations between the interaction measures and willingness to communicate.

Predictor	Correlation with WTC (r)	P
Overall classroom interaction	.424	< .001
Learner-instructor interaction	.432	< .001
Learner-learner interaction	.352	< .001

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2026, Volume: 16, Issue: 11

The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between overall classroom interaction and WTC, r(118) = .424, p < .001. Students who scored higher on classroom interaction also tended to report higher willingness to communicate. Learner-instructor interaction correlated with WTC at r = .432 (p <.001), and learner-learner interaction correlated with WTC at r = .352 (p <.001). Thus, H1 was supported in the analysed data set.

4.5. Regression Analyses

A simple linear regression with overall classroom interaction as a predictor was statistically significant, F(1,118) = 25.84, p < .001, R^2 = .180. Thus, the overall classroom interaction explained approximately 18.0% of the variance observed in WTC. The regression coefficient unstandardised was B = 0.494 (SE = 0.097), t = 5.08, p < .001.

Table 5 presents the coefficients from the simultaneous multiple regression model.

Predictor	B	SE	Standardized beta	t	P
Constant	1.900	0.333	-	5.703	< .001
Learner-instructor interaction	0.455	0.151	.412	3.006	.003
Learner-learner interaction	0.028	0.154	.025	0.179	.858

The two-predictor regression model was significant, F(2, 117) = 13.44, p < .001, R^2 = .187, adjusted R^2 = .173. Learner-instructor interaction emerged as a significant unique predictor of WTC (beta = .412, p = .003), thus confirming H2a. At the bivariate level, learner-learner interaction was positively correlated with WTC, but after controlling for learner-instructor interaction, it did not make a significant unique contribution (beta = .025, p =.858). Therefore, H2b was not supported. The two interaction dimensions correlated strongly with each other (r = .794). The corresponding tolerance (~.370) and VIF (~2.71) values do not indicate severe multicollinearity, but the large percentage of shared variance does help to explain the reduced unique contribution of learner-learner interaction in the simultaneous model.

5. Discussion

The study demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association between classroom interaction and willingness to communicate of EFL students. The overall correlation of r = .424 is a meaningful moderate relationship: students who reported their classrooms as more interactive

also tended to report more readiness to communicate in English. This is consistent with the foundational premise of situational WTC research that the immediate classroom conditions can either facilitate or constrain communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Cao, 2011).

The finding is consistent with Liu et al. (2025) who reported that classroom interaction was positively associated with WTC in a much larger sample of university students and that speaking self-efficacy and foreign language enjoyment mediated the relationship. It aligns with Han and Li (2025) who in their large-scale analysis found that teacher-student relationships, peer relationships and cooperation were relevant predictors of overall WTC and with Erdel (2026) who related classroom social climate to WTC with an emphasis on the role of psychological resources at the learner level. Thus, the current analysis extends a growing international pattern to an Iraqi EFL context. The correlational design also implies that the observed association should not be taken as evidence that interaction causes higher WTC.

The regression results reveal a more complex story. In conclusion, interaction in the classroom accounted for 18.0% of the variance of WTC, suggesting that interaction plays a role in WTC but cannot fully explain students' communicative readiness. Other factors such as perceived competence, anxiety, motivation, enjoyment, self-efficacy, topic familiarity and interlocutor characteristics are still associated with a large proportion of WTC variance. This interpretation is in line with the multilayered WTC model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) and recent evidence for affective and motivational mechanisms (Liu et al., 2025; Erdel, 2026). Learner-learner interaction had a significant bivariate correlation with WTC and was not significant in the simultaneous regression model. This is not to say that peer interaction is unimportant. Instead, the high correlation between the two dimensions of classroom interaction suggests a large shared variance. Students who have supportive teacher interactions may also be in classrooms where there is more active peer interaction. The regression model may have a difficult time isolating a large independent peer effect. Future studies with larger samples and more differentiated measures could explore this relationship with structural equation modelling or longitudinal designs.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The results imply that EFL instructors should intentionally design classroom interaction rather than leave participation to the responsibility of individual students. Teachers can create more communicative opportunities by using open-ended questions, providing enough wait

time, asking supportive follow-up questions, giving non-threatening corrective feedback, having pairs prepare before public speaking, and allocating turns equally. Teacher discourse and interactional behaviour should be given special attention in professional development because learner-instructor interaction was most uniquely related to WTC. Peer work is a valuable setting for rehearsal and participation, even if its unique regression coefficient was not significant in the simultaneous model, as it carries a lower risk.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The study has a number of limitations. First, correlational cross-sectional design cannot infer causality. Second, classroom interaction and WTC were both measured by self-report so the results represent students' perceptions and reported readiness rather than direct measures of classroom speaking behaviour. Third, the quota sample was limited to 120 third and fourth year students from two institutions in Thi-Qar; although it was balanced by institution and gender, it cannot be considered statistically representative of all Iraqi EFL undergraduates. Fourth, although internal-consistency estimates are supported by available data, a separate phase of expert validation, pilot testing, or factor analytic validation of the instrument in this sample is not documented. Future research should therefore replicate the study using probability-based, multi-site samples, report fuller evidence of content and construct validity, incorporate direct classroom observations, teacher ratings and recorded speaking behaviour, and use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs. Further studies could also examine mediators such as speaking self-efficacy, foreign language enjoyment and L2 grit as in the recent work by Liu et al. (2025) and Erdel (2026).

8. Conclusion

The current study investigated the classroom interaction and willingness to communicate among 120 third and fourth-year EFL students in two higher education institutions in Thi-Qar. The results indicated that classroom interaction was positively related to WTC, and total interaction could explain 18.0% of the variance of students' communicative willingness. In the simultaneous model, interaction with the instructor was a significant unique predictor of WTC, while interaction with peers was not significant after accounting for shared variance. These findings lend support to the idea that WTC is closely tied to the immediate interactional environment of the language classroom but also indicate that classroom interaction is only one component of a wider set of influences stemming from the learner and the context. The results lend support to

more pedagogical attention to providing supportive, frequent and meaningful opportunities for teacher-student and student-student communication in Iraqi university EFL classrooms within the limits of the correlational design.

References

- Aladini, A., Mahmud, R., & Ali, A. A. H. (2024). The importance of needs satisfaction, teacher support, and L2 learning experience in intelligent computer-assisted language assessment (ICALA): A probe into the state of willingness to communicate as well as academic motivation in EFL settings. Language Testing in Asia, 14, 58. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-024-00334-9.
- Cao, Y. (2011). Investigating situational willingness to communicate within second language classrooms from an ecological perspective. System, 39(4), 468-479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.10.016.
- Cao, Y., & Philp, J. (2006). Interactional context and willingness to communicate: A comparison of behavior in whole class, group and dyadic interaction. System, 34(4), 480-493. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.05.002.
- Erdel, D. (2026). Classroom climate and EFL students' willingness to communicate: The mediating role of L2 grit. Frontiers in Psychology, 17, 1808101. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1808101.
- Han, H., & Li, B. (2025). Perceptions of social interactions and second language willingness to communicate in different activities. Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 10, 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00312-x
- Han, R., Alibakhshi, G., Lu, L., & Labbafi, A. (2024). Digital communication activities and EFL learners' willingness to communicate and engagement: Exploring the intermediate language learners' perceptions. Heliyon, 10(3), e25213. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25213.
- Kang, S.-J. (2005). Dynamic emergence of situational willingness to communicate in a second language. System, 33(2), 277-292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.10.004
- Li, C., Dewaele, J.-M., Pawlak, M., & Kruk, M. (2025). Classroom environment and willingness to communicate in English: The mediating role of emotions experienced by university students in China. Language Teaching Research, 29(5), 2140-2160. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221111623.
- Li, S., Xu, M., & Wang, H. (2024). Understanding EFL learners' willingness to communicate dynamics during a group communicative task: An idiodynamic perspective. Acta Psychologica, 251, 104621. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104621.
- Liu, Z., Sun, D., Zhang, L., Wang, X., & Yang, Y. (2025). The impact of classroom interaction on willingness to communicate: The mediating roles of speaking self-efficacy and foreign language enjoyment. PLOS ONE, 20(7), e0328226. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0328226.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), Handbook of second language acquisition. Academic Press.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clement, R., Dornyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and

affiliation. The Modern Language Journal, 82(4), 545-562. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb05543.x.

•Mutar, Q. M., Hmmud, S. H., & Mohammad, H. M. (2024). The relationship between willingness to communicate in English and psychological adjustment of Iraqi EFL learners. Arab World English Journal, 15(2), 189-206. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no2.12.

•Peng, J.-E. (2012). Towards an ecological understanding of willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms in China. System, 40(2), 203-213. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2012.02.002

•Peng, J.-E., & Woodrow, L. (2010). Willingness to communicate in English: A model in the Chinese EFL classroom context. Language Learning, 60(4), 834-876. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2010.00576.x

•Salbaş, H., & Ekmekçi, E. (2025). The impact of classroom environment on students' willingness to communicate in foreign language learning. International Journal of Educational Research, 129, 102517. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102517.

•Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning (pp. 471-483). Lawrence Erlbaum.

•Walsh, S. (2011). Exploring classroom discourse: Language in action. Routledge.

•Zarrinabadi, N. (2014). Communicating in a second language: Investigating the effect of teacher on learners' willingness to communicate. System, 42, 288-295. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.12.014.

•Zarrinabadi, N., & Tanbakooei, N. (2016). Willingness to communicate: Rise, development, and some future directions. Language and Linguistics Compass, 10(1), 30-45. https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12176.