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Exploring the Gender-Related Factors Affecting Students' Willingness to

Communicate

The Case of Third-Year Students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in
Sciences of Language

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Declaration

I, **Asma ZOUZAL**, a Master two student at the department of English language, division of social sciences, hereby declare that the current research is my original work, and it has never been submitted to any other institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information.

This work was carried out and completed at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria.

Ms. Asma **ZOUZAL**

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Dedication

To my beloved grandfather who has passed away, I dedicate this work for his priceless prayers; May

Allah have mercy on him and place him into his heavens.

A special feeling of graduation goes to my loveliest Parents

For their unconditional love, silent sacrifices, infinite patience, and constant support. You are my

greatest pride and my most beautiful strength

To my beloved siblings, Ahmed & Ali, especially my sister Khedija, who has always been there,

whenever I needed her.

To all my family, especially my little ones, Mohamed and Hadjer, the dearest to my heart

To my soulmate, Kamy that still by myside

To Dounia my best friend and my partner during this path, who without her presence would be much

more challenging and unbearable.

To my college friends who genuinely were great people till the end not users, haters, or fake

Last but not least, I want to thank me, for believing in me in doing all this hard work, for never giving

up, I want to thank me for just being me at all the times.

To all those who I may have forgotten to mention.

I dedicate this humble work to you.

Where there's a will, there's a way

Abstract

Despite many EFL learners' motivation to become fluent speakers, they often struggle to use English appropriately in real-world situations. Thus, this study aims to explore the factors affecting third-year EFL students' willingness to communicate in the classroom, and examines how these factors vary by gender. Moreover, this study tends to reveal teachers' perceptions of gender variation in relation to EFL students' WTC. Therefore, a questionnaire was administered to 40 third year students from N=358 and an interview were conducted with five teachers in the department of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The analysis of the findings revealed a significant relationship between the Students' Willingness to Communicate and their binary Gender. Showing that the gender of the students plays a noteworthy role in their "Willingness to Communicate". The results showed that affective challenges such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes affected both genders, but are experienced differently. Also, it showed that students are motivated to communicate primarily by external factors such as grades, teacher praise, and interesting topics but they vary (females are more motivated by collaboration and discussion while males prefer competition and structured activities). In addition, it also revealed that communication styles and preferences differed by gender based on personal factors and classroom contexts. Hence, EFL students and teachers are recommended to raise their awareness about the concept of willingness to communicate, its aspects, factors and challenges and relationship with gender regarding its significant role in developing effective communication among students.

Keywords: EFL learners, factors, gender, willingness to communicate

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

APA: American Psychological Association

Apps: Applications

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FRs: Frequent Responses

L1: First language

L2: Second Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

n.d.: No Date

OCED: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA: Program for International Student Assessment

RQ: Research Question

USA: United States of America

WHO: World Health Organization

WTC: Willingness to Communicate

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Communication is an important part of learning a language, especially for students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Being able to express thoughts and ideas fluently and accurately is a primary goal of foreign language learning. However, many EFL students find it difficult to speak in English, even though they may be competent in their understanding of grammar and vocabulary.

One of the sources of this problem is a concept known as "willingness to communicate" (WTC), which refers to the students' inclination to initiate or engage in communication in a second language (L2). The reasons behind students' WTC can be difficult, especially when considering the role of gender. Furthermore, the willingness to communicate may be affected by many factors (internal and external) that can increase or decrease student willingness to communicate in classrooms or social contexts. These factors include how they communicate, their attitudes, challenges they face, and social or psychological factors.

Studies shows that gender influence how students feel and approach to communicate. Male and female students may differ in how confident they are, and their preferences in communication, their attitudes to use the language (MacIntyre et al., 2001). They found that female students often experience high anxiety and feeling more self-conscious in language learning (Park & French, 2013), which may lower their WTC, whereas, male students may take more risks in communication (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004).

The above differences in styles of communication influences how students communicate with each other in the class and their subsequent ability to learn. Gender communication behaviors can also be influenced by cultural and societal norms (Holmes, 2008). In many cultures, traditional gender roles lead to different expectations for male and female learners. For instance, female students may be encouraged to focus on accuracy than

fluency in their speaking, while male students speak more assertively and confidently (Oxford, 1994). These principals can provide students' attitudes and willingness to communicate in class.

Additionally, challenges as fear of being judged, peer pressure, and feedback from teachers are also important in EFL classrooms, they can affect students differently; female students feel anxious and social restrictions as a result of societal expectations, while male students can face pressure to perform better and compete in class discussions. The relationship between gender and WTC within the EFL setting in Algeria is poorly understood.

To understand the reasons behind WTC in relation to gender can help educators create more specialized and fair teaching practices. By addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting positive attitudes about communication, teachers can create a supportive environment that encourages all students to speak up. Furthermore, understanding the types of communication styles among EFL students may also help teachers develop strategies in order to get different needs and priorities. Finally, the ability to communicate in English is essential for EFL students, not only for the academic success but also for the future opportunities in professional and social contexts.

By exploring the factors affecting EFL students' WTC and examining how these reasons differ between male and female students, our study aims to shed light on the factors that encourage or hinder EFL learners from speaking, communicating in class, by looking at their motivations, challenges, communication styles they face. The findings of this research help teachers create more supportive and inclusive learning environments, where all students regardless of their gender, feel motivated and confident to use the language.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although speaking is a crucial aspect of language learning, many EFL learners in Algeria struggle with their active involvement in classroom discussions and engaging in

conversations in English inside and outside the classrooms. This unwillingness to engage with their classmates and the instructors may stop or hinder their language development and affects their overall language proficiency (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). There can be a multitude of factors and reasons associated with a low WTC, but it is still not clear what role gender plays in students' willingness to communicate since this area still lacks investigation in the Algerian educational context.

Previous studies have demonstrated mixed results with regard to WTC and gender differences showing greater desire to communicate among female learners (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Ariyani & Hadiani, 2019), while others have indicated male and females had no significant differences with WTC at all (Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018).

These inconsistent findings, connected with the lack of research in the Algerian EFL context. In addition, this reinforces the need to gain additional insights into how gender may influence students' motivations/reasons to communicate in English.

This study seeks to explore the factors behind WTC among male and female third-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, and to examine the differences related to their reasons for communicating whether they have similar or different motivations based on gender.

3. Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How do male and female EFL students' differ in their motivations to communicate?

RQ2: What are the psychological factors that influence male and female EFL students' willingness to communicate?

RQ3: What are the differences in communication styles between male and female EFL students?

4. Aim of the Study

The general aim of this study is to explore the factors affecting third year EFL students' willingness to communicate and examine how these factors may differ based on their binary gender. More precisely, this research work also aims to:

- Explore the motivations that drive male and female EFL students to communicate, highlighting the differences between their perspectives.

- Understand the influence of affective factors like anxiety and confidence on male and female students face in EFL classrooms that affects their willingness to communicate in relation to gender.

- Examine the differences in communication styles, between male and female EFL students.

5. Research Methodology

For the present research work, the researcher adopted a qualitative (exploratory) approach, giving the nature of the study, which aims to explore the motivations among EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in relation to their gender.

Specifically, the researcher seeks to understand the affective challenges that students' may face in the class, to explore the reasons that leads them to speak highlighting the differences among their perspectives, and to examine their different communication styles, in addition to gather teachers' point of view and insights into how gender can influence the willingness to communicate (WTC) of their students in the class.

This qualitative case study population is comprised of third year licence students of English at the University of Mohamed Khider - Biskra. The sampling consists of 40 participants (20 males and 20 females) based on purposive sampling to obtain and ensure

equal gender representation. Additionally, five (05) EFL teachers who have experience teaching third-year learners were chosen through simple random sampling.

In alignment with the research design, two main data collection tools were used: a semi-structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administrated to 40 EFL students, to highlight the significance levels of their WTC in English in relation to their gender, and how they differ from each other. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with five EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University, to explore their point of view on how students' motivations/reasons and gender differences may influence their willingness to communicate during classroom interaction.

As for the data analysis procedures, the researcher employed thematic analysis to analyze both the students' questionnaire responses and the teachers' interviews. This method was used to identify recurring themes and patterns, which help in providing a description of how gender may impact EFL learners' WTC.

By using both the students' and the teachers' perspectives. We will provide a holistic view of the phenomenon while also informing recommendations for more supportive and inclusive communication environments in EFL classrooms.

6. The Referencing Style for this Dissertation

The referencing style that was used when drafting this dissertation is the 6th edition of the APA (American Psychological Association). The choice was not arbitrary; this referencing style is deemed to be more suitable for the educational research. Therefore, all the requirements of the mentioned style were respected. Regarding the running head, it was applied throughout the entire dissertation except for the front page.

7. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses the gap at a topic that hasn't been studied much in Algeria: how gender affects whether EFL students are willing to communicate. The

results will present useful information about why male and female students might have different levels of willingness to communicate. This results may help teachers teach better, create better lesson plans, and improve teacher training, so that all students feel more comfortable and motivated to communicate or speak English in class.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three chapters.

Chapter one is devoted to present comprehensive overview of the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) in second-language learning, mainly its definitions, the origins, development, and importance of WTC in EFL contexts, with a focus on key psychological, linguistic, and social factors that influence learners' readiness to communicate. More specifically, the chapter considers the main psychological, linguistic, and social factors that impact learners' readiness to communicate. The chapter also presents theoretical models, for example the pyramid and heuristic models that can be used to explain how different factors interact to affect communication. To conclude, the chapter presents suggestions strategies to enhance students' WTC and to encourage the learners' active participation in communication in the classroom.

Chapter two explores the concept of gender in communication, especially in educational settings. It begins by defining terms such as "gender" and "sex", discussing their biological and social distinct features. Moreover, it discusses how both gender roles and gender stereotypes develop through socialization as well as differences in male and female learners' communications in relation to specific theories (for example, Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory). It reviews some studies regarding gendered differences in classroom interaction in addition to the difficulties or challenges that male and female EFL learners face. Furthermore, the chapter serves as a baseline to understand how gender may influence the learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their broader learning experiences.

The **third and last chapter** of the study is subdivided into two parts. The first part is concerned with presenting the rationale behind the research methodology adopted in this study (research approach, population, sample, and the data gathering tools). The second part provides a detailed account of the specific data collection procedures employed; namely students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews. Finally, it highlights the data analysis techniques employed and offers interpretations in addition to the discussion and summary of the study findings.

Chapter One:

The Concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in EFL Context

1.1. Introduction

Communication is essential for learning a foreign language, along with listening, reading, and writing. It helps people share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others. However, EFL teachers often notice that some students are excited to communicate, while others are more hesitant to speak the target language.

This chapter is concerned with the communication process, it provides comprehensive understanding of the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second-language communication. It explores the origins and development of WTC as a construct, highlighting its importance in language learning. The chapter also introduces and explains the pyramid model, emphasizing the heuristic model's significance in understanding WTC, which outlines the various factors that influence WTC in a second-language (L2) context, particularly in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.

Furthermore, the chapter presents the different psychological, linguistic, and social factors that impact EFL students' willingness to communicate, such as confidence, motivation, anxiety, and classroom environment. It also discusses how these factors interact to either encourage or hinder students' participation in communication. Finally, the chapter concludes by proposing and offering some strategies to enhance students' willingness to communicate effectively in classroom and engage in conversations.

1.2. Definition of WTC

When giving the chance to use the English language, some EFL students may choose to engage actively, while others may prefer to stay silent even if they can effectively interact and communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998), i.e. not all of the EFL learners look for opportunities to use the target language in a meaningful setting. For that, modern linguists have given a great importance to the various psychological, social, linguistic, and

situational factors that affect the student's unwillingness to communicate in EFL classrooms.

The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) was first introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985) to explain why people differ in their willingness to engage in interactions, even in similar contexts. They define WTC as the inclination to begin communicating when the opportunity arises, emphasizing that people have specific communication tendencies that influence their desire to speak. This is critical in terms of establishing how willing a student is to engage in communication in a classroom setting.

Additionally, the term "willingness to communicate" was defined as "the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, p.7). WTC was set by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) as relating to individuals who communicate in their first language, i.e. those who are willing to engage in communication. Then it was extended to L2 communicators (MacIntyre et al., 1998), i.e. those students who avoid starting communication using English. WTC is considered as the measure of speaker's desire to participate or avoid communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). McCroskey believes that fear, anxiety, and other factors related to second language acquisition are the main elements in communication in this language (McCroskey et al., 1985).

Willingness to communicate in second language (L2) depends on self-confidence, linguistic abilities, and the contextual situation (MacIntyre et al., 1998). It involves actively participating in conversations based on the situation, as described by Kang (2005). Encouraging a desire to communicate during language learning is a key goal in second language acquisition, as suggested by MacIntyre et al. (1998), and Kang (2005).

1.3. Willingness to Communicate in Second/Foreign Language Context

McCroskey's (1985) research on willingness to communicate (WTC) has impacted future studies, fostering interest in language selection (how individuals choose which language to use when communicating), for exploring communication and learning differences. This concept has evolved, getting the attention of scholars and educators in the field of second and foreign language teaching. L2 WTC is 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). When the willingness is high, learners participate more, take risks, and keep trying; when it is low, it can make learning more difficult and complex for them. MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that WTC in L2 is more complex than in L1 due to differences in communicative skills, confidence, and proficiency. For example, while students' communication apprehension in L1 and L2 might be similar, their WTC is often higher in L1 because they feel more competent and comfortable using their native language.

The students' readiness to communicate in a second language has always been characterized by unpredictable patterns (MacIntyre et al., 1998). It can be challenging to determine the motivations behind why some students actively seek to participate in second language communication while others do not. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) further emphasized that it is highly unlikely that WTC in the second language (L2) is a simple manifestation of WTC in L1. This distinction arises from various linguistic, social, psychological, and communicative factors that uniquely influence L2 interactions. Furthermore, Barraclough et al. (1988) explain that different people engage in talk to different extents, and elaborate that this willingness to communicate is subject to changes "at any given time in a given context" (p. 188). Similarly, MacIntyre et al. (1998) define Willingness to Communicate as a "situational variable" with both changeable and permanent influences (p. 546).

The difference between L1 and L2 WTC highlights the dynamic and situational nature of communication. Unlike McCroskey's conceptualization of WTC as a stable personality trait, MacIntyre et al. (1998) redefines WTC as a situational "readiness" to communicate, influenced by specific contexts. Zhang et al. (2018) also supported this perspective, stating that WTC involves both trait and state dimensions. At the trait level, it reflects an individual's general communicative tendency rooted in personality, while at the state level, it fluctuates based on situational factors (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). This situational variability is particularly relevant in L2 contexts, where uncertainties and complexities often play a larger role than in L1 interactions.

1.3.1. Willingness to Communicate between State and the Threat based Features

The discussion concerning the understanding of psychological behaviors, particularly the distinction between traits and states, has piqued the curiosity in the field of Psychology. Some researchers believe traits are the main factor, while others highlight temporary "person-in-a-situation" conditions as more crucial (Steyer et al., 2015, p. 73). Schmitt and Blum (2020) provided a description of these two aspects:

Traits are described as "characteristics patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that generalize across similar situations, differ consistently among individuals, and remain rather stable over time." States represent "specific patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaviors that occur in a particular context at a giving time" and can change over time depending on the situations (p. 5206).

Regarding second language acquisition, scholars continue to argue the relative importance of situational factors and personality traits in shaping Willingness to Communicate (WTC). The trait-like comprehension suggests a consistent pattern connected to traits like motivation and language anxiety, whereas certain researchers focus on situational factors as the main factors (Jafari & Deghati, 2016).

Chang (2018), MacIntyre et al. (1998), and Zhou (2013) point out the crucial role of taking into consideration both personal traits and situational factors in influencing WTC. MacIntyre et al. (1998) propose a model that integrates various emotional factors, combining personality traits and environmental factors, to describe WTC as a complex characteristic.
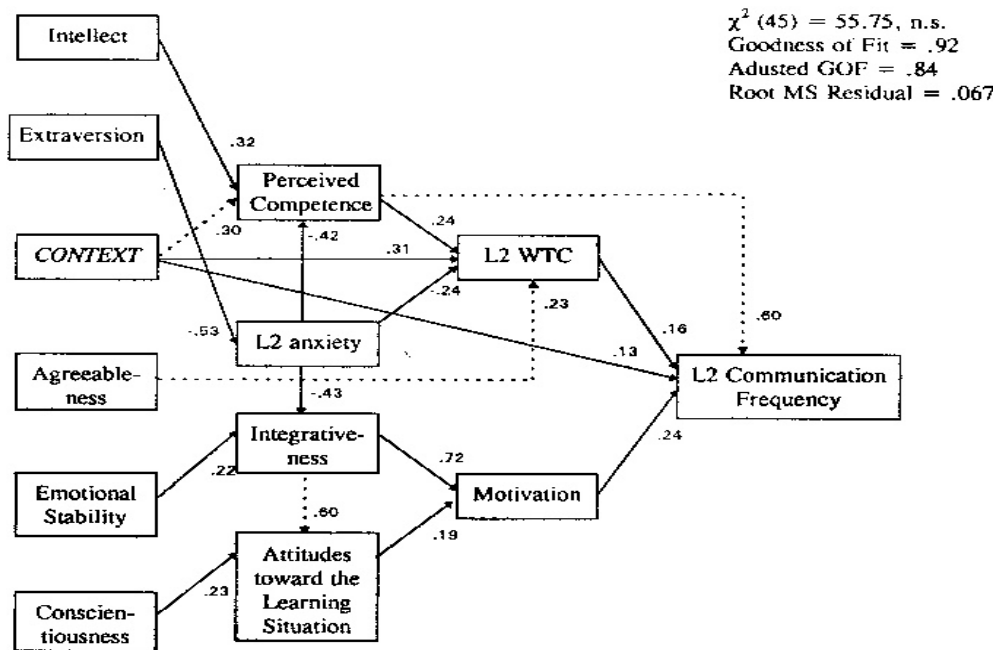
Figure 1.1: Path analysis of L2 Communication. Adapted from "Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication, " by P. D. MacIntyre & S. Charos, (1996), *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *15*(1), p. 8.

1.3.2. Willingness to Communicate in EFL Classroom

Several studies have underscored various factors that affect individuals' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language learning settings, providing valuable insights for understanding communication styles among EFL students. Within the language classroom educators and learners engage in a collaborative setting to perform their roles.

Participation and WTC levels of students can be affected by peer interactions, teacher immediacy, and teaching strategies. Factors related to the learner such as age, gender,

language learning orientation, and emotional aspects like anxiety and motivation also impact WTC.

Kang (2005) pointed up the flexible nature of WTC, shaped by contextual engagements. Recent studies highlight the complexity of WTC and the significance of combining various theories and methods, recognizing its crucial function in educational contexts.

1.3.3. Significance of Enhancing Willingness to Communicate

The willingness to participate in conversation, commonly known as WTC, differs from person to another and may change within the same conversation, impacting language learning in a positive or a negative manner.

Enhanced WTC levels play an important role in second language teaching and learning, as they facilitate better educational results and creating a supportive learning atmosphere. The importance of increased language involvement because of the high WTC levels in fostering language skills was stressed by Kang (2005).

Learners' language use participation in communication, and progress in second language learning are greatly impacted by WTC. Research has shown that learners who possess high WTC actively engage in practicing their second language, participate in real-life communication, and exhibit increased levels of engagement, especially in speaking abilities and overall language growth. For example, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) found that learners with high WTC levels are more likely to start communication in a second language proficiency. In the same way, Yashima (2002) showed that Japanese EFL students with high WTC were more willing to communicate with international peers, and made more gains with their English skills than learners with low WTC. Kang (2005) also provide evidence that situational WTC included more opportunities for meaningful use of language in classrooms. Encouraging students to actively search for genuine language chances, and

collaborate in cross-cultural communications through this cautious method can result in successful learning outcomes.

1.4. Model of Willingness to Communicate

MacIntyre and associates (1998) presented a model with different layers of variables that feed into WTC. In simple terms, WTC is a key variable influenced by various factors. The model, known as the heuristic model of variables that impact WTC, takes into account the underlying precursors of WTC, that are based on six layers as follows: communication behavior, behavioral intention, situational antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context, and social-individual context (See Figure 02):
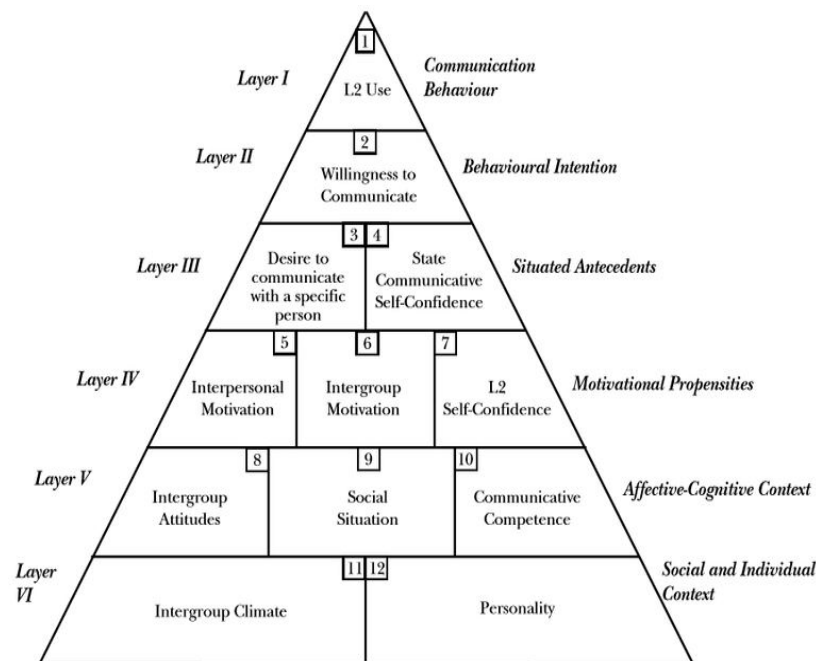
Figure 1.2: The Pyramid Model of Variables Influencing WTC. Adapted from MacIntyre, P. D., Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal, 82*(4), 545–562.

The shape of pyramid stands for the more general to the more specific influencing Factors in L2 WTC, which then fall into two groups: stable, lasting factors (layers 4, 5 and

6), and situational, contextualized, and therefore changeable factors (layers 1, 2 and 3) (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

They build upon McCroskey et al., (1987) views by positioning personality as the foundation on which the pyramid is based. In order to make these factors more accessible to the readers, a detailed overview of these layers will be presented.

Layer 1. Communication Behavior

Beginning from the highest point of the model, layer 1, communication behavior, involves the actual use of the second language, considered as the primary objective of language teaching. This communication relies directly on WTC. Using language and WTC complement each other effectively. For instance, the regular use of language and successful communication can enhance the self-confidence of language learners, which in turn increases their levels of willingness to communicate, encouraging them to actively look for opportunities to practice the target language.

MacIntyre et al., (1998) pointed out that L2 instructors aim to foster in learners the motivation to employ the language and actively search for real-world opportunities to make up for the absence of authentic language use frequently absent in L2 classroom settings.

Layer 2. Behavioral Intention (WTC)

As mentioned above in Layer 1 communication behavior relies directly on WTC, which is described as a willingness to engage in a conversation at a specific moment with particular individuals, using a second language. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), WTC indicates a "willingness to share ideas" (p. 548), which may not always be linked to the opportunity to communicate. They also proposed that the readiness to communicate serves as a valuable measure of language application, supported by the Planned Behavior theory, which underscores the impact of intention and control on behavior (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

In addition, they highlighted that WTC can manifest in different ways; it is not always dependent on a chance to speak. A simple gesture such as lifting a hand to reply can demonstrate a willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Their viewpoint suggests that students' motivations during academic sessions, particularly their active participation in discussions, are influenced by a variety of factors.

 For instance, students who are actively involved may gain confidence in language (developed from a mix of low anxiety, strong communication skills, motivation for learning and using the language), a combination of factors such as aiming to satisfy the teacher or attaining high grades, and the impact of the social context on language learning, encompassing the reasons behind teaching a particular language in that setting. Moreover, the language learning choices of students can be directly influenced by their personalities (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Layer 3. Situated Antecedents of Communication

Layer 3 contains two elements that have a direct influence on WTC: ***the need to interact with a specific person*** and ***state self-confidence*** *(self-assurance).* In relation to the initial factor, MacIntyre et al. (1998) assumed that people frequently engage in communication with others around them for a particular reason, whether it is to seek their help, collaboration, or needed service. From their perspective, the process of reaching this "superior aim" will generally require some levels of flexibility and the ability to switch between different codes. The other factor, state self-confidence, consists of two key components: perceived competence and absence of anxiety.

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) these two "main determinants of WTC" are not fixed and are highly dependent on the circumstances and the person's previous experience with second language.

Furthermore, they have an inverse relationship – anything that raises the state of anxiety will decrease a person's self-confidence and, consequently their WTC.

Layer 4. Motivational Propensities

For Layer 4, MacIntyre et al. (1998) start paying attention to factors that are steadier, enduring, and thus more complex. The components of this layer includes of three components: ***interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation*** *and **L2 self-confidence.*** The authors, state that there are two fundamental motivators, or aims on communication, play a significant role in most communication situation and apply to both interpersonal and intergroup motivation which are control and affiliation.

When delving into ***control*** as a motivator in interpersonal communication, the focus is on hierarchical, task-related situations, such as teachers and students, or doctors and patients. In this context, the purpose of communication is to control or impact the interlocutor's behavior. The translation leads directly to intergroup relations, with the only distinction that the power relationship is established among the participating groups (such as Clement's and Kruidenier's (1985) case of a dominant group learning a minority language).

Affiliation, in contrast, refers to the level of interest in developing a bond with interlocutor, whether they are an individual or a group. Personality type, attitudes towards the interlocutor(s), and a desire for integration seen as a crucial aspects in this context.

However, the third factor in Layer 4, L2 ***self-confidence***, delves deeper into the connection between the individual and the L2. MacIntyre et al. (1998) describe it as a general confidence in the ability to use L2 in communication effectively. This belief is a consequence of the interplay between self-evaluating L2 skills on one side and experiencing unease or agitation when using L2.

Layer 5. Affective and Cognitive Context

Layer 5 includes three components that focus on affective and cognitive context. However, the factors and variables explained in this layer are pertain to the individuals themselves, originating from their collective experiences, attitudes, and motivations, rather than from specific situations. These are intergroup attitudes, social situation and communicative competence.

The first factor, ***intergroup attitudes***, relates to three aspects: intergrativeness, fear of assimilation and motivation to learn L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Under the concept of *integrativeness,* the authors assume a willingness to adapt to various cultural groups.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) have additionally explored the concept that connecting and affiliation (associating) with members in the L2 community is an important reason in the process of learning L2. Moreover, MacIntyre et al. (1998) talk about work done by Clement and Kruidenier (1985) which highlights the correlation between integrativeness and enhanced engagement with the L2 community.

Increased exposure to the L2 community could lead to a potential decline in native linguistic competence, resulting in the loss of L1 membership, especially for minority group members.

This takes us to the causes of what MacIntyre et al. (1998) define as *fear of assimilation.* Lambert (1975) has specified the term "subtractive bilingualism" to describe the phenomenon of loss, where learning a new language may lead to the loss of one's native language and/or culture. Despite, integrativeness and the fear of assimilation are elements that can be found in every person, and the success of L2 communication is influenced by the balance between them (if integrativeness is more prominent, L2 communication will be fostered, and conversely). Additionally, when a majority group learns the language of a minority group, the risk to one's native identity and culture is far smaller, and there is less

resistance. *The motivation to learn an L2* developed from the elements previously mentioned above depends on the attitudes towards the second language and its population.

This is the reason why students with a positive attitude and experience tend to engage more deeply in the learning process. However, MacIntyre et al. (1998) noted that a person's willingness to communicate may not always reflect their motivation, as they could have other interests apart from communication (i.e. reading).

Another complex factor discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) is **social situation**, a multifaceted category dealing with social encounters in particular environments. Ferguson (1994) clarified that through regular repetition in a specific context of society, communication situations start being associated with language use and structures that are specific to these situations. In other words, people have a certain way of communicating depending on where they are, who they are talking to and so on.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) went on and mentioned five central determiners of a social situation: participants, setting, purpose, topic and the channel of communication. When referring to *participants,* for instance, interlocutors, the authors identify the age, gender and the relationship between the participants as most important. The level of intimacy between the participants (whether they are strangers, colleagues, family etc.), the amount of shared knowledge and their proficiency in L2 levels (e.g. native or non-native) also can all have an impact on their WTC. Based on this assumption, two colleagues working in the same area, with similar levels of L2 are more likely to successfully engage in a conversation.

The term *Setting* refers to the local and temporal context of communication (e.g. workplace, school, home etc). As already discussed, these environments call for specific linguistic behavior and speech acts. *Purpose* refers to the objectives or motivations driving communication, which can be: to persuade, to transfer information, to entertain and to reveal self (Biber 1994, MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Naturally, *the subject of the communication* will have a substantial effect on L2 usage – having good knowledge of the topic can enhance one's L2 self-confidence despite possible limitations in general proficiency, whereas the lack of it can make a significant obstacle even for a proficient speaker. Finally, *communication channel* is concerned with the medium picked for communication. These two main channels are speaking and writing, which can be subdivided even more (e.g. phone calls, emails etc.). According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), they all rely on special sets of schemata and vocabulary which may influence the levels of one's WTC.

Layer 5's last component is **communicative competence**. This theory, first introduced by Dell Hymes in (1966), generally encompasses a person's second language skills. How someone views their own competence can either facilitate or obstruct willingness to communicate. Communicative competence covers a wide range of language competences including: grammatical competence, discourse competences, sociolinguistics competences, strategic competences, and pragmatics competences, assuming having a strong communicative competences will positively serve the overall language performance.

Layer 6. Social and Individual Context

Layer 6 covers the attitudes towards and the relationship between L1 and L2, along with how the speaker's personality affects communication. **The intergroup climate** can be understood through structural features and perceptual and affective connections.

Regarding structural characteristics, MacIntyre et al. (1998) discuss the relative demographic representation of the L1 and L2 communities, i.e. how economically influential they are and to what extent they are represented in social institutions like government, church and so on; how close or distant these communities are socially. The willingness to adapt and minimize the gap, in addition to the attitudes and values related to

the L2 community, are encompassed by perceptual and affective factors. General assumption is that positive attitude towards the L2 group fosters L2 learning and vice versa.

On the flip side, it has also been noted that intergroup relations can sometimes be affected by prejudice and discriminatory actions. The origins of prejudice, similar to other attitudes, can be traced back to past experiences or the impact of L1 community members (e.g. parents, peers, media, etc); nevertheless, parents are believed to play the most crucial role in shaping prejudice development in children (Gardner 1985, Aboud 1988, Phinney 1990, MacIntyre et al., 1998). Additionally, Gardner (1985) highlights the significance of parents' attitudes towards the L2 community, as it can influence their children's learning of the second language (as in MacIntyre et al., 1998).

The above discussion indicates that the main lasting effects on L2 WTC are linked to the individuals themselves. This is the reason MacIntyre and his team (1998) found it necessary to place personality at the core of their model.

When addressing ***personality***, it is vital to recognize Goldberg's (1993) taxonomy of five key personality traits. In his view, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to new experiences are traits that encourage L2 learning and WTC (as in MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Here, it is noted that personality itself does not have a direct impact on WTC. It does, however, set the stage for L2 communication by integrating with interpersonal and intergroup relations and other factors building upon it in the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

1.5. Factors Affecting EFL Students' WTC

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed model of WTC, in EFL classrooms, certain students are inclined to share their views and participate actively when given the

opportunity, whereas some prefer to stay quiet. However, the willingness of the EFL student to communicate can be influenced by various factors, either directly or indirectly.

When learning a language, factors like language anxiety, motivation, shyness, self-confidence, attitudes, the fear of making mistakes, and students' perceived linguistic and communication competence, gender and age can play a significant role. Also, the social context variables encompass factors like the teacher's role and teaching methods, the effect of the topic, task type, and the classroom atmosphere (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

1.5.1. Individual Factors

A variety of individual factors play a significant role in influencing EFL students' willingness to actively take part in classroom communication. These personal traits and psychological attributes are essential factors in deciding if students will participate in English conversations and exchanges.

In addition, grasping the crucial personal elements that affect the willingness of EFL learners to engage in communication is vital for building supportive learning atmospheres and promoting their language advancement. It includes:

1.5.1.1. Language Anxiety

Anxiety is the primary affective challenge which considered as a key variable that EFL students may face when engaging in classroom communication, that has a vital role in the process of learning a second or foreign language.

Spielberger (1983), states that anxiety is the personal experience of stress, fear, nervousness, and concern linked to the stimulation of the autonomic nervous system. Horwitz et al. (1986) mentioned self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors related to classroom language learning are part of language anxiety, influenced by the unique characteristics of the language willingness to communicate (WTC) learning process. The

performance and language acquisition of students may be affected negatively due to anxiety.

Moreover, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, (1986) identified three components of foreign language anxiety: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; 3) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is the anxiety that one experiences while communicating in her foreign language. Since the learners have limited knowledge of L2 and problems in talking and understanding the message in a foreign language, communication anxiety is of importance in the foreign language learning process. Test anxiety is also a part of foreign language anxiety, since evaluation is a part of foreign language learning. Test anxiety happens due to the fear of failure. Fear of negative evaluation is similar to test anxiety; however, it is broader in terms of involving evaluative situations other than test taking. For example, job interviews or public speaking may lead to anxiety stemming from fear of negative evaluation.

After the study by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), which identified foreign language anxiety as a distinct phenomenon, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991) analyzed different anxiety scales and confirmed that foreign language anxiety is a separate type of anxiety linked to language learning and performance. In their 1989 study, they examined eleven anxiety scales and identified two types of anxiety which they called: general anxiety and communicative anxiety. They found that communicative anxiety was directly related to learning and using foreign language vocabulary, while general anxiety had no connection to language achievement. Later, in 1991, they identified three types of anxiety: social evaluation anxiety, state anxiety, and language anxiety. Among these, only language anxiety was found to be connected to foreign language learning.

Furthermore, researchers have classified language anxiety into two key categories:

Trait anxiety, as defined by Spielberger and Sarason (2005), is a fundamental aspect of an individual's personality that can significantly obstruct their ability to respond positively to different circumstances they encounter.

State anxiety, meanwhile, encompasses a sudden rush of emotions in reaction to an external stimulus. Which refers to the temporary feeling that may decrease as the student becomes more accustomed to the environment or establishes a sense of comfort with their teacher and classmates.

Anxiety is seen by different researchers as an intermediate stage between motivation and personality, with the ability to discouragement, loss of motivation, and a negative attitude towards speaking the language.

Brown (2007) agreed that "both too much and too little anxiety could hinder the success of learning a second language." (p. 163). Thus, it is recommended for EFL students to reduce their feelings of anxiety and nervousness when communicating in English in order to avoid underperforming in the target language.

1.5.1.2. Lack of Motivation

Motivation is the positive desire and force that drive students to speak in the classroom. Gardner (1985) explains that motivation involves the desires, attitudes, and efforts of students that drive them to use the target language.

As described by Harmer (2001) as a force that motivates individuals to act in order to achieve a specific aim is an essential factor in language learning, as highlighted by Brown (2000). During English language classes, a number of students might face challenges because of the lack of motivation, and according to Wen and Clement (2003) noted that students with low motivation or no motivation at all tend to avoid participating in classroom communication, leading to a failure in achieving language learning goals.

However, these challenges can be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Engaging in an activity driven by ***intrinsic motivation*** means finding joy and interest in the task itself, rather than seeking external rewards. This natural inclination plays a significant role in cognitive, social, and physical development. Conversely, students who do not have intrinsic motivation may not show interest in activities or lack confidence, leading to poor or limited foreign language speaking skills.

Extrinsic motivation includes to engage in an action or an activity to reach an external outcome, like obtaining a reward or avoiding punishment. According to Brown (2000) the theory of self-determination proposes that the level of autonomy varies in extrinsic motivation. The primary factor contributing to students' poor speaking abilities in foreign language learning is often identified as the lack of external motivation.

Thus, it is crucial for EFL educators to adopt strategies that enhance both internal and external motivation in their learners, like choosing engaging topics or assignments, building relationships, and using a range of activities such as role-playing, discussions, language games, and group projects.

1.5.1.3. Shyness and Lack of Self-Confidence

The willingness of students to speak in English classes can be shaped by their individual personality traits, including shyness and self-confidence which also considered as the affective challenges. Personality's importance is underscored by Liu (2005) in motivating students to engage in English conversations.

According to MacIntyre (2003), shyness is a long-lasting trait that plays a role in a person's willingness to interact. In foreign language classrooms, there is a significant relationship between shyness and anxiety, which leads to decreased levels in the desire to communicate.

MacIntyre also explains self-confidence as a combination of feeling capable in communication and being liberated from anxiety. It plays a crucial role in assessing students' preparedness for participating in spoken communication.

Djebbari (2014), suggests that "… the notion of self confidence can be regarded a fundamental aspect in students' capacity to tackle their language difficulties, as it is commonly believed to have an impact on effective language learning." (p. 53).

1.5.1.4. Students' Negative Attitude

The positive or negative feelings that students have towards learning the English language are known as attitudes.

The negative attitude of students, a factor often disregarded by teachers, can be a result of various influences, leading to negative emotions among students, as Kang (2005) highlights that this attitude is developed or influenced by negative stimuli in students' minds, directly impacting their willingness to communicate in English.

1.5.1.5. The Fear of Correctness of Speech

The fear of mistakes or the fear of correctness of speech regarded as an affective challenge.

In the classroom many students choose to speak and engage only when they are completely confident in the accuracy of their speech, prioritizing correctness and focusing on the grammatical aspects of their sentences before expressing them. As Lisa (2006) proposes that students who pay attention to their sentence structure are more motivated to engage in conversation and practice the target language. Nevertheless, when lacking confidence, they worry about making errors and therefore choose not to speak at all.

Thus, being extremely focused on precision before preparing presenting a speech could result a lack of Willingness to Communicate.

1.5.1.6. Student's perceived linguistic and communicative competence

The way students perceive their linguistic and communicative competence can greatly impact their willingness to communicate in the classroom; some students may feel insecure and lacking in skills, particularly when they compare themselves to their peers. According to Nagy and Nikolov (2007) students who feel unsatisfied with their own abilities and believe that their peers having more skills than themselves, they tend to avoid communication and stay quiet during class.

1.5.1.7. Gender and Age

Gender and age are viewed as demographic factors that may be connected to WTC, even though the evidence supporting this link is inconsistent and somewhat limited. For example, Baker and MacIntyre's (2000) research did not found any notable gender impact on WTC in their investigation involving students in Grades 10, 11, and 12, while Tavakoli and Davoudi's (2017) study with Iranian EFL students aged 11 to 50 also showed no significant gender effect.

On the other hand, it has been observed that girls in junior high school tend to have higher WTC levels than boys (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre et al., 2002), and students in Grades 8 and 9 show greater WTC than those in Grade 7 (MacIntyre et al., 2002).

A study carried out with 564 high school students in Yemen found that male students showed notably higher levels of WTC compared to their female peers (Al-Murtadha, 2021). This result was partially confirmed by Lee and Hsieh's (2019) study among university students in Taiwan.

The different findings indicate that the influence of gender and age on WTC might interact with various individual and situational factors, and the relationships between them may not be consistently predictable.

1.5.2. Social Contextual Factors

Moreover, personal factors and the social atmosphere in which EFL learners find themselves also plays a crucial part in shaping their desire and readiness to communicate. How the classroom is arranged, the methods used for teaching, the subjects discussed, and the relationships formed with peers all play a part in shaping students' comfort and motivation levels for engaging in English interactions.

Providing a deep understanding the substantial social context variables that effect the desire of EFL students to communicate is vital for creating supportive learning settings that promote active engagement. It covers:

1.5.2.1. The Effect of the Teacher's Role and Teaching Methods

The teacher plays a crucial role in influencing students' willingness to communicate in the classroom, both positively and negatively. According to Wen and Clement (2003), the teacher interaction and immediacy could enhance students' willingness to communicate.

Additionally, the techniques employed during instruction may impact the students' motivation to take part in classroom activities.

Zarrinabadi (2014) stated that it is important for the teacher to carefully consider the roles that s/he assumes or plays in the classroom, as this significantly impacts the students' achievements in the target language.

1.5.2.2. The Effect of the Topic

In a classroom for English as a Foreign Language, the subject matter plays a significant role in determining how willing students are to engage in speaking activities; their level of familiarity with the topic, interest in it, and preparation all contribute to their communication readiness.

Students enjoy engaging in conversations about subjects that attracts their curiosity and align with their background knowledge.

Cao and Philip (2006) believe that being familiar with the topic is closely linked to either enhancing or reducing students' WTC.

1.5.2.3. The Classroom Atmosphere

The classroom atmosphere greatly affects whether students are eager or hesitant to express themselves, providing them with an appropriate space where they can feel comfortable, relaxed, and supported by their teacher; this kind of environment encourages their active participation.

Thus, they tend to speak more. Kang (2005) posits that creating comfortable environments for learners to engage in authentic communication can facilitate the development of WTC in the L2.

Students who possess a strong willingness to communicate (WTC) are more inclined to utilize the second language in authentic contexts, which leads to the effective learning of the target language.

1.6. Communication Styles and Willingness to Communicate

Good communication is difficult to master because gaps in communication arise when the communication that was intended, is not transmitted, or when the meaning was received but misunderstood. The resulting miscommunication is largely due to the variation in personal styles of communication which everyone possesses. This section will discuss verbal and nonverbal types of communication as generally understood, then delving to the different communication styles in the classroom, their effect on WTC, and how teachers can adapt and modify their methods to encourage participation among students.

1.6.1. Types of Communication

Good and effective communication can thus be affected by many things like situation, time, culture, and gender. There is variation in what is meant by communication in any study of communication. Canary & Dindia (1992) stated that some people see

communication as some kind of spoken aspect, some consider as nonverbal interaction, whereas other people see communication as both verbal and nonverbal.

1.6.1.1. Verbal Communication

Figure 1.3: Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is defined by Hanes (2015) as the use of sounds and language to convey an explicit meaning. It is a way of articulating wishes, thoughts and ideas, and is essential to the processes of learning and teaching. Communication by verbal means is preferred to communications by other forms of technology over long distances. Verbal communication, often accompanied by non-verbal communications, is the dominant form of communications between two or more people.

As stated by Gray (1992), who wrote *"Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,"* there is a gender-based difference in verbal communications, as men tend to give and take solutions, while women tend to give and take feelings or empathy. As cited by Cameron (2007), this indicates that men are goal-oriented communicators as opposed to women who focus more on the relationship in communication. Men are oriented more towards visual-spatial and mathematical tasks in brain function and women have superior verbal functions in their brains. As a result, men are more inclined to action than to reflect or verbalize about the action; women enjoy the opportunity to talk; hence women are more verbally communicative than men.

In Tannen's story (1990), regarding this issue states that a woman sues her husband for divorce. When the judge asks her why she wants a divorce, she says her husband hasn't spoken to her in two years. The judge asks the husband, "Why haven't you spoken to your wife in the last two years?" He replied, "Because I didn't want to interrupt her." Differences in gender communication are even evident in non-verbal communication.

According to Krauss (1965), signs and symbols are seen as the primary signals that are conveyed in verbal communication. Words are understood as symbols, while signs are the secondary derived products of the intent of the message, including things like tone of voice, blushing and facial expressions.

1.6.1.2. Nonverbal Communication
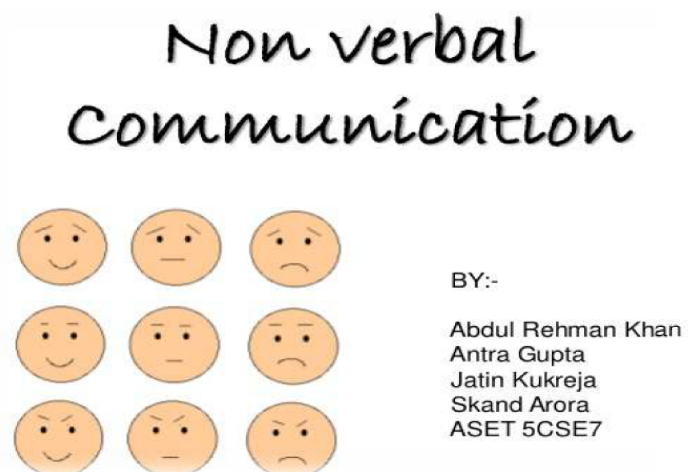
Figure 1.4: Non-verbal Communication

Barbour (1976) states, "*actions speak louder than words.*" Nonverbal communication or body language refers to those actions which are separate from speech. Mehrabian (2007) indicates that it includes facial expressions, movements of arms and hands, body postures and positions and other body movements, such as legs and feet. Glass (1992) noted that research has demonstrated that nonverbal communication differs

consistently between the sexes. Nonverbal communication has the purpose of communicating a message to another person through actions or body movements. It will have many elements, such as facial expression, intonation, volume, choice of words, eye contact, and many others. Carnes (2015), indicates that it is more immediate than verbal communication, but the meaning usually is less clear. For example, an act of nonverbal communication will be able to express emotions better than words will. Technology has ways of communicating, like movies, which are capable of delivering a lot of nonverbal communication.

In addition, based on information from *the website Body Language Expert*, women tend to be better at reading non-verbal messages than men, who also tend to be less capable of sending subtle nonverbal messages. Sometimes, the receiver will have to decide between believing the verbal message or the nonverbal message, because in some cases, the verbal and non-verbal messages may potentially become inconsistent or even contradictory to one another. Women, will tend to be better than men at spotting inconsistencies.

Furthermore, Mack (2015), states that nonverbal messages can repeat, accent, and complement, regulate, or substitute for verbal message. Non-verbal communication modes (2010), define nonverbal communication as those nonverbal stimuli, in a communication setting, which are produced by the source speaker, and his or her use of the environment; that can have message value for both source or receiver listener. Essentially, the meaning of the message is passed, without it being created in a verbal form.

Barbour (1976) in *"Louder Than Words: Non-Verbal Communication"* states that only seven percent of communication is verbal in form. Therefore, to increase the chances of others understanding, it is very important to know how to use nonverbal communication effectively.

1.6.2. Types of Communication Styles in the Classroom

The effective communication is essential in the language learning, each student has a specific way of expressing themselves. These differences in communication known as *communication styles*, which have a substantial effect on willingness to communicate (WTC) in the classroom.

Several students express themselves with confidence, whereas others may struggle and hold back because of their personality traits, cultural background, or the classroom atmosphere. Each style influences how students interact with teachers and peers, as well as their confidence in speaking English. Scholars often categorize communication styles into four types: *assertive, passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive*(UMatter, n.d., LaFave, 2023).

1.6.2.1. Assertive

Assertive communicators, clearly express their ideas and viewpoints while showing respect for the opinions of others. These students take an active part in discussions, pay close attention, and involve themselves in meaningful conversations.

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998)**,** the assertive students tend to exhibit higher WTC levels due to their confidence in speaking and trust their language skills. They are additionally more willing to receive feedback, enabling them to enhance their speaking skills rapidly. Assertive students in an EFL setting are known to take the lead in group discussions and communicate confidently with their peers and teachers.

1.6.2.2. Passive

Passive communicators, on the other hand, often choose to stay silent and avoid expressing their thoughts or speaking in public, despite having good ideas. Their hesitation to engage in conversation is frequently connected to language anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or lack of confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986). These students may choose to listen instead of

participating actively, which can result in low WTC. Passive learners might also face challenges with their self-confidence in language learning, believing that their speaking skills are lacking for effective communication in public settings.

Nevertheless, with support and a relaxed classroom environment, they can steadily enhance their confidence levels and actively take part in discussions.

1.6.2.3. Aggressive

Aggressive communicators, however, usually known to take control of conversations, interrupt others, and forcefully express their opinions. While their WTC is frequently high, their method may hinder shy students from participating and joining in. Van Lier (2004) points out that forceful communication may lead to an unequal classroom atmosphere, making it challenging for quieter students to feel comfortable to engage. Teachers need to monitor discussions and set guidelines to guarantee that every student has a fair chance to participate.

Thus, encouraging the practice of active listening and turn-taking strategies can be beneficial in dealing with aggressive communicators and creating a more inclusive setting.

1.6.2.4. Passive-aggressive

Lastly, passive-aggressive communicators tend to avoid or shy away from direct confrontation while displaying resistance through indirect methods. These students may choose not to engage in discussions, disregard group tasks, or display annoyance when requested to talk. According to Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), passive-aggressive communication is frequently tied to low motivation or dissatisfaction with the classroom environment. Students characterized by this style may find it challenging to express themselves verbally, but with structured and meaningful speaking opportunities, they can improve their confidence and level of engagement.

Since every communication style affects WTC differently, teachers must identify these patterns and use particular strategies to help learners. While passive and passive-aggressive learners need more exercises to improve their confidence, assertive learners usually need less encouragement. In order to create a more balanced learning environment, aggressive communicators can also benefit from using respectful communication techniques. By acknowledging these differences, teachers may create an inclusive environment where every student can interact with others.

1.6.3. The Relationship Between Communication Styles and WTC

Communication styles can impact a student's readiness to engage in communication in various ways. While some learners feel at ease speaking in front of others, there are those who struggle with speaking due to anxiety, self-doubt, or interactions within the classroom.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) highlight the importance of understanding that WTC involves aspects beyond language proficiency, such as motivation, personality traits, and situational factors. Assertive confident students are more likely to possess high WTC as they feel comfortable sharing their opinions. These students engage actively in discussions and are willing to accept feedback. It is argued by McCroskey and Richmond (1990) that the utilization of assertiveness in communication can drive higher engagement and encourage more active participation in classroom discussions. Moreover, according to Burgoon and Hale (1984), students who practice assertive communication behaviors are inclined to build more meaningful interpersonal relationships, consequently elevating their WTC.

Furthermore, passive students might favor listening to speaking as they are concerned about pronunciation errors, grammatical mistakes, or peer judgment. According to McCroskey et al. (1986), people who exhibit high levels of communication apprehension are inclined to avoid speaking contexts, which may have a negative impact on their

language skills. In order to assist passive learners, instructors need to establish a caring setting that fosters small, relaxed speaking exercises such as pair activities and role-playing (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

As mentioned before high WTC displayed by aggressive students might result in an imbalanced classroom environment due to their dominance in conversations. Norton (2000) clarifies that a few students assert themselves vocally, leading to a situation where more introverted classmates may feel less inclined to speak up. Moreover, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1998) propose that individuals who communicate aggressively could potentially intimidate their classmates, leading to a decrease in overall classroom participation and inclusiveness. To tackle this problem, educators ought to introduce organized turn-taking methods and promote attentive listening to guarantee every student feels appreciated and valued.

Meanwhile, passive-aggressive students tend to avoid direct communication but may resist participation subtly. These students may decide against engaging in discussions or contributing minimally. Weaver (2010) argues that passive-aggressive behavior is commonly associated with frustration towards the learning process or opposition to authority figures.

Such students might experience issues with motivation, causing them to disengage from communication tasks. One effective way to help these students is through personalized encouragement and gradual exposure to speaking tasks, allowing them to build confidence over time.

1.6.4. Cultural Influences on Communication Styles

Cultural   background significantly influences the manner in which students interact within the classroom. In certain cultures, students are motivated to share their views openly, whereas in others, remaining quiet is regarded as a mark of respect. This implies that   a

student's willingness to communicate (WTC) is frequently shaped by cultural norms rather than solely their language skills (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Littlewood, 2004; Anyichie et al., 2023).

In Western societies, assertiveness is greatly esteemed, and learners are urged to engage actively in conversations. According to Littlewood (2004) notes that in nations such as the United States, Canada, and much of Europe, education focuses on personal expression, discussion, and analytical thinking.This leads to increased WTC, since students are used to expressing their views and participating in open dialogues without the fear of being judged.

Conversely, cultures in Asia and the Middle East often prioritize politeness, hierarchy, and respect for authority, resulting in more subdued communication styles. In high-context countries like Japan, China, and Saudi Arabia, students frequently refrain from speaking, not due to insufficient knowledge, but because cultural practices value listening and thoughtful expression (Lebra, 2007; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Al-Issa, 2005).

Voicing opinions in class, particularly when opposing a teacher's viewpoint, might be viewed as disrespectful or unsuitable in these cultures. This may lead to decreased WTC, even in students who are proficient in the target language. In North Africa and Arabic-speaking nations like Morocco, and Egypt, students frequently encounter a blend of assertive and passive styles of communication.

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) they describe that although some learners are at ease when speaking, others are reluctant because of anxiety regarding negative judgment. This uncertainty is shaped by a mix of cultural traditions and the increasing influence of Western educational frameworks, resulting in varied WTC levels in these learning environments. Certain students might embrace a Western-style of assertiveness,

whereas   others   may experience discomfort when speaking freely in   front   of   teachers and fellow students.

Considering these   cultural variations, educators should apply inclusive approaches to guarantee that every student, no matter their   background, feels at ease engaging in   class activities. In addition, Young (1991) notes that fostering a supportive atmosphere that honors various communication standards can assist in closing these cultural divides.

1.7. Strategies to enhance students' WTC in classroom

Many EFL learners experience difficulties in speaking due to anxiety, shyness, low motivation, lack of confidence, or fear of negative evaluation. Researchers have identified several effective strategies to foster WTC in the classroom, including creating a supportive learning environment, implementing student-centered activities, integrating technology, and using motivational teaching techniques.

1.7.1. Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

A positive and encouraging classroom atmosphere significantly influences students' WTC. When learners feel safe and supported, they are more likely to take risks and participate in speaking activities. According to Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) argue that the social and emotional atmosphere of a classroom has a direct impact on students' participation, engagement, and confidence in communication. However, MacIntyre et al. (1998) emphasize that learners who perceive a positive and low-anxiety atmosphere are more willing to communicate, as they do not fear negative judgment or embarrassment. Teachers play a vital role in shaping this environment, they can achieve this by establishing a non-judgmental space where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities rather than failures, so the students feel valued and respected.

Furthermore, teacher support and encouragement help reduce communication anxiety. Skinner and Belmont (1993) found that students who perceive their teachers as supportive are

more engaged and willing to take communication risks. Simple gestures such as praising students' efforts, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging peer collaboration can significantly enhance students' confidence in speaking.

1.7.2. Using Student-Centered Activities

The student-centered learning promotes active participation and reduces speaking anxiety. Some research suggests that interactive and communicative activities increase students' willingness to speak. Dörnyei (2001) highlights that when students are given meaningful tasks that require interaction, their WTC naturally increases. Some effective student-centered activities include: group discussions and debates, which can allow students to express their thoughts in a low-pressure setting, encouraging spontaneous communication. Role-plays and simulations also may help students practice real-life communication scenarios, reducing anxiety and boosting confidence (Bygate, 2001). The last activity is the think-pair-share, according to Kagan (1994) this method gives students time to organize and prepare their thoughts before speaking, which reduces hesitation and increases participation. Some research supports the effectiveness of these activities in language learning. As Long (1996) highlights that negotiated interaction in group tasks facilitates language acquisition and enhances communicative competence.

Thus, by incorporating such activities, teachers can create an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without hesitation or fear of judgment.

1.7.3. Reducing Anxiety and Building Confidence

One of the biggest obstacles to WTC is communication anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that language anxiety negatively affects students' willingness to engage in communication, leading to avoidance behaviors. To reduce anxiety, teachers can implement the following strategies: gradual exposure to speaking, by encouraging students to start with small speaking tasks (e.g., pair work) before moving to whole-class discussions

helps build confidence (Dörnyei, 2005). The error-tolerant atmosphere, according to Young (1991) teachers should focus on fluency rather than accuracy in early speaking activities, reassuring students that mistakes are part of the learning process. Encouraging self-reflection, by helping students to recognize their progress in speaking can boost their motivation and self-confidence (Ushioda, 2008).

When students feel confident in their speaking abilities, their WTC improves, leading to more frequent and meaningful communication.

1.7.4. Integrating Technology in Language Learning

However, the advent of technology has provided students with a kind of independence allowing them to communicate in multiple ways other than the traditional classroom setting. Internet platforms, language learning applications, and social media also serve as good tools for generating WTC. According to Sun (2012) online discussions and voice chat applications give learners a safe place to practice speaking but without the need to be physically present. Using language learning apps (e.g., duolingo), which allow interactive talking exercises for increasing self-confidence. Virtual exchange programs, by means of linking student with students from different countries for online speech practice, encourage authentic language use. Thirdly, audio recording and podcasting are other effective approaches which, according to Lord (2008) allows students to record their speech and then to reflect on their progress for a better oral presentation and anxiety reduction.

Also, Computer-Mediated Communication tools such as video conferencing and speech recognition software can be used to create a non-threatening space for practicing speaking skills. Educators state that promotion of technology-enhanced learning environment among all students should be the ultimate goal to provide them with controlled and flexible speech opportunities and to improve their certainty in oral communication (Hampel &

Stickler, 2012). By incorporating technology into the language learning process, the instructors can give the students extra communication familiarity in a less threatening setting.

1.7.5. Motivating Students through Personalization and Autonomy

Motivation is the major building block of WTC. Researchers emphasized that the importance of students' autonomy and interpersonal ties in their learning by indicating that the learners become more motivated to develop their self-confidence and wish to communicate the more autonomy and personal bonding they feel (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This is why letting students select the topics of interest to them will fire up their intrinsic motivation, thus reducing their participation in communication and relationship dropping (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Setting realistic goals by helping them to set achievable communication goals which can raise their motivation and self-confidence (Ushioda, 2008), as well recognizing students' progress and achievements encourages them to continue participating in conversations (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, according to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory supports the idea that students who experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness are more intrinsically motivated to communicate.

In addition, by implementing these strategies, teachers can empower learners to communicate more freely, ultimately improving their language proficiency and overall learning experience.

1.8. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, an in-depth exploration of the concept of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second-language (L2) has been given, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. We began with some remarks concerning the relevance and importance of communication in language learning and the factors that affect the students' willingness to participate in communication. We also went more in-depth into the origins and development of WTC, the leading of which includes the involvement of psychological, linguistic, social, and contextual aspects. Moreover, we put forward the pyramid model by MacIntyre et al. (1998) which sorts out the parameters of WTC and places them in various layers according to the factors from personality traits to situational factors. A chapter subsequently examined the individual and social variables that affect WTC in EFL students, such as, anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, attitudes, gender, age, and classroom environment. Therefore, we focused on the teacher's function, the methods of teaching, the atmosphere of the classroom as well as the topics' relevance in promoting communication.

Finally, it was the goal of the chapter to provide a comprehensive view of the factors that are formative to WTC and also their effects on the creation of a learning environment that is positive and engaging and that enables an active participation thus successful second-language communication.

Chapter Two:
Gender Differences in EFL Communication

2.1. Introduction

In the first chapter of this study, the concept of Willingness to Communicate was presented as an important factor influencing learners' level of involvement and success in the language learning process. However, as WTC is influenced by a range of social and personal factors, perhaps one of the most significant is the variable of gender.

This chapter will explore the concept of Gender and its value in communications and in particular, communications in learning contexts. The chapter will begin by providing definitions of key terms such as "gender" and "sex", and emphasizing the biological and social features of sex and gender as part of identity. Next, it will examine how gender roles and stereotypes can be developed and sustained through socialization, using a range of established psychological and sociological theories and perspectives. Attention will be paid to the differences in communication styles assigned by gender, and draw on Deborah Tanner's *Genderlect Theory* which considers gender language orientations and how males and females use language to achieve their communicative goals. Also, this chapter will provide recent research studies on the gender differences in classroom interactions and the issues that both male and female learners experience in classroom contexts, as well as place an emphasis on the role of gender in teaching and learning. This background has laid the groundwork for analyzing the impact of gender on willingness to communicate (WTC) in the classroom and therefore their learning outcomes.

2.2. Defining Gender and Related Concepts

2.2.1. Definition of Gender

In its most basic and fundamental form, "Gender is the division of people into two categories, men and women" as highlighted by Borgatta and Montgomery (2000, p.1057).

People are naturally assigned a physical identity as either male or female, and as they mature, they acquire the knowledge of expressing masculinity or femininity within a specific cultural context and based on specific circumstances. Throughout childhood and adolescence, boys and girls are socialized to conform to gender expectations, with girls being encouraged to take on roles typically associated with women, as are boys who are taught to embrace masculine roles. As people grow, they learn how to behave from those around. During this process of socialization, children become familiar with specific roles that are commonly associated with their biological sex.

Gender, as previously explained, is carefully observed and maintained by society. As a result, the term gender is used here to describe the socially constructed traits of both men and women. Thus, gender is related to social or cultural differences linked to being male or female and the concept was defined in multiple ways by sociologists. Desprez-Bouanchaud et al. (1987) state:

> The term gender refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a male and a female. In most societies, men and women differ in activities they undertake, in access to and control of resources and in participation in decision making and in most societies women as a group have less access than men to resources, opportunities and decision making. (p. 21)

The above quote underscores the differences between sexes, and emphasizing that men usually have the upper hand because they are typically in charge in the majority of human societies.

2.2.2. Gender vs. Sex

The English language did not always make a clear distinction between the terms "sex" and "gender." It wasn't until the 1950s that American and British psychologists, along with other professionals working with intersex and transsexual patients, formally started making a clear distinction between sex and gender.

Gender, as defined above, is a cultural construct, meaning that every culture has defined gender in terms of what males and females are expected to behave, think or feel. Doob (1997, p.70) supports this argument saying, "Traditionally, most cultures have treated female and male children very differently, it guides how we think about ourselves, how we interact with others and what opportunities and constraints we face through our lives". This perspective is also supported, in part, by Gollnick and Chinn (1990, p.119) suggest that "gender is a term that better describes the differences of masculinity and femininity, the thoughts, feelings and behavior that are identified as being either male or female"; Consequently, the different attitudes, activities, responsibilities and obligations effectively determine the way individuals understand their gender roles in society relative to each sex.

The term "sex" is used to describe the biological and psychological characteristics that differentiate between males and females (WHO, 2009); therefore, sex is considered biological because it develops prior to birth. According to Macionis' definition (1998, p.239) sex is "biological distinction between female and male, it is determined at the moment of conception", thus, we can simply say that sex relates to physical variations. The difference between sex as a physiological attribute and gender as a social attribute has been utilized without opposition.

2.3. Gender Stereotypes

Male and female members are expected to demonstrate specific traits as defined by society. At a very young age, precisely at the age of four, children can already develop clear thoughts and understanding of their gender, and they aim to abide to these established roles (Eddleston, Veiga & Powell, 2003). The norms or characteristics set by society to differentiate between men and women in behavior and manners are known as gender stereotypes.

These stereotypes are facilitated by one's surrounding environment: family, friends, school, and the media are all persuasive factors in influencing individuals to conform to their stereotype causing them to strive for consistency between their biological sex and what is expected of them (Eddleston, Veiga & Powell, 2003). Accordingly, there are various aspects in society that contribute to the teaching of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes "are rigid ideas about how males and females 'typically' behave" (Ormrod, 1998, p.173). Both genders in their society are required to conform to specific behavioral norms; for example, men are expected to showcase great strength and aggressive, while women are expected to display less physical strength and a non-aggressive nature (Brannon, 2017).

If a man or a woman fails to comply with societal expectations, they are viewed as engaging in inappropriate behavior or something. In other words, these gender stereotypes have attributed attitudes such as sensitivity and being emotional to women, assigning them to a "take care" behavior, while portraying men as aggressive and rational, prescribing them to more of "take charge" style (Welbourne, 2005). These stereotypes, naturally, stem from societal teaching in which males and females are instructed that certain behaviors are suitable for males, while others are suitable for females. Parents, media, classmates, teachers, and schools play a role in shaping gender stereotypes, with each having unique expectations for boys and girls.

In society, these elements serve as the primary promoters of gender stereotypes and play a substantial role in shaping gender role within that specific society setting, as pointed by Claes (1999):

> According to the sex role theory, being a man or a women means enacting a general role as a function of one's sex. But this theory also uses the words masculine and feminine, asserting that the feminine character in particular is produced by socialization onto the female role. According to this approach, women acquire a great deal of sex role learning early in their lives, and this can lead to an attitude of mind that creates difficulties later, during their working lives. It's a form of "culture trap". (p. 430)

The quote exemplifies how gender stereotypes can impact the roles designated to men and women within a given society; Claes (1999) pointed out the concept of "the culture trap," which originates from the underlying beliefs women hold regarding societal expectations of their leadership styles. This is a consequence of society assigning distinct characteristics and responsibilities to each gender, which may not align with the opposite sex, reinforcing the correlation between status and gender where men are considered superior to women, providing them with greater advantages.

Furthermore, men's higher social position gives them more access to power and resources than women, thus providing them with increased opportunities to thrive in leadership or managerial positions. Due to the gender stereotype assigned to them, women are at a disadvantage as they do not have equal access to opportunities.

2.4. Gender Stereotype vs. Gender Role

As cited in Newsweek (2000, November 6), ***gender roles*** are the activities or behaviors usually associated with women or men, while ***gender stereotypes*** are the beliefs linked to the characteristics and personalities considered suitable for men and women (p.183).

Schneider (2005), outlines the usual traits associated with females in stereotypes, like being emotional, affectionate, sympathetic, friendly, sensitive, and sentimental. In contrast, stereotypical male characteristics are described as dominant, self-confident, forceful, aggressive, rational, and unemotional.

2.5. Theory of Gender in Communication

Studies on gender and communication have been designed to understand the possible differences in conversational styles and patterns of interaction that men and women may bring to conversations. Among the many frameworks of studying gender and communication, Genderlect Theory provides a particular focus to gender differences in communication. The following section will highlight some of the concepts of Genderlect Theory and implications of gender and communication.

2.5.1. Genderlect Theory

Genderlect theory is a concept described by the linguist Deborah Tannen in her influential book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990). Genderlect theory proposes men and women communicate differently. Men and women have distinct styles and purposes when communicating, using the term "styles" to denote the way in which they communicate, and the term "purposes" to describe the reason for communicating. Tannen (1990) run diagnostic tests on men and women to investigate the variance in communication.

However, the differences men and women encountered were not differences of superiority/inferiority, dominance/submission, obedience/defiance, but rather differences in approach. Men might tend to use language differently than women, and with different underlying purposes. Social conversation was one example Tannen used to examine these differences in context.

When engaged in social conversation, boys had a tendency to "contest" to achieve dominance in the conversation while girls wanted use the same conversation as bonding through association, via common experience. Both genders can be classified in either or both of two types of communication styles, which are described as "report talk", the direct and assertive manner of speaking which is predominately used by men; or "rapport talk", emotional and personal manner of speech predominately used by women (Tannen, 1990).

While the theory provides insight into the variety and ambiguity in communication; inter-gender communication especially; it has received criticism for assuming that all men and women communicate in the same way and not considering other factors in describing their communication style, such as socioeconomic status, age (Holmes, 2008). In conclusion, the significance of the Genderlect Theory is simply a theory to understand and appreciate the variety of communicative behaviors derived from being male or female to mutual respect.

The genderlect theory states that men and women have different purposes in communicating and different styles of accomplishing their purposes. Even when they are speaking the same language, men and women use that language in different ways (Tannen, 1990). She proposed her theory as a way to help people understand these differences and to incorporate that understanding into their inter-gender communications.

In Tannen's view (1990), women regard communication as a mechanism tool for establishing connections, whereas men employ it to exhibit power, self-confidence, and make a favorable impression. In simpler terms, men consider communication as a tool for establishing and improving their position, while women see it as a means or a tool to connect with others. Tannen (1990) mentions that this is true even when the discussions seem to be the same. For instance, two groups of young children are engaged in conversation. One group is all boys, the other is all girls. Both groups are discussing a trip to the ice cream store. One boy

says, "I had two big scoops." The second boy says, "I had three giant scoops." The third boy says, "I had too many to count," to which the others reply, "Wow."

According to Tannen (1990), the boys are competing and upping the ante over what was said before (even if they all had the small children's cone) because they are attempting to gain superiority over one another. Three girls, on the other hand, might have the same conversation but end it with, "We all had ice cream." According to Tannen's theory, the girls are attempting to create a bond between them by emphasizing through their communication the ways they are the same (Tannen, 1990).

The ways genders communicate also differ in style, according to the theory. Men joke and tell stories that help establish their position, and are often more direct in their communications, whereas women share personal stories and express emotion while sharing. The theory states that men use "report talk", while women use "rapport talk". This ties into the different purposes for which each gender uses communication (Tannen, 1990). The genderlect theory also proposes that although they are using the same language, men and women favor different parts of the language. Each gender tends to choose certain types of words and to talk about different topics. For example, women are more likely to use words that convey empathy because this supports their emphasis on relationships, while men are more likely to be direct and focused on results.

Additionally, these differences can easily lead to misunderstandings in workplaces and other environments, according to the theory, in that supervisors may unknowingly exhibit gendered approaches to management. For example, a female supervisor might say, "I know you are busy, but would you copy this memo," in speaking to someone who reports to her. A male supervisor is more likely to say, "This needs to be copied." The theory says a male hearing the female supervisor might view her apologetic tone as weakness, while she

sees it as empathy. Conversely, a female hearing the male supervisor may think he is gruff or rude, while he sees it as directness (Tannen, 1990).

Finally, the genderlect theory attempts to foster understanding that leads to mutual respect. It does not judge either of the methods of communicating. Instead, it identifies and explains them with a goal of helping people acknowledge and understand them and apply that to interactions with the opposite gender.

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2.6. Perspectives on Gender Difference

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This section presents an historical account of the development of research into gender. It, then moves to consider psychological and sociological perspective.

2.6.1. Overview of Gender Difference Research

The late 1960s through the 1970s marked an important turning point in the field of gender research. At that time, the field of gender studies saw remarkable progress, particularly in the research related to the development of gender theory and gender-related behaviors and processes. For instance, Frieze et al., (1978) as cited in Zosuls et al., (2011) published one of the first textbooks on the psychology of women and gender roles which provided a thorough discussion of the complexities surrounding the relative contributions of biological and social factors in understanding the psychology of women.

Since the mid-twentieth century, functionalist theorists have argued that men occupy instrumental roles in society, whereas women occupy expressive roles, ultimately benefiting society. In terms of chronology, Maccoby's (1966) edited book in Zosuls et al., (2011) *The Development of Sex Differences,* was founded on theories of gender development, and had multiple chapters, that to this day, are foundations of research and theory on children's gender development, and these theoretical contributions provided direction for the study of gender in children.

Another important contribution was Maccoby and Jacklin's (1974) book, *The Psychology of Sex Differences,* that presented enormous findings on gender differences in development. Tannen's (1990) book, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation,* which explained the reasons why it is difficult to talk to the opposite sex, claims, women and men are different in their communication styles.

A new and popular approach in sociology of gender is based in symbolic interactionist theory and focuses on the everyday interactions that produce and reform gender as we know it. West and Zimmerman, who were instrumental in establishing this line of inquiry with their famous (1987) article on "doing gender", demonstrate how gender is something that is produced in the daily interactions of everyone.

It is estimated within many cultures that men are competitive and woman collaborative, this is what Morgan argued (Goddard & Patterson, 2000, p.32) and more broadly when he encompasses "males are seen as logical, rational, aggressive, exploitative, strategic, independent and competitive, as females, on the other hand, are thought to be intuitive, emotional, submissive, empathic, spontaneous, nurturing and co-operative." Morgan sum this up, a man is "a leader and decision-maker" and a woman is "a loyal supporter and follower".

Biological factors are also important in identifying and categorizing us as males or females. Our sex depends on whether we were born with male or female sex organs and a genetic program that released either male or female hormones to stimulate the development of the reproductive system. Gender includes identification with certain masculine and feminine feelings, attitudes, behaviors, etc. The object is identification with a sex-biologically, psychologically and socially. We take on a gender role when we are acting in accordance with socially shared expectations about how males and females are supposed to act.

2.6.2. Psychological Perspectives

Research on gender differences from a psychological perspective is built upon some fundamental differences between male and female brain structure, cognitive abilities, and communication styles without suggesting superiority. There are distinctions between males and females in terms of cognitive abilities, which encompass a range of mental activities such as thinking, logic, comprehension and understanding, perception, memory, decision-making, and problem-solving. A number of structural elements in the human brain, or the actual parts of the brain including the way they are built and their size, differ between men and women. Two areas of the brain that have been found to be of specific interest to memory researchers are the hippocampus and the frontal lobes (e.g., Nyberg & Cabeza, 2000).

Studies indicate that females have larger hippocampus and greater neural connectivity, that supports better memory and emotional processing (Nyberg & Cabeza, 2000; Trenerry, et al., 1996). Females often engage both hemispheres of the brain during cognitive tasks, potentially improving problem-solving and communication, while males more commonly use one hemisphere of the brain. Blood flow differences in the brain areas such as the *cingulated gyrus* impacts emotional processing with women more likely to ruminate on emotions and men more likely to shift focus very quickly (Jentz, 2014).

Research on memory and intelligence, reveals no significant sex differences in overall intelligence or overall measurements of intelligence (Wechsler, 1981). However, when measuring spatial and mechanical reasoning males are much better than females, while females would be better than males in verbal ability and perceptual speed (Feingold, 1988; Majeres, 1983). Additionally, communication styles differ in which females typically use language to create social connections, males in the other hand use language to create a sense of dominance and to achieve goals (Leaper, 1991; Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990).

In the simplest terms, men and women often think and communicate in different ways but these differences usually complement each other and are not meant to place one gender above the other.

2.6.3. Sociological Perspectives

In the sociological view gender is first and foremost a social construct that indicates cultural, historical, and social context and is not simply biologically determined. The functionalist perspective was dominant in mid-twentieth century sociology, held that men and women are occupying complementary social positions, that benefit society (Holmes, 2007; Parsons, 1955, as cited in Holmes, 2007). Mills (1959) pointed to the importance of understanding one's personal identity in light of social history and context, which further reinforces the belief that we learn gendered meanings and act them out in gendered ways.

Giddens (1987) has written on the matter, arguing that biological sex does not determine behavior in a rigidly way; instead, social contexts shape gender roles as well as expectations to what those roles should entail. Anthropological research by Margaret Mead (1949-1962) explored variation across cultures in defining masculinity and femininity revealing that male behaviors is often more highly valued than female behaviors across cultures, revealing the social construction of gender position and role.

In simple terms, this perspective reminds us that much of what we think about "being a man" or "being a woman" is about the society and culture in which we are raised, not solely about biology.

To conclude, these perspectives suggest that gender differences arise from complex interactions among biological, psychological, and social factors. There is psychological research which identifies cognitive and communicative differences among men and women, while sociology emphasize a more significant role to cultural norms and social structures as an explanation for how we come to behave in gendered ways and inequalities. In practical

terms, this means that in fully comprehending gender, we need to consider both our biology and the world around us how we are raised, what is expected of us, and our social roles.

2.7. Gender Differences in Communication Styles

Studies indicate that there is a great deal of variation in the way men and women communicate with regard to their goals and styles of communication stemming from both processes of socialization and the culture in which one resides. Women generally use language to develop relationships and create social connections, whereas men are more inclined to use communication in an effort to achieve or establish status or solve a problem (Leaper, 1991; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994).

Tannen (1990) states that men and women belong to "distinct gender cultures," where conversation is characterized by existing social priorities. For instance, in everyday discussions, women may be more likely to ask questions or share information to engage with other person or group, while men may be more focused directly on stating their opinion, solving problems, or moving discussion forward. These differences lead to misunderstandings when both genders are imposing their style on the other as they understand conversation from within their own respective culture and limits.

Women's communication tends to be more expressive, polite, and tentative, especially with disagreements and conflict (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). In many cases, women will use softer language features as tag questions ("right?", "don't you think?"), and intensifiers ("really", "so"), interrupt less frequently than men. (Lakoff, 1975; Thorne & Henley, 1975). As an example a woman could say, "I think this approach could work, don't you?" which suggests that she is seeking feedback and collaboration, whereas man may instead say, "This is the best way to do this." which implies a sense of confidence and decisiveness. Tannen (1990) also points out that while behaviors like overlapping speech and interruptions can be

taken in very different ways depending on context, men may be perceived as aggressive or rude while women may come across as tentative despite being polite.

Social and psychological factors influence these communication differences. Women typically are socialized to care about empathy, cooperation, and relationship maintenance while men are taught to care about independence and competition (Chodorow, 1978; Eagly, 1987; Miller, 1976). Gender communication, according to Tannen (1990), is learned through culture rather than through biology. For instance, women in professional settings may want to seek consensus by eliciting feedback from others, while men may claim their opinions more directly to demonstrate leadership. These kinds of differences point to different ways men and women manage power and solidarity in their conversations.

There are real-life consequences to these communication differences, particularly when it comes to professional and leadership situations. Because women's speech is generally more polite and focused on collaboration, women might be viewed as less authoritative or decisive, compared with men's speeches, which are often described as assertive speech (Lakoff, 1975; Pearson, 1985). For example, women who often say things like "I think" or "maybe" will be dismissed for leadership promotions, whereas men who speak directly and confidently will be viewed as more competent. Tannen's work begins to outline or describe how these presumptions are based on real culture differences, rather than actual differences or confidence levels.

To sum up, gender differences in communication are shaped by multiple influences such as socialization, cultural expectations, and individual communication styles. Tannen's (1990) research offers a complex framework, showing that men and women often "speak different languages," which can lead to misunderstandings but also to a degree of complementarity. Greater understanding of gender differences in communication styles as

described in this chapter can improve communication and reduce conflict in the workplace and/or relational settings among them.

2.8. Gender in the EFL Classroom

Every day, gender distinctions are emphasized in the context of the EFL classroom. As Swann (1992), notes that schools are not accountable for the origin of gender inequalities, but they can still play a role in maintaining them.

Many research studies have been carried out with a primary focus on gender distinctions; however, gender and interaction within the language classroom have not been given significant attention. Sunderland (1992, p.81) mentions that "Gender in EFL classroom is a phrase may conjure up in teachers minds no more than complaints about the use of 'he', or about textbooks beings sexist". In the EFL classroom, the concept of gender raises several questions; do teachers ensure equal treatment for both female and male students? What type of interactions take place in the language classroom?

Sunderland's study on "Gender in EFL classroom" primarily examined the communication and interaction between boys and girls with the teacher in a foreign language classroom. She argued that in EFL classrooms, two languages are commonly utilized: the target language (the learned language) and the learners' native/first language (Sunderland, 1998). According to Swann again (1992), it is essential for teachers and educators to achieve and recognize gender difference in the language classroom; teachers, mostly unknowingly, reinforce gender based discrimination in a mixed-sex classroom, Sunderland (1998) also make a comment about the girls, are seen victims so often. Batters (1998), observed that a significant number of female students invested additional time in tasks that demanded attention. For example, being attentive in class, observing, and reading; in contrast, male students showed strength in spoken exercises (quoted in Sunderland, 1998, p13).

In comparison to other classrooms, the EFL classroom offers a distinct socio-educational atmosphere where students are expected to engage in conversations and express themselves with their teacher and peers in various topics (Nickitina & Furuoka, 2007). Consequently, there are many studies focus on gender in the EFL classroom. Some research argues that boys are perceived as dominant and are given more favorable attention than girls. On the flip side, certain studies view that girls tend to outperform boys in the language classroom; nevertheless, these findings are relative and not universally applicable due to the influence of social and cultural attitudes and behaviors.

2.8.1. Gender Differences and Educational Achievement

As for gender studies, it focuses on the different presence of men and women, encompassing gender and education by examining gender differences in academic performance; this area of study, in turn, explores the impact of gender on educational results. The primary focus of early research was on determining if differences in educational achievements between males and females were caused from biological distinctions (Buchmann & Edmunds, 2018).

Over the past thirty years, there has been a noticeable shift where women have overtaken men, demonstrating their abilities and skills in various fields such as education and employment; a clear indication of this progress is the increasing number of women holding significant positions, moving towards gender equality with men. Contrary to the past, where women were expected to fulfill the role of housewives and focus solely on caring for children and their husbands. Previously, educational achievements favored males, but recent findings indicates that the traditional educational disadvantage faced by females has shifted to new emerging disadvantages for males in education (Fergusson & Horwood, 1997).

In the past, females were assumed to remain in the institution and they could not carry on their educational paths, for a number of socio-cultural and economic reasons. For instance,

a poor woman or poor man, usually cannot do better academically because of the "teaching high price" and that causes inequality for learning setups in addition to other; social reasons such as the lack of a nearby academy, and how the males and females experience those factors differently, for example, when poverty forces learners to leave schools.

Men are frequently sent to work, while women are typically expected to stay at home. Researchers have biologically explained the differences in educational achievement between both genders. Halpern (1992) proposes that biological processes might play a role in language acquisition, highlighting that females tend to learn certain language concepts before males do, benefiting from their advantage in maturation. Additionally, girls spent a long period talking to advisers, mentioning the challenges of understanding and worrying about whether they are coping with the courses, this evidence may suggest that girls are better learners rather than boys (Arnot et al., 2001, p.p.57-59).

Furthermore, Show (1995) introduces a fresh perspective on examining motivation and its connection to gender by focusing on emotion as the primary element in students' learning journey; she stresses the importance of exploring the emotional (psychological) growth of both males and females. She discusses how boys are separated from their mother and move away from feminine activities; this allows them to make distinctions between male science, abstract and intellectual knowledge, and female art, emotional knowledge; she argues that these experiences may also play a role in men's lower performance in learning language or other feminine subjects.

There is a general agreement that boys do not have the same level of interest in school as girls and are more likely to challenging educational authority. For instance, if they lack interest in learning, they cause disruptions or misbehave in class (Myenn & Parker, 2001, Lyons et al., 2003).

According to PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) findings, there is additional confirmation of gender differences in educational attainment, with a clear discrepancy in school grades favoring girls over boys. In addition, Becker and Miller (2011) suggest that the improvement in female educational achievement is linked to changes in their educational ambitions and the optimistic prospects for women in the job market, particularly in public service roles; Hadjer et al, (2014) affirm that boys exhibit a deficiency in internal drive, they do not show a reduced interest, and might feel disconnected within the educational environment. Males may also receive lower ratings in terms of their subjective well-being in educational settings, as there are gender variations in behaviors linked to academic achievement.

In addition to schools, parents and peers also play a significant role in shaping the educational outcomes of male and female students, as they are the primary sources of influence upon students' attitudes of education and educational institutions. Lynch and Feeley (2009) have identified shared views and are considering it another way to express the notion that parents play a key role in construction of gender norms. Many studies have suggested parental attitudes and behaviors that support or maintain gender stereotypes are related to the diminishing confidence of girls and boys in their abilities, also steering them away from certain fields.

2.8.2. The Effect of Gender on Willingness to Communicate

Research findings indicate that gender could have an impact on L2 communication patterns. Gardner (1985 cited in MacIntyre et al., 2002) examines multiple studies showing that girls' more positive attitudes towards language learning, arguing that variations in attitude could potentially clarify some of the gender differences in academic performance. Moreover,

(Clark & Trafford, 1995 cited in MacIntyre et al., 2002, p.542) modern languages seem to be perceived as a "traditionally 'female' subject".

However, when it comes to the influence of gender on Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Afghari and Sadeghi (2012) proved the opposite of the Gardner's findings (2008) which indicate that females are significantly more prone to experiencing anxiety than young men (p.61). According to the findings in this study, no significant difference was found between male and female learners in their level of communication apprehension.

Wright (1999) reported that in a sample of Irish teenagers studying French, girls expressed a much stronger inclination to learn and use French in comparison to boys. He noted that in a regression analysis of sex, type of school, perceived in-school influences on attitudes and perceived out-of-school influences on attitudes, sex had the greatest influence in predicting attitudes towards speaking French. Regarding gender, according to Baker and MacIntyre (2000, cited in Afghari & Sadeghi 2012), boys have a preference for L2 communication outside the classroom, whereas girls show a preference for in-class communication, and the effect sizes for gender and interactions involving gender as an independent variable are minimal.

2.8.3. Challenges Faced by Male and Female Learners in Communication

The challenges that learners, male and female, face in communication are fundamentally linked to social constructions of gender and its unique style of communication. Tannen's influential work, *Genderlect Theory* (1990), provides useful conceptual language for discussing these differences in communication. It implies that men and women develop different communication styles, (men develop conversational styles that emphasize "report talk," status, exchanging information, and independence, and women develop conversational styles that emphasize "rapport talk," connection, intimacy, and relationship development).

These communication styles could lead to misinterpretations and obstacles to successful communication within educational settings.

In educational settings male students may use assertive and competitive communication styles (i.e., interrupting or taking over the conversation), behaviors that Tannen notes are often present and culturally accepted ways of asserting power (Tannen, 1990). On the other hand, women students might use collaborative and supportive methods in their communication, sometimes at the expense of using any assertive communication, which can lead to their ideas being ignored in mixed-gender classrooms.

Female students can develop lower confidence and hesitation to fully engage in potentially confrontational situations that demand assertiveness through this. Gray's popular book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) has similar observations about the difficulties of gendered communication. Gray said that women and men have different emotional needs and communication styles, and therefore conversations are complicated and often misunderstood unless they are not contained in a "locked room". While Gray's writing has been criticized for over-simplifying gender in communicating, it still helps to explain some of the real-world issues that learners need to navigate with gendered communication expectations.

Empirical research provides evidence for these theoretical viewpoints. Loureiro, Loureiro, and Silva (2020) discovered that female university students tend to have greater communication apprehension than males, especially in oral and written assignments, which may hinder their engagement. Ariyani and Hadiani (2019) noted that male students often display more openness and assertiveness, while female students excel in promoting equality and creating a comfortable communication environment, highlighting the contrasting yet complementary aspects of gender-specific communication styles.

The interplay of communication challenges in gendered ways, classroom context, and teacher behaviors creates a complex and multidimensional environment in the classroom. Abosede (2017) notes the role of implicit bias in educators, which could lead to differences in how educators treat male and female students in turn, reinforcing communication challenges and limiting opportunities for equitable participation. Thus, educators need to acknowledge and address different challenges faced by male and female learners to teach and develop communication skills effectively.

2.9. The Importance of Gender Dynamics in Communication

Understanding gender dynamics is a critical part of developing inclusive and productive communication spaces in a range of contexts, but especially in language learning. According to Tannen's extensive research, differences in communication between genders extend beyond words of dominance or submission, revealing diverse cultural norms and conversation intentions (Tannen, 1990). She argues that conversational strategies of interruption, indirectness or silence mean different things in discourse.

Appreciating the particularities enables teachers to understand and respond to how students are communicating in ways that are not based on stereotypes. For example, a male student's interruptions may be seen as rude, but it could be a culturally accepted way to show he is involved, while a female student's indirectness might not reflect a lack of confidence but could be a way of maintaining rapport. However, better understanding can establish a classroom climate that values and supports the varying styles of communication.

Gray's (1992) strict construct is not empirically supported by lots of research, but he made a point about the need to understand the different communication styles we all have with different genders. He can motivate teachers and students to way his view on differences in emotional communication and the way they interact, thus improving inter-personal understanding and reducing conflict.

Studies indicated that using gender-sensitive approaches in positions and methods of teaching may result in numerous education outcomes. According to Kutuk (2023), gender norms and gender stereotype usage are two factors which influence learners' motivation, persistence, and affect while they are learning languages. By dealing with these matters, teachers can create supportive conditions for all students to be involved.

Ariyani and Hadiani (2019) suggest teachers create activities that account for the different ways in which boys and girls communicate, foster openness and confidence within girls, and foster collaboration and empathy within boys. Using similar approaches, so the tools are balanced, facilitate negotiations, and enhance overall communicative competence.

In conclusion, gendered complexities are important considerations when applied to pedagogical approaches to communication. Gender-sensitive teaching methods create equitable learning environments, provide strategies for including all learners to enhance verbal communication skills, and prepare learners for their world beyond the classroom.

2.10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter's examination of gender as a socially, culturally construct and separate from biological sex has identified the roles, stereotypes, and societal constructs that composed the gendered experiences within society. The review of theories and frameworks of gender, including Tannen's *Genderlect Theory*, demonstrated how men and women use language differently (e.g., men tend to use language to convey information and sharing their experiences while women tend to establish relationships through language) which can cause misunderstandings and influence learners' communication behaviors in the classroom. Importantly, the review of literature indicates that gender shapes learners willingness to communication (WTC), participation, and interaction styles, which are all vital and important for language acquisition.

Furthermore, being aware of gender in education is vital to educators when building environments that all learners feel safe and supported enough to encourage all learners to participate confidently.

Chapter Three:
Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.1. Introduction

The present chapter focuses on the practical phase of the research study in which we delve into the process of analyzing and interpreting the data collected in this qualitative (exploratory) study.

The first part of this chapter briefly introduces the nature and aim of the research methodology, participants of the study, and the research tools used to ensure the validity and reliability of the current research work in terms of results and conclusions.

The second part of the chapter is allocated to analyzing the data collected from each instrument. Furthermore, a thorough discussion of results and interpretations will be provided to reveal the significant research findings of this study.

3.2. The Research Methodology of this Study

It has been repeatedly acknowledged that methodological decisions are dependent on the nature of the study, the research questions and objectives. Thus, this section would provide a comprehensive review of how this study is conducted along with researcher's decisions in relation to the selected paradigm, approach, design, and methods of analysing and gathering data.

3.2.1. Research Paradigm

Khatri (2020, p.1435) defined the research paradigm as "the theoretical or philosophical ground for the research work". In simple terms, each researcher needs to make choices about how the research study will be carried out in order to have a proper and reasonable investigation of the matter of concern. In other words, research paradigm is "the researcher's worldview perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that inform about the meaning or interpretation of research data" (Khatri, 2020, p.1436).

Any successful research project has to be built upon specific ontological and epistemological beliefs that shape the overall framework of the research, including its paradigm, approach, design, and methods. In this regard, this study is carried out from an interpretivist stance since the purpose of this research study is to explore the gender-related factors affecting EFL students' willingness to communicate.

3.2.2. Research Approach

The research approach that has been selected for this study is a qualitative approach due to the nature of the study and the research questions. Aligning with the interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative approach was the suitable option because the researcher is seeking to provide an exploration of the problem as well as uncovering teachers' perspectives and attitudes regarding this phenomenon.

3.2.3. Research Design

Research Design refers to a set of techniques and methods that are used to conduct the research study. Churchill and Lacobucci (2005) give a simple definition to research design as: "the blueprint that is followed to complete the study" (p.74). This study follows a qualitative exploratory design within the interpretative paradigm, which is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena such as learners willingness to communicate in relation to gender in classroom contexts. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences without imposing predetermined hypotheses.

The study adopts a case study approach focusing on third-year EFL students and teachers at the English Department of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, providing a contextualized insight into how gender and the willingness to speak English are related in this specific situation.

3.2.4. Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

In order to gather and obtain the needed information and for answering the research questions, the researcher dealt with EFL teachers and students to collect their view point and perceptions for the sake of feeding the study.

The study population consisted of third-year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra (N=358). However, a specific sample was carefully selected based on one main reason. Third-year students have the necessary skills and experience on communication; they are neither proficient nor complete beginners.

Furthermore, the sample was chosen based on purposive sampling technique to ensure an equal representation of gender, since this study takes gender as a variable into consideration. Therefore, the researcher chooses carefully the participants' sample that serve the study, it ended up by selecting an equal number of males (n=20) and females (n=20) from different groups of third year, to adequately represent both genders in the research.

Concerning teachers of English department at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra were randomly selected. This random sampling with five (n=5) teachers reduces selection bias and provides a broader range of teacher perspectives, increasing the trustworthiness of findings.

3.2.5. Data Collection Methods

In the process of conducting this qualitative research study, students' response and teachers' point of view is significant to this study that is why it is necessary to gather their opinions to explore the gender-related factors affecting EFL learners' WTC.

Therefore two main gathering tools and instruments were used; a semi structured questionnaire that is targeted towards third-year LMD students of English which aims to highlight the significance levels of EFL students desire to communicate in English in relation to their gender, and how they differ from each other.

Additionally, a semi structured interview that is addressed to teachers to explore their perceptions on how students' motivations/reasons and gender differences may influence their willingness to communicate during classroom interaction, in order to gain deeper understanding of how teachers view to foster more supportive communication.

By employing this qualitative method, we seek to provide an in-depth understanding of how these factors influence learners' willingness to communicate regarding their gender. Also, these data might be transformed into meaningful findings, offering valuable implications for educators in the field of English language teaching and learning.

3.2.6. Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis is an inductive research method used in qualitative studies, which involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is commonly applied to texts that are derived from interviews, focus groups, and occasionally observations (Galanis, 2018). When using this method, researchers carefully analyse the data to pinpoint recurring themes – topics, ideas, and meanings. As one of the most used analytical techniques in qualitative research, thematic analysis aims to systematically document a detailed record of the themes and codes that emerge during interviews. Various methods exist for conducting thematic analysis; however, the most prevalent one involves a six-step process: familiarising oneself with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and labelling the themes, and finally writing the report (Caulfield, 2023). Following this methodology can help reduce confirmation bias during the analysis. Therefore, this analysis tool is chosen for this study since the researcher aims to interview EFL teachers about their students barriers towards the phenomenon being investigated.

3.2.7. Data Analysis Procedures

In order to analyse the data gathered to answer the research questions, a thematic analysis method was used. The first data from the participants was analysed via descriptive statistics because it is the most suitable method for this kind of data as well as the nature of the study.

The other data, which was gathered via the interviews with EFL teachers, was analysed via a thematic analysis method, which serves the purpose of gathering those teachers' perspectives and point of view about their students towards this phenomenon.

This study focused on whether there are differences or similarities among EFL students (male and female) when it comes to willingness to communicate in class and their motivations.

3.3. Questionnaire

3.3.1. Aim and Structure

The questionnaire was used as the main tool to gather data from the students to accomplish the research (see appendix A), administered to third year LMD students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. It was designed to explore EFL students' motivations/reasons and attitudes to highlight the significance levels of their desire to speak in English in relation to gender, and how they differ from each other.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections containing twenty three (23) questions, in which the participants have to tick the right box(s) that corresponds with the appropriate answer(s) for each of them, in addition to open-ended question to express themselves freely.

The first section titled Personal/General Information consists of three (3) questions to know more about the sample participants (Q1, Q2 and Q3), which provides a general background for the students in terms of age, gender and their esteemed language

proficiency level. The second section includes ten (10) questions which sought to: explore the effective factors that students may face in classroom including their anxiety from Q4 to Q6, personality Q7 to Q9, questions from Q10 to Q13 to figure out the learners' confidence level, attitudes and perception about their willingness to communicate in English inside/outside the classroom. The third section contain six (6) questions which is about their motivations (the reasons/why they communicate) from Q14 to Q19. Last section (3) questions from 20 to 23, addresses their preferred communication style in relation to gender.

3.3.2. Piloting, Validation and Administration of Students' Questionnaire

Before administering the questionnaire, there was an important and necessary stage which is the piloting stage. It was used to determine whether the questions were well-organized, appropriate, clear and provided in a suitable manner. Abu Hassan, Schattner and Mazza (2006) claim that the purpose of piloting the questionnaire is to check the clarity of the questionnaire, eliminate ambiguity and difficult terms, collect comments on the questionnaire's overall format, determine the exact time to fill in the questionnaire and examine the relevance of research objectives.

Piloting and validity is important for checking the growing and comprehensibility of the raised questions. Accordingly, the questionnaire was first piloted on the 9th of April 2025 with (4) students before its administration to the students. The piloting stage allowed the researchers to detect and correct mistakes. After piloting the questionnaire, we did not make any changes; we ensure that the questions were clear and required no modifications since the four students answer them easily and they confirm that all the questions are clear and there is no ambiguity.

This questionnaire was administrated online; it was sent to third year EFL students via their messenger groups. This online questionnaire was created through the survey software Google forms. The researcher received (40) responses in seven days.

3.3.3. The Analysis of Students' Questionnaire Findings

Section One: Personal/General Information

Item 01: Age

The question aims to know EFL students' age, by being more focused to determine that our study target young category of students.

Age	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
18-21	12	60%	13	65%
22-25	7	35 %	7	35 %
Above 25	1	5 %	0	0 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.1: Male and Female Students' Age
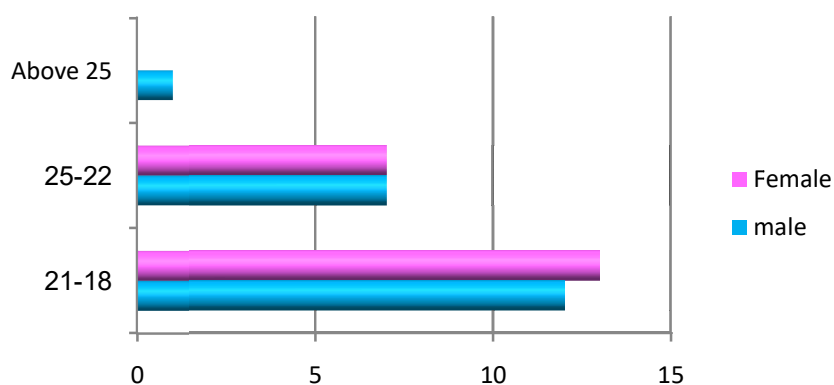
Figure 3.1: Male and Female Students' Age

The results indicate that most of students' both male and female, are in the 18–21 age range, showing that the majority of participants are at the beginning of their university

education. A smaller group falls into the 22–25 age group suggesting some more advanced or delayed learners. There was only one male participant above the age of 25 and no female participants above age 26 out of the total sample. These young ages suggest that the majority of respondents may still be building their confidence and competencies in communication, which may impact their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. Younger students are likely to feel more anxious or insecure about their interactions in the classroom, while older students may exhibit more maturity and readiness to speak up depending on their experience and exposure.

Item 02: Gender

The question aims to know whether EFL students are males or females.

Gender	Number	Percentage %
Male	20	50%
Female	20	50 %
Total	40	100 %

Table 3.2: Male and Female Students' Gender
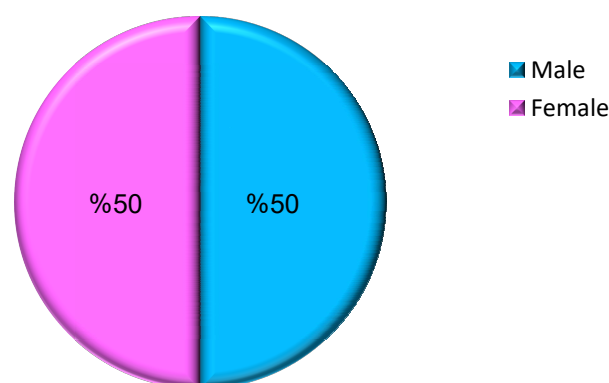
Figure 3.2: Male and Female Students' Gender

The participant's gender distribution is perfectly balanced, with 20 males and 20 females, which equal amounts to 50% representation of the sample. This allows for a fair and unbiased representation of both males' views and females' views regarding Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English.

An equal sample size gives even greater reliability to the findings of this study, especially since gender is an important variable in the study. The participation in equal amounts supports the purpose of this study; to understand how gender may or may not play a role in the affective and motivational factors associated with classroom communication.

Item 03: English Proficiency Level

This question aims to know the respondents' level of proficiency in English. Four options were offered to select. The results of this question are displayed in table 03 and

Proficiency	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Beginner	1	5 %	1	5 %
Intermediate	15	75 %	11	55 %
Advanced	4	20 %	8	40 %
Proficient	0	0 %	0	0 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.3: Male and Female Students' Proficiency Level
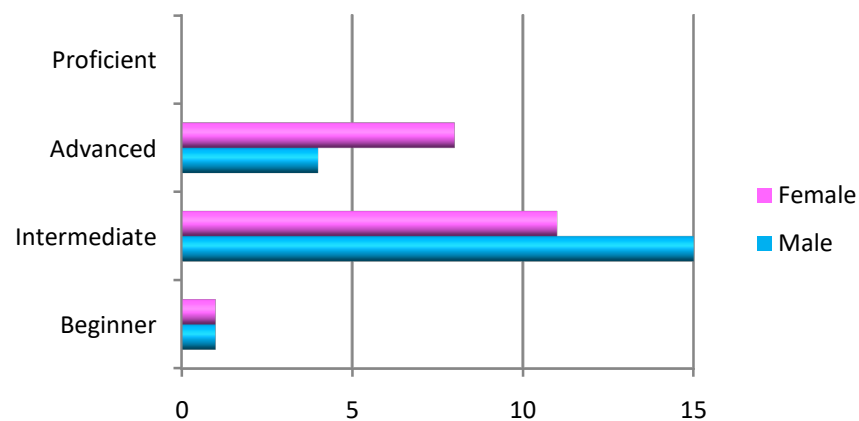
Figure 3.3: Male and Female Students' Proficiency Level

The results provided in Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3 demonstrate that most of students, both male and female, fall into the intermediate level of proficiency (15 males and 11 females) suggesting that most students have a moderate level of skill. In the advanced category, we can see that there are more females (8) than males (4) at the advanced level in comparison to those at the intermediate level, suggesting stronger performance at the higher categories favoring females. Conversely, only one male and one female are at the beginner level, and no students from either gender reached the proficient category. In general, this distribution indicates that even though most students are considered intermediate, there is a gender gap at the advanced level female students.

Section Two: Effective Factors and WTC

Item 04: How often nervous do you feel when speaking English in class?

	Male	**Percentage**	**Female**	**Percentage**
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Very often	3	15 %	3	15 %
Sometimes	10	50 %	13	65 %
Rarely	4	20 %	2	10 %
No, not at all	3	15 %	2	10 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100%

Table 3.4: Nervousness of Male and Female Students' in English

The results in Table 3.4 show that the majority of both male and female students sometimes experience certain feelings, with 10 males and 13 females selecting this response. A small number of students (3 males and 3 females) reported feeling this way very often. A few number of students reported rarely feeling this way (4 males and 2 females), and the least number of the students responses with "No, not at all" (3 males and 2 females). This distribution suggests that the majority of students (especially females)

experience these feelings occasionally, while only a minority experience them either very frequently or not at all.

Item 05: What makes you feel anxious when speaking English?

	Male FRs	Percentage %	Female FRs	Percentage %
Fear of making mistakes	7	23,33 %	11	28,95 %
Lack of vocabulary	6	20 %	8	21,05 %
Fear of being judged by peers	6	20 %	6	15,79 %
Fear of being corrected by the teacher	1	3,33 %	4	10,53 %
Speaking in front of others	7	23,33 %	7	18,42 %
Other	3	10 %	2	5,27 %
Total	30	100 %	38	100 %

Table 3.5: Male and Female Students' Anxiety Factors in Speaking English
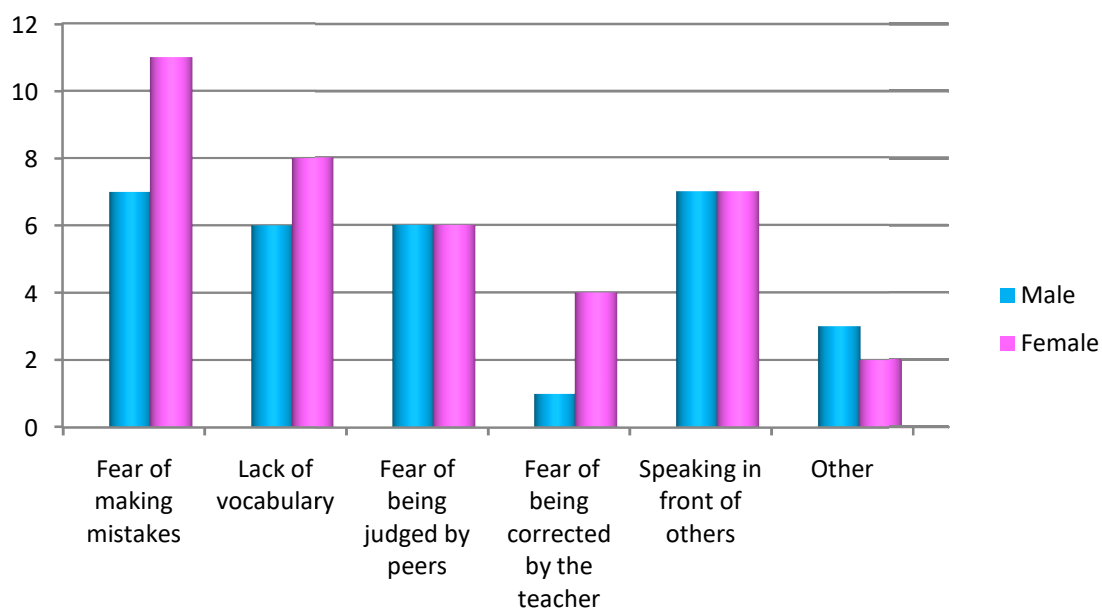
Figure 3.4: Male and Female Students' Anxiety Factors in Speaking English

The findings show the sources of anxiety experienced by male and female students when speaking English. The prevalent source of anxiety for both genders comes from the fear of making mistakes, with 23.33% of males and 28.95% of females identifying this as a concern. This means both male and female learners are highly conscious of errors in language use, with females experiencing slightly higher anxiety in this area. The second factor is a lack of vocabulary, which was reported by 20% of males and 21.05% of females. This similarity would suggest that both genders perceive a limited vocabulary as a problem or limitation when trying to communicate in English. The Fear of being judged by peers also shows comparable percentages, with males at 20% and females slightly lower at 15.79%, which means both males and females have some stress about being evaluated on their language performance.

However, the fear of being corrected by the teacher is more prominent among females (10.53%) than males (3.33%), suggesting that females may be more nervous about being correct by or in front of their teacher. Conversely, speaking in front of others is equally important for males (23.33%) but less so for females (18.42%), suggesting there is a difference in how public speaking increases overall anxiety with the two respective genders. And for the last option "Other", it showed a minor concern with 10% of males, and 5.27% of females, having reasons outside of the predefined categories. These results in combination demonstrate similarities in source of anxiety, for both genders, but some differences in intensity and type of concerns they face when speaking English.

Item 06: How does feeling anxious affect your ability to speak in the class?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
I avoid speaking entirely	5	25 %	3	15 %
I hesitate before speaking	11	55 %	14	70 %
Anxiety does not affect me	4	20 %	3	15 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.6: Impact of Anxiety on Male and Female Students' Speaking Ability
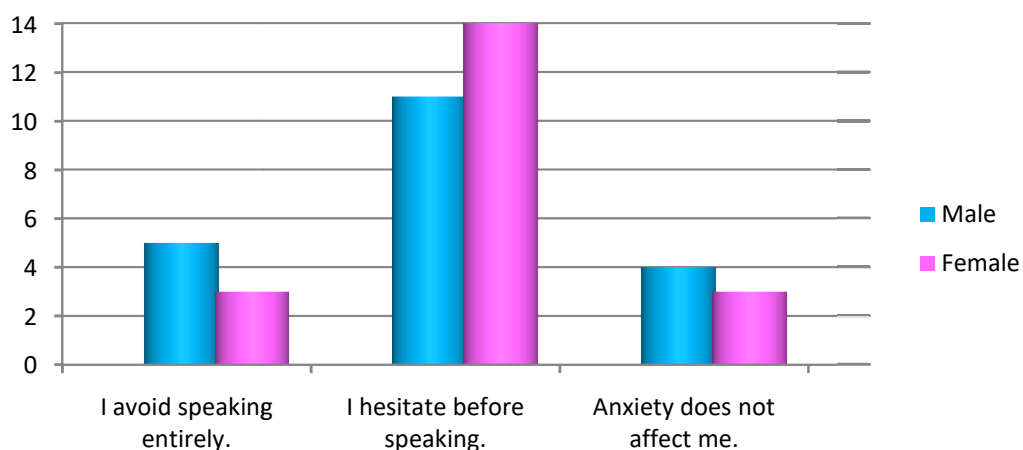
Figure 3.5: Impact of Anxiety on Male and Female Students' Speaking Ability

The data in Table 3.6 and Figure 3.5 indicates that anxiety significantly affects students' ability to speak English in class. The majority of students (11 males and 14 females) report that once they want to speak, they hesitate. This means that anxiety often leads to a lack of confidence or delay in participation. A smaller amount of students with 5 males and 3 females, avoid speaking entirely because of anxiety. Only a few students (4 males and 3 females) said that anxiety does not affect or impact them at all. This shows that most students are impacted by anxiety to some degree, as hesitation being the most common effect response, especially among female students.

Item 07: How would you describe your personality in the class?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Outgoing and talkative	2	10 %	3	15 %
Quiet but willing to participate	5	25 %	6	30 %
Confident but selective when speaking	10	50 %	7	35 %
Shy and hesitant	3	15 %	4	20 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.7: Male and Female Students' Personality
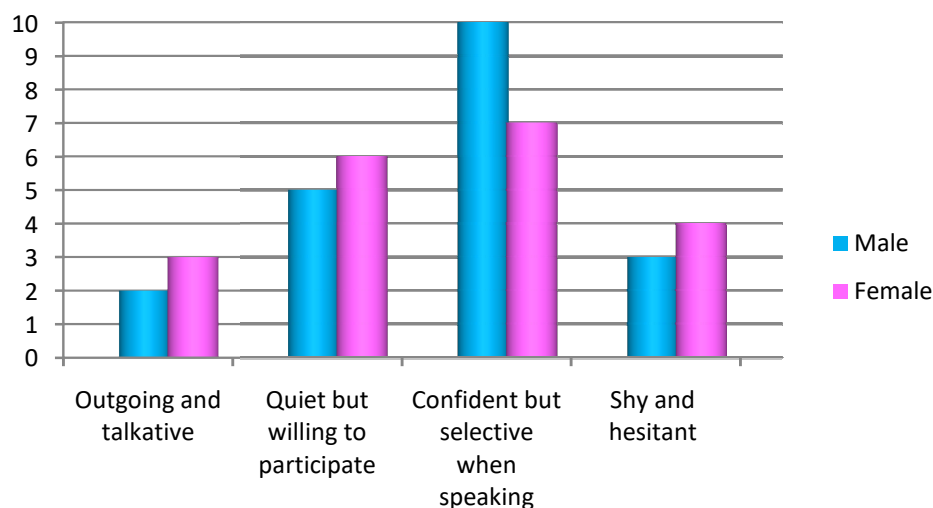
Figure 3.6: Male and Female Students' Personality

The data in Table 3.7 and Figure 3.6 shows that most students see or describe themselves as "Confident but selective when speaking," with 10 males and 7 females identifying this way. This implies that a majority of students feel capable of speaking but are mostly limited to selective when they need to speak. The next common trait is being "Quiet but willing to participate" (5 males and 6 females), suggesting that a significant number of students remained quiet and reserved, while still being engaged to participate.

Fewer students see themselves as "Outgoing and talkative" or "Shy and hesitant," with only slight variations between genders. Generally, the results suggest that although few students are highly extroverted or extremely shy, most of them fall into a middle range of confidence and participation especially male students.

Item 08: Do you prefer working alone or with others when practicing English?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Working alone	4	20 %	3	15 %
Working with others	9	45 %	7	35 %
I like both equally	7	35 %	10	50 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.8: Male and Female Students' Preference
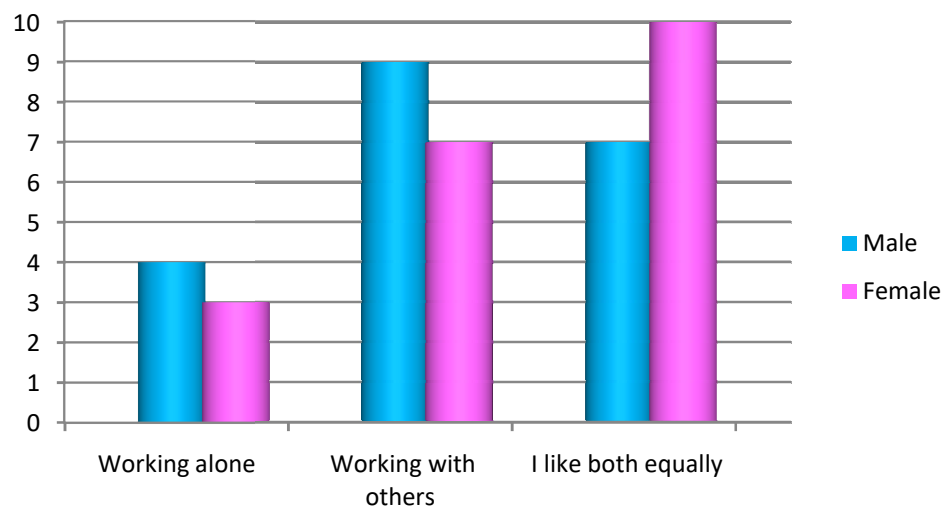
Figure 3.7: Male and Female Students' Preference

Results shown in Table 3.8 and Figure 3.7 demonstrate students' preferences on how they prefer to practice English, categorized by gender. The minority of students preferred working alone. Only 4 males and 3 females chose working alone. More students

preferred working with others compared to those who chose to work alone, especially males (9 males compared to 7 females). At the same time, many students choose the mixed option, where they like working on their own or with others equally, which was the most common response from both genders, (7 males and 10 females). This suggests that while there are some students with strong preferences for working alone or with others, most students are flexible in their options, and whether they work alone or in groups is a matter of comfort. The findings suggest that a variety of collaborative and independent work options may be the best approach taking into consideration students' preferences for learning.

Item 09: Do you think your personality affects your desire to communicate in English?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Yes, positively	9	45 %	10	50 %
Yes, negatively	7	35 %	5	25 %
No, it doesn't affect it	4	20 %	5	25 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.9: Personality's Impact on Male and Female Students'
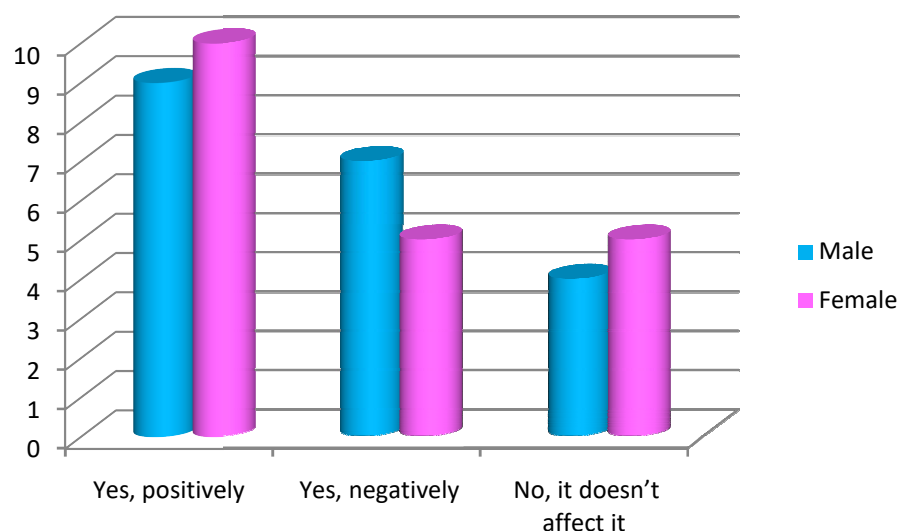
Figure 3.8: Personality's Impact on Male and Female Students'

The data in Table 3.9 shows insights into students' perceptions regarding whether they think their personality affects their willingness to communicate in English. A majority of both male and female students indicates that their personality positively influenced their desire to communicate (9 males and 10 females) responded "Yes, positively." Meanwhile, 7 male students and 5 female students indicated that their personality negatively influenced their desire to speak. A small number of the group (4 males and 5 females) stated that their personality does not have any effect on their willingness to speak English. The current results suggest that most students can see a connection between their personality and their willingness or motivation to engage in English communication, with a slightly higher tendency to connect their personality with a positive influence. Therefore, this implies that personality traits, such as confidence or openness, may be a significant role in language learning and participation in the classroom.

Item 10: How confident are you in speaking English in class?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Not confident at all	0	0 %	0	0 %
A little confident	3	15 %	6	30 %
Somewhat confident	11	55 %	8	40 %
Mostly confident	5	25 %	4	20 %
Very confident	1	5 %	2	10 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.10: Male and Female Students' Level of Confidence
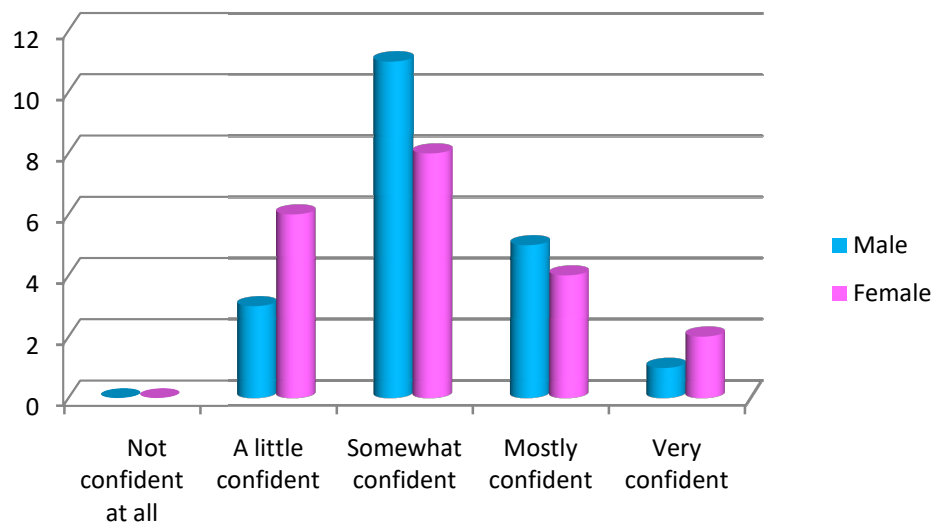
Figure 3.9: Male and Female Students' Level of Confidence

The responses to Item 10, as displayed in Table 3.10 and Figure 3.9, illustrate students' self-assessed confidence levels in speaking English in class. Most of the students reported they felt "somewhat confident," (11 males and 8 females) by selecting this option. While few of them indicated themselves as "mostly confident," including (5 males and 4 females). Interestingly, (6) females and (3) males stated they were only "a little confident." Very few students indicated they felt "very confident," with only 1 male and 2 females expressing this high level of confidence. Further, none of the participants selected "not confident at all," showing that all of them have at least some degree of confidence when speaking English.

In general, while moderate confidence is common among both genders, the results suggest that males tend to rate their confidence slightly higher than females, nevertheless both groups still have plenty of room for improvement in developing their speaking confidence.

Item 11: Do you think practicing English outside the classroom helps improve your communication skills?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Yes, a lot	16	80 %	17	85 %
Somewhat	3	15 %	3	15 %
Not much	1	5 %	0	0 %
Not at all	0	0 %	0	0 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.11: Male and Female Students' Communication Improvement
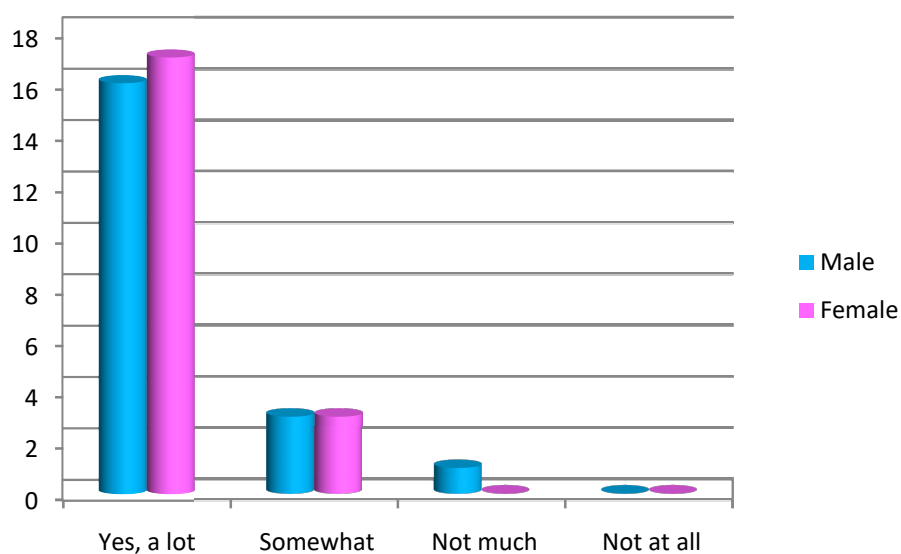
Figure 3.10: Male and Female Students' Communication Improvement

The results from Item 11, asking students about practicing English outside the classroom whether it helps to improve or develop communication skills, showed a clear agreement among them, in favor of this practice. According to the results, the majority of both male and female responded "Yes, a lot", with 16 males and 17 females selecting this option. This demonstrates a widely held belief that practice outside of class is an important

aspect of developing communication skills. A few students (3 males and 3 females) said "Somewhat" which could reflect a moderate perceived benefit. Only one male selected "Not much" as a response, and that none of the respondents selected "Not at all" was notable and indicated that nearly all students see some value in practicing English outside of the classroom. The figure above shows a clear preference for the "Yes, a lot" response from all students, male and female. Overall, the data indicate a strong positive attitude toward practicing English outside of the classroom to further develop the students' communication skills.

Item 12: In which situation do you prefer to speak the most?

	Male FRs	Percentage %	Female FRs	Percentage %
In small group discussions	14	48.2 %	9	32.1 %
During one to one conversation	13	44.8 %	15	53.5 %
When speaking in front of whole class	1	3,4 %	2	7,1 %
I don't feel comfortable in any situation	1	3,4 %	2	7,1 %
Total	29	100 %	28	100 %

Table 3.12: Male and Female Students' Comfortable Situations
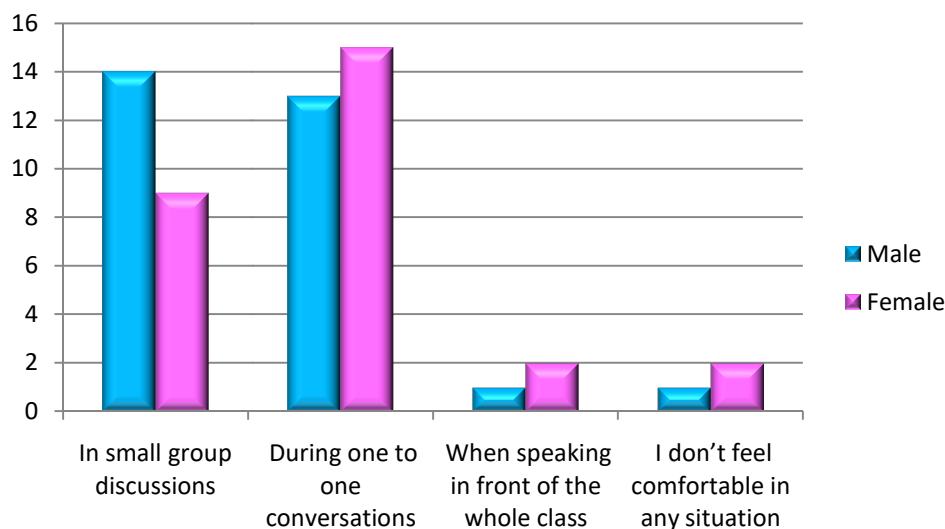
Figure 3.11: Male and Female Students' Comfortable Situations

The results presented in the table 3.12 and graph 3.11 examined the contexts in which male and female students felt most comfortable using English. The results indicated that both genders generally expressed the most comfort in one-to-one conversations, with 45% of males and 54% of females expressing this situation. The results suggest that personal and less formal contexts provided comfort for using English, especially for females in this study. For males their second most preferred situation was in small group discussions, at 48% of males selecting this option, while only 32% of females felt this way. The disparity noted indicates that males are more likely to feel comfortable using English (in this case) within group settings because they perceive them as supportive environments while females in this study recommended equal consideration to group discussion and presentations. When speaking in front of the whole class, both genders demonstrated low comfort levels with only 3% of males and 7% of females selecting this option. The success of the situation reflects their shared concerns about public speaking in English, although females appear to be slightly more comfortable in this dimension than males. Finally, a small number of students did not feel comfortable using English in any situation, with 3% of males and 7% of females indicating a need for additional support to help these students build confidence in their English-speaking abilities. Overall, the results highlight that one-

to-one interactions are the most favorable context for English use, followed by small group discussions, while speaking in front of a whole class remains a significant source of discomfort for most students.

In addition, creating supportive, low-pressure environments is important to encourage English language use among male and female students.

Item 13: What makes you feel more comfortable communicating in class?

This question designed to explore the emotional, psychological factors that help male and female students feel comfortable when communicating in English during class. The aim is to identify the specific conditions, for example; teacher support, the interaction of peers, classroom environment, or personal confidence, that reduce or lower their anxiety, and created a sense of comfort. These factors helps reveal what encourages students to speak more freely and confidently, which is important for improving their willingness to communicate.

Theme	Male Responses	Female Responses
Interesting/Familiar Topics	Feel engaged when topics are enjoyable or relatable	Feel more comfortable when topics are familiar and personally interesting
Supportive Environment	Comfortable when teacher is friendly, when peers are non-judgmental, and interruptions are avoided	Comfortable with non-judgmental atmosphere, teacher encouragement, and respectful classmates
Class Size & Group Setting	Prefer fewer people, smaller groups, or being around friends (same gender)	Feel better in small classes or when speaking in familiar, low-pressure settings
Confidence & Preparedness	Comfort increases when speaking correctly or doing their best	Prefer situations where they feel confident in the topic and their language ability
Teacher's Role	Teacher's attitude and space for expression influence comfort	Teacher's personality (open-minded), teaching approach, and feedback impact willingness to speak
Activities & Engagement	Fun, competition, discussions, or interaction with classmates improve comfort	Role-plays, discussion, peer connection, and enjoyable activities increase engagement

Table 3.13: Male and Female Students' Comfort Factors in Class

The findings suggest that both male and female students link comfort in communication with a supportive environment, interest in topics, and teacher behavior. However, when reporting how the factors influence them, there is some differences between males and females. Female students consistently emphasized the importance of a non-judgmental environment and emotional support from both teachers and their peers. They are more sensitive to the atmosphere of the classroom and often correlate their comfort with an understanding of feedback and encouragement. In contrast, male students emphasized the value of a topic they engage with, class size and confidence in their language skills. Male identified a preference for discussions and competitive tasks as a comfortable way of communication. Interestingly, a few male participants mentioned gender dynamics, by being uncomfortable speaking when a few females or many females were present. They indicated their discomfort as a factor, whereas females did not mention distinct gender dynamics in their communication comfort. The participants' responses indicate that social and psychological factors may influence males' willingness to communicate more in mixed-gender classroom contexts.

Section Three: Motivations for WTC

Item 14: Why do you want to improve your English communication skills?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
To improve my future career	12	60 %	12	60 %
To travel or study abroad	7	35 %	2	10 %
To pass exams	0	0 %	1	5 %
I don't have a specific reason	1	5 %	5	25 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.14: Male and Female Students' Reasons to Communicate
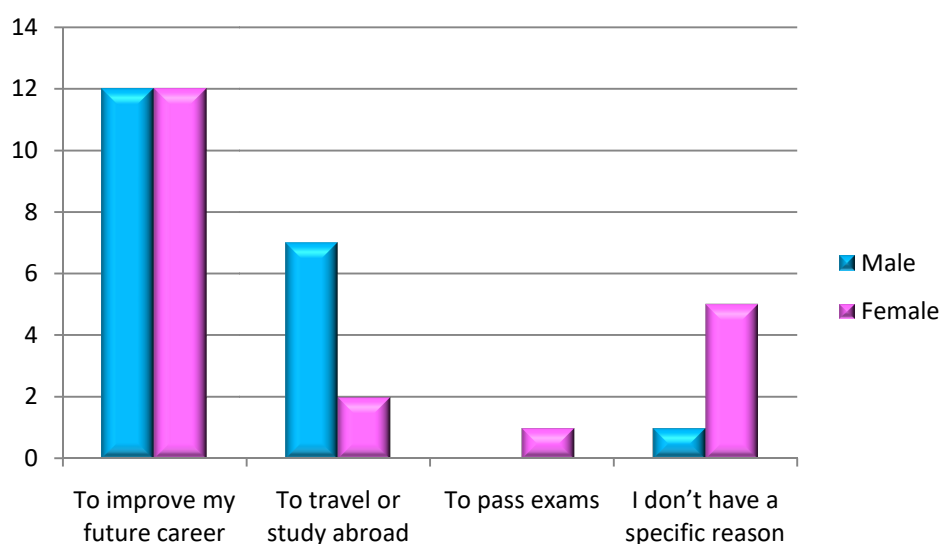
Figure 3.12: Male and Female Students' Reasons to Communicate

Improving English communication skills for the future career is the most commonly cited reason among both male and female students (12 of each). It should also be noted that male students have a stronger motivation to travel or study abroad (7), while even fewer females (2) choose this as a reason to improve their English. Furthermore, five females reported having no specific reason to improve their English, while only one male mentioned this. Only one female chose to report passing exams as the motivation to improve her

English. Based on this findings career goals are the primary driver for most students, with males showing more practical motivations like studying abroad.

Item 15: How motivated are you to participate in English-speaking activities?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Very motivated	6	30 %	5	25 %
Somewhat motivated	10	50 %	13	65 %
Not very motivated	2	10 %	2	10 %
Not motivated at all	2	10 %	0	0 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.15: Male and Female Students' Level of Motivation in English Speaking Activities
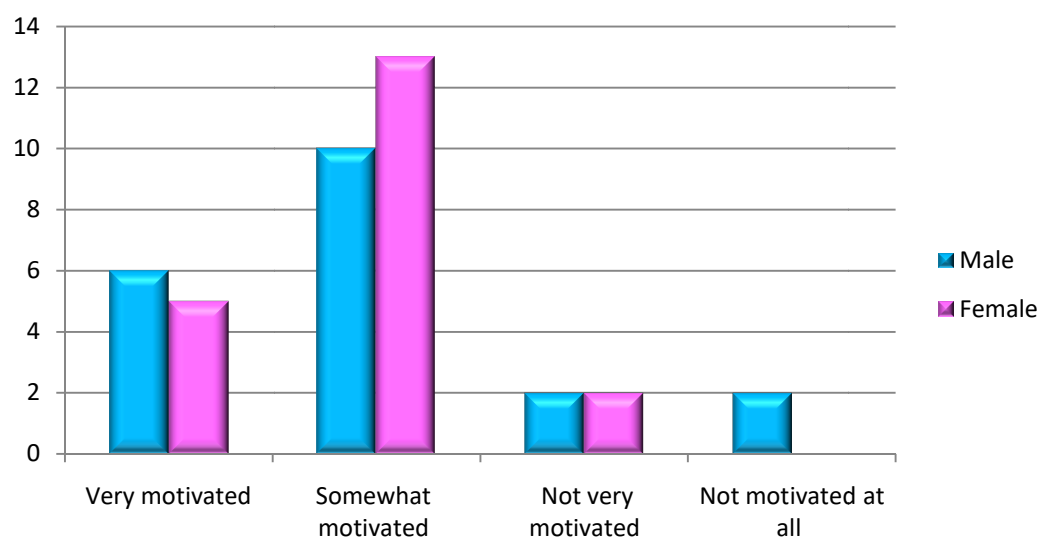
Figure 3.13: Male and Female Students' Level of Motivation in English Speaking Activities

In figure 3.13 and table 3.15, students showed high levels of motivation to participate in English-speaking activities. The majority falls under "Somewhat motivated", especially females (13 females) and only 10 males which represents a strong baseline interest to participate, although with different intensities level. The "Very motivated"

responses are similar between genders (6 males and 5 females) which reveals a core group with high degree of excitement. Conversely, 2 students of each gender see themselves as "Not very motivated", suggesting that while some students may need encouragement, they still reflected a minimum level of engagement. Notably, only males selected "Not motivated at all" (2 students), suggesting that female students were at least somewhat inclined to participate. In general, based on these results, data suggest students are generally motivated, and females were slightly more motivated toward participation.

Item 16: Do you feel motivated when the teacher uses interactive activities (e.g., role-plays, debates) in class?

	Male Number	**Percentage %**	**Female Number**	**Percentage %**
Yes, always	6	30 %	11	55 %
No	1	5 %	0	0 %
It depends on the activity	13	65 %	9	45 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.16: Motivation of Male and Female Students' in Interactive Activities
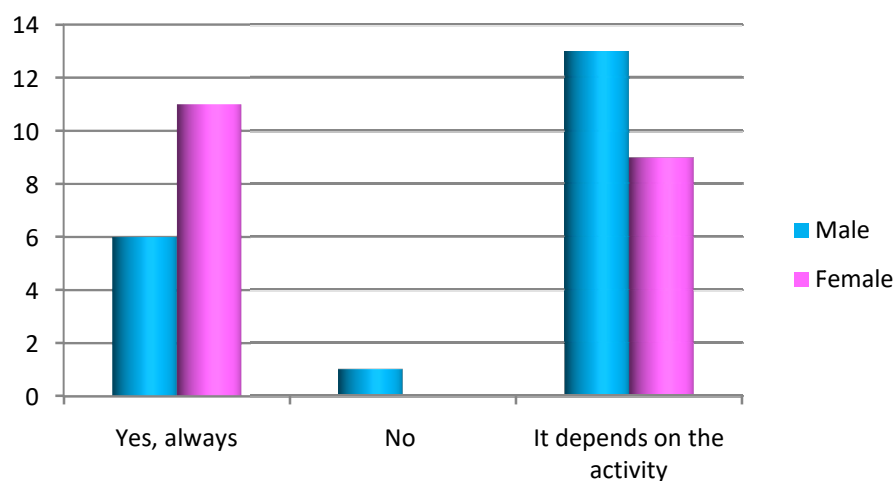
Figure 3.14: Motivation of Male and Female Students' in Interactive Activities

The results indicate the use of interactive classroom activities seems to be generally an effective way to create motivation, though the impact varies. Most respondents (13 males and 9 females) say "It depends on the activity," suggesting that engagement is influenced by the nature of the task. However, more females (11) than males (6) were consistently motivated by such activities. Only one male answered "No", and no females selected this option. This implies that interactive activities are for the most part effective but must be appropriately designed to keep students motivated.

Item 17: What would make you feel more positive about speaking English in class?

The question undertakes the task of identifying the types of encouragement, classroom strategies, or learning environments that enhance students' motivation to speak English. The focus is on what drives students to participate more actively, whether it is fun activities, praise, grades, interesting topics, or supportive classmates. The goal is to understand what students personally find motivating so that teaching strategies can be adapted to boost their willingness to communicate in class.

Theme	Male Responses	Female Responses
Interesting & Real-Life Topics	Feel more positive when topics are engaging, real-life based, and personally relevant	Interested and motivated by relatable, enjoyable topics
Supportive Class Atmosphere	Emphasize respectful, collaborative environments where they are not judged or interrupted	Value supportive, mistake-tolerant atmosphere; dislike pressure or being judged
Teacher's Influence	Respond well to entertaining, encouraging, and relaxed teachers	Teaching style, feedback, and communicative approach strongly affect positivity
Confidence & Preparation	Motivation comes from feeling prepared, knowledgeable, and in control of the language	Motivation linked to self-confidence, vocabulary improvement, and practicing English
Engaging Activities	Debate, role-exchange, participation, and interactive methods boost willingness	Prefer varied activities, discussions, and tasks that involve active participation
Peer Influence	Feel more positive when classmates support learning rather than judge	Peer support and positive social dynamics help build motivation
Motivation (Internal/External)	Some are self-motivated or respond to praise; grades are less commonly mentioned	Grades, teacher praise, and emotional encouragement are stronger motivators

Table 3.17: Positive Factors for Male and Female Students'

The responses to this question further highlight the influence that interest in topic, class atmosphere and teacher influence have on students' positivity towards speaking English. Students of both genders said that if the topic was interesting and connected to real life, they felt more willing to speak up in the class. However, while male students typically highlighted personal control (e.g., doing their best, not making mistakes, or not being interrupted) when they were positive about speaking, female students were more inclined to highlight emotional safety (not being judged, and encouraged by the teacher). Additionally, female students were also more likely to refer to external motivators (grades and feedback) as crucial in increasing their motivation to speak. Conversely, some male students referred to self-motivation and their personal enjoyment of English more than others when they referred to their motivation to speak. This suggests that students of different genders may have different sources of motivation that drives them to speak. i.e., internal for some males; and more often external or relational for females.

Item 18: What are your main reasons for speaking English in class?

	Male FRs	Percentage %	Female FRs	Percentage %
To share my ideas or opinions	12	29 %	13	32 %
To improve my English skills	10	24 %	8	20 %
To connect with classmates or the teacher	9	21 %	6	15 %
To ask a question or clarify something	7	17 %	8	20 %
To contribute to a discussion	4	9,5 %	6	15 %
Total	42	100 %	41	100 %

Table 3.18: Male and Female Students' Reasons to Speak in Class
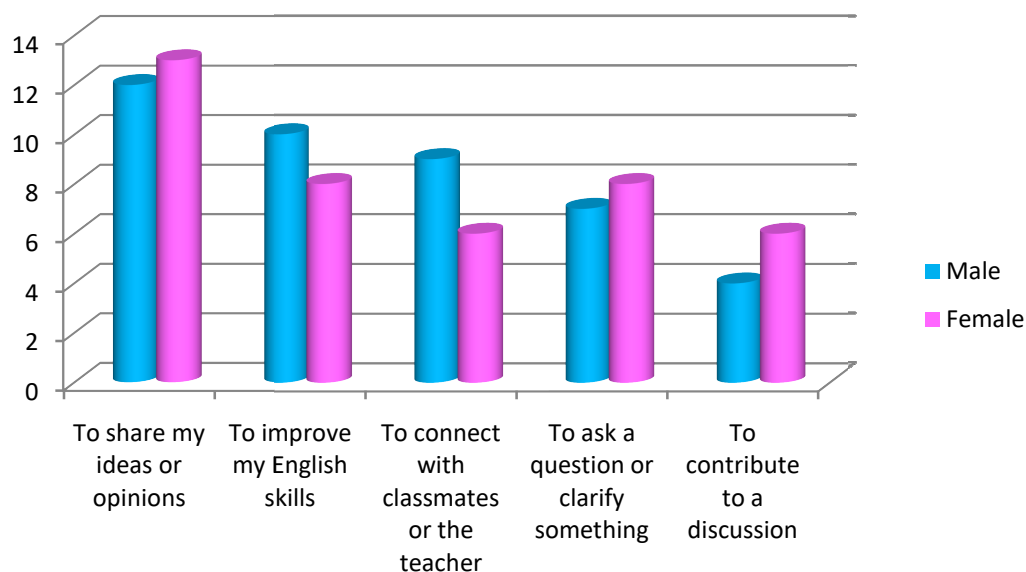
Figure 3.15: Male and Female Students' Reasons to Speak in Class

Through the results of Item 18 represent the primary reasons for speaking English in class for male and female students. Sharing ideas or opinions was the most common reason selected by both groups; 29% of male students selected this option and 32% of female students as well. This suggests that both genders value the ability to participate in classroom discussion as a method of self-expression. Improving English abilities was the second most common response for males (24%) and only slightly less for females (20%), indicating that both genders have an interest in improving their communication skills in a second language. Interestingly, the reason to connect with classmates or the teacher was selected by 21% of males and only 15% of females. This suggests that males may be slightly more focused on connecting with classmates than females may be.

The fourth reason in the responses is to ask a question or clarify something in lecture where males (17%) and females (20%) respond, this implies that female students may be more inclined to seek clarification in what they are learning compared to their male counterparts. Finally, contributing to a discussion was the least chosen reason for both genders but more females (15%) than males (9.5%) chose this reason. Overall, similar

patterns in the primary reasons are demonstrated, while some gender-based preferences exist, which suggest differences in communication priorities when speaking in the classroom and participating in classroom discussions.

Item 19: How do you feel after successfully speaking English in class?

	Male FRs	**Percentage %**	**Female FRs**	**Percentage %**
A	12	32,4 %	13	28,9 %
B	15	40,5 %	16	35,6 %
C	7	18,9 %	10	22,2 %
D	3	8,1 %	6	13,3 %
Total	37	100 %	45	100 %

Table 3.19: Male and Female Students' Feelings after Speaking

Note

A: Happy because I was understood clearly

B: Motivated to speak more often in the future

C: Confident about my ability to use English effectively

D: Relieved that I overcame my hesitation or fear of speaking
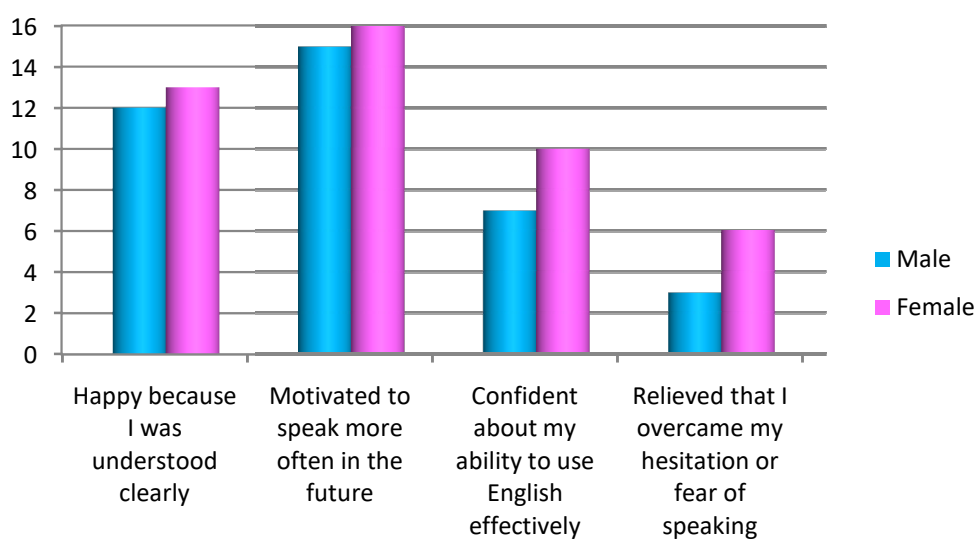
Figure 3.16: Male and Female Students' Feelings after Speaking

The results show that students extremely reported positive emotional outcomes after successfully using English in class. Both males and females intended to use English and reported feeling "Happy because I was understood clearly" and "Motivated to speak more often." In addition, other common responses consisted of feeling "Confidence in using English effectively" and being "Relieved that I overcame my hesitation or fear of speaking." These results suggest that successful speaking experiences reinforce self-efficacy and reduce anxiety, particularly for female students who more frequently expressed relief and boosted confidence. Clearly the emotional rewards related to speaking well emphasize the positive value in creating a supportive and safe classroom environment.

Section Four: Gender and Communication Style

Item 20: How do you prefer to communicate with your teacher in English?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Face-to-face in class	14	70 %	13	65 %
Through writing (e.g., emails, messages)	3	15 %	3	15 %
In private conversations outside class	1	5 %	3	15 %
I don't communicate with the teacher	2	10 %	1	5 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.20: Male and Female Students' Preferences to Communicate
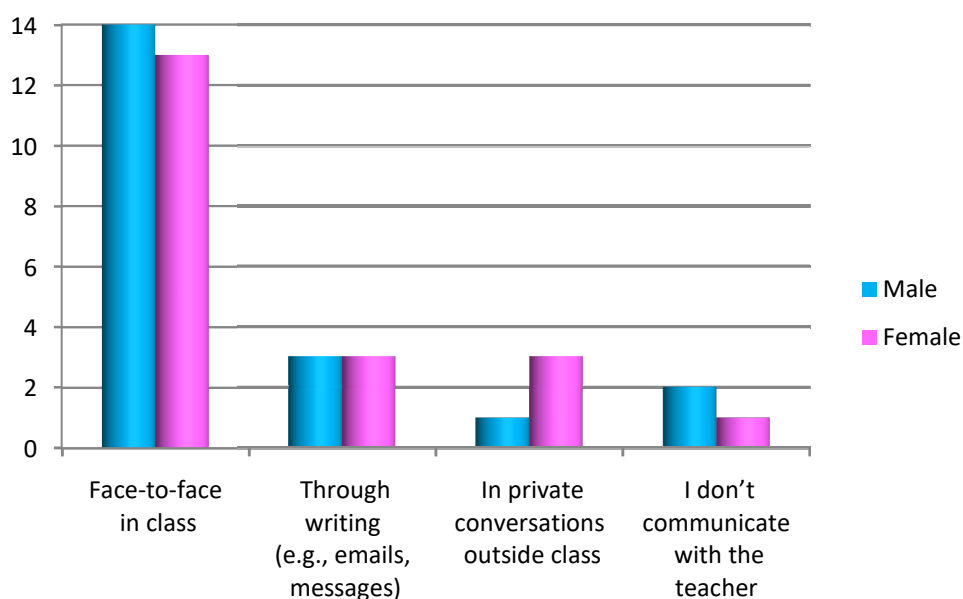
Figure 3.17: Male and Female Students' Preferences to Communicate

The results indicate that Face-to-face communication in class is the preferred method for both genders (14 males, 13 females), indicating the value placed on direct, real-time interaction. A small number students from each gender favored alternative methods,

such writing (e.g., emails) or private conversations outside class. Furthermore, there are only a small number of students (2 males, 1 female) reported not communicating with the teacher at all, which could indicate potential barriers or discomfort that educators would need to address students. The findings highlight a preference for real-time, personal communication which has implications for establishing open dialogue, and interaction in classroom.

Item 21: How do you usually express your opinions in a classroom setting?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
I raise my hand and speak up.	13	65 %	13	65 %
I share my thoughts in small groups.	5	25 %	5	25 %
I prefer to write my opinions down.	0	0 %	0	0 %
I usually keep my opinions to myself	2	10 %	2	10 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.21: Male and Female Students' Expression of Opinions in Class
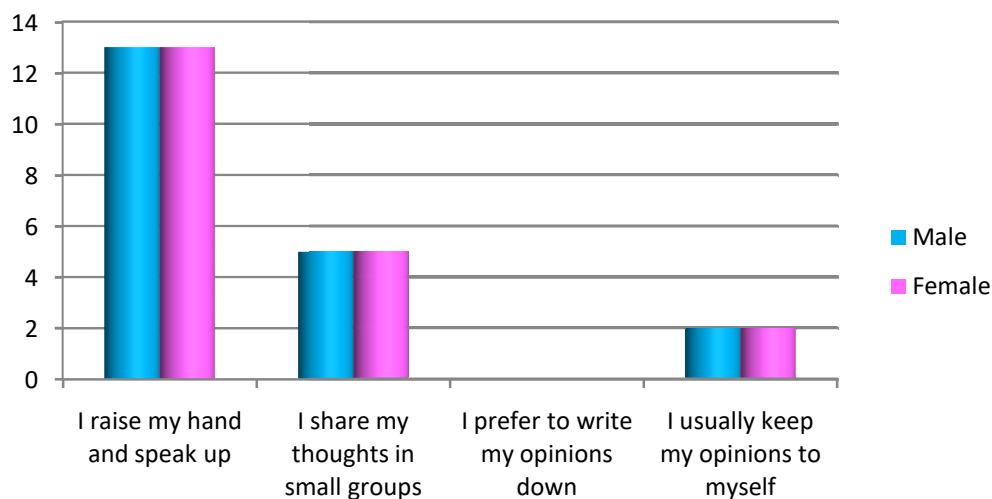
Figure 3.18: Male and Female Students' Expression of Opinions in Class

According to the results obtained above, most students (13 males and 13 females) prefer to raise their hands and speak, which signifies level of confidence and willingness to participate openly. A small number (5 each) prefer sharing in small groups, and very few (2 each) usually choose to keep their opinions to themselves. No one of them choose writing opinions down. The results highlight high level of verbal participation and a relative low occurrence of communication anxiety. Encouraging inclusive classroom practices can help maintain this trend while supporting the few who are more silent.

Item 22: When participating in group discussions, what is your usual approach?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
A	4	20 %	4	20 %
B	10	50 %	10	50 %
C	5	25 %	5	25 %
D	1	5 %	1	5 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.22: Male and Female Students' Participation Approach

Note :

A : I like to take the lead and guide the conversation

B : I prefer to listen and contribute when I feel it's necessary

C : I often share my ideas openly and encourage others to do the same

D : I tend to be quiet and may not speak up
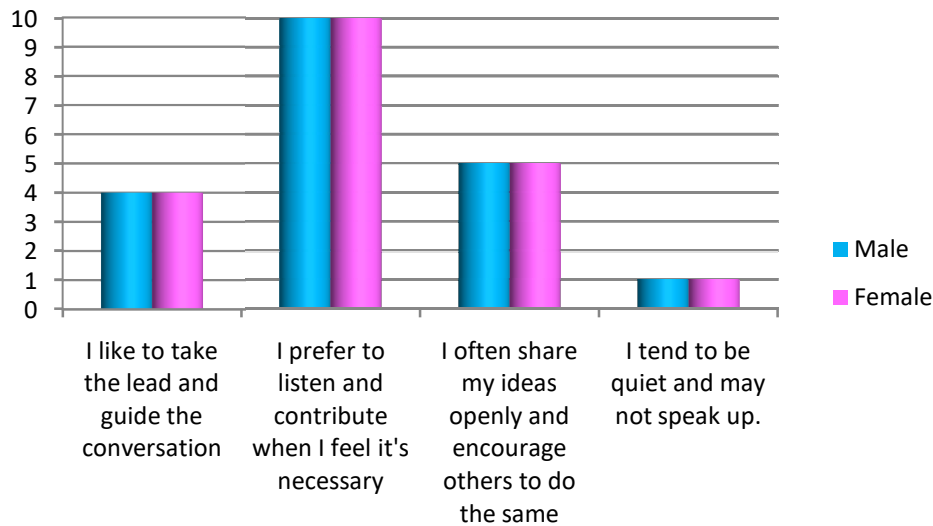
Figure 3.19: Male and Female Students' Participation Approach

The findings demonstrate that the most common group discussion method for both genders (10 males and 10 females) is to "listen and contribute when I feel it's necessary," which indicates more thoughtful, engaged approach and responsive style. Moreover, five (5) students from each gender say that they actively share ideas and encouraging others, by showing collaborative tendencies, while four (4) males and four (4) females prefer to take the lead: only one of each gender prefers to remain quiet. This balance of interaction styles shows that students are mostly comfortable in group discussions, with varying levels of assertiveness.

Item 23: How often do you think your communication style helps you communicate effectively?

	Male Number	Percentage %	Female Number	Percentage %
Yes	7	35 %	7	35 %
Sometimes	12	60 %	12	60 %
Rarely	0	0 %	0	0 %
No	1	5 %	1	5 %
Total	20	100 %	20	100 %

Table 3.23: Male and Female Students' Communication Styles
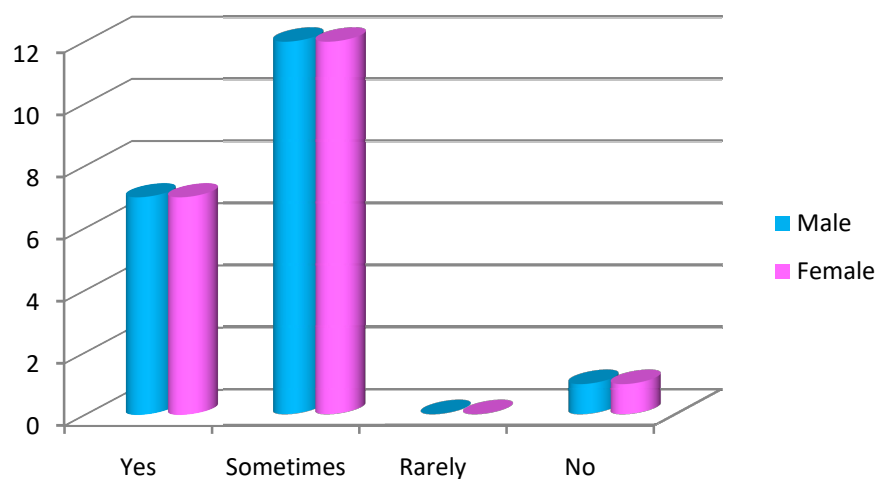
Figure 3.20: Male and Female Students' Communication Styles

The findings of this question shows that the majority of both males and females (12 each) answered "Sometimes", suggesting that while their communication styles seem to be effective, there may be situational or contextual barriers, while 7 from each gender said "Yes" showing a strong alignment between their communication style and learning outcomes. Only one male and one female responded "No," and none selected "Rarely." These results suggest that many students recognize the value of their communication styles is somewhat

helpful, also there is room for improvement or greater consistency in how they communicate to learn more effectively.

3.4. Interview

3.4.1. Aim and Structure

The ultimate goal behind this interview is to determine the main problems that EFL students encounter in communication from teachers' perspectives. It aims to explore their perceptions, on how students' motivations and gender differences may influence their willingness to communicate during classroom interaction. Additionally, it sought to know teachers' perceptions about the factors that cause willingness to communication among EFL students regarding their binary gender if there are differences and find out effective strategies to reduce it.

The interview consists of seven (7) questions (open-ended questions) to limit teachers to researcher's theme boundaries and make them free in giving much more details about our theme. Each question in this interview has purpose of using it (see appendix B).

3.4.2. Piloting, Validation and Administration of Teachers' Interview

Before the administration the interview was first piloted on the 9th of April 2025 with my supervisor before its administration to the teachers. The teachers answered the questions without any ambiguities or misunderstanding.

For the administration phase, the interview was designed as a semi-structured interview administrated to (05) teachers who teach or have experienced teaching third year EFL students in the department of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. Henceforth, the researcher created a written interview through Google docs, administrated hand to hand to (03) teachers, then she sent invitations via email to (02) teachers to provide answers. In addition, teachers may observe some noticeable differences or similarities in students' willingness to communicate that appear to be related with gender.

3.4.3. Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

Item 01. Do you notice any differences between male and female students in their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English? If yes, can you give example(s)?

This question is trying to establish if teachers see any differences between boys and girls in terms of how often or how willingly they speak English in class, by providing examples which will help to contextualize what those differences look like in the classroom. In order to understand if gender plays a role in how active students are when it comes to speaking English, based on the teacher's observations.

Theme(s)	Description
Difference of WTC related to gender	Varied perceptions indicating that some see female students as more willing, and others observe male students dominance.
Need for Encouragement	Males often require extra motivation to participate than females.
Classroom Demographic Influence	Unequal gender representation impacts judgment accuracy.

Table 3.24: The main recurring themes from teachers' responses regarding gender-based differences in students' willingness to communicate in English

The first theme that emerged in teacher responses is the **difference of WTC related to gender**. Some teachers remarked that female students are more willing to communicate in classrooms, particularly when working in groups or in writing. For example, Teacher 01 and Teacher 03 agreed that the female students demonstrated a willingness to participate more often in class discussions due to being more expressive and working in a more collaborative environment. Teacher 04 also sustained this view, stating that this behavior could reflect the nature of communicative impulses that females share.

Another recurring theme is the **need for encouragement**, particularly among male learners, teacher 01 noted that male learners often act more as passive recipients of information rather than active communicators and require additional motivation, support, and encouragement to express their views. This aligns with research suggesting that male students may lack confidence or feel less socially supported in language classrooms, making them less likely to initiate communication without external urges.

Nonetheless, teacher 02 offered a contrasting point of view, noting that male learners in his classroom are more willing to communicate and often take the lead in classroom interactions. This difference highlights the importance of context, including teaching style, classroom environment, and cultural expectations. It supports the last theme of **classroom demographic influence**, especially emphasized by Teacher 05, who expressed difficulty in making gender-based assumptions due to the overrepresentation of female learners in their classes.

In summary, while a general trend suggests that female learners exhibit higher WTC, this pattern is not absolute. Teacher responses show that gender differences in communication can be influenced by a variety of factors, including classroom environment, individual personality traits, and teacher-student dynamics. These findings reinforce the need for gender-sensitive but flexible teaching approaches that consider the specific needs and characteristics of both male and female learners.

Item 02. What challenges do male and female EFL students face when they speak English in class?

This question examines the difficulties boys and girls experience or face when they try to speak English, to find whether male and female students have the same or different challenges, such as fear of making mistakes, or lack of confidence.

Theme(s)	Description
Affective Barriers	Anxiety, fear of mistakes, and low confidence common across both genders.
Gender-Specific Anxiety Triggers	Males: confidence issues; Females: fear of judgment or misunderstanding.
Linguistic Limitations	Grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary are shared communication barriers.

Table 3.25: The common affective and linguistic challenges identified by teachers for male and female students during classroom speaking tasks

The teachers' responses reveals consistent recognition of multiple challenges that hinder EFL students' WTC, with three main themes emerging: **affective barriers**, **gender-specific anxiety triggers**, and **linguistic limitations**.

All five teachers identified **affective barriers** as a major obstacle to communication. These include shyness, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and lack of confidence**,** which were frequently mentioned. For example, Teacher 01 highlighted that learners suffer from low self-esteem and fear of being wrong, which causes hesitation in speaking. Similarly, Teacher 02 stressed the impact of shyness and fear of judgment by classmates, noting that these emotional blocks affect both male and female learners equally. Teacher 05 also echoed this, identifying anxiety and fear of committing mistakes as the main communication obstacles for both genders.

Nevertheless, the analysis also points to **gender-specific anxiety triggers**. Teacher 03 provided a nuanced observation: male students often struggle with confidence**,** which makes them more hesitant to initiate speech, while female students are more concerned with being judged or misunderstood by others. This distinction suggests that while both genders face

anxiety, the emotional source and social pressures behind that anxiety may differ, which may be a crucial insight for designing targeted classroom interventions.

The third theme that emerged is **linguistic limitations**, which include issues like grammar errors, pronunciation difficulties, and limited vocabulary**.** These were highlighted by Teachers 01 and 04, who noted that lack of fluency and accuracy damages/lower students' confidence and ability to participate effectively. These limitations not only cause embarrassment but also contribute to the affective challenges described earlier.

In summary, teachers agree that anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and linguistic weaknesses are shared communication barriers among students. The data also reveals that the emotional roots of anxiety differ by gender. Males are more affected by internal self-doubt, while females are more concerned with how others perceive them. These findings suggest the need for differentiated support strategies for example, building confidence among male students through praise and low-stakes tasks, and fostering a non-judgmental, inclusive environment to ease peer pressure for female students.

Item 03. Do male and female students prefer different ways of communicating, such as group discussions, one to one conversations, or speaking in front of the whole class?

This question asks teachers if boys and girls have different favored methods of communicating in class. To discover whether gender influences preferred communication style and preferences or not, which can help in planning classroom activities.

Theme(s)	Description
Gendered Preferences	Female students prefer collaborative settings; male students are more inclined to debates or solo tasks.
Individual Variation	Some teachers view preferences as personality-based rather than gendered.
Same-Gender Comfort	Students tend to prefer working in same-gender groups.

Table 3.26: The observed communication style preferences of male and female students as reported by teachers

Teachers' responses suggest that there are notable gender-based preferences in communication styles, although these are not universally agreed upon and often intersect with individual personality traits and classroom dynamics. The results produced three main themes: **gendered preferences**, **individual variation**, and **same-gender comfort**.

The most prominent theme, **gendered preferences**, was supported by several teachers. Teacher 03 stated that females tend to prefer group discussions and pair work, which they perceive as safer and more comfortable, while males may lean toward more competitive or individual tasks, like debates or one-on-one conversation. Teacher 04 echoed this view, suggesting that females favor collaborative tasks, whereas males often seek opportunities to demonstrate dominance through debates or challenge-based interaction. Teacher 05 also noted that female students show more interest in group work than their male counterparts.

Additionally, the theme of **individual variation** was highlighted by Teacher 04, who emphasized that some students' choices are shaped more by personality and confidence levels than by gender, an observation that aligns with research emphasizing the role of individual learner differences in communication behavior. Teacher 01 also expressed that students, in

general, are comfortable with various formats but prefer class discussion, regardless of gender. This perspective suggests that communication style is often a complex interplay between personality, social environment, and classroom culture.

Another recurring observation across the responses was the theme of **same-gender comfort**. Teacher 02 observed that students often prefer group work within their own gender, avoiding mixed-gender collaboration. This preference may stem from cultural norms, peer pressure, or a desire for comfort and ease of expression. Same-gender grouping can influence classroom dynamics significantly and should be considered when organizing collaborative activities.

In summary, while gender does influence communication style preferences to some extent, it is not the sole factor. Still, personality traits and classroom culture often override strict gender divisions**,** and many students regardless of gender, prefer to work with peers of the same gender. These insights suggest that teachers should offer a range of communication formats and allow for flexibility in group formation to accommodate both gendered tendencies and individual comfort levels.

Item 04. How do male and female students respond to interactive activities like role-plays, debates, or presentations?

This question examines the manner in which males and females behave or act when they are engaged in interactional speaking activities. To explore if males act differently than females or possibly similarly within these activities, which can facilitate choosing the correct elements of tasks for students.

Theme(s)	Description
Positive Response from Females	Female students are generally more engaged in expressive tasks like role-plays/presentations.
Debate/Challenge Appeal to Males	Male students respond better to competitive formats like debates.
Similarities Observed	Some teachers noted minimal difference in response between genders.

Table 3.27: Teachers' observations about gender-specific reactions to interactive and performance-based learning activities

Teacher responses showed both similarities and contrasts in how male and female students engage with interactive speaking activities, three key themes emerge: **positive response from female students**, **debate/challenge appeal to male students**, and **similarities observed**.

The most consistently reported trend was that **female students respond more positively** to interactive tasks, particularly expressive activities like role-plays and presentations. Teachers 01, 03, and 04 all noted that female learners are more open, enthusiastic, and comfortable participating in these activities. These formats often offer emotional safety, structure, and opportunities for social interaction elements that align well with the communication preferences identified in earlier responses. Teacher 05 also agreed with this trend, observing that females tend to be more communicative.

On the other hand, the **debate/challenge appeal to males** theme was emphasized by Teachers 03 and 04. They noted that male students tend to perform better when tasks include a competitive or argumentative element, such as debates. This aligns with earlier findings that male students often require a challenge or incentive to actively participate in speaking tasks.

Interestingly, Teacher 02 offered a divergent view, stating that they had not noticed any specific gender difference in how students respond to interactive tasks. Similarly, Teacher 05 described the student reactions as largely similar, with only slight differences in favor of female students being more expressive. These observations contribute to the third theme: **similarities observed,** suggesting that while gender-based trends may exist, they are not general. Factors such as classroom climate, individual learner traits, or task relevance may sometimes overshadow gender effects.

To sum up, while most teachers observe that females tend to engage more in expressive speaking tasks, and males show greater interest in competitive formats, these trends are not absolute. The responses suggest that gender can influence classroom participation in interactive activities, but it interacts with other factors such as individual motivation, classroom structure, and teaching style. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to offer a different activity types, (some collaborative, some competitive) to ensure all students, regardless of gender, find opportunities to engage meaningfully in spoken English.

Item 05. How do you address the specific challenges that male and female students face when trying to communicate in English?

This question is asking instructors how they assist males and females to overcome their problems with speaking English. In order to understand what strategies or techniques instructors use to support male and female students with their specific needs.

Theme(s)	Description
Psychological Safety	Emphasis on building comfort, belonging, and confidence.
Differentiated Strategies	Use of gender-sensitive approaches (e.g., fun/safe tasks for female students, competitive tasks for male students).
Mixed-Gender Collaboration Issue	Some students resist working in mixed-gender groups.

Table 3.28: The instructional and motivational strategies used by teachers to support male and female learners in overcoming WTC challenges

Teachers' responses to this question illustrate a thoughtful and learner-centered approach to tackling gender-related communication barriers. The analysis reveals three dominant themes: **psychological safety**, **differentiated strategies**, and **mixed gender collaboration issues**.

The first and most widely emphasized theme is the need to **ensure psychological safety** in the classroom. Teacher 01 explained that students, specifically those who are quiet or anxious, benefit greatly from a learning environment where they feel secure, respected, and emotionally supported. By focusing on learners' emotional well-being and fostering a sense of belonging, this teacher encourages participation through praise, humor, and even small rewards. Similarly, Teacher 03 highlighted the importance of building a safe and positive environment by using strategies like pairing shy students with more supportive peers, or allowing learners to choose unintimidating roles during speaking tasks. These responses affirm that students' emotional comfort is a prerequisite for meaningful communication in EFL settings.

The second major theme, **differentiated strategies**, points to how teachers adapt their teaching to address gender needs and tendencies. Teacher 04 explicitly described offering

safe, supportive environments for female students while providing competitive, challenge-oriented tasks for male students, like debates or games. Teacher 05 supported this view by advocating for collaborative and contextualized tasks that can appeal to students' personal experiences and preferences, suggesting that choice and relevance can boost participation across genders.

The third theme "**mixed-gender collaboration issues**" was notably discussed by Teacher 02. They expressed concern over students' discomfort when placed in mixed-gender groups, noting that there appears to be a social barrier or "gap" between male and female learners that hinders open communication. This challenge appears to stem from socio-cultural factors or interpersonal discomfort, especially among adolescents. The teacher addressed the issue by normalizing the practice, encouraging students to engage, and gradually breaking down this invisible wall. This insight underscores the importance of classroom management and gradual social integration techniques in ensuring all students can work comfortably with peers of any gender.

In summary, teachers adopt varied and thoughtful approaches to support their students' communication needs. They place high importance on emotional safety, apply gender-responsive teaching strategies, and work to overcome social discomfort, particularly in mixed-gender settings. These findings emphasize that effective teaching goes beyond linguistic instruction, it requires sensitivity to learners' emotional and social realities, as well as adaptability to different personalities and gender-based dynamics. An inclusive and supportive classroom climate, alongside flexible instructional methods, appears essential for fostering WTC among all learners.

Item 06. In your opinion, what motivates male and female students to communicate in English during class? Are there any similarities or differences?

This question asks teachers what they believe encourages boys and girls to speak English in class. To understand what factors push male and female students to participate, and whether they are motivated by similar or different things.

Theme(s)	Description
External Motivation	Grades, teacher praise, and recognition drive participation for both genders.
Gender-Based Preferences	Male students are motivated by challenge; female students by emotional connection or encouragement.
Individual Perspective	Some teachers believe motivation is shaped more by individual interests.

Table 3.29: The motivational factors influencing students' WTC in class, with attention to similarities and gender-based differences

The teachers' responses to this question highlight various sources of motivation influencing EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC), with three major themes emerging: **external motivation**, **gender-based preferences**, and **individual perspectives**. The most consistently mentioned theme is **external motivation**. Multiple teachers (e.g., Teachers 03, 04, and 05) noted that both male and female students are commonly motivated by grades, teacher praise, recognition**,** and sometimes the competitive or entertaining nature of activities. Teacher 03 emphasized that both male and female students seek approval and success**,** and these incentives encourage participation.

Nonetheless, a clear pattern also emerged in the form of **gender-based motivational preferences**. Teachers 01 and 04 reported that females are generally more easily engaged**,**

often responding positively to simple encouragement or emotionally supportive environments. Females were described as expressive, socially driven, and more likely to participate when they feel understood and appreciated. On the other hand, males tend to require more strategic effort to participate, often showing better engagement when activities are competitive, structured, or task-focused. For example, games and debates were identified as motivating tools for male students, whereas cooperative activities were more appealing to female learners. These observations point to the need for **gender-responsive teaching strategies** that align with students' engagement styles.

Interestingly, Teacher 02 argued that motivation is more subjective and individual than gendered, noting that students' engagement depends on their personal interest in English or whether they perceive it as a requirement. This perspective introduces the third theme: **individual perspective**, where motivation is understood as a function of personality, attitude toward the subject, and personal goals. It suggests that factors like learner autonomy, cultural context, and classroom climate may influence motivation just as much (if not more) than gender.

In summary, the teachers' responses indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations shape students' WTC, but the type of motivation and the way students respond to it can vary by gender. Females are more responsive to emotional and interpersonal factors, while males are more influenced by challenge-based engagement. Nevertheless, the role of individual differences remains significant, and these findings support the need for adaptive, differentiated instruction that considers both gender trends and personal learner characteristics when designing communicative tasks.

Item 07. Do male and female students react differently to classroom strategies designed to encourage communication? Can you share some examples?

This question asks whether males and females respond differently to teaching methods that are intended to increase student interactions in class. To see if teachers need to use different strategies for each gender to make communication more effective.

Theme(s)	Description
Diverse Reactions to Strategies	Female learners respond better to collaborative/group strategies; male learners to topics or challenges.
Engagement Gap in Males	Male learners are harder to engage and less responsive to general strategies.
Level-Based Over Gender Response	Some responses depend more on language proficiency than gender.

Table 3.30: Teachers' views on how male and female students respond to communicative strategies and classroom interventions

The teachers' responses highlight distinct patterns in how male and female learners respond to communicative strategies in the classroom, leading to three core themes: **diverse reactions to strategies**, **engagement gap in males**, and **level-based over gender response**.

The most prominent theme is the **diverse reactions to strategies**. Several teachers noted that female students respond more positively to collaborative and emotionally engaging strategies**,** such as group work, peer feedback, or interactive activities. In contrast, male students appear to be more responsive to strategies that involve challenge, structure, or personal interest**,** such as debates, quizzes, or goal-oriented speaking tasks. For instance, Teacher 03 observed that competitive tasks like quiz-based games were more likely to engage

male learners, while collaborative settings were more effective for female students. This theme underscores the importance of differentiating classroom strategies based on learners' motivational triggers and comfort zones.

Another key observation, forming the second theme, is the **engagement gap in males**. Teachers 01 and 04 remarked that male learners are often less actively involved in communicative tasks and harder to motivate using conventional methods. This lack of engagement may stem from disinterest, lower confidence, or a mismatch between the activity type and the male students' preferred learning style. Teacher 01 noted that even with ICTs, games, or role-plays, male students sometimes remained passive, indicating that traditional strategies alone may not suffice.

Nevertheless, a more nuanced perspective emerged through the third theme: **level-based over gender response**. Teacher 05 pointed out that students' language proficiency and topic relevance often have a greater impact on participation than gender. According to this view, a learner's comfort and ability in English (rather than their gender) determines how they respond to different strategies. A topic that resonates with students' interests or prior knowledge, combined with an appropriate level of difficulty, may engage both males and females equally.

Finally, teachers recognize that while gender influences how students respond to communicative strategies, it is not the sole determinant. Females tend to benefit from cooperative, supportive tasks, whereas males require more personalized, challenge-based, or engaging content to participate. Still, many responses suggest that language level and topic relevance can outweigh gender in influencing engagement. This highlights the need for flexible, inclusive, and student-centered approaches that consider both gender tendencies and individual learner profiles to maximize classroom communication and participation.

3.5. Discussion of the Findings

The overall aim of this study was to explore the reasons behind EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and examine how these reasons may differ based on their gender. More specifically, the research aimed to: examine and understand the affective challenges male and female students encounter in EFL classrooms that affect their WTC; explore the motivational factors that prompt them to communicate; lastly, to examine the differences in communication styles between males and females. To accomplish this, the researcher used a qualitative case study approach and collected data using a semi-structured questionnaire with third-year EFL students, and semi-structured interview with EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra.

Based on the extensive results presented from the questionnaire, the discussion of the results provides important insights into how gender differences manifest and appear in EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC), their anxiety levels, communication preferences, motivations, and classroom behaviors. Overall, the findings demonstrate patterns of similarities and nuanced distinctions between male and female students in terms of their affective experiences and communicative behavior in English language classrooms.

First and foremost, both male and female students were found to experience anxiety related to communication in English, but with slight variations in intensity and causes. While the fear of making mistakes and lack of vocabulary were common sources of anxiety across both genders, females reported slightly higher anxiety levels concerning correction by teachers and being judged. This implies that female students are likely more emotionally affected by teacher feedback as well as classroom circumstances; Males, on the other hand, showed higher anxiety when speaking in front of others, indicating a greater sensitivity to public speaking. These findings seem to conform with previous research indicating that

females tend to assign more importance to relational and emotional factors, while males are more affected by performance-variables (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2012; Rahman, 2022).

In terms of the impact of anxiety, the results show that the most common behavioral response was hesitation, especially among female students. This reflects a lack and absence of spontaneous participation and a reliance on internal processing before speaking. Notably, despite anxiety being widespread, most students continue to describe themselves as confident but selective speakers, which demonstrate a level of self-awareness and strategic participation within classroom interaction. This is consistent with the idea that WTC may be situational, relying on a combination of personal confidence and the conditions of the environment.

Communication preferences and contexts also show nuanced gendered tendencies. Both male and female students preferred one-to-one interactions, but males were more comfortable in group discussions than females. This indicates gender differences in perceived social support or competition in group contexts. Additionally, the majority of students reported feeling more assured when they raised their hands to speak than when shared in small groups, suggesting a classroom climate that favored structured participation; few students stated that they completely withdraw from communicating, which is a good sign of overall participation.

Personality and motivation emerged as important contributors to WTC. Most students linked their personality to a positive influence on their willingness to speak, with confidence and openness as traits. However, females emphasized more external motivators such as positive encouragement from the teacher and emotional safety in the classroom. Males also talked about external motivators, but mentioned internal motivators more often such as enjoyment and interest in the topic. This difference suggests that motivational strategies in the classroom should be varied: classrooms can be relational and supportive for

female students, while males may perform better with autonomously-supportive and interest-focused tasks.

When it comes to the reasons for speaking English, both genders reported sharing opinions and developing their language skills as their primary reasons. However, male participants were more likely to mention connecting with their peers or the teacher, whereas female participants were more likely to report academic purposes such as asking questions or contributing to discussions. In addition, the findings show that male and female learners also have a communicative purpose, although with a distinction on whether the communication interaction or predetermined goal of gathering information.

The impact of effective communication has significant impact on both genders, with students expressing that communication made them feel happy, engaged, and relieved feelings, this underscores the importance of providing positive speaking experiences to boost confidence and demote language anxiety. Classroom practices that provide more opportunities of frequent, low-pressure discussions are likely to foster these positive emotional outcomes, specifically for students who are more tentative and less willing to speak.

Students also showed a preference for face-to-face communication, highlighting the significance of real-time interaction for language learning development. This indicated that, for both males and females, face-to-face communication was perceived as more valuable than written or non-verbal communication. Additionally, interactive classroom activities were generally well-received, although females appeared to be the more consistently engaged group. This clarifies the need to develop, design engaging and collaborative activities that cater to different learner needs.

Finally, gender differences in learning preferences were noted in relation to classroom environment and tasks design. Female learners underlined the significance of a

supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere, while males focused on topic interest, task relevance, and the size of the class. Furthermore, some male students said that they feel uncomfortable speaking in class with many females, which adds a gender-dynamic consideration to comfort levels in the classroom. Females did not express this concern, which indicates that male students might require a greater level of engagement and potentially different support mechanisms.

To conclude, while male and female students share many similarities in attitudes and behavior, a significant differences emerge in terms of anxiety triggers, motivational factors. The findings suggest that the notion of WTC in the EFL classrooms is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon influenced by gender, personality, confidence, and classroom dynamics. Thus, teachers need to carefully consider their teaching context, and take on flexible and student-centered strategies which support and enhance students' WTC in the classroom, including providing emotional assistance, risk-taking opportunities and communicative activities which are meaningful to their learners, and which promote WTC with both genders.

Concerning the data collected from the interview showed that all teachers had a common understanding that gender is a factor in students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in the EFL classroom.

Teachers generally believed that female students tend to have higher participation rates, particularly in collaborative speaking tasks like group discussions and pair work. This matches previous existing literature concerning gendered communication styles, where female students are frequently understood as more verbally expressive/talkative and comfortable in interactive learning atmosphere. That being said, not all respondents held identical perceptions. Some teachers observed that male students had greater higher participation.

The contrasting views on gender and student participation recognizably demonstrates that WTC is constructed by contextual and individual variables. These differing perceptions supported the notion that gender informs communicative tendencies, yet is not the only variable; WTC is further socially constructed by the classroom situation, personality and group dynamics, and potential youth subcultures at work.

Teachers noted psychological and affective factors for both genders as barriers to communication. Common barriers were fear of error, lack of confidence, anxiety, and pronunciation challenges. Given the findings, affective factors were shown to be important limits on students' oral participation, confirming that emotional variables are at the heart of WTC (an area often speeds into). Interestingly, while both genders experience similar barriers, there were important differences in the way each barrier was experienced – males reportedly had increased issues concerning confidence, females reported having increased issues regarding fear of judgment. This nuanced understanding reinforces the need for differentiated pedagogical support.

Communication preferences also appeared to differ according to gender. Female students tended to be more open to emotionally charged and collaborative activities, such as presentations and role-plays, while male students preferred structured debates and competitive activities, such as quizzes. Overall, this suggests that some gendered learning preferences limited student participation and engagement with tasks.

In addition, same-gender group preferences were also demonstrated and confirmed as students reported being more comfortable interacting with same-gender peers; and for female students, this may have allowed them to manage their anxiety substantially. While some teachers attributed communication patterns more to personality than gender, there was general consensus that social comfort zones and interaction styles differ between male and female learners. This finding implies that educators must take these dynamics into account

when designing activities, proposing a range of communicative tasks that accommodate diverse preferences and reduce affective barriers.

Motivation emerged as another factor related to WTC, with apparent gendered motivational tendencies. In this study, both male and female students were considered to be extrinsically motivated, especially by grades, teacher recommendations, and interesting topics. Yet, female students were usually seen as more intrinsically motivated, and were more expressive of their motivation. Male students were said to require more motivation, or stimuli of challenge and competition. Very few teachers said that motivation closely related to the individual personality or a student being interested in language, rather than gender. Even so, the generalization was that motivation to learn can be positively impacted by tailoring strategies to support different learner needs. For example, using emotionally supportive ways to motivate females and what the males said as goal-oriented or competitive activity might help generate team inclusive participation.

When it comes to pedagogical methods, teachers indicated the types of strategies they implemented to encourage communicative interaction and decrease anxiety were: (1) they made learners feel safe and welcome; (2) they provided positive feedback; and (3) they offered a range of different communicative tasks for learners. Several teachers adjusted their teaching methods onto the associated gendered preferences, suggesting boys participate in competitive tasks and girls work collaborative tasks. One, commonly reported theme in the responses was the role of ensuring that students' emotional comfort was addressed, especially those that were shy or anxious. In summary these findings, the importance of empathetic and flexible pedagogical practices in reducing the potentially damaging effects of gendered barriers and providing more equal opportunities for students to participate in class.

Finally, the impact of task type on student engagement was a consistent theme. Teachers commented on how female students were more responsive to tasks that included role-play or some narrative aspects, while male students were more engaged when the format was pre-structured with rules. These findings support the idea that educators need to think about activity design within the classroom if they are to maximize participation. Recognition of gendered preferences for particular tasks within task design can contribute to a process of enhanced participation for all students, which will help articulate a broader, more effective and inclusive language teaching context.

This study gives critical insights into how gender affects EFL students' desire to communicate, showing the emotional, motivational, and contextual factors and challenges that shape classroom interaction, by taking both student and teacher point of view, the research underline the importance of flexible, empathetic, and inclusive teaching practices that respond to different learner needs. These findings are not only relevant for improving language learning outcomes at Mohamed Khider University, but also contribute more broadly to the general conversation on equal and effective language education that supports each learner to be a more confident communicator in the class.

3.6. Summary of the Findings

According to the findings of both the questionnaire and interviews it was concluded that gender plays an important but nuanced influence on EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in the classroom. Both male and females have anxiety associated with speaking, but the roots/sources of their anxiety differ: female students are more sensitive to judgment and correction, whereas males tend to feel pressure when speaking in front of their peers or others.

Teachers confirmed these patterns, noting that female students participate more in collaborative tasks, while male students prefer structured and competitive formats. In

addition to anxiety and engagement there are differences in motivation as well, including female students are motivated by emotional support and encouragement from the teacher, and male students are motivated by their own interest, enjoyment, challenge and engagement in the activity.

Both data sources emphasized the influence of classroom environment and teaching strategies on student participation. While students across genders expressed a preference for face-to-face communication and engaging topics, they differed in their comfort zones males being more at ease in group settings and females in emotionally supportive spaces. The teachers responded by using different strategies, like being positive, creating a safe communicative space, and developing different tasks that appealed to the students' different preferences. Therefore, these findings suggest that WTC is a dynamic, context-dependent phenomenon that affected by a mix of gender, personality, and pedagogical strategies.

To sum up, the results show that while both female and male students have similar aims to improve their English-speaking skills, their motivational approaches and support systems are different when they feel engaged and confident. The study highlights the need for empathetic, flexible and student-centered teaching strategies that recognizes gendered differences and provides equitable opportunities for participation in EFL classrooms.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to the field work of the study that consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the theoretical background of the research methodology of the study; namely: research paradigm, research design, research approach, population, sampling, data collection methods, and data analysis and procedures. The second part aimed to explore the motivations and reasons among EFL students' desire to speak in relation to their binary gender.

In addition, it dealt with detailed data analysis, interpretation, discussion of findings, and summary of the results obtained from the learners' questionnaire and teachers' interview at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra.

General Conclusion

This dissertation explored gender as an influencing factor on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, with regard to the affective challenges, motivational factors, and communication styles. Through the collected data from student questionnaires and teacher interviews, the study provided a multi-layered perspective on the ways male and female students experience and express their desire to participate in English-language communication within the classroom.

The results indicated that the affective challenges present in their participation significantly affect WTC for both genders, Firstly, a common barriers: anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and low self-confidence were found among both male and female students. The study found that females were described as more sensitive to peer judgment and feedback, while males were mainly affected by confidence-related concerns as they needed additional emotional support when speaking in front of others. These psychological constraints highlight the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environments to reinforce communication.

Furthermore, both male and female students were categorized as displaying extrinsic motivation, as they were motivated by grades, praise from teachers, and interactive and engaging classroom experiences. However, these motivations were different. Female students appeared to be motivated easier by forms that involve collaboration and connection within an interactive group format that offered emotional engagement and group support. In contrast, male students are generally motivated through competition or structures of task involvement; ultimately they needed engagement. And therefore, there would be a need to consider differentiate motivation strategies and activities, based on gender-specific preferences and personality traits.

The data also showed differences in communication styles between genders, in which females were more likely to participate in group discussions, pair work, and emotionally expressive tasks such as role-plays and presentations. Males, on the other hand, were more responsive to debates, quizzes, and one-on-one discussions that allowed them to assert their ideas. There was a preference for same-gender groups, especially in mixed-gender classes, which impacted participation as noted above. Overall, one teacher observed that personality can be more important than gender with respect to their communicative behaviors. However, there appeared to be strong consensus over the part of communication decisions and preferences of the others in relation to gender.

Overall, these outcomes highlight that gender impacts WTC in identifiable ways; it interacts with multiple contextual and individual influences. Addressing students' psychological comfort and providing a variety of communicative tasks, flexible and inclusive strategies can positively enhance communication in classes. The part of the teacher is to moderate these differences by adjusting his or her instruction, related to support students' differences in needs and interests and preferences.

To summarize, this research provides an increased understanding of how the gendered dimensions of communication in the classroom and the study of English in particular, can present pedagogical and learning challenges for EFL learners. This research recognizes the need to consider affective barriers, tailoring motivational techniques, and multiple types of activities to foster more inclusive and confident levels of student participation. Future studies could extend this research with student self-perceptions as well as gender and the impact of teacher-student interaction patterns on WTC among EFL learners.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on our findings, it is important that EFL teachers develop pedagogical practices that respond to students' gender-specific affective and communicative needs.

Teachers must strive to create an environment in which all students feel emotionally supported enough to speak without fear of peer judgment or ridicule.

As such, attention should always be given to students' personalities and their emotional states, especially for students that exhibit more introverted, anxious or withdrawn characteristics, as this may help increase students' motivation and willingness to engage.

Teachers need to keep in mind that male and female students may be motivated to share their experiences or express their opinions for different reasons and should create communication tasks that resonate with a range of interests and goals. This may require teachers to use varying types of speaking activities in their classrooms, including collaborative task-based activities that may satisfy females and goal-oriented, in addition to competitive task-based activities that may help satisfy and motivate males, to enhance the balance of speaking activity and interaction with all students in the classroom.

However, it is important to provide meaningful and ongoing feedback that preserves students' motivation and willingness to communicate, it is equally important to avoid being overly critical to the needs of both male and female students.

Part of this consideration may also be modifying instruction and materials for students to meet differing communication, learning styles and emotional needs that help improve more effective and inclusive communication in the classroom.

General Recommendations

For Educators:

EFL teachers need to prioritize speaking in the classroom by giving students ample opportunities to practice English in a supportive environment as possible.

Teachers also need to work to reduce communication anxiety by developing positive relationships with their students and getting to know their motivational and affective profiles as individuals.

Teachers should incorporate and use different methods or strategies of teaching, such as group and pair work, role plays, competitive and cooperative activities that give students a say in the activity.

When teachers authentically select an appropriate task for their students that also attracts their interests, students may be more likely to share ideas and want to communicate.

Teachers feedback is significant too, they are encouraged to provide appropriate feedback in a respectful and supportive way to build upon students' efforts and develop their self-confidence.

For Students:

Students have to value the importance of the speaking skill as an EFL learner and develop high oral competence through working on raising their willingness to communicate inside the classroom.

They should actively work on increasing their willingness to communicate by expanding their vocabulary through extensive reading, using dictionaries effectively, and engaging in language-rich interactions both in and outside the classroom.

Students should aim to improve their language proficiency mainly their fluency and accuracy by participating in classroom discussions, reducing hesitation through regular

practice, and using technology to interact with native or fluent speakers outside the classroom.

Developing self-confidence and reducing anxiety are crucial steps toward becoming more willing and effective communicators.

For Future Researchers:

Future studies should build on this exploratory research by expanding the scope to include larger, more varied samples among different academic and cultural contexts. If researchers hope to capture a more nuanced understanding of the construct of WTC, they can include other qualitative tools as part of that process like, classroom observations... in order to gain more data...

More exploration of how cultures influence the role of gendered communication patterns in EFL contexts is also suggested. More broadly, future research should explore how personality traits and classroom dynamics can influence learner willingness to communicate.

These recommendations for further research would help validate and contextualize the findings of the present study and provide teachers with useful opportunities for understanding pedagogy.

Limitations of the Study

Finally, the present study is not without limitations as it faced a number of obstacles.

Firstly, the findings of the study cannot be generalized on the whole population of EFL learners, because of the limitation of the sample size. Another limitation to mention is the lack of printed books related to the willingness to communicate at the level of libraries was a big barrier for the research.

Besides, the majority of the studies about the willingness to communicate were previously conducted in foreign countries (USA, Turkey, China, Iran…), making it challenging to directly apply or compare findings.

Further research in this area would have to rely on other tools such as; observations and oral tests, and expand the area of the study to investigate the WTC from different perspectives for example, the cultural effect on the students' willingness to communicate.

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Appendix A
A Questionnaire for Third-Year EFL Students

Dear Student,

You are kindly requested to fill this questionnaire which is part of a Master's research study on "Exploring the Gender-Related Factors Affecting Students' Willingness to Communicate". Be sure that your responses will remain confidential and will be used for academic research only. Please tick (✓) the appropriate answers for you or give a full statement when necessary.

Thank you for your time and participation

Section 1: Personal/General Information

1. **Age**

   ○ 18-21

   ○ 22-25

   ○ Above 25

2. **Gender**

   ○ Male

   ○ Female

3. **How do you evaluate your level of proficiency?**

   ○ Beginner

   ○ Intermediate

   ○ Advanced

   ○ Proficient

Section 2: Effective Factors and WTC

4. **How often nervous do you feel when speaking English in class?**

   ○ Very often

   ○ Sometimes

   ○ Rarely

   ○ Not at all

5. **What makes you feel anxious when speaking English?**

   (You may choose more than one)

   ○ Fear of making mistakes

   ○ Lack of vocabulary

   ○ Fear of being judged by peers

   ○ Fear of being corrected by the teacher

   ○ Speaking in front of others

   Other: ……………………………………

6. **How does feeling anxious affect your ability to speak in the class?**

   ○ I avoid speaking entirely

   ○ I hesitate before speaking

   ○ Anxiety does not affect me

7. **How would you describe your personality in the class?**

   ○ Outgoing and talkative

   ○ Quiet but willing to participate

   ○ Confident but selective when speaking

   ○ Shy and hesitant

8. **Do you prefer working alone or with others when practicing English?**

   ○ Working alone

   ○ Working with others

   ○ I like both equally

9. **Do you think your personality affects your desire to communicate in English?**

   ○ Yes, positively

   ○ Yes, negatively

   ○ No, it doesn't affect it

10. **How confident are you in speaking English in class?**

1	Not confident at all	2	A little confident

3	Somewhat confident	4	Mostly confident	5	Very confident

11. **Do you think practicing English outside the classroom helps improve your communication skills?**

    ○ Yes, a lot

    ○ Somewhat

    ○ Not much

    ○ Not at all

12. **In which situations do you prefer to speak the most?**

    (You may choose more than one)

    ○ In small group discussions

    ○ During one to one conversations

    ○ When speaking in front of the whole class

    ○ I don't feel comfortable in any situation

13. **What makes you feel more comfortable communicating in class?**

…………………………………………………………………………….…………

Section 3: Motivations for WTC

14. **Why do you want to improve your English communication skills?**

  ○ To improve my future career

  ○ To travel or study abroad

  ○ To pass exams

  ○ I don't have a specific reason

15. **How motivated are you to participate in English-speaking activities?**

  ○ Very motivated

  ○ Somewhat motivated

  ○ Not very motivated

  ○ Not motivated at all

16. **Do you feel motivated when the teacher uses interactive activities (e.g., role-plays, debates) in class?**

  ○ Yes, always

  ○ No

  ○ It depends on the activity

17. **What would make you feel more positive about speaking English in class?**

………………………………………………………………………………………

18. **What are your main reasons for speaking English in class?**

    (You may choose more than one)

    ○ To share my ideas or opinions

    ○ To improve my English skills

    ○ To connect with classmates or the teacher

    ○ To ask a question or clarify something

    ○ To contribute to a discussion

19. **How do you feel after successfully speaking English in class?**

    (You may choose more than one)

    ○ Happy because I was understood clearly

    ○ Motivated to speak more often in the future

    ○ Confident about my ability to use English effectively

    ○ Relieved that I overcame my hesitation or fear of speaking

Section 4: Gender and Communication Style

20. **How do you prefer to communicate with your teacher in English?**

    ○ Face-to-face in class

    ○ Through writing (e.g., emails, messages)

    ○ In private conversations outside class

    ○ I don't communicate with the teacher

21. **How do you usually express your opinions in a classroom setting?**

    ○ I raise my hand and speak up

    ○ I share my thoughts in small groups.

    ○ I prefer to write my opinions down

○ I usually keep my opinions to myself

22. **When participating in group discussions, what is your usual approach?**

○ I like to take the lead and guide the conversation

○ I prefer to listen and contribute when I feel it's necessary

○ I often share my ideas openly and encourage others to do the same

○ I tend to be quiet and may not speak up

23. **How often do you think your communication style helps communicate effectively?**

○ Yes

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ No

Appendix B
An Interview for EFL Teachers

Dear Teachers,

This interview is an attempt to collect data for the accomplishment of a master dissertation.

This latter is about "Exploring the Gender-Related Factors Affecting Students' Willingness to Communicate". We would be highly thankful for the information that you will provide us with. The responses you provide will remain anonymous and contribute to the achievement of research objectives.

Thank you for your time, effort, and collaboration

1. Do you notice any differences between male and female students in their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English? If yes, can you give example(s)?

2. What challenges do male and female EFL students face when they speak English in class?

3. Do male and female students prefer different ways of communicating, such as group discussions, one to one conversations, or speaking in front of the whole class?

4. How do male and female students respond to interactive activities like role-plays, debates, or presentations?

5. How do you address the specific challenges that male and female students face when trying to communicate in English?

6. In your opinion, what motivates male and female students to communicate in English during class? Are there any similarities or differences?

7. Do male and female students react differently to classroom strategies designed to encourage communication? Can you share some examples?

ملخص الدراسة

على الرغم من دافع العديد من متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية ليصبحوا متحدثين بطلاقة، إلا أنهم غالبا ما يجدون صعوبة في استخدام اللغة الانجليزية بشكل مناسب في المواقف الواقعية. و بالتالي تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الدوافع وراء رغبة طلاب السنة الثالثة للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في التواصل في الفصل الدراسي، و فحص كيف تختلف هذه الدوافع حسب جنسهم.

علاوة على ذلك، تميل هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن تصورات المعلمين للاختلاف بين الجنسين فيما يتعلق برغبة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في التواصل. لذلك، تم تقديم استبيان على 40 طالبًا في السنة الثالثة من أصل 358 طالب وأُجريت مقابلة مع 05 أساتذة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة. كشف تحليل النتائج عن وجود علاقة مهمة بين رغبة الطلاب في التواصل وجنسهم. مما يدل على أن جنس الطلاب يلعب دورًا مهمًا في رغبتهم في التواصل. أظهرت النتائج أن التحديات العاطفية مثل القلق والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء أثرت على كلا الجنسين، ولكن تم اختبارها بشكل مختلف. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن دوافع التواصل لدى الطلاب تنبع أساسًا من عوامل خارجية، مثل الدرجات، وثناء المعلمين، والمواضيع الشيقة، إلا أن هذه العوامل تتفاوت (الإناث أكثر دافعية للتعاون والنقاش، بينما يفضل الذكور المنافسة والأنشطة المنظمة).

كما كشفت الدراسة أن أساليب التواصل وتفضيلاته تختلف باختلاف الجنس، بناءً على العوامل الشخصية وظروف الصف. لذا، يُنصح طلاب ومعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية برفع مستوى وعيهم بمفهوم الرغبة في التواصل، وجوانبه، وعوامله، وتحدياته، وعلاقته بالجنس ودوره المهم في تطوير التواصل الفعال بين الطلاب.

Résumé de l'étude

Bien que de nombreux apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère soient motivés à devenir des locuteurs couramment, ils ont souvent du mal à utiliser l'anglais de manière appropriée dans des situations réelles. Par conséquent, cette étude vise à explorer les motivations/raisons derrière le désir des étudiants de troisième année d'anglais langue étrangère de communiquer en classe et à examiner comment ces motivations diffèrent selon le sexe.

De plus, cette étude tend à révéler les perceptions des enseignants sur les différences entre les sexes concernant le désir des apprenants de l'anglais de communiquer. Ainsi, un questionnaire a été administré à 40 étudiants de troisième année sur 358 étudiants et 5 enseignants du département d'anglais de l'Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra ont été interrogés. L'analyse des résultats a révélé une relation significative entre le désir des étudiants de communiquer et leur sexe. Ce qui indique que le genre des étudiants joue un rôle important dans leur désir de communiquer. Les résultats ont montré que les défis émotionnels tels que l'anxiété et la peur de faire des erreurs affectaient les deux sexes, mais étaient vécus différemment. L'étude a également montré que les motivations de communication des étudiants découlent principalement de facteurs externes, tels que les notes, les éloges des enseignants et les sujets intéressants, mais ces facteurs varient (les femmes sont plus motivées à coopérer et à discuter, tandis que les hommes préfèrent la compétition et les activités organisées).

L'étude a également révélé que les styles et les préférences de communication diffèrent selon le sexe, en fonction de facteurs personnels et des conditions de classe. Il est donc conseillé aux étudiants et aux enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère de mieux comprendre le concept de désir communicatif, ses aspects, ses facteurs, ses défis, sa relation avec le genre et son rôle important dans le développement d'une communication efficace entre les étudiants.