

41. EFL learners' willingness to communicate in speaking activities in online and face-to-face English lessons in Turkish context

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the participants' general willingness to communicate (WTC) levels in communicative pair or small group activities in English lessons which were taught via different mediums like face-to-face or online (during the COVID-19 pandemic). Although the concept of WTC has attracted much attention in the field of language teaching abroad, studies investigating L2 WTC in Turkish EFL context are still scarce. In order to address the aim of the study, a quantitative research method was adopted in the study. The quantitative data were gathered from the participants through a questionnaire (WTC in English scale, by Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The participants were 88 Turkish students who were learning English as a foreign language at the School of Foreign Languages of Izmir Institute of Technology, Izmir, Turkey. The results showed that all the participants had a moderate level of WTC in English. Additionally, regarding the scale items, learners were found to be the most willing to ask peers in English the meaning of an English word (item 7) ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.566$) and the least willing to do a role-play (standing in front of the class in face-to-face education or in a way that everyone can hear/see in online education) in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant) (item 1) ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.518$). Finally, the study provides several recommendations for researchers, institutions and language teachers.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, willingness to communicate, communicative activities, speaking, face-to-face education, online education

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin Türkçe bağlamında çevrimiçi ve yüz yüze İngilizce derslerindeki konuşma etkinliklerinde iletişim kurma istekliliği

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, yüz yüze veya (COVID-19 salgını sırasında) çevrimiçi gibi farklı ortamlar aracılığıyla işlenen İngilizce derslerinde iletişimsel ikili veya küçük grup etkinliklerinde katılımcıların genel iletişim istekliliği (WTC) düzeylerini keşfetmektir. Genel İletişim İstekliliği kavramı yurt dışında dil öğretimi alanında çok dikkat çekmiş olsa da, Türkiye'de yabancı dil ortamında ikinci dilde Genel İletişim İstekliliğini araştıran çalışmalar hala azdır. Araştırmanın amacına yönelik olarak çalışmada nicel araştırma yöntemi benimsenmiştir. Araştırmaya İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda kayıtlı toplam 88 öğrenci katılmıştır. Katılımcılar, İzmir Yüksek

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Teknoloji Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu'nda yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen 88 Türk öğrencidir. Nicel veriler, katılımcılardan bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır (WTC in English ölçeği, Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Sonuçlar, tüm katılımcıların İngilizce'de orta düzeyde WTC'ye sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, ölçek maddeleriyle ilgili olarak, öğrencilerin akranlarına İngilizce bir kelimenin anlamını İngilizce olarak sormaya en istekli oldukları bulunmuş (madde 7) ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.566$) ve İngilizce olarak (örneğin bir restoranda yemek siparişi verme gibi) rol canlandırma yapmaya en az istekli oldukları tespit edilmiştir (yüz yüze eğitimde sınıfın önünde durarak veya çevrimiçi eğitimde herkesin duyabileceği/görebileceği bir şekilde) (madde 1) ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.518$). Son olarak, bu çalışma, araştırmacılara, kurumlara ve dil öğretmenlerine çeşitli öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, iletişim kurma isteği, iletişimsel etkinlikler, konuşma, yüz yüze eğitim, çevrimiçi eğitim

1. Introduction

Speaking English has been one of the great challenges faced by most learners of English in Turkey. Most learners learning English as a foreign language (EFL) are reluctant to speak English and do not attend communicative activities even if they are proficient in accuracy (Savaşçı, 2014). Savaşçı (2014) questions this reluctance by asserting that students participate in the activities of other language skills such as reading, writing and listening apart from speaking and teachers generally complain about students' silence when it comes to speaking activities. There could be various reasons for this reticence such as teachers' attitudes towards students or the lesson, students' attitudes towards the lesson or teachers, the type of class environment, student motivation and so forth. Littlewood (2004, as cited in Savaşçı, 2014) discovered the likely reasons or factors hindering participation in the classroom as: "1) tiredness, 2) fear of being wrong, 3) insufficient interest in the class, 4) insufficient knowledge in the subject, 5) shyness and 6) insufficient time to formulate ideas" (p.2683). Somewhat similarly, Savaşçı reported that students' reluctance to speak English was due to anxiety, lack of confidence, cultural factors, teacher effect, fear of making mistakes and fear of being despised. MacIntyre et al. (1998) and MacIntyre (2007) had also remarked the problem of reluctance to communicate in second language (L2) in these words:

Why do some students seek, while others avoid, second language (L2) communication? Many language teachers have encountered students high in linguistic competence who are unwilling to use their L2 for communication whereas other students, with only minimal linguistic knowledge, seem to communicate in the L2 whenever possible (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 545).

When presented with an opportunity to use their second language (L2), some people choose to speak up and others remain silent. Why is it that, even after studying a language for many years, some L2 learners will not turn into L2 speakers? (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 564).

According to MacIntyre and his associates (1998), Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was approached as the initial and utmost goal of language education because linguistic or communicative competence is not enough to guarantee language learners' authentic communication in L2. Some language learners might avoid speaking in L2 and participating in communicative activities even if they are proficient in accuracy; however, others might be more willing to speak on every single occasion despite their low linguistic knowledge. Moreover, these learners' communicative behaviors may change according to different situations and over time. Thus, as is seen, WTC in L2 is not only a complex issue to understand but also a significant issue worth investigating since it directly affects language learning process and frequency of communication.

The concept of WTC can still be regarded as a new area to investigate, especially in L2 and thus, it has attracted much attention in the field of language teaching. Although some studies have been conducted in many other countries in the world, the studies carried out in Turkish EFL context on L2 WTC are still scarce. The studies including online context are also insufficient in the literature. Hence, any contribution to WTC is needed and could majorly affect the literature. Thereby, this study can make valuable contributions to the research of WTC in English in Turkish EFL context. In order to address these gaps regarding WTC in the EFL context, the present study seeks to reveal the participants' (the students at a preparatory class of a state university in İzmir, Turkey) general WTC levels in English. Furthermore, the study provides several implications for researchers, institutions and language teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Willingness to Communicate

Studies about willingness or unwillingness to communicate were conducted first in native or first language (L1) rather than second or foreign languages (L2/FL). Researchers (Burgoon, 1976; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1982, 1987; MacIntyre, 1994) treated the construct of WTC as a trait-like predisposition which is quite unchangeable in various communication situations over time and with different types of interlocutors. When traced back, Burgoon's study (1976) on "unwillingness to communicate scale" was considered to be one of the very first studies in this field. She created a scale measuring unwillingness to communicate directly to determine why some people avoided communication with others. Unwillingness to communicate was explained as a predisposition representing "a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication" (p. 60). In the study, unwillingness to communicate was approached with the following baselines: introversion, communication apprehension, anomia, alienation and self-esteem. McCroskey and Richmond's study (1982) on "communication apprehension and shyness" is also considered to be highly valuable in terms of understanding people's reticence to speak.

In the 1990s, the notion of WTC started to attract scholars' attention especially in second language (L2) context. Scholars questioned whether the variables affecting L1 WTC are the same as L2 WTC. To enlighten this topic, MacIntyre et al. (1998) mentioned that L2 WTC is not likely a plain indication of L1 WTC. By comparison with L1, in L2, more complex variables such as divergent levels of language mastery, communicative competence, political and social issues are involved and need considering. To analyze WTC in L2 thoroughly, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) conducted a study in Ottawa with 92 Anglophone students whose native language was English. Their French competence was very limited. By using Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model and MacIntyre's (1994) WTC model as base, they aimed at predicting the prevalence of L2 use on a daily basis. The variables were mainly divided as social context/personality (intellect, extraversion, context, agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness); language-related affect (perceived competence, L2 anxiety, integrativeness, and attitudes toward the learning situation) and motivational propensities (L2 WTC and motivation for language learning). The end point of all these factors was L2 communication frequency and some of them had to do with it directly and some indirectly. Personality traits were found to affect L2 use indirectly. Perceived competence was stated as a strong direct precursor of frequency of L2 communication. According to the model, WTC level, context, perceived communicative competence and motivation directly influenced L2 communication frequency. L2 WTC was directly affected by perceived competence, context, anxiety and agreeableness. Thus, it was suggested that students' perceptions of

their L2 proficiency, opportunities for language use, lack of speaking apprehension and being more pleasant and agreeable were the main determiners of their willingness to communicate. Intellect (or openness to new experiences) and extraversion were indirect paths for WTC. In addition, motivation was directly related to integrativeness and attitudes. It was also concluded that both personality traits and social context affected L2 use.

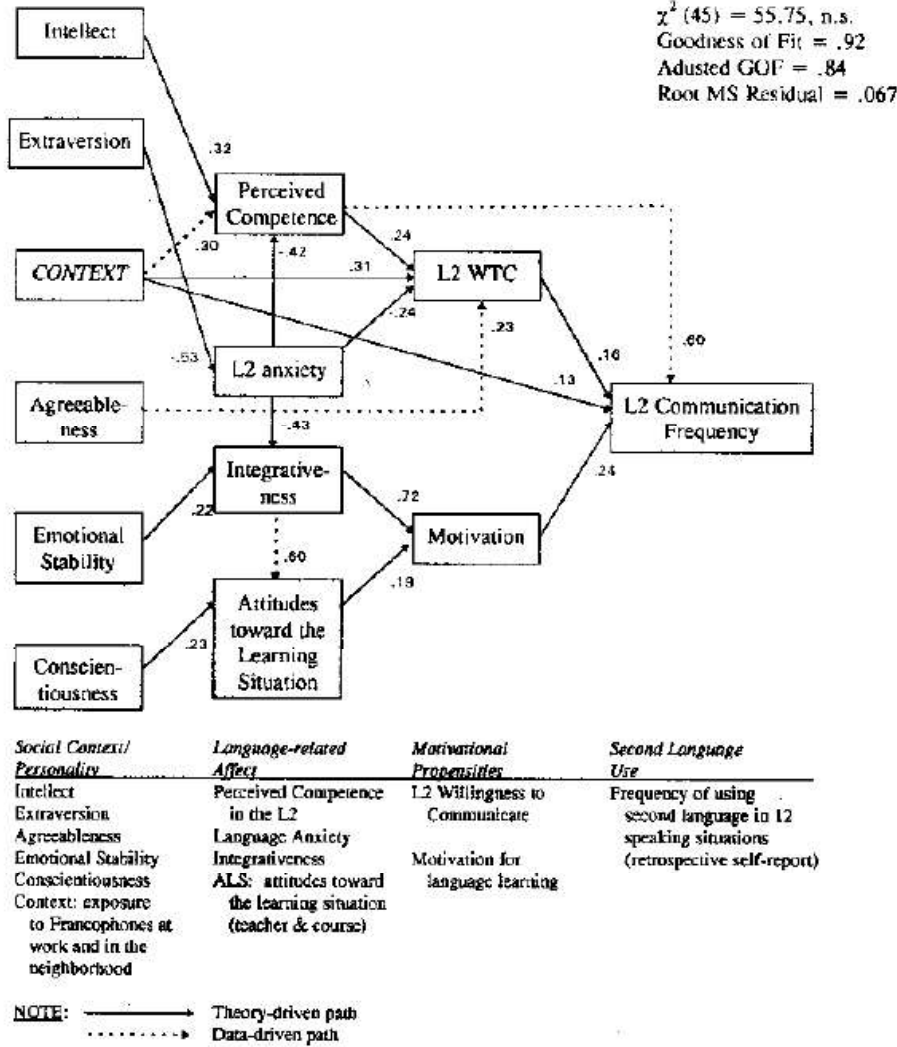


Figure 1. MacIntyre and Charos' (1996, p.18) model of L2 WTC

In the light of previous studies on WTC, the well-known heuristic model of WTC was proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and this model has been a basis and source of inspiration for most of the successive studies in L2 WTC. Rather than the former scholars (Burgooon, 1976; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1982, 1987; MacIntyre, 1994) who conceptualized WTC as a characteristic pertaining to personality, it is addressed as a variable dependent on situations along with temporary and permanent impacts in this model. Also, in the model, researchers intended to create an interface between disparate domains, such as linguistic, communicative, and psychological. In keeping with these

domains or approaches, the relations among variables affecting WTC are presented in order to anticipate, explain and describe communication in second language.

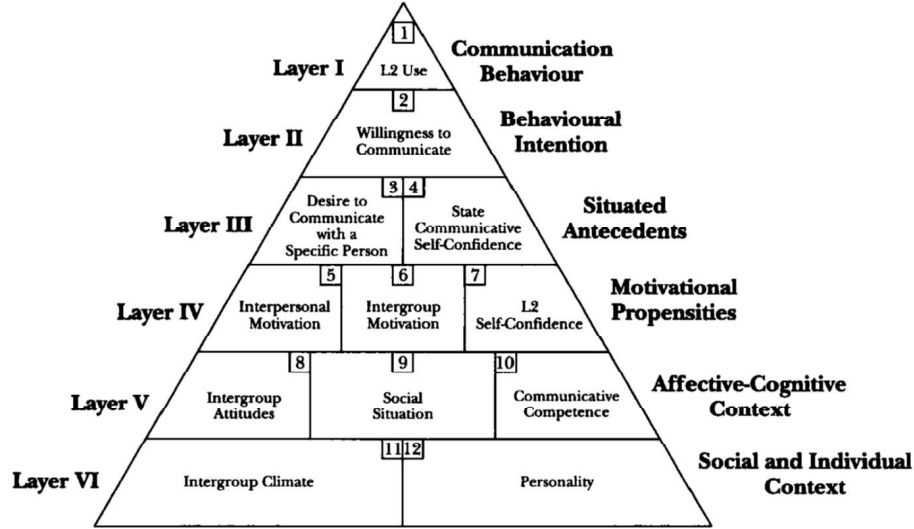


Figure 2. Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p.547)

This model is composed of six layers, which are connected to one another; social and individual context (VI), affective-cognitive context (V), motivational propensities (IV), situated antecedents (III), behavioural intention (II) and communication behaviour (I). When divided into two structures, the first three layers (I, II and III) stand for situational influences, which are, as the name suggests, “more transient and dependent on the specific context in which a person functions at a given time” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546) such as state communicative self-confidence and desire to communicate with a specific person, etc. However, the last three layers (IV, V and VI) show lasting influences which depict “stable, long-term properties of the environment or person that would apply to almost any situation” such as attitudes, personality, interrelationships in the group, etc. (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). The pyramid shape was not a coincidence to use in the model since this shape shows the immediacy of some constituents and considerably distal effects of others. All variables are interrelated. Namely, the foundation of the model is located at the bottom in layer VI including intergroup climate and personality, which have the broadest effects, and the other variables perform accordingly. When moved from the bottom to the top of the shape, it is thought to be moved from basic causes of WTC to the most proximal ones, which are the most probable predictors of L2 communication. In layer II, WTC is contextualized in relation to behavioral intention and defined as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2.” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). This is a broad definition and includes even attempts to communicate. To illustrate, a learner raising his or her hand is also accepted to have WTC even though this is not a verbal action. It means that s/he is ready to communicate. In this layer, the reasons behind the student’s readiness to speak are also explained. The most probable reasons are enough self-confidence with communicative competence and lack of anxiety, interpersonal motivation along with control and affiliation motives, positive past experiences in language learning, social context, personalities and so on (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Following MacIntyre et al. (1998), a myriad of studies was also conducted on WTC in second or foreign language contexts. For instance, utilizing socio-educational and WTC models, Yashima (2002) focused on the relationships between English as a foreign language (EFL) learning and communication variables in the Japanese context. A communication model was created with the data from 297 Japanese university students, who were given questionnaires. In the model, the variables were international posture, motivation, proficiency and communication confidence. International posture was associated with learners' general attitudes toward international communities including interest in international activities/vocation, foreign affairs and communication, which, in turn, affect language learning process in Japanese setting. As the results suggested, international posture and L2 communication confidence were found to influence L2 WTC directly. However, communication confidence was found as a stronger predictor of WTC, which is a common point with the pyramid model of MacIntyre et al. (1998). International posture had also an indirect impact on WTC through motivation, proficiency and L2 communication confidence. Motivation affected L2 communication confidence directly and indirectly via proficiency. To summarize, when learners' attitudes toward international community were positive, they were more motivated to study the target language and became more confident and competent learners or visa versa. In addition, motivated learners had high level of communication confidence, which was a combination of high level of perceived communication competence and low level of anxiety. Because L2 confidence and international posture were found as two significant elements affecting L2 WTC level, it was suggested that EFL lessons ought to be planned to reinforce learners' interest in various cultures and international activities, decrease communication anxiety and improve L2 confidence in order to increase willingness to communicate in English.

In another prominent study carried out by Kang (2005), the vigorous emergence and fluctuation of L2 situational WTC in conversation were investigated. The participants were four Korean male students (two advanced, one low intermediate and one high intermediate) in a conversation partner program at a state university in the United States. Their partners in the program were native (English) undergraduate students. The data were collected through stimulated recalls, interviews and videotaped conversations. Based on the findings, some psychological variables (responsibility, excitement and security) and co-constructed situational factors (interlocutors, conversational context and topic) were found to generate WTC, which was changeable from one moment to the next and fluctuated during the conversation. As a result of this study, Kang redefined WTC as "an individual's volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables" (p. 291) and provided useful pedagogical implications.

Cao and Philip (2006) studied L2 WTC in both trait-like and situational forms by comparing students' self-reports and their realistic behaviors in three classroom settings (pair work, small group work and whole class) in order to find out any relationships between trait and state WTC. Another objective of this study was to explore the aspects affecting WTC in learners' view. Questionnaires, class observations and interviews were utilized to collect data. Eight intermediate level students at an English language school in New Zealand took part in this study. The findings of the study revealed that no correlations existed between trait and state WTC. In addition, pair-group work were contexts, which increased learners' WTC rather than whole class interaction. Moreover, several factors affecting WTC behavior in class were proposed by the students: familiarity with topics, familiarity with speakers, group size, self-confidence, speakers' participation, cultural background and ways of communication. MacIntyre (2007) maintained that WTC is a dynamic process and referred to "the probability of initiating communication, given choice and opportunity" (p. 567). While a learner might feel motivated to speak, s/he might also feel restrained

with anxiety at any time. To start communication is up to the choice or decision of the speaker at specific time. Therefore, WTC was approached as a volitional act to choose to interact in L2. It was argued that the rate of WTC is likely to go up and down swiftly depending upon condition changes. Besides, it was suggested to use more adaptable methods to shed light on the changing process of starting or avoiding communication in L2 in a moment of opportunity.

As to more recent research, unlike most studies in which WTC was analyzed in face-to-face learning environment, Lee (2019) intended to explore the potential variables affecting WTC level of EFL learners in the extramural digital (ED) setting in Korea. L2 learning in ED setting was associated with learners' autonomous English learning initiative in digital, out-of-class and unstructured settings which were unrelated to a formal language teaching/learning program. In other words, in the ED context, learners' activities and performance were not structured and evaluated by teachers. WTC in ED context was considered to consist of both speaking and writing skills in digital activities with resources like digital games, social media (Facebook, Twitter), Web apps, video tutorials, YouTube, Skype...etc. 98 Korean students from three universities in an EFL setting participated in this qualitative study and semi-structured interviews were administered to them. Based on the findings, three main factors influencing learners' L2 WTC appeared in the ED context: contextual (familiarity with communities and speakers), socio-political (Korea's K-12 instruction) and individual (anxiety and self-confidence) variables. Moreover, the simultaneous interaction of the aforementioned variables was underlined in the course of communication in L2. This study was important due to its contribution to deeper understanding of WTC in a digital environment. Also, some valuable pedagogical suggestions were offered in order to increase learners' WTC in extramural digital settings which are very different from extracurricular digital and face to face learning settings.

There are also some studies carried out in Turkish EFL context on L2 WTC even though they are scarce. One of them is Bektaş Çetinkaya's (2005) study examining WTC with a model including linguistic, social-psychological, and communication variables in an EFL context in Turkey. In this mixed design study, 356 college students filled in a questionnaire and 15 of them attended the interviews. Structural equation model (SEM) was utilized to show the relations between the variables (speaking anxiety, personality, communication competence, motivation, and attitude toward international community). Results revealed that the students were moderately eager to speak in English. They were more willing to speak with friends (preferably foreign) in pairs or small groups rather than strangers. They thought that talking to Turkish friends or teachers just for practice was non-sense and thus they favored meaningful communication. Moreover, the students were found to be somewhat motivated to learn English and their main motives were earning more money with better job opportunities, being successful in their career and having a high social status to have a better life in the future. The students were also found to be slightly anxious while talking in English. They were found to be the most anxious when they were giving presentations and speaking in English among strangers and the least anxious when speaking with friends and acquaintances. Their anxiety was associated with their language incompetence. They also had positive attitudes toward the international community, were slightly extrovert and saw themselves as somewhat competent to talk in English. L2 self-confidence and attitudes toward the international community were found to be direct predictors of WTC. Motivation and personality (introversion/extroversion) were found to affect WTC indirectly via L2 self-confidence. It was also revealed that their personality was related to their attitudes toward the international community.

In 2015, Öz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz studied EFL learners' perceived WTC by analyzing the relationships among affective factors (ideal L2 self, integrativeness, motivation, instrumental

orientation and attitudes toward the learning situation), communication factors (self-perceived communication competence-SPCC and communication apprehension-CA) and L2 WTC with differences in gender. 134 learners majoring in EFL in a teacher education program participated in the study. Eight different scales were administered to them. Based on the findings, 21.6% of the participants had high WTC, 18.7% had high levels of CA and 13.4 % high SPCC. Female learners' scores were high in ideal L2 self and motivation; however, males had higher integrativeness, SPCC, WTC, instrumental orientations and attitudes towards learning situation. Furthermore, SPCC and CA were found to be strong precursors of WTC. Motivational and affective factors had bearings on WTC indirectly. Bergil (2016) carried out a study on 73 Turkish preparatory class learners' WTC levels related to their individual differences and speaking abilities. McCroskey's scale (1992) was used to test learners' WTC levels and demographic information such as being abroad, language level, speaking with foreign people, total period of studying and being introvert/extrovert was collected to analyze their relationship with learners' WTC. The data were analyzed from the point of both learners and instructors of speaking courses. According to the results of this study, the students were found to have weak and sufficient speaking skills, which was attributed to the activities in the curriculum and teachers' abilities to use materials. Students also had average WTC levels. Moreover, group discussion was favored by the learners, yet they were found to be unwilling to speak with strangers. In the interpersonal and friend contexts, it was suggested that extrovert students had more success in speaking than introverts. Finally, foreign language teachers were advised to benefit from various activities in terms of context like interpersonal, meetings, speaking in public, group discussion and types of receivers like stranger, friend and acquaintance.

In another study conducted by Bursalı and Öz (2017), the purpose was to explore the relations between L2 WTC and ideal L2 self in the classroom. The ideal L2 self was associated with "L2 user's beliefs, ideas or/and goals on his or her L2 usage" (p. 230). 56 English-major students at a private university took part in the study. Based on the findings, 32.1% of the students had high, 30.4% had moderate, and 37.4% had low L2 WTC. Besides, the results of ideal L2 self were found to be congruent with WTC results with 25% high, 35.7% moderate and 39.3% low levels. No significant difference between genders was detected in terms of WTC and ideal L2 self even though males' scores were slightly higher than females. It was also concluded that there were notably significant positive relations between ideal L2 self and WTC in the classroom. Finally, Başöz and Erten (2018) explored learners' perceived L2 WTC in and out of the classroom environment. They also investigated the difference between the scores of in-class and out-of-class WTC. The participants were 701 EFL learners at Faculty of Tourism at a state university. Data were collected through a scale. The results indicated that the learners' WTC levels were moderate both inside and outside the classroom. It was also concluded that their willingness to communicate in English outside the classroom was higher than their WTC levels inside the classroom.

3. Research Question

In the present study, the following research question is investigated:

1.To what extent do English language learners show willingness to communicate during pair or small group speaking activities?

It is hypothesized that learners' WTC levels in English will be high as the learners are at an English medium university and they are required to take their lessons completely in English in their departments.

4. Method

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In the present study, a quantitative approach was employed to investigate the participants' general WTC levels in communicative pair or small group activities in English lessons. Quantitative research best fits the studies when it is needed to explain why something occurs with generalizable and credible results. This study is also in consistent with quantitative type of research as it fulfils some conditions such as having measurable, observable and specific research questions; collecting statistical data from participants by using instruments with preset questions; using statistical analysis and taking an objective approach (Creswell, 2012).

4.1. Participants

The study was conducted on 88 preparatory school students at a state university in İzmir, Turkey (Izmir Institute of Technology) where the medium of instruction is completely English. Forty-five (51%) of them were female while forty-three (49%) of them were male. The mean age of the participants was 19.97 (SD=2.042, Minimum=18, Maximum=32). After the intensive language training at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL), they would start their departmental studies at the Faculty of Engineering (n=46, 53%), Science (n=29, 33%) and Architecture (n=12, 14%). (One student did not state their department.). Their native language was Turkish and they were learning EFL at the SFL. Regarding their proficiency level, they were Level 1 (elementary + pre-intermediate) students in different classes at the SFL including the students in the face-to-face (FF) and online (OL) groups. The learners in the FF group took 24 hours of face-to-face lessons a week in the Fall term of the 2019-2020 academic year. Those in the OL group took 24 hours of synchronous online lessons a week via Microsoft Teams in the Fall term of the 2020-2021 academic year. During the mentioned academic year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, like many schools around the world, the SFL adopted an online education model. Therefore, the students attended the lessons online from their homes by using the Microsoft Teams online platform. The lessons at the SFL are called Integrated Skills (IS) and the skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) are not separated. An academic year at SFL is divided into two terms: Fall term and Spring term. Each term lasts for about 15 or 16 weeks. The students at Level 1 study A2 (elementary) and A2+ (pre-intermediate) coursebooks in the fall term and B1 and B1+ coursebooks in the spring term. The participants in the present study were about to finish A2+ (pre-intermediate) coursebook when the data were collected.

4.2. Instrument and Data Collection Procedures

Pilot study: Before conducting the WTC in English questionnaire (Peng & Woodrow 2010, adapted from Weaver, 2005), a pilot study was administered to 20 randomly chosen Level 1 learners to evaluate the credibility of the questionnaire. A reliability analysis was performed in the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 28). The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) for the questionnaire was found to be .844 (Table 6), which is accepted as a desirable level and good reliability in Social Sciences. "A coefficient estimate of .70 or higher indicates good reliability" (Hair et al., 2006, as cited in Peng & Woodrow, 2010, p. 847).

Table 1. Reliability Statistics on the sample group

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	N	%
.844	10	20	100

The present study: The data were gathered from the participants (both FF and OL groups) in the last week of the Fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year through the questionnaire (WTC in English

scale, by Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The purpose of this questionnaire was to investigate Level 1 learners' general WTC levels in communicative pair or small group activities in English lessons. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms and the link was sent to the respective teachers to share with their students. The Google Form consisted of three sections: 1- a consent form, informing the participants about the study, voluntariness and confidentiality issues, 2- questions regarding participants' demographic information such as gender, age, and department, and 3- WTC in English scale items (Peng & Woodrow, 2010) (See Appendix A). The scale included 10 items regarding WTC in English in both meaning-focused (e.g., giving a speech in the classroom, doing a role-play in English) and form-focused (e.g., asking the meaning of a word, asking how to say a phrase) activities. Students answered the questions on a 6-point Likert scale. On this scale, 1 represented strongly disagree and 6 strongly agree. The items measured to what extent the students were willing to communicate in English in certain situations in lessons. Moreover, the questionnaire took learners approximately 5 or 10 minutes to complete. The learners were also provided with extra explanations about some items in the questionnaire by their teachers because those items included some phrases only related to face-to-face context. For example, in item 7. "I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English the meaning of an English word.", sitting next to me was only related to face-to-face context, so for that part this extra explanation was provided: ... my peer (sitting next to me in face-to-face education or I study with in breakout rooms/channels on Teams in online education). Likewise, in item 1. "I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant)." standing in front of the class was extended in this way: standing in front of the class in face-to-face education or in a way that everyone can hear/see in online education. Thus, a holistic context (including both face-to face and online) was intended to create to serve the purpose of the questionnaire.

Before collecting the data, the consent of the students was obtained to participate in the study. The first section of the questionnaire included significant information about the topic, instrument, procedures, voluntariness and confidentiality issues. It was made clear that the learners' participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an explanation. Moreover, this would not affect their future classes or grades. The students were guaranteed that their answers would be kept confidential and their names would not be used anywhere. To protect participant privacy, the data were collected anonymously.

5. Data Analysis

The scale items in Peng and Woodrow's (2010) study were in English, so they were translated into Turkish for learners to understand the questions better and to prevent misunderstandings. The original English versions of the scale items were also provided in the parenthesis. During the translation process, back-translation was used to ascertain the accuracy of the translations and an expert in the field of English Language Teaching checked them as well. The data were analyzed via the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 28) program. Then descriptive analyses were performed on the data. These procedures enabled the researchers to answer the RQ: "To what extent do English language learners show willingness to communicate during pair or small group speaking activities?"

6. Results

The table below illustrates the participants' categorizations according to WTC levels as high, moderate and low along with frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations:

Adres	Address
RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi	RumeliDE Journal of Language and Literature Studies
Osmanağa Mahallesi, Mürver Çiçeği Sokak, No:14/8	Osmanağa Mahallesi, Mürver Çiçeği Sokak, No:14/8
Kadıköy - İSTANBUL / TÜRKİYE 34714	Kadıköy - ISTANBUL / TURKEY 34714
e-posta: editor@rumelide.com	e-mail: editor@rumelide.com,
tel: +90 505 7958124, +90 216 773 0 616	phone: +90 505 7958124, +90 216 773 0 616

Table 2. Descriptive statistics: WTC in English

	Rank	F	%	Mean*	SD
WTC in English	High	34	38.6	5.05	1.195
	Moderate	46	52.3	3.62	1.272
	Low	8	9.1	1.90	.929

Note: *1.00-2.66: Low; 2.67-4.33: Moderate; 4.34-6.00: High.

As given in table 2, 38.6% ($f=34$, $M=5.05$, $SD=1.195$) of the participants had high, 52.3% ($f=46$, $M=3.62$, $SD=1.272$) of them had moderate and 9.1% ($f=8$, $M=1.90$, $SD=.929$) of them had low WTC levels. Thus, these results indicate that the majority of the participants had a moderate level of WTC in English. Descriptive statistics showing scale items for WTC in English is also provided below in table 3:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics: WTC in English including scale items

Item Description	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean*	SD
1. I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).	88	1	6	3.25	1.518
2. I am willing to give a short self-introduction without notes in English to the class.	88	1	6	3.99	1.497
3. I am willing to give a short speech in English to the class about my hometown with notes.	88	1	6	3.84	1.469
4. I am willing to translate a spoken utterance from Turkish into English in my group.	88	1	6	4.01	1.442
5. I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I didn't understand.	88	1	6	4.32	1.699
6. I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).	88	1	6	4.01	1.712
7. I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English the meaning of an English word.	88	1	6	4.33	1.566
8. I am willing to ask my group mates in English the meaning of word I do not know.	88	1	6	4.17	1.510
9. I am willing to ask my group mates in English how to pronounce a word in English.	88	1	6	4.17	1.683
10. I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English how to say an English phrase to express the thoughts in my mind.	88	1	6	4.09	1.443
Total WTC Score				4.01	1.553

Note: *1.00-2.66: Low; 2.67-4.33: Moderate; 4.34-6.00: High.

Table 3 reveals that the overall WTC in English level of all the participants ($n=88$) is moderate ($M=4.01$, $SD=1.553$). Moreover, even though all the mean scores for every item indicate a moderate level of WTC, the most willing situation is found to be “asking peers in English the meaning of an English word (item 7)” ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.566$) and the least willing situation is “doing a role-play (standing in front of the class

in face-to-face education or in a way that everyone can hear/see in online education) in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant) (item 1).” ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.518$). For the rest of the items, the results are close to one another.

7. Discussion

The results of the questionnaire, which was conducted to determine the participants' general WTC levels in communicative pair or small group activities in English lessons, indicated that all the study participants at IZTECH had a moderate ($M=4.01$, $SD=1.553$) level of WTC in English. This finding can be considered as unsatisfactory because the learners were at an English medium university and were required to take their lessons completely in English in their departments. Additionally, this result is consistent with those of Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2005); Öz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz (2015); Bergil (2016) and Başöz and Erten (2018) who also revealed a moderate level of WTC in their participants. However, it differs from the study conducted by Bursalı and Öz (2017), in which most of the students were found to have a low level of WTC in English.

Regarding the scale items, learners were found to be the most willing to ask peers in English the meaning of an English word (item 7) ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.566$) and the least willing to do a role-play (standing in front of the class in face-to-face education or in a way that everyone can hear/see in online education) in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant) (item 1) ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.518$). This result may be explained by feeling safe or not and being in or out of the comfort zone. Learners might have felt safe, relaxed and self-confident in their actions with their peers, but when it came to performing in front of a crowd, their comfort zone might have been broken and they might have felt insecure, anxious and stressed, which affected their willingness to communicate. In accordance with this result, a previous study by Cao and Philip (2006), which examined L2 WTC in three classroom settings (pair work, small group work and whole class) demonstrated that learners were more willing to communicate in pair and group work rather than whole class interaction.

8. Conclusion and Implications

The main goal of the current study was to determine the participants' general willingness to communicate (WTC) levels in communicative pair or small group activities in English lessons which were taught via different mediums like face-to-face or online. The results of this investigation showed that the participants of the study had a moderate level of WTC in English. This study also shed light on the most and the least willing situations in class.

The study has limitations. It can be adopted, modified or added in relation to the contexts it will be carried out. The participants in this study were Level 1 students; however, further studies can be conducted with other levels of participants. As this study was conducted at a state university, further studies can involve participants at a private university as well. Moreover, a comparison can be drawn in relation to state and private universities.

This study has several implications for researchers, institutions and language teachers. School administrators can provide time and support in order to increase learners' WTC levels in speaking activities. Extra-curricular activities like speaking clubs, movie clubs, discussion clubs and so on might be beneficial in this sense as learners may be more motivated to attend them. These activities may encourage learners to be more willing to speak in English. Finally, language teachers can have learners

do numerous speaking activities in pairs or groups. They can also integrate presentation or role-play type of tasks more often into class context in order to consolidate learners' self-confidence in front of a crowd as such skills will be highly significant in learners' social and business life in the future. As language teachers, creating friendly, intimate and stress-free environments in the class may increase learners' WTC levels in English. In this sense, engaging materials, activities and games can be helpful.

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Appendix A. WTC in English Scale (Peng & Woodrow, 2010)

No.	Item	WTC1	WTC2
A4	I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).	.933	
A9	I am willing to give a short self-introduction without notes in English to the class.	.830	
A3	I am willing to give a short speech in English to the class about my hometown with notes.	.752	
A10	I am willing to translate a spoken utterance from Chinese into English in my group.	.578	
A2	I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I didn't understand.	.435	
A1	I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).	.426	
A8	I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English the meaning of an English word.		.974
A7	I am willing to ask my group mates in English the meaning of word I do not know.		.954
A5	I am willing to ask my group mates in English how to pronounce a word in English.		.683
A6	I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English how to say an English phrase to express the thoughts in my mind.		.642

Note. Factor loadings lower than .30 are not included in this solution. WTC1 = WTC in English in meaning-focused activities; WTC2 = WTC in English in form-focused activities.