Exploring the Nexus of Factors Shaping EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate

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ABSTRACT

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In the context of EFL, WTC correlates with cultural identity, personality traits and the language ability of the learners. These factors are addressed in this research through the lens of the MacIntyre Heuristic Model of WTC, with regard to the Indonesian EFL learning environment. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study explores the moderation role of personality between contextual factors, cultural identity and communicative competence and WTC. The data were received through self-completed validated questionnaires from EFL learners from Muhammadiyah University of Makassar across faculties. The result of the study shows that cultural identity strongly gives an impact on the personality characteristics while at the same time high language proficiency negatively affects WTC although it is expected to have positive effect stressing on the role of anxiety. The study implies that, overall, these difficulties can be managed by encouraging appropriate classroom atmosphere and culturally relevant pedagogy. This research contributes to the understanding of WTC and showed that cultural and psychological aspects deserve further inclusion into the EFL curriculum in order to boost the learners' communicative competency.

KEYWORDS
communicative competence, language proficiency, willingness to communicate, EFL learning

1. Introduction

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has emerged as a central construct in the existing field of applied linguistics and language acquisition that offers valuable information to the potential and preparedness of learners in second language interaction. The concept was introduced by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and therefore focuses on the natural and situational inclination of individuals to communicate, should they have been allowed to. MacIntyre's Heuristic Model of WTC (1998) is one of the most integrative approaches, as it included psychological, linguistic, and communicative factors. This conceptual model can help to better understand all the factors influencing the person's ability to use the second language and communicate. Thus, much is still unknown about WTC, especially in the context of EFL learners in Indonesia, notwithstanding extensive West's and Kim's secondary research.

Adelifar et al. (2016) have reviewed these individual factors in prior research in detail; however, it has often been investigated independently from one another while their reciprocal dynamic relations have not been taken into consideration. For instance, a study has regressed WTC with personality characteristics such as extraversion or introversion. What has been noted is that comm (MacIntyre et al. 1998) inclination is higher in extraverts. However, the previous research lacks depth regarding the interactions between personality characteristics and secondary factors including classroom environment/culture since they greatly influence communication.

Likewise, interpersonal attributes of the classroom regarding specifically the dynamics between teachers and students, as well as among the learners themselves, has an influence in the development of WTC. Yashima (2002) noted that the learning environment impacts on the development of a global perspective, which results in an increase in WTC. Yet, with the great variability of classroom environments in different contexts of education for students in various continents, especially non-Western ones, it becomes possible to notice that these contextual factors are far from being comprehensively understood.

The impact of culture on WTC is especially significant when the society is collectivistic, wanting to maintain friendly relations and face other people, as in Indonesia. From the literature Peng and Woodrow (2010) made a study on, it is evident that the cultural identity should be considered while analyzing WTC. WTC is hypothesized to be lower among learners of collectivist culture because such learners are concerned about negative evaluation and have a high tendency towards following the trend. The third idea pertains to the cultural aspect, which often receives neglect in models developed in western environments, consequently, there is a need for the philosophical shift of existing models in line with the Indonesian EFL reality.

Also, fluency, another feature that incorporates use of language, meaning, and social cognition and thinking skills determines willingness to communicate. However, the relationship between communicative competence and WTC is not straight forward as MacIntyre et al. (1998) post that while enhancing the amount of linguistic competency, does not necessarily lead to the enhancement of WTC. This turning of results around may mean that other variables, including self-efficacy and perceived communicative competence could affect this relationship. It underlines the necessity of shifting 'the thinking mode' a step further when it comes to understanding of WTC.

Second language communication is one area that Research on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has dominated vastly in the past literature. MacIntyre, et al. (1998) proposed the Heuristic Model of WTC where the focus was on the three dimensions which includes, psychological, linguistic and contextual. The subsequent studies have examined the antecedents at personal level like personality characteristics and motivation. For example, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) reported that the learners with higher Self Confidence and lower Learner Anxiety preferred involving in communication. In the same vein, Yashima (2002) argued that the international posture defined as perceived readiness to communicate with people from other countries, will also raise WTC since both

motivation and communication apprehension are affected by it. These findings are nodding toward the fact that psychological factors play imperative role in learners' communication behavior.

Therefore, not only psychological characteristics but also context aspects were reported to influence WTC. In this regard, class settings, especially teacher's endorsement, and peers' relations contribute significantly to the construction of safety and inclusion to encourage communication (Dryden et al., 2021). Peng et al. (2016) also established that uphold of culture-sensitive teaching practices in the classroom to increase WTC as a way of respecting cultural collectivism in group-oriented cultures where learners are less likely to be acquire assertive practices in a classroom setting. However, whereas these studies are helpful in making those predictions, they appreciate cultural and contextual variables mostly as secondary to psychological traits, with no adequate consideration of their interactivity. However, most this has been researched in western cultures while little is known of Indonesian cultures which heavily inform interaction.

Similarly, what concerns WTC, it has been shown that there is no necessarily direct positive relationship between language skills and WTC. MacIntyre et al. (1998) found that WTC increases with language proficiency only when the learners' perceived communication competence and self-perceived speaking ability moderate the relationship. For instance, Pawlak et al. (2020) observed that in cases the advanced learners avoid communication when they consider the tasks practiced in classroom to be non-demanding or insignificant. This implies that WTC is not just an independent variable equal across learners and tasks, and that other variables, including task design, perceived relevance, as well as the learners' self- perceptions of their abilities need to be taken into consideration for enhancement of proficiency WTC relationship.

The present research aims at examining how cultural identity, personality, context and communication factor influence the importance of WTC among Indonesian EFL learners. To this end, within the context of MacIntyre's Heuristic Model, as a study, it aims at filling any gaps in the literature by considering the sociocultural and linguistic ecology of classrooms in Indonesia. This work seeks to fill these gaps by explicating the patterns of cultural identification, personality, context, and communicative competency in WTC using the MacIntyre's Heuristic Model.

2. Literature Review

Heuristics model as espoused by MacIntyre (2007) categorically supports the following components as influencing the WTC; beliefs, attitude and perception to communicative skills, motivation, and anxiety. Hitherto, this model has been a success in a number of unnatural L2 environments, and its implementation in EFL has been found to elicit the following factors for further research. Again, while using the second language, the L2 learners have to deal with the target language in true-life situations, EFL learners are mostly confined to classroom interactions without practice with native speakers or interaction in social realistic settings. As mentioned by Dörnyei (2009), the nature of the WTC used in EFL classrooms is different because learners interact only with the other students who speak the same native language and English is seen as a subject in school class rather than as communication medium. Given these contextual differences, this study focuses on variables particularly relevant to EFL learners: cultural, individual difference, language and communication factors as well as contextual factors. These categories and their sub-variables capture specificity of EFL environments and provide focused view on WTC in these contexts.

2.1 Contextual Factors

This study found contextual factors central in influencing the EFL learners' motivation, and hence their WTC in English. When students have positive attitudes towards teachers, when instructional activities are salient and interactive, learners' self-confidence in using English increases (Liu and Jackson 2008, MacIntyre 2007). Extraoral activities that require the use of natural language and/or other forms of communication also compel learners into more spirited learning of English (Douglas Fir Group 2016). Learner beliefs about their classroom environment: perceptions regarding facilitative conditions of classrooms, instructional arrangements, and peer group influences are amongst the most important predictors of learners' attitudes toward English communication as noted by MacIntyre (2007) as well as Liu and Jackson (2008). Co-operative learning motives students to participate in communicative activities when teachers create constructive contexts and peers offer both positive feedback and encouragement. All these aspects not only improve self-confidence among the learners. But also makes learning other aspects of the language valuable.

2.2 Cultural Factors

The study revealed that learners' cultural identity exerted a powerful impact on EFL learners' communication practices and use of English. Learners' cultural attitudes affect their self-presentation, vocal interactions and their general communication willingness in English (Yashima 2002). Thus, to improve WTC in the classroom practice, cultural sensitivity should be valued in teaching and learning process all learners should have a free opportunity to develop their communication skills. Cultural identity plays the role of the filter through which the validity of stereotypes, norms and traditions for shaping learner's perception and behavior in second language acquisition is perceived (Yashima 2002). Cultural mediation research emphasizes these aspects to influence learners' self-perceived efficacy and preparedness to communicate, defining their communicative potentialities (Kim and Cha 2017). Many learners come from culturally diverse backgrounds and educators must embrace cultural diversity since this offers support for WTC and enhances learner language learning environment.

2.3 Personality Factors

Willingness to Communicate in EFL context is a function of personality factors such as self-esteem, The motivation and self-anxiety. Yashima et al. (2018) underlined that learners' attitudes toward second language are crucial for rehearsing and participating in communicative practices perceiving language competence, control, and success foster readiness to communicate as do feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness. Measures like constructive feedback, gradual speaking activities, and purposes to supply assertiveness of interaction that could help minimize anxiety (Dewaele and Dewaele 2017). Perceived competence and intrinsic motivation are significant for learners to engage in languages learning and acquisition (Dewaele and Dewaele 2017, Yashima et al. 2018). On the other hand, fear in a classroom and lack of confidence prevent learner from giving their best, thus slowing language acquisition process. On the other hand, there is fear in the classroom and lack of self-confidence demeans individuals' involvement in the classroom thus slowing down language learning. Whenever learners are given teacher assistance and learn to reduce examination stress, they use verbal language more and interact with fellow learners in English fluently and confidently.

2.4 Language Competence

Previous research establishes language ability as the key determinant of EFL learners' communication apprehension and their WTC in English. According to MacIntyre (2007) for instance, enhanced actual maturation tends to decrease communicative apprehension but can at times make the learner less willing to participate in spoken interactions. This has a bearing on learner proficiency where teacher should match material to their achievements and integrate functions of language use in and outside classroom (Tremblay and Gardner 1995). That is why proficiency assessments such as TOEFL expose the learners' readiness for the certain communicative tasks and ensure clear and autonomic interactions. If educational practices are modified according to linguistic variability, then and only then learners can be effectively enabled to develop effective use of English in actual contexts.

2.5 Communicative Competence

Essential for increasing EFL learners' communicative effectiveness in English, Communicative Competence consists of their linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic elements (Canale and Swain 1980). This mastery allows learners to take on different social contexts, deal with cultural factors, and reach interactional goals. Linguistic competence is about the knowledge about grammar, about vocabulary, and about syntax in order to use the language exactly as you want; whereas pragmatic competence refers to the way in which you use the language in particular places and circumstances. Learners who have mastered sociolinguistic competence learn to adapt to different social settings influenced by culture on language use. An integration of these competencies into teaching practice provides learners with the necessary skills and strategies needed for real world communication in English speaking environments, thus increasing their Readiness and Willingness to communicate (WTC) in English speaking environments. An approach encompassing this makes learners ready for effective and confident communicative demands.

2.6 Research Questions

1. How do personality characteristics, contextual elements, cultural identity, communicative competence, and language proficiency individually influence EFL learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC)?
2. In what ways do personality characteristics mediate the relationships between contextual elements, communicative competence, language proficiency, and EFL learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC)?

2.7 Framework

This study's theoretical framework is anchored in McIntyre's Heuristic Model of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which highlights the interplay between individual traits, contextual elements, and communicative competence in shaping communication behaviors. Integrating McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) WTC theory on personality traits like self-confidence and anxiety, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) on the impact of classroom and peer influences, Hofstede's (1984) Cultural Dimensions Theory on cultural identity, and Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, this framework examines how these factors, along with language proficiency per Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, interact to influence WTC. It posits that personality characteristics mediate these relationships, in line with Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation theory. Using

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study aims to unravel these complex interactions to better understand how various factors collectively affect EFL learners' WTC.

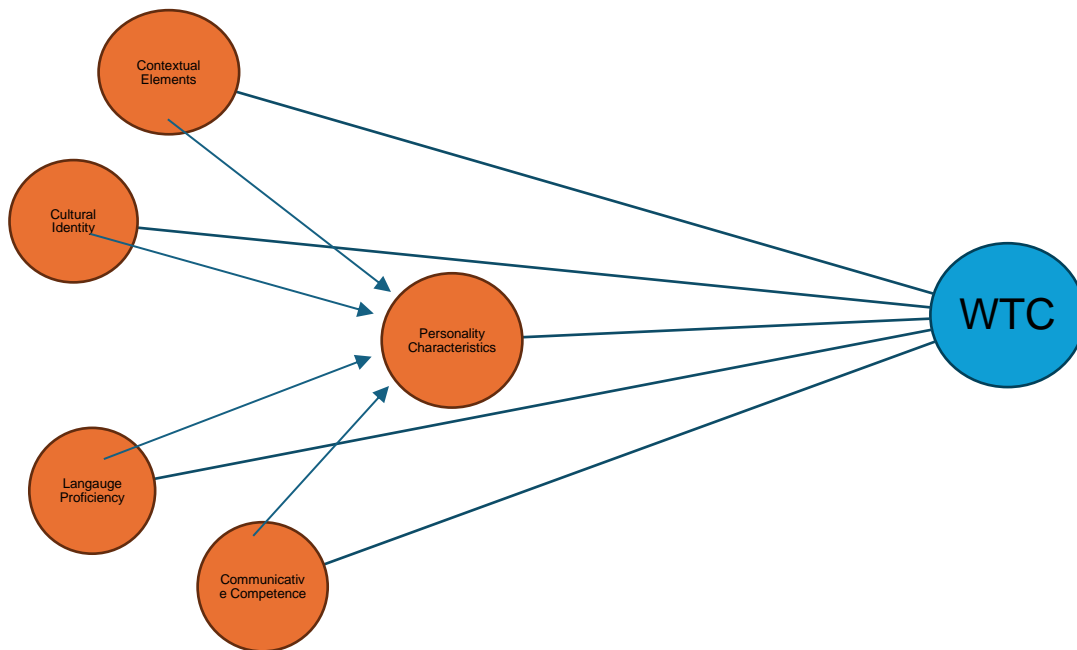Below We illustrate our SEM Initial model:

Figure 1. Initial Model

2.8 Hypothesis

In exploring the factors influencing Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among EFL learners, this study posits a series of hypotheses derived from established theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

Table 1. Hypothesis

H_1	Personality Characteristics have a significant effect on WTC
H_2	Contextual Elements have a significant effect on WTC
H_3	Cultural Identity has a significant effect on WTC
H_4	Communicative Competence has a significant effect on WTC
H_5	Language Proficiency has a significant effect on WTC
H_6	Contextual Elements have a significant effect on WTC with Personality Characteristics as an intervening variable
H_7	Communicative Competence has a significant effect on WTC with Personality Characteristics as an intervening variable
H_8	Language Proficiency has a significant effect on WTC with Personality Characteristics as an intervening variable

3. Methodology

The present study employs a quantitative research methodology that utilizes structural equation modeling (SEM) as a method. We choose SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) because to its ability to account for several

relationships and measurement errors simultaneously. This feature will be ideal for investigating the connections between observable and latent variables inside our hypothesis. The sample consists of students who are required to enroll in English language courses at the University of Muhammadiyah Makassar. This collective comprises students from several academic disciplines, including arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, health sciences, and economics.

3.1 Sampling Method

The research used a stratified random sampling procedure in choosing the respondents. The design of the program was to ensure there would be fair representation from different student populations at the University of Muhammadiyah Makassar. Afterwards, random samples were selected from the subgroups to ensure that each group was proportionately represented in the final sample. The participants who fulfilled the following criteria were open to participation from all the respondents who participated in the current study. This includes, they are currently registered for required English language classes and voluntary. Before agreeing to participate in the study, all care was taken that clear explanations about the purpose of the study, activities that would be performed by them, and the rights of the subjects have been duly explained. The briefing informed them that they could withdraw from participation in the research at any given moment without having to feel the negative impacts on their academic status or personal information.

3.2 Data Collection

Structured questionnaires were administered in the course of the study in order to gather relevant information from the participants. As for the questionnaire, when targeting the Contextual Elements, the overall guideline was distilled from the principles of educational psychology and foreign language learning and acquisition, largely compliing with MacIntyre's Heuristics model (2007). This model pays attention to the quality of classroom environment and social context in relation to learners' motivation and self-efficacy of using English. Cultural Identity was measured on the basis of questions taken from the perspective of cultural identity theory formulated by Yashima (2002) where the views of the participants in terms of culture and norms in language learning contexts were taken into consideration. Personality Characteristics were assessed by questions based on social-cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura and Cervone 1986) and self-motivation theory of L2 learning (Dörnyei 2009). These questions sought to elicit information that would help establish participant's perceived competence, classroom anxiety, motivation level, and self-confidence. Language Proficiency assessment is based on the quantitative data which involve TOEFL scores, indicating participants' language skills and their preparedness to communicate in English (Tremblay and Gardner 1995). This measurement approach was derived from language proficiency theory that clearly states that the proficiency level the learner boasts of has a strong positive correlation with the learner's communicative ability and the level of confidence he/she has in using the language in actual scenarios. To assess the Construct of Communicative Competence the participants were posed questions based on Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Competence framework which comprises the Linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic component of language necessary for efficient communication in a second language.

3.3 Validation Procedures

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to validate the questionnaire's structure by analyzing correlations among variables. Using statistical software, the study identified and rotated factors to clarify underlying constructs such as contextual elements, cultural identity, personality characteristics, language proficiency, and communicative competence. Furthermore, Reliability Analysis utilized Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of constructs within the questionnaire. A threshold exceeding 0.70 was set as indicative of robust reliability, ensuring that the measured variables consistently reflected participants' responses across different questionnaire items (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994).

3.4 Reliability and Validity Analysis for the Constructs

Table 2. Foreign Language Anxiety Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in my foreign language class.	0.384	0.651
I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	0.384	0.583
I tremble when I know I will be called on in language class.	0.384	0.681
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in class.	0.384	0.621
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	0.384	0.490

The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale shows moderate reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.384. Most items exhibit acceptable item-total correlations (>0.3), indicating reasonable validity.

Table 3. Self-confidence Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
I feel confident expressing my ideas in English.	0.794	0.612
I believe I can communicate effectively in English.	0.794	0.678
I am self-assured when speaking with English speakers.	0.794	0.702
I feel comfortable engaging in English conversations.	0.794	0.745
I have the confidence to initiate English conversations.	0.794	0.715

The Self-confidence Scale demonstrates strong reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.794. All items have strong item-total correlations (>0.6), confirming their validity and alignment with the construct. No revisions are necessary for this scale.

Table 4. Motivation Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
I am motivated to improve my English language skills.	0.852	0.689
I am eager to participate actively in English language activities.	0.852	0.731
I am determined to enhance my English communication abilities.	0.852	0.770
I find joy in exploring various aspects of the English language.	0.852	0.743
I am enthusiastic about discovering new English vocabulary.	0.852	0.781

The Motivation Scale exhibits excellent reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.852. Each item has a high item-total correlation (>0.6), indicating strong validity. This scale effectively measures learners' motivation to enhance their English proficiency.

Table 5. Perceived Competence Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
I feel I am able to communicate effectively in English.	0.813	0.709
I believe I have good English language skills.	0.813	0.688
I am confident in my ability to understand and be understood.	0.813	0.732
I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts in English.	0.813	0.746
I have the ability to express my ideas clearly in English.	0.813	0.725

The Perceived Competence Scale has strong reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.813. All items demonstrate high item-total correlations, confirming their strong validity and alignment with the construct.

Table 6. Classroom Environment Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
The English language classroom is a friendly and welcoming place.	0.725	0.543
My teacher encourages open communication in English.	0.725	0.578
The classroom activities are enjoyable and interactive.	0.725	0.610
I feel comfortable speaking English in class.	0.725	0.498
The teacher fosters a positive learning environment.	0.725	0.556

The Classroom Environment Scale shows good reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.725. All items have item-total correlations >0.4, demonstrating satisfactory validity. The scale is consistent in assessing the classroom environment's supportiveness.

Table 7. WTC Scale

Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Item-Total Correlation
I feel comfortable speaking English in class.	0.810	0.724
I am willing to participate in English conversations with my peers.	0.810	0.710
I enjoy practicing my English speaking skills.	0.810	0.732
I am confident in my ability to communicate in English.	0.810	0.758
I actively seek opportunities to speak English outside of the classroom.	0.810	0.735

The WTC Scale exhibits excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.810, indicating strong internal consistency. Each item demonstrates high item-total correlations (>0.7), confirming the validity of the items in measuring willingness to communicate. This scale is well-constructed and effectively captures learners' willingness to engage in English communication both inside and outside the classroom.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study, SMRTPLS was in use during an application of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to quantify the data acquired from the questionnaires. The data analysis was two-pronged: the measurement model tested the structure and constructs of the data, while another structural model tested the hypothesized relationships which should exist among the different variables. For each measure of fitness, we use a variety in the model of tests, such as Chi-Square Test, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) along with Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). Goodness of fit indices is very critical in the determination of the degree to which the suggested model fits the observed data; hence, dependability is ensured in the results.

4. Results

The loading factors serve as indications for assessing the degree of alignment between the question items and the recommended values. Hence, the validity testing technique guarantees that the selected indicators are appropriate and dependable for assessing the variables under investigation in this study.
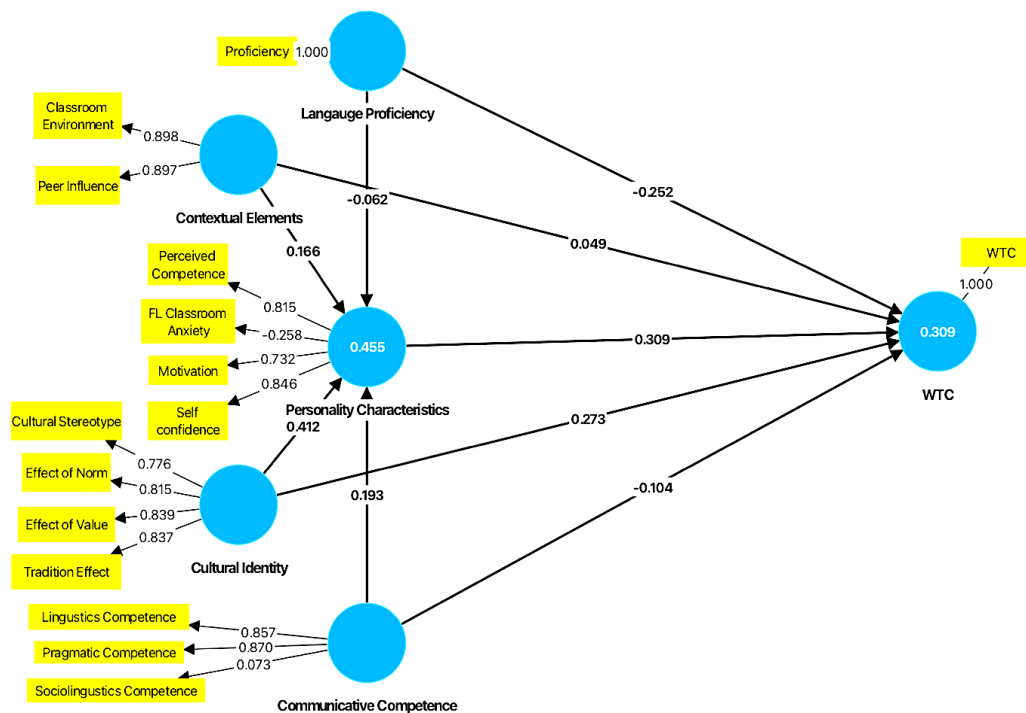

Figure 2. Iterative Analysis Model (Phase 1)

A loading factor approaching 1.0 indicates a high level of validity. We excluded certain items, such as FL Classroom Anxiety, from the test due to their inadequate validity, as shown by negative loadings. This action was taken in order to enhance the precision of the measurement. The model demonstrates how the earliest stages of enhancing an instrument may successfully include the many elements that impact learners' communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings.

In the first phase of the SEM analysis, the correlation matrix was used to identify significant relationships between variables. Variables with strong correlations were retained, while those with weak or non-significant correlations were eliminated. This process ensured that only meaningful variables, with substantial inter-variable connections, were included for further analysis.

Table 8. Loading Factor Iterative 1 (Phase 1)

	Communicative Competence	Contextual Elements	Cultural Identity	Language Proficiency	Personality Characteristics	WTC	Description
Classroom Environment		0.898					Valid
Cultural Stereotype			0.776				Valid
Effect of Norm			0.815				Valid
Effect of Value			0.839				Valid
Linguistics Competence	0.857						Valid
Motivation					0.732		Valid
Peer Influence		0.897					Valid
Perceived Competence					0.815		Valid
Pragmatic Competence	0.870						Valid
Proficiency				1.000			Valid
Self confidence					0.846		Valid
Sociolinguistics Competence	0.073						Drop
Tradition Effect			0.837				Valid
WTC						1.000	Valid
FL Classroom Anxiety					-0.258		Drop
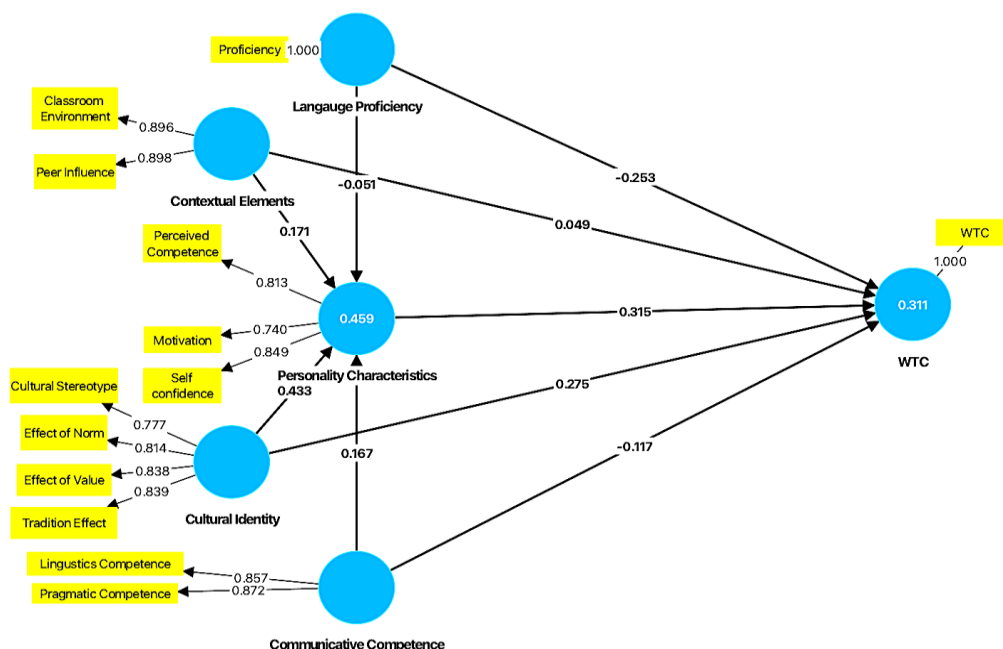
Figure 3. Revised Model Phase 2

In the Stage_2 Model, particularly in Figure 4 or the Outer Loadings output, it is important to observe that there are no values that fall below the threshold of 0.5. Presently, the Stage_2 Model has garnered acclaim for its

remarkable precision as a prognostic model. We must engage in more dialogue in future analyses to enable a seamless advancement of our inquiry.

Table 9. Loading Factor Iterative 2 on Revised Version

	Communicative Competence	Contextual Elements	Cultural Identity	Language Proficiency	Personality Characteristics	WTC	Description
Classroom Environment		0.896					Valid
Cultural Stereotype			0.777				Valid
Effect of Norm			0.814				Valid
Effect of Value			0.838				Valid
Linguistics Competence	0.857						Valid
Motivation					0.740		Valid
Peer Influence		0.898					Valid
Perceived Competence					0.813		Valid
Pragmatic Competence	0.872						Valid
Proficiency				1.000			Valid
Self confidence					0.849		Valid
Tradition Effect			0.839				Valid
WTC						1.000	Valid

In the second phase of the SEM analysis, after eliminating two insignificant variables, the refined correlation matrix reveals the relationships among the remaining variables, all marked as valid. Key observations include several strong positive correlations: 0.896, 0.777, 0.857, and 0.813, indicating that these variables significantly increase together. Additionally, correlations of 0.740 and 0.549 show moderate positive relationships, which are still significant and contribute to the robustness of the model. The elimination of weaker variables in the first phase has enhanced the clarity and strength of these correlations, ensuring that the SEM model is built on significant and meaningful relationships. This refined focus improves the model's explanatory and predictive power, making it more reliable for drawing accurate conclusions.

Table 10. Reliability Test on revised version

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Communicative Competence	0.662	0.697	0.744
Contextual Elements	0.758	0.851	0.799
Cultural Identity	0.834	0.857	0.665
Personality Characteristics	0.721	0.727	0.641

The reliability analysis of the constructs shows that Contextual Elements, Cultural Identity, and Personality Characteristics exhibit strong convergent validity, as indicated by their Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which are well above the recommended threshold. This suggests that these constructs are effectively capturing the variance in their respective latent variables. Communicative Competence, while still demonstrating acceptable convergent validity with an AVE value above the threshold, shows moderate reliability and internal consistency. Overall, the constructs exhibit good convergent validity, with Communicative Competence potentially needing further refinement to enhance its internal consistency.

Table 11. Path Coefficient

	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Communicative Competence -> Personality Characteristics	0.167	0.160	0.117	1.428	0.153
Communicative Competence -> WTC	-0.117	-0.112	0.140	0.834	0.405
Contextual Elements -> Personality Characteristics	0.171	0.173	0.113	1.516	0.130
Contextual Elements -> WTC	0.049	0.050	0.121	0.402	0.688
Cultural Identity -> Personality Characteristics	0.433	0.442	0.119	3.650	0.000
Cultural Identity -> WTC	0.275	0.287	0.171	1.607	0.108
Language Proficiency -> Personality Characteristics	-0.051	-0.049	0.092	0.561	0.575
Language Proficiency -> WTC	-0.253	-0.243	0.105	2.417	0.016
Personality Characteristics -> WTC	0.315	0.304	0.135	2.336	0.020

The results indicate ambivalent patterns for interconnections of the main research variables. Self-rating on Communicative Competence yields limited impact analysis of both Personality Characteristics and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) where it only records minimal and statistically nonsignificant coefficients. Likewise, Contextual Elements do not have a statistically significant effect on Personality Characteristics and WTC. On the other hand, Cultural Identity variable shows a very high and significant positive correlation with the Personality Characteristics variable but not with WTC. These results present Cultural Identity as an essential factor determining Personality Characteristics while suggesting that its impact on WTC is minimal.

Table 12. Hypothesis Testing

	Hypothesis	Test Results
H$_1$	Personality Characteristics Affect WTC	Supported (P < 0.05)
H$_2$	Contextual Elements Affect WTC	Not Supported (P > 0.05)
H$_3$	Cultural Identity Affect WTC	Not Supported (P > 0.05)
H$_4$	Communicative Competence Affect WTC	Not Supported (P > 0.05)
H$_5$	Language Proficiency Affect WTC	Supported (P < 0.05)
H$_6$	Contextual Elements Affect WTC with Personality Characteristics as intervening variable	Since the direct effect of Contextual Elements on Personality Characteristics (T statistics: 1.516, P values: 0.130) is not significant, the indirect effect via Personality Characteristics is not supported.
H$_7$	Communicative Competence Affect WTC with Personality Characteristics as intervening variable	Since the direct effect of Communicative Competence on Personality Characteristics (T statistics: 1.428, P values: 0.153) is not significant, the indirect effect via Personality Characteristics is not supported.
H$_8$	Language Proficiency Affect WTC with Personality Characteristics as intervening variable	Since the direct effect of Language Proficiency on Personality Characteristics (T statistics: 0.561, P values: 0.575) is not significant, the indirect effect via Personality Characteristics is not supported.

WTC is seen to have a large but contrary to expectation negative relationship with Language Proficiency. Though, Personality Characteristics is not heavily impacted from either of the states. Finally, through the analysis of hypothesized relationships, Personality Characteristics are pointed out to have a significant and positive impact on WTC, therefore underscore the need for organizations to promote skills that encourage communication. In general, these results highlight the importance of the two variables, namely Cultural Identity and Personality Characteristics in determining the results while the negative association between Language Proficiency and WTC

deserves further future research examination. The other constructs, such as Communicative Competence and Contextual Elements seem to be used less in these dynamics.

5. Discussion

5.1 Influence of Key Factors on EFL Learners' WTC

In order to understand what the combination of individual traits is, classroom dynamics, and cultural influences that will result in an EFL learner's willingness to communicate (WTC) we must first understand what drives such willingness. However, this study points out that this readiness to communicate are shaped by the interaction of personality characteristics, contextual elements, Cultural Identity, communicative competence and language proficiency. Things like confidence, motivation and anxiety are critical. Confidents spur inspection and seed the drive to go about, however, despair can be a black cast occasionally overwhelming how well you try (Dewaele and Dewaele 2017, MacIntyre et al. 1998). Further contributing to these effects are classroom factors when the combination of teacher support, peer interactions and authentic learning tasks foster or weaken communication (Liu and Jackson 2008).

Notably, the ability found by many cultures to develop communicative behaviours and willingness to engage in target language is influenced by their cultural identity. Learners' perception of language use and self-consciousness in communicative interaction are influenced by norms, values and traditions (Yashima 2002). The provision of inclusivity, motivation and validation of identities facilitates inclusion of culturally sensitive practises in language instruction (Gay 2018, Norton 2013). These practises not only take away barriers to communication but also put language learning into the context of what learners live through; for example, their WTC and performance has been shown to increase (Ardasheva et al. 2012, Deardorff 2020). By neglecting cultural identity, however, the risk is that learners, and especially learners from collectivist cultures (Hofstede 1984, Yashima 2002) may begin to feel alienated from the classroom if they are unwilling to assertively participate in classroom discussions in order to maintain group harmony.

Further complexities are found in the interplay between communicative competence, language proficiency and WTC. Canale and Swain (1980) provides a model on how to develop learners' competency in linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic areas to enable the learner to equip the capacity for competent communication in environments that provide diversity. The relationship between proficiency and WTC, though, was not straightforward. However, contrary to earlier assumptions that withdrawal originates from anxiety or fear of failure (MacIntyre 2007), advanced learners disengage due to a sense that discussions they feel do not stretch their skills are of little value. Advantaged learners may be limited in opportunities for further skill development in mixed proficiency classrooms because engaging peers with lower levels of proficiency will not seem so intellectually stimulating.

This implies that more varied instructional strategies are needed to accommodate such competency ranges within the classroom. Based on the belief that tasks should be tailored to meet all learners' developmental needs, Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) discuss this. For more advanced learners, debates, problem solving, and project-based learning tasks which require student engagement with their critical thinking are potential sources of intellectual stimulation and development of communicative competence. Both peer mentoring and exposure to higher level language use via peer mentoring can also be very valuable as a means for advanced learners to hone their skills by teaching or via less proficient learners' exposure to the higher-level language use (Khajavy et al. 2016, Taguchi 2014).

Secondly, structured groupings of student based on proficiency of specific activities can lead to meaningful engagement for all the learners (Renandya and Farrell 2011). Individualised feedback and opportunities for advanced learners to take leadership roles in communicating through task can motivate and encourage participation by the learners. These strategies fill the gap between proficiency and engagement making this a more equitable and effective learning environment. This relationship with culture involved the trick word that educators need to learn, the word 'adapting,' a departure from the teaching models which focus on the static. Educators will do well to move away from this and embrace adaptation in the form of inclusion of culture identity, emotional readiness and proficiency level in their classrooms. The importance of differentiated instruction lies in recognising that most advanced learners disengage when their developmental needs are not met, not because they are anxious or uninterested.

5.2 Mediating Role of Personality Characteristics

Personality characteristics, a component usually referred to as psychological scaffolding of communication, have a dual role in the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) of EFL learners. Besides being independent influencers, they are also mediators, the ways in which contextual elements, communicative competence and language proficiency translate into communicative action. For example, confidence and motivation do enable the connexion between technical skills and their actual use. However, anxiety always disrupts this process and erects an invisible barrier which prevents the learner from coming along. The research emphasises that a set of strategies, effective in alleviating anxiety and creating appropriate environments for communication, such as constructive feedback and mindfulness practises, were found to be effective (Gregersen et al. 2014, Mercer and Dörnyei 2020). Because these strategies reframe the classroom as a collaborative space in which learners feel safe to take risks and engage actively without fear of judgement, learners and the agents of this education become deeply engaged.

Nevertheless, cultural identity shapes this dynamic, often the assumption of cultural identity complicates this dynamic further in that collectivist cultures privilege restoring group harmony above individual assertiveness. Communication in these contexts is deeply linked to social, cultural, and learnner expectations which can interfere with WTC unless recognised and resolved (Norton 2013, Yashama 2002). If educators establish a culturally inclusive environment in which learners' identities are recognised as much as they are celebrated, barriers will begin to crumble, and learners can be fully engaged. Such environments also assist learners' intrinsic motivation, to sustain effective use of language proficiency as a tool of communication (Ardasheva et al. 2012, Deardorff 2020). Even those with the most technically savvy learners will be unable to make real world interactions go well if they lack cultural sensitivity.

This structure equips the student with language proficiency, without which no communication can validly occur, but the emotional and motivational dimensions to which these skills are animated turn language proficiency into communicative skills. Learners with high confidence and the intrinsic motivation to learn about foreign cultures and ways of life also are more likely to translate their proficiency into active participation in WTC compared to learners who lack self-doubt and the motivation to learn about how others world live, even if they have high technical ability (Khajavy et al. 2016). The use of immersion programmes and task-based learning in teaching strategies have been recognised as tools for enhancing both proficiency and communicative readiness (Renandya and Farrell 2011, Taguchi 2014) as learners have a chance to practise their skills in practical contexts in order to grow in confidence. In these approaches, learners are expected to negotiate real language needs while, at the same time, supporting technical skill and emotional robustness.

These are big implications. Unlike language acquisition, language learning is not a linear process by which we acquire grammar, then vocabulary, then sentence structure. Between how personality traits mediate how learners internalise and express what they learn in different contexts is the pivot. This serves to demonstrate that there is an urgent need for teaching techniques that deal with not only acquiring technical language, but also on emotional and cultural aspects of learning. This holistic approach is adopted by educators who combine technical instruction with hints that nurture confidence, deflate anxieties, and affirm cultural identities, drawing learners into classrooms where they are prepared for tests, but other ways than that.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contrast with the traditional assumption that higher language proficiency will increase learners Willingness to Communicate (WTC). What we instead observe is the decline in WTC among more proficient learners is complex, a function of socio-cultural and psychological factors. Indonesian high context learners are, however, apprenticed in highly proficient learning communities that create additional, societal-based barriers in order to validate face saving and group harmony. It discourages open participation in communicative activities because these cultural expectations if perceived as their peers' competence to be below theirs yields a less meaningful interaction for skill development. However, this insight goes against traditional framework such as MacIntyre's (1998) Heuristic Model that puts too little emphasis on the social environment in shaping the communication behaviour.

While personality characteristics are normally associated with WTC, cultural dimensions are presented as existing in a complex interplay with personality characteristics. One example of how this plays out is that extraversion—that deems expression (i.e., assertive behaviour) important—may not come across so strongly in collectivist settings because expressing oneself too many risks upsetting the group (Ding et al. 2022). The importance of this interplay requires individualised, psychological and cultural oriented pedagogical strategies as regards the psychological traits of the learners. Or, taking advanced learners and giving them higher order tasks or have advanced learners mentor others in peer driven activities (Khajavy et al. 2024) address advanced learners needs without alienating their classmates that cannot keep up. They promote the use of advanced learners' skills in sensible and collaborative way at the same time as they provide environments for collaborative learning.

Traditional practice of teaching which places special emphasis on grammatical accuracy and correctness make matters worse for this dynamic. Such approaches deliver basic skills, yet there is a risk that they inadvertently perpetuate learners' fear of getting things wrong, most especially the higher proficiency levels. Gregersen et al. (2021) suggest communicative focused strategies, such as interactive peer activities, structured feedback, and opportunities for real world language use, should reduce the anxiety experienced in the context of learning a second language. Furthermore, culturally relevant materials integrated within instruction beyond mere linguistic competence, provide validation for cultural identities to improve motivation and engagement (Dimitrov and Deardorff 2023).

5.4 Future Research Directions

One of the unique findings of the paper is that EFL learners who have proficiencies similar to those in comparable studies also have WTC scores that deviate significantly from middle class expectancy. Unlike second language (L2) learners, the context of the EFL learners' operation is often restricted to academic or formal settings, making the connexion between proficiency and communication even more muddled. Future research should

examine the impact of changes in proficiency levels on WTC over time in culturally specific EFL contexts, where social norms and expectations of attainment, such as seen in the context of a collective culture might suppress open participation even when high proficiency is present. (i) Study of mediators such as perceived communicative competence, self-efficacy could help explain how confidence plays a role in making the learners willing to engage with the course.

However, EFL learners' communication behaviour is to a much lesser extent, yet, directly determined by cultural identity. Future research might address what will have consequences in terms of WTC, for example collectivism versus individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. With this, cultural frameworks create learners' perceptions of communicative norms and the degree of readiness to participate, which explains why culturally adaptive teaching approaches need to be developed. For example, validation of the learner's identity and reduction of anxiety and the motivation for learning are seen in integration of culturally relevant materials and praxis in instruction.

In order to increase WTC effectively, efforts need to target cultural and psychological factors. There is evidence that mindfulness-based practises, tailored learning environments and culturally sensitive teaching practises reduce anxiety and increase communicative confidence. These approaches used in EFL teaching require to be validated empirically as research. Future studies will benefit from addressing the specific conundrums of EFL contexts in ways that create more inclusive, successful language acquisition models in which learners actively engage in English communication within culturally diverse settings.

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses cultural identity, personality characteristics, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' communicative competence to argue that all these areas interrelate. Through structural equations modeling (SEM), it was found that Cultural Stereotype, Effect of Norm, Tradition Effect, self-confidence, motivation and language proficiency were identified to be key determinants of learners' WTC in English. From the above stated research studies, it is evident that to make headway on the complex and multifaceted issue of introducing the second language, we need to take well-coordinated efforts, which imply the use of all these factors at once rather than considering them in isolation. Cultural affordances were finally regarded as the key element of motivation and self-esteem affecting the communicative competence of the learner when narratives depicted the culture in the best possible way. This implies that culturally appropriate pedagogy has the potential of affecting learners' participation and achievement in EFL settings. Thus, by integrating the appropriate cultural contents and tasks, it is possible to make learning not only more interesting and effective for students, but also closer to their cultural experiences.

The student's personality, particularly self- confidence and motivation, were identified to be vital for Communication efficiency. This study provides evidence for the proposition that the effectiveness of the learning environment in creating a positive and confidence building learning climate has a positive lift on the learners' communicative mentality. Use of techniques like positive reinforcement, a constructive approach and learning through group work are crucial in the development of self-confidence and eradication of anxiety. Language proficiency was also demonstrated to have a direct positive influence over communicative competence. Some identified strategies were suggested as focused, including specific intensive language acquisition and language immersion programs, which were singled out as helpful for the improvement of the language and, therefore,

communicative proficiency. Such strategies offer actual chances for the learners to develop linguistic skills within realistic situations.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Primary