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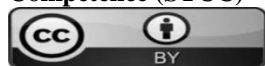
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## Investigating the Correlation Between Iraqi EFL Secondary School Students' Willingness to Communicate and Their Writing Performance

### A B S T R A C T

Due to the significance of foreign language learning and its crucial role in fostering meaningful and effective communication, contemporary language learning pedagogy places considerable emphasis on learners' willingness to communicate within foreign language classes, viewing it as a key indicator of their engagement and language acquisition. Therefore, this research aims to explore the correlation between the Iraqi EFL secondary school students' willingness to communicate and their writing performance. To fulfil the aims of the study, a sample of (100) female fourth-grade students was chosen randomly from an Iraqi secondary school, during the academic year 2024/2025. To collect and analyze data, two instruments were employed: a questionnaire adopted from Weaver (2005) and writing performance test. The results achieved indicate that Iraqi EFL secondary students show a greater willingness to communicate when working on writing tasks.

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"استقصاء العلاقة بين رغبة طلبة المدارس الثانوية العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة اجنبية في التواصل وأدائهم في مهارة الكتابة"

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المستخلص:

نظراً للأهمية البالغة لتعلم اللغة الأجنبية ودورها في تعزيز التواصل الفعال والهادف، تولي منهجيات تعليم اللغات المعاصرة اهتماماً متزايداً برغبة المتعلمين في التواصل داخل صفوف اللغة الأجنبية. وعليه، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف فيما إذا كانت الرغبة في التواصل لدى طلبة الصف الرابع الاعدادي العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية تؤثر على أدائهم في مهارة الكتابة. ولتحقيق اهداف الدراسة، تم اختيار عينة عشوائية مكونة من (100) طالبة من الصف الرابع الاعدادي من مدرسة ثانوية عراقية خلال العام الدراسي (2024-2025). وقد شملت الأدوات المستخدمة

استبيان تم تبنيته من دراسة ويفر (Weaver, 2005) لقياس الرغبة في التواصل، واختبار في الأداء الكتابي. وقد أظهرت النتائج ان متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية أبدوا رغبة أكبر في التواصل عند تنفيذ مهام الكتابة. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج، تم تسجيل بعض التوصيات العلمية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في اللغات الثانية/ اللغات الأجنبية ، الرغبة في التواصل (WTC) ، كفاءة الاتصال المدركة ذاتيًا (STCC).

## 1. Introduction

The area of studying EFL/ESL paves the way for students to communicate in the target language. Their communicative competence or their capacity to use the second language to make meaningful communication with others has been emphasized by the emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT) (Cetinkaya, 2005). According to MacIntyre and Charoas (1996, p.3), “recent trends in second language pedagogy reflect the belief that one must use the language to develop proficiency. Foreign language students cannot achieve proficiency without engaging in the target language communicatively. However, when EFL students have the opportunity to utilize the language, they display distinct disparities in second language writing (Al- Khafaji 2005).

The concept of “Willingness to Communicate” (WTC) is a framework that combines psychological, linguistic and communicative factors in order to describe and predict second language/foreign language communication. It is considered as an individual difference and has been explored by numerous studies (Cao, 2011; Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Peng, 2012). For instance, MacIntyre et al., (1998, p: 547) define WTC as “a readiness to engage in discourse, at a specific time with particular individuals, using a second language”. The primary objective of language learning is perceived to be the learners’ increased willingness to communicate in FL/SL, which enhances their language use”.

Substantial research on WTC in a second language settings has been observed in the literature review (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). It has been investigated using a scale developed by McCroskey and Baer (1985). What distinguishes EFL context from ESL context is the fact that EFL students typically lack opportunities for using the language beyond the classroom settings (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Consequently, the classroom is regarded as an ideal environment for participating and communicating in English as a foreign language.

The main aim of the current research study is to find out, firstly, Iraqi EFL secondary students’ level of willingness to communicate and writing performance. Secondly, the correlation between WTC and writing performance. The following section provides a brief review of relevant research regarding how WTC enhances understanding of SL learning.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Willingness to Communicate

The notion of WTC originated in the mid-1980s and was examined about native communication context (McCrosky, 1997). McCroskey and Baer (1985) regarded WTC as a

personality attribute that explain how individuals exhibit similar readiness in various communication contexts. McCroskey and Richmond (1989) argued that individuals who communicate more, are by large better evaluated in various context such as educational, organizations and social settings, and that low level WTC indicates communicative dysfunction, which diminishes an individual's social and emotional happiness. According to McCrosky & Richmond (1987, p. 7), it is defined as "a stable predisposition towards communication when free to choose to do so. It is a cognitive process by which a person personality influences his/her volitional choice to speak. Research on the native language WTC indicates that WTC in the first language considerably affected by two primary factors: communication anxiety and Self- Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC). The former is described as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with their either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCrosky, 1997, p. 81). Individuals with higher levels of communication apprehension are likely to show less willingness to communicate. The latter demonstrates a stronger correlation with WTC than with actual competence. The SPCC is related to an individual's ability to communicate in the target language. The original concept of WTC implies its trait-like quality that remains stable across time and different situations.

However, this concept is different when it is applied in EFL/ESL settings. Research indicates that personality and social context influences SL proficiency and WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). The rationale for the limited transferability of WTC from first language to second language is attributed to the greater difference in the L2 student's communicative competence and the social factors that influencing second language use (Cao & Philip, 2006).

## **2.2 How (WTC) Contribute our Understanding of L2 Learning**

Within social psychology, various researchers assert that individual's performances depend upon the specific context in which they take place (MacLeod & Fraser, 2010). This means that both the individual's behavior and the environment play a part in human development. Cao (2009) argues that from an ecological perspective, the notion of the context in a second language is emphasized. According to Leather & Van Dam (2003, p. 3), an ecological view of language acquisition emphasis how students' thoughts and actions are shaped by their interactions with "the physical and social environments in which they find themselves".

In his model of human evolution, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) places particular emphasis on the interactions among various ecosystems. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem are the four separate layers that make up this model. The microsystem layer involves the immediate environment that encompasses an individual's development. This pertains to the direct interaction with objects and individuals within the immediate situation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Many studies have implemented this model within the SL context. Among the factors that are associated with the microsystem is the language classroom itself, including second language proficiency. Another component is the microsystem level of WTC within a context of the classroom environment (Cao, 2011; Peng, 2012).

A concise literature analysis shows that WTC is the reason behind SL use, and is a factor that influences the frequency of SL use in educational settings (Yashima et al., 2004), which subsequently contributes to the development of SL communicative competence and improving SL performance (Kang, 2005). Additionally, extensive practice and active engagement enable learners to use the cognitive benefits of practice, so enhancing critical thinking abilities and overall learning (Fassinger, 1995).

### **2.3 WTC and Writing Performance**

Among the skills, writing is considered an essential skill in the language learning process. Evidently, students use writing as a means for not only generating ideas but also recording and reformulating knowledge. It may also be as a means for personal development and self-expression. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 641), "writing is regarded as the outcome of complicated process involving planning, drafting, reviewing and revising and certain approaches for teaching first and second language writing students to employ these processes". Writing is essential for a learner's cognitive development and professional preparation (Gere, 1985). Öz (2006) contends that "writing is the written manifestation of thoughts, desires, emotions, and schemes; this necessitates skill rather than knowledge" (p.251). Thus, writing is a skill that satisfies both students' learning needs and communication requirements.

However, writing skill is considered a challenging task for learners due to its requirement of a different cognitive, interpersonal, and linguistic techniques, many of which Iraqi EFL students do not recognize. Alsamadani (2010, p.10) states that "writing in FL context is considered a complex, demanding and challenging process". It is inherently a self-critical process that encourages introspection promoting EFL students to reflect on their comprehension, and communicate their emotions concerning their knowledge, actions, and experiences in the learning process (White & McGroven, 1994). A key factor that promotes language development, communication and learning is willingness to communicate (Molberge, 2010). McIntyre et al., (1998) assert that WTC affects not only speaking, but also reading, listening and writing skills, making it one of the most significant predictors of success in second language acquisition. Consequently, FL students with high levels of WTC may possess a greater possibility to develop their writing performance.

Examining the correlation between Iraqi EFL students' WTC and their writing performance at three public secondary schools is primary goal of this research study.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Selecting the appropriate study design is a crucial decision in the research process. The descriptive-quantitative correlational design is a research methodology that effectively collects, categories and analyses data regarding existing practices, beliefs, and conditions, subsequently interpreting the data accurately, with or without statistical methods. This research involves the collection of data to ascertain the extent of the relationship among the

study variables (Gall et al., 2007). The current study employed a correlational methodology to assess and describe the link between dependent and independent variables and clarify their differences.

### **3.2 Sample and Population**

Throughout the 2024-2025 school year, this study is carried out. The population included the fourth-grade secondary students at Wasit. The research sample consisted of 100 female fourth-grade students were selected randomly from Al-Khawarizmi secondary school for girls.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

A questionnaire and writing performance test were used as its data collection tools to achieve the aims of the study. The questionnaire was adopted from Weaver (2005) to assess the students' WTC in English (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contains 17 items reflect situations that students may face when taking an English writing course. The original version of the questionnaire contains a total of 34 items which include 17 items for speaking and 17 for writing situations. For the sake of the study, the researcher has chosen only those items that are related to writing. The students responded to the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (defiantly unwilling to communicate) to 5 (definitely willing). A writing performance test has been developed by the researcher to assess the students' writing performance. For the sake of the study, and to make sure that the majority of students are motivated to take the test willingly, its topics were chosen based on their interests. The analytical rubric developed by Brown (2007) was used to score students' writings. Using this rubric, the writing performance of students can be assessed based on five elements as follows: mechanics, organization, grammatical rules, vocabulary and content. A scale from 1-4 is used to assess each component. Accordingly, the possible test scores are 5 to 20 (See Appendix B).

### **3.3 Face Validity**

Data collection instruments are reviewed by experts in the field of EFL in order to ensure its face validity. However, the majority of the jury agree on both instruments are appropriate for the goals and the sample of this research study.

### **3.5 Pilot Administration**

To help the researcher check the clarity of WTC items' clarity and compute its reliability, 35 fourth grade students of Nukhab Al-Aziziyah Secondary for girls who are not included in the sample of the study were randomly assigned to conduct the pilot administration.

### **3.6 Construct Validity**

The construct validity of WTC can be examined by statistical analysis of the items in the questionnaire to see how well they discriminate and their item-total correlation based on the responses from individuals answering to the questionnaire. Fifty female secondary school

students from two public secondary schools were randomly chosen to participate in the statistical analysis.

### 3.7 Item Discrimination Power

To find out how well the item discriminate between students who don't have a certain trait, it is useful to calculate its item discrimination power. The discrimination power is calculated by first sorting the students' scores into two categories: high and low groups. Each with 27 points. By utilizing a T-test for two independent samples, the researcher determines if the two groups' means differ significantly. The T-test value greater than the tabulated one is seen, ranging from 2.804 to 6.721.

**Table 1**

*Discrimination Power of items in WTCQ*

Scale	Range of Computed t-values	Tabulated t-value	Level of Significance	Degree of Freedom
WTCQ	2.804 - 6.721	2.00	0.05	52

### 3.8 Item-Total Correlation of the WTCQ

When administering the WTCQ, Pearson Correlation Formula was utilized to find out if the total score of the questionnaire is significantly correlated with each of its items. This approach serves as an indicator of the items' homogeneity and their potentiality to accurately assess their intended constructs (Anstasi, 1976, p.209). However, all the questionnaire items have been determined to be statistically significant.

**Table 2**

*Person Correlations Coefficients Values Between the WTCQ Items and the Total Score*

Scale	Pearson Correlation Coefficients	tabulated t-value	Level of Significance	Degree of Freedom
WTCQ	0.298 – 0.417	0.196	0.05	99

### 3.9 Reliability

Assessing data reliability helps in establishing the degree of confidence in results produced by the employed instruments (Davies et al., 1999, p. 168). Nonetheless, different approaches exist for calculating reliability, with Alpha Cronbach being one of the most common techniques. The application of Alpha Cronbach results in a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The WTCQ is regarded reliable as its equivalent exceeds 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, p.256).

### 3.10 Data analysis

With the approval of the Headmistress of the school, a statistical analysis sample of one hundred female secondary students took the WTCQ and the writing performance test on November, 2024. The students were asked to give their views regarding the items according to

scale of five dimensions, and to complete the test in their regular class hours. The students' responses have been utilized by the researcher.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 Results related to the First Aim

To achieve this goal, the sample arithmetic mean score in the WTC was computed, yielding a result of 64.170 having a standard deviation of 5.449. The significance of the difference between the arithmetic and the theoretical means is assessed using a one-sample t-test. See table (3).

**Table (3)**  
**Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviations, and T-test Value of the WTCQ**

N	Arithmetic Mean	SD	Theoretical Mean	T-Values		Level of Significance (0.05)	d.f
				Computed	Critical		
100	64.170	5.449	51	24,167	1.98	Significant	99

As illustrated in Table (3), t-test results show a computed t-value (24,167) which notably exceeds the tabulated one (1.98) with a significance level of (0.05) and (99) degree of freedom. This means that EFL students possess high level of willing to communicate.

##### 4.2 Results related to the Second Aim

The arithmetic mean of the participants scores in the writing performance test show an average of (11.630) and a standard deviation of (1.756) as shown in Table (4). To determine the significance of variance between the two means, t-test for one sample has been used. See table (4).

**Table (4)**  
**Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-Value of the Writing Performance test**

N	Arithmetic Mean	SD	Theoretical Mean	T-test Value		Level of Significance (0.05)	d.f
				Computed	Critical		
100	11.630	1.756	10	9.261	1.98	Significant	99

T-test results reveals a calculated t-value (9.261) which is significantly exceeds the tabulated one (1.98) at a significance level of (0.05) with (99) degree of freedom. This signifies that EFL secondary students demonstrate a high level of writing performance.

##### 4.3 Results Related to the Third Aim

Pearson correlation formula is utilized to determine the correlation between the EFL secondary students' WTC and writing performance. The calculated correlation coefficient is (0.435). T-test for correlation significance is employed to determine the statistical significance. See table (5).

**Table (5)**  
**The Calculated Coefficient between WTC and Writing Performance.**

Variables	N	Correlation Coefficient	T-test Value		Level of Significance (0.05)	d.f
			Computed	Tabulated		
WTC X Writing Performance	100	0.435	4.780	1.98	Significant	98

Table (5) demonstrates that the calculated t-test value for correlation coefficient is (4.780), exceeding the tabulated one (1.98) at (0.05) level of significance and (98) degree of freedom. This indicates a strong and positive correlation between EFL secondary students' WTC and their writing performance, as whenever the participants WTC increases, their writing performance will increase.

### 5. Conclusions:

The results obtained in this study indicate that:

1. Iraqi EFL secondary students display strong intentional behaviour and demonstrate a high willingness to communicate levels in the foreign language.
2. Iraqi EFL students who have higher levels in writing performance perceive themselves as more proficient in English communication and experience reduced anxiety when engaging in English discourse within the classroom.
3. Foreign language learning use and success can be enhanced by Iraqi EFL secondary students with higher WTC which in turn has the potential to enhance proficiency and success in language acquisition. Having a classroom with high WTC is just a product of having exceptional students.
4. The positive relation between Iraqi EFL students' WTC and writing performance encompasses both the quality and the quantity of writing. This is clearly obvious by the fact that the written compositions of students demonstrate not only a higher level of quality but also a greater length of construction.
5. The correlation between Iraqi EFL secondary students' willingness to communicate and their writing performance is positive and highly significant. This indicates that WTC has a considerable impact on enhancing students' writing performance.

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**Appendix A****Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Questionnaire adopted from Weaver (2005)**

No.	Item	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Usually 4	Always 5
1	Write a postcard in English describing your last holiday					
2	Write a self-introduction in English.					
3	Write in English a one-page explanation about university life in Iraq.					
4	Write an explanation in English why you wanted to enter this university					
5	Write a paragraph in English describing the cause and effect of something (i.e. how more cars cause global warming).					
6	Write an essay in English trying to convince someone that they should buy your favorite singer's CD.					
7	Write an account in English about your future goals after graduating university					
8	Write your opinion in English agreeing with a person's point of view.					
9	Write your opinion in English disagreeing with a person's point of view.					
10	Write a diary about your daily life in English.					
11	Write an email in English describing your favorite website.					
12	Write a short report in English about an article or book you read.					
13	Write instructions in English for how to make your favourite dish.					
14	Write a descriptive paragraph in English about an Iraqi cultural event					
15	Write a short report describing your hometown in English.					
16	Translate a sentence from Arabic to English.					
17	Write a comment in English about what you think about your English class.					

**Appendix B****An analytical scoring scheme for writing performance**

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Performance Description</i>
<b>Content:</b> (C)  - Topic - Details	4	The topic is complete and clear and the details are relating to the topic.
	3	The topic is complete and clear but the details are almost relating to the topic.
	2	The topic is complete and clear but the details are not relating to the topic.
	1	The topic is not clear and the details are not relating to the topic.
<b>Organization:</b> (O)  - Identification - Description	4	Identification is complete and descriptions are arranged with proper connectives.
	3	Identification is almost completed and descriptions are arranged with almost proper connectives.
	2	Identification is not complete and descriptions are arranged with few misuses of connectives.
	1	Identification is not complete and descriptions are arranged with misuse of connectives.
<b>Grammar:</b> (G) -Use present tense -Agreement	4	Very few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies.
	3	Few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies but do not affect the meaning.
	2	Numerous grammatical or agreement inaccuracies.
	1	Frequent grammatical or agreement inaccuracies.
<b>Vocabulary:</b> (V)	4	Effective choice of words and word forms.
	3	Few misuses of vocabularies, word forms, but not change the meaning.
	2	Limited range of confusing words and word forms
	1	Very poor knowledge of words, word forms, and is not understandable.
<b>Mechanics:</b> (M) -Spelling -Punctuation -Capitalization	4	It uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
	3	It has occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
	2	It has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
	1	It is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.