

EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate in Online Learning at Higher Education in Indonesia

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: March 22, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: May 17, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Willingness to communicate (WTC), online learning, EFL, higher education</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4818789</p>	<p><i>This study aims to investigate the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in online learning amid Covid-19 pandemic at higher education in Indonesia. The participants of the study were students of FKIP Tadulako University, Palu, Indonesia. There were 71 participants of the current study. The instrument of the study was questionnaire which aims to explore the students' willingness to communicate, measured by the 16-item Likert-scale Students' Willingness to Communicate in Online Learning at higher education. This current study concludes that group discussion is the activity most students like in online English classes. Other evidences from the study are: 1) Students do not feel nervous about expressing their feelings, opinions, thoughts, and ideas in online classes, 2) The students prefer listening rather than speaking in online class discussions, 3) Class discussions in online learning are the best way to practice speaking English, 4) Students do not feel nervous in online class discussions, 5) Students prefer online class discussions rather than offline class discussions, 6) Students are always encouraged to speak in online class discussions, 7) Students are always eager to speak in online classrooms, and (9) Students should not feel ashamed if they give wrong answers in online class discussions.</i></p>

Introduction

In the world of globalization the modern learning environment must be directed develop personal intellectual abilities, critical thinking skills, communication skills important to understand cultural diversity, working with representatives from various multinational organizations (Kalugina, 2016). The communicative approach in language learning and teaching shows the purpose of language subjects is to develop students' communication and interaction skills (Zarrinabadi, et al., 2021). To those learner developments, communication skill is vital in learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. The teachers are therefore encouraged to arouse students' willingness to communicate in the teaching – learning process in the classroom. This is because, one of the goals of learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia is to be able to use English in everyday life. One of the signs that shows a person's ability to use English is when he is able to express his ideas, thoughts, feelings, and opinions to others. However, English learners often find it difficult to use English in daily conversations because of their unwillingness to practice their English skills. The students do not want to express their ideas to other students because they are nervous, and also do not want to express themselves because they are afraid (Weda, et al., 2020). Weda et al therefore reported that the majority of participants disagreed with the statement: talking to friends is a waste of time, they don't speak in class presentations because they are shy, they don't like to be involved in group discussions, their friends don't listen to their ideas and suggestions in class discussions, they don't ask their peers for advice when they have to make decisions, they are afraid to express themselves in groups, and they find it difficult to converse with their friends. That is why many studies have been conducted to find out what causes an English learner to be reluctant to communicate. The willingness to communicate in English, especially in online classes, is needed so that the teaching and learning process runs well.

In English class, willingness to communicate is very important. Therefore teachers are required to be able to motivate English learners. In a language class, encouraging students' willingness to communicate (WTC) using the target language is essential, as it is a good signal whether or not the language has been successfully acquired (Hawwini, 2019). The teachers are encouraged to present the recognized communication objects in the classroom setting to enhance students' willingness to communicate (WTC). Recognized communication objects can increase a student's WTC and the teacher must try to create a relaxed learning atmosphere for students (Fu, et al., 2012). This study therefore will explore the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in online class amidst Covid-19 pandemic at higher education in Indonesia.

Review of Literature

Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Many researchers have conducted studies on the topic of willingness to communicate (WTC). Some of those studies are presented in table 1.

Table 1. The measurement of willingness to communicate (WTC) in previous studies

Researcher	Research Site & Year	Instrument	Subjects/Participants
Zarrinnabadi, et al	Iran, 2021	Questionnaire	University students
Baohua Yu	Hongking, 2021	Questionnaire	University students
Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak	Poland, 2021	(1) self-report WTC grids for every class, (2) detailed lesson plans, (3) an in-class WtC survey and (4) an interview	University students
Weda, et al	Indonesia, 2020	Questionnaire	University students
Jean-Marc Dewaele & Liana Maria Pavelescu	Romania, 2019	Observation	High school learners
Fu, et al	China, 2012	Oxford Language Learning Strategies Inventory	University students
Mirzane & Khabiri	Iran, 2016	Questionnaire as Pre-Test and Post-Test	University students
HUSEYIN OZ	Turkey, 2014	International Personality Item Pool	University students
Zarrinabadi & Abdi	Iran, 2011	Questionnaire	University students
Mary Eddy-U	Macau, China, 2015	Focus Group Discussion	University students
NOUROLLAH ZARRINABADI, SAEED KETABI, and RAZIEH ABDI	Iran, 2014	Semi-structured interviews	English language learners
Qing Shao, Xuesong (Andy) Gao	Japan, Korea, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, New Zealand, and Taiwan, 2016	Selected articles	Language learners
Hayo Reinders & Sorada Wattana	Thailand, 2014	Interview	University students

The initiation of the teachers in classroom communication still plays a fundamental and vital role in influencing students' WTC patterns (Havwini, 2019). Fu et al (2012) suggested that EFL teachers should provide more opportunities for their students to experience success, create a good and safe learning environment and help students improve their WTC skills. Similarly, Zarrinnabadi, et al (2021) argue that learners who perceive their learning environment is autonomy-supportive are more likely to support a developed language mindset, feel more competent, and are more willing to communicate.

Online Learning

Educational institutions are now increasingly adopting and implementing online learning (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). With the Covid-19 pandemic, all institutions in the world are looking for ways to exist and carry out their activities amid the pandemic. Higher education also finds out the best ways so that academic activities continue. One surefire way to stay active in this pandemic is through online learning. Online learning (e-learning) is the result of learning that is delivered electronically using computers and computer-based media (Kompasiana, 2015).

Method

Method

Participants

The students' perception on willingness to communicate (WTC) scale was completed by 71 undergraduate students (female 60 or 80.51% and 11 or 15.49%) of FKIP Tadulako University, Palu Indonesia. The participants were in the fourth, sixth, and eighth semester registered in 2020/2021 academic year.

Instrument and Procedure

The instrument of the present study was questionnaire which aims to investigate the students' willingness to communicate in online learning in the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, measured by the 16-item Likert-scale. The questionnaire was written in English because the students were from English education study program at the FKIP Tadulako University, Indonesia. They were asked to rate their perception on the willingness to

communicate (WTC) in online learning. In this current study, the students were asked to rate the perceptions with response to the questionnaires on a 5-point Likert scale on which 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages, means, and standard deviation/SD) were used to characterize the participants' perception on willingness to communicate in online learning. The study also presents the graphic to show the portion and percentage of participants' responses on willingness to communicate (WTC) in online learning amidst Covid-19 pandemic. The statistic descriptive is therefore followed by explanation and interpretation.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Table 2 presents the demographic information of the participants in the study.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	60	80.51
	Male	11	15.49
Age	18	5	7.04
	19	10	14.08
	20	34	47.89
	21	18	25.35
	22	4	5.63
	23	0	0
	24	0	0
	25	0	0
Semester	2 nd Semester	0	
	4 th Semester	21	29.58
	6 th Semester	47	6.19
	8 th Semester	3	4.23
Ethnic Group	Kaili	14	19.72
	Jawa	1	1.40
	BanggaiKepulauan	1	1.40
	Bali	1	1.40
	LuwukBalantak	1	1.40
	Bugis	20	28.17
	Lombok	1	1.40
	Kulawi	1	1.40
	Toraja	2	2.82
	Bajau	1	1.40
	Buol	1	1.40
	Sunda	1	1.40
Indonesia	26	36.62	

Table 3. Distributions for Participants' Perception on the Willingness to Communicate in the Online Learning (N = 72)

Item	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	3.4507	.77609	11.3	28.2	54.9	5.6	0
2.	3.3803	.99090	11.3	35.2	39.4	8.5	5.6
3.	3.2113	.60747	1.4	26.8	63.4	8.5	0
4.	3.0141	1.04871	11.3	18.3	33.8	33.8	2.8
5.	2.9577	.96268	4.2	25.4	38.0	26.8	5.6
6.	3.0000	.91026	9.9	8.5	56.3	22.5	2.8
7.	3.1972	1.07729	9.9	33.8	28.2	22.5	5.6
8.	3.1549	.85604	1.4	38.0	38.0	19.7	2.8
9.	2.9718	.98520	4.2	28.2	33.8	28.2	5.6
10.	2.9155	.71207	1.4	16.9	53.5	28.2	0

11.	2.7042	.99131	1.4	18.3	45.1	19.7	15.5
12.	2.5070	.98377	1.4	11.3	43.6	23.9	19.7
13.	3.2254	.65894	2.8	26.8	60.6	9.9	0
14.	3.2958	.59508	36.6	56.3	7.0	0	0
15.	2.8732	1.17022	2.8	38.0	18.3	25.4	15.5
16.	3.1831	.83341	5.6	26.8	49.3	16.9	1.4

To show the general tendency of students' perception on willingness to communicate (WTU) in online learning at Covid-19 pandemic required the determination of the mean, standard deviation, and percentage. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) are revealed in Table 3. As displayed in Table 3, the students' responses ranged in five points on the scale. The results of the current study reveal that the students achieved a mean of 3.4507 and SD = .77609 for student's perception for item 1. The participants achieved a mean of 3.3803 and SD = .99090 for student's perception for item 2. The students achieved a mean of 3.2113 and SD = .60747 for student's perception for item 3. The students achieved a mean of 3.0141 and SD = 1.04871 for student's perception item 4. The students achieved a mean of 2.9577 and SD = .96268 for students' perception for item 5. The students achieved a mean of 3.0000 and SD = .91026 for students' perception for item 6. The students achieved a mean of 3.1972 and SD = 1.07729 for students' perception for item 7. The students achieved a mean of 3.1549 and SD = .85604 for students' perception for item 8. The students achieved a mean of 2.9718 and SD = .98520 for students' perception for item 9. The students achieved a mean of 2.9155 and SD = .71207 for students' perception for item 10. The students achieved a mean of 2.7042 and SD = .99131 for students' perception for item 11. The means and SD for students' perception of item 12 to number 16 are clearly displayed on Table 3.

The most frequent response of students' perception on willingness to communicate in online learning at Covid-19 pandemic are clearly revealed in Table 3. Table 3 presents the proportion of participants who endorsed the five options on the Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). As presented in Table 3, the majority of participants expressed their responses "Neutral" on the statement: I am excited to speak in online English class. (Item 1, 54.9%). Followed by responses "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" (Item 1, 39.3%). The majority of participants expressed their responses "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" on the statement: Group discussions are the activities I enjoy most in online English class. (Item 2, 46.5%). The majority of participants expressed their responses "Neutral" on the statement: I enjoy starting the group discussion with a number of critical questions. (Item 3, 63.4%). The majority of participants expressed their responses "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" on the statement: I don't feel nervous to express feelings, opinions, thoughts, and ideas. (Item 4, 36.6%). The majority of participants expressed their responses "Neutral" on the statement: I prefer listening rather than talking in online classroom discussion. (Item 5, 38%). The majority of participants expressed their responses "Neutral" on the statement: I always confidently speak in online class. (Item 6, 56.3%). The majority of students expressed responses "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" on the statement: Classroom discussion in online learning is the best way to practice speaking English. (Item 7, 43.6%). The majority of students expressed responses "Agree" on the statement: I feel nervous in online classroom discussion. (Item 8, 38%).

The majority of students expressed responses "Neutral" on the statement: I find it difficult to have conversation in online class discussion. (Item 9, 33.8%). The majority of students expressed responses "Neutral" on the statement: I talk in classroom discussion even though the topic is less motivating. (Item 10, 53.3%). Detail explanation of item 11 to 16 is presented on Table 3.

Frequency of Students' Responses on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Online Learning

The percentage of participants' responses on willingness to communicate (WTC) in online learning amidst Covid-19 pandemic is clearly displayed in Figure 1.

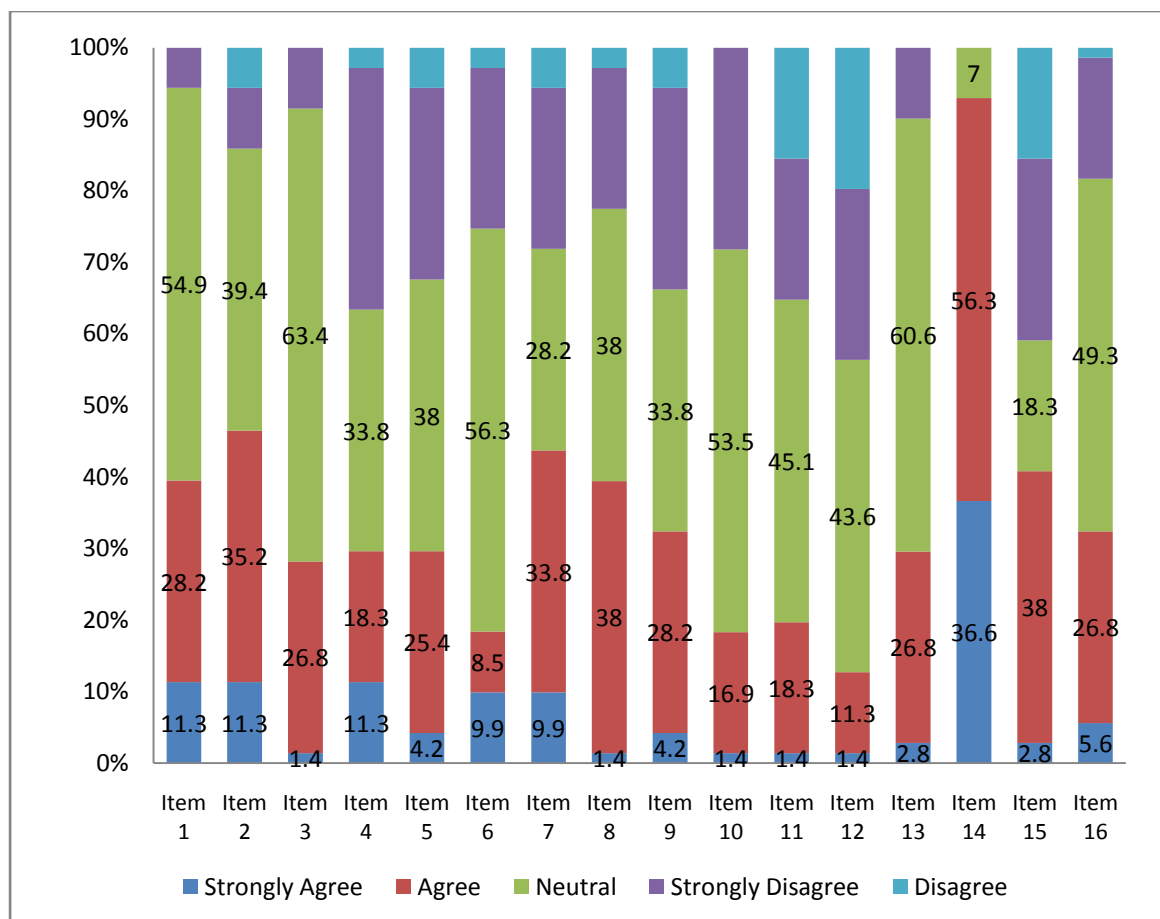


Figure 1. Frequency of Students' Responses on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Online Learning Discussion

In summary, this current study presents the students' responses to the questionnaire with a number of findings aimed at explore dealing with the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in online learning amid Covid-19 pandemic at higher education in Indonesia. The analysis is clearly revealed that the participants experienced the online learning in their own perceptions on the willingness to communicate. The study therefore found that: 1) Group discussions are the activities the students enjoy most in online English class, 2) The students don't feel nervous to express their feelings, opinions, thoughts, and ideas in the online class, 3) The students prefer listening rather than talking in online classroom discussion, 4) Classroom discussion in online learning is the best way to practice speaking English, 5) The students do not feel nervous in online classroom discussion, 6) The students prefer online class discussion rather than offline class discussion, 7) The students are always encouraged to talk in class online discussion, 8) The students are always eager to speak in online class learning, and (9) The students don't feel ashamed if their answers are incorrect in online class discussion. Based upon the students' opinions dealt with their willingness to communicate in online classroom discussion, various benefits exist to enhance students' English language proficiency. These findings are consistent with Dixon (2010) who also reported that there are two main reasons for studying student engagement in online learning. The first is that online learning will continue to exist and evolve so we have to do it well. The second reason is one of the main reasons of an effective component of online teaching (or any other teaching, for that matter) is students' involvement in a variety of online discussion. Similarly, Vonderwell & Alderman (2007) argue that asynchronous online discussion facilitates a multidimensional assessment process that is shown in the aspects of structure, self-regulation activities, student independence, learning communities and students' writing skills. Vonderwell & Alderman therefore add that the students claimed that discussion as an essential component of their online learning. Interacting with others in a fast-paced online classroom discussion environment involves participation in a social practice that comprises multiple literacy processes. In such an environment, reading, writing, initiating, and responding meet and competing for attention, by reading and writing that reflect and influence a person's thought processes (Vogler, et al., 2013: 212).

Conclusion

As the academic claims of this current study, this study concludes that group discussion is the activity most students like in online English classes. Other evidences from the study are: 1) Students do not feel nervous

about expressing their feelings, opinions, thoughts, and ideas in online classes, 2) The students prefer listening rather than speaking in online class discussions, 3) Class discussions in online learning are the best way to practice speaking English, 4) Students do not feel nervous in online class discussions, 5) Students prefer online class discussions rather than offline class discussions, 6) Students are always encouraged to speak in online class discussions, 7) Students are always eager to speak in online classrooms, and (9) Students should not feel ashamed if they give wrong answers in online class discussions.

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