A Qualitative Inquiry into the Factors Influencing EFL Learners' in-class Willingness to Communicate in English

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Abstract: This study aims to examine English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' perceptions of the factors influencing their in-class willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. Having been selected through criterion sampling method, the participants consisted of 32 undergraduate EFL learners who took the English course at Balıkesir University in Balıkesir, Turkey. In this study, which employed qualitative research design, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data generated from the interviews were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The results of the study showed that learners' in-class WTC in English is affected by a variety of factors including classmates, instructional methods, teacher, classroom atmosphere, materials, class size, L2 motivation, fear of being ridiculed, L2 anxiety, fear of making mistakes, topic interest, topic familiarity, shyness, introversion, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, practice, self-perceived communication competence and past communication experience. In light of the results, some pedagogical implications were provided and suggestions for further research were given.

Anahtar sözcükler
İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliği, sınıf içi ikinci dilde iletişim kurma istekliliği, İngilizceyi yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler, nitel içerik analizi

İngilizceyi Yabancı Bir Dil Olarak Öğrenen Öğrencilerin Sınıf İçi İngilizce İletişim Kurma İstekliliğini Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine Nitel Bir İnceleme
Öz: Bu çalışma yabancı bir dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin sınıf içi İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliğini etkileyen faktörlere ilişkin algılarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen katılımcılar, Balıkesir Üniversitesi'nde İngilizce dersini almış 32 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Nitel araştırma deseninin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada, veri toplama işlemi yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler nitel içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, öğrencilerin sınıf içi İngilizce iletişim kurma istekliliğinin sınıf arkadaşları, öğretim yöntemleri, öğretmen, sınıf atmosferi, kullanılan materyaller, sınıf mevcudu, yabancı dil motivasyonu, dalga geçilme korkusu, yabancı dil kaygısı, hata yapma korkusu, konuya olan ilgi, konu aşinalığı, çekingenlik, içe dönüklük, kelime bilgisi, telaffuz, konuşma pratiği, algılanan iletişim yetkinliği ve geçmiş iletişim deneyimleri gibi çeşitli faktörler tarafından etkilendiğini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar ışığında, bazı pedagojik çıkarımlarda bulunulmuş ve gelecek çalışmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

1. Introduction

Modern language pedagogy has attached too much significance to the use of the target language in communication and training of L2 learners who have the ability to communicate effectively in the L2 (Savignon, 2005). However, as suggested by MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels (1998), communicative competence is not adequate to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language; other individual and situational factors affect their inclinations to start or participate in L2 communication as well. It was observed that students with a high level of linguistic competence are reluctant to use their L2 for communication, while other learners who have limited linguistic competence appear to communicate in the L2 at every opportunity, which means again that learners' high level of communicative competence alone does not ensure their spontaneous and incessant use of a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Thus, the concept of Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language (L2 WTC), which refers to the decision to talk at a certain moment in time with a particular person or group using a second language (MacIntyre, 2007), plays a major role in learning a second/foreign language. It is asserted that the final objective of the L2 learning process should be to engender learners' L2 WTC since a greater L2 WTC will lead to better L2 development and more effective communication in a variety of communication contexts (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Within the current communicative paradigm, the so-called successful language program is characterized by EFL classrooms where learners are active in using the target language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). However, in most EFL classrooms in Turkey, it is commonly observed that learners avoid speaking English. As the fundamental objective of foreign language instruction is to promote learners' ability to communicate effectively, it is of paramount importance to understand why some students are willing to speak English, whereas others prefer to remain silent in language classrooms. Particularly in an EFL setting, in which learners have little, if any, exposure to L2 outside the classroom, it seems to be necessary to determine the variables that might increase or decrease learners' in-class WTC in English. Thus, this study attempts to explore EFL learners' perceptions of the factors influencing their in-class WTC in English.

2. Literature Review

The concept of WTC was primarily considered as a stable personality trait even though the influences of situational variables on a person's level of WTC were acknowledged (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). When the concept was adapted to L2 communication and learning by MacIntyre and Charos (1996), a number of additional influences were detected, resulting in a new perspective that considers L2 WTC as situational. Along with the introduction of the heuristic model of L2 WTC by MacIntyre and associates (1998), the concept was reconceptualized primarily as a situation-specific variable, liable to change across various situations.

The situational nature of L2 WTC was further emphasized by other researchers (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005). Kang's (2005) qualitative study, which explored changes in L2 WTC during communication between non-native speaking students and native speaker tutors, demonstrated that WTC in an L2 may show some moment-to-moment fluctuations. Topic, interlocutors, and conversational context were found to be major situational factors that exert influence on L2 WTC. Likewise, Cao & Philp (2006), who aimed to examine learners' perceptions of factors affecting their in-class WTC and found group size, interlocutor, topic

familiarity and interest, and medium of communication as the factors influencing their WTC, highlighted the dynamic nature of L2 WTC and the mediating effects of contextual factors.

In House's study (2004), the opposite sex, mood and the topic were revealed to affect learners' L2 WTC. Aubrey's study (2010) carried out in the Japanese EFL context showed that class size is a key factor which influences students' WTC in English. Class observations demonstrated that learners' WTC decreased as class size increased. The data collected from the interviews revealed that the students in a larger class had less chance to talk than those in a smaller class, which was also reported in another study (Khazaei, Zadeh, & Ketabi, 2012). Besides, topic relevancy, anxiety, perception of teacher participation and difficulty of the task were the other factors that had a bearing on learners' WTC inside the classroom. In another study (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015), the Polish EFL students' WTC was revealed to be influenced by factors like topic, time, collaboration and interlocutor, the chance to convey opinions, and the mastery of necessary lexis.

In Zarrinabadi's study (2014), teacher's wait time, error correction, and support were discovered to exert influence upon learners' WTC in English, while Riasati (2012) reported that task type, topic of discussion, interlocutor and seating location in class had a strong impact on learners' readiness to communicate in the classroom. In a different study (Miller & Pearson, 2013), it was reported that students were keener to communicate with a native English-speaking teacher when compared to a Chinese teacher. Another finding was that learners favored teachers who use lecture rather than discussion in the classroom. Thus, it was concluded that teacher's nationality and teaching style affect students' L2 WTC.

The study of Khodarahmi and Nia (2014) revealed that the discipline strategies used by teachers had a great impact on learners' WTC, in either motivating them to participate more actively in classroom communication or preventing them from entering into communication with the teacher or other learners. Atay & Kurt (2009) found that factors such as topic, background knowledge, teacher and peers influence Turkish EFL learners' readiness to initiate communication in English in class. In a recent study (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018) conducted in the Iranian EFL context, topic, interlocutor, shyness, self-confidence, teacher, and classroom environment were discovered to have a bearing on learners' in-class willingness to speak English.

When the available literature on L2 WTC is examined in detail, it is clearly seen that the majority of WTC studies (e.g. Bahadori & Hashemizadeh, 2018; Başöz & Erten, 2018; Öz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015; Peng, 2015; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Rastegar & Karami, 2015) have used self-report data which tapped trait-like WTC rather than using qualitative data collection techniques. These studies have only indicated the interrelationships between WTC and its predictors. There are only a small number of studies which have probed state-level WTC through observational and interview data. Nevertheless, as MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Conrod (2001) point out, the self-report technique merely taps trait-like WTC, and more in-depth qualitative methods should be employed to capture the dynamic nature of the construct and identify the factors contributing to situational L2 WTC (Ellis, 2008). Taking into account the need to examine learners' situational L2 WTC in an instructional setting, this study aims at investigating Turkish EFL learners' perceptions of the factors affecting their in-class WTC in English. Given the scarce literature on students' perceptions of the variables affecting their situational WTC in the EFL classroom context, findings of this study could shed light on this research gap. The study addressed the following research question:

What are the perceived factors influencing the Turkish EFL learners' in-class WTC in English?

3. Method
3.1. Setting & Participants
The participants of this qualitative study were 32 EFL learners studying in the departments of Tourism Guidance and Tourism Management at Balıkesir University in Balıkesir, Turkey. They were selected from a total of 274 students who completed the Turkish version of the L2 WTC inside the Classroom Scale developed by MacIntyre and his associates (2001). As the researcher aimed to collect data from both the students who were more eager to communicate and the ones who were less eager to communicate in English, criterion sampling method was used. A total of 32 learners (female: 17, 53.1%; male: 15, 46.9%), 16 with the highest and 16 with the lowest mean scores in the scale were selected for interviews. They ranged in age from 18 to 24 years (M = 21.06, SD = 1.75).

3.2. Instruments
The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The face-to-face interview data collection method was used to gather the data. The interview questions (e.g., What are your feelings about speaking English in English classes? Are there any things that affect your willingness to speak English? In which circumstances do you think your willingness to speak English decreases in English classes?) were prepared by the researcher in the light of the literature on WTC in English. The validity of the questions was ensured after they were reviewed by an expert in the field and an academic Turkish specialist. The questions were revised based on the feedback received from them. They were piloted with four learners different from those who participated in the main interviews in order to see how well the instrument worked in practice so that any potential practical problems in the research procedure could be identified. During the pilot interviews, it appeared that the interview questions were well formulated, but that there were some questions stating similar things. Those questions were omitted from the list, and the interview questions were redesigned for the main study.

In the study, the L2 WTC inside the Classroom Scale (MacIntyre et al., 2001), which was adapted by the researcher, was also used to determine the students' perceived levels of WTC in English and select the interview participants accordingly. The scale was translated into Turkish using translation and back translation methods. A high level of semantic correspondence between the original English version and the Turkish version (9.7/10) and between the original English version and the back-translated English version (9.1/10) indicated that the Turkish version satisfactorily represented the content presented in the scale items of the original scale. The reliability coefficient of the Turkish version of the scale was calculated to be $\alpha = .93$.

3.3. Procedure
The participants were guaranteed of the privacy of their answers and the protection of their identities. The researcher reminded the interviewees to choose a pseudonym to protect their identities. The researcher followed a semi-structured interview guide including a series of open-ended questions, elaboration probes and follow-up questions. Each participant's interview, which was conducted in Turkish, lasted between 20-35 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data generated from the interviews were analyzed through qualitative content analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). The audio-recorded interview data were transcribed. After the transcriptions had been finished, they were read by the researcher several times with the aim of identifying important and recurring ideas arising from the data. Coding was performed to reduce the data into easily separable sections. After the codes were created, the similar codes were put together to reach categories or themes. The proportion agreement method was used to check the intercoder reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The codes determined by the researcher were compared against the ones undertaken by an independent researcher who is an expert with a PhD in English Language Teaching. The researcher divided the number of times that two coders used a code in the same text unit by the number of times that any coder used it in the transcript. Using the same method, the overall intercoder reliability for all codes as a set was calculated. The intercoder reliability was found to be 85 percent, which is a high degree of reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

4. Results

The factors that the EFL learners considered as affecting their in-class WTC in English and the number of learners who mentioned each factor are presented in Table 1. The sub-themes identified in the transcribed data are also presented below. In the excerpts from the interviews, the acronyms *WTC* and *UnWTC* in parentheses were used to describe the participants who are willing and unwilling to communicate in English respectively depending on the mean scores that they received from the L2 WTC inside the classroom scale.

Table 1
EFL learners' perceptions of the factors affecting their in-class WTC in English

Factors Affecting in-class WTC in English		f *	N/32
L2 classroom environment	Classmates	19	29
	Instructional methods	16	
	Teacher	15	
	Atmosphere	3	
	Materials	3	
	Class size	3	
Affective factors	L2 motivation	16	21
	Fear of being ridiculed	9	
	L2 anxiety	8	
	Fear of making mistakes	7	
Topic	Topic interest	5	8
	Topic familiarity	2	
Personal characteristics	Shyness	3	5
	Introversion	2	
Linguistic factors	Practice	4	4
	Pronunciation	3	
	Vocabulary knowledge	2	
Self-perceived communication competence			2
Past communication experience			1

The frequencies of the individual factors do not necessarily count up to the total frequencies because one student may have reported more than one factor.

L2 Classroom Environment is one key factor that the participants reported as having an effect on their in-class WTC in English. To the learners, there are six important sub-factors that have an impact on their WTC or UNWTC in English in L2 classroom environment; *classmates*, *instructional methods*, *teacher*, *atmosphere*, *materials*, and *class size*. More than half of the participants (19 out of 32) mentioned the influence of their *classmates* on their willingness to speak English inside the classroom. Some representative comments include:

> My classmates are always reluctant to speak English. Their indifference to English kills my enthusiasm for speaking English. (WTC, female, Lady in red).

> I feel more relaxed and become more willing to speak English if I see that my classmates make some mistakes while they are speaking. But if my classmates are more proficient in English than me, and they speak English more fluently than I do, I become very demotivated to speak English in class. I prefer to remain silent at those times (UnWTC, female, Strawberry).

> Some of my classmates laugh at me when I make mistakes as if they were more proficient in English than me. Their irrespective behaviours really irritate me and discourage me from speaking English (WTC, male, Harry Potter).

It is clear from the participants' comments that the English proficiency level of their classmates, their level of WTC in English, and their disrespectful and mocking attitudes towards themselves play a major role in their WTC in English. Half of the interview participants (16) stated that their WTC in English depends on the *instructional methods* used to teach the content. Here are some excerpts from the interviews with the learners:

> Our instructor usually starts speaking English at the beginning of the lesson but then, after a few minutes, he continues in Turkish as most of my classmates refuse to respond to him in English. I think that the instructors should force us to speak English in class. It will help us to improve our English communication skills and make us more willing to speak English in class (WTC, female, Coffee).

> We just concentrate on grammar and ignore speaking entirely in class time. It is nonsense to learn the grammar of a language that I cannot speak. If we had an intensive speaking-based course, I would absolutely be eager to speak English in class (UnWTC, male, Jigsaw).

The above explanations show that the participants complain about the lack of instructional methods which gives them a chance to speak English in class. Of all of the interviewees, 15 pointed to the influence of the *teacher-related factors* on their eagerness to communicate in English. John Doe believes that their instructor does not pay equal attention to all the learners and does not encourage them all to speak English.

> Not everyone in our class is at the same level of proficiency in English. Our instructor ignores the less proficient students and focuses on only more proficient ones during the course. As I am a low-proficient EFL learner, the

instructor's indifference towards me decreases my willingness to speak English in the classroom (UnWTC, male, John Doe).

The participants also stated that their in-class WTC in English increases when they have a foreign instructor. They blamed Turkish instructors for always correcting their mistakes and thereby dampening their enthusiasm for speaking English. John Snow makes this clear when he says:

My willingness to speak English increases when a foreign teacher teaches English in class. Last semester, we had a foreign instructor; he only attached importance to our ability to express ourselves. He did not care whether we constructed grammatically correct sentences or not. Now, we have a Turkish instructor of English, and he always corrects our mistakes, which decreases my enthusiasm for speaking English (WTC, male, John Snow).

As can be understood from the excerpt above, having a foreign teacher increases the learners' desire to speak English in class. Other teacher-related factors which were believed to contribute to the learners' in-class unwillingness to speak English were the inadequacy of the teachers' professional teaching skills and their inadequate English language proficiency. The following excerpts may give a better idea about the participants' views on this issue.

Our instructor expects us to speak voluntarily in the classroom. He does not try to force us to speak. After he asks a question, he waits for a volunteer to answer that question. Typically, nobody answers, and then he answers the question himself. I would definitely be much more willing to speak English if the instructor forced us to speak English a little bit (UnWTC, female, Cinnamon).

Once I understand that the instructor is inadequate at teaching English properly, I immediately lose my interest in the English course and become unwilling to speak English in class. Whenever I ask our instructor the meaning of a word, he cannot give an answer to it and looks it up in the dictionary (WTC, male, Alf)

Three of the participants appeared to believe that the atmosphere of the classroom plays an important role in their WTC in English. They expressed that they are keener to speak English in a relaxed atmosphere in which there is a good rapport between the instructor and the learners. This was explicit in a statement by Daisy who claims:

Classroom atmosphere directly affects my willingness to speak English. I generally do not want to talk when there is a tense atmosphere in the classroom. Mostly, there is a warm and friendly environment in our classroom which motivates me more to speak English (WTC, female, Daisy).

Another significant factor that is obvious in the participants' interviews is the *materials* used to teach content. Three of them consider the materials as a major factor influencing their level of readiness to speak English. This was explicit in the statements by Southpark and John Snow respectively who claim:

> The coursebook that we use is so boring that I do not feel like speaking English in the English class. The level of the coursebook is extremely basic. We have been learning the same things over and over again for years. We should use a coursebook which is more appropriate to our level of English (UnWTC, male, Southpark).

> My willingness level varies depending on the materials that our instructor uses in class. I am more willing to talk in class when our instructor uses some audio-visual materials (WTC, male, John Snow).

Class size was also reported to exert influence on the participants' in-class WTC in English. Of the 32 learners who were interviewed, three mentioned the influence of class size on their WTC in English. The following excerpt demonstrates the importance of class size.

> I feel more comfortable and more willing to speak English on days when there are few students attending the class. I feel really nervous and hesitate to speak English when the class is crowded (UnWTC, female, Crazy).

Affective Factors were also reported by the participants to exert influence on their degree of WTC in English. According to the participants, there are four sub-factors that contribute to their WTC in English in this category; *L2 motivation*, *L2 anxiety*, *fear of making mistakes* and *fear of being ridiculed*. Half of the participants described their *language learning motivation* as exerting influence on their in-class willingness to speak.

> Learning English makes me feel good. It means everything to me. I like putting what I learned into practice. I even talk to my lovebird in English. I am always willing to speak English in class (WTC, female, Daisy).

> I quit studying English in the first year of high school after I found out that it would be no use learning English in a state school. Since then, I have had no interest in English and made no attempt to learn it. Now, I look for no more than being able to pass the course. I do not feel like speaking English in classes (UnWTC, male, Southpark).

It is clear from the excerpts above that both motivation and amotivation for learning English affect the participants' WTC in English. While the amotivated students feel no desire to speak English, the motivated students are excited to speak English in the classroom. Nine of the students stated that they are unwilling to speak English in class since they possess *a fear of being ridiculed* by their classmates.

> Some of my classmates are hunting for the slightest mistake of the person who speaks English, laughing at it out loud and rubbing it into his/her face over and over again. Since I do not feel comfortable in class, I do not speak English unless I have to (UnWTC, male, Madman).

L2 anxiety was also described by eight of the learners as having a bearing on their degree of in-class WTC in English. While some learners attributed their WTC in English to their relaxed manner in class, some openly expressed their anxiety about not being able to speak English. Babyface and John Snow make this clear when they say:

> My mind goes blank when it is my turn to speak in class. Although there are many words and structures that I know, and I can easily form the sentence at that moment, my anxiety level increases, and I forget what I know. This kills all my enthusiasm for speaking English (UNWTC, female, Babyface).

> I am calm and relaxed while speaking English in class. As there is nothing that makes me anxious in class, I am generally keen to speak English (WTC, male, John Snow).

Another affective factor that is clear in the participants' interviews is the *fear of making mistakes*. Seven of the interviewees consider their fear of making mistakes as a key factor leading to their unwillingness to speak English in class. Some representative comments include:

> I have intense fear of making mistakes while speaking English in class. That's why I prefer to remain silent in class. I do not know why I feel that way (UnWTC, male, John Doe).

Topic is another crucial factor that some of the participants referred to. Among the participants, eight of them highlighted the significance of topic in causing them to be eager or reluctant to speak English in class. The characteristics of the topic which were significant for the participants were *topic familiarity* and *topic interest*. Two participants believed that when they have enough knowledge about a topic, they are keener to talk about it in English. Babyface makes this clear when she says:

> I am more eager to talk about the topics that I am familiar with. However, I do not make any effort to talk about the topics that I do not know much about in the English classes (UnWTC, female, Babyface).

Another feature of topic that the EFL learners mentioned is *topic interest*. The learners consider that the more interested they are in a topic, the more willing they become to talk about it. This was explicit in the statement by Jigsaw.

> My willingness to speak English varies depending on the topic in question. I like talking about the topics that I am interested in, but I do not want to talk about the topics that I do not like (UnWTC, male, Jigsaw).

Personal Characteristics is another factor that was revealed to affect the students' level of WTC in English. Five of the participants described their personal characteristics as a key determinant of their desire to enter into a discourse in English inside the classroom. *Shyness* (3 entries) and *introversion* (2 entries) were mentioned as two important sub-factors in this regard.

> It does not matter what the language is. As I am a shy person, it makes me nervous to speak in front of people. I become too excited, feel embarrassed and blush readily. This makes me reluctant to speak English in class (UnWTC, male, Panda).

> I usually do not like talking much. It is not specific to the English classes. I am quiet in other classes as well. I do not prefer to talk unless I have to (UnWTC, male, John Doe).

As can be seen in the excerpts above, one reason why Panda is unwilling to speak English is his shyness. John Doe attributes his reluctance to speak English in class to his introverted personality. Thus, it can be said that personal characteristics of learners affect their readiness to speak English in class.

Linguistic Factors were also reported by four of the participants as exerting influence on their WTC in English. To the learners, there are three important linguistic factors that contribute to their WTC in English in class; *practice*, *pronunciation*, and *vocabulary knowledge*. Of the 32 participants, four highlighted the importance of *practice* in their level of in-class WTC in English. This was clear in the case of Frodo who says:

> There is a common problem in our class: we cannot put what we have learned into practice. We can communicate in English in written form, but we certainly cannot have verbal communication in English. I think that this stems from a lack of practice. The more we practise speaking English, the better we can speak English. As we realize that we can do it, we become more willing to speak English in class (WTC, male, Frodo).

Pronunciation is the second linguistic factor that the participants referred to. Three of the participants believed that this factor significantly influences their in-class WTC in English. This was clearly expressed by Coffee when she stated:

> If I think that there will be no trouble with my pronunciation, I do not hesitate to speak English. However, if I think that I cannot pronounce some words properly, I become reluctant to speak English in class. I believe that wrong pronunciation is something that may make a person feel humiliated (WTC, female, Coffee).

Lastly, two learners reported *vocabulary knowledge* as a linguistic factor that makes a major contribution to their in-class willingness to speak English. Lady in Red, for instance, expressed that the more words she knows in English, the keener she becomes to communicate in English in class. To Babyface, his insufficient vocabulary knowledge is one of the reasons why he is reluctant to speak English. Here are the excerpts from the interviews with the participants:

> I am generally willing to speak English in class. However, if I knew more words in English, I would feel more competent in speaking and this, in turn, would increase my willingness to speak English in class (WTC, female, Lady in red).

> I do not think that my vocabulary knowledge is sufficient to be able communicate in English. This is one of the reasons why I am reluctant to speak English in class (UnWTC, female, Babyface).

Self-perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) is another factor that was discovered to influence the participants' readiness to speak English inside the classroom. Among the

interviewees, two mentioned that their perceptions on how competent they are in communicating in the English language play a key role in their readiness to speak English. This was clear in the case of Southpark who says:

> Most of my classmates can speak English easily and fluently. I find myself inadequate in speaking English because of my weak background in English. For this reason, I am usually silent in the English classes (UnWTC, male, Southpark).

Past Communication Experience was noted by only one of the participants as influencing her in-class WTC in English. Candy explained in the interview how her positive past experience increased her enthusiasm for speaking English. She states:

> It was the first years of the high school. One day, a foreign teacher came to our class and told us something in English. None of my friends could understand what he had said, whereas I could easily understand and even respond to him. At that moment, I felt superior to everybody else. Since then, I have had a special interest in speaking English. (WTC, female, Candy).

5. Discussion
The results of the qualitative content analysis of the interviews showed that classmates, instructional methods, teacher, classroom atmosphere, materials, class size, L2 motivation, fear of being ridiculed, L2 anxiety, fear of making mistakes, topic interest, topic familiarity, shyness, introversion, practice, pronunciation skills, vocabulary knowledge, SPCC, and past communication experience contribute to the learners' WTC in English. First and foremost, the classmates factor exerts the greatest influence on the learners' in-class WTC in English. The learners' different language proficiency, different attitudes, and their relationships with each other were reported to affect their in-class L2 WTC. Similar to the results of Svensson's (2016) research study, in the learners' experience, these differences often affect their L2 WTC negatively and thereby their oral production skills development. The EFL learners want to interact with their classmates who are at their level, who are willing to speak English, and who take the English course seriously. Furthermore, some learners mention that there is no time for them to speak as their classmates with high L2 WTC take up all of the communication space. This was also supported by Yu (2015) who argues that learners with high L2 WTC intrude on the communication space of the students with low WTC and that this reduces their L2 WTC even more. Thus, there is a risk that learners with high L2 WTC will dominate the whole conversation and demotivate the other learners (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

The EFL learners also stated that their WTC in English depends on the instructional methods and materials used to teach the content. They complained about the lack of instructional methods and materials which give them the opportunity to speak English in the classroom. They mentioned that they get bored easily, and thus they are often reluctant to speak English in the English classes because their instructor does not use any other materials apart from the coursebook. According to Dörnyei (2007), long-lasting L2 learning occurs not merely via offering cognitively sufficient instructional practices but learning settings should also give sufficient pleasure and support to generate motivation in the students. Increased motivation, in turn, often leads to higher levels of WTC in English (Peng, 2007).

The teacher-related factors were also discovered to exert influence upon the learners' eagerness to communicate in English. According to the findings, lack of support from the teacher leads to a decrease in the learners' in-class L2 WTC. Kang (2005) and Peng (2007) stress the importance of social support from teachers in creating security and situational L2 WTC. To put it simply, teacher support plays a key role in promoting a safe classroom atmosphere to increase L2 communication. The participants also reported that they are keener to communicate with a foreign teacher when compared to a Turkish teacher. The result is in line with that of Miller and Pearson's (2013) study, in which students were reported to be keener to speak with a native English-speaking teacher when compared to a Chinese teacher. According to the learners, foreign teachers only attach importance to their ability to express themselves and do not care whether they construct grammatically correct sentences or not. The EFL learners complain that Turkish instructors of English always correct their mistakes, and they mention that constant correction of their mistakes reduces their enthusiasm for speaking English. This is well supported by Zarrinabadi (2014) who concludes that when the teacher's correction instantly follows the learner's error, it is likely to decrease his/her L2 WTC. The significant effect of teacher's error correction on L2 WTC was also reported in Kang's (2005) study. All in all, the aforementioned teacher-related factors lead to the inevitable conclusion that the teacher has a significant effect on learners' in-class L2 WTC.

The findings of the current study confirm that classroom atmosphere contributes enormously to the learners' WTC in English as supported by many previous studies (Joe, Hiver, & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2017; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Riasati, 2012). The EFL learners contended that they feel keener to speak English in a relaxed atmosphere in which there is a good rapport between the instructor and the learners. Moreover, they stated that a noisy class hinders their participation and learning. As Joe and associates (2017) argue, classroom social climate directly influences the satisfaction of students' fundamental mental needs, thereby positively affecting the development of the more self-directed forms of motivation that results in greater levels of L2 willingness to communicate. A positive classroom environment also reduces anxiety among learners and fosters enjoyment and L2 WTC (Khajavy et al., 2017).

Class size was also revealed to have an impact on the EFL learners' in-class WTC in English. The results indicated that the learners' WTC in English decreases as class size increases. This finding is expected and in line with Wells and Chang-Well's (1992) claim that smaller classes are more advantageous for producing higher participation. Aubrey (2010) also suggests that the learners in a larger class have less chance to talk than those in smaller class. On the contrary, the learners in smaller classes have sufficient opportunity to practise and create their self-confidence, and this, in turn, increases their enthusiasm for speaking English (Khazaei et al., 2012).

The results of the present study shed light on the fact that fear of making mistakes and fear of being ridiculed by others are important factors leading to unwillingness to speak English. The learners feel ashamed and embarrassed when they make some mistakes, particularly in grammar and pronunciation, while speaking English. This may result from their tendency to be other-directed, which is a determinant of learners' L2 WTC (Jung, 2011). They are worried about the way in which they are perceived by other people. Similarly, their second main concern is their fear of being ridiculed by others (Nagy, 2007). They complain that some of their classmates are hunting for the slightest mistake of the person who is speaking English, laughing at it out loud and rubbing it in his/her face over and over again. Since they do not

feel comfortable in class, they do not want to speak English unless they have to. Therefore, L2 WTC is partially influenced by how much the learners are ready to take the risk of losing face.

Topic of discussion is another factor which was revealed to have an impact on the EFL learners' WTC in English. According to the participants of this study, topic familiarity and topic interest are the important characteristics of a particular topic which play a major role in creating eagerness or reluctance to communicate in English. Thus, a learner's lack of knowledge on or interest in a certain topic may reduce his/her WTC in English. This study replicates the findings of the earlier studies (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005; Nagy, 2007; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Riasati, 2012) regarding the effect of topic on students' degree of L2 WTC. In their model of L2 WTC, MacIntyre and associates (1998) argue that topic has a great influence on the ease of language use. Topic familiarity may result in an increase in an individual's linguistic self-confidence, whereas lack of knowledge about a topic may impede communication. Moreover, learners appear to have the highest level of WTC about a topic they are interested in, whereas they are unwilling to talk about the topics that they find boring (Kang, 2005).

Personal characteristics including shyness and introversion were also reported by the EFL learners as key factors contributing to their readiness to speak English. Shyness was identified to have a negative impact on learners' desire to enter into a discourse in English, which is consistent with previous research (Fallah, 2014; Riasati, 2012). As shy learners have excessive self-focused attention, less self-confidence and low self-esteem (Crozier, 2001), they may tend to deliberately avoid participating in class discussions (Fallah, 2014). The missed opportunities for practising speaking cause low motivation to learn English, thereby decreasing their WTC in English. As for introversion, it was also detected to decrease the EFL learners' L2 WTC. Deducing from the findings that extroverts tend to talk more than introverts, McCroskey and Richmond (1990) argue that introversion is an antecedent of WTC. It is also suggested that extroverts appear to have a higher SPCC, which in turn leads them to have higher WTC in English (Çetinkaya, 2005). Moreover, as extrovert learners are likely to be socially active individuals and thus have more opportunities to gain communicative experience, they tend to have lower communication anxiety and higher L2 WTC (MacIntyre, Babin, & Clément, 1999).

In the study, as linguistic factors, pronunciation, practice and vocabulary knowledge were found to influence L2 WTC. Low self-assessment in pronunciation and fear of negative evaluation cause lack of L2 self-confidence and high unwillingness to speak English as also supported by Baran-Lucarz's study (2014). The learners also reported the positive effect of practice on their desire to communicate in English. This confirms Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu's (2004) finding that frequency and amount of L2 communication contribute enormously to L2 WTC. Besides, vocabulary knowledge was described by the learners as another linguistic factor that has an impact on their WTC in English, which corresponds to Cao's (2005) finding that insufficient L2 vocabulary influences the learners' SPCC, which in turn affects their L2 WTC.

SPCC, which is considered to be one of the key variables underlying L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998), was also revealed to be an important factor influencing the learners' WTC in English in this study. As shown by previous research (Bahadori & Hashemizadeh, 2018; Öz et al., 2015; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Riasati, 2012; Yashima et al., 2004), learners with higher

SPCC are keener to speak English than the ones who perceive their communication competence as low. Moreover, it is argued that it is not what learners actually can do but what they believe they can do which affects their WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). This implies that a learner's SPCC may be more essential than his/her actual ability to speak English.

The findings also demonstrated that the learners' past communication experience determines their willingness to enter into a discourse with a specific individual. Their previous negative experiences in English communication lead to their communication anxiety, which results in their reluctance to communicate in English whereas positive past experiences motivate them to speak English. The results are similar to those of other WTC studies (Çetinkaya, 2005; Jung, 2011). It is asserted that learners' L2 anxiety stems mainly from their unpleasant past experiences in the L2 classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Their communication anxiety leads to a sense of helplessness and lack of enthusiasm for communicating in English.

6. Conclusions
The current study aimed at probing the EFL learners' perceptions of the factors influencing their WTC in English in the classroom. The results demonstrated that learners' in-class L2 WTC is affected by a variety of factors including classmates, instructional methods, teacher, atmosphere, materials, class size, L2 motivation, fear of being ridiculed, L2 anxiety, fear of making mistakes, topic interest, topic familiarity, shyness, introversion, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, practice, SPCC and past communication experience. Some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers and instructors can be drawn from the results of the study. The results imply that EFL learners lack considerable practice in speaking English since most language teachers or instructors spend the majority of their class time on grammar and ignore productive skills like speaking and writing. If the fundamental objective of L2 instruction is to facilitate learners' L2 use, then a communicative approach should be adopted in EFL classrooms, with an emphasis on speaking rather than grammar. Language teachers and instructors should be aware of the fact that frequency and amount of L2 communication increase learners' WTC in English (Yashima et al., 2004).

As a result of the study, L2 anxiety was revealed to be an important factor influencing EFL learners' WTC in English negatively. EFL learners are unwilling to speak English and prefer to remain silent in the classroom because of fear of making mistakes. Efforts should be made to create a non-threatening and safe classroom environment in which learners feel secure and do not feel any apprehension about making mistakes or being laughed at. As fear of making mistakes seems to make learners hesitant to speak English in class, it is of the utmost importance that teachers accept learners' mistakes as a natural component of the L2 learning process and encourage learners to take part in L2 communication in spite of their mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, etc. This, in turn, will help to boost learners' SPCC, which is a major determinant of WTC in English. Besides, it may be advisable for teachers to give learners with low L2 WTC more chances to speak in class and develop their self-confidence.

It is evident from the findings of this study that L2 WTC is a dynamic construct which is affected by various factors. Since it is considered to be the most immediate determinant of L2 use and a key requirement for successful language learning (Ellis, 2008), it appears essential for teachers to recognize the interaction between a range of affective, linguistic, and instructional factors and the impact of that interaction upon students' L2 WTC. As L2 communication primarily takes place in the classroom in the EFL settings like Turkey, it is

crucial for EFL teachers to foster facilitating factors of L2 WTC as much as possible in the classroom. They should also consider the interplay between these factors while planning language learning activities.

As a note on the limitations of the study, the participants were restricted to only undergraduate EFL students. Thus, any further generalization from this study should be done cautiously. Besides, in the current study, semi-structured interviews were used to determine learners' perceptions of the factors which affect their WTC in English. Although semi-structured interviews give the researchers the opportunity to probe learners' self-reported perceptions or attitudes, stimulated recall technique can be a better instrument 'to prompt learners to recall or report their thoughts while performing a task or participating in an event' (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 78). With this technique, the reader is provided with a variety of interpretations of what is happening in the EFL classroom. Thus, further research on in-class L2 WTC using a stimulated recall technique would be worth carrying out.

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