Research on Willingness to Communicate in the Vietnamese Context: Trends, Findings, Implications, and Limitations

Hoang Quoc Viet[1]✉, Nguyen Van Loi[2],
Le Xuan Mai[3]

[1] viethq@ueh.edu.vn
PhD candidate at Can Tho University
(Vietnam)
University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City
(Vietnam)

[2] loinguyen@ctu.edu.vn
Can Tho University (Vietnam)

[3] lxmai@ctu.edu.vn
Can Tho University (Vietnam)

✉ Corresponding author

ABSTRACT: *Willingness to communicate (WTC), a key construct in second language acquisition (SLA), has been widely studied globally, but its investigation in Vietnam remains limited. Given the socio-cultural and educational characteristics of Vietnam, understanding WTC is crucial for improving English teaching and learning outcomes. However, existing studies in the Vietnamese EFL context remain fragmented, methodologically constrained, and have paid limited attention to the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of WTC. This integrative literature review explores research on WTC in the Vietnamese English as a foreign language (EFL) context, examining trends, findings, pedagogical implications, and limitations. Through a systematic analysis of 11 empirical studies conducted from 2016 to 2024, this review identifies three major research trends: (1) investigations into how WTC develops among Vietnamese EFL learners, (2) interactions between WTC and individual, contextual, and socio-cultural factors, and (3) strategies employed by teachers to enhance student' WTC. The findings highlight internal factors such as self-perceived competence, confidence, and anxiety, as well as external influences like classroom environment, task types, and teacher strategies. Despite these contributions, existing research faces methodological constraints, including reliance on self-reported data, small sample sizes, and a predominant focus on urban tertiary contexts. Additionally, limited attention has been given to the dynamic nature of WTC, particularly its fluctuations during task performance. The review underscores the need for more diverse methodologies, longitudinal studies, and pedagogical interventions tailored to the Vietnamese context. Recommendations for future research and practical strategies for fostering WTC in Vietnamese EFL classrooms are proposed.*

KEYWORDS: EFL teaching and learning, integrative literature review, Vietnamese context, willingness to communicate (WTC).

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1. Introduction

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is a pivotal concept in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), encapsulating the likelihood of an individual to initiate communication when given the opportunity (Khajavy *et al.*, 2018; MacIntyre, 2020). Initially conceptualized by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in the context of first language communication, WTC has since evolved to encompass second language (L2) learning, gaining significant attention from researchers worldwide (e.g., Ma *et al.*, 2022; Öz & Bursalı, 2018; Yashima *et al.*, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Understanding WTC is crucial, as it directly influences language learners'

communication behavior (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021), ultimately affecting their language proficiency and overall learning outcomes (Lee & Taylor, 2022; Hoang, 2024).

In Vietnam, research on WTC is particularly significant due to the unique socio-cultural and educational context (Bui *et al.*, 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023). The country's language education landscape has been shaped by rapid changes, including policy reforms and an increasing emphasis on English as a global lingua franca (Lam, 2023; Nguyen & Vu, 2024; Phuong *et al.*, 2023). These changes have introduced new challenges and opportunities for both learners and educators. Therefore, investigating WTC

within this context can provide valuable insights into how Vietnamese learners' L2 WTC is influenced by various factors (Huynh & Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2022). Despite the growing body of WTC research conducted in Vietnam, existing studies remain fragmented and have not yet been systematically synthesized, which motivates the need for the present integrative review.

Given the importance of this concept, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of research conducted in the Vietnamese context, highlighting research trends, key findings, pedagogical implications, and limitations of WTC studies. To achieve this, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the trends in research on WTC in Vietnam?

2. What are the findings of WTC research and their implications in the Vietnamese context?

3. What are the limitations of WTC research in the Vietnamese context?

Through a thorough examination of existing literature, this paper highlights the key trends in WTC research in Vietnam, offering a comprehensive overview of the academic landscape and identifying emerging themes and methodologies. By synthesizing the findings of these studies, the paper provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of various strategies to enhance WTC and their practical implications for language education in Vietnam. Furthermore, this research critically addresses the limitations present in current WTC studies, shedding light on methodological, contextual, and theoretical challenges. In doing so, it not only informs future research directions but also encourages the exploration of under-researched areas, ultimately contributing to a more robust and contextually relevant understanding of WTC in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Willingness to Communicate

MacIntyre *et al.* (1998) posited that L2 WTC is a multifaceted concept, significantly influenced by one's communicative competence in the second language. They argued that "it is highly unlikely that L2 WTC is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1" (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998, p. 546). Furthermore, they defined L2 WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998, p. 547). This suggests that the emergence of a communication opportunity does not necessarily compel an individual to engage in discourse to demonstrate WTC. For example, if a teacher asks students to read an article and find the answer to a question, the act of all students raising their hands to respond indicates their WTC, even though only one will be selected to answer verbally.

2.2. MacIntyre *et al.*'s (1998) Heuristic Model

To elucidate the complex interplay of factors influencing L2 communication behaviors, MacIntyre *et al.* (1998) devised a heuristic model of WTC. This model encompasses a range of linguistic, communicative, and social psychological factors that potentially impact an individual's WTC. The researchers highlighted that WTC is a situational variable that can vary across different contexts, meaning an individual's decision to engage in communication may change depending on the situation. The model is depicted as a complex six-layer pyramid, categorized into two major groups with a total of 12 variables affecting linguistic, communicative, and psychological dimensions (see Fig. 1). The first group, comprising Layers 1, 2, and 3, represents situation-specific influences, while the second group, encompassing Layers 4, 5, and 6, outlines stable influences on WTC. Specifically, Layer 1 pertains to actual communicative behavior, shaped by the intricate relationships among other layers. Layer 2 represents WTC in L2, and Layer 3 includes two precursors: the desire to communicate with a particular person and state self-confidence. Layer 4 involves two types of motivation and L2 self-confidence. Layer 5 addresses affective and cognitive contexts, reflecting the impact of learners' anxiety and motivation toward the target language. The final layer consists of intergroup climate and personality, relating to the characteristics of the L2 community and the learners' attitudes toward it. According to the model, as learners progress
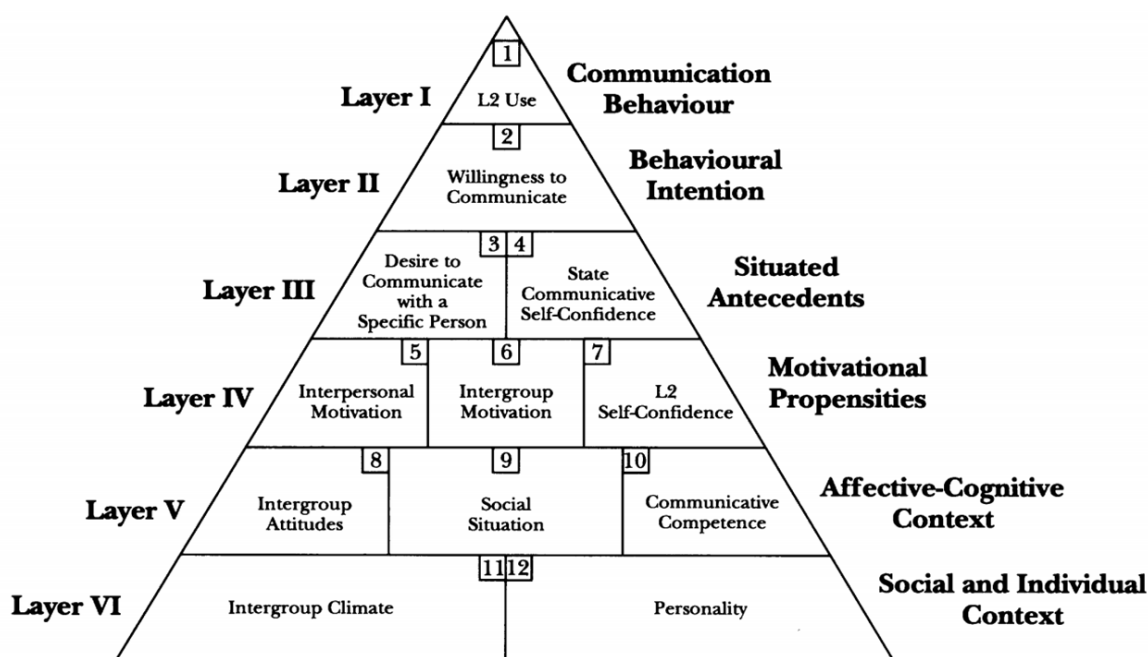
Figure 1. Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (Adapted from MacIntyre et al., 1998)

through the layers, they tend to use the L2 more frequently. Additionally, from Layer 3 to Layer 1, the influence of variables varies depending on the situation.

Moreover, communication within this framework is broadly defined, encompassing activities such as speaking up in class, reading L2 newspapers, watching L2 television, or using L2 at work (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998, p. 547). Thus, WTC includes not only speaking but also other language skills, such as reading. However, the framework does not distinguish between WTC inside and outside the classroom.

Despite its enduring influence, MacIntyre *et al.*'s (1998) heuristic model presents both notable strengths and limitations. One of its major strengths lies in its integrative nature, as it systematically connects linguistic, psychological, and social dimensions of L2 communication and clearly distinguishes between stable and situation-specific influences on WTC. This layered structure has provided a foundational framework for subsequent empirical research and has been widely adopted in both ESL and EFL contexts. However, the model has been criticized for its relatively static representation of WTC, as it does not fully capture moment-to-moment fluctuations in learners' WTC during task performance or interaction. In addition, the model was developed primarily within Western communicative contexts and does not explicitly account for socio-cultural constraints common in many EFL settings, including exam-oriented instruction and limited opportunities for authentic interaction. Nevertheless, the model remains highly relevant to the present review, as it offers a theoretically robust lens for categorizing and synthesizing the factors examined in Vietnamese WTC studies. At the same time, identifying how existing Vietnamese research aligns with, or departs from, this framework allows the present review to highlight conceptual gaps and underscore the need for more dynamic and context-sensitive approaches to WTC in future research.

2.3. Willingness to Communicate in the Contexts of English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language

WTC in SLA exhibits distinct differences between English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) environment. As noted by Lee and Lu (2021), learners' WTC outside the classroom is primarily observed in multilingual countries where English is used as an L2. In these ESL contexts,

learners are immersed in an English-speaking community, providing ample opportunities for authentic communication education and practice (Vongsila & Reinders, 2016). This immersion generally enhances WTC, as learners frequently interact with native speakers and are exposed to real-life communicative situations. Such exposure leads to increased confidence and motivation to engage in conversations, facilitating more natural and frequent use of the language.

Conversely, in EFL contexts, where English is taught as a foreign language, learners typically have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As Lee and Lu (2021) highlight, the classroom often becomes "a typical place for English communication" (p. 1) in EFL settings. This restricted environment reduces learners' opportunities for spontaneous communication (Aubrey & Yashima, 2023), which often results in lower levels of WTC. The lack of confidence, limited practical experience, and fewer chances to interact with proficient speakers further contribute to this diminished WTC (Ayedoun et al., 2019). The disparity in exposure and opportunities between ESL and EFL contexts underscores the challenges EFL learners face in developing their communicative competence.

In the Vietnamese context, these challenges are particularly pronounced (Bui et al., 2022; Lam, 2023; Le et al., 2018; Le & Tran, 2019; Hoang & Bui, 2023; Huynh & Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen & Vu, 2024; Phuong et al., 2023). As an EFL country, Vietnam provides limited opportunities for learners to use English outside the classroom (Bui et al., 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023). English is not widely spoken in daily life, and learners often lack exposure to authentic communicative situations (Le et al., 2018). Consequently, Vietnamese students primarily rely on classroom interactions to practice their English skills (Le & Tran, 2019; Nguyen, 2022; Phuong et al., 2023). Beyond these contextual constraints, Vietnamese learners' WTC is also shaped by socio-cultural norms such as collectivist orientations (Nguyen, 2024), face-saving concerns, and exam-driven learning traditions (Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012), which may discourage spontaneous oral participation even when instructional opportunities are available. This reliance places a significant responsibility on educators to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes WTC (Lam, 2023; Nguyen & Vu, 2024). Teachers in Vietnam must employ innovative teaching methods, such as task-based learning, group discussions, and role-playing activities, to encourage students to use English more actively. Additionally, integrating technology and online resources can help provide learners with more exposure to English through media such as videos, podcasts, and interactive language platforms (Le et al., 2018). By addressing these contextual challenges, educators can better support Vietnamese EFL learners in developing their WTC, ultimately enhancing their overall language proficiency and confidence.

2.4. Previous Reviews on Willingness to Communicate

Research on WTC in L2 education has seen significant interest, leading to numerous review articles that aim to systemize concepts, theories, influencing factors, and research methodologies (e.g., Kirkpatrick et al. 2024; Riasati & Noordin, 2011; Syed et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2023). These reviews play a crucial role in providing an overview of the field and identifying potential future research directions.

Several reviews have focused on tracing the development of the WTC model over time. For example, Mohseni & Niknejad (2013) and Syed et al. (2021) presented a narrative review of key conceptual developments in L2 WTC research, including MacIntyre et al.'s pyramid model, Wen and Clement's (2003) conceptual model in the Chinese context, and Kang's (2005) situational model. This review also introduced *Complex Dynamic Systems Theory* as an alternative theoretical framework for studying the complex and dynamic nature of L2 WTC. Zarrinabadi and Tanbakooei (2016) also examined the rise and development of WTC research, discussing potential future directions, such as "dynamism in L2 WTC, WTC in different skills, and WTC in

computer-mediated communication" (p. 42).

Other reviews have concentrated on identifying the antecedents and influencing factors of WTC. Riasati and Noordin (2011) conducted a literature review to identify the antecedents of WTC and the factors influencing it. Yan *et al.* (2023) performed a systematic review of factors influencing students' English WTC in the EFL classroom published from 2013 to 2022, categorizing them into internal and external factors. This review indicated that the factors have become more diversified, including emotional intelligence, ethnic group affiliation, and digital game-based learning. Furthermore, Akdemir (2021) investigated the micro and macro factors influencing WTC, considering both its fixed and dynamic nature.

Regarding research methodology, reviews have indicated a variety in the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods to study WTC. Kirkpatrick *et al.* (2024) conducted a scoping review of WTC in language education, discussing the methodologies that have been employed to assess WTC. Yan *et al.* (2023) also analyzed the research methods used in studies on English WTC, noting that quantitative methods were dominant.

Furthermore, some systematic reviews have focused on the impact of specific factors on WTC. Jelínková *et al.* (2024) conducted a systematic review on the impact of feedback on EFL students' WTC. Elahi Shirvan *et al.* (2019) performed a meta-analysis on the correlations between L2 WTC and three key factors: perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and motivation.

Some review studies have focused on specific contexts or learner populations. Jelínková (2022) reviewed studies on WTC in university students, focusing on research with potential pedagogical implications at this level. Simic and Tanaka (2008) conducted a review of research works on WTC in language contexts, paying particular attention to studies in Asia and Japan. Matsuoka and Evans (2005) also reviewed WTC in the second language context, specifically mentioning the East Asian context. However, Yan *et al.* (2023) pointed out that previous reviews were often not up-to-date and overlooked comprehensive factors affecting students' L2 WTC. Kirkpatrick *et al.* (2024) also highlighted the lack of research on WTC in digital and EFL contexts.

Overall, existing review studies have made substantial contributions to conceptualizing WTC, identifying its influencing factors, and mapping methodological trends across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. However, these reviews have primarily adopted broad, cross-contextual perspectives and have not systematically examined WTC research within specific national EFL settings. In particular, no review to date has synthesized empirical studies on WTC conducted in Vietnam, where learners' communicative behavior is shaped by distinct sociocultural norms, educational policies, and classroom realities. This lack of a context-specific synthesis limits our understanding of how global WTC theories are operationalized and manifested in Vietnamese EFL classrooms. Addressing this gap, the present study provides an integrative review of WTC research in Vietnam, linking established theoretical frameworks with local empirical evidence to clarify research trends, pedagogical implications, and directions for future inquiry.

3. Methodology

This study adopted an integrative literature review approach to synthesize empirical research on WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context. This approach is appropriate for integrating findings from studies employing diverse research designs and for identifying research trends, pedagogical implications, and theoretical and methodological gaps (Uman, 2011; Robinson & Lowe, 2015).

3.1. Search Strategy and Study Selection

A systematic search was conducted across international and regional databases, including ERIC, LLBA, MLA, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and internal repositories of Vietnamese universities. The search used combinations of the keywords *"willingness to communicate"*, *"WTC"*, *"Vietnam"*, and *"Vietnamese"*. To capture both international and locally published research, no

restrictions were placed on publication venue. The search focused on studies published between 2015 and 2025, reflecting the emergence and development of WTC research in Vietnam.

Study selection followed a three-stage screening process. First, titles and abstracts were screened to identify studies that explicitly addressed WTC in Vietnamese EFL contexts. Second, full texts were examined based on predefined inclusion criteria: studies had to (a) investigate WTC as a central construct, (b) involve Vietnamese EFL learners or teachers, (c) report empirical data using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods designs, and (d) be published as peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, or approved M.A./Ph.D. theses. Finally, studies lacking sufficient methodological detail, empirical evidence, or substantive focus on WTC were excluded. This process resulted in 11 empirical studies for final synthesis.

3.2. Data Extraction, Quality Appraisal, and Synthesis

A structured data extraction framework was used to collect information on research design, participant characteristics and contexts, data collection instruments, operationalization of WTC, and reported influencing factors and pedagogical strategies. At the review level, influencing factors were categorized into internal, contextual/situational, and socio-cultural/pedagogical dimensions to facilitate cross-study comparison.

Each study was subjected to a basic quality appraisal focusing on clarity of research design, participant description, reporting of reliability and validity (where applicable), and transparency of data analysis. This appraisal informed interpretation rather than serving as an exclusion criterion, in line with integrative review principles.

Findings were synthesized using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, dominant research trends, pedagogical implications, and methodological limitations across studies, while highlighting underexplored areas such as the dynamic and temporal nature of WTC.

Table 1. Summary of Features of Selected Studies

Research Design	Quantitative (n=4) Qualitative (n=3) Mix/multi-methods (n=4)
Research Settings	K-12 (n=3) Tertiary (n=8)
Types of Paper	Article (n=8) Theses (n=3)

4. Results

As this study adopts an integrative literature review approach, the Results section does not report statistical significance or effect sizes, which are typically associated with primary empirical analyses. Instead, the results synthesize and interpret patterns, trends, and recurring findings across existing empirical studies on WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context. The figures and tables presented below therefore serve to visually summarize research trends, influencing factors, and pedagogical implications identified in the reviewed studies

4.1. Research Trends on WTC in the Vietnamese Context

Regarding the significance of L2 WTC in SLA, researchers have explored this concept through various studies. In Vietnam, research on WTC over the past decade has predominantly followed three main trends (see Fig. 2). The first trend focuses on investigating how WTC is developed, emphasizing its role in fostering authentic communication and contributing to language acquisition. These studies usually focus on measuring L2 learners' levels of WTC or their beliefs. The second trend examines the interactions between WTC and other variables. The figure shows that all studies on WTC in Vietnam investigated the factors affecting L2 learners' WTC. The third trend explores teachers' strategies for enhancing WTC, assessing how different approaches impact students' WTC, with 3 out of 11 studies focusing on this area. Moreover, interviews and questionnaires are the predominant instruments used in the studies, with each being employed in 7 out of 11 cases,

alongside 1 instance of open-ended questions and 1 observation. Lastly, the participants in these studies are predominantly from tertiary contexts (6 studies involving students and 1 involving teachers) and high school contexts (4 studies involving students and 2 involving teachers). Overall, recent research has significantly deepened our understanding of WTC and highlighted its importance in L2 teaching and learning in tertiary and high school settings in Vietnam.

4.2. Research Findings and Implications on WTC in the Vietnamese Context

4.2.1. Findings

Understanding the factors that influence students' WTC in EFL contexts is crucial for enhancing language learning outcomes. This synthesis of recent studies highlights the multifaceted nature of WTC, encompassing internal factors such as self-perceived competence, confidence, and anxiety, alongside contextual elements like classroom environment, task types, and teacher strategies.

Internal factors play a significant role in influencing WTC. Nguyen (2016), Hoang (2023), and Hoang and Bui (2023) highlight the importance of self-perceived communication competence and self-confidence. Le and Tran (2019) and Phuong *et al.* (2023) note that low confidence and fear of making mistakes hinder students' WTC. Anxiety, identified by Le *et al.* (2018), Bui *et al.* (2022), and Nguyen (2022), negatively impacts WTC, leading to lower engagement in communicative activities. Furthermore, Nguyen (2016) emphasizes that motivation and positive attitudes are critical for enhancing WTC.

Contextual and situational factors also significantly affect WTC. A supportive and interactive classroom environment, as underscored by Le and Tran (2019), Lam (2023), and Phuong *et al.* (2023), encourages active student participation. The nature of tasks and discussion topics, highlighted by Lam (2023) and Hoang and Bui (2023), also play a crucial role, with interesting and relevant tasks promoting higher engagement levels. The teacher's role is crucial, with effective strategies including creating a dynamic atmosphere, providing positive feedback, and fostering supportive peer relationships and teacher-student rapport, as noted by Bui *et al.* (2022), Hoang (2023), Hoang and Bui (2023), Huynh and Nguyen (2021), and Nguyen and Vu (2024).

Social and cultural factors further influence WTC. Le *et al.* (2018) found that social presence in online environments enhances WTC, while Bui *et al.* (2022) emphasize the importance of peer dynamics in the classroom. Phuong *et al.* (2023) and Nguyen and Vu (2024) identify cultural factors and unstimulating learning environments as significant barriers to WTC, underscoring the need to address these elements to improve communication willingness.

In terms of novelty, the focus on Vietnam is novel, but the findings mostly reinforce global WTC trends. Emphasizing any truly Vietnam-

Figure 2. Summary of Research Trends in WTC in the Vietnamese Context

unique insights (e.g. surprising teacher behaviors, policy impacts, or cultural attitudes found in the selected studies, or cultural pressures, exam-driven classrooms) would demonstrate stronger novelty.

4.2.2. Pedagogical Implications

The research underscores the importance of creating supportive, interactive, and engaging learning environments tailored to individual student needs. By addressing both psychological and situational barriers, educators can foster a more conducive atmosphere for language acquisition, thereby improving students' communicative competence and overall engagement in the learning process.

Creating a supportive and interactive classroom environment is a common recommendation across studies. Le and Tran (2019), Nguyen (2022), and Lam (2023) suggest fostering group work, providing positive feedback, and reducing anxiety to enhance WTC. Huynh and Nguyen (2021) advocate for incorporating mindful physical movement into language teaching to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience.

Tailoring pedagogical strategies to address individual and contextual factors is crucial for enhancing WTC. Nguyen (2016), Lam (2023), and Nguyen and Vu (2024) emphasize the need for personalized support and understanding students' individual differences. Incorporating relevant and interesting activities, as suggested by Lam (2023) and Hoang and Bui (2023), can boost student engagement and WTC.

By implementing these strategies, educators

Table 2. Research Findings and Pedagogical Implications

Studies	Findings	Implications
Nguyen (2016)	- Factors: internal factors (self-perceived communication competence, communication apprehension, motivation, attitudes, personality)	- Understanding communication orientation of L2 learners & influencing factors
Le *et al.* (2018)	- Students holding more WTC during online environment - Factors: social presence, confidence & anxiety	- Allowing students to control social presence during online learning
Le and Tran (2019)	- Students holding low levels of WTC - Factors: individual (lack of English proficiency, low confidence in speaking abilities, fear of making mistakes) & situational (the difficulty of tasks, unfamiliarity with topics, the classroom atmosphere)	- Providing more preparation time - Encouraging pair & group work, offering positive feedback - Creating a supportive & interactive classroom environment
Huynh and Nguyen (2021)	- Mindful physical movement improving self-confidence & WTC - Factors: self-confidence	- Incorporating physical movement into language teaching > more engaging & interactive learning environment
Nguyen (2022)	- Students holding a medium level of WTC - Students preferring speaking activities & volunteer answers, rather than with teachers & peers	- Creating a supportive & interactive classroom environment - Providing positive feedback & - Reducing students' anxiety
Bui *et al.* (2022)	- Teacher's role emphasized - Factors: confidence, anxiety, sociocultural factors - Teachers' strategies: dynamic atmosphere, peer-interaction, group cohesiveness, warm-up, topic familiarization	- Updating teaching methods & continually adapting strategies

Studies	Findings	Implications
Lam (2023)	- Students holding a medium level of WTC - Factors: individual characteristics (self-confidence & learning anxiety) & situational variables (task types, discussion topics, interlocutors)	- Creating a supportive learning environment - Tailoring pedagogical strategies
Phuong *et al.* (2023)	- Factors: psychological (nervousness, pressure from social comparison, tension) & contextual factors (classroom atmosphere, speaking partners, lecturers' characteristics)	- Enhancing their teaching methods & develop personal qualities like sincerity & caring to foster a supportive environment
Hoang and Bui (2023)	- Factors: self-perceived English proficiency, anxiety, self-confidence, interests - Teachers' strategies: dynamic atmosphere, teacher rapport, grouping, warm-up activities, arousing topics, positive corrective feedback - Students' beliefs varying individually	- Creating a positive classroom environment - Fostering supportive peer relationships
Hoang (2023)	- Students holding a high & medium level of WTC - different between males & females - Factors: self-perceived English proficiency, anxiety, self-confidence, interests, sociocultural factors, teacher-student rapport	- Understanding students' individual differences - Creating a positive classroom environment & improving teacher-student relationships
Nguyen and Vu (2024)	- Teacher's role emphasized, not textbook / curriculum - Factors: restricted lexicon, inaccurate pronunciation, low self-confidence, anxiety, cultural factors & unstimulating learning environments	- Tailoring teaching strategies > addressing individual & contextual factors

can effectively address the various factors influencing WTC and create a learning environment that promotes active communication and language acquisition (see Table 2).

Additionally, based on the findings regarding the factors influencing Vietnamese EFL learners' WTC, a systematic model can be developed to represent these factors. The factors are classified into two categories: internal and external factors. Fig. 3 visually synthesizes the internal and external factors influencing Vietnamese learners' WTC, illustrating how psychological variables interact with instructional and socio-cultural conditions.

Importantly, the pedagogical implications identified in this review are not merely theoretical but point toward concrete educational outcomes. By fostering supportive classroom environments, implementing interactive task types, and providing affect-sensitive teacher feedback,

educators can promote higher levels of student participation, increased speaking confidence, and reduced communication anxiety. Over time, these outcomes are likely to contribute to greater learner engagement, more frequent use of English for authentic communication, and improved communicative competence in Vietnamese EFL classrooms

4.2.3. Limitations of Previous Studies

Despite the valuable insights provided by research on WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context, several limitations need to be acknowledged to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings and their implications (see Table 3).

First, the scarcity of research on WTC in the Vietnamese context is notable. The eleven studies, including theses, fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Given that WTC is inherently dynamic and context-sensitive (Hoang
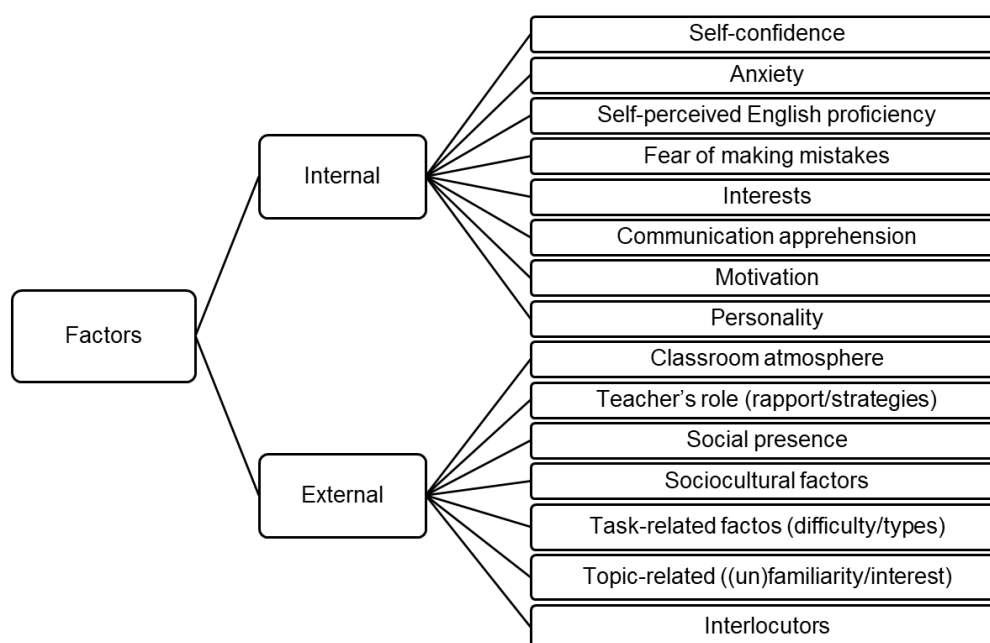
	Self-confidence
	Anxiety
	Self-perceived English proficiency
Internal	Fear of making mistakes
	Interests
	Communication apprehension
	Motivation
	Personality

Factors

	Classroom atmosphere
	Teacher's role (rapport/strategies)
	Social presence
External	Sociocultural factors
	Task-related factos (difficulty/types)
	Topic-related ((un)familiarity/interest)
	Interlocutors

Figure 3. Model of Factors Influencing Vietnamese EFL Students' WTC

& Bui, 2023; Lu, 2022), there is a pressing need for further studies conducted in unique contexts like Vietnam to enrich both the literature and practical applications.

Regarding the research methodology, there are four specific limitations. First, many studies, such as those by Nguyen (2016) and Le *et al.* (2018), rely heavily on self-reported data through questionnaires and interviews. While these methods provide valuable insights into learners' perceptions and attitudes, they are subject to biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Participants may overestimate or underestimate their WTC, leading to inaccuracies in the data. Second, the majority of the studies focus on specific educational contexts, primarily tertiary institutions and high schools in urban areas. For example, studies like those by Le and Tran (2019) and Bui *et al.* (2022) predominantly involve students from these settings. This narrow focus limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts, such as rural schools or different educational levels. Next, several studies, such as Phuong *et al.* (2023), utilize small sample sizes, which can affect the reliability and validity of the findings. Small sample sizes reduce the statistical power of the studies and make it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the factors influencing WTC. Lastly, many studies employ a cross-

sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach, seen in studies like Nguyen (2022) and Lam (2023), does not account for changes in WTC over time or the long-term effects of interventions. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand the dynamic nature of WTC and the sustainability of pedagogical strategies.

In terms of theoretical and conceptual aspects, three limitations are observed. First, while individual studies often focus on specific factors affecting WTC, such as anxiety (Le *et al.*, 2018) or self-confidence (Huynh and Nguyen, 2021), there is a lack of comprehensive models that integrate multiple factors. This narrow focus can lead to an incomplete understanding of the complex interplay of variables influencing WTC. Also, although cultural factors are acknowledged in some studies (e.g., Hoang, 2023; Nguyen and Vu, 2024), there is often insufficient exploration of how broader cultural and societal norms impact WTC. More research is needed to understand how cultural attitudes towards language learning and communication shape students' WTC in the Vietnamese context. Finally, many studies emphasize psychological factors such as self-confidence and anxiety (Nguyen, 2016; Bui *et al.*, 2022) while potentially underestimating the role of external factors such as institutional policies, curriculum design, and socio-economic

Table 3. Limitations of Contemporary Research

Categories	Limitations
Methodological constraints	Reliance on self-reported data
	Limited generalizability
	Small sample sizes
	Cross-sectional design
Theoretical & conceptual frameworks	Narrow focus on specific factors
	Insufficient attention to cultural contexts
	Overemphasis on psychological factors
Practical & pedagogical implications	Implementation challenges
	Teacher training and development
	Sustainability of interventions
	Contextual adaptability

conditions. A more holistic approach that considers both internal and external influences is needed.

Concerning the practical and pedagogical aspects, it is indicated several challenges that can impact the effectiveness of recommended strategies and interventions. One of the primary practical limitations is the implementation challenges. Recommendations for pedagogical strategies, such as those suggested by Le and Tran (2019) and Huynh and Nguyen (2021), may face implementation challenges in real classroom settings. Factors such as large class sizes, limited resources, and teachers' workload can hinder the effective application of these strategies. Furthermore, the role of teachers is crucial in enhancing WTC, yet there is often insufficient focus on teacher training and professional development. Studies like Bui *et al.* (2022), Hoang (2023), and Hoang and Bui (2023) emphasize the need for dynamic teaching methods but do not provide detailed guidance on how teachers can develop these skills. Additionally, while various studies propose innovative strategies to enhance WTC, there is limited evidence on the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of these interventions. Research such as that by Lam (2023) often lacks follow-up studies to assess the lasting impact of the suggested pedagogical changes. Last but not least, strategies effective in one context may not be easily adaptable to others. For instance, methods that work well in urban tertiary settings (Nguyen, 2022) may not be feasible in rural or under-resourced schools. There is a need for more context-specific research to develop adaptable and scalable strategies.

5. Discussion

WTC is a central construct in SLA because of its close link to authentic communication and successful language acquisition. In the Vietnamese context, existing research has largely followed three main trends. The first examines learners' levels of WTC and beliefs about communication, highlighting factors that facilitate or hinder meaningful engagement. The second explores the interaction between WTC and internal and external variables, such as anxiety, self-confidence, and contextual influences, underscoring the multifaceted nature of WTC and the importance of supportive learning environments (Yan *et al.*, 2023). The third, though less frequently addressed, focuses on teacher strategies to enhance WTC, emphasizing the role of teacher training and dynamic instructional practices in fostering students' communicative willingness.

While research on WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context has yielded valuable insights, several limitations warrant consideration.

Methodologically, most studies rely heavily on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which are susceptible to social desirability and recall bias. In addition, the predominance of cross-sectional designs, small sample sizes, and a focus on urban tertiary and high school settings limits both the generalizability of findings and understanding of WTC as a dynamic construct. Longitudinal and methodologically diversified studies are therefore needed.

From a theoretical perspective, existing research tends to examine isolated factors such as anxiety or self-confidence, with limited integration of multiple influences within comprehensive frameworks. Although cultural factors are occasionally acknowledged, broader socio-cultural and institutional influences, such as educational policies, curriculum design, and socio-economic conditions, remain underexplored.

Practically, many proposed pedagogical strategies face implementation challenges due to large class sizes, limited resources, and teachers' workloads. Moreover, insufficient attention has been given to teacher training and the long-term sustainability of WTC-focused interventions. Finally, strategies effective in specific contexts may not be readily transferable, highlighting the need for context-sensitive and scalable approaches tailored to diverse Vietnamese educational settings.

Contemporary research on WTC in the Vietnamese context has also underscored its critical role in SLA. Given the current emphasis on task-based language teaching and CLT, which prioritize the development of learners' communicative competence, WTC becomes a pivotal concept in the EFL classrooms in Vietnam. However, recent studies (e.g., Bui et al., 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023) reveal a significant gap in teachers' understanding and application of WTC principles. These studies indicate that while teachers endeavor to promote student communication, they often do so without adequately considering the students' WTC. This disconnect suggests a pressing need for further research that can influence and improve teacher training programs.

In language education research, a recurring concern is the tendency of some studies to replicate existing work with limited theoretical or methodological innovation. While replication can serve a validation function, excessive repetition contributes little to advancing knowledge. One critical gap that remains underexplored in the Vietnamese context is the dynamic nature of WTC. Although international research has demonstrated that WTC fluctuates across contexts, interlocutors, and emotional states (e.g., Henry et al., 2021; MacIntyre & Gregerson, 2021; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; MacIntyre, 2020; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015), such dynamic perspectives are largely absent from Vietnamese studies. Addressing this gap would enable a more nuanced understanding of how WTC develops and fluctuates in relation to Vietnam's specific sociocultural and educational conditions, thereby contributing both locally and to broader SLA scholarship.

Last but not least, in the Vietnamese EFL context, learners' WTC is shaped not only by individual and instructional factors but also by deeply rooted socio-cultural norms. Vietnam is commonly characterized by collectivist orientations that emphasize group harmony and social cohesion (Nguyen, 2024), which may discourage learners from speaking out or drawing attention to themselves in classroom interactions (Le & Tran, 2019). Closely related to this orientation is the cultural importance of face-saving, whereby learners may avoid oral participation to prevent embarrassment or loss of social image, particularly when they perceive their linguistic competence as limited (Bui et al., 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023). Such concerns are frequently reflected in learners' fear of making mistakes and preference for teacher-led or highly controlled speaking activities (Phuong et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2022). In addition, Vietnam's exam-driven educational system reinforces an accuracy-focused learning culture that prioritizes test performance over spontaneous oral communication (Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012), which can further discourage communicative risk-taking and constrain opportunities for authentic interaction (Lam, 2023; Nguyen & Vu, 2024). Taken together, these socio-cultural and institutional influences help explain why

Vietnamese learners' WTC may remain limited even in communicative classrooms, highlighting the need for culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that create psychologically safe environments and gradually encourage participation in ways aligned with local values.

6. Conclusions

Research on WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context highlights the interaction of internal, contextual, social, and cultural factors shaping learners' communicative engagement. Internal variables such as self-perceived competence, confidence, anxiety, and motivation interact with classroom conditions, task design, and teacher strategies, with supportive and interactive environments facilitating higher WTC. Social dynamics and cultural influences further underscore the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy. At the same time, existing studies are constrained by methodological limitations, including reliance on self-reported data, restricted generalizability, small sample sizes, and challenges in sustaining pedagogical interventions.

To address the identified limitations and enhance the effectiveness of strategies aimed at improving WTC in the Vietnamese EFL context, the following recommendations are proposed to the stakeholders:

(1) Future research should adopt more diverse methodologies, including longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, to better capture changes in WTC over time. Combining objective measures with self-reported data can reduce bias and improve reliability. In particular, real-time or temporal measures of WTC offer a promising avenue for examining moment-to-moment fluctuations during communicative tasks (Henry et al., 2021; MacIntyre & Gregerson, 2021; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; MacIntyre, 2020; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). Such approaches align with the dynamic nature of WTC and can generate actionable insights for L2 pedagogy and curriculum design.

(2) To increase the generalizability of findings, research should include diverse educational settings, such as rural schools and institutions with varying levels of resources. Expanding the participant pool to include a wider range of demographics, including students from different socio-economic backgrounds and regions, will ensure that the findings are more representative of the broader Vietnamese EFL context.

(3) Professional development programs for EFL teachers should be prioritized, with a focus on strategies to enhance WTC. These programs should provide practical, context-specific training on creating supportive classroom environments, managing large classes, and integrating culturally responsive teaching practices. Additionally, mentorship and peer support systems can help novice teachers develop the skills needed to implement these strategies effectively.

(4) Educational institutions should assess the long-term sustainability of pedagogical interventions aimed at enhancing WTC. Regular follow-up studies and ongoing assessments are necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions over time. Teachers should be supported in aligning new strategies with existing curricula to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

(5) Given the significant influence of cultural factors on WTC, teaching strategies should be culturally sensitive and adaptable to different contexts. Educators should incorporate cultural elements into their teaching materials and activities, promote cross-cultural understanding, and create opportunities for students to practice English in real-life contexts. This will help make the learning experience more relevant and engaging for students from diverse backgrounds.

(6) The potential of online environments to enhance WTC should be further explored and integrated into language learning programs. Allowing students to control their social presence in online learning can reduce anxiety and increase confidence. Educational institutions should invest in the necessary technological infrastructure and provide training for both teachers and students to effectively utilize these tools.

By addressing these recommendations, stakeholders can better support the development of WTC among Vietnamese EFL learners, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency and greater success in real-world communication.

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