Influencing Factors of Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in the EFL Classroom: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has been considered a research hotspot in second language acquisition and foreign language teaching. However, systematic analysis of factors influencing students' WTC in English is scarce. This systematic review aims to explore and summarize existing research on factors influencing students' English WTC published from 2013 to 2022. According to the selection criteria, a total of 25 relevant publications are included in the scope of analysis, which has been categorized into internal and external factors. Both of these factors influence students' English WTC. The results showed that most of the studies were concentrated among Middle East participants and the quantitative approach was dominant in these studies. This review revealed that the factors have become more diversified, such as emotional intelligence, ethnic group affiliation, and digital game-based learning. The factors include not only internal and external factors, but there is also a growing trend examining the comprehensive factors including individual factors, affective factors, and learning environment that affect students' WTC in English. Finally, this study may benefit English teachers, researchers, and educators who aspire to improve students' English WTC by providing a detailed review of the factors influencing students' English WTC. It concludes with recommendations for future research to study students' WTC in English.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Internal Factors, External Factors, EFL, Systematic Review

Abstrak

Kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi (WTC) ialah satu cabang kajian penguasaan bahasa kedua. Namun, analisis tinjauan sistematik akan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris didapati masih kurang mendalam. Tinjauan sistematik ini bertujuan untuk meneroka serta menyorot kajian lepas mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesediaan pelajar untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2013 hingga 2022. Berdasarkan kriteria pemilihan, sebanyak 25 buah penerbitan telah dimasukkan sebagai skop analisis tinjauan dimana skop dikategorikan sebagai faktor dalaman dan luaran. Kedua-dua faktor ini mempengaruhi WTC pelajar. Dapatan tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyak kajian banyak tertumpu dalam kalangan pelajar dari Timur Tengah malah kajian kualitatif mendominasi reka bentuk kajian. Tinjuan ini turut mendedahkan bahawa faktor-faktor yang telah dikenal pasti telah menunjukkan trenda kepelbagaian samada kebijaksanaan emosi, kumpulan etnik, dan pembelajaran secara permainan berasaskan digital. Faktor-faktor yang dikenalpasti setakat ini bukan sahaja mengesahkan wujudnya faktor dalaman dan luaran, malah mempamerkan trenda penyelidik meneliti faktor yang memberi kesan terhadap kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris secara komprehensif antaranya faktor individu, afektif, serta persekitaran pembelajaran. Akhir sekali, tinjauan literatur sistematik ini berfaedah kepada guru bahasa Inggris, para penyelidik, serta warga pendidik yang berkeinginan meningkatkan kesediaan pelajar untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris dengan menyediakan tinjauan terperinci mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Tinjauan sistematik ini diakhiri dengan cadangan untuk penumpuan kajian dimasa depan.

Kata kunci: Kesediaan untuk Berkomunikasi (WTC), Faktor Dalaman, Faktor Luaran, EFL, Tinjauan Sistematik

■1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the continuous development of globalization, English is becoming more and more important as a global common language to communicate the speakers' ideas effectively. Communication plays an important role in global business, cultural exchanges, and communication. Therefore, more and more language learners improve their English communicative competence, so that they can have a higher willingness to communicate (WTC) and express their views clearly. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) state that second language acquisition (SLA) includes learning a new language in a foreign language context (e.g. English in Mexico or German in the United States)

as well as learning a new language in a host language environment (e.g. German in Germany). It means that learning English as a foreign language is not necessarily different from learning English as a second language (L2). In this study, therefore, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is used to describe the study of English by language learners as their foreign or second language in different countries.

WTC was originally developed in the first language (L1) communication research (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) and was defined as the probability of communicating given the choice (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). Originally, L1 WTC was considered to be "a personality-based, trait-like predisposition" (McCroskey and Richmond, 1991). Consequently, WTC can be seen as a stable personality trait in L1. Lee and Drajati (2019) pointed out that since the bridge was established between L1 WTC and SLA in the 1990s, L2 WTC has been often theorized as "a readiness to enter into the discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2". With the development of modern language pedagogy, there has been great emphasis on L2 WTC (Biria & Jouybar, 2016; Manipuspika, 2018; Mohammadi, Barati & Youhanaee, 2019; Soomro & Pathan, 2020). In other words, WTC refers to the willingness of learners to communicate and express their ideas in L2 in specific situations. Meanwhile, it has also been acknowledged that L2 WTC plays a significant role in the amount of communication that occurs in the classroom (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998).

Although some literature reviews on L2 WTC summarize the concepts, theories, and influencing factors (e.g., Riasatil & Noordin, 2011; Zhang, Beckmann & Beckmann, 2018; Shamsi & Bozorgian, 2022), these literature reviews are not up to date, and most recent studies are not included. Besides, little work has been done to identify the systematic exploration of the literature, such as the characteristics of research areas, participants, and methods. In fact, the previous research focus has neglected the comprehensive factors that influence students' L2 WTC. The current systematic review reports the studies on students' English WTC in recent ten years and fills in the research gap. Additionally, it also provides a reference for future study in this field. The researchers will first introduce the background, research questions, and methods of this systematic review.

■**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

WTC in the second language (L2) has been theorized as "a readiness to enter into the discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547). MacIntyre et al. (1998) emphasized that the process of language learning is to develop the willingness of L2 learners to find communication opportunities and speak in a real-life context, so they regarded L2 WTC as an important factor affecting students' communicative behavior. Scholars have conducted many studies on L2 WTC (Mohammadi, Barati, & Youhanaee, 2019; Alenezi, 2020; Alqarni, 2021; Ma, Yu, Reynolds, & Jiang, 2022; Sjaifullah & Laksmi, 2022), which focused not only in the internal factors but also in the external factors. These studies have shown that students' L2 WTC is affected by various factors such as emotion and environment, which can positively or negatively influence their communication.

So far, some scholars have conducted literature reviews on L2 WTC to provide a reference for further research. Riasati et al. (2011) conducted a literature review about the antecedents of WTC. In this review, they described the heuristic model of WTC and reviewed the relevant studies to identify the variables, such as apprehension, self-perceived communication competence (SPCC), motivation, personality, and context that influenced L2 WTC. Meanwhile, some pedagogical implications were discussed as directions for future study. Nonetheless, the studies included in Riasati et al.'s (2011) review are limited and are not up to date, which needs to be supplemented with the latest studies. For instance, they discussed the variables such as motivation (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Conrod, 2001), apprehension (McCroskey & McCroskey, 2002), gender, and age (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). These findings are likely to be constantly changing due to the teaching environment as well as the personal development of students, so newer findings are needed to be validated. More importantly, their review of the factors of L2 WTC only gave a simple introduction and did not classify these variables, such as internal or external factors. Classifying the research factors will make it more rigorous and clearer, which facilitates the subsequent further research. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2018) explored various types of situational factors by proposing a situational antecedent's framework of state WTC and first systematically organized situational cues and characteristics into a multi-layered framework of situational antecedents of WTC. This review article focused on the relationship between L2 WTC and the learning situation while ignoring personal factors in particular, such as motivation and personality.

In a newly-published review article, Shamsi et al. (2022) reviewed the studies published in the last decade to explore how social media helps language learners to develop their L2 WTC by focusing on the emotional aspects, such as self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety. The results showed that social media can help learners to improve L2 WTC by increasing self-confidence and motivation and decreasing anxiety. It can be seen that social media as an external influencing factor has changed students' L2 WTC by influencing internal factors of students. Shamsi et al. 's (2022) article is a systematic review and clearly explains the influence of social media on learners' L2 WTC both inside and outside of the classrooms. Nevertheless, there are still deficiencies in this study. First, it focuses on the relationship between social media and learners' emotional factors, while other psychological factors (i.e., self-regulation and metacognition) are not discussed. Second, the social media channels in this study are single and not comprehensive enough, which leads to the credibility of the research results being improved. Analyzing learners' L2 WTC from a more comprehensive and systematic perspective will make the findings more comprehensive.

Although the existing reviews on L2 WTC summarize its concept, theory, and related empirical studies, so far, there is less systematic literature review on students' L2 WTC within the scope of the search. Therefore, the present systematic review aims to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing the 25 relevant publications. The specific research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the studies exploring students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English?
RQ2: What factors can influence students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English?

■3.0 METHODOLOGY

In this study, a systematic review was carried out to retrieve studies conducted from 2013 to 2022 related to students' English WTC in the last decades. It followed Petticrew and Roberts' (2006) guide of the systematic review. This systematic review involves the following steps:

1. Defining the research questions and choosing keywords, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and database
2. Carrying out the literature search
3. Screening the references
4. Assessing the remaining studies against the inclusion and exclusion criteria
5. Extracting the data
6. Evaluating critically
7. Synthesizing the data to answer the research questions
8. Writing up the report

3.1 Databases

The retrieval of a large number of articles requires a suitable database search method, hence three major search channels are emphasized to find literature: electronic database, backward searching, and forward searching (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Considering the time and need for a systematic search, an electronic database is the best choice. Petticrew et al. (2006) also pointed out that electronic databases constituted the pre-dominant source of published literature collections. Therefore, this study utilized China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) as the primary database, which "is the largest academic Chinese journal full-text database worldwide covering various disciplinary studies (M. Li, 2020)", while Scopus is an additional supplementary database. These two electronic databases complemented each other and made the research data richer.

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Before the literature screening process, inclusion and exclusion criteria have been specified according to the research questions, research design, methodology, and time frame.

The inclusion criteria are:
1. The publication must be a published scholarly article, conference paper, or proceedings.
2. The publication must contain 'willingness to communicate' in its title, abstract, and keywords.
3. The major focus of the publication is on the factors that influence students' English WTC.
4. The study is written in English or Chinese.

The exclusion criteria are:
1. The publication is not available online.
2. The research scope is not in the field of second language acquisition (SLA).
3. The publication is not an empirical study.

3.3 Data Extraction

Figure 1 below is the revised PRISMA workflow diagram, which shows the process of literature search, screening, assessing of eligibility, and finally included procedures. It can be seen that 57 publications from Scopus and 643 publications from CNKI have been retrieved in the preliminary search stage, a total of 700 publications. After removing duplicates, the total was reduced to 681 publications. To find more relevant articles, the search terms are intentionally broad, including "willingness to communicate" and "English". However, these articles were not related to our research field. Therefore, the researchers screened the title, abstract, and keywords of the remaining 681 publications. Finally, 449 irrelevant publications were deleted, and the remaining 232 publications were retained for further screening. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 25 publications were retained for data extraction. After selection, all included publications were thoroughly read and documented using data form. This form was constructed by the researchers and included search source (CNKI/Scopus), research title, author name, publication year, sample information, country or region, research questions, type of research, identified factors, results, and remarks. This form helped to provide a comprehensive overview of the key information for each study and facilitated report writing by the researcher.
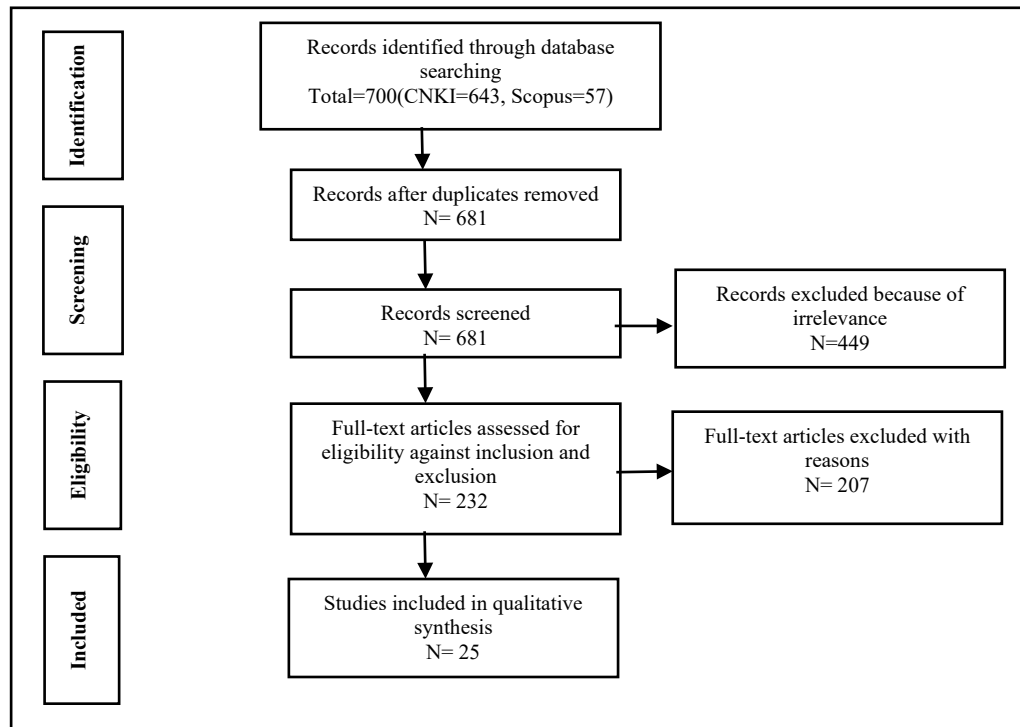
Figure 1 - PRISMA flow chart for systematic literature review

■**4.0 RESULTS**

This section introduces and discusses the research samples on the factors influencing students' WTC in English. After sample collection, 25 publications were reviewed and summarized according to the different components of the study, including the number of research, research methods, regional context research, and research influencing factors. The results of these data are as follows.

4.1 Number of Research

A number of studies have been published on the influencing factors on students' WTC in English. Figure 2 shows the distribution of relevant studies between 2013–2022. We can see that the studies on students' English WTC have not always been on the rise in the past ten years (2013-2022). It has fluctuated in this period, with the number of studies rising steadily and reaching the maximum in 2016 (N=4) and 2018 (N=4). In addition, Figure 3 reveals the number of research methods in the year 2013-2022. It can be seen that the quantitative method is the most (N=16), followed by the qualitative method (N=5), and the least is the mixed method (N=4). These three methods have all been used in 2015, 2018, and 2020, the number of studies in each year is 3. It can be inferred that the study on students' English WTC received more attention in these years. However, the number of studies has gradually declined after 2018. The researchers speculate that most of the influencing factors and research participants have been fully investigated, and new research areas need to be further explored.
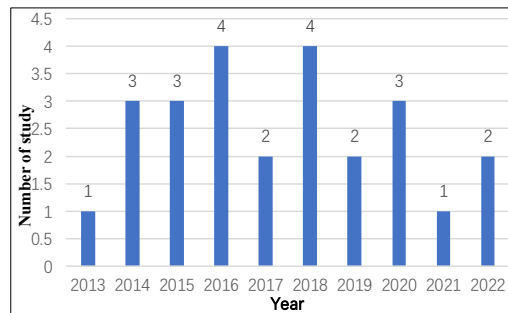

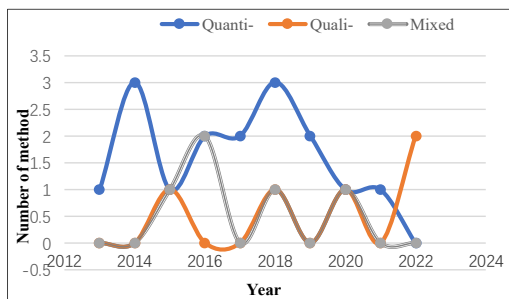**Figure 2** - Number of relevant studies between 2013–2022

Figure 3 - Distribution of research methods within ten years (2013-2022)

4.2 Research Methods

Students' WTC in English has been examined rigorously from three common methods namely questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Figure 4 illustrates that questionnaires are used most frequently, accounting for 64% (20 times). Nevertheless, observations are used least frequently, accounting for 10% (3 times) among these reviewed studies. The studies indicated that researchers in the past have mainly adopted questionnaires in their data collection. It can be inferred that questionnaires are an effective and quick mean to measure the attitudes and opinions of participants in the process of data collection. Besides, in the 25 studies, the longest duration of study is about 4 months. It investigated the experiences of five students who had participated in a fifteen-week game-based learning program and conducted six interviews with each of them. It can be deduced that collecting data in interviews takes considerable time and experience for researchers.
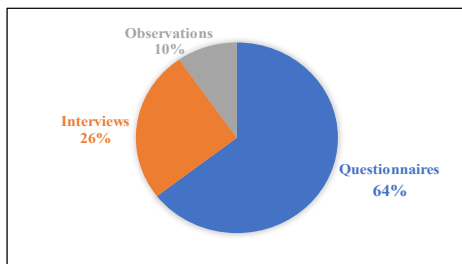

Figure 4 - Distribution of instruments in data collection

4.3 Regional Context Research

Over the past decade, the studies in this review have been conducted in different countries/regions. A clearer and more general understanding of the distribution of the country/region of research participants is illustrated in Figure 5. It can be seen that the research participants involved were from the Middle East (Iran and Saudi Arabia), followed by East Asia (China), and Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia), while South Asia (India and Pakistan) received the least focus. This trend reveals that scholars in the Middle East have paid great attention to students' English WTC, especially with Iran (N=14) as the largest number of studies from 2013 to 2022. In addition, due to the different degrees of the popularity of English in various regions, scholars had different interests in conducting these studies. For instance, the research interest and value in this field are relatively high among Arabic and Persian speakers as these languages are the main languages in the Middle East. However, the research interest and value in this field are relatively low among scholars in Southeast Asia because English is more popular and widely used in this region. It can be concluded that scholars in the Middle East focus on both internal and external factors in students' English WTC, such as gender, anxiety, teacher feedback, and learning environment. Hence, the research interest and value in this field are relatively high. On the contrary, scholars in Southeast Asia pay less attention to these factors. Thus, the research interest and value are relatively low in this field.
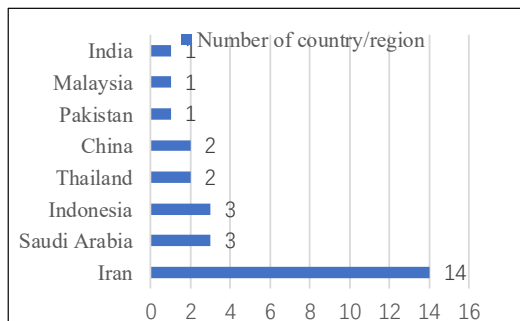

Figure 5 - Distribution of the country/region of research participants

4.4 Influencing Factors of Research

The empirical studies in this review have revealed several factors that had a significant influence on students' English communicative willingness in the past ten years. Twenty-five studies mainly identified eight factors that influenced students' English WTC (see Figure 6). One possible reason why these factors are interesting to examine is due to they are closely related to foreign language learning among adult learners and have not been fully explored. These factors that become the influence factors of students' WTC in English can be grouped into internal factors (N=5) and external factors (N=3).
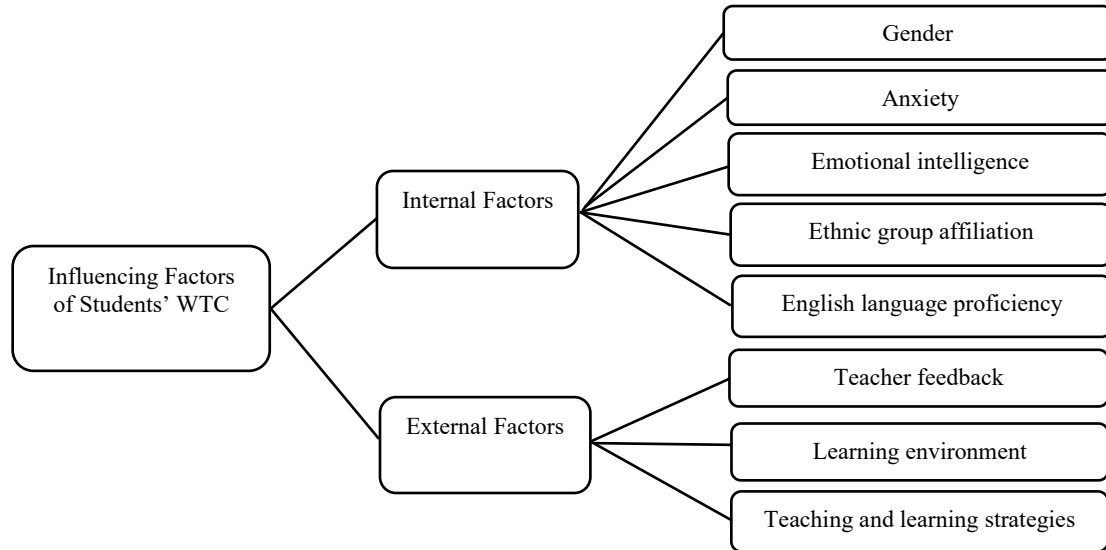

Figure 6 - Categories of influencing factors in studies (2013-2022)

Figure 6 illustrates the internal and external factors that affect students' English WTC. The most obvious finding to emerge from these studies is that these factors play an important role in students' English WTC. In the studies reviewed, it was found that the most common internal factors are anxiety (Rastegar & Karami, 2015; Manipuspika, 2018; Kalsoom, Soomro & Pathan, 2020), gender (Valadi, Rezaee & Baharvand, 2015; Ghanbarpour, 2016), emotional intelligence (Tabatabaei & Jamshidifar, 2013; Alavinia & Alikhani, 2014), and English language proficiency (Biria & Jouybar, 2016; Tan & Phairot, 2018). It can be inferred that past studies have paid good attention to the psychological and personal characteristics of the students, emphasizing the students' attitudes and perceptions of English WTC. The exploration of these internal factors is also beneficial to improve students' English WTC by adjusting internal influencing factors.

In addition, it was also found that three types of external factors are mostly explored in past studies, including teacher feedback (Khodarahmi & Nia, 2014; Zadkhast & Farahian, 2017; Tavakoli & Zarrinabadi, 2018; Sa'adah, Nurkamto & Suparno, 2018; Montazeri & Salimi, 2019), teaching and learning strategies (Khodarahmi & Nia, 2014; Mesgarshahr & Abdollahzadeh, 2014; Marzban & Firoozjahantigh, 2017), and learning environment (Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Turjoman, 2016; Mohammadi, Barati & Youhanaee, 2019). This pattern showed that over the last ten years (2013-2022), scholars conducted extensive investigations on the external factors of students' English WTC. It can be concluded that these scholars have paid full attention to the external factors that affect students' English WTC, and tried to enhance their communication willingness by improving the external conditions that are not conducive to their communication in English.

In reviewing the literature, it is important to note that some scholars only focused on internal or external factors. Thus, the scope of these studies was relatively one-sided before 2020. It was probably due to the lack of in-depth research on students' English WTC in the early stage. Therefore, scholars can only explore the internal and external factors separately. Nonetheless, with the development of research in this field, some scholars have begun to conduct a comprehensive exploration of these factors. This review found that only five studies so far have investigated comprehensive factors, such as individual factors, affective factors, and learning environment. These empirical results show that different types of factors did not independently affect students' English WTC but rather the effect of these factors was interrelated. The findings for each category of factors are presented in the following section.

■5.0 DISCUSSION

This section presents the answers to the research questions after a detailed reading and analysis of these 25 studies.

5.1 The Characteristics of the Studies Exploring Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English

This systematic literature review selected 25 studies on students' English WTC, of which 9 studies involved internal factors, 11 studies for external factors, and 5 studies explored both. With regard to research design, there are 16 quantitative studies, 5 qualitative studies, and 4 studies of mixed methods. It can be seen that quantitative methods appear most frequently. Among these studies, the research design is

mainly cross-sectional (N=15). There are few studies with experimental (N=7) or longitudinal (N=3) designs. This finding is not surprising because experimental or longitudinal studies can be time-consuming and expensive. The three commonly used data collection methods are questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, accounting for 64% (20 times), 26% (8 times), and 10% (3 times) respectively. It can be concluded that questionnaires are an effective and quick mean to measure the attitudes and opinions of participants in the process of data collection, while interviews and observations take a considerable time and experience of researchers and are used in fewer studies.

The participants in these studies involved students from the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Among them, the top three regions/countries are Iran (N=14), Indonesia (N=3), and Saudi Arabia (N=3). The sample sizes reported in the studies ranged from 4 to 375 participants. Participants in most studies involved only one region/country, with one exception, i.e., Abd Razak et al.'s (2018) study involved three countries namely Malaysia, China, and India, implying that the interpretation of research findings needs to consider the contextual factors.

In addition, the researchers also analyzed the influencing factors that affect students' English WTC and divided them into two categories, namely internal factors and external factors. Internal factors refer to the traits and characteristics of individuals, which vary from person to person (Yan, Li, Panadero, Yang, Yang & Lao, 2021), and may affect the formation and cultivation of an individual's English WTC. This category includes age, gender, emotional intelligence (EI), anxiety, confidence, motivation, English language proficiency, scholastic success, and ethnic group affiliation (EGA). External factors refer to the influence brought by the environment or people. This category includes different types of teacher feedback, teachers' classroom discipline strategies, teaching communication strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, and different learning environments. Among these factors, gender, anxiety, and English language proficiency in internal factors, and teacher feedback, teaching and learning strategies, and learning environment in external factors are the most influential factors. Furthermore, these studies showed that some factors are interrelated and affect students' WTC in English. For instance, Montazeri et al.'s (2019) study investigated the effect of oral metalinguistic corrective feedback on learners' WTC in an Iranian L2 learning context. The result suggested that metalinguistic corrective feedback is an indirect way to motivate learners and encourage them to correct their mistakes or errors when they are speaking. It can be inferred that motivation has played a facilitative role between teachers' feedback and learners' English WTC. The findings for each category of factors are presented in the following section.

5.2 Factors Influencing Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English

5.2.1 Internal Factors

Over the past decade, a total of 9 studies identified internal factors that influenced students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. The most frequently reported factors were found to be gender, anxiety, English language proficiency, and ethnic group affiliation (EGA).

Four studies on the internal factors that influenced students' English WTC have focused on gender factor. These studies explored whether there was a relationship between gender and students' WTC in English. In Tabatabaei et al.'s (2013), Alavinia et al.'s (2014), and Valadi et al.'s (2015) studies, the impact of gender on EI and oral English proficiency was explored respectively, which had different impacts on students' English WTC. Specifically, females' EI and English WTC are higher than males' (Alavinia et al., 2014), and females with high EI have stronger English WTC (Tabatabaei et al., 2013). The results showed that females' EI is more advantageous than males' EI in English WTC. Nonetheless, Valadi et al. (2015) found that gender did not have a direct relationship between Iranian students' oral English proficiency and their English WTC. Similarly, Ghanbarpour's (2016) study also revealed that gender did not affect students' English WTC. It can be seen that gender has no or little influence on students' WTC in English. The results concluded that gender is not a significant factor for students in their English communication. Based on this factor, more studies should also pay attention to the impact of individual differences on their English WTC.

Anxiety is another dimension that has also been explored in examining the influencing internal factor of students' WTC in English. Two studies on the internal factors that affect students' English WTC have been conducted to investigate the impact of anxiety on Iranian and Indonesian students' WTC in English (Rastegar, et al., 2015; Manipuspika, 2018). The results found that Iranian students' foreign language classroom anxiety was negatively correlated with their English WTC (Rastegar, et al., 2015), but there was a strong positive correlation between Indonesian students' foreign language classroom anxiety and their English WTC. It can be concluded that studies on anxiety as an internal factor on students' WTC in English remain inconclusive. However, comparing the participants of these two studies, Indonesia is a country with a bigger population, diverse ethnic groups and rich in a multilingual context. Thus, despite English being a foreign language in Indonesia, Indonesian students have a high willingness for English communication. Due to the speakers' linguistic tolerance, anxiety is not enough to affect students' English WTC in Indonesia. Iran, on the other hand, has a relatively single language category. Being in a monolingual environment could have influenced the people's willingness to learn a new language becomes relatively low. Thus, foreign language class anxiety may increase their pressure to use English and weaken their WTC in English. It can be seen that the linguistic tolerance may affect students' willingness to study a language. Specifically, when students are in a learning environment with high linguistic tolerance, anxiety does not have a great impact on their WTC in English. On the contrary, if students are in a learning environment with low linguistic tolerance, anxiety will seriously affect their English WTC. Therefore, the results of these two studies should be accepted with caution.

Among the internal factors reviewed thus far, English language proficiency has emphasized the significant impact on students' English WTC in three studies (Valadi et al., 2015; Biria et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2018). The studies reported one similar conclusion; there is a positive correlation between students' English language proficiency and English WTC. Tan et al. (2018) more specifically pointed out the differences in English WTC among students with different English language proficiency. In the classroom, the communicative willingness of students with high English language proficiency is higher than that of students with middle and low English language proficiency, and there is no significant difference in WTC between the moderate and low proficiency groups. It can be seen that English language proficiency has a significant impact on students' WTC in English. Nevertheless, the recruitment of participants is different among the three studies. In Valadi et al.'s (2015) study, the intermediate language learners were recruited and trained, while the other two studies' participants were recruited directly and had no training. It can be inferred that different forms of participant recruitment could affect the results of study. In other words, learners who received training significantly performed better than their actual English proficiency, thereby could also affect the accuracy of the results. Besides, the sample size may also affect the results of the study. In Biria

et al.'s (2016) study, only 60 participants were tested, while the participants in the other two studies were between 140-375. The results of the study may apply only to this part of the participants. Consequently, the findings of these three studies which implied the instances of sub-internal factors should also be accepted with caution.

There are also other important internal factors that have an important impact on students' English communicative willingness, but are less reported, such as ethnic group affiliation (EGA). EGA refers to "how closely someone feels attached to their native culture and language" (Abd Razak et al., 2018, p.207). Abd Razak et al. (2018) surveyed the relationship between ethnic belonging and English WTC in these three major groups of college students in Malaysia (Malays, Chinese, and Indians). The results showed that students had a high sense of ethnic belonging, which led to a lower WTC in English. The researchers argue that because the higher the students' sense of ethnic belonging, the stronger their willingness to use their native language, the lower their WTC in English. It can be seen that EGA has an important impact on students' WTC in English. For this phenomenon, the researchers believe that the participants live in a multilingual context, where English is frequently used on several occasions. However, the participants are used to speaking their native language. It is their EGA that promotes the use of their native language. Specifically, EGA represents a special sense of attachment and importance to one's culture, ethnic group or nation. That is to say, when students' EGA is higher, their willingness to use the native language will be stronger, whereas their willingness to use English as their foreign language or second language will be decreased. Therefore, the findings conclude that EGA has an important impact on students' WTC in English.

The overall findings of the above studies implied that the most frequently reported internal factors that influenced students' WTC in English are gender, anxiety, English language proficiency, and EGA. Despite anxiety, English language proficiency, and EGA have positive or negative influence on students' English WTC, gender has no or little influence on their WTC in English. In addition, the researchers also inferred that linguistic tolerance has a significant impact on students' English WTC.

5.2.2 External Factors

It is not enough to only consider internal factors, and the impact of external factors on students' English WTC cannot be ignored. A total of 11 studies in this review investigated the external factors that affect students' WTC in English. The most frequently reported external factors are teacher feedback, learning and teaching strategies, and learning environment.

Five empirical studies indicate that using different types of teacher feedback inside the classroom gives an important impact on students' English WTC by influencing their psychological state and language acquisition. For instance, Zadkhast et al.'s (2017) study showed that immediate corrective feedback was better at reducing students' anxiety and improving students' English WTC. Meanwhile, Tavakoli et al.'s (2018) study reported that explicit corrective feedback could better reduce students' anxiety and enhance communication perception ability to improve their English WTC. Similarly, the findings of Montazeri et al. (2019) revealed that metalinguistic feedback improved students' English WTC by influencing learners' learning motivation. It can be inferred from these three studies that teacher feedback directly affects students' psychological factors, such as anxiety and motivation, and then has a significant impact on students' English WTC. Besides, two recent studies concerning students' WTC in English have shown that oral corrective feedback has a positive impact on their English WTC by improving their language acquisition. First, Sa'adah et al.'s (2018) study showed that oral corrective feedback can correct students' pronunciation and semantic errors. The researchers concluded that it is necessary to be implemented in class and is conducive to the improvement of students' English WTC. Second, the findings of Zare et al. (2020) revealed that oral corrective feedback in pronunciation and grammar was perceived to have the greatest contribution to students' WTC in English. Both instances demonstrate that teachers' oral corrective feedback has a positive impact on students' language acquisition and improves their English WTC. Therefore, these findings demonstrate that teacher feedback directly affects students' psychological factors and SLA, and then has a significant influence on students' WTC in English.

Three quantitative studies explored the important impact of different types of teaching and learning strategies on English WTC among Iranian students. For example, Khodarahmi et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and students' WTC in English. The results showed that teachers' disciplinary strategies such as recognition or reward which can profoundly affect students' attitudes played a positive role in students' English WTC while attacking and punishment-type disciplinary strategies reduced learners' communicative willingness in the classroom. Meanwhile, Mesgarshahr et al. (2014) explored the impact of teaching communicative strategies on students' English WTC inside the classroom. The results indicated that instructional communicative strategies increased students' English WTC by reducing their fear of communicating and enhancing their self-confidence and motivation. In addition, vocabulary learning strategies were also found to have a significant influence on students' English WTC (Marzban et al., 2017). It can be seen that by increasing students' vocabulary size and knowledge, students' self-confidence and behavior intention will be improved, so their English WTC in the classroom can be further enhanced. Among these studies, it can be inferred that different types of teaching and learning strategies have an important impact on students' English WTC, and psychological factors cannot be ignored, such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, play a significant role between these strategies and students' WTC in English. These findings also suggested that the exploration of different teaching and learning strategies has brought in-depth thinking in foreign language teaching in the future. Foreign language teachers and educators can explore and formulate teaching and learning strategies suitable for students and improve their English WTC.

In addition, the learning environment was also found to have an important impact on students' English WTC in three studies. For instance, Turjoman (2016) investigated differences in English major students' WTC in public and private schools. The results showed that students in private schools are more willing to communicate in English. The researchers consider it may be because teachers in private schools are of diverse nationalities and are more inclined to use English, which undoubtedly has a positive impact on students' WTC in English. Similarly, Mohammadi et al. (2019) explored the application of the flipped classroom model in English teaching. The findings showed that the flipped classroom model, which emphasizes students' communicative ability and problem-solving skills, enhanced students' English WTC by improving their thinking skills and giving opportunities for interactive learning activities. Moreover, a digital game-based learning model was explored in Thailand (Reinders et al., 2015), and it showed that this kind of learning model based on digital games gave students a collaborative environment and brought them positive experiences. This style of learning lowers emotional barriers and encourages risk-taking in students, thus stimulating their English WTC. Through the above three studies on the learning

environment, it can be seen that the external environment cannot be ignored in students' English learning. Different from the traditional learning environment, the teaching environment under the novel teaching mode stimulates students' English WTC even more.

Based on the reviewed studies, it appears that teacher feedback, learning and teaching strategies, and learning environment are reported as the most influential external factors in students' English WTC. It can be seen that these factors directly affect students' psychological factors and SLA. It is interesting to note that the findings thus far have implied that well-designed learning and teaching strategies, learning environments using various teaching modes as well as teacher feedback in the class have a positive influence on students' English WTC. However, other sub-internal factors could also influence the impact on students' WTC in English.

5.2.3 Comprehensive Factors

In this review, five studies, involving both internal and external factors that have affected students' English WTC since 2020, were also retrieved (Alenezi, 2020; Kalsoom et al., 2020; Alqarni, 2021; Ma et al., 2022; Sjaifullah et al., 2022). These factors can be categorized into three main themes that are individual factors (e.g., age, gender, course grades, previous communicative experience), affective factors (e.g., foreign language speaking anxiety, learning motivation), and learning environment factors (e.g., learning contexts, classroom activities, social support). These empirical shreds of evidence highlight that different types of factors did not independently affect students' English WTC but rather the effect of these factors was interrelated. For instance, in Kalsoom et al.'s (2020) study on learners' WTC in English, the researchers noted that lower anxiety and a relaxed classroom environment play a positive role in learners' WTC in English, while a competitive classroom environment brought high anxiety and reduced their English WTC inside the classroom. Furthermore, Alqarni (2021) found that learners' English WTC was influenced by affective factors under different learning contexts. The findings show that online learning contexts which used digital technology gave them the opportunity to communicate and improved their learning motivation in speaking English. Similarly, the findings in Alenezi (2020), Ma et al. (2022), and Sjaifullah et al. (2022) also revealed that the comprehensive factors including individual factors, affective factors, and learning environment factors are related and have a pivotal impact on students' WTC in English. Therefore, it can be inferred that the exploration of students' English WTC should not only pay attention to internal or external factors. More importantly, future studies should try to analyze how these factors commonly affect or are affected by students' WTC in English.

■6.0 CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review aimed to review relevant studies on students' English WTC from 2013 to 2022, focusing on research characteristics and influencing factors in the study. The total of 25 studies selected for this systematic review is all empirical studies. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are all employed in these studies. Data from the collected studies are collected from different sources such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations, while it is mainly collected from the questionnaires. Additionally, the research participants of these studies are concentrated in the Middle East (Iran and Saudi Arabia), followed by East Asia (China) and Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia), and South Asia (India and Pakistan) had the least. Besides, in the process of data analysis, these empirical studies highlight that the different types of factors did not independently affect students' English WTC but rather the effect of these factors was interrelated. The present review draws on its findings to offer the following recommendations to researchers.

Future researchers can expand their research design such as experimental or longitudinal study. Among the studies in this review, a cross-sectional study design was mainly adopted. Few are used in experimental or longitudinal study design so the relationship between the factors and students' L2 WTC is a correlation rather than a causal relationship. Furthermore, to get rich information from the research participants and supplement results, it is worth considering increasing data collection sources such as in-depth interviews and observations in future research. Besides, the development of students' English communicative competence has been considered as a multifaceted and purposeful process (Sanmugam, Shamsudin & Subramaniam, 2017), so a comprehensive and analytical framework for analyzing how the different internal and external factors are is interrelated and affect students' English WTC is necessary for future researchers.

Like other literature review studies, this review tries to cover the relevant studies on the topic, but there are still some limitations that need to be further improved in future research. Firstly, these empirical papers published within the last ten years are not sufficient for identifying the characteristics and influencing factors of the research in the aspect of students' English WTC because the relevant studies of L2 WTC have been explored over a much longer period. Therefore, future researchers should employ a wider time range to collect these data. Moreover, the research participants in these reviewed studies are concentrated in the Middle East, while the country/region outside the Middle East needs to be further explored in future studies. Consequently, reviews should employ a wider geographical scope to gain a full review of students' English WTC.

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