

Classroom willingness to communicate among EFL secondary school students in Poland and Spain

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ABSTRACT: The objectives of this study were to analyse the classroom Willingness to Communicate (WTC) of EFL learners in secondary schools in Poland and Spain and to identify the factors that predict this type of WTC in both settings. The study found limited practical significance in the differences between the two groups' WTC, with more similarities than differences emerging in the circumstances that encouraged or inhibited communication. The study examined several potential predictors of WTC, including gender, age, socioeconomic status (SES), relative standing among peers in oral production and interaction, Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), and intercultural sensitivity. Of these factors, five (relative standing among peers in oral production and interaction, FLE, FLCA, extroversion and intercultural sensitivity) were found to predict classroom WTC in both settings. The study concludes by discussing some practical implications of these findings for EFL teaching at the secondary level.

Keywords: in-class Willingness to Communicate, English as a Foreign Language, secondary school students, Poland, Spain

Voluntad de comunicarse en el aula del alumnado de inglés como LE en centros de educación secundaria en Polonia y España

RESUMEN: Los objetivos de este estudio fueron analizar la voluntad de comunicarse en el aula de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (LE) en centros de educación secundaria de Polonia y España, e identificar los factores que predicen este tipo de disposición en ambos contextos. El estudio encontró un significado práctico limitado en las diferencias entre los dos grupos en cuanto a esta variable. El estudio investigó también varios predictores potenciales de la voluntad de comunicarse, incluidos el género, la edad, el nivel socioeconómico, la posición relativa entre pares en cuanto a producción e interacción orales, el disfrute de la LE, la ansiedad en el aula de LE y la sensibilidad intercultural. De estos factores, se encontró que cinco (posición relativa entre pares, disfrute, ansiedad, extroversión y sensibilidad intercultural) predicen la voluntad de comunicarse en el aula de LE en ambos contextos. El estudio concluye con algunas implicaciones prácticas de estos hallazgos para la enseñanza del inglés como LE en la etapa de educación secundaria.

Palabras clave: voluntad de comunicarse dentro del aula, inglés como lengua extranjera, alumnado de educación secundaria, Polonia, España

1. INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate (WTC), or a person's voluntary decision to either engage in verbal communication or to stay silent when given the opportunity (MacIntyre, 2007, 2020), is one of the most central notions in the field of foreign and second language learning and teaching (Kang, 2005; Yashima et al., 2004), as learners who exhibit a high WTC tendency are more likely to succeed in language learning (MacIntyre, Baker et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2004; Zhou et al., 2023). The importance of WTC lies in the pivotal role played by interaction in language development, as proposed by various perspectives, such as linguistics (Long, 1985; Swain, 1985, 1995) or sociocultural (e.g., Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) seminal pyramid model of linguistic, communicative and socio-psychological variables that influence WTC led to a proliferation of research seeking to elucidate how a variety of factors impinge upon and interact with WTC that remains quite active in the present day. However, research is still scarce that a) investigates secondary students' in-class WTC – the participants in studies on WTC are typically tertiary education students, and b) identifies predictors of WTC in particular settings. Despite the fact that WTC has been discussed as being sensitive to contextual, regional, and cultural influences (Cao & Philp, 2006; Denies et al., 2015), studies in a variety of cultural and educational contexts are conspicuously lacking. To illustrate, a recent search of the Web of Science to find the number of books, book chapters, and articles on WTC and “foreign language” or “second language” (as topics) in Spain yielded seven relevant articles.

In light of this gap, the present study sought to investigate the levels of WTC of EFL secondary students in Poland and Spain and how sociodemographic, personality and affective factors predict secondary learners' WTC in each context. Despite being both European countries, Spain's preference for traditional methodologies contributes to an emphasis on grammatical accuracy, often at the expense of practical communication skills (García-Sampedro, 2021; Morales Gálvez, 2009). Meanwhile, Poland's emphasis on the communicative approach (Dzieciół-Pedich, 2015) underscores a priority for real-life language use and interaction. Therefore, our study explored in-class WTC and factors predicting it in two different language teaching traditions. The results are expected to inform language teaching practices aimed at promoting EFL secondary learners' WTC.

2. WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS

Numerous studies have investigated how WTC in a second or foreign language (L2/FL) is affected by different variables. Elahi Shirvan et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis concluded that perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and motivation are three high-evidence learner-internal factors that influence FL/L2 learners' WTC, with perceived communicative competence having the largest effect among these three factors. Many other internal and external factors have also been found to affect the WTC. However, this review only reports studies that examine the links between WTC and the variables relevant to this research.

There is no clear consensus in the research on the relationship between age and gender, and WTC. In the context of English as FL, research conducted by Donovan and MacIntyre (2004), Amiryousefi (2018), Dewaele and Dewaele (2018), and Cheng and Xu (2022) suggest

that age affects WTC. To illustrate, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) showed that younger, typically less advanced students required greater encouragement to use the FL, whereas older, more proficient learners exhibited higher levels of WTC. However, Alemi et al. (2013), Tavakoli and Davoudi (2017), Dewaele (2019), Barrios and Acosta-Manzano (2021) and Mulyono and Saskia (2021) found no association between WTC and participants' age. The results on the relationship between gender and WTC are also contradictory. Although most research has found that females show higher WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; Cheng & Xu, 2022; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Khajavy et al., 2018), in Amiryousefi's (2018) study, male participants reported talking to their teachers in class more frequently than female participants. Additional research (Alemi et al., 2013; Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017) has found no statistically significant gender differences. Most probably, the relationship between gender and WTC and age and WTC is modulated by factors such as the culture of the classroom, the larger culture outside, proficiency level, learning motivations, and particular FL, among others.

Personality, together with intergroup climate, forms the foundation of the seminal L2 WTC pyramid model. MacIntyre et al. (1998) explored the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and WTC through structural equation modelling (SEM) and found significant relationships between all five factors and WTC. Concerning the specific case of extraversion, research has found that this personality trait is a significant predictor of WTC (Fatima et al., 2020; Khany & Nejad, 2017). A qualitative study (Freiermuth & Ito, 2020) also revealed that, among other characteristics, participants with high L2 WTC had positive personality features, such as extraversion, which contributed to compensating for their FL deficits.

As mentioned above, two of the WTC high-evidence correlates were those of perceived communication competence and anxiety. Perceived communication competence has been found to be the most important predictor of FL/L2 WTC in some studies (Halupka-Resetar et al., 2018; MacIntyre, Baker et al., 2002; MacIntyre, Dörnyei et al., 1998). Additionally, both the meta-analysis conducted by Elahi Shirvan et al. (2019) and the meta-analytic structural equation modelling adopted by Jin and Lee (2022) found that, among the three high-evidence factors, perceived competence influenced L2 WTC the most. Incidentally, the present investigation asked participants to self-assess their relative standing among peers in terms of oral production and interaction, which may be argued to be a proxy for perceived communication competence concerning speaking and oral interaction. Language anxiety is another powerful (negative) predictor of WTC in FL/L2 (e.g., Cetinkaya, 2005; Dewaele, 2019; Knell & Chi, 2012; Wu & Lin, 2014). Research has drawn inconclusive results concerning the strength of the relationship between perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and WTC. Whereas Jin and Lee (2022), Yashima (2002), and Yashima et al. (2004) found a stronger association between perceived communicative competence and WTC than that between anxiety and WTC, the study by Baker and MacIntyre (2003) concluded that with students of French as an L2, WTC was only associated with perceived communicative competence. Some studies have found that language anxiety mediates the relationship between WTC and other factors such as perceived communication competence (Chou, 2022), overall competence (Zhou et al., 2023), and classroom environment (Li et al., 2022).

Few studies have so far investigated the association between intercultural awareness, competence or sensitivity, and WTC. In addition, previous investigations have mainly explored

this association in out-of-class contexts. In a study that used multiple regression analyses, Liu (2017) concluded that students' WTC in Chinese as an FL, although largely determined by their speaking anxiety level and length of stay in China, is mediated by other variables such as intercultural communication sensitivity level. Furthermore, most of the research conducted in this area is qualitative (Anderson, 2022; Normann, 2021; Quinto et al., 2019; Tarp, 2020). To illustrate, Tarp (2020), from a grounded theory approach, explored the influence of a group of ten expats' intercultural experiences on their WTC in Danish while studying and/or working in Denmark. Among the study findings, the following two are of particular relevance to our study: the participants' experience of intercultural encounters influenced their L2 WTC, and the development of language skills may affect their appraisal of different kinds of relationships and, hence, their WTC.

Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) is a further factor that has been found to be closely associated with WTC. In a meta-analysis conducted by Botes, Dewaele et al. (2022), a moderate positive correlation was observed between FLE and WTC. Additionally, FLE has been found to be a predictor of WTC in a variety of contexts and samples, such as adult EFL learners in Spain (Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Dewaele, 2019) and primary EFL learners in Hong Kong (Lee & Taylor, 2022). Additionally, FLE and its constituent dimensions have been found to act as mediators in the relationships between WTC and other factors. For example, FLE was found to mediate the relationship between classroom environment and WTC (Li et al., 2022), and the three dimensions of FLE (teacher appreciation, personal enjoyment, and social enjoyment) (Botes et al., 2021) were found to mediate the relationship between Informal Digital Learning of English and L2 WTC inside the classrooms of secondary students in Hong Kong in a study by Lee et al. (2022). Using a qualitative approach, Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021) also identified this relationship between WTC and FLE.

Finally, no study has explored the relationship between the learner's socioeconomic status (SES) and their WTC in a second or foreign language. However, the fact that several studies have found an association between SES and variables intuitively related to WTC, such as speech production scores (Huang et al., 2018), English performance (Butler, 2014, 2015; Butler & Le, 2018; Zou & Zhang, 2011), and intrinsic motivation and self-confidence (Butler, 2017), led us to consider investigating the association between SES and WTC. In doing so, this study is the first to explore whether learners' social standing affects their inclination to talk and engage in communication in the target language in the classroom.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1. Objectives and research questions

In light of the scarcity of studies on WTC of secondary school students from different contexts and the relevance of identifying factors associated with classroom WTC that can then inform educational practices, the present study aimed to investigate the features and differences in classroom WTC exhibited by EFL learners in secondary schools in Poland and Spain and identify predictors of WTC of these EFL students in these two contexts. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following three questions:

- RQ1: How willing are EFL secondary school students to communicate in the classroom in Poland and Spain?
- RQ2: Research question 2 (RQ2): How do EFL secondary school students in these two national contexts differ in their classroom WTC?
- RQ3: Research question 3 (RQ3): How do demographic, personality, socioeconomic, and emotional factors predict the WTC of EFL secondary school students in Poland and Spain?

3.2. Participants and contexts

A total of 2608 conveniently sampled public secondary school EFL learners from 17 schools in Poland and 11 schools in Spain participated in the study. The learners' ages ranged between 13 and 20 years ($M = 15.78$ years; $SD = 1.28$) (further details in Table 1). The students in both countries studied English as their first foreign language. The schools in Poland were located in Pruszcz Gdanski, Gdansk, Sopot, Gdynia and Wroclaw (northern and southern Poland), and those in Spain were situated in the Andalusian provinces of Málaga, Granada, Almería, and Jaén (southern Spain). Cities, towns, semi-dense areas, and rural areas were represented in the school sample.

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of the sample*

| | POLAND (N = 1480) | SPAIN (N = 1128) |
|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Age range | 13-20 | 13-20 |
| Mean age (SD) | 16.19 (1.04) | 15.24 (1.29) |
| Gender | Female | 609 (53.99%) |
| | Male | 496 (33.51%) |
| | Other | 11 (0.98%) |
| | Prefer not to say | 18 (1.60%) |

One of the authors contacted schools in northern and southern Poland through email, visited them in person between March and April 2022, and invited management teams and English teachers to participate in the investigation. Teachers and students were informed that the online questionnaire used to gather the data was anonymous and that participation was voluntary. The questionnaire was completed by students using their own mobile devices during English classes, with the researcher present. In Spain, the process was similar, except that the Spanish teachers who agreed to participate were contacted through video conferences and were responsible for having their students complete the online questionnaire during English classes. Since this researcher was bilingual, contact with English teachers was established in their mother tongues.

3.3. Instruments

A questionnaire was used as the quantitative instrument in this study. The language of the questionnaire completed by the students in Spain was Spanish, and that completed by

the students in Poland was Polish. In the case of items in English extracted from previous publications, some were culturally adapted if deemed necessary and were all translated following the guidelines set by the International Test Commission's (2017) guidelines for translating and adapting tests. The questionnaire included several sections.

a. Sociodemographic section

This section collected data regarding the participants' gender, age, school, and parental highest level of education.

b. Perception of relative standing in spoken production and interaction competence measure

Students were asked to assess their relative standing in their FLE class among their peers concerning spoken production and interaction on a scale from 0 (extremely far below that of my classmates) to 100 (extremely far above that of my classmates).

c. Extroversion scale

The 12-item scale for the measurement of extroversion of the short-scale Eysenck Personality Questionnaire–Revised (EPQ-R) (Eysenck et al., 1985) was used to measure extroversion. This dichotomous yes/no scale consists of ten items associated with extroversion and the remaining two with introversion (reverse coded). The scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .845$).

d. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale

The present investigation used eight items taken from the FLCA scale created by Horwitz et al. (1986) and used in a study conducted by MacIntyre (1992) (Appendix). This shorter version of the scale was shown to maintain the same level of reliability as the original scale (MacIntyre, 1992) and was later validated by Botes, van der Westhuizen et al. (2022). Two items indicated low anxiety (reverse coded), and six indicated high anxiety. The internal reliability of this scale in our study, as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was high ($\alpha = .910$).

e. Foreign Language Enjoyment scale

An adaptation of the short form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) validated by Botes et al. (2021) was used to measure student enjoyment when learning and speaking English. The short form extracted nine items from the original FL enjoyment scale developed by Dewaele and McIntyre (2014). The adaptation consisted of rewording some items so that they reflected enjoyment when speaking or interacting orally in English. For example, the original item 'I am proud of my accomplishments' was modified to 'I am proud of my accomplishments in speaking/oral interaction in the English class' and the

references to “foreign language” were substituted for “English”. The reliability of the scale, as measured using Cronbach’s alpha, was high ($\alpha = .873$).

f. Intercultural Sensitivity scale

The participants’ intercultural sensitivity was measured by using ten items in the study by Wu (2015), who extracted 13 items from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale formulated by Chen and Starosta (2000). The present study includes items in the following three (of the four) dimensions identified by Wu (2015): security in the interaction (items 1 to 4), or the security or self-confidence of the interlocutors while they participate in intercultural communication; commitment to and attention to interaction (items 5 to 7); degree of participation and sensitivity towards culturally different interlocutors; and respect for cultural differences (items 8 to 10), which refers to the identification, acceptance, and respect for the cultural differences of others in communication.). The reliability of the complete scale, measured using Cronbach’s alpha, was high ($\alpha = .836$).

g. In-class Willingness to Communicate scale

This scale contained 18 items, 15 of which were extracted from items in questionnaires on WTC in class situations (Menzel & Carrell, 1999; Peng, 2019), translated and culturally adapted, and the other three were added by the authors. These items represent a variety of typical universal classroom situations in which participants were asked if they were willing to speak in English. Participants were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale (where 1 = I avoid it, 2 = I am unwilling, 3 = Undecided, 4 = I am willing, and 5 = I am totally willing). The reliability of the scale, measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .923, which shows that this scale had a very high internal consistency.

3.4. Results

3.4.1. EFL secondary students’ WTC in Poland and in Spain

As shown in Table 2, the result of the Mann–Whitney test indicated a significant difference in in-class WTC in English between secondary students in Poland and Spain, with the latter group showing a higher level of WTC than the former. However, this difference only achieved a small effect size of practical significance (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

Table 2. Result of the Mann–Whitney test comparing the difference in in-class WTC between the two groups

| Country | Mean (Potential range: 18-90) (SD) | Mean Rank | <i>z</i> | <i>p</i> | Effect size <i>d</i> |
|---------|---------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| Poland | 63.85 (12.902) | 1235.63 | | | |
| Spain | 66.36 (13.077) | 1394.87 | -5,325 | <.001 | 0.21 |

3.4.2. Factors predicting the WTC of EFL secondary school students in Poland and Spain

Results from the preliminary Pearson correlation analyses with a Bonferroni correction ($p < .006$) indicated that all independent variables except for age were significantly associated to in-class WTC (Table 3) in both samples. Of those seven significantly associated variables, FLCA was the only one with a negative correlation with WTC.

Table 3. Pearson correlation analyses between in-class WTC and the independent variables

| Independent variables | Poland sample (N = 1364) | | Spain sample (N = 1099) | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| | Pearson <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> | Pearson <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Gender ⁽¹⁾ | .098 | <.001 | .084 | .005 |
| Age | -.023 | .396 | -.030 | .327 |
| SES | .181 | <.001 | .134 | <.001 |
| Extroversion | .277 | <.001 | .256 | <.001 |
| Relative standing | .499 | <.001 | .445 | <.001 |
| FLE | .370 | <.001 | .440 | <.001 |
| FLCA | -.587 | <.001 | -.452 | <.001 |
| Intercultural sensitivity | .541 | <.001 | .449 | <.001 |

⁽¹⁾Gender: 1 = Female; 2 = Male

Note: FLE = Foreign Language Enjoyment; FLCA = Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

The correlation coefficients between the independent variables were also calculated, and none were too high (Tables 4 and 5). This indicates that multicollinearity was not likely to be a problem for the current data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

Table 4. Intercorrelations between independent variables and *p* (Poland sample)

| Pearson correlations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Gender ⁽¹⁾ | | | | | | |
| 2. SES | .080 | | | | | |
| 3. Extroversion | -.056* | .032 | | | | |
| 4. Relative standing | .038 | .235 | | | | |
| 5. FLE | .172** | .215** | .085** | | | |
| 6. FLCA | <.001 | <.001 | .002 | .172** | | |
| 7. Intercultural sensitivity | .038 | .014 | .116** | .172** | | |
| | .164 | .596 | <.001 | <.001 | | |
| | -.288** | -.202** | -.100** | -.587** | -.186** | |
| | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | |
| | .008 | .198** | .250** | .515** | .211** | -.458** |
| | .781 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 |

⁽¹⁾Gender: 1 = Female; 2 = Male

Note: FLE = Foreign Language Enjoyment; FLCA = Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Table 5. Intercorrelations between independent variables and *p* (Spain sample)

| Pearson correlations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Gender ⁽¹⁾ | | | | | | |
| 2. SES | .089** .003 | | | | | |
| 3. Extroversion | -.052 .084 | -.019 .531 | | | | |
| 4. Relative standing | .052 .085 | .321 <.001 | -.018 .558 | | | |
| 5. FLE | -.055 .066 | -.031 .299 | .159 <.001 | .232 <.001 | | |
| 6. FLCA | -.312 <.001 | -.202 <.001 | -.078 .009 | -.469 <.001 | -.096 .001 | |
| 7. Intercultural sensitivity | -.091 .003 | .079 .009 | .191 <.001 | .319 <.001 | .240 <.001 | -.265 <.001 |

⁽¹⁾Gender: 1 = Female; 2 = Male

Note: FLE = Foreign Language Enjoyment; FLCA = Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Multiple regression analyses (method: enter) were performed with the Poland and the Spain sample data separately to test if the independent variables in each case significantly predicted participants' in-class WTC in English. For the Polish sample, a significant regression equation was found for in-class WTC ($F(7, 1356) = 208.132, p < .001, R^2 = .518$). Five factors were found to be significant predictors of in-class WTC. The dominance analysis performed in order to determine the relative importance of the factor on in-class WTC (Mizumoto, 2023) revealed that FLCA was the strongest (negative) predictor of WTC, followed, in this order, by intercultural sensitivity, relative standing, FLE and extroversion (Table 6).

Table 6. β , *t*, *p* and corresponding dominance weights (Poland sample)

| Predictor | standardised β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | Dominance weight (%) | 95% CI | Rank |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|--------------|------|
| Gender | .033 | 1.682 | .093 | .009 (1.74%) | [.004, .021] | 6 |
| SES | .031 | 1.560 | .119 | .004 (0.77%) | [.002, .010] | 7 |
| Extroversion | .146 | 7.451 | <.001 | .039 (7.53%) | [.026, .058] | 5 |
| Relative standing | .119 | 4.756 | <.001 | .092 (17.76%) | [.070, .113] | 3 |
| FLE | .218 | 11.219 | <.001 | .075 (14.48%) | [.057, .106] | 4 |
| FLCA | -.361 | -14.508 | <.001 | .172 (33.20%) | [.145, .196] | 1 |
| Intercultural sensitivity | .226 | 9.557 | <.001 | .125 (24.13%) | [.096, .148] | 2 |
| <i>Total</i> | | | | .518 (100%) | | |

For the Spanish sample, a significant regression equation was found for in-class WTC ($F(7, 1091) = 138.956, p < .001, R^2 = .471$). Five factors were found to be significant predictors of in-class WTC. The dominance analysis revealed that FLE was the strongest predictor, followed, in this order, by FLCA (negative predictor), intercultural sensitivity, relative standing, and extroversion (Table 8).

Table 7. β , t , p and corresponding dominance weights (Spain sample)

| Predictor | standardised β | t | p | Dominance weight (%) | 95% CI | Rank |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------|-------|----------------------|--------------|------|
| Gender | -.040 | -1.680 | .093 | .005 (1.06%) | [.002, .014] | 7 |
| SES | .016 | .663 | .508 | .006 (1.27%) | [.002, .014] | 6 |
| Extroversion | .151 | 6.618 | <.001 | .039 (8.28%) | [.021, .064] | 5 |
| Relative standing | .181 | 6.662 | <.001 | .089 (18.90%) | [.062, .114] | 4 |
| FLE | .298 | 12.739 | <.001 | .123 (26.11 %) | [.090, .167] | 1 |
| FLCA | -.251 | -9.299 | <.001 | .106 (22.51%) | [.073, .136] | 2 |
| Intercultural sensitivity | .227 | 9.273 | <.001 | .103 (21.87%) | [.072, .136] | 3 |
| <i>Total</i> | | | | .471 (100%) | | |

4. DISCUSSION

The results obtained in our study indicate that the sample in Spain expresses a higher desire to communicate. However, the practical significance of the difference between the classroom WTC of the two groups of EFL secondary students is quite small. These results are somewhat counterintuitive, given the expectation that a more communication-focused teaching approach (as observed in the case of Poland versus Spain) might lead to greater WTC in the classroom.

Out of the eight variables whose associations with WTC were investigated in the present study, five (FLCA, FLE, intercultural sensitivity, extroversion, and relative standing in spoken production and interaction among peers) were found to be predictors of WTC in both samples. However, the relative importance of most factors differs slightly between the two samples. In this respect, the most notable difference lies in the fact that anxiety is the strongest predictor of WTC among students in the Poland sample, while enjoyment is the strongest predictor in the Spanish sample. Age, gender and SES were not found to be significant predictors of WTC in either sample.

The findings concerning the predictive value of the affective factors in the study, FLCA and FLE, are consistent with research on predictors of WTC concerning anxiety (Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Cetinkaya, 2005; Dewaele, 2019; Knell & Chi, 2012; Wu & Lin, 2014) and enjoyment (Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Dewaele, 2019; Lee & Taylor, 2022). Additionally, our study adds evidence of the association between intercultural sensitivity, competence, or awareness and WTC, identified both by previous quantitative (Liu, 2017) and qualitative studies (Anderson, 2022; Normann, 2021; Tarp, 2020; Quinto et al., 2019). Regarding the personality factor in this study, our results are also consistent with findings in previous studies (Fatima et al., 2020; Khany & Nejad, 2017) in that extraversion is a significant predictor of WTC. In addition, as previously mentioned, perceived communicative competence is the high-evidence factor that has been found to have the largest effect on FL/L2 learners' WTC (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019) and is the most important predictor of the level of FL/L2 WTC (e.g., Halupka-Resetar et al., 2018; MacIntyre, Baker et al., 2002; MacIntyre, Dörnyei et al., 1998). The variable of relative standing among peers in terms of spoken communication, which may be interpreted as a

proxy for perceived competence, was also found to be a significant predictor of adolescent EFL participants' WTC in our study.

Our findings align with previous findings that indicate that neither age (Alemi et al., 2013; Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Dewaele, 2019; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017) nor gender (Alemi et al., 2013; Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017) are predictors of FL/L2 learners' WTC. Finally, the social standing of EFL teenagers in this study was not found to predict their in-class WTC, despite some studies, as mentioned above, that have found a relationship between SES and factors that seem to be intuitively associated with WTC, such as speech production scores (Huang et al., 2018), performance in English (Butler, 2014, 2015; Butler & Le, 2018; Zou & Zhang, 2011), or intrinsic motivation and self-confidence (Butler, 2017). Based on these findings, one main pedagogical conclusion can be drawn: There are factors that influence learners' willingness to talk, which can be addressed through teacher interventions and instructional practices. For example, teachers can foster learning enjoyment and intercultural appreciation to encourage students' desire to communicate in the target language. Conversely, certain factors can hinder students' willingness to talk, such as language anxiety, which teachers can contribute to reducing.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to compare classroom WTC between EFL secondary school students in Poland and Spain, as well as to identify the factors that predict this type of WTC in both settings. Our study had some limitations that must be acknowledged. These include the use of a convenience sample of schools within specific geographical areas in Poland and Spain, voluntary participation, which may have resulted in a certain level of self-selection bias, and a lack of qualitative data that could be used to explain the findings more deeply. Additionally, as this was a cross-sectional study, it is not possible to determine whether WTC is the cause or result of the predicting factors or whether a bidirectional relationship exists between WTC and those factors. Despite these limitations, however, this study contributes to the understanding of the experiences of in-class WTC and broadens our understanding of the factors that are and are not associated with it at an educational level, secondary education, in which there is a conspicuous dearth of studies.

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7. APPENDIX

Note: The translations into Polish and Spanish of the different instruments can be obtained from the authors.

Extroversion scale

- Are you a talkative person?
- Are you rather lively?
- Do you enjoy meeting new people?
- Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party?
- Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?
- Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?
- Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?
- Do you like mixing with people?
- Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?
- Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?
- Do other people think of you as being very lively?
- Can you get a party going?

(Original 12-item scale for the measurement of extroversion of the short-scale Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – Revised [EPQ-R] [Eysenck et al., 1985])

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale

- Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it.
- I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do.
- I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class.
- I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class. (reverse-coded)
- I feel confident when I speak in FL class. (reverse-coded)
- I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class.
- I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class.
- It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class.

(Items extracted by MacIntyre [1992] from the FLCA scale developed by Horwitz et [1986])

Short-Form Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) In the foreign language class:

1. My teacher encourages me to speak English.
2. The teacher is friendly.
3. The teacher is supportive when I speak English in class.
4. I enjoy my English lessons.
5. I've learned interesting things when speaking English in class.
6. I am proud of my accomplishments in speaking and interacting in English.
7. We form a tight group.
8. We laugh a lot in the English lessons.
9. We have common 'legends,' such as running jokes.

(Adapted from the short form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) validated by Botes et al. [2021])

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

1. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
2. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
3. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
4. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
5. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
6. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
7. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards difference between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
9. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
10. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.

(Original Wu's [2018] Intercultural Sensitivity scale [first 10 items] based on Chen and Starosta's Intercultural Sensitivity Scale)

In-class Willingness to Communicate scale

1. When I am prepared for class.
2. When I know the correct answer.
3. When I can really clarify the issue under discussion.
4. When my views differ from my classmates' views.
5. When no one else is talking.
6. When I am sitting in the front of the class.
7. When my views differ from the professor's views.
8. When the class is engaged in an open discussion.
9. When the topic is interesting.
10. When my participation is being assessed.*
11. When the class is engaged in a heated debate.
12. When I am in a small group.
13. When the professor asks for a response from the class.
14. When I am sitting in the back of the class.
15. When I am graded on participation.
16. When I am comfortable with the subject matter.
17. When I have to talk in pairs.*
18. When I would like to ask the teacher a question.*

(Items extracted from Menzel & Carrell [1999] and Peng [2019]; * items were added by the authors)