



The Correlation between Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and Speaking Achievement: A Case of Seventh-Grade Students of Junior High Schools In Palembang

Salsabila Kamalia^{1*}, Annisa Astrid², Deta Desvitasari³

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang: 2120205034@radenfatah.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang: annisaastrid_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang: detadesvitasari_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Speaking is a crucial aspect of language learning, yet many students struggle with developing effective speaking skills. Successful communication requires not only linguistic competence but also confidence and motivation. One psychological factor believed to influence speaking achievement is Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which is the term used to describe a student's preparedness to communicate if given the chance. This study focused on analyzing the relationship between WTC and speaking achievement and determine the extent to which WTC contributes to students' speaking achievement. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving 105 students from two junior high schools in Palembang. This study implemented a WTC questionnaire and a speaking test to obtain the data, and statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. The correlation analysis indicated that there was no correlation between students' willingness to communicate and their speaking achievement ($r=0.144$, $p=0.143$), suggesting that WTC alone may not directly impact speaking achievement. The study concludes that while WTC is important for language learning, other factors such as linguistic competence, learning environment, and instructional strategies may also play a role in students' speaking achievement. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of WTC and its implications for language teaching practices.

KEYWORDS

Speaking Achievement; Willingness to Communicate, Correlation, Junior High School Students

ABSTRAK

Berbicara adalah aspek penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa, namun banyak siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara yang efektif. Komunikasi yang sukses tidak hanya membutuhkan kompetensi linguistik tetapi juga kepercayaan diri dan motivasi. Salah satu faktor psikologis yang diyakini mempengaruhi pencapaian berbicara adalah Willingness to Communicate (WTC), yang mengacu pada kesiapan siswa untuk terlibat dalam komunikasi ketika

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diberikan kesempatan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada menganalisis hubungan antara WTC dan pencapaian berbicara serta menentukan sejauh mana WTC berkontribusi terhadap pencapaian berbicara siswa. Penelitian ini menerapkan desain penelitian kuantitatif korelasional dengan melibatkan 105 siswa dari dua sekolah menengah pertama. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner WTC dan tes berbicara, kemudian dianalisis secara statistik menggunakan SPSS. Analisis korelasi menunjukkan bahwa tidak ditemukan hubungan antara WTC dan pencapaian berbicara siswa ($r = 0.144$, $p = 0.143$), yang mengindikasikan bahwa WTC secara independen mungkin tidak memiliki dampak langsung terhadap pencapaian berbicara siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa terdapat faktor lain, seperti kompetensi linguistik, lingkungan belajar, dan strategi pembelajaran, yang dapat berkontribusi terhadap pencapaian berbicara siswa. Oleh karena itu, meskipun WTC merupakan aspek penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk menggali faktor-faktor lain yang mungkin berpengaruh terhadap keterampilan berbicara siswa. Hasil penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang peran WTC dalam akuisisi bahasa serta dampaknya terhadap praktik pengajaran bahasa..

***Corresponding Author:**

Salsabila Kamalia

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang: 2120205034@radenfatah.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in language learning, as it allows people to express their thoughts, share ideas, and connect with others. According to Hussain (2017), speaking proficiency is a key indicator of language competence, making it an essential aspect of language acquisition. Effective speaking skills enable students to engage in discussions, negotiate meanings, and build interpersonal relationships (Pakula, 2019). The ability to speak fluently in English is essential for academic success, professional growth, and social interactions in an increasingly globalized world.

Despite being a crucial measure of language proficiency, many students struggle with speaking due to various linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors (Illyin et al., 2021; Ur, 2024). Linguistic barriers, such as limited vocabulary, lack of grammar mastery, and poor pronunciation, hinder effective communication (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Psychological factors, including anxiety, motivation, low self-confidence, and lack the willingness to communicate play crucial roles, as students who experience them often struggle more in their speaking (Illyin et al., 2021; Ramli et al., 2020; Zhou, 2024). Additionally, social and environmental factors, such as dynamics of the classroom and peer interactions, have an impact on shaping students' speaking, students are more inclined to participate in speaking

when they feel comfortable and encouraged (Kakita & Palukuri, 2020; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Therefore, overcoming these challenges and understanding key aspects of speaking are essential for students to develop fluency and communicate effectively.

One of the key psychological factors influencing speaking is Willingness to Communicate (WTC). It refers to a learner's readiness to participate in communication within a specific context (Macintyre, 2020). *WTC* is essential for developing speaking skills, as it reflects a student's eagerness and confidence to use the language effectively (Rattanasaeeng & Sukavatee, 2021). Research suggests that students with higher *WTC* tend to have better speaking skills because they practice the language more frequently, leading to greater fluency and confidence (Riasati, 2018).

To develop a high level of willingness to communicate (*WTC*), students must recognize key influencing factors, including self-confidence, personality traits, and motivation (Dong et al., 2023; Lin, 2019). Confident students have a tendency to actively participate in class, initiate conversations, and express opinions without fear of negative evaluation, fostering higher *WTC* (Ramli et al., 2020). In addition, extroverted students are more inclined to engage in conversation with others and have lower levels of language anxiety, which improves their *WTC* (Lin, 2019). Moreover, motivated students recognize the benefits and significance of their academic efforts, making them more eager to learn and use the target language in conversation (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018).

Various studies have explored the relationship between *WTC* and speaking achievement. Studies by Al-hafiz and Gushendra (2021); Sinaga et al. (2021) discovered a significant correlation between *WTC* and speaking skills among high school students in Indonesia. Other studies conducted by Bergil (2016); Kadhim and Kamil (2024); Rostami et al. (2016) proved that willingness to speak is positively correlated with the English department tertiary students' speaking skills and language proficiency. In contrast, Al-Hinddasi (2019); Khoiriyah and Ciptaningrum (2020) both examined the relationship between willingness to communicate with proficiency in English and achievement, the result identified that the willingness to communicate did not significantly correlate with their English language proficiency and achievement. In addition, Rattanasaeeng and Sukavatee (2021) also found no discernible relation between students' *WTC* and speaking ability in EFL undergraduate students. These contrary results draw attention to the need for more research, especially in different educational and cultural settings. Addressing this research gap, the present study examines whether *WTC* correlates with speaking achievement among seventh-grade students of junior high school in Palembang, Indonesia.

Based on previous research and theoretical frameworks, the study formulates the following hypotheses: H_0 : There is no correlation between students' Willingness to Communicate (*WTC*) and speaking achievement. H_1 : There is a correlation between students' Willingness to Communicate (*WTC*) and speaking achievement.

This study aims to close the research gap by focusing on seventh-grade students, a group that has not received enough attention in earlier *WTC* studies. The specific objectives are (1) to analyze the correlation between students' *WTC* and their speaking achievement among seventh-grade students in Palembang, and (2) to assess the extent to which *WTC* contributes to speaking achievement in a junior high school context. This research provides new insight into how *WTC* and speaking ability develop in earlier stages, offering practical implications for language teachers working with younger learners. By addressing these objectives, the study hopes to improve our knowledge of *WTC*'s function in language learning, enabling curriculum developers to develop teaching methods that encourage effective communication in EFL classes.

METHOD

A quantitative research methodology with a bivariate correlational research design was used in this study. A bivariate correlation study was chosen in this research to examine the relationship between two variables (Cohen et al., 2018). Two different variables were used in this study which were independent and dependent variables with *WTC* as an independent variable (X) and speaking achievement as a dependent variable (Y). The formula is as follows:



Figure 1: Bivariate correlational research design.

The population of this study was composed of 344 seventh-grade students from two junior high schools in Palembang: SMPN 6 and SMP Nurul Amal. The sample was selected through a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a set of people that are available to study (Fraenkel et al., 2022). In this study, the school principals assigned the available students from each school to participate. As a result, 105 students were chosen as the sample.

This study collected two types of quantitative data: students' *WTC* scores, obtained from a questionnaire, and students' speaking achievement scores, measured through a speaking test. To gather the necessary data, this study utilized two research instruments. First, The *WTC* questionnaire constructed by Aoyama et al. (2020) was specifically created for junior high school students and contained 53 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, scaling from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Next, the speaking test required learners to perform a 1–2-minute monologue or dialogue, selecting one of five language functions from the English for Nusantara book by Damayanti et al. (2022). The test was assessed by two raters using a rubric by Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), which evaluated grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation.

To ensure the instruments' validity and reliability, the *WTC* questionnaire's validity was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) by Aoyama et al. (2020),

demonstrating acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.081, SRMR = 0.061). For the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted to check whether or not the questionnaire is suitable for junior high school students in Palembang, The result showed that the questionnaire had an appropriate internal consistency level, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.896. The speaking test's content validity was verified by English education lecturers from UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, ensuring alignment with the curriculum and students' proficiency levels. Additionally, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation formula was used to measure inter-rater reliability, revealing a correlation coefficient score of $r = 0.651$ ($p < 0.001$) demonstrating a high degree of agreement amongst raters.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS through several statistical tests. First, a descriptive analysis was calculated to compute the mean, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation of students' *WTC* and speaking scores. Then, the prerequisite analysis of normality and linearity test was measured to affirm that the data were normal and linear (Fraenkel et al., 2022). Finally, a hypothesis analysis employing a Pearson-Product Moment Correlation test was conducted to examine the relationship involving *WTC* and speaking achievement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study was to identify whether or not students' willingness to communicate and speaking achievement are correlated. This study took 105 seventh-grade students of SMP N 6 and SMP Nurul Amal Palembang as the sample. To answer the first research question “*How was the correlation between students' willingness to communicate and their speaking achievement among seventh-grade students in Palembang?*” the data were analyzed through several statistical tests using SPSS version 27. The following section outlines the analysis results that provide the answer.

The result of Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Prior to calculating the data, a *WTC* questionnaire was distributed to the students to fill out. Then, the data obtained were calculated by using SPSS. The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire are presented as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire.

N	Min	Max	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
105	118	247	19940	189.90	25.086

The table presented above found that the questionnaire's minimum score is 118, while the maximum score is 247 with a total score of 19940 and a mean of 189.90.

The result of Students' Speaking Score

Before calculating the data, a speaking test was conducted on the students. After that, The students' speaking test results were evaluated by two raters. Then, the data obtained were calculated by using SPSS. The descriptive statistics of students' speaking tests are presented as follows:

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of speaking score.

N	Min	Max	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
105	48	98	7740	73.71	12.169

Based on the table presented above, it was revealed that the lowest score on students' speaking test is 48, and the highest score is 98 with a mean score of 73.71.

Prerequisite Analysis

Before conducting the correlation analysis, the prerequisite test was analyzed to check regardless of whether the data were normal and linear. The data were measured using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov formula to confirm that they were normally distributed (Fraenkel et al., 2022). The result of the normality test is provided as follows:

Table 3: The normality test.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

			Unstandardized Residual
N			105
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean		.0000000
	Std. Deviation		12.04267893
Asym. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c			.098
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^d	Sig.		.102
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.095
		Upper Bound	.110

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

In the normality test, the data were considered normal if the Sig.2-tailed/p-output score was exceeded 0.05 (Cohen et al., 2018). From the data provided above, it can be seen that the p-output was $.098 > 0.05$ indicating that the data were normal and can proceed to linearity test. Next, a linearity test using One-Way ANOVA formula was examined to see the linear relation

between two specific variables (Fraenkel et al., 2022). The outcome of the linearity test is presented below:

Table 4: The linearity test.
 ANOVA Table

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Speaking*QWTC	Between Groups	(combined)	4254.974	36	118.194	.721	.857
		Linearity	318.713	1	318.713	1.944	.168
		Derivation from Linearity	3936.261	35	112.465	.686	.888
	Within Groups	11146.455	68	163.918			
	Total	15401.429	104				

In the linearity test, the data were considered linear if the p-output or (Sig.2-tailed) was greater than 0.05 (Cohen et al., 2018). According to the data presented, it was revealed that the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) score was $.888 > 0.05$ indicating that the data were linear and can proceed to the correlation analysis.

The Correlation Analysis

Once the data were classified as normal and linear, the data were processed into the correlation test employing Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in SPSS. The finding was described as follows:

Table 5: The correlation analysis.
 Correlations

		QWTC	SPEAKING
QWTC	Pearson Correlation	1	.144
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.143
	N	105	105
SPEAKING	Pearson Correlation	.144	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.143	
	N	105	105

From the data presented above, it was shown that the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) was .143 which was higher than 0.05 (> 0.05), this means that the hypothesis (H1) was declined and the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted. In addition, the correlation coefficient or r-obtained was .144 which was lower than r-table which is .190. Therefore, it can be inferred that no correlation existed between students' *WTC* and their speaking achievement. In line with the outcome of the correlation test, because no correlation was found between students'

willingness to communicate and their speaking achievement, the regression test could not be calculated and the second research question could not be answered.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is considered an essential factor influencing students' speaking achievement. Riasati (2018) stated that *WTC* has a crucial impact on language learning, as it affects how frequently students practice and use the target language in meaningful contexts. However, the findings of this research indicated that there is no correlation between WTC and speaking achievement. The findings align with those of other researchers. A study conducted by Rattanasaeang and Sukavatee (2021) found no association between *WTC* and speaking ability, as the p-output was higher than the p-obtained. Similarly, Al-Hinddasi (2019); Khoiriyah and Ciptaningrum (2020) both reported that there was no significant alignment between willingness to communicate and English language achievement. In contrast, different findings emerged in other studies. Al-hafiz and Gushendra (2021) discovered a substantial link between willingness to communicate and speaking performance. Additionally, Kadhim and Kamil (2024) identified a moderate correlation between willingness to communicate and productive skill performance of tertiary students.

There are several possible explanations for the lack of correlation between students' willingness to communicate and speaking achievement. The outcome suggests that speaking achievement is influenced by more than just willingness to communicate. Students' speaking achievement can be impacted by numerous other factors including lack of linguistic abilities, affective factors that include anxiety, low motivation, and lack of self-confidence, teaching strategies, and environment (Harmer, 2015; Illyin et al., 2021; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). A lack of linguistic abilities, such as low vocabulary and insufficient grammar, can be a major barrier to speaking achievement. Students with limited vocabulary mastery often struggle to grasp word meanings, making it difficult for them to engage in conversations (Andriani Putri et al., 2020). Similarly, grammar deficiencies may hinder students from constructing meaningful sentences, thereby limiting their ability to participate in discussions effectively (Hussain, 2017).

Affective factors, such as inhibition, also play a significant role in students' speaking achievement. Many students choose to remain silent during speaking activities due to their fear of making mistakes in English (Ur, 2024). Additionally, motivation also plays a major role in guiding students' efforts to enhance their speaking. Motivation can come from both internal and external sources, encouraging students to work toward their language learning goals (Illyin et al., 2021). When students have high motivation, they are more inclined to participate in speaking activities and make consistent progress in developing their achievement (Andriani Putri et al., 2020). Moreover, self-confidence and anxiety can also significantly impact students' speaking. Students with strong linguistic abilities may still struggle to speak fluently if they lack confidence or experience high anxiety levels (Illyin et al., 2021). In contrast, students with higher confidence tend to feel more comfortable while

speaking, as lower anxiety levels allow them to express themselves more freely and effectively (Zhou, 2024).

Teaching strategies and a supportive environment are also key factors that influence students' speaking achievement. Effective teaching strategies and a positive learning atmosphere can significantly enhance students' engagement in communicative activities, allowing them to develop fluency, accuracy, and overall speaking proficiency (Andriani Putri et al., 2020; Kakita & Palukuri, 2020). Thus, teachers should develop and apply effective teaching strategies that nurture a positive and encouraging classroom environment. By creating meaningful and interactive learning experiences, students can actively engage in using the target language, which can significantly enhance their speaking achievement (Pakula, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between seventh-grade students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their speaking achievement. The findings indicated no correlation between *WTC* and speaking achievement, as the *r*-obtained ($r = .144$) was lower than the *r*-table ($r = .190$), and the *p*-output (.143) was higher than the *p*-value (0.05). These results correspond with earlier research that found no link between *WTC* and speaking achievement. This lack of correlation suggests that factors beyond *WTC* may influence students' speaking achievement, including linguistic proficiency, other major affective factors, teaching strategies, and the learning environment. Therefore, this research implies that language instruction should focus on various aspects, such as improving vocabulary and grammar, boosting confidence, and creating an engaging learning environment. Teachers should use interactive and communicative activities to help students practice speaking more naturally and confidently. A positive and encouraging classroom environment is also important to reduce anxiety and increase students' willingness to speak. Additionally, professional training programs should equip teachers with strategies to promote active language use. Moreover, it is suggested that future research should explore how *WTC* interacts with other emotional and cognitive factors, investigate other additional psychological, linguistic, and environmental factors in language learning, and explore different research methods that can offer a deeper insight into the connection between *WTC* and speaking achievement.

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