

The Impact of Classroom Environment on Student's Willingness to Speak English

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ABSTRACT

Many students feel reluctant to speak English in the classroom due to fear of making grammatical or pronunciation mistakes, negative evaluation from teachers or peers, and limited vocabulary to express their ideas effectively. This study aims to examine how the classroom environment influences junior high school students' willingness to speak English by exploring the roles of teacher support, peer relationships, learning activities, and the physical classroom environment in shaping students' confidence and classroom participation. This study employed a conceptual research design using a literature review approach. The review analyzed 32 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025 that focused on classroom environment, willingness to communicate, speaking anxiety, and English language learning in EFL contexts. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research objectives, publication quality, and empirical contribution to the topic. The findings reveal that a supportive classroom environment plays a crucial role in enhancing students' willingness to speak English. Teacher support emerged as the most influential factor, followed by positive peer relationships, interactive learning activities, and a conducive physical classroom environment. Together, these factors reduce speaking anxiety, strengthen students' confidence and motivation, and encourage more active participation in English-speaking activities, highlighting the importance of creating supportive learning environments to improve students' communicative competence.

Keywords: *Classroom Environment, Student, Speak, English*

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INTRODUCTION

Communication and expressing opinion in front of public is one of the most important aspects of speaking towards many people. It is essential that to deliver a proper and effective speech, both in clearness and confident. Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning English language as it enables the learners to present ideas, opinions and information accurately in social and academic contexts. Speaking competence is usually regarded as a sign of successful language acquisition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. However, developing speaking skills is still a big challenge for many learners, especially in countries, where English is not used as a daily means of communication. Therefore, making students willing and confident to speak English has become one of the main goals of English language teaching.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, speaking competence is often regarded as an indicator of successful language acquisition. To many language practitioners, motivation is a key element in the process of learning a second/foreign language (Riasati, 2018). Even though speaking is important, most EFL students have low willingness to speak English in classroom activities. Students are often afraid to speak up in class. This can occur for various reason, ranging from fear of making a mistake in grammar or pronunciation, being negatively evaluated by teachers or peers, or not having enough vocabulary to communicate their ideas, and therefore they are reluctant to engage in discussions, answer questions or voice

their opinions. These psychological barriers can lower students' confidence and provide limited opportunities to practice language meaningfully, which can be detrimental to the development of their speaking proficiency.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) refers to learners' readiness to initiate communication in a second or foreign language when opportunities arise and is widely recognized as a key predictor of successful language learning. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), learners' willingness to communicate is influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by situational factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, motivation, and the learning environment. Recent studies have demonstrated that a supportive classroom environment characterized by positive teacher-student relationships, collaborative peer interaction, and engaging learning activities significantly enhances students' WTC in EFL contexts (Azwar et al., 2021; Lee & Drajiati, 2019; Riasati, 2018). Teacher support and positive classroom interactions have also been shown to promote students' motivation, positive academic emotions, and classroom participation, all of which contribute to greater willingness to communicate (Lei et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2021). However, most existing studies have focused primarily on individual psychological factors or specific instructional strategies, while relatively few have comprehensively examined how multiple dimensions of the classroom environment jointly influence junior high school students' willingness to communicate. Moreover, evidence synthesized from recent literature remains limited, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts. Therefore, this literature review addresses this gap by integrating recent empirical findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of how classroom environment supports students' willingness to speak English.

Previous studies have found that students' willingness to communicate is affected not only by individual characteristics but also by the classroom environment. Classroom environment encompasses the physical, social, and psychological conditions in which learning occurs (B. Fraser, 2012). Supportive teachers, positive peer relationships, interactive learning activities, and a comfortable classroom atmosphere encourage students to participate actively in speaking tasks (Ertesvåg et al., 2025; Nugent, 2009; Tikkanen et al., 2024). Conversely, unsupportive classroom climates and stressful learning conditions may increase speaking anxiety and reduce students' willingness to use English (Riasati, 2018). Therefore, creating a positive classroom environment is considered an essential factor in encouraging students to communicate confidently in English.

Despite numerous empirical studies examining the relationship between classroom environment and students' willingness to communicate, existing findings remain dispersed across different educational contexts and theoretical perspectives. A comprehensive conceptual synthesis is therefore needed to provide a clearer understanding of how classroom environment influences students' willingness to speak English. Such a synthesis can also contribute to the development of more effective pedagogical strategies for English language teaching.

This article aims to examine how classroom environment influences students' willingness to speak English by synthesizing relevant theories and previous empirical studies. Specifically, it explores how teacher support, peer relationships, learning activities, and classroom climate affect junior high school students' willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, it discusses the pedagogical implications of these classroom environment dimensions for English language teaching. The findings are expected to help teachers create supportive learning environments that foster students' confidence, increase classroom participation, and ultimately improve their English communication skills.

METHOD

This study employed a conceptual research design using a literature review approach. Relevant studies were collected from academic databases including Google Scholar and ERIC. The selected literature focused on classroom environment, willingness to communicate, speaking anxiety, and English language learning. The collected studies were analysed using

descriptive and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and relationships among the concepts. Categorization of the area were based on four key main factors: (1) Teacher support, (2) Peer relationship, (3) Physical environment, and (4) learning activities.

Analysis was carried out on the basis of a thematic conceptual approach. Relevant theories and concepts were identified and systematically organized based on the key dimensions of classroom environment, students' willingness to speak English and the factors affecting oral communication in EFL contexts. These theoretical perspectives were then reviewed to explore the conceptual link between classroom environment and students' willingness to speak English. Finally, the synthesized literature was used to explain how various aspects of the classroom environment such as teacher support, peer relationships, classroom climate, physical learning conditions, and interactive learning activities could conceptually influence students' readiness to engage in English-speaking activities.

This study aimed to establish conceptual relationships between classroom environment and students' willingness to speak English, rather than to evaluate students' speaking performance or measure learning outcomes through empirical data. This study synthesized established theories and findings from previous studies. Thus, the most suitable methodological approach was a conceptual research design that would provide a holistic theoretical understanding of how the classroom environments influence students' willingness to communicate in English.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a literature synthesis conducted on several journal articles. The results of this conceptual review suggest that the classroom environment is an important factor that affects students' willingness to speak English in EFL classrooms. Four major themes were emerged from the synthesis of previous studies. These include: teacher support, peer relationships, physical classroom environment and interactive learning activities. Overall, the literature suggests that these classroom environment dimensions collectively contribute to the development of students' motivation, confidence and active involvement in English speaking activities. Hence, the need to develop a conducive, engaging classroom environment to build students' confidence and efficiency in communicating in English.

Teacher Support

The synthesis of previous studies indicates that the teacher support is the most powerful predictor to boost students' willingness to speak English in the EFL classrooms. Teacher support is defined as the perceived helpfulness and acceptance that teachers provide to students (Torsheim & Wold, 2000). Teacher practices and classroom management are related to students' academic performance and engagement (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). According to Whitaker (2004), the main variable in the classroom is not the student, but the teacher. Great teachers have high expectations for their students, but even higher expectations for themselves. Good classroom atmosphere gives positive student attitude and keeps increasing by a better atmospheric condition (Limpo et al., 2013; Velegol & Zappe, 2016).

Teacher support involves a range of actions including giving positive feedback, promoting student involvement, showing understanding, and establishing a safe learning environment. When teachers shout at students, blame them, or aggressively discipline them, these students often show less concern for their teachers and fewer cooperative classroom behaviours (Miller et al., 2000). Teachers is required to create a supportive classroom environment, so students are more likely to view speaking activities as opportunities to learn rather than as situations in which they may be judged or criticized.

Empirical studies have shown that supportive teachers can significantly improve students' self-confidence and reduce their fear of making mistakes in speaking English (e.g., Students who are positively reinforced and encouraged are more likely to participate actively in class discussions and oral communication activities. In contrast, excessive correction, harsh

criticism, or negative feedback may increase students' speaking anxiety so that they are not willing to communicate in English.

From the motivational perspective, teacher support also influences the students' intrinsic motivation to learn and use English. Teachers can help to promote greater engagement in speaking tasks through acknowledging students' efforts, providing meaningful learning activities and building positive personal relationships. This type of encouragement encourages students to view speaking as an achievable and rewarding learning experience, rather than a source of stress.

These findings are in line with the theoretical perspective of MacIntyre et al. (1998) who proposed that affective factors such as self-confidence and communication anxiety contribute to learners' willingness to communicate. Fraser (1998) also highlighted that a positive classroom environment supported by teacher-student relationships enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, teacher support should be regarded as a basic component of the classroom environment which gives students confidence, increases motivation and encourages them to take an active part in English speaking activities.

Peer Relationship

The review of the previous studies indicates that positive peer relationships are important in enhancing students' willingness to speak English in the EFL classrooms. A supportive peer environment encourages students to communicate more freely, as they feel accepted and respected by their classmates. When students perceive their classmates as cooperative instead of critical, they are less afraid of making language mistakes and more likely to participate in speaking activities.

Many studies have shown that when students work together, they learn better. For example, pair work, group talks and acting out roles help students practice speaking in an environment. During these activities students will support each other. This makes them feel less worried about talking and more confident about sharing their thoughts. As a results, students are more eager to chat ask questions and join in class discussions. They get more confident, in speaking up and sharing ideas with their peers. Students are more willing to start conversations because they feel supported by their peers.

Positive peer relationships also enable learners to be more experimental with new words and language expressions without being overly concerned about making mistakes. Through meaningful interaction, constructive criticism and cooperation with fellow students, the students can broaden their vocabulary and develop fluency when speaking. In contrast, negative peer interaction, such as ridicule, criticism, or exclusion, might increase the anxiety of speaking and discourage students to participate in oral activities.

Classroom Environment

The synthesis of prior research shows that the physical classroom environment is an important determinant of students' willingness to speak English. The physical environment includes some aspects of the learning space like classroom layout, lighting, ventilation, arrangement of seats, noise level and learning facilities. A good classroom environment, which is well-organized and comfortable, enables students to concentrate better on learning activities and to take a more active part in oral communication.

Research has found that a comfortable physical learning environment aids students' ability to focus by minimizing distractions and promoting sustained attention to classroom activities. Physical comfort helps students pay better attention to explanations given by teachers, interact with fellow students and speak in class. In contrast, overcrowded classrooms, excessive noise, poor lighting, or inadequate learning facilities may reduce students' concentration and negatively affect their participation in English-speaking activities.

Furthermore, a supportive physical environment promotes greater student engagement in classroom learning. Flexible seating arrangements and interactive classroom spaces encourage collaboration among students, making pair work, group discussions, and

speaking activities more effective. Such learning environments provide students with more opportunities to practice English in authentic communicative situations, thereby increasing their confidence and willingness to communicate.

Learning Activities

Previous studies consistently suggest that the types of learning activities implemented in the classroom can substantially influence students' willingness to speak English. Interactive activities, such as role plays, group discussions, debates, and oral presentations, create opportunities for students to use English in meaningful and authentic situations. Rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy, these activities encourage learners to communicate ideas, solve problems, and interact with others, making speaking a natural part of the learning process.

Among these activities, role plays allow students to practice English in simulated real-life contexts, helping them become more comfortable using the language without excessive fear of making mistakes. Likewise, group discussions provide a collaborative environment in which students can exchange opinions, ask questions, and negotiate meaning with their peers. Such interactions not only improve speaking fluency but also foster greater confidence in expressing ideas. Debate activities further challenge students to think critically and respond spontaneously, while oral presentations help learners organize their thoughts and develop confidence in speaking before an audience.

The literature also indicates that students are more motivated to participate when classroom activities are engaging and communicative. Interactive tasks reduce the monotony of traditional teacher-centered instruction and encourage active participation throughout the learning process. As students become more involved in these activities, they gain more opportunities to practice English, expand their vocabulary, and improve their communicative competence. This repeated exposure to meaningful communication gradually strengthens their confidence and increases their willingness to speak English.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that a supportive classroom environment plays a fundamental role in enhancing junior high school students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The literature consistently indicates that teacher support, positive peer relationships, interactive learning activities, and a conducive physical learning environment collectively reduce speaking anxiety, strengthen students' confidence and motivation, and encourage more active participation in classroom communication. Among these factors, teacher support emerged as the most influential because it creates a psychologically safe atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas without fear of negative evaluation. These findings contribute to the growing body of WTC research by synthesizing recent evidence on the interaction between classroom environment and students' communicative behavior. Practically, the study suggests that English teachers and curriculum developers should prioritize supportive, learner-centered classroom practices that promote meaningful interaction and collaborative learning. As this study is based on a literature review, future research is recommended to validate these findings through empirical investigations involving different educational levels, cultural contexts, and research designs to provide broader evidence of how classroom environment shapes students' willingness to communicate.

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