

# The Contribution of Teacher Support to Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English Classes

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## Abstract

Students' willingness to communicate (WTC) is considered an important factor in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it reflects students' readiness to participate in communication activities. However, many vocational high school students still show low participation and lack confidence in communicating in English. One factor assumed to contribute to this issue is teacher support. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the contribution of teacher support to students' willingness to communicate in English classes at a vocational high school. This study employed a quantitative correlational design involving 140 tenth-grade students at SMKN 41 Jakarta. The data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires measuring teacher support and students' willingness to communicate. The Teacher Support instrument consisted of 20 valid items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.930, while the WTC instrument consisted of 18 valid items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.899 after two invalid items were removed through validity testing. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality testing, Spearman Rank Correlation, and simple linear regression in IBM SPSS Statistics. The findings revealed that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, Spearman Rank Correlation was used. The correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate with a correlation coefficient of 0.310 and a significance value of 0.000. In addition, the simple linear regression analysis indicated that teacher support contributed positively and significantly to students' willingness to communicate with an R Square value of 0.160, meaning that teacher support contributed 16% to students' willingness to communicate. These findings imply that supportive teacher behavior may help students become more confident, motivated, and willing to communicate in English classes. The study also suggests that teachers should create more supportive and interactive classroom environments to improve vocational students' participation in English communication activities.

**Keywords:** *EFL Classroom, English Learning, Teacher Support, Vocational School, Willingness To Communicate,*

## Introduction

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning contexts, students' participation and willingness to communicate (WTC) play an important role in determining language learning success. WTC refers to students' readiness to initiate communication when given opportunities to use the target language. Students who are willing to communicate tend to participate more actively in classroom interaction, discussions, and speaking activities, which may improve their language learning outcomes. However, many students in EFL classrooms still experience reluctance, anxiety, and low confidence when communicating in English. Communication in English classrooms does not only depend on students' linguistic competence but also on psychological and contextual factors such as confidence, classroom atmosphere, and teacher behavior (Hu & Wang, 2023; Weda et al., 2021; Zhang, 2023). Many students, especially those

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in vocational schools, are often reluctant to express their ideas or participate actively in English discussions even though they may have adequate English proficiency. Previous studies also revealed that vocational students often experience fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary mastery, and low self-confidence in speaking English (Yunus et al., 2023). Consequently, students' willingness to communicate in English remains relatively low.

Several studies have emphasized that teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to communicate (Fitriani A & Jumarniati, 2023; Sari & Margana, 2023). Teacher-related factors such as teaching attitude, emotional care, classroom feedback, and supportive communication behaviors significantly influence students' communication willingness (Zhang, 2023). Supportive teacher behaviors and immediacy, including encouragement, responsiveness, smiling, and empathy, positively affect learners' WTC in EFL contexts because they help students overcome communication anxiety and hesitation during speaking activities (Sabzalipour et al., 2021). Teachers' immediacy behaviors strongly predict students' WTC and academic engagement (Hu & Wang, 2023). When teachers create warm and supportive learning environments, students become more confident and motivated to use English. Teacher support is also considered an important aspect influencing students' classroom participation and communication behavior. Moreover, Teacher support includes academic support, emotional support, and instrumental support (Liu & Li, 2023). Academic support refers to teachers' assistance in helping students understand learning materials and tasks, emotional support involves encouragement and empathy, while instrumental support includes practical assistance and learning resources provided by teachers. Previous studies have shown that supportive teacher behavior positively influences students' confidence, motivation, engagement, and communication participation in EFL classrooms (Hejazi et al., 2023; Weda et al., 2021; Lee & Lee, 2020).

From a broader pedagogical perspective, teacher academic support not only directly enhances WTC but also indirectly affects students' engagement through perseverance and motivation (Guo et al., 2025). In vocational school settings, teacher support becomes even more important because vocational students tend to focus more on technical and practical subjects related to their majors, while English is often considered a secondary subject. Vocational school students generally prioritize practical and occupational skills that prepare them for future careers, causing English learning to receive less attention compared to technical competencies (Elguanda et al., 2023; Kusmiyati & Sarmi, 2021). Consequently, vocational students often demonstrate lower engagement and confidence in English communication activities compared to students in general high schools (Yunus et al., 2023; Amri & Paramaiswari, 2020). Although many studies have discussed willingness to communicate and teacher support in general EFL contexts, research focusing specifically on vocational high school students in Indonesia remains limited. Most previous studies focused on university students or general senior high school students. Therefore, investigating teacher support and students' willingness to communicate in vocational school settings is important because vocational students have different learning orientations and classroom characteristics.

Based on the research gap above, this study aimed to investigate the contribution of teacher support to students' willingness to communicate in English classes at a vocational high school. This research is expected to provide empirical insights into how supportive teacher behavior contributes to students' willingness to communicate in vocational EFL classrooms. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Indonesian vocational high school students and its examination of teacher support as a contributing factor to students' willingness to communicate. The research question of this study was: "Is there a significant contribution of teacher support to

students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English classes at a vocational high school?" Accordingly, the objective of this study was to identify the contribution of teacher support to students' willingness to communicate in English classes at a vocational school.

## Method

This study employed a quantitative research method with a correlational design to investigate the contribution of teacher support to students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English classes. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to examine the relationship between variables without manipulating them. The research was conducted at SMKN 41 Jakarta during the 2025/2026 academic year. The independent variable in this study was teacher support, while students' willingness to communicate served as the dependent variable. The population of this study consisted of tenth-grade students at SMKN 41 Jakarta. The sample involved 140 students selected from four classes, namely DKV 1, DKV 2, Accounting 1, and Accounting 2. The sampling technique used in this research was cluster sampling because intact classes were selected as the research participants. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the participants were naturally grouped into classroom units, making the data collection process more efficient and manageable. In addition, vocational high school students were selected as the participants because they have different learning characteristics and classroom orientations compared to students in general senior high schools. Vocational students tend to focus more on practical and technical learning activities related to their majors, which may influence their confidence and participation in English communication activities. Therefore, examining teacher support and students' willingness to communicate in vocational school contexts was considered important to provide more contextual understanding regarding communication behavior in English classrooms.

The data were collected using questionnaires consisting of two research variables: Teacher Support and Students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Both instruments employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The Teacher Support questionnaire consisted of 20 items adapted from previous studies that measured three dimensions of teacher support, namely academic support, emotional support, and instrumental support (Liu & Li, 2023; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2022). Meanwhile, the WTC questionnaire initially consisted of 20 items adapted from previous studies (Lee & Lee, 2020) and (Weda et al., 2021), which aimed to measure students' willingness to communicate both inside and outside the classroom. After validity testing was conducted, two invalid items were removed, resulting in 18 valid items used in the final instrument. Prior to conducting the main research, validity and reliability tests were administered involving 36 respondents outside the research sample. The validity test used Pearson Product Moment correlation to determine the validity of each questionnaire item, while reliability testing employed Cronbach's Alpha using IBM SPSS Statistics to measure the consistency of the instruments.

The results indicated that all remaining items were valid and reliable for use in the study. Furthermore, the data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, normality testing, Spearman Rank Correlation, and simple linear regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution of the data obtained from the questionnaires, while the normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed (Pallant, 2020). Since the normality test showed that the data were not normally distributed, Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyze the relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate. In addition, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to

examine the contribution of teacher support toward students' willingness to communicate in English classroom activities.

## Results

### Validity Test

The validity test results showed that all 20 items of the Teacher Support variable were valid because the calculated r-values were higher than the critical r-value of 0.329. Meanwhile, in the WTC variable, 18 items were valid, while two items were declared invalid and removed from the instrument.

*Table 1. Validity Test Results*

Variable	Total Items	Valid Items	Invalid Items
Teacher Support	20	20	0
WTC	20	18	2

These findings indicate that the remaining questionnaire items were appropriate for measuring the intended variables and could be used for the main data collection process. The validity results also demonstrated that the questionnaire items were able to represent the dimensions measured in this study, including academic support, emotional support, instrumental support, and students' willingness to communicate both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, the instruments were considered suitable for examining the relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate in English classroom activities.

### Reliability Test

The reliability test results demonstrated that both research instruments had satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

*Table 2. Reliability Test Results*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Interpretation
Teacher Support	0.930	20	Highly Reliable
WTC	0.899	18	Reliable

These findings suggest that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended constructs and were appropriate for use in the main study. The high reliability scores also indicated that the participants responded consistently to the questionnaire items, suggesting that the instruments had good stability and internal consistency. Thus, the instruments were considered dependable for measuring teacher support and students' willingness to communicate in English classroom contexts.

### Normality Test

The normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The results indicated that the significance value was lower than 0.05, meaning that the data were not normally distributed.

*Table 3. Normality Test Result*

Test	Significance Value	Interpretation
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	0.023	Not Normally Distributed

Since the data did not meet the assumption of normality, non-parametric statistical analysis was considered more appropriated for hypothesis testing. Consequently, Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyze the relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate. The use of non-parametric analysis was considered suitable because it does not require normally distributed data and is appropriate for analyzing ordinal data obtained from Likert-scale questionnaires. Therefore, the findings obtained from the statistical analysis were considered appropriate for interpreting the relationship between the variables examined in this study.

### **Spearman Rank Test**

The Spearman Rank Correlation test showed that the teacher support had a positive and statistically significant relationship with students' willingness to communicate.

*Table 4. Spearman Rank Correlation Result*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Significance	Interpretation
Teacher Support and WTC	0.310	0.000	Positive and Significant Relationship

Although the correlation strength was categorized as weak, the findings indicated that higher levels of teacher support were associated with higher levels of students' willingness to communicate in English classroom activities. This finding suggests that supportive teacher behavior may encourage students to participate more actively in communication activities and become more confident when expressing their ideas in English. Furthermore, the significant relationship between the variables indicates that teacher support plays an important role in shaping students' communicative behavior in vocational EFL classroom settings.

### **Simple Linear Regression**

The regression analysis revealed that the regression equation was:

$$Y = 36.912 (\alpha) + 0.348 (X) + e$$

The regression analysis indicated that teacher support positively contributed to students' willingness to communicate. The positive regression coefficient suggests that an increase in teacher support tended to increase students' willingness to communicate in English classes.

*Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Result*

Variable	$\beta$	T	Sig.
Constant	36.912	7.728	0.000
Teacher Support	0.348	5.123	0.000

Furthermore, the significance value confirmed that teacher support significantly predicted students' willingness to communicate. The coefficient of determination (R Square) value was 0.160, indicating that teacher support contributed 16% to students' willingness to communicate, while the remaining 84% was influenced by other factors outside this study. These findings imply that although teacher support contributes positively to students' willingness to communicate, students' communication behavior is also affected by other psychological, social, and classroom-related factors such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, peer interaction, vocabulary mastery, and speaking ability. Therefore, teacher support should be considered as one of several important factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in English classroom activities.

## Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English classes at SMKN 41 Jakarta. The correlation coefficient value of 0.310 indicated that the relationship between the two variables was positive but relatively weak, suggesting that students who perceived greater teacher support tended to demonstrate higher willingness to participate in English communication activities. This finding emphasizes the important role of teachers in creating a supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to communicate confidently in English. Teacher support can be reflected through positive feedback, motivation, emotional encouragement, and interactive learning activities that help students feel comfortable during classroom interaction. Previous studies have similarly shown that supportive classroom environments and teacher encouragement significantly contribute to students' willingness to communicate and classroom participation in EFL contexts (Weda et al., 2021; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Lee & Lee, 2020). In addition, students who perceive positive teacher-student relationships are generally more motivated to engage in communicative activities and less afraid of making mistakes while speaking English (Dewaele & Li, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings also support the perspective that willingness to communicate is influenced not only by students' language competence but also by psychological and environmental factors within the classroom. Students who receive continuous support and encouragement from teachers tend to feel less anxious and more confident when expressing their ideas in English. A supportive learning environment can therefore strengthen students' communication confidence and improve their active classroom participation. That motivation, perceived competence, and reduced communication anxiety are significant predictors of willingness to communicate in second-language learning contexts. Similarly, previous studies explain that positive emotions and supportive classroom interactions play an essential role in promoting learners' communicative behavior in foreign language classrooms (Dewaele & Li, 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

In relation to teacher support, teacher support includes academic support, emotional support, and instrumental support. Academic support refers to teachers' ability to provide clear explanations, guidance, and constructive feedback to help students understand learning materials effectively, while emotional support involves empathy, encouragement, and positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Instrumental support refers to practical assistance and learning facilitation that help students complete learning tasks and participate actively in classroom activities. Teachers who consistently provide these forms of support may help students feel safer, more comfortable, and more confident during English learning activities, particularly in speaking and communication tasks (Liu & Li, 2023). Supportive teacher behavior may also reduce students' fear of making mistakes, communication anxiety, and feelings of insecurity that often hinder students from expressing their ideas in English classrooms (Dewaele & Li, 2021). As a result, students are more likely to engage actively in classroom interaction and demonstrate greater willingness to communicate in English learning contexts.

Furthermore, teacher support also plays an important role in creating a motivating, supportive, and psychologically secure classroom environment. A supportive classroom atmosphere may encourage students to participate more actively in communication activities and reduce psychological barriers that interfere with language learning and classroom interaction (Hejazi et al., 2023). Positive teacher-student relationships can strengthen students'

self-confidence, increase learning motivation, and foster positive emotional experiences during English learning activities (Lee & Lee, 2020). In addition, communicative teaching practices such as collaborative discussions, pair work, and interactive speaking activities may further improve students' willingness to communicate because students feel appreciated and supported by their teachers throughout the learning process (Weda et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers are encouraged to maintain supportive classroom interactions, provide constructive encouragement, and establish positive emotional connections with students to enhance students' communication confidence and participation in English classrooms (Zhang, 2023).

Although the relationship between teacher support and students' willingness to communicate was significant, the correlation strength was categorized as weak. In addition, the coefficient of determination showed that teacher support contributed 16% to students' willingness to communicate, while the remaining 84% was influenced by other factors outside this study. This finding suggests that teacher support is not the only factor influencing students' willingness to communicate. Other variables such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, classroom atmosphere, peer interaction, vocabulary mastery, and speaking ability may also contribute to students' willingness to communicate in English classes. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence that supportive teacher behavior contributes positively to vocational students' willingness to communicate in English classes. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to create more supportive, interactive, and communicative classroom environments to help students become more confident and active in English communication activities.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the contribution of teacher support to students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English classes at a vocational high school. The findings showed that teacher support had a positive and significant relationship with students' WTC. The Spearman Rank Correlation result indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.310 with a significance value of 0.000, showing a positive but weak relationship. In addition, the simple linear regression analysis revealed that teacher support contributed significantly to students' WTC, with a coefficient of determination of 16%. This means that teacher support explained 16% of students' willingness to communicate, while the remaining 84% was influenced by other factors outside this study. These findings imply that supportive teacher behavior can help students feel more confident, comfortable, and motivated to communicate in English. Therefore, English teachers, particularly in vocational schools, are encouraged to create supportive, interactive, and communicative classroom environments through encouragement, positive feedback, empathy, collaborative activities, and meaningful speaking tasks. Such support may reduce students' communication anxiety and increase their classroom participation.

However, this study has several limitations. It was conducted in only one vocational high school and focused solely on teacher support as the independent variable. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all vocational school contexts. In addition, the study used only quantitative questionnaire data, so students' deeper perceptions and classroom experiences were not explored comprehensively. Future researchers are suggested to examine other factors influencing students' WTC, such as motivation, self-confidence, language anxiety, peer support, vocabulary mastery, speaking ability, and classroom climate. Further studies may also use mixed-method or qualitative approaches and involve larger samples from different schools or educational levels to obtain more comprehensive findings.

## Acknowledgments

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