

CLASSROOM Social Climate, English Language Engagement as Predictors of Willingness to Communicate of Junior High School STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In second and foreign language learning, effective communication is essential for communication especially in global business and cultural exchanges. Therefore, many language learners improve their English communicative competence to be more willing to communicate. However, challenges persist in fostering a high level of willingness to communicate, especially in social or psychological context. This study aimed at investigating the influence of classroom social climate and English language in willingness to communicate of junior high school students. Quantitative descriptive correlation design utilizing mean and standard deviation, Pearson r, multiple regression analysis and total enumeration sampling technique were employed in this study. Three adapted questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. Results revealed that significant relationships were found on both classroom social climate and English language engagement to willingness to communicate. Between the two independent variables, only English language engagement was considered as predictor of willingness to communicate. Further, findings also show that the willingness to communicate was high suggesting that students' engagement with English language matters more in fostering their communicative willingness than the classroom environment.

KEYWORDS: *Education, classroom social climate, willingness to communicate, quantitative descriptive correlational, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is the intention to speak or to remain silent given free choice (MacIntyre, 2020). In second and foreign language learning, effective communication is the ultimate purpose for communication and plays a vital role in global business, cultural exchanges, and communication (Wu et al., 2024). MacIntyre et al. (2022) reported that despite

high levels of motivation, many learners still hesitate to engage in conversations due to anxiety or lack of confidence, resulting in limited opportunities for language practice.

For instance, a study undertaken by a Turkish researcher examined the factors contributing to students' reluctance to communicate. The results revealed that students were hesitant to communicate in English because of class size, noise levels, classroom environment, instructional materials, and insufficient assistance from teachers as well as inadequate relationships with peers (Aksak, 2020). Moreover, in Norway, students face speaking challenges in English due to inconsistent lesson time allocation, infrequent informal activities, and anxiety (Daastøl, 2022). Furthermore, Alrabai, (2022) explores the relationship between classroom emotions, motivation, and learners' willingness to communicate in EFL that was participated by Saudi learners. Results revealed that all learners' emotions except boredom significantly directly predicted L2WTC and anxiety had the largest total effect on L2WTC, followed by motivation.

In the Philippines, despite extended years spent attending English courses, many English language learners are still groping to communicate in EFL class which do not demonstrate communicative competence. Specifically, a study of Briones, (2023) investigates the perceptions and views of second year college students major in English about their self-confidence in terms of spoken English in the Philippine State University. The result revealed that majority of them viewed themselves as mediocre users of the said language and are still in the process of learning. Furthermore, Leyaley, (2023) identified the causes of the students' passiveness to engage in English language in the classroom and the strategies they employed to overcome it which were participated by the pre-service teachers of Kalinga State University.

In Davao Region, a common problematic scenario regarding students' willingness to communicate in English involves rural high school learners who exhibit hesitancy to speak during classroom discussions, especially in English Misuari-Dahoroy and Palma (2024) revealed that students were hesitant to communicate in English during class discussion because they prefer using their mother tongue due which limits their exposure in English and practice in using English. Furthermore, a study of Pandapatan et al. (2022) showed that students remain passive to communicate with their teachers and classmates in oral activities particularly when these are conducted in English, due to anxiety and a lack of motivation.

On the other hand, the classroom social climate has a major impact on students' willingness to communicate (WTC), which is an important aspect of their learning and engagement processes (Barabadi, 2020). According to a recent study of Peng and Woodrow, (2021), a positive classroom social atmosphere, which includes supportive peer relationships, encouraging teacher-student interactions, and a general sense of belonging, can significantly improve students' willingness to communicate.

Furthermore, English language engagement and willingness to communicate (WTC) have become a focus of language acquisition research, with indicated that those who actively participate in English-learning activities have higher levels of WTC. Engagement refers to how deeply learners immerse themselves in English-based interactions, such as participating in discussions, reading extensively, or practicing the language with digital tools. The above literatures clearly showed the conflicting views on the influence of classroom social climate, English language engagement, and willingness to communicate of students. Most of the above-mentioned studies conducted were bivariate associations. Some researches were more on the association between classroom social climate and willingness to communicate. Others related to English language engagement and willingness to communicate.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the level of classroom social climate among junior high students in terms of: Teacher Academic Support; Teacher Emotional Support; and Classroom Mutual Respect?
2. What is the level of English language engagement among junior high students in terms of: Cognitive; Affective; and Social?
3. What is the level of willingness to communicate among junior high students in terms of: Communicative self-confidence; Integrative orientation; Situation context of L2 use; Topical Enticement; Learning responsibility; and Off-instruction communication?
4. Is there a significant correlation between: Classroom Social Climate and Willingness to communicate; and English Language Engagement and Willingness to communicate?
5. Do Classroom Social Climate and English Language Engagement significantly predict the Willingness to communicate of junior high students?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in Self-determination Theory of Ryan and Deci (2017). Self-Determination Theory offers valuable insights into how motivation affects students' engagement with English and their willingness to communicate. According to SDT, students' motivation thrives when their three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are met.

Moreover, in an English language classroom, autonomy is fostered when students feel they have control over their learning choices, such as selecting topics for discussion or deciding how to participate. This freedom increases their engagement with the language. Additionally, competence comes into play when students feel capable of using English effectively, which is achieved through appropriate challenges and constructive feedback. As students gain confidence in their abilities, they are more willing to communicate in English. Lastly, relatedness emphasizes the importance of supportive relationships within the classroom environment. When students feel connected to their peers and teachers, they are more likely to take risks in speaking and participate actively in discussions. By fulfilling these three needs, SDT creates a positive, motivating classroom environment that encourages students to engage with English and enhances their willingness to communicate in the language.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study employed quantitative research method. Quantitative research is a method for testing objective theories by investigating the relationships between variables. These factors can be measured, typically using instruments, and the resulting numbered data can be examined statistically (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research methods use numbers and everything measurable to conduct systematic investigations of events and their interactions. They are used to answer questions about relationships among observable variables to understand, predict, and regulate a phenomenon (Leedy, 1993).

This study specifically used the descriptive - correlational approach. As described by Creswell (2012), descriptive-correlational design is a quantitative research approach that explores relationships between variables without manipulating them. This design focuses on describing characteristics of a group, event, or phenomenon, and determining the extent to which variables are related, without implying causation. Researchers use statistical tests like correlation to measure the strength and direction of these relationships. In this study, the levels

of classroom social climate, English language engagement and willingness to communicate will be explored.

Place of the Study. This study was conducted to Grade 10 public junior high students from four schools within Babak District of Island Garden City of Samal. Furthermore, these schools were chosen accordingly because they represent a diverse range of educational settings which helps provide a broader understanding of how classroom social climate and English language engagement influence students' willingness to communicate. Noted that one of the schools offers a Technical-Vocational strand (SMAW), making it ideal to explore how communication fits into hands-on learning. Another school serving a rural area with an active Alternative Learning System (ALS), offers insight into inclusive education contexts. Also, a small upland public high school reflects the experiences of learners in remote and resource-limited areas. Lastly, an integrated school in the district center, represents a more typical public-school setting.

Respondents. The respondents of this study comprised of 203 Grade 10 students enrolled for the academic year 2024–2025. The distribution of respondents per school is as follows: school A – 55 students, school B – 46 students, school C – 51 students, and school D – 51 students. Moreover, total enumeration sampling is the process of selecting samples of this study. Total enumeration sampling, also known as a census, involves collecting data from every single member of a population instead of a sample. This approach ensures complete data coverage, eliminating the need for estimations or inferences based on a subset (Creswell, 2012). In line with that, the researcher took the total number of grade 10 students of each school through their Learner Information System (LIS) coordinator with the consent of the school heads. These students were chosen as the respondents of this study because first, grade 10 students are typically 15–16 years old, which puts them at a cognitive and social stage when they can understand complicated concepts and give meaningful responses. Their age makes them excellent for adolescent and educational courses. Second, grade 10 students are usually in a solid educational context and can easily utilize school resources. Finally, maturity to manage survey/research themes in which grade 10 students are more mature than younger students and can handle sensitive or complex study issues.

Statistical tools. For a comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the data, the following statistical tools were utilized. **Mean**, this was used to

determine the levels of classroom social climate, English language engagement and willingness to communicate of skills of grade 10 students. **Standard Deviation** was used to quantify the amount of variation of the levels of classroom social climate, English language engagement and willingness to communicate of the students. **Pearson-r Correlation** was used to determine the relationship between classroom social climate and willingness to communicate and English language engagement and willingness to communicate. **Multiple Regression Analysis** was also used in the study to determine the significant influence of the two independent variables (classroom social climate and English language engagement) as predictors to dependent variable or outcome variable (willingness to communicate).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Classroom Social Climate

Table 1 presents a level of junior high school students’ perceptions regarding the classroom social climate. The indicators are grouped into three: Teacher Emotional Support, Teacher Academic Support, and Classroom Mutual Respect. The overall mean of classroom social climate is 4.59 which described as very high. This means that junior high school students’ perception regarding classroom social climate is always observed. In addition, the overall standard deviation is .585 which indicates that the respondents have ratings that are nearly almost the same suggesting consistency in the responses. The finding is quiet higher from the study of Ma and Wei (2022) in which it was found out that the classroom social climate perceived by the junior high school students was at a high level indicating that classroom social climate is oftentimes observed. This underscores that a supportive classroom environment promotes student engagement and academic success.

Table 1
Extent of Classroom Social Climate of Junior High School Students

INDICATORS	Mean	SD	DESCRIPTION
Teacher Emotional Support	4.26	.706	Very High
Teacher Academic Support	4.68	.622	Very High
Classroom Mutual Respect	4.61	.638	Very High
Overall Mean	4.59	.585	Very High

The indicator teacher academic support got the highest mean of 4.68 which categorized as very high. This means that the teacher's academic support in the classroom is always observed. The finding is collectively affirmed to the study of Pamon and Oco, (2024) which revealed that teacher academic support to students was categorized as very high. This highlights the critical role of teachers in academic support in enhancing students' language proficiency. Additionally, this finding is also congruent to the study of Lei, et. al, (2018) which found out that there was a very high level of teacher academic support to students' academic performance especially in English. This connotes that high levels of teacher academic support can significantly enhance students' performance in English.

On the other hand, the indicator teacher emotional support got the lowest mean of 4.26 which categorized as very high. This means that the teacher's emotional support in the classroom is always observed. This finding conforms to the study of Tado (2023) that teacher emotional support was categorized as very high. It further showed that teacher emotional support fosters favorable student attitudes toward academic subjects. Moreover, the finding is quiet greater but still supports the study of Lobo (2023) which revealed that teacher emotional support inside the classroom was high. Lobo's study further underscored that consistent emotional support contributes to increased student engagement and a more supportive classroom climate.

Level of English Language Engagement

Table 2 presents a level of English language engagement of junior high school students. The English language engagement has indicators namely: cognitive engagement, affective engagement and social engagement. The overall mean of English language engagement is 4.26 which described as very high level. This means that English language engagement of students is always evident. In addition, the overall standard deviation is .686 which indicates that the respondents' responses were fairly consistent. This finding coincides with the study of Othman and Chuah (2021) which it was found out that the level of students' English language engagement was very high. This indicates that the higher the language engagement is, the higher the language proficiency is. This denotes that fostering high levels of English language engagement among students can lead to improved language proficiency, suggesting that classroom strategies that actively involve students in using and interacting with the language may significantly enhance their overall language skills.

Table 2
Extent of English Language Engagement of Junior High School Students

INDICATORS	Mean	SD	DESCRIPTION
Cognitive Engagement	4.24	.715	Very High
Affective Engagement	4.22	.707	Very High
Social Engagement	4.23	.725	Very High
Overall Mean	4.26	.686	Very High

The cognitive engagement indicator got the highest mean of 4.24, described as very high signifying that students’ level of English language engagement in terms of cognitive is always evident. This finding is similar to the study of Lee (2020) that students’ cognitive engagement level happened to be very high while using an automated content feedback system. This connotes that student demonstrated cognitive engagement through composing strategies such as questioning, reasoning, and planning, indicating active mental involvement in the learning process. In the same manner, a study of Escandallo et al., (2022) showed that the level of students’ cognitive engagement through a game-based approach was very high. This implies that innovative teaching strategies can effectively boost English language engagement in cognitive among students.

On the other hand, the affective engagement got the lowest mean of 4.22 categorized as very high, indicating that students’ English language engagement in terms of affective is always evident. This suggests that students exhibit strong emotional involvement, including interest, enjoyment, and pride in their English classes. The finding supports the study of Genelza (2022) which shown that the level of students’ affective engagement in purposive communication was very high. The result signified that students' emotional involvement in English language learning is consistently evident. It was suggested that students who are more emotionally engaged in language learning tend to demonstrate higher proficiency in English.

Level of Willingness to Communicate

Presented in Table 3 is the level of willingness to communicate among junior high school based on the six indicators namely: communicative self-confidence, integrative orientation, situation context of L2 use, topical enticement, learning responsibility and off-instruction communication. The overall mean of the willingness to communicate of students is 4.13 which is categorized as high. This means that the students’ willingness to communicate in

an English classroom is oftentimes manifested. Furthermore, the garnered standard deviation of .740 indicates that although most students gave responses close to the average, there were still some differences in how they answered, so their answers were generally consistent, but not exactly the same. This study is aligned to the study of Nelson (2020) which result showed that the level of willingness to communicate of students was found to be high. This finding indicated that students frequently exhibited a willingness to engage in English communication within the classroom setting.

Table 3
Extent of Willingness to Communicate of Junior High School Students

INDICATORS	Mean	SD	DESCRIPTION
Communicative Self-Confidence	4.17	.823	High
Integrative Orientation	4.07	.895	High
Situation Context of L2 Use	4.08	.837	High
Topical Enticement	4.06	.836	High
Learning Responsibility	4.22	.728	Very High
Off-instruction Communication	3.98	.823	High
Overall Mean	4.13	.740	High

Learning Responsibility indicator got the highest mean of 4.22 categorized as high level, indicating that the students’ willingness to communicate in learning responsibility was oftentimes manifested. This suggests a strong agreement across participants regarding their sense of accountability in learning tasks. This finding confirms with the study of Darasawang and Reinders (2021) which result revealed that students’ willingness to communicate in learning responsibility was notably high. This finding presented that students often show a strong sense of responsibility in their learning by being willing to speak up, share ideas, and take part in classroom discussions. It shows they are actively involved and ready to communicate as part of their learning.

On the other hand, the off-instruction communication indicator got the lowest mean score of 3.98 described as high which means that students’ willingness to communicate in the aspect of off-instruction was oftentimes manifested. This indicates frequent informal communication beyond classroom settings. This study is congruent to the study of Lee (2020) which indicated that students demonstrated a high level of willingness to communicate outside the classroom, particularly when they had higher self-confidence and engaged in virtual intercultural experiences, highlighting the importance of affective factors

in facilitating communication in various environments. Similarly, a study of Peng and Woodrow (2010) also exhibits a result of high level of students’ willingness to communicate not only during classroom instruction but also in out-of-class contexts, emphasizing the role of motivation and confidence in promoting communication beyond formal lessons.

Relationship of Classroom Social Climate and English Language Engagement with Willingness to Communicate

Table 4 presents the results of a correlation analysis examining the relationship between classroom social climate, English language engagement, and students’ willingness to communicate in English.

Table 4
Relationship of Classroom Social climate and English Language Engagement with Willingness to Communicate

Variables Paired	r	p-value	Remarks
Classroom Social Climate and Willingness to Communicate	.237	.001	Significant
English Language Engagement and Willingness to Communicate	.480	.000	Significant

The data revealed that classroom social climate has a positive but weak significant relationship with willingness to communicate ($r=.237$, $p=.001$). This indicates that although the association is statistically significant, the strength of the relationship is limited. In practical terms, this means that while social climate is related to students’ willingness to communicate, other factors such as language anxiety, self-confidence and personality traits, play a more substantial role. Such as indicated in the study of Wang H. et al. (2021) an indirect effect was found between class social climate and willingness to communicate of second language in class through both positive emotions (i.e., enjoyment and pride) and negative emotions (i.e., anxiety and boredom).

Moreover, English language engagement exhibits a stronger significant and positive relationship with willingness to communicate ($r=.480$, $p= .000$). This denotes that when English language engagement increases, the willingness to communicate also increases. This finding is aligned with the study of Yan (2024) which revealed a strong correlation between language learning engagement and willingness to communicate. This suggested that higher levels

of engagement in English learning are associated with enhanced communication abilities, aligning with the notion that increased engagement leads to greater willingness to communicate. The finding also supports the study of Lee and Hsieh (2019) which indicated a positive and significant correlation between English language engagement and willingness to communicate. This exhibited the importance of language engagement in promoting students' readiness to communicate in English greater with willingness to communicate across in-class, out-of-class, and digital contexts.

Influence of Classroom Social Climate and English Language Engagement on Willingness to Communicate

Table 5 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the influence of Classroom Social Climate and English Language Engagement on Willingness to Communicate in English. In terms of individual predictors, the results show that among the independent variables, it is only the English language engagement that has a significant influence on the willingness to communicate among junior high students ($\beta = .451$, $t = 6.857$, $p = .000$). This means that for every unit increase in English language engagement there is a corresponding increase in the willingness to communicate among the students.

Table 5
Influence of Classroom social climate and English Language Engagement on Willingness to communicate

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Remarks
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.579	.400		3.951	.000	
1 CSC_overal	.103	.083	.082	1.243	.215	Not Significant
ELE_overal	.487	.071	.451	6.857	.000	Significant

Note: R=.486, R-square=.236, F=30.866, p=.000

This finding conforms to the study of Li (2024) that English language engagement has a significant influence on the willingness to communicate in L2

language among students. The result suggests that students who are more engaged and persistent in their English language learning are more willing to communicate in the language.

However, the classroom social climate does not have a significant influence on the willingness to communicate among junior high students ($\beta = .082$, $t = 1.243$, $p = .215$). This finding contradicts the study of Khajavy et al., (2018) which revealed that a positive classroom environment significantly predicted higher levels of willingness to communicate among learners. This means that a positive classroom atmosphere—where students enjoy learning and feel respected can boost their confidence and make them more willing to communicate. Another study that supports this finding is the study of Dewaele and Lei (2022) which found out that there was a positive influence of classroom social climate to the willingness to communicate among students.

Furthermore, the model reveals that the overall regression is statistically significant, as indicated by an F-value of 30.866 and a p-value of .000, suggesting that the predictors together significantly explain variations in willingness to communicate. The R-square value of .236 indicates that approximately 23.6% of the variance in willingness to communicate can be explained by the combined effect of CSC and ELE. This finding is congruent with the study of Hoorie (2017) which resulted in showing that although the study does not report an exact R-squared value of 0.236, the structural model demonstrated that the combined effects of classroom social climate and language engagement accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in willingness to communicate.

Finally, the result of the study confirms the Self-Determination Theory of Ryan and Deci (2017) which emphasized that students are most motivated when they feel in control of their learning, capable in what they're doing and connected to the people around them. When students are truly engaged in learning English because they're interested and see value in it, they're more likely to speak up and use the language. Even though the classroom environment doesn't directly make students more willing to communicate, it still plays a big role.

CONCLUSION

The most prominent indicator in a very high level of classroom social climate was teacher academic support, particularly in how teachers teaching students in learning well. Regarding teacher emotional support, the classroom climate was consistently characterized by teachers showing respect for students' opinions. Similarly, the level of English language engagement among students was also assessed as very high. This engagement was primarily driven by cognitive engagement, where students created their own examples to better understand key concepts in their English classes. In terms of affective engagement, students' involvement was largely influenced by their enjoyment of the material they were learning. The level of willingness to communicate (WTC) among students was also reported as high. The most influential domain was learning responsibility, represented by students' willingness to ask classmates about correct word pronunciations.

A positive but weak significant relationship was found between classroom social climate and willingness to communicate. This suggests that while a positive classroom environment contributes to students' WTC, other factors such as language anxiety, self-confidence, and personality traits play a more substantial role. In contrast, English language engagement showed a stronger and more significant positive relationship with WTC. This indicates that increased engagement in English language learning is associated with a higher willingness to communicate. Among the independent variables examined, only English language engagement had a significant influence on students' WTC. This implies that for every unit increase in English language engagement, there is a corresponding increase in willingness to communicate. However, classroom social climate did not have a statistically significant influence on students' willingness to communicate. When combined, the two independent variables (classroom social climate and English language engagement) accounted for 23.6% of the variance in willingness to communicate, while the remaining 76.4% remains unexplained by these variables. So, it may be recommended that future researchers explore other factors that could explain the remaining percentage.

The findings indicate that the classroom social climate was perceived as highly positive, particularly in terms of teacher academic support, emotional support, and students' active engagement in English language learning. Teachers fostered an environment that encouraged participation, collaboration, and learner

autonomy, enabling students to engage meaningfully with classroom activities and discussions. This supportive atmosphere was reflected in students' affective and cognitive engagement, as they demonstrated enthusiasm for learning, responsibility in completing tasks, and confidence in interacting with peers and teachers.

Moreover, the results reveal that while classroom social climate is positively associated with students' willingness to communicate (WTC), English language engagement emerged as the stronger and more significant predictor. This suggests that students' active involvement in language learning activities plays a more direct role in enhancing their readiness to communicate than classroom climate alone. Although both variables collectively contributed to students' WTC, a substantial portion of the variance remained unexplained, indicating that other personal, social, or contextual factors may also influence communication willingness.

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