


## Global perspective and willingness to communicate in the Saudi EFL context: A correlational study



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### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords

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This study examines the relationship between global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) among Saudi EFL learners, with a particular focus on the influence of gender. An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was employed in this research. The study involved administering questionnaires to a sample of 150 undergraduates (96 males, 54 females) and conducting semi-structured interviews with 8 participants (4 males, 4 females) to gain deeper insights. The quantitative results revealed an insignificant difference between GP and WTC in English overall. However, a moderate positive correlation was found between WTC and specific GP domains (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal). The qualitative interview analysis further highlighted that learners with a higher GP demonstrated greater WTC and were driven by factors such as intercultural awareness and openness to multiculturalism. This study contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between GP and WTC in English, an area previously underexplored in the context of Saudi EFL learners. The results emphasize the nuanced role that GP plays in influencing learners' willingness to communicate. The findings suggest that educational strategies aimed at enhancing global perspectives among learners could foster a greater willingness to communicate in English. This highlights the importance of integrating elements of intercultural awareness and multicultural openness into EFL curricula to better support student engagement and communication.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study examines the link between global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) among Saudi EFL learners, focusing on gender. It reveals a moderate positive correlation between GP domains and WTC, emphasizing cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal factors and highlights the impact of intercultural awareness and multicultural openness on willingness to communicate.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ascent of English as a global lingua franca, particularly in Saudi Arabia, is a complex tapestry of historical, socio-economic, and cultural influences. Historically, the spread of English has been intricately linked to British colonialism. As the British Empire expanded, English was often imposed in colonies for administration and education. This linguistic imperialism facilitated not just governance but also the imposition of western values and ideologies, often overshadowing local languages and cultures. The use of English served to establish and maintain colonial power structures, contributing to a form of cultural hegemony (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992).

In the contemporary globalized era, English continues to play a pivotal role, now as a tool for national elites to consolidate power. Proficiency in English is frequently seen as a marker of social status and a key to accessing

economic and educational opportunities. In many non-English speaking countries, including Saudi Arabia, the elite leverage their English proficiency to maintain socio-economic status and influence (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The global economy, dominated by multinational corporations and transnational interactions, primarily operates in English. This reality positions English as a crucial skill for global market participation, with national elites often controlling access to English education, thereby wielding significant power over economic opportunities within their societies (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

Saudi Arabia's unique historical path, characterized by its avoidance of direct European colonization, has set a distinct trajectory for its language influences. The rise of Islam and Saudi Arabia's role as a converging point for global pilgrims and traders accelerated the early language contacts with English. In the past century, especially following the discovery of oil, the significance of English in Saudi Arabia has become closely tied to the nation's educational progress and economic shifts. This era marked the onset of structured foreign language education, initiated by King Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud, and saw increased American involvement in the oil sector, significantly altering the country's language dynamics and making English proficiency increasingly important, particularly in international commerce and academics (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002; Al-Rasheed, 2010; Bowen, 2015; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Wynbrandt, 2010).

The mid-20th century marked significant entrenchment of English in various sectors, including education, healthcare and petroleum, due to the expansion of the petrochemical industry and the influx of foreign workers. However, this period also saw a rise in concerns over Westernization and the impact on Islamic values. The end of the 20th century and the onset of the 21st century experienced fluctuating English influence caused by economic, political and social dynamics, with notable reforms in English teaching post-9/11. The contemporary Saudi context marked by technological advancement and global economic integration further emphasizes the vital role of English in education reforms and the increasing adoption of English as a medium of instruction (Al-Kahtany, Faruk, & Al Zumor, 2016; Alhamdan, Honan, & Hamid, 2017; Alzahrani, 2012; Elyas, 2011; Hertog, 2012).

In this multifaceted landscape, English emerges as an essential tool for communication within a society deeply influenced by expatriatism, with a significant portion of the population comprising foreign workers. This demographic composition makes English crucial for daily interactions and cultural, social, and professional exchanges between Saudis and the international community. This study aims to explore the influence of gender and global perspectives on willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, a critical factor for effective language learning and application. By examining the interplay of gender, global perspectives, and WTC in English, this study contributes to the field of English language learning in Saudi Arabia. It aims to provide nuanced insights into the motivations, challenges, and aspirations of Saudi EFL learners, with outcomes expected to inform pedagogical approaches, curriculum design, and policy decisions. This effort enhances the effectiveness of English language education in the Kingdom and potentially in similar socio-linguistic contexts, revealing how English proficiency can impact social mobility, access to opportunities, and possibly reinforce or challenge existing power structures within the Saudi context.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. Does a difference exist between global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Saudi male and female EFL learners?
2. To what extent does each of the three GP domains correlate with L2 WTC?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the intricate relationship between global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Saudi EFL learners requires a comprehensive examination of relevant cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains. Cognitive skills, essential for understanding the world, involve learning, thinking, and organizing information, and are shaped by exposure to diverse cultures and societies (Anderson, 2013;

Kegan, 1994). This exposure broadens individuals' perspectives, preventing rigid thinking and enhancing understanding of different traditions and cultural norms. The cognitive domain of GP is critical in EFL learning, as it encompasses knowledge about one's own and others' societies and cultures, along with awareness of communicative tactics at both individual and societal levels (Barth, 1969; Byram, 1997). This foundational knowledge aids learners in understanding shared identities and social norms, crucial when interacting with geographically distant or underrepresented cultures.

The work of Borg (2003) underscores the importance of the cognitive domain in facilitating understanding of other cultures and customs, thereby enhancing language use. Anderson (2013) further emphasized its role in learning new languages, including grasping unfamiliar alphabets and linguistic rules. The Common European Framework of Reference advocates for multilingual and intercultural education, reinforcing the importance of cognitive skills in developing EFL communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2018; Deardorff, 2006). However, merely summarizing these contributions overlooks the nuanced interplay between cognitive development and practical language application, which can significantly influence EFL learners' WTC.

In the intrapersonal domain, global perspective encompasses emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, and self-realization, all of which are crucial for language learning. This domain involves developing self-acceptance, recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses, and pursuing self-actualization, as described in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Achieving self-actualization includes problem-solving and forming deep social relationships, pivotal for understanding the importance of freedom and independence. For EFL learners, the intrapersonal domain significantly impacts their WTC in English. Self-actualized individuals, who realize their potential and are motivated to be creative (Hanley & Abell, 2002; Reiss & Haverkamp, 2005) tend to have enhanced WTC. The connection between intrapersonal development and language proficiency underscores the role of self-awareness and acceptance in effective interaction in a new language (Burlinson, 2005; Ordun & Akün, 2017).

Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) highlighted that self-confidence in intrapersonal thinking affects performance in foreign language tasks, stressing the importance of embracing one's faults for language development. Despite evidence of a positive relationship between intrapersonal development and L2 WTC (Al-Obaydi, 2020; Mohamadi, Alishahi, & Soleimani, 2014), some scholars argue that intrapersonal thinking might lead to subjective evaluations of oneself, potentially hindering accurate self-understanding (Rabbani, 2015). Fansury, Januarty, Rahman, and Syawal (2020) further suggested that a positive intrapersonal perspective does not always correlate with increased WTC in a foreign language, as individuals may prefer to focus on self-improvement in their native language. These conflicting views necessitate a deeper exploration of the intrapersonal domain's role in EFL contexts.

The interpersonal domain of global perspective involves an eagerness to communicate with foreigners, significantly impacting EFL learners' WTC in cross-cultural interactions (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024; Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). Studies have shown a positive correlation between interpersonal development and the willingness to learn and communicate in English (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Ye, 2018). An interest in the culture of English-speaking countries can also enhance learners' WTC (Aisyiyah, Ikawati, & Hakim, 2020). However, achieving fluency in a foreign language can be challenging due to limited interaction with native speakers or others who practice the language. Cultural events, expatriate gatherings, and studying abroad provide opportunities for language practice, increasing WTC in English (Gu et al., 2010; Kang, 2014; Sung, 2013; Xu & Qiu, 2023). For instance, exposure to American culture through Hollywood has been a motivator for English learners (Aisyiyah et al., 2020), and international students often show improved communication skills and GP after studying in English-speaking countries, despite potential challenges such as facing racism (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024; Nagy, 2008).

Contrarily, some studies suggest a weaker link between intercultural experiences and WTC. Advances in AI and translation technology, such as Google Translate, have been argued to reduce the need for learning new languages (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). However, others argue that foreign media and technology contribute

positively to English proficiency (Aisyiyah et al., 2020). In multicultural workplaces, the common practice of using a shared language may reduce the influence of intercultural experiences on WTC in a foreign language (Ariyanti, 2016). These contrasting perspectives highlight the complexity of the interpersonal domain's impact on EFL learning and the necessity for a critical examination of these dynamics.

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) developed a pyramidal L2 WTC model in which "integrativeness" is an influential factor, referring to the willingness to approach individuals from the target language community. In Saudi Arabia, where EFL learners lack or avoid extensive interaction with the target language community, integrativeness might be related to international posture (Yashima, MacIntyre, & Ikeda, 2018). International posture comprises an interest in foreign affairs, the desire to travel abroad to live or work, and an open attitude to interacting with groups from different cultures, which are aligned with WTC in English (Xu & Qiu, 2023; Yashima et al., 2018).

The concept of international posture connects learners to the global community, resembling the GP domains. Extending this notion to GP, the present study aims to investigate the nuanced relationship between these constructs and their influence on EFL learners.

Research on gender and WTC offers conflicting results. Some studies found that EFL learners' WTC and communication differed depending on their gender, leading to variations in the rate and outcome of second language learning (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003; Turjoman, 2016; Yetkin & Özer, 2022). Others found no significant difference in WTC in English between male and female participants (Valadi, 2015). Due to the importance of gender and the lack of conclusive research in this field, the current study investigates gender as a potential factor in EFL learners' WTC in English within the Saudi EFL context. This comprehensive approach aims to address the inconclusive literature on the issue and provide clearer insights.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data (Bowen, Rose, & Pilkington, 2017). This design allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Saudi EFL learners, first through quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative data to expand on the quantitative findings.

#### 3.2. Research Population

The research population consisted of 195 Saudi EFL students from the University of Jeddah, located in Western Saudi Arabia. The participants, aged between 19 and 25, were chosen to provide a representative sample of the university's EFL learners. This population was selected to ensure a diverse and comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing WTC and GP in the Saudi EFL context.

#### 3.3. Instrument

Data were collected using two primary instruments: A global perspective (GP) scale from the Global Perspective Inventory (Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017) and a second language willingness to communicate (L2 WTC) scale adapted for the Saudi context (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2016; Zhang, Beckmann, & Beckmann, 2022).

The Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) consists of 35 items distributed across six scales that emphasize cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions. The L2 WTC scale includes items focusing on both macro and micro perspectives of WTC.

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability Confirmation

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted with a subset of the population. The reliability of the scales was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the results are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha reliability results.

Domain	Cronbach's alpha
Cognitive domain	0.891
Intrapersonal domain	0.813
Interpersonal domain	0.762
WTC	0.835

### 3.5. Participants and Data Collection

Out of the 195 students, 150 valid questionnaire responses were analyzed in the quantitative phase. Questionnaires focusing on GP and WTC were distributed, with the GP scale measuring various aspects of the students' global perspective and the WTC scale assessing their willingness to communicate in English in different contexts. For the qualitative phase, 10 students volunteered for semi-structured interviews, with eight completing them. Conducted in Arabic, the interviews lasted about 30 minutes each and explored participants' experiences and perspectives in greater detail. The interviews were transcribed, translated, and verified for accuracy, providing deeper insights into the quantitative findings.

### 3.6. Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26). The analysis aimed to investigate the relationship between GP and L2 WTC, with L2 WTC as the dependent variable, and cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains as independent variables.

### 3.7. Qualitative Data Analysis

Content analysis techniques were employed to analyze the interview data. Key themes pertinent to the research questions were identified using a coding scheme that encompassed 23 codes around five major themes: Global cognition, intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences, WTC in English and GP, and WTC and gender. This qualitative analysis provided a richer, more nuanced understanding of the quantitative findings.

## 4. RESULTS

The study assessed global perspective (GP) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Saudi male and female EFL learners. The analysis showed no significant differences in GP and L2 WTC between genders ( $p = 0.39$  for GP, and  $p = 0.22$  for L2 WTC), as depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations, and scores for global perspective and willingness to communicate based on gender.

Item	Gender	N	M	t	df	Sig.
GP	Male	96	3.81	2.4	148	0.39
	Female	54	3.71			
WTC	Male	96	4.84	2.1	148	0.22
	Female	54	4.9			

The Pearson correlation analysis highlighted a positive relationship between WTC in English and GP ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Higher GP levels were associated with greater WTC in English, indicating a strong interconnection between global perspective and language use proficiency (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis between global perspective and willingness to communicate.

Variable	Mean	SD	GP	WTC
GP	3.76	0.36	1	0.61**
WTC	4.87	0.84	0.61**	1

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed).

Further correlation analysis between each GP domain (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) and WTC in English revealed several key relationships. There was a moderate positive correlation between the cognitive domain of GP and WTC in English ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding suggests that higher levels of complex thinking (cognitive domain) are associated with increased WTC in English (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Correlation analysis between global perspective of the three domains and willingness to communicate.

Variable	Cognitive	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	WTC
Cognitive	1	0.553**	0.544**	0.583**
Intrapersonal	0.553**	1	0.401**	0.542**
Interpersonal	0.544**	0.401**	1	0.702**
WTC	0.583**	0.542**	0.702**	1

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed).

Additionally, the intrapersonal domain of GP showed a moderate positive relationship with WTC in English ( $r = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). High levels of WTC were associated with greater self-acceptance and respect for cultural differences (intrapersonal domain). Furthermore, the interpersonal domain of GP demonstrated a strong and positive relationship with WTC in English ( $r = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with high levels of WTC correlating with greater social awareness and engagement with multicultural sensitivity (the interpersonal domain of GP).

#### 4.1. Findings from the Interviews

The following responses were the major themes extracted from the qualitative analysis based on the interview sessions: Global cognition; intrapersonal experience; interpersonal experience; WTC in English, GP, and future goals; and WTC in English and gender.

##### 4.1.1. Global Awareness and Language Engagement

This theme centered on participants' knowledge and understanding of important life details, including cultural differences, keeping informed about global issues and current events, and how cultures interacted socially; it was also significant for motivating EFL learners' WTC in English.

Responses to "Are you concerned with worldwide news and diverse cultures? If yes, then why are you concerned?" are as follows:

Interviewee 6 (M): "Other cultures don't interest me that much; their news is somewhat irrelevant to me. I don't think international events affect my life."

Interviewee 8 (M): "I am very fond of discovering other cultures. I like American culture, and my passion for it grew due to Hollywood movies and series. I follow the news about American public figures, actors, and artists. I am curious by nature."

Interviewee 7 (M): "The more you make foreign friends and are interested in international news and social media, the more willing you become to communicate in English with others."

The results suggest some insularity in the perspectives of Saudi EFL learners. However, while they were aware of the benefits of an L2, most perceived that the activity was mainly for recreation, suggesting that the learning objectives of the Ministry of Education and Saudi EFL learners are not aligned.



#### 4.1.2. Intercultural Understanding and Self-Identity

This theme focused on participants' self-awareness and integration of their values and self-identity. It captured elements of respect and acceptance of cultural differences and emotional awareness and posited that these also affected Saudi EFL learners' WTC in English. Participants described their intercultural experiences with foreigners:

Interviewee 2 (F): "How you view the world is a private process through which you develop your own identity."

Interviewee 3 (F): "I am a girl, and I have lots of friends from different ethnic groups. I also made many male and female friends online from countries from around the world."

Interviewee 5 (M): "The Holy Qur'an says that we [humans] were created as nations and tribes so we may know one another; so, I think English helps a lot in getting to know and appreciate other people's values and traditions."

#### 4.1.3. Cross-Cultural Communication: Perspectives of Saudi Learners

This centered on participants' willingness to interact with people with different norms and cultural backgrounds, acceptance of others, and being comfortable in that relationship.

Interviewee 8 (M): "I like to communicate in English; I also text in English with my friends in person and online, and some of them are foreigners."

Interviewee 8 (M): "To me, English and other languages are vital for creating an open-minded generation. I think we need an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for each other's cultures."

Interviewee 5 (M): "I sometimes get nervous when I have to interact in English with foreigners in my country, which makes me stutter. However, I don't mind using English to talk to someone I know or in EFL classes because we are all language learners in the classroom."

Interviewee 2 (F): "I went to an international school in Jeddah, so studying with different individuals from different backgrounds was never a challenge; we communicated in English comfortably."

Most participants appeared to share positive views toward multiculturalism as an influential factor in one's WTC in English (e.g., Interviewees 1, 2, and 8). Similarly, most interviewees considered intercultural communication an effective stimulus in language learners' WTC in English (e.g., Interviewees 2, 5, and 8).

#### 4.1.4. Linking Global Mindset and WTC

This theme centered on participants' willingness to speak English with others and their GP, that is, participants' predisposition to complex thinking and considering other perspectives. Additionally, responses demonstrated the participants' willingness to engage with and interact with foreigners. Thus, one of the sub-questions was "*Is it important to involve people from different cultures in your life? Why is this important?*" The responses were as follows:

Interviewee 1 (F): "Working with students from different cultural backgrounds enriches my life. It broadens your view of yourself and the world."

Interviewee 3 (F): "Yes. All the countries in the world are interconnected and interdependent on one another. All societies and individuals should understand that."

Interviewee 6 (M): "Usually, I use Arabic with foreigners in my country. They should speak the language of the country they work in, right? Of course, I try to speak English in my English classes or when I travel abroad as a matter of necessity."

Interviewee 1 (F): "Yes. Many foreigners in my country don't speak Arabic, so English comes in handy when dealing with them in workplaces such as gas stations, hospitals, shopping malls, and restaurants."

Participants were asked to answer the following questions: “Do you think English serves a purpose in your present and future life? Why?” and “Do you think that English changes how you feel about other nations/cultures? How?” The responses were as follows:

Interviewee 4 (F): “Of course, English is vital to me. It’s the language of the world. You need it [English] to update your knowledge and develop your personality and vision of the world around you.”

Interviewee 6 (M): “I think everyone needs to learn the English language. It helps build one’s character and enriches life experience.”

Interviewee 8 (M): “English has assisted me a lot in making various connections, and I think I may need it in the future, for going abroad one day, for example.”

Interviewee 4 (F): “I try to communicate in English to develop my English language skills. I am planning to apply for a scholarship abroad, and talking to foreigners, especially native speakers of English, will help a lot.”

Interviewee 1 (F): “Yes. It makes me understand that ‘different’ doesn’t necessarily mean bad.”

Interviewees connected WTC in English and GP by highlighting that their beliefs and self-actualization were more important constructs of WTC in English than gender. The segregation of males and females was a situational context in Saudi. Accordingly, male Saudi participants appeared to have greater confidence than female participants and thus were more willing to communicate in English than in Arabic.

#### 4.1.5. *WTC and Gender*

This theme was considered an outlier to determine the factors that may influence participants’ WTC based on gender. Diverse or specific factors were explored. For example, some male interviewees believed female students were less socially active with people from various cultural backgrounds.

Interviewee 7 (M): “I think that boys are keener on interacting with people from different countries. Maybe it is because of the way girls are raised in our society.”

Interviewee 2 (F): “[It is] ... your own philosophy of life, and it doesn’t matter whether you are a boy or a girl.”

Interviewee 2 (F): “I don’t think gender affects eagerness to take part in discussions or role play in English classes as Saudi schools are not gender mixed, so I think this issue is about personal preference.”

Other interviewees maintained that the classroom environment was more influential than gender. As Interviewee 6 (M) explained: “What happens in the classroom is more relevant than one’s gender. In my opinion, the attractiveness of the task, the friendly atmosphere, and the teacher’s personality are vital.”

Both male and female interviewees stated that gender did not play a major role in Saudi classrooms concerning WTC in English. However, although it was not considered a significant issue, some interviewees stated that female students in particular might avoid communicating in English outside classrooms.

#### 4.1.6. *Contextual Analysis: Alignment of Official English Policies with Learner Perspectives*

The qualitative findings of this study reveal varying degrees of engagement with, and attitudes toward, English among Saudi EFL learners, reflecting a complex interplay between individual experiences and broader educational policies. English, as the primary foreign language in Saudi Arabia, plays a significant role in diverse social, professional, and educational domains (Alqahtani, 2015). This has been underscored by its compulsory inclusion in all state school levels and its use as a principal medium of communication in key economic sectors such as petroleum and health (Alqahtani, 2015).

Historically, the evolution of English language teaching policy in Saudi Arabia, from its inception in the 1930s, has been marked by various shifts, each reflecting the changing priorities of the Ministry of Education and the societal context (Al-Nofaie, 2010). The period from 1970 to 2001, for instance, emphasized instrumental goals for English proficiency, including accessing academic knowledge and fostering understanding of other cultures, which



aligns with the global awareness and cross-cultural communication themes identified in this study's findings (Aljohani, 2016; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017).

From 2000 to 2014, the policy shifted toward integrating English from primary school level amidst debates concerning its impact on cultural and religious identities and language development in Arabic (Al-Shammary, 2002; Alabdulkarem, 2007; Elyas, 2008; Ministry of Education Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2013).

This period's policy objectives, including the spread of Islam and the promotion of international communication (Alamri, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2002) resonate with our interviewees' perspectives on using English for broader understanding and intercultural engagement.

The latest phase (2014–2020) under the Vision 2030 policy further emphasizes communicative competence, mutual cultural understanding, and a positive attitude toward learning English, reflecting a 'weaker Islamization' position, and aligning more closely with the views expressed by participants in this study (Ministry of Education Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2013; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017).

This contextual analysis suggests that while official English language policies in Saudi Arabia have evolved to emphasize intercultural communication and global engagement, there remains a gap in fully aligning these policies with the diverse needs and realities of learners. The qualitative data in this study indicate that while learners appreciate the instrumental and intercultural value of English, there is a need for policies to further address practical, everyday language usage and cultural sensitivities specific to the Saudi context.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed method and delves into the relationship between Saudi EFL learners' global perspectives (GP) and their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English, emphasizing the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal developmental domains (Kegan, 1994) and the role of gender. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data with existing literature (Bowen et al., 2017) has revealed nuanced insights into these relationships.

The findings indicate that Saudi EFL learners place significant value on motivational and cognitive factors in their WTC in English. The quantitative data underscore this by showing a robust correlation between the GP domains—particularly the interpersonal domain ( $r = 0.70$ )—and WTC. This strong connection is mirrored in the qualitative responses, where learners like Interviewee 8 (M) exemplify the significant impact of interpersonal engagement on enhancing WTC. The moderate positive correlation between the cognitive domain ( $r = 0.58$ ) and WTC is similarly reflected in participants' narratives, emphasizing the role of global awareness and critical thinking, as per the perspective of Interviewee 3 (F).

Furthermore, the intrapersonal domain highlights self-awareness and respect for cultural diversity and also showed a positive correlation with WTC ( $r = 0.54$ ). This is evident in the experiences shared by participants, such as Interviewee 7 (M), who values diverse cultural interactions. Interestingly, the quantitative analysis revealed no significant gender differences in GP and WTC, aligning with the qualitative findings where individual willingness to communicate transcended gender distinctions. This suggests that while gender roles are considered, they are not definitive determinants of WTC in English, with personal interests and classroom dynamics being more influential. Overall, the integration of the quantitative and qualitative analyses provides a comprehensive understanding of how cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal factors, along with gender considerations, intricately influence the WTC in English among Saudi EFL learners.

### 5.1. Unraveling the Emotional and Motivational Layers of WTC

The importance of the intrapersonal domain of GP has been highlighted in the literature (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In this research, participants showed awareness of cultural differences and were emotionally aware, although their WTC in English was mixed. Invariably, EFL learners recognize that English is an essential global language

and will probably play an important role in their lives (Smokotin, Alekseyenko, & Petrova, 2014). Most participants reported a positive outlook on interacting with foreigners and extrinsic experiences, which was supported by the literature (Fang & Baker, 2018; Fang, Chen, & Elyas, 2020). Some of their acceptance was attributed to their religious and spiritual beliefs respecting the diversity of cultures (Awayed-Bishara, 2018). They developed this amenability through their experiences of traveling for work or studying abroad, even in cases where they experienced discrimination (Kang, 2014; Nagy, 2008). Most stated that adverse experiences made them more emotionally aware, respectful, and open toward other cultures (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024). Communication was pivotal. MacIntyre et al. (1998) observed that students who raised their hands to answer a teacher's question committed themselves to an action indicating an eagerness to interact if given the opportunity. Similarly, Saudi EFL learners described situations that could potentially change their WTC in English and psychological readiness to engage with others. The literature supports this positive relationship between GP and L2 WTC. The importance of technology is also evidenced by cultural education through movies or online activities (Aisyiyah et al., 2020; Fansury et al., 2020).

Moreover, other intrapersonal variables appear to have a strong relationship with L2 WTC. According to Kang (2005), L2 WTC can be divided according to communication willingness (based on personal characteristics) and communicative situations. This highlighted the duality of L2 learners' wants and needs. The study further identified self-confidence as a critical component in both aspects of WTC in English, which is stimulated by strengthening students' self-confidence and motivation. Therefore, strong self-confidence results in stronger communication ability (Cao, 2014).

### *5.2. Mind Matters: Navigating the Cognitive Dimensions of WTC*

The GP cognitive domain relationship between EFL and L2 WTC is instructive (Borg, 2003). Most interviewees appeared relatively insular. The general disinterest in current global events could limit Saudi EFL learners' ability to expand their vocabulary. Learners must use opportunities to develop multiple perspectives (Awayed-Bishara, 2018; Burlison, 2005). Movies typically present a subjective viewpoint, and actors may not use an expansive vocabulary. Additionally, closed captioning may be ineffective. However, in a study conducted with 50 EFL learners, Kabooha (2016) found that "well-selected" movies could be instructive regarding language learning skills and motivation. This is pivotal as reticence to discover and learn about other cultures could hinder Saudi EFL learners' WTC in English. This reticence also limits the opportunities to engage in multiple topics that may interest foreigners and change predetermined misconceptions (Salih & Omar, 2021).

### *5.3. Cross-Cultural Conversations: The Global Perspectives of WTC*

Intercultural awareness is an effective stimulus for language learners' WTC in English (Fang & Baker, 2018; Salih & Omar, 2021). Nevertheless, some respondents expressed anxiety through stuttering or avoiding interaction in English with others inside and outside EFL classrooms. Regarding the relationship of the intrapersonal domain of GP with L2 WTC, the interviewees confirmed the positive role of learning and communicating in English in their sense of purpose and personal and professional development. This was also demonstrated in promoting emotional awareness, respect, and openness to multiculturalism. However, WTC in English may be affected by a lack of appreciation of the influence of language in their lives, as shown by the response of Interviewee 2, who believed English was insignificant regarding his future. Therefore, all learners of a second language should be aware of the need for positive acceptance of intercultural differences (Salih & Omar, 2021).

Some participants cited high levels of anxiety and speech impediments. These findings were supported by Leong and Liu (2013) who argued that different intrapersonal consequences, such as anxiety, could affect learners' level of self-perceived language proficiency and willingness to interact in English. They also explained that learners who feared being evaluated negatively tended to be more apprehensive about communicating with others. Khreisat

(2022) concurred with this assessment, as their research found that males were particularly anxious about being evaluated negatively, while females experienced greater test anxiety.

#### *5.4. The Impact of Interpersonal Global Perspective on WTC*

The interviews demonstrated a positive relationship between the interpersonal domain of GP and WTC in English. The quantitative results identified the interpersonal perspective as the greatest stimulus for Saudi university EFL learners' L2 WTC ( $r: 0.7$ ). This connection may be due to participants' views on the advantages of social interaction through English, which manifested as positive personal development, interconnectedness, and interdependence between world societies (Smokotin et al., 2014). As mentioned, Saudi Arabia has various foreign nationalities and cultures. Therefore, building positive intercultural relationships would help the Saudis explore and increase their awareness of cultural differences (Farooq, Soomro, Umer, & Umer, 2018). Furthermore, English as a foreign language is viewed as a connecting tool between various cultures. Hence, willingness to work and frequently interact with people from other cultures can improve WTC in English (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Salih & Omar, 2021). The use of technology may mitigate face-to-face anxieties and empower users to control their space (e.g., choosing to live online). It may also provide various opportunities to vicariously participate in foreign cultures (Aisyiyah et al., 2020; Fansury et al., 2020).

#### *5.5. From Theory to Practice: Implications for Language Education*

In the Saudi context, the challenge concerns increasing its citizens' bilingualism level (Alrifai, 2020). Although English has been taught in Saudi Arabia for several decades, plans to achieve higher language proficiency levels have made minimal progress (Mahdi, 2014). Economically, Saudi Arabia experienced significant growth based on natural resources. Furthermore, Saudi Vision 2030 has been optimized by restructuring the country as a tourist destination via heavy investment in infrastructure. However, Saudis have not improved their language proficiency, as indicated by this research, and various reasons have been offered to explain the poor Saudi English proficiency level (Education First, 2023). Indeed, language proficiency can be a facilitator or an obstacle to intercultural interaction (Fang & Baker, 2018). Therefore, improving Saudis' language abilities should be a priority for Saudi stakeholders and policymakers.

This study argues for increasing emphasis on preparing EFL lessons that enhance learners' opportunities to develop their GP to encourage communication in English. Accordingly, additional opportunities are required to build confidence and improve EFL motivation for Saudis to be more willing to communicate in English with foreigners. Educators can assist in this by exposing learners to the sociocultural aspect of language through examining different cultures, debating global events, and inviting foreign guest speakers to EFL classes (if possible). Additionally, online sessions can be scheduled with English-speaking schools in L1 countries. Although GP and L2 WTC concepts are naturally dynamic and evolving, encouraging learners and educators to grasp the relationship between these concepts is essential to improving language education (Fang & Baker, 2018).

This study provides several novel insights into the interplay between GP and WTC among Saudi EFL learners. First, it highlights the significant positive correlation between the interpersonal domain of GP and WTC, emphasizing the importance of social interactions in enhancing WTC. Second, the study reveals that cognitive engagement and global awareness are crucial for WTC, even though many learners showed a general disinterest in global events. Third, the research underscores that intrapersonal factors such as self-confidence and emotional awareness are vital for WTC, with technology playing a supportive role in mitigating anxiety. Lastly, this study identified no significant gender differences in GP and WTC, suggesting that individual willingness to communicate is influenced more by personal interests and classroom dynamics than by gender. These findings offer valuable implications for EFL educators and policymakers aiming to improve English language education in Saudi Arabia.

## 6. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study explores second language (L2) willingness to communicate (WTC), a topic that continues to engage language education scholars. It investigates how cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains of global perspective (GP) relate to and potentially influence L2 WTC among Saudi EFL learners. This exploration is set against the backdrop of the multifaceted role of the English language in Saudi Arabia, transcending its colonial legacy to become a tool for socio-economic stratification and power consolidation.

The findings reveal the intricate interplay between language, global perspectives, and the socio-political landscape. They underscore the importance of recognizing the variations in WTC among language learners and how these variations are influenced by learners' global perspectives. English, in the Saudi context, serves as both a bridge to global opportunities and a marker of socio-economic status, highlighting the dual nature of its influence as an instrument of historical significance and contemporary socio-political utility.

In essence, this research contributes to our understanding of the complex dynamics of English language learning within a globalized yet distinctly local Saudi context. It emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to English education that acknowledges its dual role as a tool of historical influence and a contemporary instrument of socio-political significance. The study's insights into the relationship between GP domains and WTC underscore the profound impact of socio-cultural, cognitive, and affective factors on language acquisition and use, emphasizing the importance of considering learners' global perspectives in their engagement with the English language.

The implications of this study are significant for EFL educators and policymakers in Saudi Arabia and similar socio-linguistic contexts. First, the findings suggest that enhancing the interpersonal domain of GP through social interactions and intercultural communication can significantly boost WTC among EFL learners. Educators should therefore prioritize activities that promote social engagement and cultural exchange.

Second, the study highlights the critical role of cognitive engagement and global awareness in fostering WTC. This implies that curriculum designers should integrate global topics and critical thinking exercises into language learning programs to broaden learners' perspectives and stimulate their interest in global events.

Third, intrapersonal factors such as self-confidence and emotional awareness are shown to be vital for WTC. Thus, language programs should incorporate confidence-building activities and provide a supportive environment to reduce anxiety and encourage active participation in English communication.

Lastly, the lack of significant gender differences in GP and WTC suggests that personalized learning strategies that focus on individual interests and classroom dynamics may be more effective than those based on gender distinctions. This finding can inform the development of more inclusive and equitable language education policies.

This study, while providing insights into the relationship between global perspective and willingness to communicate in English among Saudi EFL learners, acknowledges certain limitations and suggests directions for future research. As a nonexperimental design, it does not establish causation between GP domains and L2 WTC. Future experimental studies could explore this causality, perhaps considering learners of varied proficiency levels. Additionally, expanding participant demographics to include different regions of Saudi Arabia could enhance the study's generalizability and provide a more nuanced understanding of the variables, such as proficiency levels and gender dynamics.

Further research should also consider longitudinal approaches, tracing EFL learners' development over time, to deepen the analysis of the interplay between GP and L2 WTC. The current findings indicate no significant gender differences in GP and L2 WTC scores and a positive correlation between GP domains and L2 WTC, particularly in the interpersonal domain. This suggests that social communication and cultural interconnectedness are influential factors.

These results underscore the necessity of integrating GP and L2 WTC enhancement in the Saudi educational curriculum, starting from early education stages. Emphasizing sociocultural aspects in language teaching and exposing learners to diverse cultures and international perspectives could significantly bolster English language

proficiency. While the findings offer valuable insights, they are context-specific and highlight the dynamic nature of WTC in English and GP, influenced by evolving political, social, and cultural factors.

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