

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is one of the indicators of success in learning English as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) contexts (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Lin, 2018). According to Lin (2018), WTC has been believed to have an essential role in actual communication in English. WTC is defined as “readiness to participate in using a second language in a discussion with a specific person and at a particular time” (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Specifically, Reinders and Wattana (2015) defined the WTC “as an individual’s intention to participate or initiate in communication using English as the target language at a particular situation and moment.”

There have been many studies on the willingness to communicate in teaching and learning second and foreign languages (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Zarinnabadi et al., 2014; Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Shirvan et al., 2019; Lee & Lee, 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Lee et al., 2021). The adoption of MacIntyre’s model (1998) has been widely used in investigating willingness to communicate. This model consists of six layers of variables. The sixth layer represents the social and individual context (i.e., personality traits and climate between groups); the fifth layer is affective-cognitive (i.e., intergroup attitudes, social situations, and communicative competence); the fourth layer relates to motivational tendencies (i.e., motivation and self-confidence); the third layers are situated antecedent (i.e., communicative trust and desire to communicate with a specific person in L2); the second layers relates to behavioral intention (i.e., WTC); and the first layers is communication behavior (L2 use).

Thus, some studies have attempted to include some of the variables that facilitate WTC to investigate the role of psychology in L2 communication (Lee

& Hsieh, 2019). For example, self-confidence and anxiety (Rainders & Wattana, 2015), communicative competence and motivation (Shirvan et al., 2019), personality factors (Macintyre & Legatto, 2011), classroom environment (Zarrinabadi et al., 2014), grit (Lee & Lee, 2019), L2 enjoyment and L2 anxiety (Lee, Xie, & Lee, 2021), and L2 confidence, L2 anxiety, L2 motivation, and grit by Lee & Hsieh (2019). However, questions remain, especially regarding the application in the context of the EFL and some are still not fully discussed the WTC in the digital context. The writer took the title was none other than because the writer wanted to know how EFL pre-service teacher communicated actively or otherwise in the classroom based on their experiences.

Pre-service English teachers are the target for this research. This is because pre-service teachers and their training need to be considered in order to become professional and qualified teachers in their future teaching. As stated by Demir (2015) which states that pre-service teacher training deserves special attention due to the fact that it is the first step towards professionalization, and evaluation is the essence of pre-service training for further improvement of its quality. In addition, an English teacher should ideally be able to use English fluently and comfortably to make the language real and interesting for their students (Sato, 2017). For this reason, pre-service English teachers need to prepare themselves to be able to use English well in order to become professional when they become teachers in the future.

## **1.2 Rational Research**

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is an essential part of language learning and communication processes (Shirvan et al., 2019). The existence of WTC cannot be separated from affective variables that play a significant role in influencing the communication process. As MacIntyre (1994) puts it, “the influence of affective variables such as motivation, self-perceived communication competence (SPCC), willingness to communicate and other

constructs have significant roles in explaining learners' communication behaviour.”

In the advancement of digital media and communication technology, WTC has provided opportunities for virtual intercultural communication. Recent studies have investigated affective factors (i.e., motivation, self-confidence, risk-taking, L2 speaking anxiety, and steadfastness) and virtual intercultural experiences related to L2 WTC in the classroom, outside the classroom, and in digital settings (Lee & Lee, 2019). In the same year, Lee & Hsieh (2019) has examined the relationship between affective variables (L2 self-confidence, speaking anxiety, motivation, and grit) and L2 WTC in in-class, out-of-class, and digital settings among Taiwanese EFL students. This study does not fully understand the relationship between virtual intercultural experiences (digital settings) and L2 WTC.

The study will investigate the individual factors that influence EFL pre-service teacher to be willing to communicate in a blended learning (face-to-face and digital classroom settings). As Ushioda (2014: 51) in Cameron (2015) considers that there is a link and connectedness between contextual and internal elements of learners in the L2 or EFL learning system which is complex and mutually forming. The writer will use qualitative methods for the current case study. According to Cameron (2015), qualitative methods can fill gaps in the recent WTC exploration and reflect the complex and dynamic nature of the topic. A naturalistic approach is used in phenomenological inquiry or qualitative research to understand phenomena in specific context settings (Hoepfl, 1997 in Cameron, 2015).

### **1.3 Urgency of the Research**

Despite the vast array of studies on L2WTC, two research gaps seem particularly prominent: First, existing L2WTC research pays considerable attention to face-to-face environments, such as the in-class context (in which students often talk with familiar interlocutors, such as teachers and peers, in relatively predictable L2 scenarios) and the out-of-class context (in which they

are likely to communicate with unfamiliar acquaintances or strangers in somewhat unpredictable situations). However, such a probe into rapidly emerging digital contexts (in which they share with familiar or unfamiliar interlocutors, both verbally and in written form, utilizing digital devices and resources) remains underexplored (Lee & Lee, 2019).

Second, the relationship between L2 WTC and factors that might influence it (e.g., affective factors, external factors, cognitive factors, etc.) in three different communicative contexts (face-to-face and digital settings) has yet to be fully clarified in the empirical research. In addition, as far as the writer knows, there are still very few studies investigating the phenomenon of willingness to communicate in-depth, namely individual factors that might affect students' WTC in the classroom. The current study aims to determine the individual factors related to the willingness to communicate with EFL pre-service teachers both face-to-face and in a digital setting.

## **1.4 Research Question and Objective**

### **1.4.1 Research Question**

The theme of this study is “Pre-Service Teachers’ Willingness to Communicate in Blended Learning Classroom: A Case Study.” Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulated one research question, the question is:

Which individual factors do pre-service teachers regard as influential in their willingness to communicate in the English language classroom context, both in face-to-face and digital classroom settings?

### **1.4.2 Research Objective**

This study aims to determine the individual factors related to the willingness to communicate with EFL pre-service teachers both in face-to-face and digital classroom settings.