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Factors predicting classroom WTC in English and French as foreign languages among adult learners in Spain

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify associations and predictors of willingness to communicate (WTC) of adult foreign language (FL) learners and whether they are contingent upon the FL being learned. To this end, our research investigated learner variables associated with WTC in adult FL learners of English and of French in an under-researched field of WTC studies in Spain. More specifically, the following variables were studied: gender, age, level of multilingualism, perceived relative standing in the class, language proficiency, teacher's use of the FL in class, out-of-class foreign language use (OCFLU) and the two emotions of foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). Of the 9 independent variables examined, FLCA and language proficiency were found to be predictors of the WTC of both English and French language learners; additionally, enjoyment was found to be a predictor of WTC of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and OCFLU, of learners of French as a foreign language (FFL). Our findings indicate that the construct of WTC needs to be further studied as research may produce dissimilar results depending on the instructional setting, population and foreign language. Pedagogical implications for language teaching practices seeking to enhance adult FL learners' WTC were also drawn from the study results.

Keywords

adult learners, English as a foreign language, French as a foreign language, predicting factor, willingness to communicate (WTC)

I Introduction

The construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) is currently acknowledged as one of the key critical concepts in foreign and second language learning and instruction. WTC refers to an individual's predisposition to talk (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) and their

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readiness to engage in communication in the target language when presented with the opportunity (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The importance of WTC is primarily connected with the decisive role that interaction has been proposed to play in language development according to different perspectives, such as linguistic (Long, 1985; Swain, 1985, 1995) or sociocultural (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Additionally, in a globalized world where the development of intercultural understanding is increasingly becoming an educational priority, finding opportunities to communicate would considerably improve the likelihood of intercultural contact and hence, of mutual understanding of peoples and cultures (Clément, 1986; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) presented a pyramid model of linguistic, communicative and socio-psychological variables influencing WTC that integrated trait-like predispositions and transient factors. Buttressed by this seminal model, WTC research has gained momentum in second and foreign language research and to date, as detailed below, a myriad of learner internal and external factors has been found to be related to WTC. However, research that explores WTC in a foreign language (FL) other than English is still very scarce (see Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018; Liu, 2017). Additionally, as will be later demonstrated, the age of the participants in studies into WTC is relatively young – they are typically adolescents or young adults – and most studies do not recruit adult learners from a range of ages and backgrounds. Furthermore, although determinant factors of WTC have been discussed to be sensitive to contextual, regional and cultural influences (Cao & Philp, 2006; Denies et al., 2015), there is a conspicuous dearth of studies in many cultural and educational settings. To illustrate, a search in the Web of Science to determine the number of books, book chapters and articles on WTC in Spain yielded 4 relevant articles only.

In light of these arguments, this study aimed to investigate learner factors that predict WTC in English and French – the two most studied foreign languages in Spain – among adult FL learners from a variety of educational backgrounds. More precisely, the influence on WTC of the following learner internal and external factors was investigated: gender, age, language proficiency, level of multilingualism, perceived relative standing in the class, teacher's use of the FL in class, out-of-class language use (OCFLU) and the two emotions of foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). As some factors are amenable to intervention, implications were expected to be drawn that can inform language teaching practices aimed to foster FL learners' WTC. The participants were from a wide range of age groups, from teenagers to mature adults.

II Literature review

Many studies have explored the relationship between WTC and related variables in learning a L2 or a FL. Perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and motivation have been found to be three key learner-internal factors influencing FL/L2 learners' WTC, with perceived communicative competence having the largest effect, according to the metanalysis conducted by Shirvan et al. (2019). Many other learner internal and external factors have been found to influence WTC. However, in this article,

the literature review will be limited to studies that explore the associations of WTC and factors examined in the present study.

With regards to the association between WTC and the demographic factors of age and gender, research results are far from conclusive. Whilst most studies have found that women display a higher WTC than men (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Khajavy et al., 2018), the male participants in Amiryousefi's (2018) study reported communicating with their teachers in class more often than female learners. Other studies showed no significant differences between genders (Mulyono & Saskia, 2020; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017). When it comes to the association between age and WTC, results are also rather inconclusive. Amiryousefi (2018), Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) and Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) showed that WTC was predicted differently across age groups. For example, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) found that older and more advanced learners had higher levels of WTC, whereas younger, typically less advanced, pupils, needed more encouragement to verbally engage in the FL. The results of Dewaele (2019), and Tavakoli and Davoudi (2017), however, indicated that participants' age was not associated with WTC. The classroom culture, the wider culture outside the classroom, the proficiency level and the motives to learn and language, among other factors, may modulate the association between gender and WTC and age and WTC.

When it comes to multilingualism, previous research has revealed that there is no significant correlation between this variable and WTC (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018). However, research on the relationship between WTC and multilingualism is very scarce and limited to adolescent and young adults. It can be hypothesized, however, that this association may change in adults from a wide age range and, probably, with a larger language repertoire and different motivations to learn the language.

A further factor under study in our research, students' L2 proficiency, was identified in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic pyramid model of variables influencing WTC as an indirect factor impacting on their WTC through its influence on the learner's perceived competence. However, while the association between this latter factor and WTC has been examined in many studies, relatively few studies have explored the link between actual L2/FL proficiency – as measured by standardized or achievement tests rather than based on learners' perception – and WTC (Denies at al., 2015; Freiermuth & Ito, 2020). This is possibly due to the difficulty in obtaining language proficiency data, and particularly speaking proficiency data, since, as it has been acknowledged, research on oral WTC should ideally include a measure of speaking ability (Denies et al., 2015). Most of the studies across contexts have consistently found a significant association between actual proficiency and WTC (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2019; Zare et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). Some further studies (e.g. Denies et al., 2015; Khajavy et al., 2016) have attested to the indirect influence of language proficiency on WTC through its impact on communicative or perceived competence, as postulated by MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model. The review of the literature also confirms that English is the most often studied FL and that the study participants are mostly secondary or university students. These observations call for further studies on how language proficiency can affect WTC in a wider range of students, including older adults, and foreign languages and learning contexts.

The association between relative standing among the peer group and WTC has also been minimally explored so far. In Dewaele and Dewaele's (2018) study, both variables were significantly positively correlated; however, relative standing did not predict WTC in their study. Again, studies with adult learners may yield different results. Additionally, teacher's frequency of FL use was found to be a positive predictor of students' WTC in the studies conducted by Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) and Dewaele (2019).

The study of WTC in digital contexts has experienced a surge of interest in the last few years that is relevant to understand the association between WTC and extramural language use (e.g. Lee, 2019; Lee & Dressman, 2017; Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Lee & Lee, 2020). To illustrate, Lee and Dressman (2018) found a significant correlation between English as a foreign language (EFL) WTC online and a diverse use of informal form-focused (e.g. practicing grammar rules or searching vocabulary definitions) and meaning-focused (e.g. reading news in English or watching U.S. dramas on Netflix) activities in a digital environment among Korean EFL university students. In the area of French as a L2 learning, results in MacIntyre and Doucette's (2010) study suggested a positive relationship between the participants' amount of time spent speaking French outside class and their WTC in class. The participants of the studies into the association between OCFLU and WTC both in English and in French are adolescents or young adults. More comprehensive studies in terms of age are, therefore, needed, in order to understand this relationship better.

Concerning the association between affective factors and WTC, most studies have found enjoyment to be a positive predictor of WTC (Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018; Khajavy et al., 2018) whereas studies have consistently shown that anxiety is negatively associated with WTC (Dewaele; 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018; Liu, 2017; Zhou et al., 2020).

To conclude, although research into WTC has exploded in the last approximately 20 years, very few publications have examined the influence on their WTC of factors pertaining to adult FL learners of a wide age range and backgrounds and, even fewer, have explored the differences in WTC between adult French and English FL learners (for an overview of participants' characteristics in previous studies, see Appendix 1). Furthermore, research in the Spanish-speaking context is still very scarce. Our study aims to contribute to this research gap in WTC.

III Methodology

1 Objective and research questions

Given the dearth of studies into WTC of learners of different FLs that include samples of adult learners of a wide age ranges and educational background, the present study aimed to investigate predictors of WTC of adult learners of various ages and educational backgrounds that study English or French as a FL. More precisely, the study aimed to answer the two following questions:

- Research question 1: What learner variables are associated to WTC in adult FL learners of English and of French in a Spanish context?

- Research question 2: How differently do learner variables predict the WTC of adult learners in English and in French as foreign languages?

2 Participants and context

A total of 420 conveniently sampled English (298) and French (122) FL learners from 4 Spanish official language schools (OLSs) participated in the study. OLSs are state funded, regionally managed institutions specialized in teaching and certifying FLs in Spain, whose curricula are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). Potential participants were encouraged to fill the questionnaire in class, by email and through social media – Twitter, Facebook and online learning platforms.

The English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' ages ranged between 14 and 70 years ($M = 39.44$ years; $SD = 13.37$; $Mn = 41$) and the French as a foreign language (FFL) students' ages between 15 and 70 ($M = 37.82$ years; $SD = 14.95$; $Mn = 38.50$). Female participation (69.49% in English and 72.13% in French) was higher than male participation (30.54% in English and 27.87% in French), being very close to the female/male distribution in adult, non-compulsory FL courses in OLSs (66/34) (MECD, 2016, p. 4).

More than half of the EFL (53.03%) and FFL (61.48%) learners reported having earned a bachelor's, undergraduate, master's, or doctoral degree. Overall, the sample has a considerably higher level of education than the general Spanish population. A total of 71.82% of EFL learners and 75.41% of FFL learners stated having obtained tertiary education versus the 38.60% in the Spanish population at large (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2020). As for the sample's language proficiency level, most participants had already passed the A2 exam level (26.19%), followed by those who had obtained their B1 certificates and were registered in B2 classes (23.57%). Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants, overall and according to the FL they were learning.

3 Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire consisting of five sections: the sociodemographic section, the FLE Scale, the FLCA Scale, the WTC Scale and the OCFLU Scale.

a Sociodemographic section. This section collected data regarding the participants' gender, age, highest level of education, language proficiency level (operationalized as the highest European Common Framework level they had reached through an official test), FLs they knew or were learning (one vs. more than one), FL they were thinking of when providing the questionnaire answers, their perceived relative standing among peers (on a 5-point scale from 'Well below the average level' to 'Well above the average level') and OLS where they were enrolled.

b The FLE Scale. Ten items extracted from the original 21-item FLE Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) were used in the present study (Appendix 2). The items were selected

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample in frequency, with percentage in parentheses.

Data group	Data variable	General $N = 420$ (100)	English $n = 298$ (70.95)	French $n = 122$ (29.05)
Gender	Male	125 (29.76)	91 (30.54)	34 (27.87)
	Female	295 (70.24)	207 (69.46)	88 (72.13)
Language proficiency level (i.e. highest CEFR level obtained)	None yet (first-years)	50 (11.90)	27 (9.06)	23 (18.85)
	A1	88 (20.95)	39 (13.09)	49 (40.16)
	A2	110 (26.19)	79 (26.51)	31 (25.41)
	B1	99 (23.57)	85 (28.52)	14 (11.48)
	B2	73 (17.38)	68 (22.82)	5 (4.10)
Number of foreign languages (FLs)	1 FL	330 (78.57)	257 (86.24)	73 (59.84)
	2 or more FLs	90 (21.43)	41 (13.76)	49 (40.16)
Highest level of education	Primary education	23 (5.48)	12 (4.03)	11 (9.02)
	Secondary education	31 (7.38)	24 (8.05)	7 (5.74)
	Vocational training	15 (3.57)	13 (4.36)	2 (1.64)
	Higher secondary education	45 (10.71)	35 (11.74)	10 (8.20)
	Higher vocational training	73 (17.38)	56 (18.79)	17 (13.93)
	Undergraduate degree	55 (13.10)	41 (13.76)	14 (11.48)
	Bachelor's degree	122 (29.05)	86 (28.86)	36 (29.51)
	Master's degree	51 (12.14)	28 (9.40)	23 (18.85)
	Doctoral degree	5 (1.19)	3 (1.01)	2 (1.64)
Relative standing among peers	Far below average	11 (2.62)	9 (3.02)	2 (1.64)
	Below average	87 (20.71)	70 (23.49)	17 (13.93)
	Average	282 (67.14)	191 (64.09)	91 (74.59)
	Above average	39 (9.29)	23 (7.72)	12 (9.84)
	Far above average	1 (0.24)	1 (0.34)	0 (0)

'to capture the reliability of the original scale without sacrificing the reliability of the measurement' (Dewaele et al., 2019, p. 418) and included both private and social sources of FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

c The FLCA Scale. Eight items were extracted from the FLCA scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) (Appendix 3). They reflected symptoms of anxiety and nervousness in the FL class. These items were found to maintain the reliability of the original scale (MacIntyre, 1992). Two FLCA items indicated low anxiety (reverse scored) and six, high anxiety. Both the FLE scale and the FLCA scale used in the study were culturally adapted translations into Spanish of the original measures, following the International Test Commission's (2018) Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests.

d The OCFLU Scale. The term out-of-class foreign language use (OCFLU) is used in this study to refer to any type of voluntary, non-course related FL use outside the classroom. This encompasses using the language for a broad range of purposes including communication, socialization, work, or even self-instruction. OCFLU may be unguided, user-guided, or even teacher-guided provided it is not meant as a FL class assignment.

Five items regarding FL use outside the class were adapted from Olsson and Sylvén (2015) for this questionnaire (Appendix 4). Participants estimated the frequency of language use for five activity types outside the class on a 7-point Likert scale (from 0 = never to 6 = every day). The activity types were the following: speaking with friends, relatives, colleagues, etc.; reading on social media, magazines, books, newspapers, etc.; listening to music, TV, series, movies, videogames; writing letters, emails, diaries, blogs, etc.; and speaking to themselves (e.g. practicing pronunciation, singing alone, recording themselves, etc.).

e *The WTC Scale.* Eleven items measuring classroom WTC were translated into Spanish and culturally adapted from Peng (2019) for this questionnaire (Appendix 5). Peng (2019) used the 19 items from Menzel and Carrell's (1999) willingness to talk in class scale as the original item pool to measure WTC in English. The items were rated on a 10-point scale (from 1 never or not at all to 10 always or all the time). Students were asked to indicate to what extent they decided to communicate in three situations: when they felt stimulated to speak up (e.g. 'the topic is interesting'), when they were well prepared (e.g. 'know the correct answer'), and when they sensed a responsibility to speak up (e.g. 'sitting in the front of the class'). Peng (2019) named these three dimensions: contextual stimulation, communication preparedness, and communication responsibility, respectively. Although this instrument was used in a Chinese context, its items represent universal classroom situations.

4 Data analysis

The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants were summarized through descriptive statistics.

Internal consistency of the 10 items of the FLE scale, as measured by Cronbach alpha coefficient, was high ($\alpha = .828$; $M = 4.25$; $SD = 0.44$ in the EFL sample/ $\alpha = .794$; $M = 4.24$; $SD = 0.37$ in the FFL sample) (internal consistency of the 21 items in Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) study was .86; $M = 4.2$; $SD = 0.54$). Internal reliability for the 8–item FLCA scale was also high ($\alpha = .890$; $M = 3.06$; $SD = 0.87$ in the EFL sample/ $\alpha = .836$; $M = 2.90$; $SD = 0.75$ in the FFL sample) (internal consistency of the same items in Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) study was .86). In the case of the OCFLU Scale, internal reliability was good ($\alpha = .782$; $M = 2.75$; $SD = 1.27$ in the EFL sample/ $\alpha = .794$; $M = 2.33$; $SD = 1.24$ in the FFL sample). As for the WTC scale, the internal reliability was also high for both groups ($\alpha = .898$; $M = 6.79$; $SD = 1.53$ in the EFL sample/ $\alpha = .892$; $M = 6.75$; $SD = 1.46$ in the FFL sample).

One-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests showed that the distribution for the WTC of both data sets was close to normal (Kolmogorov–Smirnov $Z = .043$, $p = .200$ in the EFL sample; Kolmogorov–Smirnov $Z = .052$, $p = .200$ in the FFL sample) and, consequently

Table 2. Pearson correlation analyses between WTC and the variables for EFL and FFL.

Independent variables	English as a FL (n = 298)		French as a FL (n = 122)	
	Pearson r	p	Pearson r	p
Gender	–.094	.107	.031	.736
Age	–.142	.014	.083	.361
Multilingualism	.135	.020	–.070	.443
Relative standing	.301	.000*	.178	.050*
Teacher uses FL in class	.194	.001*	.093	.311
Language proficiency	.222	.000*	.301	.000*
FLE	.380	.000*	.321	.000*
FLCA	–.507	.000*	–.304	.000*
OCFLU	.266	.000*	.327	.000*

Note. * $p <$ **[AQ: 1]**.

parametric statistic procedures were used, specifically Pearson correlation analyses and multiple regression (via stepwise method) analyses. Overall, the assumptions related to the generalization of the results (linearity, normal distribution of residuals, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, etc.) were reasonably met in the different regression model. Green (1991) recommended a minimum sample size of 50 for any regression, with eight additional observations per term. This means that, for a multiple regression study of nine independent variables, the required sample size is 122, which is the size of our FFL sample and far below our EFL sample. All calculations were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26.0 (IBM Corp, Armonk, New York, USA). Significance was set at $p \leqslant 0.05$.

IV Results

Results from the preliminary Pearson correlation analyses with a Bonferroni correction ($p < .006$) indicated that 6 out of the 9 independent variables in the case of English and 4 in the case of French were significantly associated to WTC (Table 2). FLCA was the only variable to be significantly negatively correlated with WTC.

Correlation coefficients between the independent variables were calculated and none were too high (Tables 3 and 4), suggesting that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a problem for the present data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed with the English as a FL (EFL) students' data and another one with the French as a FL (FFL) students' data to test if the independent variables in each case significantly predicted participants' WTC. In the case of English, a significant regression equation was found for WTC, with three variables out of six predicting 38% of the variance ($F(3, 294) = 59.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2Adjusted = .37$). Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) was the strongest (negative) predictor, with a medium effect size (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014), explaining 26% of variance ($\beta = -.413$, $t(294) = -8.42$, $r = -.463$, $p < .001$). Positive predictors of WTC were language

Table 3. Intercorrelations between independent variables in English FL learners ($N = 298$).

Pearson correlations	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. FLE						
2. FLCA	–.331					
	.000					
3. OCFLU	.145	–.240				
	.012	.000				
4. Relative standing	.235	–.474	.254			
	.000	.000	.000			
5. Language proficiency	–.161	.006	.204	–.007		
	.005	.918	.000	.904		
6. Teacher's English use in class	.029	–.027	.060	–.019	.504	
	.616	.640	.305	.746	.000	

Notes. FL = foreign language. FLE= foreign language enjoyment. FLCA = foreign language classroom anxiety. OCFLU= Out-of-class foreign language use.

proficiency, explaining an additional 5% of variance ($\beta = .271$, $t(294) = 5.81$, $r = .321$, $p < .001$), with a small to medium effect size, and foreign language enjoyment (FLE), which explained a final 7% of variance ($\beta = .287$, $t(294) = 5.8$, $r = .337$, $p < .001$), with a medium effect size. In the case of French, a significant regression equation was also found for WTC, with three variables out of four predicting 22% of the variance ($F(3, 121) = 11.13$, $p < .001$, $R^2Adjusted = .20$). out-of-class foreign language use (OCFLU) was the strongest predictor with a small effect size, explaining 11% of variance ($\beta = .244$, $t(121) = 2.88$, $r = .294$, $p = .005$). A (negative) predictor of WTC was FLCA, explaining an additional 7.4% of variance ($\beta = -.257$, $t(121) = -3.14$, $r = –.307$, $p = .002$), with a small effect size. Language proficiency explained a final 4% of variance ($\beta = .208$, $t\ (121) = 2.45$, $r = .258$, $p = .016$), also with a small effect size. Tests of multicollinearity were conducted for the two analyses to examine the interrelationships among the variables. Resulting VIF values were all under 1.16, implying little threat of multicollinearity in both regression analyses.

In order to facilitate the discussion of results, descriptive statistics for the scales used in the study – the independent variables FLCA, FLE and OCFLU, and the independent variable WTC – were calculated (Table 5).

V Discussion

Research question 1

Our study investigated learner-internal and external variables associated to WTC in adult FL learners of English and of French in a Spanish context. Some coincidences as well as interesting differences are observed when analysing our findings in light of previous research on associations or predictors of WTC.

Table 4. Intercorrelations between independent variables in French FL learners ($N = 122$).

Pearson correlations	1	2	3	4
1. FLE				
2. FLCA	–.233			
	.010			
3. OCFLU	.338	–.101		
	.000	.268		
4. Language proficiency	.242	–.105	.273	
	.007	.248	.002	

Notes. FL = foreign language. FLE= foreign language enjoyment. FLCA = foreign language classroom anxiety. OCFLU= Out-of-class foreign language use.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the independent variables FLCA, FLE and OCFLU, and the independent variable WTC.

Foreign language	Mean (standard deviation)			
	FLE (potential range: 1–5)	FLCA (potential range: 1–5)	OCFLU (potential range: 0–6)	WTC (potential range: 1–11)
English ($n = 298$)	4.25 (.44)	3.06 (.87)	2.75 (1.27)	6.78 (1.53)
French ($n = 122$)	4.24 (.37)	2.89 (.75)	2.33 (1.23)	6.75 (1.45)

Notes. FLCA = foreign language classroom anxiety. FLE = foreign language enjoyment. OCFLU = out-of-class foreign language use. WTC = willingness to communicate.

Our study found a positive significant association between actual language proficiency and WTC. In this respect, it is a valuable contribution to the scarce evidence on the relationship between language proficiency as measured by standardized or achievement tests and WTC. Additionally, the correlation coefficients between the two FLs and WTC is small, as it was the case in the study by Zhou et al. (2020), who also used a measure of overall competence. Additionally, the variability of WTC explained by overall competence in the regression model in this latter study with English learners (6%) is rather similar to that explained by proficiency in our study with EFL student data (7%).

With respect to the demographic factors of age and gender, the study found no significant association with WTC. The motivation to learn a FL by the students enrolled in OLSs may explain that age and gender are not factors when it comes to WTC in the study context. In a survey carried out in three Andalusian OLSs (Acosta-Manzano, 2021) aimed to identify the motivations to start learning a FL, over half of the sample mentioned reasons connected with enjoyment, leisure, personal interest, culture and travelling. This may suggest a widespread predisposition among students to communicate in the FL, irrespective of their age and gender. Additionally, the number of languages was not significantly associated with WTC, thus ruling out that multilingualism may be a factor in the WTC of the adult learners in the study.

As regards the classroom-related factor of relative standing, our study with adult learners found a significant and positive correlation. This result is in line with that obtained by Dewaele & Dewaele (2018) with secondary FL learners in the UK. In neither study was relative standing found to be a predictor of WTC. With reference to the other classroom-related factor under study, the teacher's use of the FL, our findings with adult EFL learners are consistent with those obtained by Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) with secondary students and by Dewaele (2019) with adult learners in that it is positively correlated to WTC, although the correlation coefficients in those studies (r = .33 and r = .39) are well above the ones found in the present study (r = .19 [EFL] and r = .09 [FFL]). Unlike in our study, however, teacher's use of the FL was found to be a predictor of WTC in those studies. The mean age of both FL samples was considerably higher than in those two studies, which may explain the rather weak association of this variable with the study participants' WTC.

Our results also attest to the association between out-of-class exposure and practice of the FL and WTC in the FL found in previous research (e.g. Denies et al., 2015; Lee & Dressman, 2017; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). This suggests that adult learners with a higher FL WTC seek out more extramural opportunities to practice their FL communicative skills.

Concerning affective factors, our study found WTC to be correlated to EFL learners' FLE (r = .38) and to FFL learners' FLE (r = .32). These correlations are lower than those reported by Khajavy et al. (2018), Dewaele (2019) and Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) (with private FLE), whose studies obtained a correlation between FLE and WTC of r = .49, r = .43 and r = .46, respectively. They are more consistent, though, with the coefficient reported by Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) between WTC and social FLE (r = .30). The considerably higher age range in our study may partly explain the differences with previous research, although this speculation needs to be confirmed by further research. Regarding FLCA, our study exhibited a negative correlation between WTC and EFL learners' FLCA (r = –.50) and FFL learners' FLCA (r = –.30) and it was found to be the strongest predictor of the EFL learners' WTC and the second strongest predictor of FFL learners' WTC. Our results for EFL learners are generally in agreement with those obtained in previous research: r = -.41 (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018); r = –.53 (Dewaele, 2019); r = –.55 (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010) while those obtained with the FFL learners' data are more in keeping with the coefficients reported by Khajavy et al. (2018) (r = –.25), and Shirvan et al. (2019) (r = –.29).

To sum up, the demographic factors under study (gender, age and multilingualism) were not found to be associated to WTC in our study. On the contrary, an association was found with the other factors under study, namely the class-related factors of relative standing and teacher's use of the FL - scarcely researched in relation to WTC so far-, language proficiency, out-of-class language use and the affective factors of enjoyment and anxiety. The strength of the association is small with the exception of the association of anxiety and WTC in the case of EFL learners, which is medium to large (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). It is worth noting that enjoyment and anxiety show a stronger association with WTC than language proficiency, thus highlighting the role of affective factors in FL students' disposition to communicate in classroom situations.

Research question 2

Descriptive results of the scales indicate that, on average, EFL and FFL learners experience extremely similar and rather high levels of language learning enjoyment and of willingness to communicate. This can be explained by the fact that FL learning in OLSs is not a part of a wider curriculum and that personal interest in learning the FL and enjoyment ranks high among the students' reasons to enrol in a FL course (Acosta-Manzano, 2021) in this institution. However, EFL learners seem to be more adversely affected by anxiety, despite claiming to use the FL outside the classroom more often than FFL learners. Plausible explanations for these differences will be provided below in connection with the discussion of predictors of WTC of adult learners in English and in French as foreign languages.

As to how differently learner variables predict the WTC of adult learners in English and in French as foreign languages, our results suggest that WTC may be dissimilarly affected by learner internal and external factors depending on the FL under study. Differences between EFL and FFL emerged in terms of significant correlates and predictors of students' WTC. Five factors – namely the affective factors of FLCA and FLE, relative standing, language proficiency and OCFLU – significantly correlate with WTC in both EFL and FFL learners. The magnitude of the correlation between language proficiency and WTC, although small in both cases, is less strong in the case of EFL learners, which is indicative of a stronger influence of proficiency on the WTC of FFL students. Concerning the affective factors in the study, while correlations exist with WTC in the case of both languages, the correlation coefficient between FLCA and WTC in the case of EFL learners is considerably higher and it falls between a medium and large effect size. However, the correlation coefficients between FLE and WTC is rather similar in both samples, with a small effect size. It is also worth noting that relative standing and the teacher's use of the FL in class are correlates with WTC in the case of the EFL students alone.

When it comes to predictors of WTC, language proficiency and FLCA are predictive factors in both groups of FL learners; however, while in the case of language proficiency, this factor explained a similar percentage of the variability of the WTC of French and English language learners, FLCA explained a remarkable 26% of the variability of the EFL students' WTC versus 7.4% of the variability FFL learners' WTC. Additionally, the use of the FL outside class is found to be a predictor (and the strongest predictor) of WTC of FFL learners alone and the positive emotion of FLE is a predictor of EFL but not of FFL. According to our results, then, the variability of the WTC of EFL learners is explained by affective factors in a much higher proportion than in the case of FFL learners and, most notably, by language anxiety. As mentioned above, on examination of the mean values for FLCA, FLE and WTC for both groups of FL learners (Table 5), it is observed that the differences between the groups are relatively small, with a slightly higher FLCA level among the EFL learners. It is, therefore, the association between these affective factors and, particularly, between FLCA and WTC, that most importantly contributes to differentiating the two groups of FL learners.

A number of potential learner and contextual variables (e.g. personality, attitudes and motivation, sociobiographical history, intergroup processes, instructional practices, etc.)

that have not been controlled in our study, most possibly operating in interaction with each other, may explain these results. The role of English as a cultural and symbolic capital and its status as a lingua franca in business, academic, international tourism and service industry settings may also be behind the dissimilarities. In this regard, there is a current pressure to obtain official competence certificates in FLs – most notably in English – to graduate[1] and secure employment in Spain whereas FFL learners tend to study the language for pleasure rather than need. In the survey on the motivations to start learning a FL carried out in Andalusian OLSs mentioned above (Acosta-Manzano, 2021), 50% of the participating EFL learners ($n = 144$) mentioned reasons connected with enjoyment, leisure, personal interest, culture and travelling, whereas 60.44% of the FFL cited those reasons ($n = 91$). Professional, work-related reasons or the need to obtain an official certificate of proficiency were mentioned by 50% of the EFL learners and 39.56% of the FFL learners. Those learning English and those learning French in our study have, therefore, most probably, different underlying attitudes and motivations, being motivation, as mentioned above, one of the high-evidence correlates of WTC (see Shirvan et al., 2019). To illustrate, Peng and Woodrow (2010) concluded that WTC was influenced by motivation indirectly through confidence. This indicates that different subtypes of motivation may impinge on WTC differently, which may partly explain the different variability of WTC explained by FLCA in the two datasets. This speculation needs to be further researched.

Another plausible explanation for the stronger association between FLCA and EFL learners' WTC is the fact that the proportion of participants who learn more than one FL is substantially higher in the FFL than in the EFL sample (40.16% and 13.76%, respectively). Fairly conclusive evidence has been obtained in several studies (Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele, 2007, 2010; Dewaele et al., 2008; Thompson & Khawaja, 2016) for the association of higher levels of multilingualism with lower levels of anxiety in FL learners. Although mean differences FLCA in our study between EFL and FFL learners are not large, the higher level of multilingualism among the FFL learners may have contributed to this lower association between FLCA and WTC in this group of learners, either directly or indirectly via the effect of self-perceived confidence on FLCA. Again, this hypothesis needs to be further investigated.

Additionally, the dissimilar linguistic distance between Spanish and the two FLs under study (Spanish and French being Romance languages) may also impact on the WTC of EFL and FFL learners differently, again via the impact of anxiety on self-perceived competence. Levelt's (1989) model of speech production identifies four major processes: (1) conceptualization of the communicative intention; (2) formulation of concepts, which involves retrieving lexical items from the speaker's mental lexicon, as well as grammatical encoding and phonetic planning; (3) articulation, which requires control of the articulatory system; and (4) self-monitoring of the three previously mentioned processes. In speech production, these processes overlap and need to be carried out at speed. The lack of automatization typical of FL learners makes it anxiety-provoking to simultaneously pay attention to all processes involved under real-time constraints (Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Trebits, 2016). It is now well established by research that similarities between the L1 and, in general, previously learned languages and additional languages facilitate language learning of lexicon, syntax and phonology. For example,

Schepens (2015) found evidence that suggested that the learning requirements are lower for similar new sounds than for distant sounds. Spanish and French are more linguistically proximal languages than Spanish and English as the two former pair belong to the same linguistic family and have the same root. In a later study, Schepens et al. (2020) also provide convincing evidence of the language learning constraints imposed by a learner's native language. It may be the case that, when automatization is not complete, the extra cognitive effort needed for the speech production (and hence to access new not-so-distant sounds, lexicon, etc.) implied in speaking in English for a Spanish L1 speaker also generates more anxiety and less self-confidence than when s/he speaks French, which, in turn, have been consistently found to be crucial determinant factors for WTC. Again, this speculation needs to be confirmed by relevant research.

A further interesting finding in this study is the fact that the exposure and production of language outside the class is found to be a predictive factor only in the WTC of FFL learners. As noted above, OCFLU explains 11% of the variation in FFL learners' classroom WTC. Surprisingly, EFL and FFL learners have similar average levels of OCFLU even when the opportunity for frequent and varied contact with English is more readily available through, e.g. online communities and social media, games, films and series, personal interactions, online videos, and an assortment of online publications. Most probably, both the receptive and productive use of the FL outside class require more effort and a more proactive approach from the French learners to FL learning which can be interpreted in terms of engagement (e.g. Mercer, 2019; Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017; Svalberg, 2009, 2018). Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2017) draw on Fredricks et al. (2004) to differentiate this construct from its close relative, motivation, by claiming that it represents 'the point where students act, drawing on the energy and direction of motivation to put thought and feeling into deed' (p. 152). An active willingness to interact with the language and/or interlocutor and initiation and positive responses to interaction are among the key characteristics of engagement, according to Svalberg (2009, 2018). This fuller engagement with FL learning, which may encompass outside and inside use of the FL, may be part of the explanation of the fact that OCFLU is a predictive factor of the classroom WTC evidenced by FFL learner data alone. However, this claim still needs to be substantiated by research.

Additionally, as mentioned above, EFL and FFL learners in our context have overall different motivations to learn the target language, alongside different average levels of anxiety and multilingualism, which, together with the dissimilar linguistic distance between Spanish and the two target languages, can all be factors associated with how different the factors under study predict WTC in EFL and FFL learners in distinctive ways.

VI Conclusions

Our study aimed to investigate learner variables associated to WTC in adult FL learners of English and of French in a particular instructional Spanish context, specifically gender, age, level of multilingualism, perceived relative standing in the class, language proficiency, teacher's use of the FL in class, out-of-class language use and the two emotions of FLE and FLCA. Of the 9 independent variables examined, FLCA and language

proficiency were found to be predictors of the WTC of both English and French language learners; additionally, enjoyment was found to be a predictor of WTC of EFL learners and out-of-class language use, of FFL learners' WTC. Some of our results confirm those obtained in previous research. For example, our study corroborated the role of anxiety as the high-correlate of WTC identified in previous studies. However, our findings also indicate that the construct of WTC needs to be further studied, as research may produce dissimilar results depending on the instructional setting, population and foreign language. In this respect, our results indicate that the magnitude and nature of the association of learner factors and WTC may be contingent upon the language being learned.

Given that some of the factors that have been found to be associated with FL learners' WTC in our study are amenable to pedagogical intervention, some pedagogical implications must be considered to better leverage these factors' effect on situational WTC and, simultaneously, to ameliorate or outweigh the effect of individual learners' potential trait-like WTC. Concerning affective factors, FLCA and FLE have been found to be predictors of WTC. The most direct implication of this finding is that teachers should optimize the conditions in the FL classroom to encourage FLE by creating a secure, stress-free and motivating environment. Additionally, as OCFLU is associated with WTC, teachers should make the most of the variety of learning resources accessible online that can widen the boundaries of the classroom by creating an expanded FL environment (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Not only could this increase the learners' WTC, but it could also increase their opportunities to engage with the FL in a more autonomous, self-regulated and self-directed way. Finally, according to our results, a relationship exists between the teacher's use of the FL and EFL students' WTC. This calls for the teacher's use of the FL in classroom communication as it may enhance the students' predisposition to communicate in the target language.

Some limitations should be acknowledged. First, there could be some self-selection bias given that the study participation was voluntary. Second, the study was conducted with a limited number of participants in a particular cultural, geographical, educational, and institutional context. Therefore, results might not be representative of all students at the OLSs in Spain and of other adult FL learner populations. Thirdly, the variable 'relative standing among peers' consisted of only one item, which could have affected the reliability of the measure. Fourthly, this study is exclusively quantitative; qualitative data can provide valuable insights into the relationships between the variables under study. And lastly, as it was a cross-sectional study, it cannot be determined if WTC is a cause or a consequence of the emotional factors of anxiety and enjoyment, of language proficiency, and of out-of-class foreign language use. Further research is, therefore, needed, to clarify the relationships of the factors investigated, extend the research to a broader population of adult FL learners, and integrate a range of data collection and analysis methods, including qualitative, to allow data triangulation and provide additional explanations on the findings.

Notwithstanding these limitations, our study contributes to a broader understanding of factors associated WTC among an understudied FL learner population – adult learners from a wide age ranges and educational backgrounds – in an under-researched context, involving more than one FL, and it helps to identify patterns of findings across studies

and also findings that may be specific, among others, to the study population, foreign language or instructional context. [AQ: 2]

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Note

1. Depending on the university and bachelor's degree course, a B1 or a B2 CEFR level in a FL is a compulsory prerequisite for graduation in Spanish universities.

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Appendix 1. Participants' characteristics in previous studies.

Study	Number of learners	Age (years) or education range	Country
Study (English as a foreign or second language):			
Amiryousefi, 2018	612 EFL	19.88	Iran
Cao & Philp, 2006	10 ESL learners	–	New Zealand
Cao, 2011	18 L2	University	New Zealand
Cao, 2014	6 ESL learners	–	New Zealand
Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021	2 EFL	High school	Romania
Dewaele, 2019	210 EFL	25.6	Spain
Fernández-García, y Fonseca-Mora, 2019	124 EFL	Secondary school	Spain
Ghonsooly et al., 2012	158 L2	Freshmen university	Iran
Khajavy et al., 2018	1528 EFL	Secondary school	Iran
Liu, 2017	162 Chinese L2	22.26	China
Mulyono & Saskia, 2020	458 EFL	13–23	Indonesia
Peng & Woodrow, 2010	579 EFL	University	China
Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017	117 EFL	72% under 17	Iran
Zhou et al., 2020	129 Chinese EFL	21–30	Belgium
Study (French as a foreign or second language):			
Baker & MacIntyre, 2003	195 FSL	14–18 years old	Canada
Denies et al., 2015	1,117 FSL	12th grade	Flanders
Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018	144 FFL	Secondary school	England
Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004 reused:	742 FSL		Canada
(1) MacIntyre et al., 2002;		(1) 268, M = 13	
(2) Baker & MacIntyre, 2003;		(2) 195, M = 16.2	
(3) MacIntyre, Babin & Clément, 1999, along with MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003		(3) 279, M = 21.1	
MacIntyre & Charos, 1996	92 FSL	33	Canada
MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010	238 FSL	16.4	Canada
MacIntyre et al., 2002	268 FSL	13	Canada

Notes. EFL = English as a foreign language. ESL = English as a second language. FFL = French as a foreign language. FSL = French as a second language.

Appendix 2. Escala de Disfrute en el Aprendizaje de una Lengua Extranjera [Enjoyment in Learning a Foreign Language Scale]: Spanish translation and original English version.

¿En qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Muy en desacuerdo / En desacuerdo / Indeciso/a / De acuerdo / Muy de acuerdo.

1. No me aburro en la clase de lengua extranjera.
2. Disfruto la clase de lengua extranjera.
3. Soy un/a miembro valorado/a de la clase de lengua extranjera.
4. En la clase de lengua extranjera me siento orgulloso/a de mis logros.
5. En la clase de lengua extranjera hay un ambiente positivo.
6. Me resulta atractiva la idea de hablar una lengua extranjera.
7. La clase de lengua extranjera es divertida.
8. Mis compañeros/as son agradables.
9. Hay un buen clima en la clase de lengua extranjera.
10. En la clase de lengua extranjera nos reímos mucho.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Strongly disagree/ Disagree / Undecided/ Agree /Strongly agree

1. I don't get bored.
2. I enjoy it.
3. I'm a worthy member of the FL class.
4. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.
5. It's a positive environment.
6. It's cool to know a FL.
7. It's fun.
8. The peers are nice.
9. There is a good atmosphere.
10. We laugh a lot.

Notes. Spanish version is authors' translation.
Source. Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014

Appendix 3. Escala de la Ansiedad en la Clase de la Lengua Extranjera [Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale]: Spanish translation and original English version.

¿En qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Muy en desacuerdo / En desacuerdo / Indeciso/a / De acuerdo / Muy de acuerdo

1. Incluso si estoy bien preparado/a para la clase de lengua extranjera, me siento estresado/a.
2. Siempre siento que los demás estudiantes hablan la lengua extranjera mejor que yo.
3. Siento cómo me late el corazón cuando el/la docente me elige para intervenir.
4. No me preocupa cometer errores en la clase de lengua extranjera.
5. Me siento seguro/a cuando hablo en la clase de lengua extranjera.
6. Me pongo nervioso/a y me confundo fácilmente cuando estoy hablando en la clase de lengua extranjera.
7. Me pongo muy nervioso/a cuando tengo que hablar en la lengua extranjera sin preparación previa.
8. Me da vergüenza responder voluntariamente en la clase de lengua extranjera.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Strongly disagree / Disagree / Undecided / Agree / Strongly agree

1. Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it.
2. I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do.
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class.
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class (reverse-coded).
5. I feel confident when I speak in FL class (reverse-coded).
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class.
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class.
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class.

Notes. Spanish version is authors' translation.
Source. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986

Appendix 4. Escala de Frecuencia de Uso de la Lengua Extranjera Fuera de Clase [Out-of-Class Foreign Language Use Scale]: Spanish translation and original English version.

¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza la lengua extranjera por trabajo, motivos e intereses personales fuera del aula? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Nunca / Menos de una vez al mes / Entre 1 y 4 veces al mes / Entre 1 y 2 veces por semana / Entre 3 y 4 veces por semana / Entre 5 y 6 veces por semana / Todos los días.

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia habla en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: con amigos, familiares o conocidos, por negocios, trabajo, internet, videojuegos, etc.).
2. ¿Con qué frecuencia lee en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: redes sociales, libros, periódicos, revistas, etc.).
3. ¿Con qué frecuencia escribe en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: cartas, correos, diarios, blogs, redes sociales, etc.).
4. ¿Con qué frecuencia escucha la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: música, televisión, películas, series, videojuegos, Youtube, internet, etc.).
5. ¿Con qué frecuencia habla consigo mismo en la lengua extranjera? (Ej.: practicar pronunciación, cantar solo, grabarse hablando en una grabadora de voz, Vlogs / Youtube / Instagram / Snapchat, etc.).

English translation of our adapted questions from Olsson and Sylvén (2015).

The possible answers included: Never / Less than once a month / Between 1 and 4 times a month / Between once or twice a week / Between 3 times and 4 times a week / Between 5 and 6 times a week / Every day.

1. How often do you speak in the FL outside class? (e.g. with friends, relatives or acquaintances, for business or work, on the internet, videogames, etc.).
2. How often do you read in the FL outside class? (e.g. social media, books, newspapers, magazines, etc.).
3. How often do you write in the FL outside class? (e.g. letters, e-mails, diary entries, blogs, social media, etc.).
4. How often do you listen in the FL outside class? (e.g. music, television, films, series, videogames, Youtube, the internet, etc.).
5. How often do you talk to yourself in the FL? (e.g. to practice pronunciation, sing alone, record yourself speaking with a recorder, Vlogs, Youtube, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.).

Notes. Spanish version is authors' translation.
Source. Adapted from Olsson & Sylvén, 2015.

Appendix 5. Escala de Predisposición a la Comunicación [Willingness to Communicate Scale]: Spanish translation and original English version.

Indique hasta qué punto decide comunicarse en clase de lengua extranjera en las siguientes ocasiones (1 equivale a nada o nunca y 10 a siempre o todo el tiempo).

1. Cuando estoy preparado/a para la clase de lengua extranjera.
2. Cuando sé la respuesta correcta.
3. Cuando realmente puedo aclarar el asunto que se está discutiendo.
4. Cuando tengo un punto de vista distinto al resto de mis compañeros de la clase de lengua extranjera.
5. Cuando nadie más habla.
6. Cuando me siento en primera fila.
7. Cuando mi punto de vista difiere del de mi docente.
8. Cuando toda la clase está involucrada en una conversación abierta.
9. Cuando el tema es interesante.
10. Cuando se evalúa mi participación en la clase de lengua extranjera.
11. Cuando toda la clase está involucrada en un debate acalorado.

1. When I am prepared for class.
2. When I know the correct answer.
3. When I can really clarify the issue under discussion.
4. When my views differ from my classmates' views.
5. When no one else is talking.
6. When I am sitting in the front of the class.
7. When my views differ from the professor's views.
8. When the class is engaged in an open discussion.
9. When the topic is interesting.
10. When my participation is being graded.
11. When the class is engaged in a heated debate.

Notes. Spanish version is authors' translation.
Source. Adapted from Peng, 2019.