



# Willingness to Communicate in Arabic Among Secondary Islamic Boarding School Students in Cambodia: A Mixed-Methods Study

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## Abstract

Learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is widely recognized as a key indicator of success in language learning, as higher levels of WTC are associated with more effective and meaningful language use. This study investigates students' WTC in Arabic at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, along with the factors that support and hinder its development. This area remains underexplored in non-Arab contexts involving Muslim minority populations. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, this study used a survey as the primary method, complemented by qualitative data from observations, interviews, and documentation, with thirty students participating. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through triangulation. The findings indicate that students' WTC in Classroom contexts was moderate ( $M = 2.45$ ), whereas their WTC outside the Classroom was low ( $M = 2.00$ ). Students were more willing to communicate in memorization-based tasks or when prompted by teachers, but showed limited engagement in spontaneous communicative situations. Supporting factors included high learning motivation, a supportive learning environment, and varied instructional methods. In contrast, inhibiting factors included limited facilities, mismatched teacher backgrounds, differences in students' proficiency levels, and minimal opportunities for Arabic practice outside the Classroom. The study concludes that enhancing WTC requires holistic, environment-based pedagogical interventions in Arabic language learning within non-Arab Muslim minority contexts, while also extending WTC research beyond its traditional focus on English language learning.

**Keywords:** Arabic; Willingness to Communicate; Second Language Learning; Cambodian Islamic Boarding School; Students

## Abstrak

Tingkat kesiapan untuk berkomunikasi (*Willingness to Communicate/WTC*) pada seorang pembelajar bahasa mencerminkan keberhasilan dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Makin tinggi WTC, makin baik kualitas pembelajarannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki WTC dalam bahasa Arab di kalangan siswa An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Phnom Penh, Cambodia, serta faktor-faktor yang mendukung dan menghambatnya. Hingga saat ini, penelitian tentang *Willingness to Communicate* dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di lingkungan non-Arab dengan populasi Muslim minoritas, seperti di Cambodia, masih sangat terbatas. Oleh karena itu, Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan campuran (*mixed methods*) a convergent parallel mixed-methods design dengan metode

*survei sebagai pendekatan utama, yang diperkaya dengan data kualitatif melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Sebanyak tiga puluh siswa berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Selanjutnya, Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis melalui triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat WTC siswa dalam kelas tergolong menengah, dengan nilai rata-rata WTC di dalam kelas ( $M = 2.45$ ) dan di luar kelas termasuk rendah dengan nilai rata-rata di WTC luar kelas ( $M = 2$ ). Siswa lebih bersedia berkomunikasi dalam konteks tugas hafalan atau ketika diminta oleh guru, namun kurang aktif dalam situasi komunikasi spontan. Faktor-faktor pendukung WTC meliputi semangat belajar yang tinggi, lingkungan belajar yang mendukung, serta variasi metode pembelajaran. Faktor penghambatnya meliputi keterbatasan fasilitas, latar belakang guru yang kurang sesuai, perbedaan kemampuan siswa, dan minimnya praktik bahasa Arab di luar kelas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan WTC memerlukan intervensi pedagogis yang holistik dan berbasis lingkungan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di konteks non-Arab dengan populasi Muslim minoritas, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian Willingness to Communicate yang selama ini didominasi oleh penelitian bahasa Inggris.*

**Kata Kunci:** Bahasa Arab; Willingness to Communicate; Pembelajaran Bahasa Kedua; Pesantren Cambodia; Santri

## INTRODUCTION

In the discourse of second language acquisition, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is now recognized as a key factor determining a learner's success (Macintyre et al., 1998; Kirkpatrick et al., 2024). Globally, the effectiveness of language learning is no longer measured solely by passive mastery of linguistic structures, but rather by the learner's mental readiness to engage in real communication (Nurkamariah & Zakiyah, 2021; Darasawang & Reinders, 2021; Zhang et al., 2025) This is because WTC functions as a bridge that transforms a person's language competence into active communication performance (Q. Zhang et al., 2024). Without the will to communicate, extensive language knowledge will remain locked and non-functional. In the context of learning Arabic (Kholis et al., 2023), the urgency of WTC becomes even more crucial given the complex nature of this language, where learners often experience psychological barriers even with sufficient vocabulary (Yang et al., 2024).

Arabic is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (UNESCO, 2023). Its presence has increased with the rapid development of Islam. In this regard, Arabic indirectly serves as a means of communication, especially for Muslims worldwide. Twenty Arab countries officially use Arabic, making it highly significant for Muslims, both Arab and non-Arab (Fiddin et al., 2023). Based on its distribution, Arabic speakers rank fourth in number. According to the latest population statistics, Arabic speakers in Africa, Asia, and Islamic countries reach 480 million (Khalati & Al-Romany, 2020).

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian country with a Buddhist majority (97%). However, there are regions in Cambodia with a Muslim population with Malay cultural influences, so the supporting language for Islamic education in Cambodia is Malay (Herniti, 2017). It has been stated that students in Cambodia struggle to learn foreign languages because the Cambodian alphabet differs from those of other languages. However, they have been introduced to Arabic script from an early age and have read the Quran, thus enabling them to understand Arabic script (Febriandika et al., 2023). In the region, Islamic-based educational institutions

have been established to educate children or future generations to carry on the Islamic struggle (Febriandika et al., 2023).

One of the largest Islamic educational institutions in Cambodia is An Nikmah As-Islamiyah Phnom Penh. This Islamic boarding school is directly supervised by the Cambodian Supreme Council for Islamic Religious Affairs. Arabic is a mandatory subject for all students, as it is an important language for them. Furthermore, Arabic is the language of the Quran and Hadith, the two primary sources of Islamic teachings. Islamic literature is also written in Arabic. Furthermore, Islamic rituals, such as prayer, are also conducted in Arabic (Khasawneh & Khasawneh, 2022). Therefore, Arabic language material at this Islamic boarding school is explained using at least two methods: the Nahwu Sharaf (grammar) method and the Muhadatsah (conversation) method. By implementing these two methods, students are expected not only to understand Nahwu Sharaf but also to apply these rules in everyday communication (Simanullang & Zailani, 2023).

To improve their Arabic communication skills, this Islamic boarding school provides both in-class and out-of-class learning for students. In class, Arabic is taught two to three times a week. Students at An Nikmah Al Islamiyah are asked to memorize conversations provided by the teacher. Students have difficulty memorizing the material due to their limited fluency in reading Arabic texts and therefore require additional guidance from the teacher. Furthermore, students are provided with important notes from the conversations, including new vocabulary. Outside of class, Arabic language learning is provided for students who wish to continue their studies abroad, such as at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt ((Utami & Pohan, 2024a). These efforts impact students' willingness to communicate in Arabic.

Several factors influence a person's willingness to communicate using a language. One such factor is Willingness to Communicate (WTC). In the framework of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Willingness to Communicate plays a pivotal role in determining whether learners' linguistic knowledge is transformed into actual language use (Huang et al., 2025). SLA research emphasizes that language development is facilitated through meaningful interaction and sustained communicative engagement; however, such interaction can only occur when learners are psychologically prepared to initiate communication (Han & Li, 2025). WTC therefore functions as a mediating construct between linguistic competence and communicative performance, influencing the frequency and quality of learners' engagement in the target language (Aladini & Gheisari, 2025). Learners with higher levels of WTC are more likely to seek opportunities for interaction, negotiate meaning, and receive feedback, all of which are essential processes in second language acquisition (Sun et al., 2024). Conversely, limited WTC may constrain learners' access to communicative input and output, resulting in underutilized linguistic competence and slower language development (Sun et al., 2024).

MacIntyre et al. defined WTC as a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using the L2 (Macintyre et al., 1998). Furthermore, Willingness to Communicate in a second language is not a single fixed trait, but a multilayered construct represented in a pyramid model. At the upper layers, WTC reflects learners' immediate readiness to engage in communication in specific situations, which is directly influenced by situational variables such as interlocutors, topic, and classroom context. At the lower layers, WTC is shaped by more stable factors, including individual personality traits,

intergroup attitudes, and motivational dispositions. This layered model suggests that learners' willingness to communicate may fluctuate across contexts while still being grounded in relatively enduring individual characteristics (MacIntyre et al., 2001; Macintyre, 2007)

WTC has recently become a topic of discussion among language learning academics. WTC was introduced by McCroskey and Baer (J. C. McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Citing McCroskey and Richmond, WTC is defined as an individual's tendency to initiate communication when given the freedom to do so (L. McCroskey et al., 2002). In this context, learners who desire to communicate in a second language will actively seek out opportunities to communicate, although this desire is also influenced by external situational factors (Alimorad & Farahmand, 2021; Fahri et al., 2024). This definition is similar to that of Henry et al (2024), who defined WTC as the desire to speak or remain silent when given the freedom to choose between the two. However, the success of language learning can be seen from the student's willingness to communicate (Lee & Drajadi, 2019). Therefore, WTC is a crucial factor in second language acquisition that teachers must consider (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024a). In this study, Willingness to Communicate is conceptualized not only as a relatively stable trait but also as a situational construct that may fluctuate depending on contextual and environmental factors. The Arabic learning context examined in this study refers to Arabic as a foreign language learned primarily for religious and educational purposes, with opportunities for communication occurring both inside and outside the classroom.

In this regard, several previous studies have discussed WTC in learning Arabic as a second language. Ibrahim (2013) investigated the effects of behavior and emotions on students' WTC at the University of Islamic Sciences Malaysia. It was found that self-confidence influences students' WTC, so lecturers are advised to communicate inside and outside the classroom and give students assignments that can motivate students to communicate using Arabic. Mahmoodi & Moazam (2014) investigated the correlation between WTC and students' Arabic language learning achievement at Bu-Ali Sina University-Hamedan, Iran. This study found a significant correlation between students who excel in Arabic learning and their willingness to communicate using Arabic. Meanwhile, Kholis et al. (2023) compared the WTC levels of Arabic Language Education (PBA) students and Arabic Language and Literature (BSA) students at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The results of this study showed that the WTC levels of BSA students were higher than those of PBA students, so the researchers recommended that lecturers to apply learning methods that can attract student interest. Meanwhile, Mardhiah et al, (2023) examined the correlation between Arabic language anxiety and students' WTC in public universities in Malaysia. The results showed that the higher the students' anxiety levels, the lower their WTC. Therefore, lecturers are expected to motivate students to communicate in Arabic in class.

Despite the growing interest in WTC in Arabic language learning, existing studies have largely focused on university-level learners and contexts where Arabic is taught in relatively supportive linguistic environments. Empirical research examining Arabic WTC in non-Arab contexts remains limited, particularly in Islamic boarding school settings and among Muslim minority learners in Southeast Asia. As a result, there is still a lack of understanding of how WTC in Arabic develops in educational contexts where learners have restricted exposure to authentic Arabic communication. Specifically, it remains unclear how learners' willingness to

communicate in Arabic develops in learning environments with limited authentic exposure to the language. In addition, the factors that support and hinder students' willingness to communicate in such contexts have not been sufficiently explored.

This study is theoretically informed by MacIntyre et al.'s Pyramid Model of Willingness to Communicate, which conceptualizes WTC as emerging from dynamic interactions among individual, affective, and contextual factors. This study aims to investigate WTC in Arabic among students at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and the supporting and inhibiting factors. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by providing empirical insights into learners' willingness to communicate in both classroom and out-of-class contexts. Contextually, it offers evidence from an Islamic boarding school in Cambodia, a setting that remains underrepresented in studies on Willingness to Communicate. Theoretically, this study extends the application of the Willingness to Communicate framework to Arabic language learning in non-Arab, Muslim minority contexts. The results of this study are expected to provide input for educational institutions to motivate their students through interesting practical efforts both inside and outside the classroom so that they can improve their WTC and achieve language learning goals.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

To conduct this study, the mixed-method was applied. Mixed-method research play a crucial role by providing quantitative data that complements qualitative insights from students in An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Cambodia. Mixed methods research employing the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, utilizing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. There is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research than either form by itself. Their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems (Creswell, 2009). This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Dimyathi et al., 2025), in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' willingness to communicate in Arabic (Creswell, 2025; Zumitzavan, 2025) The use of a mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate for WTC research, as willingness to communicate involves both learners' internal perceptions and their observable communicative behaviors (Macintyre et al., 1998; Creswell, 2025). Quantitative data capture students' self-reported tendencies and readiness to communicate, while qualitative data provide insights into how WTC is enacted in classroom and out-of-class contexts. The integration of both data types enables data triangulation and enhances the validity of the findings (Denzin, 2012).

By integrating the survey method into mixed-method research, it can leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a more nuanced understanding of the research question. Surveys are systematic tools for collecting quantitative data from a sample of students, using structured questionnaires. Creswell (2015) surveys used to gather data on variables of interest, such as attitudes, opinions, or behaviors related to

willingness to communicate arabic language from students in An Nikmah state islamic school Cambodia, which can be quantified and analyzed statistically.

### **Data Collection and Instrument**

The survey method was chosen to determine the effect of willingness to communicate on students' Arabic speaking skills. In this study, a questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. According to (Sugiyono, 2018a), the survey method is a quantitative research method that is used to obtain data that occurs in the past or present, about beliefs, opinions, characteristics, behavior, relationships. Data collection techniques with observation (interviews or closed-questionnaires). To gather data, questionnaires were delivered using Google Forms to all student participant groups in al nikmah state islamic school Cambodia. This study was carried out between July and September 2024. The questionnaire was administered during the first phase of data collection, followed by classroom observations and semi-structured interviews conducted concurrently to support data triangulation. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol designed by the researchers. The protocol consisted of guiding questions covering three main themes: (1) students' experiences of using Arabic in classroom interactions, (2) their communication practices outside the classroom, and (3) perceived factors influencing their willingness to communicate. The semi-structured format enabled the researchers to probe deeper into participants' responses while maintaining consistency across interviews.

A closed-questionnaire is a list containing questions that must be answered or worked on by students who want to be investigated, also called respondents. A closed-questionnaire can be distributed simultaneously to many respondents, answered by respondents according to their respective agreements, can be made anonymous so that respondents are free and honest. A closed-questionnaire used is a direct questionnaire of choice type, meaning that the questionnaire is delivered directly to the person who will be asked for information about themselves by choosing one of the available answers (Almeida et al., 2016). A closed-questionnaire developed by Kholis et al. (2023), modified by the researchers to suit the situation at the Islamic boarding school. In this study, WIC was measured in two contexts: in-class and out-of-class. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items designed to measure students' willingness to communicate in Arabic in both classroom and out-of-class contexts. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from the questionnaire is: "I will speak Arabic when given the opportunity to speak freely in Arabic language learning." Another sample item is: "I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet my classmates." The internal consistency of the instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha to ensure reliability. Content validity was established through expert validation, and the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the research context.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed in this study. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. To ensure anonymity, no personal identifying information was collected, and all data were reported in aggregated form. Participants were

assured that their identities would remain confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All data were stored securely and accessed only by the researchers.

### Data analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis following the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three stages, namely first, reduction. Reduction is carried out by transcribing speech data into written form. Second, the presentation stage, at this presentation stage, from the written interview results, the researcher analyzes the existing data and presents it in a report, namely the results and discussion. Third, the stage of drawing conclusions. The final step is the process of validating the data using triangulation of data and data sources by utilizing other data to check the data found in research field (Sugiyono, 2022). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, to describe students' levels of willingness to communicate in Arabic. To facilitate interpretation, mean scores were categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high. The categorization was based on the range of the Likert scale, following commonly used interval classifications in educational research (Sugiyono, 2022). Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. Through this process, recurring patterns and themes related to supporting and inhibiting factors of students' willingness to communicate were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data integration was conducted using a merging strategy, in which quantitative and qualitative findings were compared and interpreted together (Fetters et al., 2013). Quantitative results describing students' levels of willingness to communicate were complemented by qualitative themes that explained the underlying factors influencing these levels. This integration enabled a more comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

The description is intended to provide an overview of students' interests and motivations in speaking Arabic at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Cambodia in 2024. Then the sampling technique in this study uses the random sampling technique, because in taking samples, researchers want to take samples from each sub-population by taking into account the size of the sub-populations and mixing the subjects in the population so that all subjects are considered the same. The inclusion criteria for this study were students who were officially enrolled at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School in Phnom Penh, actively participated in Arabic language classes, and had studied Arabic for at least one semester. Students who did not attend Arabic classes regularly, had incomplete questionnaire responses, or were newly enrolled and had not yet participated in Arabic learning activities were excluded from the study. The amount that can be used, Suharsimi Arikunto explained that if the subjects are less than 100, it is better to take all of them so that the research is a population study. But if the number of subjects is large (more than 100 people) it can be taken between 10-15% or 20-25% or more overview of students' interests and motivations in speaking Arabic at Al Nikmah School, Cambodia in 2024 (Huyler & McGill, 2019) The sample size of 30 participants was considered adequate, as the study involved the entire accessible population of students learning Arabic at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School. In mixed-methods research, particularly in educational

settings with limited populations, smaller samples are acceptable when the purpose is to obtain an in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Demographics

The details of respondents in this study, classified by gender, age, and student class, are as follows:

Table 1. Respondent Data

<b>Gender</b>									
Male					Female				
5 (17%)					25 (83%)				
<b>Age</b>									
13 Th	14 Th	15 Th	16 Th	17 Th	18 Th	19 Th	20 Th	21 Th	22 Th
3 (10%)	1 (3%)	5 (%)	5 (17%)	2 (6%)	6(20%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)

Table 1 explains the demographics of the respondents. Table 2 shows that of the total 30 respondents, the majority were female students (25 people) compared to male students (5 people), which reflects the dominance of female participation in Arabic language learning at the An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Phnom Phen Islamic boarding school. The age range of respondents varied from 13 to 22 years, with the largest age being 18 years (6 people), followed by 15 and 16 years old (5 people each), and 13 and 21 years old (3 people each). This age diversity indicates that the students came from secondary education to early tertiary education levels, which influenced their level of maturity and experience in learning Arabic. This composition is important to analyze because differences in age and gender have the potential to affect the level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Arabic, both inside and outside the classroom. The dominance of female students can also provide an initial insight into which groups are more active or responsive in the learning communication process, making it an important consideration in formulating inclusive and adaptive learning strategies based on the students' demographic background.

### Level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Arabic among Students at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The level of WTC among students at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School was measured using a questionnaire developed by Kholis et al. (2023), modified by the researchers to suit the situation at the Islamic boarding school. In this study, WTC was measured in two contexts: in-class and out-of-class. To interpret students' levels of willingness to communicate, mean scores were categorized into three levels based on the five-point Likert scale: low (1.00–2.33), moderate (2.34–3.66), and high (3.67–5.00). This categorization

followed the equal-interval classification commonly used in educational research to facilitate meaningful interpretation of mean scores (Sugiyono, 2022).

Table 2. Willingness to Communicate in the Class

No	Statements	Average	SD	Description
1	I will speak Arabic when given the opportunity to speak freely in Arabic language learning.	2,5	0,92	Moderate
2	I will speak Arabic when I have the opportunity to speak in front of the class in Arabic lessons.	2,36	1,14	Moderate
3	I will speak Arabic when discussing with friends in Arabic lessons.	2,33	1,04	Low
4	I will speak Arabic when I have the opportunity to present Arabic vocabulary and grammar that I have memorized in class.	2,4	0,99	Moderate
5	I will speak Arabic when I have the opportunity to present Arabic conversations that I have memorized in class.	2,8	1,25	Moderate
6	I will speak Arabic when the teacher asks students to discuss using Arabic.	2,43	1,17	Moderate
7	I will speak Arabic when the teacher asks me to express my opinion using Arabic.	2,33	0,83	Low
<b>Total</b>		2,45	1,05	Moderate

Table 2 shows the Willingness to Communicate of An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School students in the classroom. The mean WTC score was 2.45, indicating a moderate level of willingness to communicate. Survey results show that students have a lack of willingness to communicate using Arabic in the classroom, especially when students are discussing. This also occurs when the teacher asks them to express their opinions in Arabic. Both indicators have the same average, namely 2.33. However, students will try to communicate in Arabic when presenting memorized conversations with other students in

Arabic in front of the class. In addition, students will also try to communicate in Arabic if given the opportunity by the teacher to communicate in Arabic in front of the class, such as to mention new memorized vocabulary. Therefore, students are able and willing to communicate in Arabic based on the material they are learning. This means that students are not yet able to communicate freely in Arabic.

The quantitative results indicate that students' willingness to communicate in Arabic within the classroom remains relatively moderate ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). However, students demonstrated a higher tendency to speak Arabic during structured activities such as memorized dialogues and teacher-directed presentations. This finding is supported by interview data, in which students reported feeling more confident when speaking Arabic after preparation. One participant stated, "I feel confident speaking Arabic when I have memorized the dialogue given by the teacher." Conversely, spontaneous communication and expressing personal opinions in Arabic were perceived as challenging due to fear of making grammatical mistakes and negative peer evaluation.

### Willingness to Communicate Outside the Classroom

Students' willingness to communicate outside the classroom can be seen from the eight indicators shown in Table 4.

**Tabel 3. Willingness to Communicate Outside the Classroom**

No	Statements	Average	SD	Description
1	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet my classmates.	1,97	0,71	Low
2	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet my peers from other classes.	1,7	0,69	Low
3	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet my seniors or juniors.	1,63	0,95	Low
4	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet my teachers, especially my Arabic language teachers.	2,03	0,87	Low
5	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet teachers who graduated from foreign universities, such as Al-	1,5	0,92	Low

Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt.				
6	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet friends and acquaintances who can speak Arabic.	2	0,82	Low
7	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I have discussions in small groups.	1,73	0,68	Low
8	I will speak Arabic outside of class when I meet native Arabic speakers.	1,73	1	Low
<b>Total</b>		2	0,83	Low

Table 3 shows the willingness to communicate of An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School students outside of class. Students' willingness to communicate in Arabic outside the classroom was particularly low, with a mean score of 2.00, which falls within the low category based on the established interpretation threshold. Survey results indicate that students have a low willingness to communicate in Arabic outside of class. However, students try to communicate in Arabic when they meet teachers, especially the Arabic language teacher. Furthermore, students also communicate in Arabic when they meet classmates who also speak Arabic. Therefore, students' willingness to communicate in Arabic arises when their conversation partners can communicate in Arabic.

The quantitative findings indicating low levels of willingness to communicate outside the classroom ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) were further supported by qualitative interview data. Several students reported feeling anxious and lacking confidence when using Arabic beyond formal instructional settings. As one student stated, "Outside the classroom, I rarely speak Arabic because I am afraid of making mistakes." Another participant emphasized that their willingness to speak Arabic depended largely on teacher instruction and memorization activities, noting that spontaneous communication remained challenging.

## DISCUSSION

### Factors Supporting and Inhibiting the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) of Arabic Students at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Although the overall results of the study indicate a generally low level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Arabic among the students of An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School Phnom Penh, Cambodia, some students still demonstrated relatively good performance. This was especially reflected in their agreement with the statement, "I will speak

Arabic when I have the opportunity to present Arabic conversations that I have memorized in class.” Such responses suggest that with adequate preparation and familiar material, certain students feel more confident and willing to speak. These findings point to the existence of supporting factors that encourage communication in Arabic, which deserve closer examination to inform more effective teaching strategies.

### **Factors Supporting WTC**

The findings of this study indicate that students’ willingness to communicate in Arabic is strongly supported by their high enthusiasm for learning the language. This enthusiasm was reflected in students’ active participation during classroom activities and their readiness to engage in speaking practices, particularly in structured learning situations. Such intrinsic motivation appears to enhance students’ psychological preparedness to use Arabic, which is a key component of Willingness to Communicate. This finding is consistent with the study by Maryani et al. (2024), who reported that learning motivation plays a significant role in increasing WTC among Arabic language learners. In the context of An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, students’ motivation is closely tied to the religious value of Arabic, which strengthens their commitment to learning and using the language despite limited exposure outside instructional settings.

In addition to motivation, a supportive learning environment was found to play a crucial role in fostering students’ willingness to communicate. Islamic boarding schools provide a distinctive environment where Arabic is not only taught as a subject but also practiced through daily activities, such as muhadatsah between students and teachers. These routine interactions contribute to students’ familiarity with Arabic and reduce psychological barriers to communication. This finding aligns with (2023)., who demonstrated that a supportive learning environment significantly enhances students’ WTC in Arabic learning contexts. However, the present study suggests that the effectiveness of such an environment is more pronounced within classroom and semi-formal settings, while spontaneous communication outside the classroom remains limited, particularly in contexts where Arabic is not used as a daily interpersonal language.

Furthermore, the use of varied learning methods, including nahwu (grammar), sharaf (morphology), and muhadatsah (speaking practice), was identified as another important factor supporting students’ willingness to communicate. These instructional approaches provide students with a solid linguistic foundation while simultaneously offering opportunities to practice spoken Arabic. The combination of structural and communicative methods appears to increase students’ confidence, especially during memorization-based and teacher-guided activities. This finding supports the results of (2024), who emphasized that diverse instructional strategies are essential for enhancing learners’ WTC. Within the Cambodian Islamic boarding school context, where students tend to feel more secure in controlled learning situations, such varied methods help bridge the gap between linguistic knowledge and actual communicative performance.

From an affective perspective, several students demonstrated relatively high intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for learning Arabic, as evidenced by their active participation in speaking activities and their willingness to practice when they felt adequately prepared. This

finding is consistent with Maryani et al., (2024) who explained that strong learning motivation significantly contributes to higher WTC among Arabic learners, although the overall WTC level in the present study remains lower than in their context. Linguistically, students benefited from systematic exposure to nahwu and sharaf, as well as structured muhadatsah practice, which provided a clearer understanding of language forms and supported their perceived communicative competence; this partially confirms prior findings that diverse and form-focused instructional approaches can facilitate WTC, while also highlighting that linguistic support alone is insufficient when affective barriers remain high.ss

According to the situational and environmental layers described in Macintyre et al.'s (1998) model, the Islamic boarding school environment simultaneously supports and constrains willingness to communicate (WTC). Daily activities that promote Arabic use, such as routine muhadatsah between students and teachers, provide meaningful opportunities for interaction and build confidence, reflecting the positive environmental effects noted by Kholis et al. However, the school's cultural norms, including strong respect for authority, fear of making mistakes in front of peers, and a culture of modesty, may increase learners' anxiety and reluctance to speak spontaneously. This may explain why the WTC level in this study is lower than in previous research conducted in non-boarding or non-Islamic contexts.

### **Factors Inhibiting WTC**

While it is important to acknowledge the factors that support students' willingness to communicate, it is equally essential to examine the barriers that hinder their participation. Understanding these inhibiting factors allows for a more balanced and realistic view of the challenges faced in promoting Arabic communication among students. These obstacles may stem from internal issues such as anxiety and lack of confidence, or external factors like limited exposure to the language and insufficient classroom interaction

The findings of this study indicate that limited facilities and learning infrastructure constitute a significant barrier to students' willingness to communicate in Arabic (Zaim et al., 2023; Supriyanto et al., 2025). The lack of supporting resources, such as Arabic textbooks, audio-visual materials, and communicative media, restricts students' exposure to authentic language input and reduces opportunities for meaningful practice. This condition not only affects learning outcomes but also diminishes students' motivation and confidence to use Arabic actively. This finding is consistent with (2021) who reported that insufficient learning resources negatively influence students' WTC and their overall engagement in Arabic language learning. In the context of an Islamic boarding school in Cambodia, where Arabic is not part of the surrounding linguistic environment, limited instructional resources further exacerbate students' dependence on classroom-based input.

In addition to infrastructural constraints, the educational background of teachers emerged as another inhibiting factor influencing students' willingness to communicate (Zakiyah et al., 2022). Some teachers were found to lack formal training or specialization in Arabic language education, which affects the quality of linguistic input, feedback, and communicative scaffolding provided to students. Previous research has emphasized that teachers' proficiency in the target language plays a crucial role in fostering learners' confidence and WTC (Alqurashi & Althubaiti, 2021). Within this study's context, insufficient teacher

expertise may lead students to rely heavily on memorization and avoid spontaneous communication, thereby limiting opportunities for meaningful interaction in Arabic.

Differences in students' Arabic language proficiency were also identified as a factor constraining willingness to communicate. Variations in linguistic ability and educational background can create imbalances during interaction, causing less proficient students to withdraw from communicative activities due to anxiety or fear of making errors. This finding aligns with Burhanuddin et al (2023), who reported that disparities in learners' language proficiency significantly affect their WTC. In classroom interactions at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, such differences may reduce peer-to-peer communication, particularly when activities are not sufficiently differentiated to accommodate varying proficiency levels.

Furthermore, the lack of an Arabic-speaking environment outside the classroom was found to substantially limit students' willingness to communicate. Opportunities to use Arabic beyond instructional settings were minimal, resulting in restricted language practice and reduced communicative confidence. This finding supports Bhatti & Juhari (2023), who highlighted the importance of external environmental support in enhancing students' WTC. In a non-Arab, Muslim minority context such as Cambodia, where Arabic is primarily associated with formal learning and religious instruction, the absence of a broader Arabic-speaking environment constrains students' ability to transfer classroom knowledge into spontaneous interpersonal communication.

The findings identify several barriers that align with or extend beyond those reported in previous research. Inadequate facilities and learning resources, including insufficient audio-visual tools and outdated Arabic materials, were found to reduce both students' and teachers' willingness to use Arabic. This observation supports Marwa et al's., (2021) conclusion that a lack of resources negatively impacts willingness to communicate (WTC). Furthermore, when teachers possess limited proficiency in Arabic, the quality of input and feedback provided to students may decline. This finding corroborates Alqurashi & Althubaiti's (2021) assertion regarding the significance of teacher language skills in fostering learners' WTC. Variations in students' abilities and educational backgrounds were also identified as influential factors. This is consistent with Burhanuddin et al., (2023) findings that heterogeneous proficiency levels can discourage less proficient learners from participating, particularly when more advanced students dominate classroom interactions.

Beyond the school context, the lack of an Arabic-speaking environment outside Islamic boarding schools further restricts students' opportunities for language practice. This finding is consistent with Bhatti and Juhari's assertion that external environmental support is essential for sustaining willingness to communicate (WTC). In Cambodia, Arabic is seldom used in the wider community, and students rarely encounter authentic communicative situations that require Arabic. This situation may explain the discrepancy between the relatively positive outcomes of classroom-based interventions and the persistently low overall WTC scores. While the present findings support the general structure of MacIntyre et al.'s WTC model, they also demonstrate that the interactions among affective, linguistic, situational, and environmental components are strongly shaped by cultural and institutional norms specific to Islamic boarding schools in Southeast Asia.

The findings indicate several pedagogical implications. Teachers can enhance students' willingness to communicate (WTC) by designing tasks that offer sufficient preparation and scaffolding, including memorized and semi-scripted dialogues that transition to more spontaneous conversations. This strategy may reduce anxiety and improve competence. Additionally, incorporating diverse communicative activities, promoting peer collaboration, and providing constructive feedback can cultivate a classroom environment in which mistakes are recognized as essential to the learning process rather than sources of embarrassment. At the curriculum level, integrating explicit WTC-oriented objectives and structured opportunities for out-of-class language use can systematize efforts to increase communicative practice.

Institutions should invest in teacher professional development programs that enhance Arabic language proficiency and communicative pedagogy. Allocating resources to modern learning materials and technology-enhanced language learning tools is also recommended. Policies that foster collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and external institutions, such as universities or Arabic language centers, can expand students' exposure to authentic Arabic use beyond the pesantren environment. Additionally, implementing guidelines that promote a psychologically safe classroom atmosphere, where students are encouraged to experiment with language without fear of harsh criticism, aligns with the affective and environmental dimensions highlighted in MacIntyre et al.'s model.

Although this study offers valuable insights, several limitations should be considered. The relatively small sample, drawn exclusively from a single Islamic boarding school, restricts the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or cultural contexts. Additionally, the quantitative analyses primarily utilize descriptive statistics, which limits the ability to infer relationships among variables or to conduct robust subgroup comparisons. Future research should address these limitations by recruiting larger, more diverse samples from multiple institutions and by incorporating longitudinal or experimental designs to investigate changes in willingness to communicate (WTC) over time and in response to specific pedagogical interventions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, inside the classroom, the level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among students at An Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Phnom Penh, Cambodia, is relatively moderate. Meanwhile, outside the classroom, students' WTC is low. The most significant results indicate that students are more likely to speak Arabic in memorization contexts and under direct teacher instruction; however, in informal and spontaneous contexts, such as speaking with friends or non-native teachers, they are less inclined to speak Arabic. Conversely, WTC is hampered by limited infrastructure, irrelevant teacher training, differences in ability among students, and the use of varied learning methods. Factors supporting WTC include a high enthusiasm for learning Arabic and a supportive learning environment. These results demonstrate the importance of developing a learning approach that prioritizes students' affective and social aspects in addition to cognitive ones to make Arabic learning more contextual and communicative. Theoretically, this study extends Willingness to Communicate research by providing empirical evidence from an underexplored context, namely Arabic language learning in an Islamic boarding school within a Southeast Asian Muslim minority community. This study was limited to a single educational institution and used only

quantitative data, which does not fully describe the affective dynamics of students. Based on the findings, this study offers several practical implications. Teachers are encouraged to create low-anxiety, student-centered communicative activities to foster spontaneous Arabic use. Curriculum designers should integrate communicative and affective components into Arabic learning programs, including structured interaction beyond the classroom. At the policy level, institutional support through relevant teacher training, infrastructure improvement, and the development of Arabic-speaking environments is essential to enhance students' willingness to communicate. Further research is recommended to employ longitudinal designs to investigate changes in learners' willingness to communicate in Arabic over time. Expanding the study to multiple Islamic boarding schools in Southeast Asia would enable comparative analysis across different institutional contexts. Moreover, qualitative methods such as classroom observation and in-depth interviews are recommended to further examine affective factors, including anxiety and motivation, that influence WTC.

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