The Relationship Between Teacher-Student Rapport, Stroke and English as a Foreign-Language Learners' Willingness to Communicate: The Case of Saudi EFL Female University Students

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Abstract

EFL learners must deal in communicative practices to master the target language. This study examines EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC), due to its absolute impact on their communication. This is a quantitative study that attempts to find the relationship between Saudi EFL learners' WTC, teacher-student rapport and teacher stroke. The 130 Saudi female students from the College of Business Administration at Taif University, enrolled in English for academic purposes, took part by answering three questionnaires. The data were analysed by Spearman-Rho correlation, using SPSS software. The result was a significant positive correlation between 1) Saudi EFL learners' WTC and teacher-student rapport, 2) stroke and Saudi EFL learners' WTC and 3) teacher-student rapport and stroke. This study will have a sound effect on helping educators understand the importance of building good teacher-student rapport and providing a positive teacher stroke for enhancing Saudi EFL learners' WTC in the classroom.

1. Introduction

Communication is an essential skill that all foreign-language learners must practise to master the target language. However, the achievement of this skill depends on the learners' WTC and the variables that influence it. WTC is a complex issue with a range of determinants, including L2 communicative confidence, motivation, L2 attitudes, anxiety and the learning context (Ortega, 2009). Researchers studying the effects of these variables have focused especially on the personal factors that relate to WTC, including perceived communication competence, language anxiety and motivation (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019). In the Saudi context, Alenezi (2020) found that for Saudi EFL learners, many factors influence, including the classroom learning environment and, more specifically, the teacher, whose role in facilitating communication has a strong impact on students.

Teachers play a vital role in learners' performance. Thus, a positive relationship between teachers and students is an important element of the classroom environment that affects learning outcomes (den Brok et al., 2005; Ma et al., 2018). In addition, the relationship between teachers and students also affects learners' engagement in class. By establishing a positive educator-learner rapport, teachers can facilitate students' WTC to a significant extent (Cai, 2021; Song et al., 2022). Irajzad et al. (2017) argue that teacher behaviour (e.g. mentioning students' names, complimenting students' work, keeping eye contact, nodding and smiling) can influence the teacher-student relationship.

Based on the theory of positive psychology (pp), Wang et al. (2021) included teacher-student rapport and stroking behaviour within the positive factors that require exploration in the field of education. Thus, this study aims to investigate the relationship between these two variables as well as their association with Saudi EFL female learners' WTC.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 L1WTC

The original investigation of WTC occurred within the communication studies by Burgoon (1976), as 'unwillingness to communicate' (UWTC). She focused only on UWTC in the first language (L1) and explored what hinders one from communicating. Later, this concept expanded to the WTC construct, as McCroskey and Baer (1985) explored the factors that affect WTC in L1. McCroskey and Baer (1985) defined WTC as 'the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so'. They also viewed WTC as trait-like, in that it remains stable in various situations.

2.1.2 L2 WTC

Later, researchers started to shift their focus to explore WTC in cases of second/foreign language (SL/FL) WTC. MacIntyre and Charos (1996) began to explore the factors that affect L2 engagement in communication. This shift is a result of the different natures of L1 and L2 that affect readiness to

communicate. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 546), L1 WTC is unlikely to imply L2WTC. They added that WCT is a situational construct as well, changing according to the situation, unlike the trait view. Based on this conclusion, the definition of WTC becomes 'readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2' (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). In their work, MacIntyre et al., (1998) discussed the relationship between the linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables and their effect on an individual's WTC, by designing a conceptual model that helps to predict L2WTC. However, in the last decade, the PP movement has impacted the educational field and turned many L2 WTC researchers' focused towards exploring more positive factors that could predict learners' WTC, such as credibility and immediacy (e.g. Lee, 2020).

2.1.3 Positive Psychology

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) initiated the concept of PP in an attempt to focus on exploring the positive aspects of life without denying the negative ones. PP is 'the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between' (Peterson, 2006, p. 4). For many years, educational studies have focused on investigating such negative factors as anxiety (e.g. Manipuspika, 2018; Shabani, 2012). When educational PP has flourished, discussion of positive interpersonal variables has included their implementation in language education (Dewaele et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Some have investigated the variables as determiners of learners' L2 WTC, such as immediacy, grit, and enjoyment) (e.g. Ebn-Abbasi & Nushi, 2022; Sheybani, 2019). Wang et al. (2021) pointed out the need to explore such variables as a positive teacher- and student-related factors (e.g. teacher rapport, stroke).

2.2 Empirical Studies

2.2.1 Teacher-Student Rapport

Teacher-student rapport is 'an emotional connection between teachers and their learners based on understanding, caring, and mutual respect' (Lammers & Byrd, 2019, p. 128). Studies that investigated teacher-student rapport have proved its impact on learners' outcomes (e.g. Frisby & Gaffney, 2015; Ma et al., 2018). Dornyei and Csizer (1998) included the relationship between teachers and their students in a list of the 'ten commandments' for motivating language learners. Many studies have explored the construct of teacher-student rapport with other related variables, such as engagement (e.g. Shakki, 2022; Thornberg et al., 2020). Using a mixed method, Thornberg et al. (2020) explored the effect of teacher-student rapport on learners' engagement. Swedish students (234) who studied at compulsory schools completed a questionnaire in the quantitative phase of the research; in the qualitative phase, 120 students participated in an interview. That research found a relationship between teacher-student rapport and learners' engagement as well as teacher-student rapport's effects on learners' engagement. The qualitative outcomes reported the learners' perceptions of the characteristics of a good teacher and their perspectives on how their teachers and classroom environment impacted their engagement. One of the interesting findings was that a strong teacher-student rapport can greatly enhance learners' classroom involvement. Likewise, Shakki (2022) explored the effect of teacher-student rapport and teacher support on learners' engagement. The researcher invited 216 Iranian students majoring in Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, English Translation and English Literature to cooperate in this investigation and complete a questionnaire. The results

showed a relationship between teacher-student rapport, teacher support and learners' engagement and the impact of teacher-student rapport and teacher support on learners' engagement.

2.2.2 Teacher Stroke

In this context, 'stroke' implies any action that an individual takes to show recognition of others' presence (Shirai, 2006). It also refers to any act of recognition that is essential for individuals to protect their physical and psychological well-being (Stewart & Joines, 1987, p. 4). Eric Berne (1988) first introduced 'stroke' in his theory of transactional analysis (TA). Stewart and Joines (1987) defined it as 'a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and personal change' (p. 3). Applying TA in educational settings can facilitate teacher-student interaction (Stewart & Joines, 1987, pp. 281–282). Stewart and Joines (1987) divided stroke into different categories: verbal (e.g. conversation) or nonverbal (e.g. smile), positive or negative and conditional or unconditional (pp. 73–74). The educational context treats stroke as a sub-component of teacher care that satisfies learners' sense of existence (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2014; Pishghadam et al., 2015). Wang et al. (2021) included stroke among the positive variables that require investigation within educational positive psychology.

There is a dearth of studies on teacher stroking behaviours. Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) explored stroke in the context of integration of academic motivation. Pishghadam et al. (2019) explored its relation to teacher success, credibility and EFL students' willingness to attend classes. Yuan (2022) tried to examine the association between teacher stroke, teacher-student rapport and grit and the effect of teacher stroke and rapport on learners' grit. Distributing a questionnaire among 316 Chinese university EFL learners, the researcher found a positive relationship between these variables as well as effects on learners' grit.

2.2.3 WTC

L2 French learners participated in the study that MacIntyre et al. (2001) conducted. The researchers measured WTC in each of four skill areas (i.e. speaking, writing, reading and comprehension) and explored five reasons for studying L2 (i.e. friendship, travel, job, personal knowledge and school achievement), all of which were positively associated with WTC inside and outside the classroom. The outcomes also demonstrated the importance of the teacher's friendly and supportive behaviour in improving students' WTC in the classroom. Zarei et al. (2019) explored EFL learners' WTC and teachers' socioaffective and pedagogic strategies. In their qualitative study, they interviewed 19 EFL teachers about the socioaffective and pedagogic strategies they used in their classes in the Iranian context. The purpose of the study was to learn the extent to which they used strategies to facilitate or hinder students' WTC. They found two main themes, namely, facilitating and hindering factors. Teachers' supportive behaviour was one of the sub-factors included in facilitating factors. This support affects learners' WTC; for instance, teachers encourage learners to participate when they praise them, sympathise with them, consider what their students say or give them a turn at talking.

Many studies on WTC have explored the effect of personal factors (e.g. anxiety) on L2 WTC (e.g. Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021). Others (e.g. Khajavy et al., 2018) aim to investigate the

impact of situational factors (e.g. classroom environment) on students' WTC. Teacher-student rapport is one of the scarcely explored positive interpersonal variables. Only recently have a few researchers investigated its effect on learners' WTC (e.g. Cai, 2021; Song et al., 2022). Cai's (2021) research aimed to explore the effect of teacher-student rapport and immediacy in predicting Chinese EFL learners' WTC. A questionnaire that Cai (2021) used to gather data from 858 university students produced findings that revealed that the teacher-student relationship and teacher immediacy positively predicts Chinese EFL learners' WTC. In addition, a strong positive relationship existed between the teacher-student relationship, immediacy and EFL learners' WTC. Song et al. (2022) used similarly valid and reliable methods to gather and analyse the data from 4,392 Chinese EFL learners. They aimed to predict students' WTC through teacher-student rapport and teacher caring. The result indicated that positive teacher-student rapport and teacher caring could predict Chinese EFL learners' WTC. Also, the result showed a significant relationship between teacher caring, teacher-student rapport and EFL learners' WTC. However, these studies did not focus on a particular gender to investigate WTC, exploring both genders and relying on a quantitative method. In addition, the association between teacher-student rapport, teacher stroke and EFL learners' WTC remains ambiguous since no study has explored this area in any context.

2.2.4 WTC in Saudi Context

Many studies on EFL WTC in Saudi Arabia have investigated personal factors (e.g. anxiety). Bensalem (2021) used a quantitative method to explore the effect of anxiety and enjoyment on learners' WTC. The findings of this study proved the possible impact of some contextual variables (e.g. attitudes towards the target language and instructor) on students' WTC. Other studies on EFL WTC in the Saudi context have also explored the factors that affect EFL learners' WTC in the classroom, using qualitative methods. For example, Alqurashi and Assulaimani (2021) revealed the impact of variables (e.g. teacher reaction, topic choice) on the learners' WTC. Another study found that the same was true for classroom environmental factors (e.g. topic interest, instructor, class size) (Alenezi, 2020). However, these studies used qualitative methods and male participants. Based on the findings of past studies:

- Most studies have focused on the impact of personal and situational factors on EFL students' WTC.

- Few studies have investigated the effect of positive factors on EFL learners' WTC.

- Most studies in the Saudi context relied on qualitative methods to explore EFL learners' WTC.

- No research has explored the association between teacher-student rapport, teacher stroke and EFL learners' WTC.

2.3 The Gap

This study will fill the literature gap by exploring the association between teacher-student rapport, teacher stroke and Saudi EFL female university students' WTC, using a quantitative method (questionnaire) to explore these variables.

2.4 Statement of the Problem

Communication is an important skill that all foreign-language learners must practise to acquire the foreign language. However, many Saudi EFL learners suffer from reluctance to communicate in classrooms (Hamouda, 2013; Alenezi, 2020). One of the reasons that deter learners from communicating in class is the teacher-centred classrooms that Saudi EFL classes use (Althubaiti & Alqurashi, 2022). This method deals with learners as passive recipients who only listen to the teacher. As Alzobiani (2020) argues, this method of instruction also hinders learners' developing positive relationships and communicating with their teachers.

2.5 Significance of the Study

In many Saudi universities, students usually spend about two hours a day in EFL classrooms, proving the need for effective communication with their instructors. As this study aims to investigate the relationship between teacher stroke, teacher-student rapport and Saudi EFL female university students' WTC, the findings of this study will help instructors to consider their positive stroking behaviour and attempts to build positive rapport with their learners. It also will help Saudi EFL instructors and students to realise the association between positive teacher stroking behaviour, the relationship between instructors and learners and learners' WTC. In addition, it will help guide future research to explore other positive variables that relate to EFL learners' WTC.

2.6 Research Question

•   Are there any significant relationships between teacher stroke, teacher-student rapport and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 130 Saudi female students who studied EFL at Taif University. They were from the College of Business Administration and enrolled in Regular English for academic proposes (REAP) courses. They took the REAP lectures for about 5 hours per week. The participants were adult learners from different levels. They enrolled in the courses at REAP level I, II, III or IIII. All participants volunteered to answer a three-scale questionnaire.

3.2 Instruments

This study is a quantitative correlational study that relied on a questionnaire to collect and analyse the data. Using a quantitative method in this correlational study helps to easily calculate the degree of association between the variables. Another advantage of using this method is the ability to reach a larger audience. However, this method does not add an in-depth understanding of the study and does not consider the differences among the participants (Queirós et al., 2017).

This study relied on a quantitative method to gather the participants' data and analyse them. So,

the research tool was a questionnaire that consisted of three scales. The questionaire's first scale is the 'Student-Instructor Rapport Scale (SIRS)' that Lammers and Gillaspy (2013) developed; it aims to assess students' relationship with their instructors using nine items (see Table I in the appendix). The second scale is the 'Student Stroke Scale (SSS)' that Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) designed to examine the stroke the teacher gives to students, using 18 items (see Table II in the appendix). To measure Saudi female EFL learners' WTC, this study used the 'Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire' (WTCQ) by Peng and Woodrow (2010), containing 10 statements (see Table III in the appendix). All items of the three-scaled questionnaire were assessed using a 6-point Likert scale, where (6) means 'strongly agree' and (1) means 'strongly disagree'.

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Validity

The creators of the previous studies identified above had validated and used all three scales. Lammers and Gillaspy (2013) designed and validated the 'Student-Instructor Rapport Scale' (SIRS) (see Table I in the appendix). The second scale was the 'Student Stroke Scale (SSS)', which Pishghadam and Khajavy (2014) developed and validated (see Table II in the appendix). The third scale was the valid tool of Peng and Woodrow's (2010) 'WTCQ' (see Table III in the appendix).

3.3.2 Reliability

Because the participants spoke Arabic as their first language, an experienced translator translated the questionnaire from English to Arabic for their use. Then, we piloted the questionnaire on 20 participants to test its reliability (see Table 1). Cronbach's Alpha test was used to measure the reliability of each of the three scales. As Table 1 shows, the rapport scale consists of 9 items ($\alpha = .96$), the stroke scale contains 18 items ($\alpha = .90$) and the EFL WTC scale includes 10 items ($\alpha = .93$). All three scales enjoyed a satisfactory Cronbach alpha value. After testing the reliability of these scales and the online demonstration of the questionnaire, the researcher collected the responses of 130 participants.

Table 1. Results of the Cronbach's Alpha Test

Questionnaires	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Rapport Scale	.96	9
Stroke Scale	.90	18
EFL WTC Scale	.93	10

After measuring the reliability of each scale, the questionnaire was designed for distribution online using Google Forms. It was sent to the WhatsApp and Telegram groups of the Saudi EFL female learners from the College of Business Administration, studying at REAP level I,

II, III or IIII at Taif University. All 130 agreed to participate by agreeing to the informed consent and answering the questionnaire. The data-collection process took about a week.

3.4 Analysis

To analyse the data, we used Microsoft Excel first, to decode and encode the data and transform words into numerical data, to facilitate the analytical process. We reversed the negatively worded items (10 and 18) (see Table II in the appendix) in the second scale. Then, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software executed the data analysis. This research used three tests: the normality distribution, descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient tests. Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk were used to examine the normality of the distribution for the variables. In addition, the descriptive statistics test was used to find the mean and the standard deviation (SD). The Spearman-Rho correlation was implemented to find the correlation between the study variables.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the answers and information they shared would be confidential and used only for research purposes. Moreover, they could withdraw their participation at any time (see Appendix).

4. Results

To answer the first research question, we used SPSS to analyse the quantitative data. Table 2 shows Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk being run to examine the normality of the distribution for the variables. The results of all variables indicated that $p<.005$; hence, the data are not normally distributed. Thus, the Spearman-Rho correlation was used to find the correlation in this case. The results of Table 3 illustrate that 130 students participated in the current study, and the highest mean in the first scale was for the seventh item (M= 5.47, SD=.97), while the lowest mean was the third statement's (M=4.84, SD=1.46). Table 4 shows that the highest mean in the second scale was for item 11 (M= 5.14, SD=1.28) while the lowest mean (M=3.48, SD=1.67) was for item 22. Table 5 shows that the highest mean in the third scale was for item 29 (M= 4.75, SD=.1.29), while the lowest mean and SD was for the sixth statement (M=3.78, SD=1.67). Finally, Table 6. illustrates that applying the Spearman-Rho correlation to find the correlation between teacher-student rapport, stroke and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC resulted in finding a significant positive relationship between teacher-student rapport and stroke (r = 0.620, n = 130, p = 0.001, α = 0.01). Likewise, a favourable relationship appeared between teacher-student rapport and EFL WTC (r = 0.446, n = 130, p = 0.00l, α = 0.01). The findings also indicated a strong association between stroke and EFL WTC (r = 0.550, n = 130, p = 0.001, α = 0.01).

Table 2. Tests of normality for the variables.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Student-Instructor Rapport	.227	130	.001	.753	130	.001
Student Stroke Scale	.116	130	.001	.928	130	.001
Willingness to Communicate	.098	130	.004	.935	130	.001

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the teacher-student rapport scale.

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	130	1.00	6.00	5.12	1.28
2.	130	1.00	6.00	5.05	1.39
3.	130	1.00	6.00	4.84	1.46
4.	130	1.00	6.00	5.30	1.09
5.	130	1.00	6.00	5.18	1.32
6.	130	1.00	6.00	5.39	1.11
7.	130	1.00	6.00	5.47	.97
8.	130	1.00	6.00	5.19	1.21
9.	130	1.00	6.00	5.20	1.33

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the teacher stroke scale.

item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
10.	130	1.00	6.00	5.06	1.29
11.	130	1.00	6.00	5.14	1.28
12.	130	1.00	6.00	4.61	1.51
13.	130	1.00	6.00	4.66	1.32
14.	130	1.00	6.00	4.38	1.62
15.	130	1.00	6.00	3.52	1.69
16.	130	1.00	6.00	4.78	1.58
17.	130	1.00	6.00	4.62	1.41
18.	130	1.00	6.00	5.18	1.34
19.	130	1.00	6.00	4.68	1.28
20.	130	1.00	6.00	4.60	1.37

21.	130	1.00	6.00	4.10	1.57
22.	130	1.00	6.00	3.48	1.67
23.	130	1.00	6.00	4.12	1.51
24.	130	1.00	6.00	5.06	1.28
25.	130	1.00	6.00	3.98	1.46
26.	130	1.00	6.00	4.86	1.22
27.	130	1.00	6.00	4.18	1.37

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of WTC scale.

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
28.	130	1.00	6.00	3.78	1.67
29.	130	1.00	6.00	4.14	1.61
30.	130	1.00	6.00	4.31	1.60
31.	130	1.00	6.00	4.75	1.29
32.	130	1.00	6.00	4.73	1.46
33.	130	1.00	6.00	4.27	1.54
34.	130	1.00	6.00	4.72	1.31
35.	130	1.00	6.00	4.74	1.32
36.	130	1.00	6.00	4.55	1.49
37.	130	1.00	6.00	4.60	1.44

Table 6. Correlations—The results of Spearman-Rho correlation between Student-Instructor Rapport, stroke and learner willingness to communicate in FL.

			Rapport	Stroke	EFL WTC
Spearman's Rho	Rapport	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.620[**]	.446[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001	.001
		N	130	130	130
	Stroke	Correlation coefficient	.620[**]	1.000	.550[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.	.001
		N	130	130	130
	EFL WTC	Correlation coefficient	.446[**]	.550[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.
		N	130	130	130

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Discussion

The current study attempts to explore the association between teacher-student rapport, teacher stroke and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC. The findings from the descriptive statistics indicated that Saudi female EFL learners had a positive rapport with their teachers, received positive strokes from their instructors and were willing to communicate in English (Tables 3, 4 and 5). The findings of the Spearman correlation analysis related to the first research question. These outcomes showed a statistically significant and positive association between teacher-student rapport and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC, as well as a strong positive relationship between teacher stroking behaviour and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC. Teacher stroke correlates with Saudi EFL WTC more than rapport with Saudi EFL WTC does. Besides, a direct and strong correlation was found between teacher-student rapport and stroke (Table 6).

The present study's findings support the outcomes of previous studies. First, the relationship between teacher-student rapport and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC means that students who have a good rapport with their teachers are willing to communicate. This association agrees with the outcomes that Cai (2021) and Song et al. (2022) found, namely, that teacher-student rapport links to and increases   EFL learners' communicative engagement in the classroom. These results also align with the outcomes of Shakki (2022), who found a strong teacher-student rapport associated with increased classroom engagement. Similarly, these results agree with the findings of Thornberg et al. (2020), who found a strong teacher-student rapport linked to learners' contributions and classroom involvement. The findings of this study also echoed the outcomes of Alqurashi and Assulaimani (2021), Alenezi (2020) and Khajavy et al., (2018), who reported that classroom factors (e.g. teachers) relate to EFL learners' WTC. Thus, without a positive teacher-student relationship, EFL learners are unwilling to communicate.

Second, the relationship between teacher stroke and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC means that learners who receive positive strokes from their teachers tend to be willing to communicate. The results of this research were consistent with the outcomes of MacIntyre et al., (2001) which claimed that teachers' use of friendly and encouraging behaviour is aligned with the learners' increased communication in the EFL classroom. Also encouraging is comparison of these results to Zarei et al., (2019), who argued that when teachers smile, nod, make eye contact and demonstrate supportive behaviour, they can create a relaxed and safe learning environment in which the learners' are confident to communicate and participate during the class. In fact, EFL learners are unwilling to communicate without receiving positive strokes from their teachers.

Finally, the direct positive relationship this research found between teacher-student rapport and stroke aligns with the findings of Yuan (2022), namely, that this positive teacher-student rapport and the teacher's interpersonal behaviours are interrelated. These results also can be interpreted based on Dornyei and Csizer's (1998) argument, about teachers smiling, giving appraisal and being accepting, comprising examples of positive teachers' behaviour that strengthens the relationship between teachers and their students.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Findings

The current study is a quantitative study that scrutinises the relationship among teacher-student rapport, teacher stroke and Saudi female EFL learners' WTC. The quantitative results indicated that Saudi EFL females have good rapport with their teachers, receive positive strokes from their instructors and are willing to communicate in EFL class. In addition, a statistically significant correlation between 1) teacher-student rapport and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC, meaning that learners who enjoy a positive rapport with their teachers are willing to communicate; 2) teacher stroke and Saudi EFL female learners' WTC, indicating that learners who receive positive strokes are willing to communicate. Finally, a direct relationship appeared between the independent variables (rapport and stroke).

6.2. Limitations of the Study

Like all studies, this study is not without limitations. One is the absence of the impact of some personal and situational factors (e.g. level of proficiency, motivation, personality) on the variables of this study. In addition, this study was conducted in a Saudi university, an EFL context. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) context. In addition, this study did not consider the dynamic nature of EFL learners' WTC; thus, relying only on this judgement for all cases is impossible, due to the changing nature of EFL learners' WTC. Finally, this study used only a closed-ended questionnaire for all three scales to discover the relationship between the study's constructs. Therefore, the answers were specified and did not add any in-depth explanation to the relationship between variables.

6.3. Further Research Directions

Future studies may investigate the effect of contextual and individual factors (e.g. level of proficiency, personality, motivation) on EFL learners' WTC. Additionally, upcoming research may explore the dynamicity of EFL students' WTC and explain how it changes, based on teacher-student rapport and teacher stroke in EFL classrooms. Also, this research relied only on a closed-ended questionnaire to discover the relationship between the constructs of this study; thus, other types of data-collection tools, including open-ended questionnaires and interviews, could enable deeper understanding of the participant's point of view. Finally, future researchers can increase the generalisability of the results by conducting the same study to investigate other learning contexts.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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