

TO SPEAK OR NOT TO SPEAK? THE WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK ENGLISH AMONG ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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abstract

Adapting to the habits of communicating in English poses a significant challenge for freshmen of English Education Department in Indonesian context. They are required to listen to their lecturers' explanation in English as well as to use English during classroom discussion. This research aims to explore the factors influencing the willingness to speak English. This study used mixed methods with the explanatory design. The quantitative data were collected by means of survey. As many as 40 first-year students majoring in English education in an Islamic state university in Cirebon filled in the questionnaire. The qualitative data were collected by interviewing 8 students. The quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics while the qualitative data was used to corroborate the analysis of the quantitative findings. The results show that students are willing to speak and there are factors that influence students' willingness to speak. Analysis of questionnaire data regarding the level of willingness to speak in students obtained a mean value of 3.1, which indicated that students were willing to speak (but not very high) in the classrooms. It was also discovered that six factors influence students' willingness to speak: task type, topic of discussion (topics of familiarity, topics of interest, and topic preparation), interlocutor, students' personal characteristics (fear of negative evaluation, fear of correctness of speech, personality (shyness), self-confidence, teacher's role, and seating location.

INTRODUCTION

As aspiring English teachers, first-year students in English education programs are expected to cultivate habits that enhance their proficiency and confidence in the language. This includes adapting to practices such as regular communication in English. The adaptation process for new students was fundamental because it determined their future studies (Wahyuddin & Nurwahda, 2022). Three things can affect adaptation coping in students: differences in character, differences in backgrounds, and differences in motivation (Suharsono & Anwar, 2020). Furthermore, the most important thing for effective communication is behavioral adaptation. Therefore, the ability to adapt to university life becomes essential for students during their first year of college (Pennings et al., 2018).

From the first semester, freshmen in the English Education Department are required to use English in classroom interaction. The goals are for students to develop proficiency, fluency, and confidence in using English to communicate, which are beneficial not only for students' academic activities in university but also for their future careers as English teachers. Speaking skill is essential to develop because it is the skill mostly needed to communicate with others (Rao, 2019; Farhani, Binsasi, & Handayani, 2020).

In Indonesian context, the demand for speaking English during classroom interaction poses certain difficulties among the first year students, many of whom rarely speak English in their daily life. This is related to the fact that not everyone learns English well at school (Maduwu, 2016). Farhani, Binsasi, and Handayani (2020) analyzed a number of earlier studies and categorized the issues that senior high school students face when speaking English, i.e., limited lexical range, grammar as a barrier, fear of other people's reactions, lack of courage when speaking in front of audience, and anxiety when speaking English. The challenges they experience in school will follow them as they transition into university students. There are several factors that influence students' speaking performance in the English Education Department such as over-reliance of mother tongue in the classroom, lack of ideas, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being criticized (Astuti & Pusparini, 2019; Riadil, 2020; Inayah & Lisdawati, 2021).

Condition control in situations where it is necessary to speak English is very dependent on the willingness of students to communicate. Students should have an adequate willingness to communicate (WTC) to achieve good English-speaking skills (Lee in Ramli, 2021). Azwar, Harahap, & Azwandi (2021) also stated that WTC must be owned by students to support L2 interaction and facilitate L2 development. Likewise, Anggriani & Humaera (2021) stated that having a WTC will facilitate the language learning process by allowing students to practice and use authentic language. WTC for students can significantly influence their success in mastering English speaking skills.

Having effective communication skills are essential for English teacher candidates to convey knowledge and information in the classroom. To prepare English Department students for this, providing opportunities for students to speak in English during classroom activities is important. For the first year students, it is important to assess their readiness and willingness to speak in English. Therefore, this study aims to explore the factors influencing the first-year English department students' willingness to speak English during classroom interaction.

METHOD

This study used the mixed-methods with an explanatory design that is carried out using quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were used as the main data and complemented by qualitative data. Random sampling was carried out on 40 second-semester students as the sample of this study to collect the quantitative data. Furthermore, qualitative data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews with 8 students.

Data collection techniques and instruments were taken based on Creswell's data collection methods (2018). Data collection techniques was carried out quantitatively by conducting surveys through questionnaires to 40 first-year semester students. The questionnaire used was adapted from Riasati & Rahimi (2018) with 27 statement items. It is rated on the four-point Likert scale ranging from "definitely not willing" to "definitely willing". The questionnaire's validity and reliability were measured with the Pearson's product-moment correlation and Cronbach's Alpha Correlation. Two items in the questionnaire were dropped after deemed invalid. In terms of reliability, all of the items were proven reliable with the Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6 (0.921). Descriptive statistical features in SPSS 29.0 were used to analyze the questionnaire results.

After obtaining quantitative data, qualitative data collection was carried out with semi-structured interviews with questions that are still related to the statements in the questionnaire. Interviews was conducted with 8 first-year semester students who had filled out questionnaires. The interview consists of 12 questions about students' experiences, feelings, and opinions about what factors influence the willingness to speak in first-year students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the factors influencing the willingness to speak English during classroom activities among the first-year students of English Language Teaching Department in an Islamic state university in Cirebon. 40 students (11 males and 29 females) participated in filling in the questionnaire consisting of 25 items.

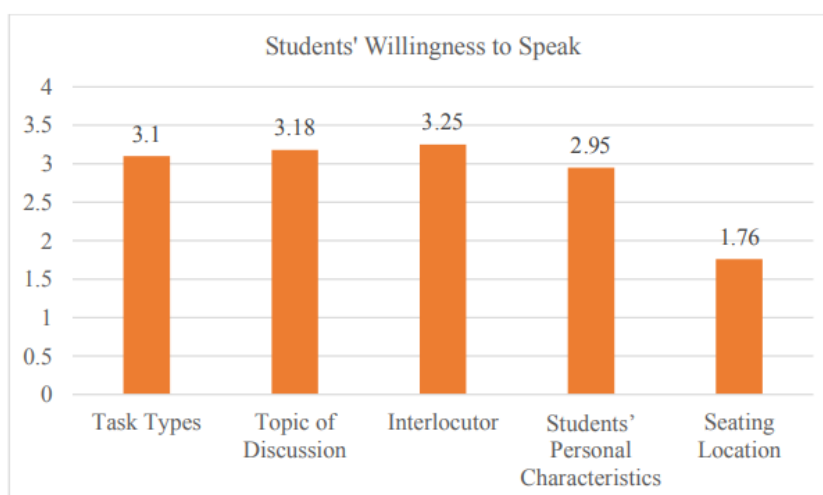


Figure 1. Factors affecting Students' Willingness to Speak

Figure 1 presents several factor influencing the willingness to speak in the classroom, i.e., task types, topic of discussion, interlocutor, students' personal characteristics, and seating location. The factor which mostly influence the students' willingness to speak is the interlocutor (M=3.18) while the factor with the least influence is seating location (1.76).

Task Type

Task type is a factor that influences students' willingness to speak during classroom activities. Different task types require different cognitive level, language skills, and emotional comfort, all of which affect whether students are willing to participate in the task or not. Ten items were categorized as task type.

No	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Volunteering to answer when teacher asks a question.	40	3.23	0.65
2	Talking in large groups.	40	2.98	0.65
3	Talking in small groups.	40	3.35	0.48
4	Talking in pairs.	40	3.38	0.62
5	Asking a question in class.	40	2.85	0.73
6	Presenting my opinions in class.	40	2.85	0.76
7	Volunteering to participate in class discussions.	40	3.28	0.55
8	Helping other classmates answer a question.	40	3.23	0.61

9	Presenting a lecture in front of class.	40	3.05	0.50
17	Volunteering to speak individually in class.	40	2.85	0.69
Mean			3.10	

In individual activities, students have enough willingness to speak even though in some cases the willingness is not very high. Starting from item number 1 which measures how willing students are to voluntarily answer the lecturer's questions, they get a mean value of 3.23, which means students are quite willing. Item 7 (volunteering to participate in class discussions) has a slightly higher score than item 1, namely 3.28, followed by item 8 (helping other classmates answer a question) with the same value as item 1 with a value of 3.23. Even though item 7 has similarities with item 17 and item 5, item 7 has a fairly higher score, while item 17 (volunteering to speak individually in class) and item 5 (asking a question in class) only get a value of 2.85. For presenting material in front of the class (item 9) it only gets a score of 3.05 and presenting opinions only gets a score of 2.85. The results show that students do not have a high willingness to speak or present something individually in class.

What many students mentioned was that they would speak if it was a must, such as speaking to present material or doing assignments either individually or in groups. Based on the quantitative data obtained, the task type achieved an average score of 3.1 out of 10 questionnaire items. The items that are part of this task type are related to types of speaking groups, volunteering to speak in class, making presentations, and asking and answering questions in class. The value achieved for each item is quite good, even though it is not too high. This shows that students are willing to speak English in certain situations on average. This differs from Riasati and Rahimi (2018), who found lower task types.

From this, it can be seen that the type of task given to students will have an impact on encouraging student availability to speak English in language classes. Statements from all respondents support the argument that the type of speaking task has an important role in their willingness to speak. Student 5 stated that he would speak individually if asked by the lecturer or during a presentation.

“I will speak in English if the lecturer asks me or tells me to speak. In addition, if I am assigned to present material I will also speak.”

In addition, several respondents also mentioned that the type of discussion group assigned also affected their availability to speak. More students feel willing to speak if they are in a small group than in a large group. Even students with low levels of willingness to talk can speak more when given the right kinds of assignments and are fully required to complete them. The term "appropriate assignments" refers to tasks that can provide pupils a chance to speak. In addition, chores that are laden with the necessity of motivating students to talk. Azwar, Harahap, and Azwandi (2021) stated that students are quite willing to speak because they feel familiar with the assignments, so students recognize repetition. This is also related to student motivation, where they know what types of assignments make them calmer. Aydin (2017) cited in Kurnia (2019) explained that one of the things that had a positive effect on the WTC was enthusiasm and ambition to learn foreign languages.

Topic of Discussion

Discussion topics also influence students' willingness to speak during classroom activities. Discussion topics determine students' interest, familiarity, and comfort during speaking activities.

No	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
15	Speaking about a topic I am familiar with.	40	3,13	0,68
16	Speaking about a topic I am interested in.	40	3,30	0,68
18	Speaking about a topic when I am prepared.	40	3,28	0,63
23	Speaking about a controversial topic.	40	2,88	0,78
24	I will speak about a topic that I am comfortable with.	40	3,33	0,66
Mean			3.10	

In the category of topic of discussion, there are five relevant items. In Table 8 it can be seen that the highest score achieved was talking about a preferred topic (item 24) with a value of 3.33 and followed by item 16 (speaking about a topic I am interested in) which still has similarities with a score of 3.30. This shows that students do not mind and are quite willing to talk about topics they like or topics they find interesting. Students are also quite willing to speak when they have prepared material for discussion and are familiar with the topic of conversation. This is indicated by the value of item 18 (speaking about a topic when I am prepared) and item 15 (speaking about a topic I am familiar with) which are not too low (3.28 and 3.13). Meanwhile, item 23 (speaking about a controversial topic) only scored 2.88 which indicated that students were not too willing to discuss controversial topics.

The topic of discussion got an average score of 3.18 from 5 questionnaire items. The interview results also showed that the topic of discussion was a factor that influenced students' willingness to speak, including familiar, interesting topics, and topics that had been prepared. Students are more willing to speak if the topic of conversation is familiar, according to their interests, and has been prepared beforehand so they already understand the topic. This is in accordance with Kurnia (2019), which states that topics are a factor influencing student's willingness to speak.

Student 27 said that he would be happy to speak if he was familiar with the topic being discussed even though it was not a topic that interested him.

"Even if it's not a topic that interests me, I'll still speak because I know about it."

Some respondents stated that if they were faced with an unfamiliar topic, they would first listen to the topic being discussed and then join in the conversation even though they only asked a few and a lot. Student 27 who said:

"When facing a new topic, I will try to listen first and then ask questions little by little."

There was also Student 13 chose to avoid unfamiliar topics for fear of making a mistake. From the students' statements, it can be seen that familiar topics are a factor in their willingness to speak. Students do not mind speaking when the topics discussed are familiar to students because they feel they know things about the topic. Unfamiliar topics cause difficulties for students. Students face topics that are not familiar to them with different responses: make

students speak through further curiosity about unfamiliar topics and make students avoid the unfamiliar topics.

Almost all respondents stated that they would be happy to talk if the topic of conversation was of interest to them or according to their interests. Even Student 3 who do not have a great will to speak will try to participate in speaking.

“I feel lacking in my speaking skills so I am more silent during conversations, but I will be happy to speak when the topics discussed match my interests.”

It is understood that topics that are interesting to students will affect students' willingness to speak. Topics that are in accordance with student interests or preferences will increase student enthusiasm in speaking.

The topics prepared can be a factor that influences the availability of students to speak. Almost all student respondents (7 out of 8) agree that the topics prepared to increase their availability to speak. Usually, this happens in giving presentation assignments in groups or individually by lecturers. Student 37 stated:

"If I have prepared the topic presented and understand it after my preparation, I have absolutely no objection to explaining it again even though it is in a presentation.”

The topics that students have prepared will give students an understanding of the topic. That way, it will increase students' courage and willingness to speak. Conversely, if the topic of discussion is not prepared in advance, students will find it difficult so they choose not to speak.

Interlocutor

The interlocutor or the speaking partner also influences students' willingness to speak. The communication dynamics are possibly influenced by the relationship, mutual comfort, authority among the participants.

No	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11	Speaking to a classmate who is of the same sex.	40	3,45	0,50
12	Speaking to a classmate who is of the opposite sex.	40	3,15	0,57
13	Speaking to a classmate who is older than me.	40	3,35	0,53
14	Speaking to a classmate who is younger than me.	40	3,40	0,49
19	Discussing a topic with my friends when our opinions are different.	40	3,20	0,64
26	Discussing a topic with my teacher when (s) he has a different view.	40	2,93	0,65
Mean			3.25	

The interlocutor category includes sex, age, and degree. These three things are contained in the six statements shown in Table 9. Starting from sex, the value in item 11 (speaking to a classmate who is of the same sex) is 3.45 which is greater than item 12 (speaking to a classmate who is of the opposite sex) with a value of 3.15. This shows that students are more willing to talk to people of the same gender. However, the value of item 12 which is not too small shows that students are also quite willing to talk to the opposite sex.

Next is the age difference. Students are indicated to be more willing to talk to younger interlocutors than to interlocutors who are older than them. Item 14 (speaking to a classmate who is younger than me) has a higher score than item 13 (speaking to a classmate who is older than me). Item 14 achieves a value of 3.40 while item 15 achieves a value of 3.35. Besides that, the comparison is quite thin and the score is not too low, indicating that students also don't mind talking to older interlocutors.

The last one is about degrees. Item 19 (discussing a topic with my friends when our opinions are different) achieves a score of 3.20 and item 26 (discussing a topic with my teacher when (s) he has a different view) only achieves a value of 2.93. That way, item 16 achieves a higher score than item 26. This shows that students are more willing to discuss with their friends or other students than to discuss with the lecturer. The score achieved by item 26 is quite low indicating that students are not too right to discuss with lecturers.

The interlocutor is one of the factors that significantly influence the students' willingness to speak. The interlocutor on the quantitative data findings obtained an average score of 3.25 from the 6 questionnaire items. This also shows that students' willingness to speak is not low. Various data were obtained from respondents regarding the interlocutor factor. The answers mentioned by respondents focused more on the speaking ability of the other person. Some respondents (2 out of 8) said they did not mind speaking to various interlocutors. This is because they think they are all learning, so they must have differences in speaking ability. Student 13 said:

“I don't mind because I think that we are all learning.”

Others stated that the interlocutor influenced their availability to speak. For some respondents, the other person who has better speaking skills makes them feel less confident to speak and decreased availability to speak because of it. Student 3 said:

“The interlocutor influences me to speak. When I get someone to talk to who is smarter, my willingness to speak will decrease.”

There was also Student 27, who stated that the interlocutor with better speaking skills made him feel more enthusiastic because he could learn from how the other person spoke. There were also Student 30 said that the interlocutor with a flawed and convoluted delivery method could affect her willingness to speak because the information conveyed could not be understood.

From the things above, it can be seen that the interlocutor can be a factor that influences students' willingness to speak. Several things in the interlocutor aspect that affect students' willingness to speak according to students are the ability to speak to the other person and the response of the other person. The ability to communicate to the other person and the other person's response are two factors in the interlocutor component that students say influences their willingness to speak. Some students are delighted to keep talking when engaging in discussion activities with others who have greater abilities, and some students feel nervous about their speaking abilities, which causes them to be less motivated to speak. The way that some interlocutors respond or express things has an impact on how willingly pupils are willing to speak. This is in accordance with what was found by Riasati & Rahimi (2018) that one that influences students' willingness to speak is the interlocutor effect with factors such as interlocutor familiarity, interlocutor participation, and sex of interlocutor. Besides that, Kurnia (2019) also stated that the interlocutor in the conversation also influenced students' willingness to speak and found that students would be more willing to speak if they were confident and familiar with the other person they were talking to.

Students' Personal Characteristics

No	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	Trying to talk than listen during a conversation.	40	2,58	0,80
22	Speaking when I know my speaking will be graded.	40	3,15	0,57
25	Speaking when no one else is speaking.	40	2,78	0,76
27	Speaking when I am sure that my answer is correct.	40	3,30	0,60
Mean			2.95	

There were four statement items that fall into the category of student's personal characteristics. The highest score was achieved by item 27 (speaking when I am sure that my answer is correct) with a value of 3.30 followed by item 22 (speaking when I know my speaking will be graded) with a value of 3.15. These two items highlight students' fear. From the value achieved in item 27, it is indicated that students have confidence when they believe that the answers are correct so they are willing to speak. In addition, students tend to speak when their speaking is assessed. Item 10 (trying to talk than listening during a conversation) and item 25 (speaking when no one else is speaking) did not achieve high scores (2.78 and 2.58). The two scores show that students do not have a high will to speak if they are not required to.

Students' personal characteristics are one of the factors that are often mentioned by respondents. In the questionnaire data, students' characteristics get an average of 2.95 from 4 questionnaire items. Through the interview session, it is known that several things influence students' personal characteristics, such as fear of negative evaluation, fear of correctness of speech, personality (shyness), and self-confidence. Student 5 said that he would only speak if it were a significant task that would obviously generate value.

“I will only be willing to speak in English if it is an important task such as a presentation or video assignment. I will seriously prepare for it. If in ordinary activities such as discussions in small groups or class discussions, I prefer to be silent and just listen.”

This shows that students still have a fear if they get bad grades. Therefore, students will prepare the material to be presented and try to practice speaking or presenting to ensure there are no mistakes.

Many statements from respondents also stated that they often feel afraid of negative reactions from both lecturers and their friends. Several respondents mentioned that the lecturer's reaction when they were talking sometimes affected their fluency of speaking. This then affects the willingness of students to continue speaking. All respondents mentioned that they actually feel happy if they get corrections from the lecturer because it can help them find out the deficiencies in their speaking. There are several different acceptances from the respondents on this matter: 1) students could accept any reactions and corrections from the lecturer and then make it a learning and reflection; and 2) the corrections from the lecturers made students feel insecure. Even so, they still find the reaction/correction from the lecturer very helpful.

Another addition from Student 4 regarding the lecturer's reaction, which affects the fear of making mistakes, is from the lecturer's body language. He stated:

“Sometimes there is a lecturer's body language that makes me feel that I made a mistake when speaking in a presentation. It affected my nervousness enough to speak afterward.”

Respondents are also concerned about negative evaluations from their friends or interlocutors. The interlocutor's negative response often makes students reluctant to speak again. Student 30 stated:

“The response from my friends when I made a mistake affected my confidence when I spoke afterwards. Sometimes there are friends who give a negative reaction with a bad reprimand. It makes me reluctant to speak.”

From the things above, the fear of negative evaluation is also related to the type of task in which students will speak if they are given an assignment that requires them to speak. Tasks that require students to speak are often related to values that make students try to speak well. Apart from assignments that produce grades, other negative evaluations can also arise from the interlocutor's response, whether the interlocutor is a lecturer or a student's peer. The negative response in question is in the form of lecturer body language, lecturer feedback, and peer feedback. However, even though the lecturer's reactions were negative and there was criticism, some students said they felt helped by this and learned where they had made mistakes.

Several respondents mentioned that they did not want to speak or participate in groups when it was not necessary because they were afraid of saying something wrong. Student 13 stated that she often felt afraid of making mistakes in pronouncing or using words so she did not want to participate much in speaking activities.

“Actually, I find it more difficult and afraid of making mistakes in pronouncing or using words, so I prefer to be silent rather than participating in speaking.”

Several respondents (2 out of 8) stated that they were shy and often preferred to listen in on a conversation. Student 13 stated that in the conversation he understood the topic being discussed but she felt very embarrassed to express it. This is clearly a factor in the availability of students to speak.

“I was shy, very embarrassed if other people paid attention to me. In conversations, sometimes I actually understand and have opinions on the topics discussed, but I'm too shy to express them and I prefer to just listen.”

This is also related to the fear of making mistakes and the fear of a negative response from the other person. When students don't feel confident about the answers they have, their embarrassment will increase. Likewise, if they know that the person who they are talking to is not someone who responds positively, then they will feel even more embarrassed to speak.

Statements about self-confidence often emerged from the respondents. The respondents have several opinions about their confidence when speaking English. For example, Student 4 stated that sometimes she hesitated to speak when she was not confident with an opinion that she felt was not strong enough.

“Sometimes not confident when I doubt my opinion. So, I feel hesitate if I have to speak.”

There is also student 5 who feels confident with his opinion and way of speaking.

“I am confident in the words I say because I understand those words and I also understand the causes and effects of what I say.”

From the two statements, it shows that knowledge of the topic of conversation affects students' confidence to speak. There are things that cause confidence to be a factor that influences the availability of speaking from students, including confidence regarding knowledge of the topic of conversation, knowledge of the science of speaking, and response/understanding of the interlocutor.

According to Riasati and Rahimi (2018) also found that students' personal characteristics, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of correctness of speech are factors that influence students' willingness to speak. In addition, according to Kurnia (2019), students' mood and self-confidence also affect students' willingness to speak. It was stated that students are willing to

speak because they feel they have high self-confidence. That way, this is in accordance with what the authors have found that students will be willing to speak if they feel confident in what they will say, both in opinion and word use.

Seating location

For some students, their sitting position in class is also a factor in their willingness to speak in speaking activities. The next factor is seating location, with a quantitative average value of 1.76 from the 2 questionnaire items. From the questionnaire data, students are willing to speak if sitting in front or behind. There were several statements from the respondents regarding the seating location factor in the speaking activity, namely regarding the comfortable sitting location and friends who sat around. Student 37 stated that he prefers to sit in the front because he can talk more easily with the lecturer and with his classmates.

"For me, sitting is enough to affect my ability to speak, I prefer to sit in the front so that I can clearly communicate with the lecturer and can be noticed by other friends."

Another respondent, Student 4, who also preferred to sit in the front added that the reason he preferred to sit in the front was because she didn't need to speak in a loud voice, whereas if she sat in the back he needed to speak in a louder voice. There were also Student 5 stated that sitting in the front would make him feel more comfortable talking than when sitting in the back, he would more often just pay attention to the ongoing conversation. This is in accordance with Azwar, Harahap, and Azwandi (2021), who also found that students are more willing to speak if they sit in the front. This sitting position is also related to students' confidence in speaking activities.

In addition to the sitting position that students feel comfortable with, the people who sit around individuals also affect students' willingness to speak. Student 24 stated that the people sitting around her often helped her if she made a mistake. This made the respondent's willingness to speak increased. Student 30 also mentioned that sometimes the people sitting around her did not have a good response to the respondent and it made her willingness to speak decrease.

"The people sitting around me also influence me, sometimes there are those who want to share/help/correct (if I made a mistake), but sometimes there are those who don't. It affects me quite a bit. I became not brave to speak."

From the things above, it can be concluded that seating location also affects student availability to speak. This is indicated by a sitting position that is felt to be suitable for students to speak more easily, namely by sitting in the front for several reasons, such as being closer to the lecturer, getting the attention of friends while talking, and not requiring a loud voice to speak. In addition, the student's sitting position with other students is also a factor in the availability of student speaking. Students prefer to be able to help each other with the people sitting around them. This is accordance with Anggriani & Humaera (2021) that several factors influence students' willingness to speak through seating location, namely internal factors such as anxiety and self-confidence and external factors such as the interlocutor.

CONCLUSION

There are also 6 factors influencing students' willingness to speak: task type, topic of discussion, interlocutor, students' personal characteristics, teacher's role, and seating location. The task type factors found from student interviews were the type of presentation material, both individual and group assignments, and group types. There are also topics of discussion factors

that influence students' willingness to speak, including topics of familiarity, topics of interest, and topic preparation. The interlocutor factor includes the ability to speak to the other person and the response from the other person. Factors of students' personal characteristics include fear of negative evaluation, fear of correctness of speech, personality (shyness), and self-confidence. The teacher's role factor includes the responses and feedback given by the lecturer and an order from the lecturer, either in the form of assignments, direct questions, or specific instructions.

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