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Promoting Willingness to Communicate in Synchronous Online EFL Classrooms: Vietnamese Secondary School Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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Abstract

Although students' willingness to communicate (WTC) inside the classroom is a growing research interest in second and foreign language (L2) education, little research has investigated L2 teachers' strategies to promote students' WTC in Asian contexts. This study explores Vietnamese secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding promoting English as a foreign language (EFL) students' WTC inside the classroom. The sample included eight EFL teachers (three males and five females) from two Vietnamese secondary schools. After we analyzed the recordings of classroom procedures available in the schools' archives, we sent an email invitation to the teachers. Eight teachers were invited to participate in 40-minute semi-structured interviews. The results show that the teachers' belief systems were complex and dynamic. Surprisingly, the contextual factors, teachers' experience, teachers' gender, and technological constraints were found to affect their beliefs and practices. Also, there were more congruences than incongruences between the teachers' beliefs and practices concerning L2 WTC inside the classroom.

Keywords: individual factor, self-determination theory, situational factor, teachers' beliefs and practices, willingness to communicate

Introduction

Willingness to communicate (WTC) inside the second or foreign language (L2) classroom is conceptualized as a psycho-emotional, educational, and linguistic construct, indicating learners' readiness to participate in discourse when they have a choice (Bui et al., 2022; McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Previous research demonstrated the relationship between WTC level and personality traits (Öz, 2014), contextual factors (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005; Khatibi & Zakeri, 2014; Ma et al., 2021; Öz et al., 2015), teachers' motivational instruction strategies (Liu et al., 2021; Vongsila & Reinders, 2016), tasks (Yashima et al., 2016), perceived communication competence, communication apprehension (Bukhari & Cheng, 2017), individual learner variables (Bursalı & Öz, 2017; Riasati, 2014), and teaching styles (Chen et al., 2022; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). All of these studies have implications for language teaching and learning.

Although WTC inside the classroom is a rapidly burgeoning research interest, little is known about the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding promoting WTC inside the synchronous online classroom. Given that communication or social interaction is an input-embedded means by which interlocutors exchange their knowledge and experiences, resulting in the development of knowledge and skills (Long, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978), L2 teachers not only need to encourage students to communicate but also promote students' desire to initiate communication (Öz et al., 2015). However, although the advent of technology has enhanced language learning, a lack of interactivity is a limitation of synchronous online classrooms.

Although the relationship between L2 teachers' beliefs and practices has been vastly explored, little is known about Asian teachers' beliefs and practices concerning WTC inside the synchronous online classroom. As Asian young EFL student contexts are underexplored and WTC is an important area of language teaching and learning, this study is timely, suggesting implications for classroom practices. It reports data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with eight Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers. The results of this study would be of great value to practitioners and researchers beyond its immediate context. The current research explores the connection between Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs and practices concerning WTC inside the classroom. It seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs about WTC inside the synchronous online classroom?
2. How do Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers promote students' WTC inside the online classroom?
3. Are there any (in)congruences between Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding WTC inside the online classroom? What contextual factors are responsible for the incongruences, if any?

Literature review

WTC in L2 contexts

The concept of WTC in L2 has shifted in the past decades. While the very first endeavors on WTC (e.g., McCroskey & Baer, 1985; MacIntyre, 1994) focused on L1 contexts, recent attempts have been interested in L2 contexts and differentiated in-class and in-society WTC constructs. Most, if not all, of recent studies have given implications for L2 teaching and learning.

L2 WTC is a complicated concept as "it is highly unlikely that WTC in L2 is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). It refers to "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (p. 547). However, WTC in L2 classrooms is not always necessary when a communication opportunity emerges because the teacher may only call upon one student to answer, although many students volunteer. Hence, teachers may need to create an inclusive classroom environment providing equal opportunities for all students to engage in communication.

A heuristic six-layer model of L2 WTC was developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), and according to this model, linguistic, communicative, and psychological factors can influence WTC (see Figure 1). Unlike L1 WTC, L2 WTC is considered unstable. Its level can fluctuate across discourses. Layers 1, 2, and 3 in this model mainly describe L2 use, behaviors, and situated antecedents. Layers 4, 5, and 6 refer to psycho-emotional, social,

and individual factors. However, this framework provides "a broad sense" of L2 WTC (p. 547); it neglects the difference between in-class WTC and out-of-class WTC.

Pursuing an interest in students' readiness to start communication in L2 contexts, MacIntyre et al. (2001) acknowledged the gap in the previous studies and introduced two questionnaires measuring second language learners' in-class and out-of-class readiness to initiate communication. This is a self-perceived WTC scale, which the researchers used to collect learners' self-reports. The scale for L2 in-class WTC has four main subscales: speaking, writing, reading, and comprehension. Data collected from 72 high school students learning L2 French showed that L2 teachers could use tools to enhance students' WTC.

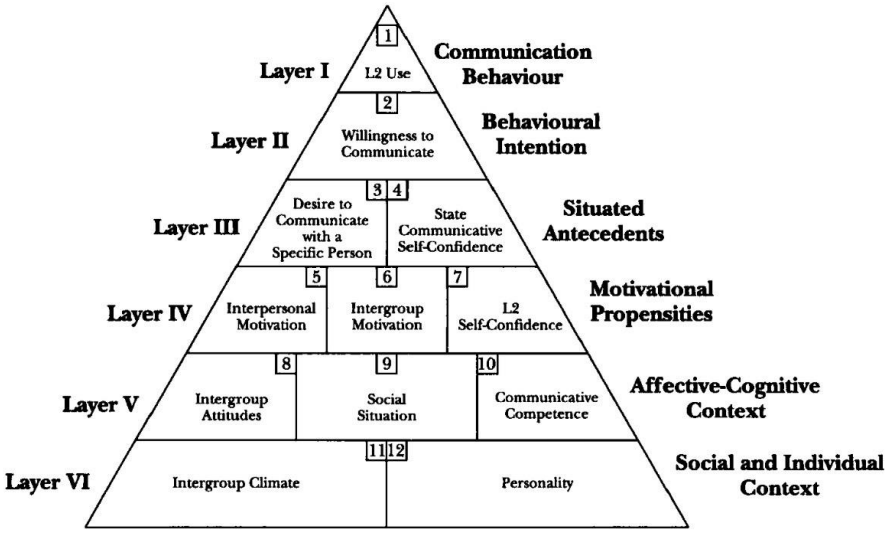

Figure 1. *Heuristic six-layer structure (Adapted from MacIntyre et al.,1998)*

Many studies have employed the scale by MacIntyre et al. (2001) to measure L2 students' WTC through self-reports in different contexts. For example, Öz (2014) explored the association between personality traits and L2 WTC. Data collected from 168 Turkish students of English showed that those students with a high degree in communication were extroverts, agreeable, and open to experience. Öz et al.'s (2015) study explored the relationship between WTC, communicative competence, and communication apprehension. Data collected from 134 Turkish EFL students showed that WTC could be directly impacted by the students' communication anxiety and capacity and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Although conducted in different contexts, these studies shared a finding that students' self-perceived level of WTC could directly predict L2 development.

Although the scale by MacIntyre et al. (2001) has been employed in recent studies, it is open to criticism. These critical comments concentrate on whether this scale is applicable in EFL contexts. For example, as noted by Ubaid et al. (2021) and Weaver (2005), the scale does not particularly describe an EFL classroom discourse, and some items are too specific.

Factors in L2 WTC

The current literature indicates factors that affect L2 students' WTC inside the classroom. These factors can be classified into two main categories: individual and situational (Cao, 2011; Öz, 2014). Individual factors refer to individual learner

differences that influence WTC, while situational factors are generally defined as external factors, such as interlocutors (teachers and peers), artifacts, and activities that impact WTC.

As WTC is affected by individual factors to a certain extent, self-determination theory (SDT) may explain one's desire to get involved in communication (Ryan & Deci, 2017). From the self-determination perspective, humans are proactive in deciding on their engagement in social activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Thus, extrinsic motivation is effective at school when they accept "the value and importance of a behavior and its integration into the self" (Joe et al., 2017), suggesting the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It implies that self-determined motivation may impact students' L2 WTC and achievement.

To investigate the effects of EFL learner differences on WTC, Öz et al. (2015) administered a 20-item questionnaire to Turkish EFL students. The questionnaire included seven main individual variables affecting WTC. Findings showed that perceived communication capacity and fear were closely related to WTC. However, motivation was not directly correlated with WTC. The reliability and validity of this study were open to question. For example, the motivation factor's internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was lower than .7. This finding was confirmed by the studies by Rihardini et al. (2021) and Zarrinabadi et al. (2023) about the influence of anxiety and teachers' motivation on WTC.

Concerning the situational factors in L2 WTC, several studies have deployed techniques to enhance WTC inside L2 classrooms. For example, Kang (2005) used classroom observations and interviews to find factors influencing L2 students' desire to start communication in class. Results showed that three main factors influenced students' willingness to communicate: tasks, group members' familiarity, and communication discourse. Students' willingness to initiate communication was not trait-like but dynamically situated. This finding aligned with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) research. The results have implications for L2 pedagogy. However, the study was case- and context-focused, with only four participants. The researcher called for more research on the effects of outside factors on in-class WTC.

Similarly, the study by Khatibi and Zakeri (2014) investigated external factors affecting WTC. These researchers administered a twenty-item questionnaire depicting the situations with potential effects on WTC inside the classroom, including communication contexts and interlocutor types. Data collected from twenty-five tertiary seniors indicated that the students preferred communicating in small to large groups and were significantly more willing to communicate with familiar people. Topics and the learning environment also impacted students' WTC greatly. The findings suggested that L2 teachers might need to consider group size, grouping strategies, assigned tasks, and learning environment to mediate students' in-class WTC. A limitation was that its sample size (25 students) was inadequate for this quantitative study.

Research on internal and external factors affecting students' WTC in L2 inside the classroom has provided implications for teaching and learning. Accordingly, teachers should consider individual learner variables (age, psycho-emotional and sociocultural background, and interests) to apply appropriate strategies to encourage their WTC. Characteristics of tasks and interlocutors, as situational factors, may also need to be considered as students may be more willing to communicate about the tasks they are interested in and with people they find friendly. Thus, the investigations reviewed above

suggest what teachers may do in the classroom to encourage students' WTC inside the classroom in L2 contexts.

Students' WTC inside the L2 classroom

Given that the teacher organizes classroom activities, students should be willing to engage in these activities to acquire the expected input. The past decades have experienced pedagogy reforms supporting communicative language teaching in different contexts (Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007). Students should be given communicative opportunities to develop their communicative competence in the classroom. Teaching vocabulary and grammar gives students the necessary linguistic knowledge to achieve communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Accordingly, the teacher may facilitate or mediate students' communication.

MacIntyre et al. (2001) argued for the teacher's role in promoting L2 students' WTC. Teachers' strategies can be effective when they align with students' needs and expected values (Guay, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Teachers may need to utilize student-friendly strategies that might develop students' needs to communicate in the target language. As such, teachers may need to consider situational and individual factors. As individual factors are psychological and affective in nature, it may be necessary for teachers to understand students to encourage their WTC successfully inside the classroom. This finding was confirmed by Hoang and Bui (2023).

Regarding the teacher's role in encouraging students' WTC, Yashima et al. (2016) tested the effects of strategies on students' initiation of communication inside the classroom. This experimental research lasted fifteen weeks, with a 90-minute session per week. The students were allowed to choose the topic in which they were interested. The findings showed that the number of students speaking times and length rose significantly as they could talk about the topics they were interested in. The results suggest that the classroom should be an environment where students can exchange their knowledge and experiences. Also, it may be essential for teachers to consider the topic's characteristics (e.g., interesting and familiar) to foster communication inside the classroom.

The experimental research by Liu et al. (2021) investigated if the learning environment impacts students' readiness to start communication and their attitudes toward the treatment. This study used a pretest-posttest between-group design. The intervention for the experimental group entailed game-based instruction, while the control group did not receive any intervention. The results revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test. The experimental group also communicated substantially more than the control group and indicated positive attitudes toward using games. The findings suggest that using games could facilitate WTC inside the classroom during group work. Therefore, teachers may create a student-friendly environment to enhance students' WTC.

Concerning what teachers should do in the classroom, the study by Ma et al. (2021) examined the pedagogical techniques used by L2 teachers in China. The researchers used purposeful snowball sampling to select four Chinese graduate students. The interviews and classroom observations showed that learner variables (e.g., education level and sociocultural background) and contextual factors (e.g., teachers, learning environment, and interlocutors) could directly impact L2 in-class WTC. These researchers argued that teachers should consider individual learner differences and situational factors to effectively enhance WTC in the classroom.

Given that students' confidence is a crucial factor in WTC, Chen et al. (2022)

study explored the teacher's roles in students' WTC in different contexts. Two groups of students (domestic and overseas) were recruited. They were asked to report the impacts of teachers and teaching on their confidence to start communication in and out of class. The results from the questionnaires and interviews showed that both groups had low levels of WTC. There was an insignificant difference in overseas students' levels of WTC inside and outside the classroom. However, the domestic students' level of WTC at school was significantly higher than their in-society WTC level. The findings suggest that teachers adapt to students regarding contextual factors.

Overall, most, if not all, of the previous studies suggested that teachers should consider individual learner variables (e.g., personality traits and social background) and situational factors (e.g., learning environment and interlocutors) to effectively enhance WTC inside the classroom. They provided meaningful recommendations for teachers' practices of WTC-promoting strategies inside the classroom.

Relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in L2 education

The term "*teacher belief*" is broadly defined as what teachers think (Basturkmen et al., 2004). Borg (2003, 2017) notes that teachers' beliefs or cognition is influenced by four main factors: pre-service education, in-service training, context, and practice. Teachers' beliefs are interrelated to their professional coursework and classroom practice (see Figure 2). In other words, their in-service training may influence teachers' beliefs and practices. Borg's model has recently motivated ongoing research on interactions between teachers' beliefs and practices concerning different areas in L2 education.

Interested in the complexity theory, which views the relationship between components to be complex and dynamic, Zheng (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the learner-centeredness reforms in China. Six EFL teachers were recruited to participate in interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews. Findings showed that teachers' belief systems, including core and peripheral beliefs, were complex. The teachers' core beliefs affected their practices more than the peripheral ones, resulting in alignments and misalignments between beliefs and practices. From a complexity perspective, Zheng argued that one's thoughts co-exist and should not be separated from the context.

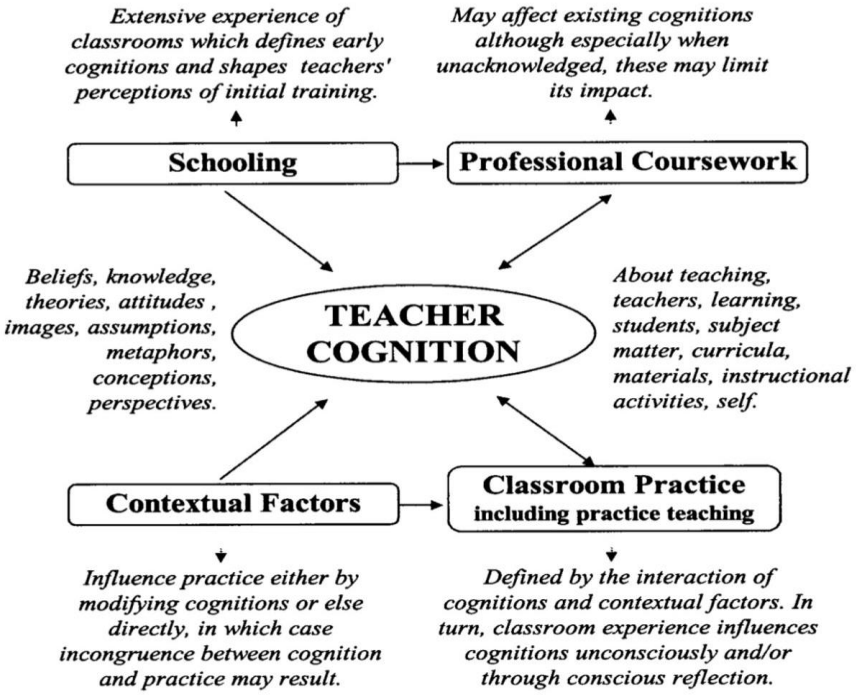

Figure 2. Teacher cognition model (Adapted from Borg, 2003)

Yüksel et al. (2021) studied the interactions between 20 Turkish university EFL teachers' beliefs and practices. Teachers' self-reports (to understand the teachers' beliefs) were administered before classroom observations (to examine teachers' practices). Results showed more congruences than incongruences between the teachers' beliefs and practices about most aspects of oral corrective feedback.

Regarding WTC in the synchronous online L2 context, several studies (Bui, 2024; Cheng et al., 2014) show some technology limitations regarding students' interaction. First, a lack of interactivity may obstruct or limit students' interaction (Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2016). Accordingly, unlike the traditional face-to-face classroom, the synchronous online classroom enables only one person to present, suggesting that the lack of interactivity may obstruct the development of students' WTC. Second, online students may have a sense that they go to the online class to receive the target input for self-study (Namaziandost et al., 2021; Susanti et al., 2023). In other words, they might prefer listening to the teacher to sharing their experiences. Finally, the technology limitation may hinder the teacher's role as a monitor of the learning process. For example, Moser et al. (2020) and Pu and Xu (2021) raised concerns about the education quality as students may attend online lectures.

Research methods

Research design

This qualitative study deployed semi-structured interviews and recordings of classroom procedures to collect data. First, teachers were invited to participate in online interviews to understand their beliefs about how to promote WTC inside the classroom. Second, recordings of classroom activities were examined to know how teachers promoted students' WTC. Data from these sources were finally compared to investigate (in)congruences between the teachers' beliefs and practices.

Participants

A sample of eight seventh-grade teachers from two secondary schools in Southern Vietnam were involved in this study. After asking for permission from the schools where the data were collected, an email invitation was sent to the teacher pools provided by the schools. Nine out of fifteen teachers responded and agreed to participate in the study. However, only eight teachers could participate. These teachers were informed of their rights as participants and the ethical considerations of this study. They consented after the researcher's explanation. They were anonymized and agreed to use pseudonyms as reported in the data report (see Table 1).

The secondary schools where the participants came from were situated in an underexplored rural area in Southwestern Vietnam. The schools had no foreign teachers representing middle-range public secondary schools in terms of settings. Their curriculum is uniform, using the national curriculum of Vietnam, in which English is required from 6th grade to 9th grade. These two schools are confidentially anonymized as A and B in this study.

Table 1.

Description of Participants

Name	Gender	Years of Experience	School
Lieu	female	7	A
Hoang	male	8	A
Hong	female	2	A
Quyen	female	4	A
Trung	male	7	B
Quynh	female	6	B
Hoa	female	3	B
Tai	male	6	B

Data collection

Data were collected when schools in Vietnam kept offering online courses in 2022. The researchers used an interview scheme and a classroom checklist. First, the researchers collected the recordings of classroom procedures available in the schools' archives. Two recordings (approximately 80 minutes each) of each teacher were examined to avoid the effects of the characteristics of the lesson on the teachers' performances (Kamiya, 2016). Subsequently, the semi-structured interviews, conducted in Vietnamese, were then administered within a week after the observations were accomplished. Each interview lasted 35-40 minutes and was audio-recorded for data analysis. The interviewer, the first author, used the interview scheme and such guiding questions as "Why do you think so?", "What do you think about…?", and "What if students…?" to collect in-depth data about teachers' beliefs. Their responses were regularly confirmed and clarified to assure research reliability and validity.

Data analysis

Collected data from the recordings and interviews were thematically analyzed. As these two sources had distinct characteristics, they were analyzed differently. Although we attempted to analyze the teachers' strategies to enhance WTC, some strategies may not have been identified.

The interview data analysis concentrated on what the teachers thought of their role in enhancing students' WTC and explained their motivational tools identified in the classroom recordings. The content-based analysis was a 5-step cyclical process: transcribing, reading, identifying, classifying emerging themes, and refining (Nunan &

Bailey, 2009). To assure reliability and validity, the researchers cross-checked the whole process; the other scrutinized the work completed by one researcher. The results from this data analysis were used to address RQ1.

Table 2.

Classifications of alignments and misalignments between beliefs and practices

	Description
Apparent match	The teacher's response apparently aligns with their practice.
Apparent mismatch	The teacher's response apparently differs from or does not reflect their practice.
Partial match	The teacher's response reflects more or less strongly in their practice.
Not applicable	The teacher does not mention or avoid talking about the issue.

The data from the recordings were initially examined by the researchers separately. Each researcher examined the data twice to avoid missing any necessary data. They focused on the teachers' artifacts and activities to encourage classroom communication events. Communication events were divided into two main types: teacher-student and student-student communication. The techniques used by the teachers were classified into four broad categories: interactional issues, self-determination, learning environment, and individual emotions. The results of this data analysis were used to address RQ2.

To answer RQ3, the researchers compared data from observations and interviews. The assessment of congruences and incongruences was mainly based on what the teachers did in the classroom, what they thought of promoting WTC, and how they explained their practices. The researchers used Ha and Murray's (2020) taxonomy to determine the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. They were coded as apparent matches, apparent mismatches, partial matches, and not applicable (see Table 2). As the teachers were asked about what they had done in the classroom, their explanations were used as interpretive and descriptive information accompanying the matches and mismatches between their beliefs and practices.

Results

Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs about WTC inside the online classroom

The teachers expressed varied beliefs about WTC. Hong, Quynh, and Quyen viewed WTC as a situated construct; therefore, the teacher should be an agent to encourage and prepare students to communicate. They strongly believed teachers should apply diverse pedagogical techniques to promote WTC in the classroom. In contrast, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai conceptualized WTC as an individual issue affected by individual factors, such as intrinsic motivation, prior experiences, and interests. Students, therefore, should be allowed to determine whether it is necessary to communicate, what and when they should speak, and whom they should communicate with. As such, they believed that pedagogical strategies to promote WTC do not always work.

Four main themes were identified from the teachers' beliefs about types of classroom interaction. First, all the teachers generally revealed that organizing interactive activities in synchronous online classrooms was hard. They attributed the lack of interactivity to class time limits, technological constraints, and students' attitudes, hindering the administration of interaction tasks in synchronous online classes. Second, Hong and Quynh showed a strong belief in teacher-student interaction. They believed that

students' language could be modified through interaction with more proficient speakers as higher-level speakers' language is more complex, influencing students' language development. Communicating with people at a comparable proficiency level could improve fluency, but the Vietnamese assessment policy emphasizes accuracy more than fluency. However, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai preferred to deploy student-student interaction tasks. They explained that peers would be more willing to share their opinions in group work as they could have similar interests and perspectives. Third, they mentioned a contextual factor in Vietnam: the class size is usually large, with about 40 students. As a result, it was hard for teachers to communicate with all individual students in the classroom. Quyen, on the contrary, disregarded the role of social interaction. She explained that social interaction only results in the development of speaking competence, which is not included in the national language tests. Finally, the heavy schedule made it hard for the teacher to set aside much time for classroom interaction. Students were required to learn lexical and syntactic and do many written exercises. Therefore, the teacher should spend much time giving instructions and assisting students in doing exercises that might reflect in tests, and the teacher could be blamed if students scored low on tests.

In general, the teachers considered students' emotions when encouraging their WTC. They referred to interaction characteristics in that interlocutors could be emotionally charged. Students should be allowed to choose the person they prefer working with. They believed that the rapport between class members could promote students' WTC. However, they thought that it was hard to establish rapport between the teacher and students and between students.

A considerable variation in the teachers' beliefs about how and when to use strategies was found. More experienced teachers believed that teachers should use WTC-promoting techniques flexibly, depending on the happenstances in the classroom and the teacher's awareness of the student's readiness to communicate. The teachers with an experience of 4 years or less revealed that they adhered very closely to their lesson plans. Lieu, Hoang, Quyen, Quynh, and Tai said from their experience that students' WTC might be affected by their emotions, resulting in varying WTC levels. The teacher, thus, should be flexible and sensitive in encouraging them to communicate. They could not organize activities like games to make students feel up to speak out in online classrooms. In particular, Hong, Trung, and Hoa reasoned that the limitations of the online platform (Zoom and Google Meet) did not enable them to administer all the activities they wanted.

Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' practices of promoting students' WTC inside the classroom

Data collected from the recordings show that all eight teachers deployed diverse artifacts and activities to enhance students' WTC. All six teachers used various techniques to encourage students' WTC inside the classroom. They used English to converse with their students.

Teachers' preferences for some motivational tools and the frequency of promoting WTC inside the classroom were identified. The teachers' most frequently used motivational strategy was group work, facilitated by Microsoft Team). However, it is important to note that the textbook suggested this activity. Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai set aside more time for group work (around 20 minutes per session) than the other teachers in each session. These teachers let the students discuss the assigned topics freely. They did not circulate the classroom to assist students or participate in each group's

discussion. However, Hong and Quynh spent more time encouraging teacher-student communication than peer interaction, probably because they employed Zoom and Google Meet. As for Quyen, the importance of social interaction in second language acquisition was not highly emphasized, with 8-10 minutes per session, compared to the other teachers' episodes.

The recordings indicated two main trends regarding when to promote communication in L2. Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Quyen, and Hoa only encouraged students to communicate after instruction. They deployed the PPP model, and no teacher-student interaction was detected from the classroom observations. However, Hong, Quynh, and Tai encouraged the students to communicate when delivering instruction. By asking questions in the whole class or personally, they encouraged students' curiosity about the topic, assessed students' understanding, and helped them recall their memory and associate their existing knowledge with the new input.

However, all teachers, except Quyen, generally respected the students' self-determination. They did not force them to do it when assigned a task or initiated a talk with the students. Although some students refused to communicate with the teacher and peers, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai let them decide to speak. These teachers possibly did not consider classroom communication a choice or that the students encountered linguistic difficulty participating in communication. Nonetheless, Quyen, Hong, and Quynh provided more support to encourage the students to speak. These three teachers repeated or simplified their questions when they asked a specific student a question and offered further linguistic support to enable the students to communicate in group work. Quyen especially came close to the student and repeated the questions many times as the student had to answer them questions.

A relationship was found between the teachers' gender and the use of techniques to promote WTC. The three males mainly focused on tasks. They asked questions relevant to the lessons, gave instructions and explanations, and assigned communicative tasks. However, the five female teachers created an informal, relaxing, and friendly learning environment. They always smiled, sometimes made irrelevant jokes, and asked if the students needed more assistance for successful group work. They acknowledged the potential hardships of synchronous online learning that could stress students; a friendly learning environment could enhance students' WTC.

The (in)congruences between teachers' beliefs and practices

The analysis of the two data sources shows some alignments and misalignments between the teachers' beliefs and practices about promoting students' WTC inside the online classroom. As mentioned in Section 3.4, the classification was labeled as apparent matches, apparent mismatches, and partial matches. However, no cases of "Not Applicable" were identified. As the teachers were asked to explain what they did in the observations, their responses were used as descriptive information, interpreting the matches and mismatches between their beliefs and practices.

The analyses of data collected from the interviews and recordings show four main aspects of WTC: interactional characteristics, self-determination, learning environment, and individual emotion (see Table 3). Table 3, which is necessarily briefly presented on a case-by-case basis, provides an overview of matches and mismatches of what each teacher did in the classroom and said in the interviews. Overall, the teachers' beliefs could be predicted by their practices.

The coding of matches and mismatches was quite complex. Interestingly, what

the teachers said about the types and characteristics of interaction generally was reflected in what they did in the classroom. For instance, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai held a strong position on peer interaction due to their shared interests and contextual factors reflected in their teaching. Unlike these teachers, Hong and Quynh favored teacher-student interaction as the teacher could use techniques to modify students' language. All these seven cases were labeled as matches. However, although Quyen did not support the interaction hypothesis in second language acquisition, she applied teacher-student interaction to a certain extent and explicitly stated the importance of interaction in learning to encourage group discussion. This case was marked as a mismatch. One divergence in the teachers' beliefs and practices was that technological constraints did not enable them to transfer their beliefs to practices.

Regarding self-determination, although Lieu and Hoa expressed that the teacher should let students determine if they wanted to talk, these two teachers did not let the students choose their group members. These two cases were labeled as partial matches. Surprisingly, Hoa, Hong, and Quyen stated in the interviews that the teacher should be sensitive about encouraging WTC as students could be emotionally charged in communication; however, these teachers repeated their questions to require their students to speak until their students responded. These three instances were labeled as mismatches.

Two emerging themes were detected from the data (see Table 3). First, the more experienced the teachers, the more apparent matches between their beliefs and practices were identified. For example, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Quynh, and Tai, each with six to eight years of experience, indicated their beliefs reflected in their practices. Second, novice teachers, with experience of two to four years, were less sensitive in interacting with their students in the classroom but were aware that students could be emotional.

Contextual factors were identified to influence the teachers' beliefs and practices. For instance, some teachers revealed that class size and heavy coursework were barriers to performing teacher-student interaction and switching activities to encourage WTC in the classroom. This was especially valid in online classrooms as it was hard to let many students speak simultaneously during class time. Also, the emphasis on accuracy in the assessment policy restricted their encouragement of communication at school.

Table 3.

Alignments and misalignments between teachers' beliefs and practices

	Apparent match	**Apparent mismatch**	**Partial match**
Lieu	Interactional characteristics, learning environment, individual emotion		Self-determination
Hoang	Interactional characteristics, self-determination,		Learning environment, individual emotion
Hong	Interactional characteristics, learning environment	Individual emotion	Situational
Quyen	Self-determination, learning environment	Interactional characteristics, individual emotion	
Trung	Interactional characteristics, self-determination, individual emotion		Learning environment
Quynh	Interactional characteristics, learning environment, individual emotion		Self-determination

Hoa	Interactional characteristics, learning environment	Individual emotion	Self-determination
Tai	Interactional characteristics, self-determination, individual emotion		Learning environment

Generally, the analysis shows more apparent alignments than apparent misalignment or partial alignment separately. Apparent mismatches occurred the least often. The teachers' practices were found to be influenced by their beliefs and considerations of contextual factors. Technological constraints were found to affect the teachers' practices significantly. As such, transferring their beliefs to practices sometimes had no chance, resulting in mismatches and partial matches between their beliefs and practices.

Discussion

This article reports a study on the (in)congruences between L2 teachers' beliefs and practices concerning promoting WTC inside the synchronous online classroom. Data were collected from recordings and interviews with eight Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers in an underexplored place in Vietnam. Comparisons of data collected from the two sources show some apparent matches, apparent mismatches, and partial matches between what the teachers did in the classroom and what they said in the interviews.

Results revealed that the eight teachers in the interviews were aware of the basic issues in enhancing students' WTC in the classroom. However, three of them did not consider individual factors. According to SDT, as individuals are conceptualized as proactive, teachers' motivation can be regarded as practical tools when their intervention is congruent with the students' "self" (Guay, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Initially, students perceive the teacher's intervention as aligned with their needs and the values they highly appreciate, which subsequently triggers the autonomous transfer and modification of their behaviors through the mechanism of identified regulation. Thus, students' emotions might be taken into account. As adolescents are especially emotionally charged in socialization (Theurel & Gentaz, 2018), the teacher might need to be sensitive in communicating with them and promoting their WTC.

Interestingly, the male and female teachers expressed their preferences for different techniques to establish teacher-student rapport and show their friendliness in communicating with students. It should be emphasized that the teacher's intervention should be identifiable so that students accept it and the transformation and internalization occur (Ellis, 2015; Guay, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Cornes et al. (2023) and Mulliner and Tucker (2015) raised awareness about the teacher's language use in student communication. Accordingly, the teacher's words should be constructive; otherwise, the teacher can hurt students' feelings. Overall, teachers' beliefs were complex and dynamic.

The findings also revealed a notable diversity in the teachers' practices. In this study, Lieu, Hoang, Trung, Hoa, and Tai deployed peer interaction only, while Hong, Quynh, and Quyen only conducted teacher-student interaction. It is worth highlighting that face-to-face interaction and communication play a crucial role in facilitating the process of language acquisition (Long, 1981) "by assisting L2 learners' production" (Ellis, 2015, p. 252). Accordingly, interaction does not cause but only conditions the acquisition and learning processes to arise. L2 learners may need to negotiate meaning and focus on form. The study by Lee et al. (2019) and Rasuki (2020) also emphasized that

internationally modified input enhances receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition more effectively than pre-modified input. According to Pennings and Hollenstein (2019) and Zeainstra et al. (2023), both types can engage students in learning. Sun et al. (2022) found that teacher-student interaction can mediate academic achievements through learning engagement and learning atmosphere. The recent modifications of the sociocultural theory have also indicated the power of peer interaction and small-group student talks can create opportunities for knowledge development (Li & Zhang, 2022). However, for the success of peer interaction, student capacity, gender, personality traits, and group structure should be considered (Tenenbaum et al., 2020). It might be necessary for the teachers to consider these variables when grouping students. As Ellis (2015), Lantolf and Thorne (2006), and Vygotsky (1978) noted, interaction provides opportunities for people to exchange knowledge and experiences, resulting in the internationalization of thought via the control over language use. To this end, we argue for combining teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom. In teacher-student communication, the teacher may diagnose students' problems, understand their capacities, and use scaffolding strategies to modify students' competencies. Also, as WTC is affected by individual and situational factors, the teacher might need to respect students' self-determination. It may be necessary that the teachers prepare students for communication and encourage their desire to initiate communication. In this study, Quyen, for example, only facilitated communication rather than WTC and required them to answer her questions. As a result, students are still passive in the communication process. Finally, the link between teacher gender and the use of motivational techniques is a novel finding in the current literature. The inherent characteristics of gender can explain it. Teachers of different genders can behave differently in the classroom (Hedlin, 2013). The study by Haase (2008) found that female teachers tend to care about the students more than male teachers do. The lack of interactivity of online platforms was identified as obstructing the teachers' implementation of some techniques to enhance L2 WTC in the online classroom.

This study confirms the teacher cognition model by Borg (2003). First, the findings match what the teacher thought and did (see Table 3), indicating possible impacts of these aspects. Second, according to the teachers' self-reports, contextual factors interfered with their beliefs and practices. For instance, the teachers mentioned that the class size and required schoolwork hindered their beliefs and practices. Interestingly, unlike previous research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, this study shows some findings about the effects of the teachers' experience on their beliefs, transferring to their practices. Accordingly, the more experienced the teachers were, the more alignments between their beliefs and practices were found. While some previous studies (e.g., Ha & Murray, 2020) indicated more mismatches than matches between teacher beliefs and practices, the current study shows more alignments than misalignments. The matches and mismatches between the teachers' beliefs and practices should not be considered personal shortcomings. It can reflect contextual factors and teachers' professional development, which can affect further teacher training (Kamiya, 2016). Another novel finding in this study is that more experienced teachers tended to show more congruences between their beliefs and practices than novice teachers (2-4 years of experience). According to Akiri et al. (2021) and Taylor (2020), experienced teachers usually form stronger beliefs and solid practice principles than novice teachers. Also, the teachers' core beliefs may affect their practices more than peripheral beliefs

(Phipps & Borg, 2009). Bai and Yuan (2018) noted that the incongruences between teachers' beliefs and practices can be explained by the teachers' preparation sufficiency and confidence level. In this study, experienced teachers could be viewed as better prepared as it was likely that they performed their lessons from their experience. Finally, unlike the physical face-to-face class, synchronous online learning suffered from technological constraints, hindering the transfer of teacher beliefs to practices.

Conclusion

This study shows some limitations. First, the restricted sample of this study does generalize the (mis)alignments between teachers' concepts and practices. As sociocultural factors can impact teachers' beliefs and practices, further studies can explore their relationship in other contexts to reach generalizability. As the scope of the study confined itself to the associations between teachers' beliefs and practices about promoting WTC inside the class, this study did not provide insights into other aspects of WTC. Future researchers might investigate different elements of WTC, such as the effects of strategies to promote WTC.

The current study gives three main implications for teaching and learning in Vietnam and similar contexts. First, regarding the context dynamics, contextual and technological constraints could interfere with the teachers' transfer of their beliefs into practice. It relies mainly on the facilities, teachers' qualities, and characteristics of learners (e.g., teachers' classroom management techniques and features of teacher-student communication). Professional training may be crucial in bridging the gap between the teachers' beliefs and practices. We argue for the administration's role in providing teacher training courses in online language pedagogy (Yüksel et al., 2020). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is a complex area. As Yüksel et al. (2020) put it, many possible factors may affect teachers' beliefs and practices. In this study, the online learning modality shows some characteristics that affect the teachers' practices and (mis)alignments of teacher beliefs and practices.

This study expands the literature on teachers' beliefs about promoting WTC inside the classroom. First, as little is known about the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding WTC, this study provides insights into the effects of contextual factors and teachers' professional knowledge on their practices and beliefs, partly resulting in matches and mismatches. Teacher training may concentrate on supporting teachers to investigate and reduce the difference between their beliefs and practices, developing the confidence and legitimacy of their claims. Second, conducted in an underexplored context in Vietnam, this study adds interesting results about Vietnamese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding WTC to the literature. In summary, the current study's findings have implications for EFL classroom practices in Vietnam and beyond the immediate contexts.

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Ethics and Consent

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Prince of Songkla University, Thailand, Ethics Project ID: 2022 PSU-2564-2565.

Research Origin

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Data Availability

Data are included in the text. As this qualitative study includes interviews conducted in Vietnamese, the interviewee's native language, transcripts will be provided on request.

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