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INVESTIGATING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' L2 WRITING WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN INDONESIA: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated pre-service English teachers' L2 Writing Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Indonesia using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. The study was designed to observe gender differences in WTC, explore the relationship between WTC and academic writing performance, identify factors promoting students' L2 Writing WTC, and explain how these factors contribute to the connection between WTC and writing performance. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire directed to 85 pre-service English teachers who had completed an academic writing course, while qualitative data were found through semi-structured interviews with six selected participants. Quantitative data were analyzed using Mann–Whitney U Test and Spearman's rho correlation, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed no significant difference in WTC scores between male and female students. A statistically significant but weak positive correlation was found between WTC and academic writing performance ($r_s = .272$, $p = .012$), suggesting that WTC alone accounts for only a small portion of the variation in writing performance and should then be interpreted with thoughtfulness. Three factors promoting L2 Writing WTC developed from the qualitative findings: linguistic barriers, psychological factors, and sociocultural factors, with psychological factors appearing as the most dominant influence. These findings suggest that English teacher education programs should give greater attention to nurturing pre-service teachers' psychological readiness to communicate, alongside continued linguistic support, in order to strengthen their engagement in academic writing.

Keywords: L2 Writing WTC, Pre-Service English Teachers, Willingness to Communicate

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is an important skill for students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program, especially for those training as pre-service teachers. This is because this skill is needed for completing university assignments, writing research articles, and engaging in professional academic communication (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). But, producing good writing in a second language is a complex task that reflects a student's general language skill (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). For this reason, many learners often encounter challenges and feel "stuck" when they are trying to put their ideas into written words.

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Beyond linguistic competence, successful writing performance depends deeply on psychological readiness, which determines whether a student is actually prepared to engage in the writing process. This willingness is basically taken by the construct of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547, as cited in Croucher et al., 2024) defined as a "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2. While WTC was originally developed to study speaking behavior, it has since grown and been extended to the domain of L2 writing (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024, 2026). In this context, WTC roles as the critical psychological bridge that turns a student's passive language knowledge into actual written performance (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). So, there is a clear behavioural difference among learners, high-WTC students have a tendency to be more active in sharing ideas, participate more frequently in classroom activities, and show higher levels of confidence (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). In contrast, low-WTC students are often prone to avoiding communication and remaining silent, even when their language skills are otherwise adequate (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). So, in the Indonesian context, where many pre-service English teachers struggle to use English effectively due to these personal barriers, understanding what drives or hinders willingness is vital for their professional growth (Ilyas, 2022).

Several complex factors shape a learner's L2 Writing WTC, which can generally be categorized into three primary areas: linguistic barriers, psychological factors, and sociocultural factors. The first factor involves linguistic barriers, where limited vocabulary and grammar directly block the effective expression of ideas. Specifically, the difficulty of constructing clear and logical connected sentences growths the cognitive effort required for tasks, often leaving learners feeling "stuck" (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). Also, a strong fear of making mistakes leads to continuous self-monitoring. So, many students choose to avoid participating in L2 writing activities overall to escape potential errors (Maruf et al., 2026). Psychological factors are similarly important, as high levels of writing anxiety and the fear of negative evaluation can block communication even when suitable linguistic knowledge is present (Q. Li et al., 2023; Maruf et al., 2026). This concern is particularly salient for pre-service teachers, as writing anxiety among this population has been linked to limited strategy awareness and fear of instructor evaluation (Rasool et al., 2023). In contrast, positive internal drivers such as self-confidence and the "ideal L2 self", a student's vision of future success, strongly motivate engagement (Ilyas, 2022). Research consistently demonstrates that a learner's self-perceived competence often plays a more key role in their willingness to write than their actual technical proficiency (Ilyas, 2022). Finally, sociocultural factors, including the classroom and social environment, significantly outline WTC. A supportive atmosphere characterized by strong peer support creates a "safe space," encouraging students to take linguistic risks (Ilyas, 2022). On the other hand, a judgmental classroom culture triggers fear of being judged, which drastically reduces a student's willingness to participate (Maruf et al., 2026).

Gender's role in shaping Willingness to Communicate (WTC) represents a significant area of analysis, yet empirical findings regarding this relationship remain notably inconsistent. For instance, some studies indicate that female learners experience higher

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levels of language anxiety, which subsequently leads to a lower WTC compared to their male learners (Q. Li et al., 2023; Yousef et al., 2013). Conversely, other investigations have reported that females can be the outperforming group, showing a significantly higher willingness to engage in communication (Alavinia & Alikhani, 2014). So far, a different body of research has found no statistically significant gender differences in communication purposes at all (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). In the Indonesian context specifically, studies on writing anxiety have similarly reported mixed findings regarding gender, with some studies finding females reporting higher anxiety (Hz, 2024) while others found no substantial gender gap (Fajaryani et al., 2024). Such differences suggest that the gender-WTC relationship is highly context-dependent, potentially shaped by specific educational environments and cultural norms. However, this relationship has rarely been tested among pre-service English teachers specifically, whose dual identity as language learners and future educators may shape their communication willingness differently than in general EFL student samples.

Previous research has also observed the link between Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and students' actual writing performance, and most studies agree there is a positive relationship between the two variables (Han et al., 2024; Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2026). Definitely, learners who display a greater willingness to communicate have a tendency to produce a higher total number of words and reveal stronger fluency and engagement in their written tasks (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2026). But, observed investigations have produced inconsistent results regarding the strength of this connection. For example, one study reports a strong relationship where WTC is a primary factor and a key predictor of successful communicative success (Han et al., 2024). In contrast, another study found only a weak correlation, noting that other variables such as objective language proficiency also significantly affect the final writing outcome (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2026). Because both these studies depend on quantitative survey data, neither could explain why the strength of this relationship varies across contexts. This needs qualitative insight into students' own experiences, which becomes especially relevant when testing this relationship in a new cultural and educational setting such as Indonesia (Ilyas, 2022).

Taken together, these identified gaps illustrate that while scholarship on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has grown, it remains heavily concentrated on oral behaviour and purely quantitative designs. So, there is still limited understanding of how L2 Writing WTC specifically operates among pre-service English teachers in Indonesia, who occupy a unique dual role as both language learners and future professional educators (Q. Li et al., 2023). Talking this gap, the present study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Latif & Wasim, 2024; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The logic of this design is that it first identifies quantitative patterns in WTC and its relationship with writing performance, subsequently using qualitative interviews to explain the specific psychological, linguistic, and sociocultural mechanisms behind them. Importantly, this comprehensive integration combining quantitative scope with qualitative depth in the specific context of Indonesian pre-service teachers that has not yet been undertaken by prior studies in this research area (Maruf et al., 2026).

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This study aims to investigate pre-service English teachers' L2 Writing Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Indonesia using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Latif & Wasim, 2024; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). To achieve this objective, the research addresses four central questions. First, it examines whether significant differences exist in WTC scores between male and female pre-service teachers. Second, it explores the correlation between students' WTC and their actual academic writing performance. Third, the study identifies the linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural factors that promote pre-service teachers' readiness to engage in writing tasks. Fourth, it investigates how these qualitative factors explain the underlying connection between WTC levels and writing performance outcomes. Finally, this design enables the study to move beyond identifying statistical patterns to explain the deeper reasons behind student behaviours, offering a comprehensive picture of what shapes future English teachers' willingness to communicate through writing.

METHODS

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, following the research recognized by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010). In this specific design, the quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted first to identify general forms among the participants. Then, the results from the first phase were used to guide the qualitative stage, which involved gathering more detailed individual information (Latif & Wasim, 2024). The overall research flow followed a structured path: Quantitative → Analysis → Results → Qualitative → Integration (Latif & Wasim, 2024). Qualitative findings help to explain and clarify the general leanings found during the early stage, and design was chosen because it allows for a deeper understanding of the quantitative results (Latif & Wasim, 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

A total of 104 students initially participated in the study by completing the survey. However, the final data only involved students who had successfully finished their academic writing course to confirm they had enough experience with the subject. So, 85 participants met these criteria and were included in the final analysis. This group consisted of 20 male and 65 female students. The remaining 19 participants were excluded because they had not yet completed the required academic writing course.

For the qualitative phase, six participants were selected from the 85 survey respondents using a purposive sampling strategy, specifically a maximum variation technique. This strategy was chosen to ensure that the qualitative findings took a wide range of perspectives across the field of L2 Writing WTC. Based on their total survey scores, participants were ranked and grouped into three levels: high, medium, and low WTC. Two participants were then randomly selected from each group, resulting in a final sample of six interviewees (two high-scoring, two medium-scoring, and two low-scoring). This sample size is consistent with common practice in explanatory sequential mixed-methods designs, where a small number of purposefully selected participants is considered enough to explain and elaborate on quantitative results, rather than to achieve statistical generalizability (Latif & Wasim, 2024; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

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The data were collected sequentially to maintain the requirements of the chosen research design. In the quantitative phase, a survey was used that had been adapted from Zhang and Zhang, (2024) and used a Likert scale. The survey contained a specific number of items that had already been validated in Zhang and Zhang (2024) studies. This questionnaire was spread to the participants through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp using Google Forms. After the quantitative stage was completed, the qualitative phase started with semi-structured interviews conducted with the six previously selected participants.. Each interview lasted between 5 and 6 minutes and was conducted online through WhatsApp voice calls. Interview sessions were recorded to confirm a true analysis of the responses.

The primary quantitative data was collected using the Second Language Writing Willingness to Communicate Scale (L2WWTCS) (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). This instrument was originally developed and validated by Zhang and Zhang (2024) to specifically measure willingness in the L2 writing context. To confirm an efficient data collection process, the questionnaire was spread through Google Forms. The instrument employed a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 7 (Very true of me) (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). The response options were clearly defined as: 1 = Not at all true of me, 2 = Mostly not true of me, 3 = Partly not true of me, 4 = Uncertain, 5 = Partly true of me, 6 = Mostly true of me, and 7 = Very true of me (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). So, higher scores on this scale directed a stronger willingness to communicate in L2 writing among the pre-service teachers.

To confirm the internal consistency of the adapted L2WWTCS within the present sample, a reliability analysis was shown on the responses of all 85 participants. The instrument demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .932 across the 17 items, well above the minimum acceptable threshold of .70 (Pallant, 2016). Also, item-total correlation analysis indicated that all items exhibited an acceptable to strong correlation with the total scale score (ranging from .526 to .775), confirming that no items needed to be removed from the analysis. This result supports the construct validity of the instrument in the present context, consistent with the psychometric properties reported in the original validation study by Y. Zhang & Zhang (2024).

The data analysis for this study was conducted in a structured manner to address each research question. To address RQ1, which observed the differences in WTC scores between male and female participants, a Mann–Whitney U Test was employed. This test is suitable for comparing differences between two independent groups when using ordinal data or scores (Pallant, 2016). Before analysis, the data were reviewed to confirm that all necessary statistical assumptions were fulfilled. For RQ2, a Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the connection between students' WTC scores and their actual academic writing performance, as this technique is appropriate for investigative the strength and direction of the relationship between two ordinal or non-normally distributed variables (Maruf et al., 2026; Pallant, 2016). Students' academic writing performance scores were gained from their final grades in the Academic Writing course, as assigned by the course instructor. It is important to note that this final grade represented a composite score, incorporating not only students' writing task performance but also other components such

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as assignments, class participation, and course engagement, rather than being derived solely from a single scored essay. Similar to the first test, statistical assumptions were reviewed before the analysis started to confirm the results were valid.

To address RQ3, thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to process the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews. This analysis followed six specific stages: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maruf et al., 2026). By using this systematic method, the researchers were able to identify patterns and organize the participants' experiences into three primary thematic categories: linguistic barriers, psychological factors, and sociocultural effects (Maruf et al., 2026).

Finally, to address RQ4, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative phases were combined during the final clarification stage, following the explanatory sequential mixed-method design proposed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010). In this research design, the qualitative findings were used definitely to explain and develop upon the initial quantitative results (Latif & Wasim, 2024). This combination is important because it allows the researcher to use the specific personal narratives from the interviews to clarify the general trends found in the statistical analysis, if a deeper understanding of the factors that promote or hinder students' willingness to communicate (Latif & Wasim, 2024).

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

A Mann–Whitney U Test was run to check differences in WTC scores between male and female participants. Descriptive statistics indicated that male participants (n = 20) had a median WTC score of 89.5 (IQR = 75.5–99.0), while female participants (n = 65) had a slightly higher median score of 94.0 (IQR = 83.0–101.0). The Mann-Whitney U Test showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups (U = 780.500, p = .176). The effect size was calculated as r = .147, indicating a small effect according to conventional benchmarks (Pallant, 2016) This suggests that even though female participants showed a marginally higher median WTC score, the practical magnitude of this difference between genders was small.

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Table 1. Mann–Whitney U test results for gender differences in WTC scores

	Value
Total N	85
Mann-Whitney U	780.500
Wilcoxon W	2925.500
Test Statistic	780.500
Standard Error	96.446
Standardized Test Statistic	1.353
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.176

The analysis showed no statistically significant difference between male and female participants (U = 780.500, p = .176). This finding shows that gender did not appear to create obvious differences in students' willingness to communicate in L2 writing in this study. Both male and female participants demonstrated relatively comparable levels of willingness to engage in writing activities. Essentially, the tendency to participate, express ideas, and communicate through writing appeared to be distributed similarly across both groups. This result advises that students from both genders shared similar responses about their willingness to communicate in English writing contexts.

This finding was observed among pre-service English teachers who had finished an academic writing course and were included in the final analysis. Since all participants came from a similar educational background and learning context, they may have skilled comparable academic expectations and writing experiences. Both groups were shown similar classroom activities and writing tasks during their study process. As a result, male and female students may have developed similar perceptions to writing in English. These similarities could explain why no substantial differences appeared in the WTC scores between the two groups.

The absence of a statistically significant difference also suggests that willingness to communicate in L2 writing may not be strongly related with gender characteristics within this specific situation. Instead, students' willingness may have been influenced by other factors that were not directly observed in this stage of analysis. While some individual differences may still exist, the complete scores exposed relatively similar patterns between male and female participants. So, the results indicate that both groups proved comparable levels of willingness to communicate through L2 writing activities.

Connection between WTC score and L2 writing performance was also observed using Spearman's rho analysis.

Table 2. Spearman correlation between WTC score and L2 writing performance

		L2 Writing Performance	WTC Score
L2 Writing Performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.272*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.012

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	N	85	85
WTC Score	Correlation Coefficient	.272*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	—
	N	85	85

*Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Spearman's rho analysis revealed a significant positive connection between WTC score and L2 writing performance (rs = .272, p = .012). This finding shows that students with higher willingness to communicate have a tendency to prove better academic writing performance. Essentially, when students showed greater willingness to express ideas and participate in communication through writing, their writing scores also tended to grow. The positive direction of the relationship suggests that both variables moved in the same pattern. As one variable improved, the other variable also tended to grow.

This connection was identified among pre-service English teachers who had completed an academic writing course and participated in the study. These students had previous experience with academic writing activities and were familiar with writing-related tasks in university backgrounds. The result suggests that willingness to communicate may play a role in students' engagement during writing activities. Students who were more willing to participate in communication through writing may have been more able to express ideas, organize information, and actively engage in writing tasks. Such participation may contribute to stronger performance in academic writing contexts.

While the relationship was statistically significant, the correlation strength was categorized as weak. In terms of practical significance, the coefficient of determination (r^2) indicates that WTC accounts for approximately 7.4% of the variance in students' academic writing performance. This suggests that while WTC is a statistically meaningful correlate of writing performance, the majority of variance in writing outcomes (over 90%) is likely explained by other factors not measured in this study, such as objective language proficiency, prior writing instruction, or motivation. This means that willingness to communicate was connected with writing performance, but the relationship was not particularly strong. Some students with high WTC scores may not always prove high writing performance, while others with moderate WTC levels may still achieve good results. This pattern suggests that additional factors may also contribute to students' academic writing outcomes. So, WTC appears to be related to writing performance, but it may not be the only factor associated with students' achievement in L2 writing.

Qualitative Findings

Interview data from six participants were investigated using thematic analysis. Three themes emerged from the analysis: linguistic barriers, psychological factors, and sociocultural factors.

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Table 3. Frequency of factors promoting L2 writing WTC

Factors	Frequency
Psychological	34
Sociocultural	22
Linguistic Barriers	4

Between the three factors, psychological factors looked most frequently with 34 incidences, followed by sociocultural factors with 22 incidences and linguistic barriers with four incidences.

About linguistic barriers, one participant stated: *"Honestly, in classroom or academic contexts that are more formal and logical, I find it hard to write well in English"* (Excerpt 1). This difficulty was echoed by another participant, who specifically pointed to uncertainty in vocabulary and grammar as a barrier: *"I often feel confused about choosing the right words, or unsure about my grammar because I feel my grammar ability is still lacking"* (Excerpt 2). Together, these excerpts show that linguistic competence influenced students' willingness to communicate in L2 writing, particularly in academic contexts requiring formal and logical language use. Such difficulties may reduce students' confidence when participating in writing activities and make them hesitate to communicate through written systems. So, linguistic barriers may act as a problem that limits students' willingness to participate in L2 writing tasks.

About psychological factors, one participant explained: *"There are still a lot of people who are better than me at using English, and I also often feel less confident"* (Excerpt 3). This sense of low self-confidence was echoed by another participant, who noted that her enthusiasm for writing depended heavily on her sense of competence: *"I have experienced a phase where I felt very enthusiastic about writing in English, especially when I felt confident in my writing ability"* (Excerpt 4). Beyond confidence, a third participant highlighted a lack of intrinsic motivation as a distinct psychological barrier: *"For me, writing is only an obligation in learning English, not something I actually enjoy..."* (Excerpt 5). Together, these excerpts suggest that psychological willingness to write is shaped not only by self-confidence, but also by learners' intrinsic interest in the writing process itself. Students who perceive themselves as less capable, or who lack genuine interest in writing, may become tentative to express ideas or actively avoid writing tasks altogether. As a result, psychological conditions, spanning confidence, motivation, and self-perception, may substantially reduce students' willingness to actively communicate through writing.

About sociocultural factors, one participant stated: *"I feel more comfortable when friends support each other instead of teasing each other if there are typos or grammar mistakes"* (Excerpt 6). Another participant similarly emphasized the motivating role of a supportive surrounding environment: *"The environment also has quite an influence, for example, if the people around me are supportive and often use English, I become more motivated"* (Excerpt 7). This was more reinforced by a third participant, who linked classroom climate directly to confidence: *"A supportive classroom and encouraging friends*

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also increased my confidence, having a positive environment is crucial" (Excerpt 8). Together, these excerpts indicate that both peer support and larger environmental exposure to English influenced students' willingness to communicate in writing activities. Positive peer interactions and a psychologically safe classroom climate may help reduce fear and increase students' comfort when expressing ideas through writing. So, sociocultural conditions may contribute to creating an environment that supports students' willingness to communicate in L2 writing.

Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Spearman's rho analysis exposed a significant positive connection between WTC score and L2 writing performance ($r_s = .272$, $p = .012$), even though the relationship strength was weak. This finding shows that students with higher willingness to communicate generally tended to reveal better academic writing performance. This implies that students who showed greater willingness to express ideas and participate through writing, also tended to achieve higher writing scores. The positive direction of the relationship suggests that both variables moved in a similar pattern. As students' WTC scores improved, their writing performance also exposed a tendency to growth. But, the weak strength of the correlation indicates that the relationship between these variables was not particularly strong.

The quantitative findings suggest that willingness to communicate may contribute to students' academic writing outcomes, but it may not be enough to explain writing performance completely. Some students with relatively high WTC scores may not necessarily achieve equally high writing scores. Also, some students with moderate levels of willingness may still perform well in academic writing tasks. This pattern shows that students' writing outcomes may be influenced by other conditions beyond willingness itself.

To further explain how the qualitative themes account for the quantitative patterns identified in this study, Table 4 presents a joint display integrating the statistical results with representative qualitative excerpts. This integration illustrates how psychological, sociocultural, and linguistic factors, as experienced by participants, help account for the strength, direction, and limitations of the quantitative relationships observed.

Table 4. Joint Display of quantitative and qualitative findings

Quantitative Result	Qualitative Theme (Frequency)	Illustrative Quote	Integrated Interpretation
Weak but significant positive correlation between WTC and writing performance ($r_s = .272$, $p = .012$, $r^2 = 7.4\%$)	Psychological factors (n = 34)	*"There are still a lot of people who are better than me at using English, and I also often feel less confident."* (Excerpt 3)	Low self-confidence and fear of negative evaluation may suppress WTC even among students with adequate writing ability, helping explain why the WTC–performance link is only weak: psychological readiness and actual skill

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			do not always move together.
No significant gender difference in WTC (U = 780.500, p = .176, r = .147)	Sociocultural factors (n = 22)	*"A supportive classroom and encouraging friends also increased my confidence, having a positive environment is crucial."* (Excerpt 8)	Because classroom climate and peer support were described similarly by both male and female participants, shared sociocultural conditions may explain why WTC did not differ meaningfully by gender, the environment, not gender, appears to be the more influential factor.
WTC accounts for only ~7.4% of variance in writing performance, leaving most variance unexplained	Linguistic barriers (n = 4)	*"I often feel confused about choosing the right words, or unsure about my grammar because I feel my grammar ability is still lacking."* (Excerpt 2)	The low frequency of linguistic-barrier codes (compared to psychological and sociocultural codes) suggests that objective language proficiency, a factor not captured by the WTC scale, may be a major contributor to the unexplained variance in writing performance.

The combined findings suggest that willingness to communicate in L2 writing may not be influenced only by linguistic competence. Instead, students' willingness appeared to be shaped by a combination of psychological, social, and language-related conditions. Psychological factors, which appeared more often, may explain why the quantitative relationship between WTC and writing performance remained weak. Students may reveal high willingness to communicate due to confidence, motivation, or comfort, while their actual writing performance may still be influenced by other conditions. So, the combination of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a wider understanding of factors related with students' willingness to communicate and their writing performance in L2 contexts.

As shown in Table 4, the qualitative themes do not merely repeat the quantitative findings but offer a deeper explanation for why WTC's relationship with writing performance was weak and why gender differences were absent, pointing to psychological readiness and shared classroom climate as more influential factors than gender or WTC scores alone.

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DISCUSSION

Difference in WTC Scores Between Male and Female Students

The findings of this study show that there is no significant difference between male and female students about their L2 writing willingness to communicate (WTC). This result shows that gender does not play a major role in defining how ready a pre-service teacher is to write in English in the Indonesian context. Both male and female participants in this research described similar levels of willingness to participate in writing tasks, suggesting that their motivation and preparation are shaped by factors other than their gender.

This finding is consistent with earlier research directed by Maruf et al. (2026), who also exposed that gender is not a strong predictor of willingness to communicate between higher education learners. Also, some studies in various educational settings have stated that male and female students often show no significant differences in their communication purposes when they share the same learning environment (Alrabai, 2022; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). These results propose that when students are located in the same academic program, such as a teacher training course, their professional goals might dominate any gender-related differences in communication behaviour.

In contrast, these results change from the study by Li et al. (2023), which found that female pre-service teachers often experience higher levels of anxiety, which could possibly lower their communication scores. The variation in these findings might be clarified by the specific appearances of pre-service teachers in Indonesia. Then all participants are being skilled to become qualified educators, they are exposed to the same instructional methods and classroom culture, which likely creates a combined level of confidence (Q. Li et al., 2023). So, the shared social and academic expectations in Indonesian teacher education programs may help connect the gap between male and female students' willingness to write.

Also, research in other Asian countries provides more evidence for these complex results regarding gender. For example, Fahim and Dhamotharan (2016) discovered that male trainee teachers in a Malaysian university were significantly more willing to communicate in English than female trainee teachers. This result differed with findings by Alavinia and Alikhani (2014), who reported that in a different context, female learners were actually the ones outperforming males in their willingness to participate. These different patterns across regions show that while gender is a common background variable used to understand communication purposes (T. Zhang, 2024), its impact is not universal. Instead, the variation across Malaysia, Iran, and Indonesia suggests that cultural expectations and the specific academic environment of each study control whether gender creates a real gap in a student's communication willingness.

Beyond these regional differences, the absence of a gender gap in this study might tell how WTC is used as both a characteristic and a state variable. According to Donovan and Macintyre (2004), many settings show no significant differences between male and female participants in their communication purposes, as individual motivation often dominates gendered personalities. This lack of difference is often linked to the shared educational experience, which is supported by Baker and Macintyre (2000), who noted that factors like

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the level of language immersion play a larger role in shaping WTC than gender itself. For pre-service teachers in Indonesia, their shared professional identity and the pedagogical training they receive likely provide a combined foundation for their communication behaviour. So, when future teachers are committed to the same professional goals, their personal willingness to write becomes more dependent on the classroom atmosphere and the specific requirements of the task rather than their gender. This is more supported by Estrada-Chichón et al. (2023) who similarly found among EFL student teachers that classroom-situated factors outweighed fixed demographic characteristics such as gender in determining willingness to communicate.

Relationship Between WTC and L2 Writing Performance

The quantitative analysis in this study exposed a significant positive connection between students' WTC and their L2 academic writing performance ($r_s = .272$, $p = .012$). This result means that as a student's willingness to communicate increases, their actual writing performance also tends to improve. While the connection is statistically significant, the strength of this connection is considered weak. This suggests that while being willing to communicate is helpful for academic success, it is not the only factor that determine students' final writing score.

This positive connection aligns with recent findings by (Zhang & Zhang, 2026), who similarly reported that L2 Writing WTC positively predicts writing fluency and output, including measures such as total word count. Particularly, their study also found that the explanatory power of WTC and its sub-components on writing performance remained small despite reaching statistical significance, a pattern that closely mirrors the present study's own weak correlation ($r^2 = 7.4\%$). This convergence across two independent samples suggests that the modest relationship between WTC and writing performance found here is not only a limitation of this study's design, but may instead reflect a genuine and replicable characteristic of how WTC relates to writing outcomes: it meaningfully shapes learners' engagement and productivity, without being a strong standalone predictor of overall writing quality.

But, the weak nature of this connection shows that writing performance is a complex method influenced by many other variables. Factors such as linguistic competence, vocabulary knowledge, and grammatical accuracy are also important for producing good academic text (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). This distinction between willingness and performance is more supported by Tsao (2021), who found that L2 writing self-efficacy, rather than general willingness, was the stronger predictor of how actively students engaged with corrective feedback on their writing, reinforcing the present study's argument that psychological willingness and technical writing improvement operate through partially separate mechanisms. Also, internal factors like motivation and writing anxiety can sometimes block a student from performing well, even if they have a general willingness to participate (Q. Li et al., 2023). So, being willing to write is a good starting point, but students still need strong technical skills and emotional support to achieve high scores in their academic writing courses.

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Also, the importance of this connection is highlighted by the view that WTC is the top objective of language learning. According to Macintyre and Vincze (2017), fostering this willingness is important because it stimulates genuine communicative behaviour and eventually enhances language skill. This is particularly relevant for L2 writing, as recent research by Gao et al. (2025) shows that learners' emotional intelligence profiles are associated with meaningfully different levels of willingness to communicate across multiple language domains, including writing. By prioritizing WTC as a central goal, educators can help students move beyond simple vocabulary acquisition toward more meaningful and active language use.

In addition, specific internal factors and learning strategies can further explain how a student's willingness translates into better writing results. For example, Dastgoshadeh and Javanmardi (2021) found that emotional intelligence acts as a significant interpreter of WTC, suggesting that students who can manage their feelings effectively are more likely to initiate communication. This internal willingness can be further supported by using self-regulation strategies, which T. Zhang (2024) argued can have a thoughtful impact on a student's communication skills and overall language progress. Also, in some classroom situations, activities such as extensive reading have been shown to build learners' confidence in processing ideas, making them more willing to share their thoughts through writing. Then, combining emotional support with effective learning strategies is needed to strengthen the connection between a student's willingness and their actual academic achievement.

Factors Promoting Students' L2 Writing WTC

Based on the qualitative coding, psychological factors were known as the most main effect on students' willingness to communicate, appearing 34 times in the data. Participants often mentioned that their confidence, self-perception, and anxiety directly affected their decision to start writing. This finding supports the Willingness to Communicate Model proposed by (MacIntyre et al., 1998), which claims that state self-confidence and a lack of anxiety are the most direct antecedents to L2 communication. Also, Zhang and Zhang (2024) explained that a student's interest in the English language and their awareness of their own skill are powerful internal drivers that promote active engagement. This finding is strongly corroborated by Arfiandhani & Takeuchi (2025), who found among Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers that self-efficacy and enjoyment, rather than grit alone, were the strongest predictors of learners' engagement, closely paralleling the centrality of confidence and self-perception identified as the dominant psychological factors in the present study. Beyond confidence and self-perception, related constructs such as grit and classroom enjoyment have also been shown to shape L2 WTC (Ebn-Abbasi & Nushi, 2022; G. Li, 2024), suggesting that psychological willingness to communicate may be further reinforced by learners' persistence and emotional engagement with the learning process.

Sociocultural factors were the second most common theme, with 22 incidences. Students stated that peer support and a positive classroom environment significantly boosted their courage to write. When the classroom feels safe and students do not fear being judged by others, their "emotional defences" drop, allowing them to take more linguistic

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risks (Maruf et al., 2026). This confirms that social interaction and a supportive teacher-student relationship are essential for creating an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas through writing (Alrabai, 2022; Maruf et al., 2026). This finding is consistent with Hu & Wang (2023), who found that EFL teachers' immediacy behaviors, the perceived warmth and approachability of a teacher, significantly predicted students' overall willingness to communicate and academic engagement, strengthening the centrality of supportive teacher-student relationships identified in the present study's sociocultural theme. Similarly, (Yang et al., 2024) found that teacher support fosters L2 willingness to communicate indirectly through increased foreign language enjoyment, suggesting that the emotional climate a teacher cultivates in the classroom may be as important as direct instructional support.

Lastly, while linguistic barriers such as limited vocabulary and grammar were mentioned less often (4 times), they still play a role in delaying WTC. Some students explained that they hesitate to write when they are scared of making technical mistakes or when they cannot find the right words to express their opinions (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024). While psychological and social factors are the main supporters of willingness, these language challenges continue a basic problem that students must be overwhelmed to feel fully ready to communicate in an academic background (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

It is important to recognize that a student's willingness to communicate is a dynamic quality that can change depending on the specific situation. According to (Croucher et al., 2024), WTC often acts more like a situational state rather than a permanent feature, and this framing helps explain a notable pattern in the present interview data: several participants described their willingness to write as changing with mood, topic interest, or immediate classroom atmosphere, rather than as a fixed personal characteristic. This situational view aligns with, and helps contextualize, (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021) finding that emotional intelligence, the capacity to manage one's own feelings in the moment, plays a key role in triggering communication. In the Indonesian teacher-education context specifically, (Lubis & Lubis, 2023) similarly found that classroom interactions worked as a safe, situational trigger for communication, which mirrors participants' own emphasis on classroom atmosphere in the present study's sociocultural theme. Overall, these situational and contextual accounts suggest that interferences to raise pre-service teachers' L2 Writing WTC may be more effective if they target frequent situational conditions, such as consistently low-pressure, low-judgment writing environments rather than treating WTC as a fixed trait to be developed once and assumed stable then.

Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Following the explanatory sequential mixed-method design proposed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), the findings from both phases were combined to offer a deeper understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase showed a significant but weak positive correlation between WTC and writing performance. The qualitative phase helped explain this result by revealing that psychological factors were the most frequently discussed strength determining students' willingness. At first glance, this dominance of

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psychological factors in the qualitative findings appears to sit uneasily with the weak quantitative correlation between WTC and writing performance. If psychological willingness is truly the primary driver of WTC, one might expect WTC to correlate more strongly with writing performance. However, this apparent inconsistency is, in fact, the dominant insight that the explanatory sequential design is able to reveal. The quantitative phase measured WTC as a single collective score correlated against a single writing outcome, which cannot distinguish why a student is or is not willing to write. The qualitative phase clarifies that psychological willingness like confidence, self-perception, and motivation, governs whether a student is willing to attempt writing at all, but does not by itself govern how well that student performs once they do. A highly confident student may write frequently and enthusiastically, yet still produce technically limited text if their grammar or vocabulary is weak, as reflected, although less frequently, in the linguistic barriers theme. In this sense, WTC and writing performance are best understood as related but distinct constructs: WTC governs engagement and willingness to attempt communication, while performance is additionally shaped by technical competence that operates largely independently of psychological willingness. This distinction, visible only through the qualitative data, explains why psychological factors can dominate learners lived experience of writing willingness while still yielding only a modest statistical relationship with their measured writing scores (Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

This combination shows that L2 Writing WTC is not just about a student's language skill, but rather a combination of psychological, social, and linguistic effects. This aligns with Xiao & Qiu (2022), who found that learners' WTC varies in response to broader contextual and attitudinal factors rather than remaining a stable individual trait, reinforcing the present study's conclusion that WTC is best understood as dynamically shaped by situational psychological and social conditions rather than fixed characteristics such as gender. The detailed narratives from the participants explained that even when students are ready to communicate, their actual performance depends on a complex balance of internal confidence and external support (Alrabai, 2022). By using the qualitative findings to develop upon the statistical results, this study provides a more complete picture of how to support pre-service English teachers in Indonesia as they develop their skilled communication skills (Latif & Wasim, 2024; Y. Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study explored pre-service English teachers' L2 Writing Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in Indonesia using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in WTC scores between male and female students, indicating that gender did not play a major role in shaping students' willingness to communicate in L2 writing. Also, a significant positive connection was found between WTC and academic writing performance, while the strength of the connection was weak. This shows that students with higher willingness to communicate tended to demonstrate better writing performance. But WTC alone was not enough to explain students' writing results.

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The qualitative findings further clarified the quantitative results by identifying three factors promoting students' L2 Writing WTC: linguistic barriers, psychological factors, and sociocultural factors. Between these factors, psychological factors developed as the most main effect, followed by sociocultural factors and linguistic barriers. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that students' willingness to communicate in writing is shaped not only by language-related skill but also by confidence, self-perception, and social support. These findings contribute to the understanding of L2 Writing WTC, mostly between Indonesian pre-service English teachers, by providing a more complete explanation through an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach.

Theoretically, these findings extend the L2 Writing WTC framework by empirically demonstrating that psychological willingness and actual writing performance, while related, function as partially independent constructs, willingness governs a learner's engagement with writing, while performance remains additionally dependent on technical linguistic competence. Pedagogically, these findings carry direct implications for English teacher education programs in Indonesia and similar EFL contexts. First, teacher education curricula should join structured opportunities for low-stakes, low-judgment writing practice, such as peer-reviewed journaling or collaborative drafting activities, to directly target the psychological barriers identified as the most dominant factor in this study. Second, given the prominent role of classroom climate in shaping WTC, writing instructors should be trained to actively cultivate supportive peer feedback norms. For example, by modeling constructive error correction rather than public criticism of mistakes. Third, because linguistic barriers, although less frequently reported, still constrained some participants' willingness to write, targeted micro-skill instruction in grammar and vocabulary should be maintained alongside psychological support, rather than treated as a separate or lower priority.

Outside confirming the general applicability of the L2 Writing WTC construct in a new cultural context, this study's central contribution lies in refining, rather than merely replicating, the existing WTC framework. Y. Zhang & Zhang (2024, 2026) have recognized that WTC correlates with writing performance, but have been unable to explain why this relationship is consistently modest in strength. By integrating qualitative interview data, this study offers an explanation: WTC and writing performance are best understood as related but distinct constructs, where WTC governs a learner's willingness to engage with writing tasks, while performance additionally depends on technical competence that operates largely independently of psychological willingness. This modification suggests that future WTC models may benefit from explicitly distinguishing between willingness-as-engagement and performance-as-outcome, rather than treating a strong positive correlation between the two as a necessary marker of construct validity. In this sense, the contribution of this study is not just contextual, situating WTC research within an underexplored Indonesian pre-service teacher population, but also conceptual, offering a mechanism-level explanation that helps settle why psychological willingness can dominate learners' lived experience of writing willingness without translating into a strong statistical predictor of writing performance.

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This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn from a single institutional context with a relatively modest size (N = 85 for the quantitative phase; six participants for the qualitative phase), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to pre-service English teachers in other regions or institutional settings across Indonesia. Second, the correlation between WTC and writing performance, while statistically significant, was weak in strength (rs = .272, r^2 = 7.4%), indicating that the majority of variance in writing performance remains unexplained by WTC alone, this finding should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive evidence of a strong relationship. Third, this study is limited by its measure of academic writing performance, which was based on students' composite final course grades rather than an isolated, standardized writing assessment. As these grades may also reflect factors such as attendance and class participation, the reported correlation between WTC and writing performance should be interpreted with some caution. Future research would benefit from replicating this study across multiple institutions and regions in Indonesia to test the generalizability of these findings, employing a larger and more diverse sample, and using a dedicated, independently scored writing assessment rather than composite course grades to more precisely isolate the relationship between WTC and writing performance.

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