

Exploring Relationship Between Willingness to Communicate and Communication Apprehension in English Among Malaysian Employees: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

Proficiency in English has become increasingly critical within the Malaysian workforce, particularly in administrative and professional sectors where communication effectiveness directly impacts organizational performance. Despite widespread recognition of English as a second language in Malaysia, employees often face challenges in using it confidently in workplace settings. Two interrelated psychological constructs communication apprehension (CA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) play a pivotal role in shaping employees' communicative behavior in English. While previous research has examined these constructs in isolation, limited empirical attention has been paid to their interrelationship within the Malaysian workplace context. This preliminary study aims to investigate the relationship between CA and WTC among Malaysian employees. Employing a quantitative research design, a total of 64 participants from various government agencies responded to a structured online survey comprising the PRCA-24 and WTC scale. Both instruments demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$). The results indicate that respondents exhibit moderate levels of CA ($M = 80.31$, $SD = 22.57$) and WTC ($M = 67.32$, $SD = 18.94$) when using English in professional settings. Inferential analyses reveal no significant differences across demographic variables such as gender, age, years of service, or educational background. Importantly, a moderate positive correlation was found between CA and WTC ($r = .504$, $p < .01$), suggesting a complex interplay where higher anxiety does not necessarily inhibit communication intent. These findings highlight the urgent need for workplace language programs that integrate both linguistic training and psychological support, enabling employees to develop both competence and confidence in English-mediated communication.

Keywords: communication apprehension, English for occupational purposes, language competence, willingness to communicate, workplace English communication

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Meneroka Hubungan antara Kesiediaan untuk Berkomunikasi dan Kebimbangan Berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris dalam Kalangan Pekerja di Malaysia: Satu Kajian Awal

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Abstrak

Keperluan penguasaan bahasa Inggeris menjadi keperluan yang penting dalam kalangan tenaga kerja di Malaysia, khususnya dalam sektor pentadbiran dan profesional yang memerlukan keberkesanan komunikasi demi memastikan keberhasilan organisasi. Walaupun bahasa Inggeris telah diiktiraf secara meluas sebagai bahasa kedua di Malaysia, ramai pekerja masih menghadapi kesukaran untuk menggunakan bahasa ini dengan yakin di tempat kerja. Dua konstruk psikologi yang saling berkait iaitu kebimbangan komunikasi (*communication apprehension, CA*) dan kesiediaan untuk berkomunikasi (*willingness to communicate, WTC*) mempengaruhi tingkah laku komunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris. Walaupun kedua-dua konstruk ini telah dikaji secara berasingan dalam kajian terdahulu, hubungan antara keduanya dalam konteks pekerjaan di Malaysia masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk meneroka hubungan antara CA dan WTC di kalangan pekerja Malaysia. Menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kuantitatif, seramai 64 orang responden daripada pelbagai agensi kerajaan telah menjawab soal selidik yang mengandungi instrumen PRCA-24 dan skala WTC. Kedua-dua instrumen menunjukkan kebolehpercayaan yang tinggi (α Cronbach = 0.85). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa responden berada pada tahap sederhana bagi kedua-dua CA ($M = 80.31$, $SP = 22.57$) dan WTC ($M = 67.32$, $SP = 18.94$) ketika menggunakan bahasa Inggeris dalam konteks profesional. Tiada perbezaan signifikan ditemui merentasi pemboleh ubah demografi seperti jantina, umur, tempoh perkhidmatan dan tahap pendidikan. Hubungan korelasi positif sederhana turut ditemui antara CA dan WTC ($r = .504$, $p < .01$), yang mencerminkan interaksi yang kompleks yang mana kebimbangan tidak semestinya menghalang hasrat untuk berkomunikasi. Dapatan ini menekankan keperluan untuk merangka program latihan bahasa di tempat kerja yang bukan sahaja memfokuskan kepada aspek linguistik, tetapi juga menyokong pembangunan psikologi pekerja untuk meningkatkan keyakinan dan kecekapan komunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris.

Kata kunci: Kebimbangan komunikasi; Bahasa Inggeris untuk tujuan pekerjaan; Kecekapan bahasa; Kesiediaan untuk berkomunikasi; Komunikasi Bahasa Inggeris di tempat kerja

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1. Introduction

Communication apprehension (CA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) are related yet conceptually distinct constructs. CA refers to the fear or anxiety associated with actual or anticipated communication with others (McCroskey & Beatty, 1986). In contrast, WTC reflects an individual's interest or motivation to initiate communication (Bukhari et al., 2015; Carmack & DeGroot, 2018). Importantly, the relationship between CA and WTC is not always linear or predictable. Although CA is typically regarded as a negative factor due to its link with communication anxiety, several studies suggest that in certain contexts—such as when the topic holds personal significance or when motivation to communicate is high—individuals with elevated CA may paradoxically demonstrate greater willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004; Jones-Carmack, 2022).

Traditionally viewed as inversely related, recent research indicates that CA and WTC, while distinct, may coexist and interact in shaping communicative behaviour (Carmack & DeGroot, 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2003). For instance, individuals with high CA may still exhibit increased WTC when confronted with situations that are personally meaningful or emotionally salient.

Studies have shown that CA affects not only individuals' WTC but also their performance, participation, and engagement, particularly in educational and workplace settings (Gardner et al., 2005; Payne & Almansour, 2014). Furthermore, CA has been linked to reduced academic achievement, limited community involvement, weaker language proficiency, and challenges in interpersonal communication (Islam & Azeema, 2017). Understanding the interplay between CA and WTC is therefore crucial for educators, trainers, and researchers in developing strategies that mitigate communication anxiety and enhance positive communicative behaviour.

Given the significance of English in the Malaysian context, examining CA and WTC becomes particularly important. English is widely recognised as a key competency for employability, workplace communication, and professional advancement. Numerous studies (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Mat Husin & Radzuan, 2021; Sharija Shahrudin et al., 2015; Zainuddin et al., 2019) highlight stakeholders' views on the importance of English for job readiness and meeting industry expectations. Ting et al. (2017) further emphasise the varied levels of English proficiency among Malaysians, noting its role as a second language in daily communication. Additionally, researchers have underscored English as a crucial medium for workplace interactions within Malaysian organisations (Abdullah, 2014; Mat Husin & Khamis, 2022; Saleh & Murtaza, 2018). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that English holds a central and indispensable role in the Malaysian workplace, reinforcing its importance for professional success across sectors.

1.1 Problem Statement

Although a number of studies have examined communication apprehension (CA) within Malaysian workplace contexts (Abdullah, 2014; Jusoh et al., 2018; Mat Husin & Khamis, 2022; Mohd Diah et al., 2023), empirical research on willingness to communicate (WTC) from an administrative or organizational perspective remains limited. Existing WTC studies in Malaysia have predominantly focused on educational settings, particularly among undergraduate students (Kho-Yar et al., 2018; Muthu et al., 2021; Pragash et al., 2020) and English language teachers (Fahim & Dhamotharan, 2016; Yousef et al., 2013). This imbalance in research emphasis reveals a clear gap in the literature



regarding the manifestation of WTC among employees in professional workplace environments, where English is frequently used as a medium of formal and informal communication.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to explore the relationship between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate in the use of English among Malaysian employees. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the level of communication apprehension and willingness to communicate in English within this population, as well as to examine the extent to which these constructs are associated with selected demographic variables, namely gender, age, years of service, and educational background. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of communicative behaviour in Malaysian workplace settings and provides empirical insights that may inform organizational communication practices and language-related interventions.

1.2 Significance of study

In workplace settings, understanding employees' levels of communication anxiety and their willingness to use English as a medium of communication is essential. Employers and managers should be able to gauge the degree of apprehension employees experience when using English, as well as their readiness to communicate in the language when performing tasks, collaborating, or participating in team-based activities. When employees lack confidence in communicating in English, they may require additional support through targeted training programmes designed to enhance their self-efficacy, reduce communication apprehension, and strengthen their overall communicative competence. Such initiatives are crucial for fostering a more confident and effective workforce, particularly in environments where English serves as a key professional communication tool.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Communication Apprehension

CA was highlighted by James C. McCroskey (1984) as 'an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication'. This fear can be regarded as a universal psychological experience shared by all humans (Lucas, 2012). Furthermore, CA was associated with 'ideas of distress, fear, and anxiety, or negative reactions toward interacting with others' (Byron, 2005). CA is a natural phenomenon in which an individual feels uncomfortable when attempting to communicate or interact with others. Even though it is a natural occurrence, CA can be developed as individuals grow and over time, a person's fear or anxiety in communicating in their first or second language develops (Pitt et al., 2000). That fear or anxiety is associated with a poor communication experience in a specific situation or with a specific person (Ekalestari et al., 2023; Mittinty et al., 2018; Scovel, 1978). Eventually, an anxious person will avoid communicating much of the time to distance himself or herself from the fear or anxiety in communication.

There are four types of CA according to the sources which are 'Trait-like, Context-Based, Audience-Based and Situational' (McCroskey & Beatty, 1986). Trait-like CA is associated with the individual personality and its variables hardly change (Rasakumaran & Indra Devi, 2017). An individuals' personality seldom changes dramatically in a period if that particular individual did not undergo any special treatment or training thus their CA level will not decrease. Studies that used different measurement tools aiming to examine the level of anxiety based on traits like CA had produced similar findings without any treatment given (McCroskey, 1997).



2.2 Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to the probability that an individual will initiate communication when given the opportunity (McCroskey, 1992). In second language contexts, WTC is influenced by several psychological and contextual factors, including communication anxiety, perceived competence, and situational context (MacIntyre et al., 1999). Previous research in language learning environments has demonstrated that learners with higher perceived competence and lower communication anxiety tend to exhibit greater willingness to communicate (Liu & Zhu, 2021; Song et al., 2022). Additionally, the concept of WTC has been associated with attitudes such as openness to experience and communicative competence, forming part of a broader disposition toward engagement in communication (Sakamoto & Roger, 2022).

WTC represents the link between an individual's communication competence and their intention to communicate. Some individuals enjoy speaking in discussions, while others prefer to remain silent unless required to speak. Psychological, linguistic, and contextual variables collectively influence the relationship between communication competence and actual communicative behaviour (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995). Although WTC is often considered a relatively stable personality-based trait, it may also vary depending on situational factors. Therefore, individuals may demonstrate different levels of willingness to communicate across different communication contexts (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995).

In workplace settings, WTC becomes particularly important as communication directly affects task coordination, collaboration, and professional performance. Studies in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) highlight that employees' willingness to use English in professional contexts is shaped not only by linguistic competence but also by confidence, organisational culture, and communication expectations within the workplace (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Saleh & Murtaza, 2018).

2.3 Relationship between CA and WTC

The relationship between CA and WTC has been extensively studied and it had been reported that there is a significant negative correlation between CA and WTC. The importance of assessing these CA and WTC relationships is very crucial toward understanding how apprehension limits a person's attitudes and perceptions in communication (Hackman et al., 1995). Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) claimed CA was negatively related to WTC in intercultural communication contexts. This finding was supported by the study conducted by Pragash et al. (2020), who provided empirical evidence that CA indeed hinders individuals' willingness to engage in intercultural communication. Pragash et al. (2020) suggested that CA negatively affects WTC study which focused on CA and intercultural WTC among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities.

Additionally, the study by Macintyre et al. (1999) highlighted that after communication begins, variables such as apprehension and perceived competence exert a greater influence on communicative behavior. This claim suggested that addressing CA is crucial for promoting effective communication and enhancing individuals' willingness to engage in various communication contexts, including face-to-face and computer-mediated interactions (MacIntyre et al., 1999). Another finding that claimed the negative relationship between CA and WTC was from a study by Jin & Martin (2012). They found out that CA was negatively related to WTC in both face-to-face and computer-mediated communication contexts. Additionally, higher levels of CA have been linked to lower levels of willingness to engage in intercultural communication (Logan et al., 2014). A study in Indonesia contexts suggested that individuals with higher levels of CA tend to reveal lower levels of WTC



(Fitriana & Syahri, 2021). While there may not be a direct correlation between CA, WTC and speaking ability, the significant relationship between CA and WTC persists (Fitriana & Syahri, 2021)

Overall, the findings from these studies collectively highlight the negative relationship between CA and WTC, underlining the importance of assessing both CA and WTC levels to ease effective communication in various settings.

3 Methodology

The goal of this paper is to investigate the relationship between CA and WTC among Malaysian employees. The research design employed in this paper involved a quantitative design using survey questionnaires. The present study was conducted in several government agencies and statutory bodies including state governments with the aim of investigating WTC and CA in using English language among Malaysian employees.

Convenience sampling was chosen due to its practicality and feasibility given the large population of Malaysian employees (Creswell, 2014). This sampling approach was appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study and the practical constraints associated with accessing employees from multiple government agencies. Although the population of Malaysian government employees is large, access to participants was limited due to organisational approval procedures and voluntary participation requirements. Therefore, a total of 64 respondents voluntarily participated in this study. As this study was designed as a preliminary investigation, the sample size was considered adequate for exploratory statistical analysis. The questionnaire was administered using Google Forms and distributed via email to the respondents.

Survey questionnaire involving three sections consisting of 48 items was developed. Section 1 has four items on demographic information of the respondents. Section 2 has 24 items which were adopted from PRCA-24 by (McCroskey et al., 1985). PRCA-24 had been considered to be very effective in terms of its reliability and validity (Radzuan & Kaur, 2010). The scale was used to find out the respondents' feeling for communication within four different contexts which were Group Discussion, Conversation, Meeting and Public Speaking. The scoring norms for PRCA were as follow;

Table 1: Scoring Norms for PRCA

Categories	Level		
	Low	Moderate	High
Group Discussion	1 - 11	12 - 19	20 - 30
Meetings	1 - 13	14 - 19	20 - 30
Conversation	1 - 11	12 - 17	18 - 30
Public Speaking	1 - 14	15 - 23	24 - 30
Total CA scores	1 - 50	51 - 80	81 - 120

Section 3 has 20 items on WTC constructs. Items in this section were adopted from the WTC scale in McCroskey's study in 1992 and these items used a probability- estimate scale. The participants



indicated the percentage of times they would choose to communicate in each type of situation, from 0 (never) to 100 (always). The norms for WTC scores were as follow;

Table 2: Scoring Norms for WTC

Categories	Level		
	Low	Moderate	High
Group Discussion	0 - 56	57 - 88	89 – 100
Meetings	0 - 38	39 - 79	80 – 100
Conversation	0 - 63	64 - 93	94 – 100
Public Speaking	0 - 32	33 - 77	78 – 100
Stranger	0 - 17	18 - 62	63 – 100
Acquaintance	0 - 56	57 - 91	92 – 100
Friend	0 - 70	71 - 98	99 – 100
Total WTC Scores	0 - 51	52 - 81	82 - 100

The quantitative data collected from the survey were recorded and analyzed using IBM SPSS 26.0 Statistics Data Editor software. All 48 items in the survey achieved 0.85 in terms of Cronbach's Alpha value, indicating a high level of internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2003). The normal distribution of the data in this study was measured using the statistical method of Skewness and Kurtosis (Aminu et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). From the table below, both the Skewness and Kurtosis value for the items total Overall CA score and Total WTC score gathered in this study were in acceptable range of <3 and <10 (Aminu et al., 2014) which can indicate that the data was normal.

Table 3: Value of Skewness and Kurtosis

Items	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Overall CA Score	64	.222	.299	-.883	.590
Total WTC Score	64	-.630	.299	.354	.590

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics were used by presenting the means and standard deviations to explore the level of CA and WTC of respondents. Moreover, in comparing the variables identified in this study, inferential statistics using t-test and ANOVA were used. To find out the relationship between CA and WTC, Pearson correlation test was conducted.

Table 4 showed the respondents' profile. Majority of the respondents are Female (68.8 percent) whilst only 31.3 percent are Male respondents. In terms of age, 53.1 percent respondents were in the age



group of 30 to 39 years old, followed by 32.8 percent of them aged between 21 to 29 years old, 8 respondents aged between 40 to 49 years old and only 1 respondent in the age of 50 years and above. Almost half of the respondents (40.6 percent) had 0 to 5 years of service, 28.1 percent had 6 to 10 years of service, and 26.6 percent of them had 11 to 15 years of service whilst only 3 respondents had 16 years of service and above. More than half of respondents (60.9 percent) hold bachelor's degree whilst 32.8 percent of respondents hold a Master Degree and only 4 of the respondents have PhD degree.

Table 4: Respondent's profile

No	Profiles	Categories	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	20	31.3
		Female	44	68.8
2	Age (years)	21 to 29	21	32.8
		30 to 39	34	53.1
		40 to 49	8	12.5
		50 and above	1	1.6
3	Years of Service (years)	0 to 5	26	40.6
		6 to 10	18	28.1
		11 to 15	17	26.6
		16 and above	3	4.7
4	Highest Education Background	Bachelor Degree	39	60.9
		Master Degree	21	32.8
		PhD	4	6.3

4 Findings

4.1 Overall CA and WTC scores

Table 5: Respondents' CA scores

CA Categories	M	SD
Group Discussion	20.36	5.58
Meeting	20.34	6.23
Conversation	20.41	5.97
Public Speaking	19.23	5.82
Overall CA	80.31	22.57

Table 5 showed respondents CA scores according to the four contexts (i.e. Conversation, Group Discussion, Meeting and Public Speaking). The data suggest that respondents experienced a moderate level of CA (n = 64) experienced a highly moderate level of CA with mean score of 80.31 (SD = 22.57). Within the four contexts, respondents experienced high level of CA in three (3) contexts with only Public Speaking recorded moderate level of CA score. Conversation recorded the highest CA score (M = 20.41) followed by Group Discussion (M = 20.36), Meeting (M = 20.34) and the lowest was recorded during Public Speaking (M = 19.23).



Table 6: Respondents' WTC score

WTC Categories	M	SD
Context		
Group Discussion	72.71	21.37
Meeting	64.90	20.82
Conversation	67.60	22.41
Public Speaking	67.60	18.36
Receiver		
Stranger	65.16	18.73
Acquaintance	67.50	20.41
Friend	69.30	21.76
Overall WTC	67.32	18.94

The respondents perceived willingness to initiate communication using English language was presented in Table 6. Respondents showed a moderate level of WTC using English language with the mean score of 67.32. This score indicated that respondents were somewhat willing to communicate using English language within 4 contexts and towards 3 receivers (i.e. strangers, acquaintance and friends). Dissecting each category within WTC categories, under the four contexts, respondents showed moderate level of WTC in Group discussion (M = 72.71) followed by conversation (M = 67.60), Public Speaking (M=67.60) and the lowest level of WTC in Meeting (M = 64.90). On the other hand, in term of receiver context, respondents recorded moderate level of WTC toward stranger (M = 65.16) and Acquaintance (M = 67.50) but scored higher level of WTC toward F.

4.2 Gender

Table 7: WTC and CA score based on gender

Categories	Respondents' Gender	N	M	SD
WTC Scores	Male	20	63.91	21.33
	Female	44	68.86	17.80
CA Score	Male	20	86.10	19.94
	Female	44	77.68	23.40

Table 8: t-test results for WTC and CA score based on gender

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
WTC Scores	1.28	.262	-.97	62	.337
			-.91	31.54	.373
CA Score	.75	.389	1.39	62	.168
			1.48	42.83	.146



Based on the data in Table 7, Female respondents showed higher score in WTC with Mean score of 68.86 compared to Male respondents (Mean score = 63.91). For CA score, Male employees were more apprehensive (Mean score = 86.10) compared to Female (Mean score = 77.68). An independent- samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in WTC and CA scores between males and females. Results as shown in Table 8, revealed that there is no significant difference in WTC scores between male and female, $t(62) = -.97, p = .337$. Similarly, there is no significant difference in CA scores between male and female, $t(62) = 1.39, p = .168$.

4.3 Age

Table 9: WTC and CA score based on Age

Categories	Age Groups	N	M	SD
CA Scores	21 until 29	21	79.38	24.23
	30 until 39	34	78.62	21.98
	40 until 49	8	92.63	19.31
	50 and above	1	59.00	
	Total	64	80.31	22.57
WTC Scores	21 until 29	21	64.21	21.97
	30 until 39	34	67.65	18.94
	40 until 49	8	73.96	8.86
	50 and above	1	68.33	
	Total	64	67.32	18.94

Table 10: ANOVA results for WTC and CA score based on Age

Categories		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CA Scores	Between Groups	1782.89	3	594.30	1.177	.326
	Within Groups	30296.86	60	504.95		
WTC Scores	Between Groups	560.79	3	186.93	.509	.678
	Within Groups	22042.63	60	367.38		

Results (Table 9) showed the WTC and CA scores based on age group. Comparing the CA mean score of the age group, respondents in the age of 40 until 49 showed the highest CA score ($M=92.63, SD = 19.31$) whilst those in the age of 50 and above scored the lowest CA score ($M=59$). For WTC scores, respondents in the age of 40 until 49 recorded the highest score in WTC ($M=73.96, SD = 8.86$). This study conducted a one-way ANOVA test to compare the means for the CA and WTC scores among the age groups. In Table 10, a one-way ANOVA revealed no significant effect of age



groups on CA scores, $F(3,60)=1.17$, $p=.326$. The same results also were achieved for the WTC scores among the age groups with no significant effect of age on WTC scores, $F(3,60)=0.51$, $p=.678$.

4.4 Years of Service

Table 11: WTC and CA score based on Years of Service

Categories	Years of Service	N	M	SD
CA Scores	0 to 5	26	80.50	24.37
	6 to 10	18	74.94	19.53
	11 to 15	17	83.82	22.16
	16 and above	3	91.00	30.20
	Total	64	80.31	22.57
WTC Scores	0 to 5	26	64.30	23.33
	6 to 10	18	66.02	15.71
	11 to 15	17	71.67	15.50
	16 and above	3	76.67	7.26
	Total	64	67.32	18.94

Table 12: One-way ANOVA result for WTC and CA score based on Years of Service

Categories		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CA Scores	Between Groups	1071.835	3	357.278	.691	.561
	Within Groups	31007.915	60	516.799		
WTC Scores	Between Groups	851.696	3	283.899	.783	.508
	Within Groups	21751.733	60	362.529		

One-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of respondents' years of service on CA and WTC scores. Results showed that there was not a statistically significant difference in CA scores between at least two groups of years of services ($F(3, 60) = .691$, $p = .561$). Likewise, there was not a statistically significant difference in WTC scores between at least two groups of years of services ($F(3, 60) = .783$, $p = .508$)

4.5 Education background

Table 13: WTC and CA score based on Highest Education Background

Categories	Highest Education Background	N	Mean	SD
WTC Scores	Bachelor Degree	39	65.90	19.88
	Master Degree	21	68.89	18.33
	PhD	4	72.92	14.23
	Total	64	67.32	18.94
CA Scores	Bachelor Degree	39	77.15	21.76
	Master Degree	21	84.90	22.69
	PhD	4	87.00	30.39
	Total	64	80.31	22.56



Table 14: A one Way ANOVA result for WTC and CA score based on Highest Education Background

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall CA Score	Between Groups	1010.864	2	505.432	.992	.377
	Within Groups	31068.886	61	509.326		
Total WTC Score	Between Groups	255.904	2	127.952	.349	.707
	Within Groups	22347.525	61	366.353		

Data from the findings in Table 13 showed that those respondents who had Master and PhD degree scored higher CA score compared to those who had Bachelor 's degree. Master holders recorded CA Mean Scores of 84.90 and PhD holders recorded Mean scores of 87.00 compared to Bachelor's degree holders (Mean CA scores = 77.15). The same trend was highlighted from WTC scores findings. Those PhD holders (Mean WTC Scores = 72.92) and Master holders (Mean WTC scores = 68.89) recorded higher WTC scores compared to Bachelor's holders (Mean WTC scores = 65.90).

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine the effect of highest education background groups on the WTC and CA scores. Results as in Table 14 revealed that for CA, Highest education background did not have significant difference between the group, $F(2,61) = .992, p=.377$. The same result was achieved for the WTC scores, $F(2,61) = .349, p=.707$.

4.6 Correlation between CA and WTC

Table 15: Pearson Correlation Result

		CA score	WTC score
CA score	Pearson Correlation	1	.504
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
WTC score	Pearson Correlation	.504	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64

A Pearson correlation coefficient was carried out to measure the linear relationship between CA and WTC using English language among respondents. There was moderate positive correlation between the two variables, $r(62) = .50, p < 0.01$.

5 Discussion

5.1 RQ 1 Communication apprehension level among Malaysian employees in using English language

Findings showed that most respondents experienced a moderate level of communication apprehension when using English in the workplace. Interestingly, the results indicated that conversation recorded the highest CA level, followed closely by group discussion and meetings, while public speaking recorded the lowest level of CA among the four communication contexts. One



possible explanation is that workplace presentations are often prepared and structured, allowing employees to rehearse their communication beforehand. In contrast, spontaneous conversations or discussions may create greater anxiety because employees must respond immediately without preparation. This finding differs from several previous studies which reported that public speaking is typically the most anxiety-provoking communication context (Hasni et al., 2019; Husin, 2022; Rasakumaran & Indra Devi, 2017; Wan Mustapha et al., 2010). Nevertheless, several studies (Abdullah, 2014; Husin, 2022; Jusoh et al., 2018; Mat Husin & Khamis, 2023) have similarly reported moderate levels of communication apprehension among Malaysian employees when using English in workplace settings.

5.2 RQ2 Willingness to communicate level in using English language among Malaysian employees

Analysis from the data revealed that Malaysian employees experienced a moderate level of WTC using English language. This result was similar to those reported by Fahim & Dhamotharan (2016) and Moazzam (2014) in which they reported that Malaysian professionals' workers had moderate WTC in English, particularly in group discussions. These findings strongly suggested that Malaysian professionals have a moderate level of WTC in English language, especially in collaborative environments. Furthermore, data also showed that most respondents recorded higher WTC in group discussion and toward friends. This finding is backed up by the evidence in Barjesteh et al. (2012) which concluded that Malaysian respondents experienced high level of WTC in group discussion and toward friends.

5.3 RQ3 The relationship of Communication Apprehension (CA) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) levels with demographic variables (i.e. Gender, Age, Years of Service and Education background)

5.3.1 CA and WTC with Gender

Findings in this study reported that gender variables have no significant difference between CA and WTC score. It can be assumed that male and female respondents experience the same level of CA and WTC in using English language. In contrast to this finding, Vilhauer (2013) claimed that females potentially adapt differently to various communication contexts, including face-to-face and computer-mediated interactions which indicated that female might had lower CA and higher WTC compared to male. Also, studies by Walther & Burgoon (1992) and Schulze et al. (2022) suggested that gender may play a role in shaping individuals' willingness to communicate in different communication contexts. In addition to that, Chen et al. (2022) and Akiatan et al. (2021) suggested that gender may influence individuals' perceptions of social presence in communication, impacting their willingness to communicate in different communication modalities.

5.3.2 CA and WTC with Age

Based on the finding, it was reported that there were no significant differences in the score of CA and WTC among group age of respondents. When considering the relationship between age and communication apprehension levels as well as willingness to communicate levels, it is important to note that age may not be a determining factor in these aspects. Research suggests that age and gender differences do not significantly impact foreign language communication apprehension and willingness to communicate levels, indicating that these factors may not play a decisive role in individuals' communication behaviors and attitudes (Yetkin & Özer, 2022). Furthermore, Peterson &



Stead (2011) and Kuthy et al. (2010) highlighted that age is not a significant predictor of WTC in workplace context. These findings suggest that individuals' willingness to engage in specific activities or behaviors may not be strongly influenced by age alone, emphasizing the need to consider a range of factors beyond age when examining communication apprehension and willingness to communicate levels (Peterson & Stead, 2011; Kuthy et al., 2010).

5.3.3 CA and WTC with Years of Service

Results gathered in this study showed that there was not a statistically significant difference in CA and WTC level on the respondents' years of service. Contrary to the belief that years of working determine CA and WTC levels, several studies (Husin, 2022; Husin & Khamis, 2023; Abdullah, 2014; Jusoh et al., 2018) indicated that the duration of exposure to communication demands may not necessarily correlate with increased CA levels. Additionally, Blume et al. (2013) emphasized that a lack of comfort in communication can impede success in both academic and professional settings, regardless of an individual's experience or exposure to communication demands. This underscores the importance of addressing CA and WTC level to achieve success, regardless of the individual's tenure in a specific field.

5.3.4 CA and WTC with education level

This study's finding further resonated that education background did not play a significant role on WTC and CA levels. Studies by Obralic & Mulalic (2016) found no statistically significant difference between Turkish and Bosnian students in terms of WTC, CA, and communication competence. This suggests that regardless of educational background or nationality, individuals exhibited similar levels of WTC and CA. Moreover, Sunusi et al. (2019) indicated that CA levels were not determined by the students' intellectual disability status, emphasizing that factors beyond educational background influence communication apprehension. Additionally, Baker & MacIntyre (2000) highlighted that perceived competence had little to no correlation with WTC indicating that factors beyond education, such as immersion experiences, may influence individuals' communication behaviors and attitudes (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000). This suggests that educational background alone may not dictate individuals' WTC.

5.3.5 Relationship between CA and WTC

Findings in this study showed that WTC was positively correlated with CA. Interestingly, the findings revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .504$) between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. This suggests that employees may continue to communicate despite experiencing anxiety, particularly when workplace responsibilities require them to do so. This result contradicts many previous studies which typically report a negative relationship between these two constructs (MacIntyre et al., 1999; Jin & Martin, 2012). One possible explanation is that employees in professional environments may experience communication anxiety while simultaneously feeling obligated to communicate due to job responsibilities. In such situations, higher communication apprehension does not necessarily prevent communication but may instead coexist with a strong intention to communicate when workplace tasks require interaction in English. This finding suggests that organisational demands and professional expectations may shape employees' communicative behaviour differently from educational contexts.

The analysis revealed that demographic variables including gender, age, years of service, and educational background did not significantly influence respondents' levels of communication



apprehension or willingness to communicate. These findings suggest that communication anxiety and communication willingness are more strongly influenced by psychological or contextual factors rather than demographic characteristics. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies which indicate that demographic variables are not strong predictors of communication behavior in second lan

6 Conclusion

This study examined the levels of communication apprehension (CA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Malaysian employees. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrated moderate levels of both CA and WTC, suggesting that although employees may experience some anxiety when using English, they remain willing to communicate in professional contexts. Importantly, the study identified a moderate positive relationship between CA and WTC ($r = .504$), indicating that higher levels of communication anxiety do not necessarily reduce employees' willingness to communicate. Instead, employees may continue to communicate despite experiencing anxiety, particularly when workplace responsibilities require them to do so. These findings highlight the importance of workplace language development programmed that not only improve linguistic competence but also address psychological aspects such as communication confidence. Future studies may further investigate the role of digital communication tools, organizational culture, and workplace expectations in shaping employees' communication behavior in English.

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