



The Study of EFL Learners' Willingness to Read in an EFL Context: A Grounded Theory Approach



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ABSTRACT

Language-specific sentiment is often considered to be part of a universal structure of willingness to communicate (WTC) that can also be known as willingness to read (WTR). In fact, the theoretical basis used in the WTC theory has been applied to WTR without any empirical justification. In this study, we introduce WTR as a stand-alone construct and conceptualize it. Given the importance of reading in the Iranian EFL context, we feel it is necessary to explore the concept so that we can provide a better understanding of it. To this end, drawing on a grounded theory study, we conducted 25 interviews and used MAXQDA 2022 for the qualitative content analysis, which included the three stages of open, axial, and selective coding. The analysis resulted in a core category—willingness to read in EFL—a multidimensional construct that is distinguished by a five-dimension taxonomy: Contextual factors( bottom-up drives), Strategies( top-down drives), intervening condition, causal condition (classroom-related drives), and wanting to read. The model's reliability was estimated through the Kappa index, showing a significance value of <1.96. Overall, we conclude that WTR in EFL can be considered among other more established language-related emotions associated with EFL reading. The present study concludes that among the factors predicting WTR as a construct, bottom-up drives, classroom-related drives, step-down forces, top-down drives, and wanting to read shape WTR among EFL learners.

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## 1. Introduction

The fact that some learners prefer to learn and read English, while others have been reluctant, has attracted the interest of language-learning researchers in recent years. According to the findings of a study carried out in 64 countries by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), 37% of the Language learners population polled observed that they never read for enjoyment and are unwilling to read. Clearly, this situation is alarming. To engage in reading, EFL learners need to be willing to read texts in English; in general, learners' zest for reading could engender reading achievement in L2 (Brown, 2001). As much of a person's erudition occurs through reading, willingness to read (WTR) can play a significant role in L2 reading achievement as well. Relevant research has consistently recognized the importance of motivation and willingness in reading development (Cox et al., 2000; Wigfield et al., 2004). Wigfield et al. (2004) stated that learners who read for enjoyment are far more willing to read than those who read merely for education. Unwilling learners usually disengage from reading, leading to lower reading comprehension (Moomaw, 2013).

While traditionally encompassed within the broader construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) and often measured as a single score, recent research suggests a distinction between WTR and WTC (Borsipour et al., 2019; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017). Although previous studies have acknowledged a potential association (MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al., 2001), WTR is increasingly recognized as a

language-domain-specific concept. This distinction arises from the inherent differences between receptive and productive skills. Verbal communication, a core component of WTC, involves the creation of spoken messages to convey meaning. Conversely, reading, a receptive skill, focuses on decoding and comprehending written messages. This study emphasizes the unique nature of WTR by treating it as a separate construct specific to the domain of reading in English as a foreign language (EFL).

A review of the literature on willingness to read (WTR) reveals a critical gap. Existing studies fail to treat WTR as a distinct construct with its own measurement tool. Furthermore, the theoretical framework underpinning WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998) has been uncritically applied to WTR without empirical validation. Given the paramount importance of reading in the Iranian EFL context, this study delves deeper into the concept of WTR to enhance our understanding. Unattended WTR issues can lead to subsequent reading comprehension difficulties (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie et al., 2004). When learners lack the motivation to read, disengagement ensues, ultimately hindering comprehension (Moomaw, 2013). Deficiencies in reading comprehension have detrimental consequences for both individuals and society (OECD, 2013).

According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), reading engagement is "the *doing* part of reading: the reading of text, persistence in reading, frequency of reading, and dedication to reading activities". Much in a

similar but distinct vein, we argue that WTR can represent the *intending* part of reading. It is a fact of life that intention comes before action (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, deeper analysis of factors that help WTR learners of English as a foreign language seems to significantly improve the understanding of researchers and professionals of self-reading, while highlighting the essential components of WTR. Therefore, factors/conditions that affect WTR should be discovered through experimental research. The present study could serve as one of the first attempts to uncover the underlying determinants of this newly developed concept. This line of research has the potential to provide explanations of how WTR works by proposing a conceptual model of L2-specific WTR. This model would be crucial for those engaged in reading-related activities. Without such a model; however, foreign language learners' WTR remains an underdeveloped notion. Hence, given the knowledge gap concerning WTR, this study aimed to discover how EFL learners conceptualize WTR; accordingly, it addressed the following research question: **RQ:** What is the theory that explains the process leading to willingness to read in EFL?

## 2. Research Background

### 2.1. Willingness To Communicate (WTC)

In general, during the language-teaching period, as colloquial, the main purpose of language-teaching is to encourage the learner to look for communication opportunities and their desire to communicate in such situations. It should be noted that the

relationship between the desire to communicate and other variables may vary considerably from culture to culture and may also be influenced by a large number of variables (Gol Aghaei, Cheraghpour, 2017). Although the tendency to seek conceptual communication is relatively new, several researches have been done about the study of its conceptual elements and its empirical results in communication with the use of the second language. In view of MacIntyre et al. (1998), the ultimate goal of learning a second language, or foreign language, should be to make learners tend to find opportunities for communication, as well as to build a desire to communicate in them. So they suggest making the desire to communicate should be a good goal in a second-language teaching. In order to understand the desire to communicate with other effective components, the authors study the personality, relationship, emotional and socio-psychological variables and introduce them (Dabiri, 2013).

Among other studies, MacIntyre's (1994) study showed that fear of contact and understanding of one's ability to communicate are two direct variables that can make a person feel different about being communicative. In another study, Midraj et al. (2008) found that in UAE public schools, there was a positive correlation between language learning and the desire to communicate with other cultures, internal motivation and a willingness to spend time learning the language. The results of the research of Dabiri (2013) in Iran among the students of Zanjan Azad University further show that there is a positive relationship

between the tendency to communicate and the degree of success in learning English spoken proficiency. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between his/her own understanding of the ability to communicate and the degree of success in learning English spoken language skills. Abbasi et al. (2021) in a study concerning increasing understanding and awareness of the relationship between personal factors in language teaching, to, and especially personal factors of tendency to correlate, social intelligence and motivation among 168 samples of Iranian male and female learners with respect to gender and language learning levels, concluded that the relations of these three variables are meaningful and not only the desire to communicate and spontaneous communication in girl students' language. In addition to the above mentioned cases, there have been many variables to influence WTC, including motivation, communication self confidence, classroom environment, attitudes, extraversion or introversion, competence, educational strategies, teachers' neutrality and so on... Notes (Khajavy, Ghonsooly, 2017).

## ***2.2. Willingness to read (WTR) and its relationship with willingness to communicate (WTC)***

Usually, university students in Iran who pursue non-English majors are required to complete a curriculum consisting of two English language courses under the headings of general English and one specialized English course (Khajavy et al., 2016). These courses emphasize the development of reading comprehension skills, especially for

semi-technical texts (Ghonsooly et al., 2012). The instructional approach prioritizes reading activities and vocabulary/grammar instruction that are directly related to the reading material. As a result, speaking, writing, and listening skills range from minimal to unfocused.

This emphasis on reading creates challenges for students transitioning from high school to college. An increase in technical and reading materials for them can prevent them from understanding appropriate material and potentially lead to a decrease in their motivation to read (Ghonsooly et al., 2012). In addition, students in their respective fields encounter a significant amount of technical English material in the form of textbooks and research papers, which, given the text-heavy nature of academic learning, makes their reading skills a vital prerequisite for Success in selected fields becomes (Schiefele et al., 2012). Therefore, understanding and identifying the factors that affect learners' willingness to read (WTR) of an English (or any other second language) text can help researchers and second language teachers to have a more comprehensive picture of contextual factors and mechanisms. have the fundamentals that guide WTR.

Basically, the concept of WTR is related to the well-established construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) introduced by McIntyre et al. (1998). Basically, WTC examines the influence of various linguistic, contextual and motivational factors on communication. While most research on WTC has focused on speaking, McIntyre et al. (1998) believe that

WTC encompasses other language skills beyond speaking and therefore refers to all four language skills. Therefore, the same theoretical model used in WTC theory can also be applied to WTR. Therefore, it can be said that the WTR is a part of the WTC structure that focuses on reading. According to the definitions of WTC by McIntyre and his colleagues, WTR is defined as the readiness to read a text according to choice and opportunity (Khajavy, Ghonsooly, 2017).

Of course, it is important to mention that although WTR and WTC both emphasize the readiness to initiate a behavior (i.e. talking to each other or reading), it should be kept in mind that communicating and talking to others is a constructive verbal skill. While reading is an acquired writing skill. Accordingly, some components, such as basic sources of confidence (anxiety and perceived competence) and motivation may be different in WTR and WTC. Anxiety in WTC research refers to situations related to communicating in English (e.g., I feel anxious when giving an oral presentation to the rest of the class). Therefore, oral communication anxiety cannot be the source of reading anxiety (Saito et al., 1999). In other words, reading anxiety is specific and different from oral communication anxiety (Sellers, 2000). Accordingly, a person may be motivated to speak English, but not motivated to read in English. Therefore, although the underlying factors of WTR may be similar to WTC, but their operationalization will be different from WTC.

### ***2.3. Related Research to willingness to read (WTR)***

The available reviews indicate that the issue of WTR has not been considered as an independent concept in any of the studies related to its measurement tool. In addition, the theoretical basis used in the theory of WTC (McIntyre et al., 1998), without any empirical evidence, has also been applied to WTR. But instead, EFL researchers have focused their attention on individual factors related to the reading process, such as self-confidence in second language reading, self-concept, reading anxiety, and more specifically, reading motivation and its various manifestations. Researchers such as (Grabe ,Stoller, 2019) have rightly argued that factors related to the individual, such as willingness to read texts, interest in specific topics, emotional attitudes toward reading, and self-perceptions, are of vital importance in the classroom learning context. In recent years, a few studies have been carried out on WTR in the Iranian EFL context; for example, Borsipour et al. (2019) examined the association between sensory emotions (emotion) and WTR. This study showed that the stronger the emotion toward the reading topic, the higher the WTR. Another study was carried out by Khajavy and Ghonsooly (2017) in which a model of willingness to read (WTR) was tested based on L2 motivation and communication confidence. In this study, the analysis indicated that L2 learning experience, ideal L2 self, and communication confidence positively and significantly predicted WTR, and L2 learning experience was the strongest predictor of WTR.

Dahmardeh, Eghtesad (2022) in an article entitled *The Role of Education Culture on Language learners Willingness to Communicate in Online Persian Language Classes in Korea Based on Complex Dynamic Systems Theory*, investigated the role of important factors mentioned by Language learners in their willingness to communicate in online elementary Persian Language courses at Korea University, in which Language learners from different nationalities participate. More precisely, the present study examines the role of Language learners linguistic profile and education culture on their L2 WTC. For this purpose, a questionnaire was distributed among 23 Language learner from five nationalities, run by semi-structured interviews with all participants. Results indicate that in general, Language learners linguistic profiles and personal/emotional characteristics did not play an important role in their L2 WTC; however, significant differences were observed in environmental/situational components among East Asian Language learners and Language learners from other nationalities, especially in the type of interaction (written/spoken) and the interlocutor (teacher/classmates).

In another study, Derakhshan et al (2022) investigated the Communication Willingness Model (CWM) based on second language motivation and ideal self among Persian as a Foreign Language (PaFL) learners among international students at the University of Kurdistan. They concluded that while both ideal self and motivation significantly influenced communication willingness, the unique effect of ideal self in second language

was more pronounced than motivation among PaFL learners. Heydari and Moradian (2020) examined the impact of synchronous computer-mediated video-based communication on in-class and out-of-class communication willingness and intercultural competence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. They found that synchronous classes had a statistically significant improvement in communication willingness both inside and outside of the classroom. Therefore, in a rapidly diversifying world, facilitating learners' communication willingness and encouraging them to become intercultural speakers should be among the priorities of teachers. In another study, Moradi (2012) investigated communication willingness among Iranian learners, examining the effect of class size on this phenomenon. He concluded that class size has a significant impact on students' communication willingness. In this study, students demonstrated a higher willingness to communicate in smaller classes, where they have more opportunities to practice oral skills and interact. Domakani and Vatankhah (2012) conducted another study to investigate communication willingness in English among Iranian learners and the role of language learning motivation in creating communication willingness. They concluded that there is a significant relationship between communication willingness in and outside the classroom. The results of this study also showed a strong correlation between English language learning motivation and communication willingness. The findings suggest that Iranian learners

learn English for the purpose of using it in real-world contexts.

Mekiabadi et al. (2019) also concluded in another study among 236 English language learners in Iran with intermediate to advanced proficiency level that all three types of sensory excitement, i.e. emotional, cognitive and socio-cultural with L2WTC subscales, with Important variables such as: willingness to talk (WTS), willingness to read (WTR), willingness to write (WTW) and willingness to listen (WTL) have a positive and significant correlation.

Therefore, according to the review of the research background of (WTR), we find that the WTR has not been considered as an independent concept in any of the studies related to a suitable measurement tool, so in this study, we try to the existing study gap is filled and a proper answer to the main question of this research is provided.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Drawing on a grounded-theory study, we explored the concept of WTR in order to generate a substantive theory that is grounded in the data collected.

#### **3.2 Participants and statistical sample**

The statistical sample of this study includes 25 language learners who lived in Parsabad Moghan in Iran and were enrolled in valid language classes and engaged in learning. They were selected through purposive sampling and to get their opinions about WTR We used semi-structured interviews. It has been argued that an appropriate sample size for qualitative research is “ascertained by how well the sample can represent the phenomena of

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interest” (Morse, 1991). In the present study, a sample size of 25 was deemed sufficient to produce data saturation related to the research questions. The process of data collection and data analysis was pursued until theoretical saturation was reached. The researchers continued to sample and code data until no new categories could be formed. In this selected sample, male and female language learners had different proficiency levels. Since the purpose of this study was to investigate more deeply the WTR experiences of EFL learners during the reading process, EFL learners with a broad age range and proficiency levels were selected. Their native language was Azerbaijani Turkish. As for the gender factor, 5 (20%) and 20 (80%) of the participants were male and female, respectively. In terms of the marital state, 14 (56%) of them were single and 11 (44%) were married. Educationally, 4 (16%), 7 (28%), 9 (36%), and 2 (8%) of them held high school Diploma, B.A., and M.A. degrees, respectively; only 3 (12%) of them were high school students. The age group of 18-20, 21-30, and 31-40 were composed of 1 (.04%), 14 (56%), and 10 (40%) of the participants, respectively.

#### **3.3 Instrument**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the needed qualitative data regarding how EFL learners conceptualize WTR in English. The interviews were conducted in Persian for the sake of better comprehensibility and were then translated into English at the stage of qualitative data analysis. An interview protocol developed by the researcher was

utilized during the interview sessions. Accordingly, in order to validate the interviews, the following steps have been taken into consideration: 1) Long-term engagement: a period of one month to conduct and direct the interviews, 2) Reviewing the participants: providing reports to the interviewees and receiving feedback in Regarding the interpretations provided by the interviewer (researcher) and 3) Obtaining homogenous information: examining the codes counted by two university professors. In addition, in conducting individual interviews, the duration of which varied between 20 and 30 minutes, the topics of the conversation were informed in advance to the interviewee so that he could participate in the meeting with the desired preparation and provide the desired information. Finally, the researcher (the first author) recorded the necessary points during the interview and immediately prepared the implemented version of each interview. To ensure the validity of the data, after the analysis of each interview, if necessary, the participant was

referred again and the correctness of the content was confirmed and the necessary changes were applied. In order to ensure reliability and adequacy, the guidance and supervision of experienced and expert professors were used and the interview text was given to them and two qualitative research experts to review the codings.

To be consistent with previous research, we regard WTR as an attitude—an affective variable (Aiken, 1980, Gable & Wolf, 1986, Munson-Warken, 2016). Therefore, the interview questions were developed on the basis of Anderson's (1981) conceptual definition of affective variables. Attitude as an affective variable is characterized by three attributes: (a) intensity, or the degree or strength of feeling; (b) direction, or the positive, negative, neutral, or ambivalent direction of that intensity of feeling; and (c) the target, artifact, object, concept, or idea at which the intensity and direction of feeling are directed (Anderson, 1981; Gable & Wolf, 1986). The questions asked in the semi-structured interview are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Interview Questions and Their Attributes*

Question No.	Question	Attribute Addressed
1	How much do you like to read English texts? Why?	Intensity
2	What is your purpose in reading English texts?	Target
3	What do you like or dislike about reading that makes you react to it? Explain why?	Target
4	When will your interest in reading English texts increase or decrease?	Intensity
5	How do you feel when reading an English text?	Direction

### 3.4 Procedure

We used semi-structured interviews to learn about the Iranian participants'



perspectives on the elements impacting WTR. The request to record the interview was made orally. All interviews were recorded by the second researcher of this study at the institute or were sent by the interviewees through WhatsApp. During this stage, one-on-one interviews were conducted using an interview guide, and the data were then analyzed using MAXQDA, 2022. The categories were refined, expanded, or deleted as necessary using the constant comparative method proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Accordingly, three stages of analysis were conducted: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The data were analytically dissected during the open-coding process. The goal of this process was to provide the analyst with fresh perspectives by dissecting common conceptions or interpretations of occurrences seen in the data. Events, activities, and interactions were compared to one another in open code to identify patterns and discrepancies. They received conceptual designations as well. Conceptually comparable events, activities, and interactions were combined in order to create categories and subcategories. Furthermore, as Dorney (2010) has articulated, open coding is the initial stage of conceptual data analysis, wherein concepts within interviews, documents, and records are categorized based on their relevance to similar topics. During this stage, the interview text is fragmented into sections of varying lengths, ranging from a single word to a long phrase, sentence, or even a short paragraph. Each of these sections is then assigned a category label, but the focus at this stage is on generating new ideas to form

theories. Subsequently, through axial coding, the author can strengthen abstract and foundational concepts with higher-level concepts. Thus, the aim of axial coding is to establish relationships between the generated concepts (in the open coding stage), followed by the subsequent stage of selective coding. According to Dörnyei (2010), the final step of grounded theory analysis is selective coding. In this stage, we select a core category that will be the focal point throughout the rest of the analysis and writing of the study. This core category will serve as the centerpiece for the new proposed theory. Since our goal is to integrate a substantial amount of our analyzed data, the selected central category or themes must be abstract enough to encompass other categories.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Qualitative Analysis

To achieve theoretical saturation, interview data were collected in three rounds. By the end of the third round, we observed diminishing returns in terms of new insights, suggesting we had reached saturation – a point where further data collection wouldn't yield deeper understanding.

First, all factors extracted from the interview files were coded. Then, based on the underlying concept or theme of each code, they were categorized into similar groups. This process ultimately led to the development of final themes. Furthermore, the specific coding procedures – selective, axial, and open coding – are presented in tables, which serve as the output of the coding system.

Finally, using the Shannon entropy model, we statistically analyzed the level of support

for our findings from relevant studies (reference: MAXQDA website, 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of extracted codes as a percentage of the total number.

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
Main theme				
Classroom-related Drives				
teaching method and content	75.0%	25.0%		100.0%
environmental impact	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
authentic language environment	50.8%	46.2%	23.1%	100.0%
communication opportunities	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
teacher impact	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	100.0%
Top-down Drives				
peer reading	42.1%	36.8%	21.1%	100.0%
reading strategy use	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
willingness to read	33.3%	47.6%	19.0%	100.0%
Bottom-up Drives				
text type	41.7%	41.7%	16.7%	100.0%
text difficulty	87.5%	12.5%		100.0%
topic familiarity	28.6%	47.6%	23.8%	100.0%
Step-down Forces				
quality of text book	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
time limitation	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	100.0%
scoring criteria	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Wanting to Read	75.0%	25.0%		100.0%
SUM	37.1%	42.5%	20.4%	100.0%
# N = Documents	10 (40.0%)	10 (20.0%)	5 (20.0%)	5 (100.0%)

**Figure 1.** Frequency Distribution Based on the Coded Section among the Interviewee Rounds

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of extracted codes as a percentage of the total

**Table 2 .** Frequency Distribution of the Codes in Numbered Columns Based on the Coded Section among the Data Collection Rounds

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
Main theme	0	0	0	
Causal Condition (Classroom-related Drives)	0	0	0	
teaching method and content	6	2	0	8
Environmental impact	5	5	5	15
authentic language environment	4	6	3	13
communication opportunities	2	4	3	9
teacher impact	5	10	2	17
Strategie (Top-down Drives)	0	0	0	
peer reading	8	7	4	19
reading strategy use	10	10	5	25
Contextual Condition (Bottom-up Drives)	0	0	0	
text type	10	10	4	24
text difficulty	7	1	0	8
topic familiarity	6	10	5	21
Intervening (Step-down Forces)	0	0	0	
quality of text book	4	4	4	12
time limitation	1	8	2	11
scoring criteria	1	5	4	10
Wanting to Read	6	2	0	8

number, categorized by data collection rounds. These codes represent meaningful phrases, primarily reflecting main themes. Each code corresponds to specific sections of paragraph lines and interview content, conventionally coded. Essentially, codes are allocated to sections, indicating concepts or themes across the three data collection rounds.

Each box contains a number representing the extent to which the corresponding code has been applied relative to the selected code. For instance, the SUM line indicates that the highest proportion of extracted codes (i.e,42.5 %) pertains to the second round of data collection.

SUM	82	94	45	221
N = Documents	10	10	5	25

Table 2 presents the quantity of extracted codes from the 25 interview files, organized by data collection round. The figures within each box correspond to the respective coded section's proportion relative to the total. For instance, the teaching method and content have each appeared eight times in both Round 1 and Round 2, with no instances coded in Round 3. In the SUM row, a total of 82, 94, and 45 sections have been coded across the three data collection rounds.

Table 3 below outlines the breadth of extracted codes derived from the 25 interviewee files throughout the three data collection rounds.

#### 4.2. Frequency distribution of codes

Here, according to Table 3, we can show below the range of codes extracted from 25

interviewer files in three rounds of data collection. Table 3 highlights the most frequently coded sections (dark green cells) within each data collection round. This suggests, on average, 80% of the interview content was relevant to the research topic and could be coded. The remaining 20% likely contained less relevant information. Furthermore, all 25 interviews underwent open coding, resulting in a total of 800 coded sections. Interviewee No. 2 had the most coded sections (57), while Interviewees No. 9 and No. 10 had the fewest. Finally, axial coding identified five core themes within the interviews which will be shown in the next steps.

**Table 3.** *Frequency Distribution of the Coverage Scope of the Extracted Codes*  
*Frequency Distribution of the Coverage Scope of the Extracted Codes in all Analyzed Texts*

Code System	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	TOTAL
Main theme				
Classroom-related Drives				
teaching method and content	4%	1%		2%
Environmental impact	2%	5%	8%	4%
authentic language environment	2%	4%	5%	3%
communication opportunities	1%	1%	4%	2%
teacher impact	4%	1%		6%
Top-down Drives	2%	5%	8%	
peer reading	2%	4%	5%	8%
reading strategy use	1%	1%	4%	15%
BOTTOM-UP DRIVES	4%	11%	1%	
text type				14%
text difficulty	10%	6%	7%	6%
topic familiarity	15%	17%	12%	10%
Step-down Forces				

quality of text book	14%	17%	5%	2%
time limitation	11%	2%		2%
scoring criteria	6%	15%	12%	2%
Wanting to Read	4%	1%		2%
NOT CODED	25%	31%	30%	28%
CODED	75%	69%	70%	72%
WHOLE TEXT	100% (30,027)	100% (29,149)	100% (10,849)	100% (70,025)

### 4.3 Word Cloud Index

One of the most effective instruments in the qualitative software employed is the super keyword or word cloud index. This index aims to identify the most frequent words in the interview files to illustrate it, showing that every code with a high frequency is of great significance. By employing this index in qualitative analysis, researchers can easily observe the size of each keyword in the form of a colored picture, which indicates its significance from the interviewees' perspectives. The index is the output of the word cloud option from the retrieval window in MAXQDA reported at the end of the open, axial, and selective coding procedures. In Figure 2, each keyword of a particularly large size shows its frequency and repetition throughout the conducted interviews. The following figure shows the MAXQDA output of the 25 interview files.

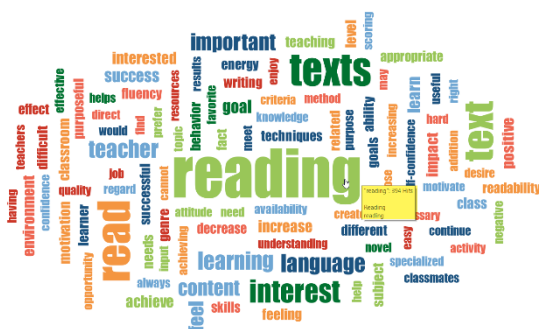


Figure 2. Word Cloud Instrument in the Interview Files.

Figure 2 also illustrates the mouse pointer hovering over the word "reading." As indicated by the yellow box, the frequency of the word "reading" across the entire interview file is 394. Therefore, it occupies the central position within the word cloud.

### 4.4 The Emergent Theory of WTR

This section explores the factors influencing WTR through a combination of visual representation (Fig 3) and detailed explanation. Quotes from the interviewees will be incorporated throughout the discussion to strengthen the emerging theory about WTR.

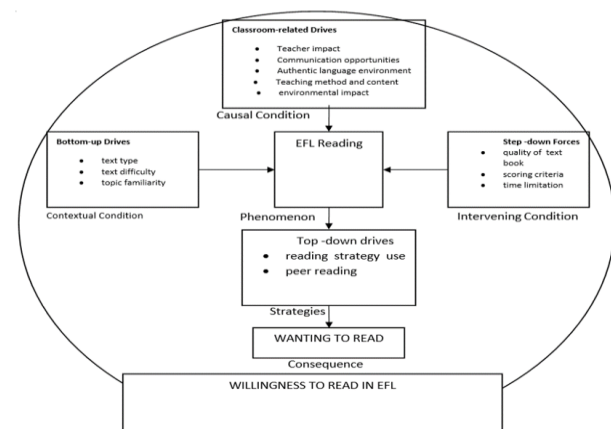


Figure 3. The Emergent Substantive Theory of Willingness to Read in EFL

Table 4 shows the data frequencies related to the main theme and the associated sub-themes in the theory that emerged.

**Table 4.** Themes and Sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-themes	Frequency
Causal Condition (Classroom-related Drives)	Teaching method and content	10
	Classroom effect	29
	Authentic language environment	24
	Communication opportunities	10
	Teacher impact	45
Strategies (Top-down Drives)	Peer reading	50
	Reading strategy use	113
Conextual Condition (Bottom-up Drives)	Text type	99
	Text difficulty	29
	Topic familiarity	75
Intervining Condition (Step-down Forces)	Quality of textbook	14
	Time limitation	17
	Scoring criteria	11
Wanting to Read	-	-

As evidenced by the analysis in fig 3 and table 4, a central category emerged, denoted as "Willingness to Read." This core category encompasses five principal themes: "Classroom-Related Drives," "Top-Down Drives," "Bottom-Up Drives," "Step-Down Forces," and "Wanting to Read." Each main theme incorporates fourteen more specific sub-themes. Subsequently, we offer a comprehensive exploration of the five main themes constituting the emergent theory. Finally, we engage in a discussion surrounding the core category of the qualitative data analysis, namely, "Willingness to Read in EFL."

**4.4.1 Phenomenon**

The component of the phenomenon is the result of causal conditions, which refers to a set of events and occurrences that lead to such an action. Therefore, every phenomenon is the result of causal conditions. Since this study aims to assess the willingness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to read, the phenomenon in question

is investigated through the direct relationships and influences of causal conditions, as well as the interplay of background and intervening conditions. In other words, the extent to which background, intervening, and causal conditions impact the phenomenon (i.e., English reading) is contingent upon the extent to which that phenomenon, in turn, influences the strategies that lead to the outcome.

**4.4.2 Causal Condition( Classroom-related Drives)**

In the interview, the participants talked about the impacts of the classroom followed by conversational opportunities, real language environment, and teaching methods. This section deals with these issues in detail.

The existing gaps between what should be presented in the classroom and what occurs are the cause of the emergence of problems and directly affect reading. The participants discussed many common issues that cause challenges in this regard. Causal conditions

affecting the phenomenon refer to a series of important events and factors in this study that lead to the development of the central phenomenon. These factors are directly related to the category of class and play a fundamental role in creating the phenomenon. Firstly, the impact of the teacher was discussed. The role of the teacher and their behavior, in addition to teaching, were considered by the participants. Further, the study opportunities, original language environment, teaching method, and content, as well as the impact of each environment, are discussed separately.

#### **4.4.2.1 Teacher Impact**

One of the factors affecting learning and reading is the teacher and their impact on the learning process. The results of the coding analysis showed that approximately 68 percent of the coding conducted in the interviews, discussed the challenges they had with teachers; of course, these challenges varied, but in general, they had a direct impact on the learning process and interest in reading. The participants mentioned that the teacher's impact caused more disruption in language learners who did not have a very strong knowledge base, as well as discouragement and disappointment among language learners with high language skills. When the teacher played a positive role, the Language learners interacted with each other. Otherwise, they wandered and went astray.

One of the interviewees, emphasizing the role of the teacher and the teaching style as well as their relationship with Language learners motivation and interest, said: *"When I like the teacher's teaching style, my interest in reading English texts increases.*

*Unfortunately, some teachers show off their literacy and mastery in front of the Language learners."* [Participant 05]

#### **4.4.2.2 Communication Opportunities**

In this regard, approximately 36 percent of the participants' responses also emphasized how conversational opportunities in the classroom can influence the learner and their interest in reading texts. This impact can be positive. Some may also point to reasons other than conversation opportunities for their success. If the teacher can provide the necessary opportunity for reading in the classroom, the interest and the motivation to read will increase. This can actually become an opportunity for the emergence and expansion of conversation. *"It was mentioned in an interview that a person's interest in reading will increase with the amount of opportunities they have to interact with people."* [Participant 18]

#### **4.4.2.3 Authentic language Environment**

In 52 percent of the interviewees' responses, the influence of environment on learning has been emphasized. Generally, language learning is a topic that many take seriously. Some believe that a foreign language can only be learned in its native environment, and otherwise, our understanding and learning of that language will always remain superficial and rudimentary. Therefore, an appropriate environment for learning a foreign language can significantly increase study efficiency and mastery of that language as a foreign language. So if the learning environment is authentic and the materials are sourced from genuine English literature, students will be more engaged. Teachers should also provide

an atmosphere for learners in which they feel that the environment is authentic. As one of the interviewees said, *“We expect the teachers to create an authentic language environment in the classroom, and speak the original language.”* [Participant 05]

#### **4.4.2.4 Teaching Method and Content**

Interview data revealed that teaching method and content were the two most frequently cited factors (32% of participants) influencing motivation and interest in reading among Iranian language learners. Difficulty level and lack of personal interest in the reading materials were the primary reasons participants reported for abandoning reading tasks.

#### **4.4.2.5 Environmental Impact**

The impact of the environment on increasing motivation is another important component for reading, which has been acknowledged in 60 percent of the responses from the interviewees. They believe that an environment in which all factors are available but attractiveness and facilities are lacking can also play an inhibiting role, thus reducing their motivation and interest.

*“The classroom plays a critical role in learning English. Language learners should feel they are in an authentic situation.”* [Participant 19]

#### **4.4.3 Contextual Condition (Bottom-up Drives)**

One of the types of factors through which action/reaction strategies take place is bottom-up drive factors. These contextual factors affect EFL reading. They have a direct impact on top-down drives. Here, text type, text difficulty, and text familiarity can play an effective role in the mentioned impact.

Each of these factors is discussed below separately from the point of view of the interviewees.

##### **4.4.3.1 Text Type**

In a significant portion of participants' responses, namely 96 percent, great importance on the type of text with a higher degree of difficulty for reading and talked about its negative impact on the learning process. As most of the participants emphasized, text included in the curriculum against their will confuses them. They weaken their interest and reduce their motivation to read. A participant said, *“Sometimes we do not like specialized texts. Indeed, difficult texts make me disappointed.”* [Participant 02]

##### **4.4.3.2 Text Difficulty**

In 32 percent of the responses by the participants, stated that the difficulty of the text is one of the important factors related to reducing motivation and interest in reading English texts. Reading an English text can be boring for a language learner if the level of difficulty is high. A participant in this regard said: *“Reading difficult texts makes me tired and disappointed.”* [Participant 02]

The level of the text to read and the vocabulary used in it play an important role in whether a learner will continue or stop reading. One individual suggested that Language learners should be provided with English texts starting from the simplest and progressing to more difficult ones. By using this arrangement, people can gain a clearer understanding. Another participant stated, *“The more difficult the text, the further I moved away from reading English texts, so I got frustrated and switched to reading*

*intermediate and lower level texts.”*  
[Participant 05]

#### **4.4.3.3 Topic Familiarity**

In 84 percent of the interviewees' responses, this component has been mentioned. When a text is socially and personally accepted by and familiar to learners, their willingness to learn will increase as their motivation to read is strengthened and their interest intensifies. All these outcomes are the result of the learners' familiarity with the text and subject. In this regard, one of the participants said,

*“Finding some information which is in the same line with my own belief would encourage me to read widely and immensely, and the opposite might also be said.”*  
[Participant 09]

Another participant added, *“But if I am not interested in the text, the main reason for which is the type and genre of the text, I have no connection with the text and I consider it a kind of obstacle in my success.”*  
[Participant 12]

The participant also stated, *“As a language learner, I have to look for my interest in the text, and the important points of the text that arouse this interest in me are very crucial and give me a sense of accomplishment.”* [Participant 12]

#### **4.4.4 Intervening( Step-down Forces)**

Some factors are considered facilitators or inhibitors, which, in their own right and in some cases, have a diminishing role in creating interest in reading. As mentioned earlier, these inhibitors have an impact on EFL reading. These factors can reduce the motivation to learn and, in some cases, if managed well, increase motivation.

The quality of the textbook, scoring criteria, and time limitations are among the factors that, according to the results obtained from MAXQDA, play an important role in the process of creating or limiting motivation for the language learner. That were respectively mentioned in 48, 40, and 44 percent of the responses provided by the interviewees, which have been extracted in the codings. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the presented texts, scoring criteria, and the time limitation are the factors that reduce interest. On the other hand, the type of text, the degree of difficulty, and the learners' familiarity with the topic affect learners' motivation to read English texts. One of the participants said, “

*Injustice in giving unrealistic scores can negatively impact my interest in English content.”* [Participant 25]

#### **4.4.4.1 Textbook Quality**

The quality of the text, which is directly related to the learner's motivation and willingness to continue reading and learning, can be very effective. Another participant stated, *“Apart from the content, in many cases, the way it is written can also affect me. Texts that are not written correctly, scientifically, or not following literary standards may compromise my taste for reading.”* [Participant 01]

Another participant, in addition to the content, mentioned the appearance of the text and even considered the impact of the font and page design in reducing their motivation and interest. He stated, *“As discussed in the class, it is not only English texts and their content that increase or decrease our interest, but also the way they are written and*



*the use of fonts and even the cover of a textbook can motivate us to read it.”*  
[Participant 06]

#### **4.4.4.2 Scoring Criteria**

All language learner strongly emphasized a fair evaluation and unbiased view at all levels. From their point of view, a good teacher, by being literate and highly educated, can promote the progress of Language learner when they use the factor of evaluation only for correct evaluations.

*“A teacher with good morals encourages the learner to continue reading.”*  
[Participant 01]

*“My attitude toward reading English is largely determined by the type of material I'm studying and the standards my teachers use to evaluate me.”* [Participant 14]

*“The teacher’s scoring criteria and teaching method and content can increase or decrease my interest in reading English texts.”* [Participant 15]

#### **4.4.4.3 Time Limitation**

Language learning can be impacted by inadequate time constraints and unrealistic schedules. This decreases learners' levels of interest, perseverance, and motivation.

*“My preference is for content that is brief and practical. This is because we don't have enough time to read.”* [Participant 01]

Most of the participants emphasized that the time limitation is a fact. They mentioned that time limitations can stop a person from achieving his goals and negatively affect the intended reading outcome.

*“On the other hand, time constraints and study sessions may also negatively impact my ability to read English texts.”*  
[Participant 12]

Time constraints can prevent a person from achieving his goals and in fact he may not reach the right point in reading and learning the language.

*“Limitation of time and lack of proper management can cause problems in understanding the content.”* [Participant 20]

*“We should set aside times for reading English texts that do not interfere with other subjects.”* [Participant 22]

#### **4.4.5 Strategies (Top-down Drives)**

Among the factors identified, a number of contextual factors were noted during interviews with participants. Some of these are causal conditions, and others are confounding and inhibiting conditions. These three factors influenced the phenomenon as their interaction revealed strategic elements through interviews with participants. From respondents' opinions, two important factors emerged as strategies (i.e., use of reading strategies and peer reading).

They resorted to two strategies to solve the problems they encountered in different previous situations, including classroom and contextual factors. In this way, they could solve problems that arose. The willingness to read increased in response to these strategies. The proposed strategies can be used by the participants to change the result in favor of wanting to read.

##### **4.4.5.1 Reading Strategy Use**

According to nearly all participants, one of the important strategies for solving the problems of reading English texts and learning English is to use summaries, as this prevents fatigue, which reduces disinterest in the text. As a result, revision replaces full

reading and can be considered a strategy. *"Sometimes, instead of reading a book, I like to study its literary reviews. This way, without reading the whole book, which can be very boring, I become aware of the essence of the story and the novel by reading other people's theories."* [Participant 07]

#### 4.4.5.2 Peer Reading

Reading alone is not as effective as group reading since the questions raised and the problems encountered during group reading can be solved by exchanging opinions and interacting with other Language learners in the presence of their teacher. This theory has been mentioned by 76 percent of the responses provided by the interviewees, which have been extracted through codings. As one participant stated, with an emphasis on referring to friends, classmates, and professors to solve the problem of reading English texts:

*"When I have problems reading English texts, I like to solve them by referring them to my friends and professors."* [Participant05]

#### 4.4.6 Wanting to Read

Approximately 32 percent of the responses provided also mention this topic. The interdependence of the themes identified leads to an increase in wanting to read in EFL, which can be considered the core theme obtained from this research. When the strategies are well-directed and properly applied, they strengthen the motivation to read, resulting in wanting to read and the consequence. As mentioned earlier, willingness to read is the result of these actions and reactions in EFL Reading. A couple of the participants stated:

*"Interest is formed when there is an intrinsic enjoyment in reading."* [Participant 20]

*"I enjoy reading English texts because they boost my vocabulary as well as my literacy in English."* [Participant 02]

#### 5.4 Reliability and Validity of the Data (Research Trustworthiness)

Calculating the validity and reliability of the data collected and used in qualitative research is very important as in quantitative research. Basically, the issue of validity is the answer to the question of whether the variable that the researcher is investigating is actually the same thing that he is measuring or not. Therefore, while observing the interview protocol, in this research, the validity of the research interviews was studied and reviewed by the supervisors and advisors, and after the necessary modifications or changes, it was finally approved. Reliability also refers to the reproducibility of research findings. Therefore, the findings can be audited when another researcher can clearly follow the path of decision used by the researcher during the interview and show the consistency of the study.

In this study, the Kappa index, which is one of the most important criteria for calculating the reliability of qualitative research, is used, which is introduced in the form of the following relationship:

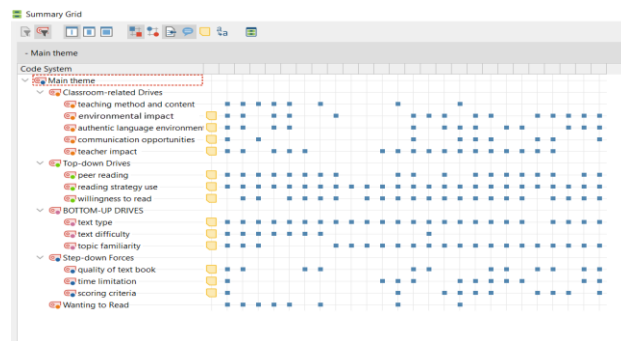
$$\text{kappa} = \text{Pi} = (\text{PA}_0 - \text{PA}_E) / (1 - \text{PA}_E) \quad (1)$$

where in:

PA<sub>0</sub>: represents the level of agreement between two evaluators

PA<sub>E</sub>: representing the expected agreement

If the value of this coefficient is greater than 0.60, there is reliability. MAXQDA software provides such a possibility to calculate this coefficient according to coding the answers of at least 2 interviewees. Validity in qualitative research is associated with the defensibility, credibility, confirmability, and even reflectivity of the results. Figure 4 shows the documents' relationships and the codes' zero-one nature, which allows the Kappa index to be considered. For reliability estimation, a meta-combination of the selected document was given to an expert in the field. As an index of the research reliability, the Kappa index estimation (i.e., 0.901) showed an index above the required value. The obtained significance value (<0.05) indicates the coding relationship between the two pertinent documents.



**Figure 4.** MAXQDA Index of Correlation among the Various Indices of the Different Documents

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the extracted codes out of the 25 interview files. It is worth mentioning that each frequency is represented as a blue square. Since the distribution of the codes has a desirable level of consistency for the corresponding codes, it could be concluded that there is a desirable and high rate of agreement among the participants.

**Table 5.** Coding Agreement Test among Interviewees No. 2 and 18.

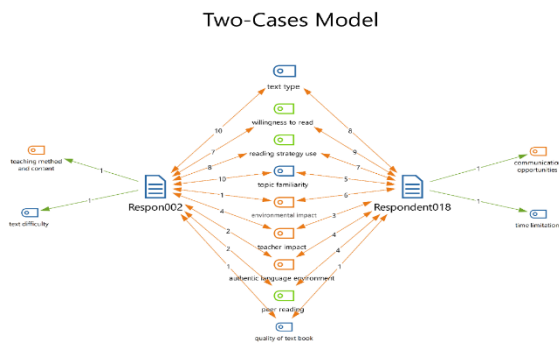
		Value	Estimated Standard Deviation <sup>a</sup>	Estimated T <sup>b</sup>	)Sig(
Measure of agreement	Kappa	0.901	0.472	8.923	0.004
N of Valid Cases					
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis					

Table 5 shows the level of agreement value between Interviewee Nos. 2 and 18 based on the Kappa index of inter-code agreement. The obtained Kappa value is 0.901, with an SD value of 0.475. Its statistical significance can be ensured using the t-value and p-value that the first index of <1.96 and the second index of >0.05 are required. Since the value of 8.923 exceeds 1.96, the p-value equals 0.004, which is

smaller than 0.05. Thus, it can be claimed that the Kappa index-based agreement test provides a highly acceptable value.

Figure 5 below shows the overlap/correlation values among the extracted codes between Interviewee Nos. 2 and 18. In other words, the model shows the number of codes they pointed out and the extent of agreement between them (i.e., it is an index of the proximity of their views). In

the figure, the codes located in the center and shown via a two-sided arrow refer to mutually agreed codes. The codes on the right of Interviewee No. 18 are specific, indicating that Interviewee No. 2 did not point them out; the opposite is the case of the codes on the left. Moreover, the values presented with each arrow indicate the frequency of the respective code among the coded selectins.



**Figure 5. MAXQDA Overlap (Two-case) Model**

#### 6.4 Trustworthiness

The study employed three key procedures to establish the credibility of its findings. First, constant comparative analysis was utilized. This involved continually comparing emerging concepts and categories with the interview transcripts to ensure their consistency and accurate representation of the data. Second, member checking was conducted. Provisional categories and the final conceptualization were presented to the participants to solicit feedback and ensure alignment with their perspectives. This process involved writing a summary of the results and sending it to each interviewee for review. This facilitated the identification and rectification of any potential misunderstandings. Finally, the research underwent an audit process. Two faculty members, external to the study, reviewed the

raw data alongside the researchers' interpretations and explanations. This external review aimed to confirm the coherence of the coding scheme and the plausibility and accuracy of the data interpretations.

#### 7.4 Ethical Considerations

To ensure participant confidentiality, the study adhered to strict data security protocols. Only the researcher possessed access to the raw data. Following transcription, all interview audio files were archived in a secure location. Likewise, paper-based survey data was electronically stored after entry, with the electronic file password-protected on a locked laptop. Furthermore, the reported findings solely included aggregated data, preventing the identification of any individual participant.

#### 5. Discussion

A grounded theory design was used to explore how EFL learners conceptualize WTR in EFL. Five major themes emerged (along with further subthemes), describing significant aspects of the phenomenon of EFL reading. These five major themes were put into a preliminary model to clarify how EFL learners conceptualize WTR. So the theoretical model can be best understood as an interaction between five factors that can ultimately create a desire to read English among language learners.

Since the main goal of this study was to find the dimensions of a WTR model in the EFL context by choosing an appropriate research approach, it was concluded that five factors: contextual factors (bottom-up stimuli), strategies (top-down stimuli), factors intervening condition (reducing

forces), causal factors (motivators related to the class) and willingness to read can be identified as the main dimensions of the WTR in English learner, which is consistent and overlapping with theoretical discussions and previous studies. It was discovered that several aspects of the classroom, such as the teaching method and content, the impact of the environment, the authenticity of the language environment, the opportunities for communication, and the influence of the teacher, had significant effects on WTR. This finding is consistent with the results of earlier empirical research (Grabe, 1991, Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Moomaw, 2013), which showed that providing Language learners with an encouraging and supportive learning environment can help them develop their WTR. It is possible to provide a justification for this by explaining that external stimuli have the potential to increase the amount of reading that is completed, which helps strengthen Language learners' willingness to read. This finding is also supported by Domekani and Vatenkhah's (2012) study confirming that classroom-related factors such as authentic language environment and the teaching method can affect reading motivation and, consequently, WTR among EFL learners. Therefore, it is never hidden to anyone that the characteristics of the educational classes and their different dimensions are very important in the effectiveness of the provided education and improving its quality, and contribute to encouraging language learners to read and learn new materials. Therefore, this factor, as the primary platform and important infrastructure, can increase the satisfaction of

language learners and strengthen their desire to learn English.

The second component of the five elements affecting WTR in EFL was intervening condition( step-down forces). It was found that some notions, including the quality of the textbook, scoring criteria, and time limitations, affect WTR. Some empirical findings available in the literature are compatible with this. The research by Charzynska (2015) and Kartala et al. (2012) confirms this finding. The research in this area demonstrates that several of the above-listed elements are seen as either facilitators or inhibitors. They play a decreasing role in stimulating readers' interests. These inhibitors have a debilitating effect on EFL reading and indirectly affect reading strategies. Moreover, this can reduce the motivation to read, and, in some cases, it may help Language learners to increase their L2 reading motivation. It is natural to imagine that the parameters related to the inhibiting factors as one of the important challenges of English language teaching in Iran and other non-English speaking countries of the world are common and will cause problems in their success in learning the language in different countries. Since teaching a second language is a specialized and scientific matter, therefore, its environmental and working factors should also be specialized and scientific in order to increase the success rate or measures taken. Therefore, it is natural that with the low quality of educational books and discrimination or the appropriateness of the evaluation and grading system for language learners, etc. It will also be reduced to educational purposes.

The third dimension of WTR in EFL in the present study model was contextual factors (bottom-up drives). Elements such as text type, text difficulty, and text familiarity affect WTR in EFL. Most of the participants in this study focused on the kind of texts that were taught in their curricula, which was contrary to their interests. They became repeatedly confused as they stated. Additionally, the complexity of the content reduced their desire to read, which may confuse EFL learners and lead them to grow bored with reading. The present findings are supported by Abdul-Hamid (2020), who found that texts that are socially and personally accepted and familiar to learners can increase their WTR. Among other studies supporting the present finding is Borsipour et al.'s (2019) investigation in which the association between sensory emotions (emotioncy) and WTR was highlighted. Borsipour's (2016) study showed that the higher the level of emotioncy with the reading topic, the higher the WTR. In addition, the study revealed that factors such as uninteresting and dull texts, difficult vocabulary, and personal views might cause exvolvement (i.e., an unwillingness to read) among EFL learners. Therefore, can be said that one of the most important factors related to the second language education system, which causes students to be disinterested in a second language such as English, is the existing educational books and their textbooks. Naturalness Considering the existing conditions and the low desire of language learners to read a second language, it can be imagined that the compilation of their educational books has not undergone

major changes in accordance with the changes of new generations, and the design and compilation of foreign language books is inefficient and unattractive to language learners. Therefore, a major change in the composition, exercises, pictures, quality of book printing and the way of presenting and teaching it will certainly encourage students to learn and also increase the desire to read foreign languages.

The fourth component affecting WTR in EFL was Strategies (top-down drives) in which some factors, such as using reading strategies, utilizing summaries, and peer reading, were detected. These factors were cited by the study participants as measures taken to solve the problems they faced while reading English texts. Grabe and Stoller's (2019) study is in line with this result. They confirmed that strategies are often defined as involving a set of abilities under the potentially conscious control of the reader. In addition, they stated that strategies help learners comprehend texts, which enhances their language learning. Therefore, as stated in other studies, language learners who lack the necessary skills and strategies simply fall victim to the fear of education and concentration and even tests related to the English language. However, teaching and learning foreign languages is usually not possible without having full knowledge of practical strategies, and it is necessary to act by designing a program or programs to achieve predetermined goals, because learning strategies, Teaching and communicating verbally are often related to each other in discussions of language learning and are often related to a behavior

that can ultimately increase the desire to read and the success rate in reading and learning. So it is natural that this topic can also have a significant contribution in improving students' interest in reading, which neglecting it will have many negative effects.

The last and fifth component of WTR was wanting to read. This component highlights learners' tendency and interest in reading. It is worth mentioning that learners' interest in reading materials in English and their willingness to read more could be pursued through their actions or responses. Then, it can be argued that reading strategies strengthen the motivation to read, leading to wanting to read. The results obtained in the present study, with respect to the notion of wanting to read, are in line with Borsipour et al. (2019), Munson-Warnken (2016), and Khajavie and Ghonsooly (2017). All the aforementioned studies considered learners' interest as an influential factor in the development of WTR among EFL learners. Therefore, although countless factors play a role in the success of language learning, but as the researchers have said, students' motivation, interest and attitude are among the most important factors that can improve and increase the desire to read English. Therefore, motivation and interest, which is considered an internal source, is a strong and appropriate reason and stimulus that makes a person act, and it is natural that it can increase the level of success and greater progress even if the talent is low. increase, and therefore, the greater the anxiety and interest, the less anxiety or disinterest in reading.

The current study's proposed WTR model arguably incorporates a broader range of

WTR dimensions than most prior studies. This comprehensive perspective underscores the model's multidimensionality. It emphasizes that, in addition to text characteristics, various factors inevitably influence EFL learners' WTR development. These factors include classroom orientations, teachers' chosen reading instruction strategies, classroom atmosphere, learners' reading strategies, and their interest in the reading materials.

### ***5.1. Educational achievements***

The present study's findings could contribute to the body of knowledge, particularly in the WTR domain. In addition, the findings can have some consequences for EFL teachers, learners, and researchers. The emergent theory of WTR and the scale developed for measuring WTR has the potential to impact research on reading assessment. Previous studies on WTR have not relied upon an appropriate scale for measuring the WTR of their Language learners. Despite the fact that previous studies have provided valuable information on WTR in the EFL context (e.g., Borsipour et al., 2019; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017), few studies have used accurate and reliable scales for gauging WTR.

In addition, EFL teachers can employ the factors related to classroom-related drives of the WTR model and provide their learners with opportunities for reading and make them more willing to read in English. Furthermore, the findings of this study imply that EFL teachers should establish more sophisticated criteria for selecting reading texts for learners, consider learners' emotional differences toward different reading topics,

and apply teaching strategies appropriate for different learners.

Similarly, EFL learners can focus on the components of the WTR model presented in this study and learn how to improve their abilities with regard to different dimensions of WTR. For instance, they can enhance their reading strategies, learn from their peers, and focus on contextual clues to solve their reading problems. Moreover, they can learn how to manage bottom-up drives, such as text type, text difficulty, and topic familiarity, to increase their out-of-class reading and enhance the quality of their reading materials, which can lead to the development of WTR in their lifelong learning process. To improve their reading habits, EFL learners can rely on the criteria developed in the scale in terms of step-down forces, which, as a dimension of WTR, make the learner focus on the quality of the textbook they are to select for reading, the exam scoring criteria, and time limitations. Additionally, the outcomes of this study invite learners to be aware of their own emotions regarding particular topics. Therefore, they may be able to choose reading topics that best suit their needs and interests and, consequently, improve their reading competence.

Material developers can benefit from the findings of the present study by taking learners' needs into account when designing reading materials. Moreover, the results of this study can provide educators with well-designed principles so that they can guide teachers in choosing the most desirable reading topics in class.

### ***5.2 Suggestions for Future Research***

1. The present study relied on EFL learners' perspectives of WTR in the EFL context. Another study could be carried out focusing on the views of EFL teachers and researchers regarding their experiences concerning WTR and their strategies for teaching reading skills to Iranian EFL learners. This will show whether the views of researchers themselves differ in terms of knowledge and practices of WTR in the classroom.

2. Because of time limitations, this research only assessed the WTR of EFL learners in language institutes in the city of Parsabad and did not include other cities or provinces. Other studies can repeat the current study in other cities in Iran or abroad. This will enhance estimations of the reliability and construct validity of the developed scale and measurements of WTR among other EFL learners in other cities and social settings.

3. Another limitation of the present study was that the individual characteristics of the learners participating in the study were not taken into account. Personality traits such as introversion/extraversion, anxiety, and motivational factors have been shown to be effective in reading comprehension (Nelson, 2008; Rogers et al., 2022; Van Der Kleij et al., 2022). Therefore, such factors could have affected learners' responses and the final WTR scale.

### ***6. Conclusion***

Comprehension, as the most available source of collecting knowledge and information in the L2 learning domain, has been a focal point of ELT researchers (Ahmadi & Pourhossein, 2012; Al-Qudairy



& Abdullah, 2010; Anderson, 2015; Guthrie et al., 2013; Klassen, 2022; Li., 2022). Within the domain of willingness to communicate (WTC), reading takes priority (Maftoon & Amiri, 2011; MacIntyre et al., 2001), and willingness to read (WTR) could attract the attention of researchers (Borsipour et al., 2019; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Munson-Warnken, 2016) as a significant factor in L2 reading.

The present study concludes that among the factors predicting WTR as a construct, contextual condition (bottom-up drives), causal condition (classroom-related drives), intervening (step-down forces), Strategies (top-down drives), and wanting to read shape WTR among EFL learners. Some of these components, or at least some of their sub-factors, have been examined in previous studies. Borsipour et al. (2019) focused on text difficulty and learners' interests as determining factors in the development of WTR as a construct among EFL learners. Meanwhile, Khajavi and Ghonsooly (2017) considered L2 experience learning as the most powerful predictor of WTR.. However, this research is new and has research innovation due to the terms developed as WTR dimensions and its comprehensive view of this construct.

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