

## Willingness to Write in EFL Contexts

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**Abstract:** This research was conducted to measure Persian EFL students's degree of willingness to write in English. To reach the goal, semi-structured interviews were conducted, deriving inspiration from earlier works of McCrosky and Baer (1985), MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (1998), and Yashima (2002) on willingness to communicate. The participants of the study were 29 individuals comprising 23 university students from different majors and 6 writing experts with academic statuses varying from BA holders in TEFL to university professors in applied linguistics. They were interviewed in two separate layers via employing the Delphi technique. Content analysis was conducted on the interviews and the components were extracted; the WTW questionnaire was then designed and developed for the first time and was validated via conducting factor analysis and was then administered to 257 university and IELTS students. The final version of the questionnaire included 38 items after having been factor analyzed. The results indicated that there are four factors underlying the construct of willingness to write, which are *interlinguaprofession*, *cognition*, *involvement*, and *technology*. The findings of the study can bring considerable benefits to EFL students to recognize the influential factors on their degree of willingness to write (WTW) and try to boost the facilitating factors to become more autonomous learners. Academic EFL/ESL writing teachers can enhance their students' writing ability via embarking upon new strategies through which they can make learners more willing to write by promoting learners' involvement and engagement in writing, as one of the findings of this study.

**Keywords:** Willingness to Communicate, Willingness to Write, EFL Context.

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## **Introduction**

Over the past century, global interactions have dramatically increased resulting in more demands for efficient communication in English, a language that is being learned by over a billion individuals worldwide; knowledge of the English language has served as a powerful tool for development and advancement in professional arenas (Johnson, 2009). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, graduates need a range of English skills to meet the demands of professionalism in the third millennium, and English communication skills are vital to fulfill professional objectives (Riemer, 2007). Apart from operational domains, academia has also been influenced by the global impact of the English language, as French scholars, for instance, have adapted the classic scholarly mandate to “publish in English or perish in French” (Phillipson, 2001, p. 81).

Though the goal of language learning in the past was mastering the structures of the language, modern language pedagogy attaches great importance to communication and places particular emphasis on educating individuals who are eventually able to use their language for communicative purposes. In fact, modern language teaching and learning aims at encouraging learners to use language for meaningful and effective communication beyond the borders of the classroom (Riasati, 2012). However, a closer look at the issue indicates that even after years of studying English, either at academic contexts such as schools or language institutes, or at home through self-studying, some language learners do not volunteer to participate in English tasks and activities. Macintyre (2007) believes that it is not easy to answer this question without taking various factors into account. In order to address this issue, willingness to communicate (WTC), proposed by McCroskey and Baer (1985), can be taken into account. McCroskey and Baer (1985) regarded WTC as a personality trait. Subsequently, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) attempted to re-conceptualize it as a situated construct that reflected the speaker's tendency to get involved in the act of speaking with regard to a specific person or group of people to whom communication would take place at a given moment. It is hardly deniable that, within the field of language pedagogy, such issues are so important that deserve more attention. However, given the paramount importance of communication in the third millennium, it should be noted that an ever-increasing range of skills are required to maintain relevance with the global environment. That is, communication is not confined to the oral mode only as commonly used to be thought. There is ample evidence indicating that beyond the oral skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, writing has started to gain particular importance. This claim is well supported by

Yancey (2009) who states that English is written today in different online and printed forms as never before due to the influences of science and progressivism.

Writing has been viewed from different perspectives in EFL contexts; Williams (2012) discusses the potential role(s) of writing in second language learning and states that although writing is often regarded as the result of acquisition with a minor role, rather than having a facilitating one, it may have the capacity to pave the way for the development of L2. In academic settings, receiving scholarships and eligibility for higher education is exhibited through academic writing (Bacha, 2000; Zhu, 2004). The importance of academic writing is such that the individuals' success or failure and scholarship opportunities are largely attributable to the quality of their written work. Sedita (2013) takes assessment and writing into account and discusses the use of writing by teachers to determine how much students have learnt. Succeeding in the writing test along with the other language skills is also required in high stakes examinations such as TOEFL and IELTS which are standardized tests developed to measure language proficiency and mark the basic requirements of pursuing studies (Buyukyavuz & Cakir, 2014). In addition, success in getting academic careers in English speaking countries is, to a large extent, determined by the applicants' mastery of written texts of different types (Prosser & Webb, 1994).

## Literature Review

Writing is a complex process of exploring one's thoughts, discovering ideas, and generating meaning (Flower & Hayers, 1980). Writing is a daunting task both in the native language (L1) and the second/foreign language (L2); difficulties arise since writers need to be aware of a series of aspects that are essential to convey meaning in an effective writing (Flower & Hayers, 1980). As stated by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991), writing is one of the most difficult language skills to master in the view of most language learners. In a study conducted in an EFL context, Yavuz and Genc (1998) concluded that writing composition is viewed by most EFL learners, both high- and low achievers, as something so challenging that they just strive to survive certain examinations. Teachers in Yavuz and Genc's (1998) study also reported most students' lack of interest to attend the writing class and their reluctance to write even a few sentences. Brown (2015) referred to writing as a struggle for individuals in which teachers also seem to be engaged. As stated by Trivelli-Bowen, Moore, Niemeyer, and Holmes (2014), teachers in this technological age often struggle to teach writing in creative ways to motivate reluctant writers. Klimova (2014) carried out a study taking the writing

constrains and difficulties of learners into account and stated that writing is a difficult skill to learn because of cultural differences in the way academic register is understood in varied cultures as well as social reasons, such as having negative attitudes about the target language and not making visible progress in the foreign language. In a study conducted on 34 international students in Thailand, it was found out that feedback played a crucial role in enhancing the students' motivation level in writing though some lacked proficiency in English (Hamidun, Hashim, & Othman, 2012). In another study conducted on 121 Saudi student writers, lack of generating ideas, attention to accuracy, and fulfilling teacher's expectations were found to be the most stressful strategies (Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2013). The results further indicated that most of the participants had an average level of stress toward their writing strategies. Leki (2001) found that there are the daily challenges that writing teachers face such as class size, time constraints, provision of local needs and conditions etc. as well as more ideological challenges such as providing institutional and individual investment needed for teaching L2 writing, resisting imposed materials and methods by the centers and so forth. All the above mentioned studies prove how challenging yet important writing is for individuals.

Willingness can be regarded as an important factor driving learners toward communication in an L2. It has been argued that the ultimate goal of L2 learning should be to generate "willingness" to seek opportunities and willingness to communicate (WTC) in students (MacIntyre, et al, 1998). Willingness to communicate (WTC) was originally investigated in the context of first language communication to explain individual differences in the native language and was then further developed in L2. McCroskey and Richmond (1987) developed the willingness to communicate construct building on the earlier work of Burgoon (1976). It was defined as the intention to initiate communication when the choice was given (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

Considering the importance of English writing around the world in ESL/EFL contexts, one expects that ESL/EFL learners exhibit a high degree of willingness toward this essential skill. It is anticipated that learners, observing the fast pace of advancement in science and technology, be particularly motivated to join English writing courses and attempt to write in different genres in varied contexts. However, a brief glance at the problems and challenges encountered by learners regarding English writing reveals a major discrepancy. Demotivation, discouragement, negative attitude, dislike, lack of interest, mere survival, etc., are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that unveil a serious problem when put together.

Considering the importance of writing and the effective roles it plays in modern day communication and in L2 learning, the need to help learners become more willing toward writing in an L2 is felt more than ever. However, though communication has gone beyond the oral mode particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and writing has been gaining increasing significance particularly in academia, factors influencing this rather crucial skill have not been investigated as much. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to explore the factors involved in the construct of willingness to write (WTW) in the Persian EFL context and to design and introduce the WTW measurement instrument.

## Method

### Participants

The participants of the qualitative part of the study were 23 university students and 6 academic writing experts in order to make use of their professional knowledge and experience. The student participants were selected from different majors such as *English Language Teaching*, *Engineering*, *English Language Translation*, etc. The experts had academic statuses varying from BA holders in TEFL, teaching at English language schools, to university professors in Applied Linguistics with the age range of 30-60. The accessible population in the quantitative phase comprised 257 EFL learners from a vast majority of majors and with various backgrounds. The number of the participants was deemed sufficient for conducting factor analysis. Prior to conducting the study on the main population, 83 randomly selected students from various sub majors filled out the WTW questionnaire in the piloting phase.

### Instruments

Defined as the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with a particular purpose, interviews have always been among the most popular data gathering means in research (Dexter, 1970). For the purpose of the present study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 individuals including both writing instructors and university students in two layers. The questions of the interview were developed open-endedly but closed at the same time by getting hints from Macintyre, Dornyei, Clement and Noel's (1998) study. Moreover, as the present research was to be conducted in an EFL context, Yashima's (2002) study regarding *International Posture*, proposed as a new construct, was further taken into

account. The WTW questionnaire was then designed, developed and administered to the participants in the quantitative of the study.

### **Procedure**

The data was collected from March to September, 2017. The Delphi technique, mainly developed by Dalkey and Helmer (1963), was employed to conduct the interviews with the two groups of the participants, 23 students and 6 experts in two separate rounds. All interviews were conducted in a private setting with the presence of only the interviewee and the interviewer. All interviews were recorded with the prior consent of the interviewees. Moreover, in order to observe the confidentiality code, the interviewees' names and personal information will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. Some of the interview sample responses regarding the factors that influence EFL learners' WTW are provided below:

#### **Expert 1 (Professor in Applied Linguistics):**

*“Students should first be taught the basic rules and structures of the language to become more willing to write ..... I believe peer writing review can make students willing to write and to write more.....when they correct or even teach each other about the writing task they become more willing to write ..... the atmosphere of the class can be very helpful as well, so when the teacher can provide a situation to write for the students, it will create a confidence in them that can help them write better.”*

#### **Expert 2 (Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics):**

*“I believe integrative motivation is an important factor in making students willing to write; if they have this type of motivation, they will continue writing out of the classroom context even after the course is finished ..... this type of motivation has to be fortified by the teachers ..... I further believe that private counseling is necessary in order to get to know more about students' psychological issues and preferences. A teacher should treat each student on the basis of his personality and character ..... internet and social media can also be influential in making EFL learners willing to write ..... I also believe that applying for scholarships for pursuing education or attending international conferences and symposiums can also make the learners more willing to write.”*

Following the interviews, the researcher initiated the transcription phase and performed content analysis to extract the components. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278).

### **WTW Questionnaire**

For the purpose of data collection in the present research, WTW questionnaire was designed and developed in English on the basis of the components that were extracted from the semi-structured interviews conducted both in English and Persian. 108 components were extracted from the interviews and were then analyzed and converted into statements and the first version of the questionnaire with 84 items in 12 major categories was developed and then converted to a five-point Likert scale questionnaire ranging from ‘definitely willing’ to ‘definitely NOT willing’ (Definitely Willing to write, Willing to write, Moderately Willing to write, NOT Willing to write, and Definitely NOT Willing to write) was developed.

The 84-item questionnaire was then given to three academic writing experts to evaluate. 5 items were removed as a result of their evaluation and the questionnaire was shortened to 79 items. Then a pilot study was conducted on a group of 83 students similar to the participants in the main study. The feedback received from the students led to some modifications; as an example, in the first version of the 79-item questionnaire, the Likert choices were placed after the statements, but it was later made known in the piloting phase that learners had difficulty understanding them as well as the sequence and format of the items; therefore, the format of the questionnaire was modified and the Likert choices were provided before the statements. Items with the median score 9, for instance, as the most influential factors in making learners willing to write, were:

- *When I am able to write an essay,*
- *When I attend international congresses,*
- *When I monitor my own progress in writing,*
- *When I plan to study abroad,*
- *When I feel free to write,*
- *When I outline my ideas individually before I start writing,*
- *When my teacher uses different ways of teaching in the classroom,*
- *When I am involved in teaching writing in the class,*

- *When my teacher provides me with private counseling,*
- *When I write at a multicultural setting (e.g. an international course),*

Some other items such as *I study in a co-educational class, I have a male teacher, I have a female teacher, I write outside the classroom,* had the lowest median numbers, 1 and 2, and were thus removed. On the whole, 11 items of the questionnaire were removed and the items of the questionnaire were cut down to 64 in the final version.

The quantitative data gathered through the pilot study was used for calculating the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.96. When items with the item total correlation lower than 0.5 were excluded from the questionnaire, 4 items were removed. Following that, the questionnaire was sent to Professor Robson from University of Toyo in Japan, Professor Lahuerta Martinez from University of Oviedo in Spain, and Professor Lee from National Taipei University, eminent scholars who have worked on WTC to rate the items that they believed to have an influence on the construct of willingness to write from the scale of zero to ten (0 was defined for the items that do NOT influence WTW at all and 10 for the items that considerably influence WTW). As the next step, items with the median number six and above were retained and the rest were removed.

Based on the results of the pilot study, the questionnaire was modified (64 items) and administered to 257 university and IELTS students, who had passed an academic writing course in English, from various majors with different educational backgrounds. Exploratory factor analysis was carried out and the factors underlying the construct of WTW were extracted.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants in terms of their majors in the quantitative phase of the study.

**Table 1.** *Distribution of the Participants in Terms of Major*

1) Laboratory Science	15) Persian Literature
2) Electrical Engineering	16) French Literature
3) English Language Teaching	17) Mathematics
4) Chemical Engineering	18) Architecture
5) Genetics	19) Structural Engineering
6) Computer Engineering	20) Chemistry
7) Medicine	21) Industrial Engineering
8) English Language Medicine	22) Management
9) Dentistry	23) Molecular Biology
10) Biotechnology	24) Aviation
11) Civil Engineering	25) Tourism Management
12) English Language Translation	26) Telecommunications
13) Marketing	27) Psychology
14) Petroleum Engineering	28) Urban Planning

## Results

The descriptive and inferential statistics of the results are provided in this section. Table 1 shows the information of the respondents of the WTW questionnaire.

**Table 2.** *Descriptive Statistics of the Participants*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	254	1.00	2.00	1.5787	
Age	253	18.00	41.00	23.4427	
Education	214	.00	3.00	.5047	.85989
Field	220	.00	28.00	8.4955	4.63213
Writing	241	1.00	3.00	2.0871	.55965
Valid N (listwise)	183				

As shown in Table 2, from 257 participants of the study, 254 reported their gender. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 41. A closer look at the above table indicates that the majority of the participants were between 19 and 25 and their average age was 23.5 ( $SD = 4.71$ ). Most of the participants were undergraduate students and reported medium writing ability ( $M = 2.08$ ) out of the three options of *Low*, *Medium*, and *High*. 254 people reported their gender; females comprised 57.2% of the respondents while males formed 41.6 % of the sample. The students were asked to self-report their writing ability to see how they conceive of their writing proficiency. As shown in the table, 28 individuals reported a high command of their writing ability, 164 medium, and 49 low. The participants had education levels from undergraduate to PhD. However, the majority of them were undergraduate students. Table 3 shows the gender, writing ability, and education level of the participants.

**Table 3.** *Gender, Writing and Education Level of the Participants in the Quantitative Phase*

	Gender		Writing Ability			Education			
	Male	Female	High	Medium	Low	U	BA	MA	PHD
N	107	147	28	164	49	152	22	34	6
%	41.6	57.2	10.9	63.8	19.1	59.1	8.6	13.2	2.3

Out of 257 individuals, 221 reported their fields of study from whom 133 were medical students, 19 had studied English Language Literature and the rest were of 26 other majors such as English Language Translation, English Language Teaching, Architecture, Civil Engineering, Psychology etc. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the 64-item WTW questionnaire after the second piloting phase:

**Table 4.** *Descriptive Statistics of the 64-Item WTW Questionnaire*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q 63. When the teacher's plan for each session is NOT predictable,	256	3.1445	1.30106
Q 38. When I write in the morning,	254	3.0669	1.25087
Q 37. When I am involved in large group discussions (6-10 students),	256	2.8945	1.16173
Q 54. When I write in the evening,	254	2.8583	1.24300
Q 33. When I interact with classmates who are younger than me,	255	2.8431	1.12545
Q 12. When I interact with the opposite sex in the writing class,	253	2.8221	1.23281
Q 2. When I have a teacher of the opposite sex,	257	2.7938	1.08985
Q 47. When I write in the afternoon,	254	2.7520	1.15134
When I communicate with students of higher semesters (terms),	255	2.7373	1.19612
Q 23. When I interact with classmates who are older than me,	253	2.7352	1.07138
Q 18. When I take online writing tests in the class,	255	2.7294	1.20421
Q 59. When I have practiced writing in Persian,	254	2.6732	1.26034
Q 28. When I need to read more extensively about the topic,	256	2.6172	3.45644
Q 43. When I am involved in a competition with my classmates,	254	2.6024	1.26809
Q 55. When my teacher corrects my mistakes indirectly,	254	2.5906	1.21489
Q 7. When computers are used for teaching writing in the class,	254	2.5866	1.22490
Q 14. When I write at home,	256	2.5352	2.83652
Q 64. When my teacher assigns in-class writing compositions,	255	2.5059	1.11140
Q 25. When I am involved in small group discussions (3-5 students),	256	2.4961	1.09185
Q 3. When my classmates read and comment on my writing	253	2.4822	1.17374
Q 35. When my teacher assigns out-of-class writing compositions,	255	2.4706	1.16296
Q 13. When I am involved in pair-work activities,	254	2.4291	1.13900
Q 6. When I need to learn grammatical structures,	255	2.4235	1.12288
Q 9. When the topic is general,	255	2.4118	1.14287
Q 8. When I need to pass the writing test,	254	2.4016	1.36448
Q 56. When I am involved in teaching writing in the class,	256	2.3828	1.11757
Q 17. When I need to have an extensive knowledge of vocabulary items,	255	2.3804	1.15032
Q 60. When the teacher's plan for each session is predictable,	255	2.3569	1.06949
Q 44. When I outline my ideas with others before I start writing,	251	2.3546	1.08709
Q 29. When multimedia equipment is used for teaching writing,	253	2.3123	1.02418
Q 10. When my goal is to start my job after graduation,	255	2.2863	1.22972
Q 42. When social networks are used for writing purposes,	254	2.2559	1.05644
Q 62. When I write at a multicultural setting (e.g. an international course),	256	2.2539	1.06365
Q 46. When my teacher corrects my mistakes directly,	255	2.2353	1.18701
Q 61. When my teacher makes the students curious to know more about writing,	256	2.1953	1.09944
Q 48. When I know how to write a C.V,	253	2.1897	1.07440
Q 53. When my teacher uses different ways of teaching in the classroom,	252	2.1786	1.12020
Q 57. When I plan to exchange cultural information with foreigners,	256	2.1680	1.18119
Q 58. When my teacher provides me with private counseling,	257	2.1673	1.13847
Q 39. When I know how to write an article,	254	2.1614	1.18352

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q 19. When I receive comments regarding my writing performance,	254	2.1614	1.08599
Q 36. When I have access to writing samples,	253	2.1423	1.09631
Q 31. When I am involved in choosing the topic in the class,	257	2.1284	1.08030
Q 52. When I outline my ideas individually before I start writing,	256	2.0820	.99662
Q 34. When my teacher is aware of my English proficiency level,	257	2.0623	1.08073
Q 27. When I attend international congresses,	253	2.0316	1.13695
Q 45. When I feel free to write,	255	2.0196	1.15169
Q 5. When I write letters/emails to friends abroad,	252	2.0079	1.19758
Q 50. When I need to learn expressions related to my field of study,	256	2.0078	1.06271
Q 26. When I know how to write a proposal,	255	1.9804	1.08116
Q 51. When I know writing in English will help me make money,	254	1.9803	1.04239
Q 15. When I am able to write an essay,	254	1.9685	1.09210
Q 30. When I monitor my own progress in writing,	257	1.9650	.95746
Q 24. When I know the writing principles (topic sentence, supporting sentences, listing signals, etc),	254	1.9646	1.07188
Q 32. When I know how to use writing strategies,	256	1.9609	1.04339
Q 20. When the topic is related to my major,	254	1.9331	1.09592
Q 22. When I know how to learn writing,	256	1.9023	1.07477
Q 49. When I plan to live abroad,	255	1.8863	1.11486
Q 40. When I plan to study abroad,	255	1.8784	1.10338
Q 21. When my goal is to continue my education,	255	1.8784	1.04849
Q 41. When I have background information about the topic,	254	1.8504	1.00653
Q 4. When I am able to write a paragraph,	254	1.8386	1.08599
Q 16. When I apply for admission to continue my education abroad,	256	1.7773	1.07431
Q 11. When I have background knowledge about what I want to write,	254	1.7323	1.02882
Valid N (listwise)	192		

As demonstrated in the table, the highest mean score (3.144) belongs to item 63 (teacher's session plan) followed by items 38 (writing in the morning), and 37 (learners' involvement in large group discussions) with the mean scores 3.066 and 2.894, respectively. The lowest mean score (1.732) is observed on item 11 preceded by items 16 and 4, the former with the mean score of 1.777 and the latter with the mean score of 1.838. As shown in the table, items 4, 16, and 11 deal with paragraph writing, further education abroad, and the role of background knowledge, respectively. All of the items of the questionnaire have standard deviations above 1, which indicates that they have clustered toward the mean.

### Questionnaire Validation

Exploratory factor analysis was used for identifying the constructs or factors affecting EFL learners' *willingness to write* (WTW) on the basis of the correlations between variables. A sufficiently big sample is needed to conduct factor analysis (Costello & Osborne, 2005). One

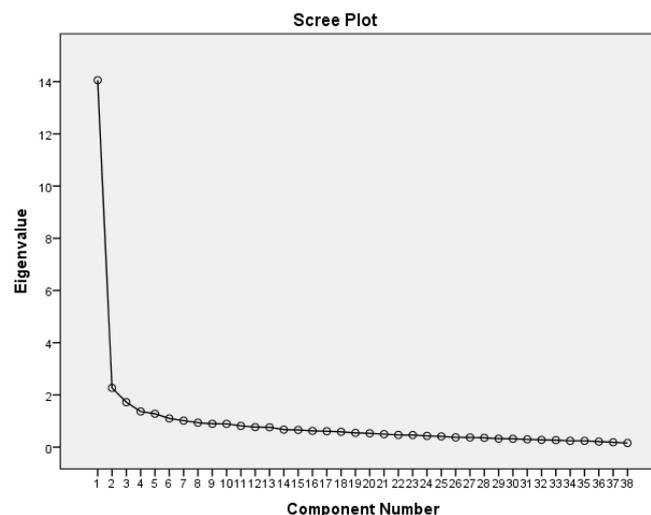
way to make sure the sample size is large enough is to use the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (Field, 2009). The KMO “represents the ratio of the squared correlation between variables to the squared partial correlation between variables” (Field, 2009, p. 647). When the KMO is near 0, factor extraction is almost impossible but when it is near 1, factor extraction is deemed possible. According to Field (2009), KMO values above 0.9 are ideal. The KMO value of this dataset is 0.94 which is deemed appropriate.

**Table 5.** *KMO Bartlett's Test*

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>	<b>.942</b>	
	Approx. Chi-Square	5058.880
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	703
	Sig.	.000

Another required criterion for conducting factor analysis is that measurement of the variables should be done at an interval level since it can be accurately applied to the values of the variables (Field, 2009). A Likert scale is assumed to be an interval scale since it carries the assumption that the differences between points on the scale are all equal (Ratray & Jones, 2007) and the data should be normally distributed in order to be able to generalize the results beyond the sample (Field, 2009) and to further conduct factor analysis to determine the underlying factors of the dataset. In this study, the WTW questionnaire was designed on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Definitely willing” to “Definitely NOT willing”.

Another statistically admissible way to identify the number of factors to be considered for conducting factor analysis is to look at the scree plot. The figure below shows the scree plot of the 64-item WTW questionnaire:



**Figure 1.** *Scree Plot of the 64-item WTW Questionnaire*

As shown in Figure 1, a few of the 64 eigenvectors of the correlation matrix in this study have high eigenvalues: many are below 1 or are even lower. The factors that have values above the point at which the curve flattens out should be kept and the ones with values at the break point or below should be removed (Hof, 2017). Therefore, as it can be seen in the scree plot above, four factors should be retained. Items of the construct of WTW were factor analyzed using the principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. Table 6 displays the total variance explained for the factors that affect EFL learners' willingness to write in English. Four factors were extracted because their eigenvalues were greater than 1.

**Table 6.** *Total Variance Explained*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.055	36.987	36.987	14.055	36.987	36.987	10.025	26.382	26.382
2	2.268	5.967	42.955	2.268	5.967	42.955	3.983	10.481	36.863
3	1.723	4.533	47.488	1.723	4.533	47.488	3.148	8.283	45.147
4	1.365	3.592	51.080	1.365	3.592	51.080	2.254	5.933	51.080
5	1.279	3.367	54.446						
6	1.099	2.893	57.339						
7	1.016	2.673	60.012						
8	.938	2.469	62.481						
9	.894	2.352	64.833						
10	.891	2.345	67.179						
11	.815	2.144	69.323						
12	.768	2.020	71.343						
13	.761	2.002	73.345						
14	.671	1.765	75.110						
15	.660	1.738	76.847						
16	.624	1.642	78.489						
17	.610	1.605	80.095						
18	.586	1.542	81.637						
19	.545	1.434	83.071						
20	.530	1.394	84.465						
21	.497	1.307	85.773						
22	.466	1.227	87.000						
23	.464	1.222	88.222						
24	.430	1.133	89.355						
25	.413	1.088	90.442						
26	.374	.984	91.427						
27	.372	.979	92.406						
28	.356	.936	93.342						
29	.326	.857	94.199						
30	.321	.844	95.043						

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
31	.298	.785	95.828						
32	.278	.732	96.560						
33	.268	.704	97.264						
34	.242	.636	97.900						
35	.241	.634	98.534						
36	.212	.559	99.093						
37	.186	.488	99.581						
38	.159	.419	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

As shown in the table, the analysis yielded four factors explaining a total of 51.080% of the variance for the variables. Factor 1 with the highest loadings explained 36.987% of the variance. The second factor explained 5.967% of the variance and the third and fourth factors explained 4.533% and 3.592 of the variance, respectively.

The rotated component matrix is the main output of principal components analysis which shows estimated correlations between each of the variables and the estimated components. Table 7 demonstrates the rotated component matrix of the four factors underlying the construct of willingness to write in English extracted via applying factor analysis.

**Table 7. Rotated Component Matrix**

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q40: When I plan to study abroad,	.79			
Q16: When I apply for admission to continue my education abroad,	.791			
Q49: When I plan to live abroad,	.763			
Q15: When I am able to write an essay,	.733			
Q26: When I know how to write a proposal,	.718			
Q27: When I attend international congresses,	.681			
Q41: When I have background information about the topic,	.664			
Q22: When I know how to learn writing,	.663			
Q11: When I have background knowledge about what I want to write,	.660			
Q21: When my goal is to continue my education,	.657			
Q48: When I know how to write a C.V,	.636			
Q32: When I know how to use writing strategies,	.627			
Q04: When I am able to write a paragraph,	.620			
Q20: When the topic is related to my major,	.619			
Q50: When I need to learn expressions related to my field of study,	.614			

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q24: When I know the writing principles (topic sentence, supporting sentences, etc.),	.599			
Q39: When I know how to write an article,	.599			
Q05: When I write letters/emails to friends abroad,	.556			
Q57: When I plan to exchange cultural information with foreigners,	.543			
Q17: When I need to have an extensive knowledge of vocabulary items,	.525			
Q51: When I know writing in English will help me make money,	.522			
Q10: When my goal is to start my job after graduation,	.455			
Q45: When I feel free to write,		.636		
Q53: When my teacher uses different ways of teaching in the classroom,		.623		
Q59: When I have practiced writing in Persian,		.542		
Q31: When I am involved in choosing the topic in the class,		.536		
Q52: When I outline my ideas individually before I start writing,		.525		
Q09: When the topic is general,		.483		
Q36: When I have access to writing samples,		.462		
Q07: When computers are used for teaching writing in the class,			.630	
Q29: When multimedia equipment is used for teaching writing,			.609	
Q18: When I take online writing tests in the class,			.606	
Q08: When I need to pass the writing test,			.578	
Q35: When my teacher assigns out-of-class writing compositions,			.491	
Q56: When I am involved in teaching writing in the class,				.661
Q55: When my teacher corrects my mistakes indirectly,				.659
Q43: When I am involved in a competition with my classmates,				.477
Q01: When I communicate with students of higher semesters (terms),				.473
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. <sup>a</sup>				
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.				

As shown in Table 7, factor analysis was run after performing Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization. Variables with loadings lower than 0.3 were considered to have a non-significant impact and were therefore omitted. Items which loaded on all four factors were also removed and the item omission continued for a few separate rounds; as a result, 26 items were removed and as it can be seen in the rotated component matrix, there are finally 38 items that load on 4 separate factors. In other words, there are four main factors underlying the construct of willingness to write. As demonstrated in the table, factor 1 comprised 22 items with factor loadings ranging from 0.793 to 0.455. The items in factor 1 are Qs 40, 16, 49, 15, 26, 27, 41, 22, 11, 21, 48, 32, 4, 50, 24, 39, 5, 57, 17, 51, 10, and 20. Seven items loaded on factor 2 with loadings ranging from 0.636 to 0.462. The items of the second factor are Qs 45, 53, 59, 31, 52, 9, and 36. Factor 3 comprised 5 items with factor loadings ranging from 0.630 to 0.491. The items of factor three are Qs 7, 29, 18, 8, and 35.

Finally, factor four had 4 items with loadings ranging from 0.661 to 0.473. The items in factor 4 are Qs 56, 55, 43, and 1.

A closer look at the table indicates that all items in the rotated component matrix have factor loadings above 0.450. The highest factor loading (0.793) was observed on item 40 which was loaded on factor one. However, the lowest factor loading (0.455) belongs to item 10, also loaded on factor one, followed by item 36 with the loading of 0.462 observed on the second factor. The last version of the questionnaire with 38 items became the finalized validated WTW questionnaire (see appendix C).

## Discussion

**The first factor** with 22 major loadings, on items 40, 16, 49, 15, 26, 27, 41, 22, 11, 21, 48, 32, 4, 50, 24, 39, 5, 57, 17, 51, 10, and 20, encompasses three major sub-factors, namely international posture, linguistics, and professionalism. Hence, the term *Interlinguaprofession* was coined to label this factor. Falling back on Yashima's (2009) model proposal, International posture encompasses international affairs and deals directly with the needs learners have outside the borders of their home country and when they feel the need for having an extensive communication with the rest of the world in order to expand their circle of friends or their area of specialty or interest. The items that are categorized under this factor are all related to the urge and the desire of the learners to communicate and exchange information with other people from around the world. Items 49, 40, 16, 27, 5, 57, directly tackle either living or studying abroad; they uncover the need for the learners to expand and master their writing proficiency to be able to survive, live and work in another country (Yashima, 2002). Items 4, 15, 26, and 39 all center around professionalism and show the need the learners feel in writing articles, papers, CV and so forth in order to be able to fit in a foreign culture and be able to communicate perfectly in the academic world for professional purposes either in their educational or their occupational roles. As stated by Payne (2012), most of the jobs entail good writing skills and many others require a high level of competency. The means of communication in the world of academia is the written language and a closer look at the aforesaid items signifies the importance of writing in today's world. The ability to write clearly and effectively impacts students' academic performance with regard to the curriculum (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007). Item 17 clearly deals with the role of linguistics as it refers to the importance of extensive knowledge of vocabulary needed for producing sentences. As mentioned by Van Gelderen and Oostdam (2002) Linguistic fluency

is a significant factor in writer's abilities in order to generate comprehensible texts and sentence structures. *Interlinguaprofession* is the most extended and significant factor with the highest loadings among all, therefore, if fully understood and taken into account by either the prospective teachers or the learners, it will bring about significant improvements in rendering the students even more willing to write by catering for their linguistic, international and professional needs.

**The second factor** underlying the construct of WTW is the role of *cognition* and how cognitive elements affect learners' willingness to write. This factor consists of items 45, 53, 59, 31, 52, 9, and 36. A closer look at the items of this factor indicates that they are all centered on the role of cognition. Item 59 of the questionnaire, as an example, highlights the importance of L1 as a major cognitive resource that learners depend on at earlier stages of their writing mastery and developing their inter-language. Learners write in their second language in the same way they write in their first or mother tongue language and research has numerously shown this in a variety of different contexts (Cumming, 2001; Cumming, Rebuffot & Ledwell, 1989). Therefore, we can hardly deny the role of L1 as a major cognitive resource which affects learners' second language writing. However, the role of negative transfer from L1 should not be neglected by any means but the importance of L1 in shaping L2 proficiency is beyond any shadow of doubt. Brainstorming, being able to produce new concepts and ideas and linking them to make a unified piece of writing are directly related to the cognitive dimension. Every writing task involves the three cognitive processes of reflecting, interpreting and expressing. However, it is worth pointing out that text production and text interpretation are not simple processes, linguistically speaking (Deane, Samuels, & Williams, 2009). Internalizing linguistic expressions during text interpretation is major in the writing process (Demény, (2012). There are two strategic approaches of top-down and bottom-up in writing. The top-down approach is featured by advance-planning strategies, such as outlining that helps in generating and organizing ideas (Deane et al., 2009), which is in line with item 52 of the items of the WTW questionnaire which was categorized under the third factor of *cognition* in the present study: "when I outline my ideas individually before I start writing". As Deane et al (2009) state, outlining can help the writer find drafting easier and more useful. Therefore, we can argue that outlining in advance raises willingness to write thus nudges learners forward in creating more sophisticated and better developed writing texts. A number of studies have found that making an outline is more likely to result in the production of higher quality texts (Deane et al., 2009). Outlines can help

learners organize their texts, develop ideas and texts, and give structure to their ideas (Walvoord et al, 1995). Electronic outlining plays a significant role in enhancing students' writing performance and it lessens mental struggle. (De Smet, Broekkamp, Brand-Gruwel, & Kirschner, 2011). This further highlights the importance of making an outline before initiating the writing task. As found out in the present study, it is an essential parameter in making EFL learners more willing to write, that's why teachers are strongly recommended to practice outlining with their students in the writing class.

On the other hand, the bottom-up approach, as a cognitive strategy in writing, assumes that writers generate new and important ideas as their words are jot down on paper. The bottom-up approach is featured by free writing and extensive revising (Elbow, 1981). As such, item 45 of the WTW questionnaire deals with the same issue and highlights the significance of free writing which induces a sense of willingness in learners to write. The act of free writing can prompt new ideas and is clearly an effective strategy in enhancing learners' writing proficiency as evidence abounds. Moreover, extensive free writing may be useful for improving handwriting or typing fluency (Hayes, 2006). In another study conducted by Defazio, Jones, Tennant and Hook (2010), it was stated that writing is a cognitive-oriented skill, which involves learning, comprehension, application and integration of new knowledge. Also, creative inspiration, problem-solving, reflection and revision result in the production of a written text.

**The third factor** which contains items 7, 29, 18, 8, and 35 is labeled *Technology*. It basically highlights the importance of using computers and multimedia equipment in writing classes as well as online test administration. A closer look at the items of this factor indicates that the use of multimedia and computers can enhance learners' willingness to write to a great extent. In other words, it is concluded that sticking to the writing task and teaching via today's technological advancements can induce willingness among writing language learners. Sullivan and Pratt (1996) compared two ESL writing classes, in one of which online discussion was used. They found that the class with the online discussion course in writing had a remarkable improvement compared to the other class. In another study carried out by Schultz (2000), students' revisions to their writing were investigated using *Computer-Assisted Classroom Discussion* (CACD) and it was found out in the study that advanced language learners made detailed and local revisions after receiving feedback via CACD. As Warschauer (2007) anticipates, in the days ahead of us, new types of writing will emerge which will necessitate the application of computers in the English language classroom when

spontaneous needs arise. Sandolo (2010) believes that word processors need to be available in all classrooms to help students, more especially for those with motor skills issues. His research findings further indicated that technology equips students with the ability to enhance their writing via adding more precision in the details they provide in their writing compositions. Moreover, electronic discussion proved to raise a critical awareness about the nature of communication or miscommunication (DiMatteo, 1991).

**The last factor**, with 4 loadings on items 1, 43, 55, and 56 of the questionnaire, is labeled *Involvement* mainly because of the fact that all of the items (1, 43, 56) are directly related to the comprehensive and collective nature of students' involvement in the act of teaching and learning writing which augments their degree of willingness to write. Involvement is basically considered as the product of the form of language use. It involves linguistic variation in both spoken and written forms of communication (Besnier, 1994). Involvement entails both the learners and the teacher to delve into the writing task since involvement of all in learning brings about success for all learners. A more careful and detailed examination of the questionnaire indicates that there are items highlighting the role of classmates and how they get involved in the writing task as well as the role of the teacher as the facilitator who can make it a more doable and realistic task for the learners. Interestingly, among the items loading on this factor there is item 56 which is “when I am involved in teaching writing in the class”, which signifies the importance of involvement and how seriously the learners see their involvement in the task that they see themselves a part of teaching writing in the class and prefer to take part in it actively. Item 43 also shows competitive interaction among the students through which they could touch the tendency to move forward not just on an isolated line but in interaction with other peers. This necessitates the teacher to be able to provide the situation for out-performing students to scaffold their weaker counterparts to support them to move toward more actuality from potentiality as stated by Vygotsky (1978).

## Conclusion

The willingness to write (WTW) questionnaire was designed, developed, and validated in this study. There are four factors at the core of the WTW questionnaire, which were named, *interlinguaprofession*, *cognition*, *involvement* and *technology*. The first factor (interlinguaprofession) with 22 items and the highest loadings explains more than one third of the variance. This factor encompasses international, linguistic, and professional aspects of

writing in EFL learners' life. Issues such as the need to produce grammatically correct texts, applying for admissions overseas, writing paragraphs, proposals, articles etc. are the underlying elements of this factor.

Cognitive strategies were also shown to be as important in making students more willing to write; making an outline before the writing task or using L1 as a huge cognitive resource, for instance, were proved to be effective in generating more willingness to write in learners. Involvement of the learners in the writing task was another factor underlying the construct of willingness to write, which should be addressed by the teachers. Finally, technology was found to be another significant factor dealing with the use of computers, multimedia, online tests and so forth which play a part in inducing a sense of willingness to write. It was found out that teaching writing via technological tools, social networks, etc. can tremendously impact learners' WTW.

Furthermore, the four factors of the construct correlate highly with each other. The reliability measure of the questionnaire was considerably high:  $\alpha = 0.95$ . All items of the questionnaire contribute to the construct validity and reliability of the questionnaire: the items correlate more than 0.4 with the factors that underlie them; the Cronbach's alpha does not increase when one of the questionnaire items is deleted.

Academic EFL/ESL writing teachers can benefit from the findings of this study most by enhancing their students' writing ability via embarking upon new strategies through to make learners more willing to write. For instance, as already explained in the findings of this study, learners' involvement and engagement in writing is one significant factor that makes learners more willing to write and teachers should address that in their classes to induce a sense of willingness to write in learners to improve their writing ability.

It was found out in this study that cognition plays a highly crucial role in making students more willing to write. Therefore, teachers and writing practitioners are strongly recommended to devise more cognitive tasks such as outlining in the writing classes to nudge their students forward toward more WTW.

It was further found out in this study that professional aspects such as writing paragraphs, proposals, articles etc. are factors affecting WTW. It is beyond any shadow of doubt that writing is an essential requirement for almost all of the job-related as well as educational environments in today's world. Nevertheless, there is hardly any doubt that learners are reluctant to approach writing, as discussed previously. Learners should learn to be autonomous and try to recognize and use the factors that make them display more

willingness to write if they wish to achieve success in learning writing; one such way is to practice more professional writing assignments.

Test developers can take into account the factors that affect learners' WTW and design more challenging yet constructive writing tests that can trigger learners' willingness to write to bring about improvement in their writing ability. As it was found out in this study, cognition, for instance, is an underlying factor of WTW; test developers can design writing tests that make learners' use more cognitive strategies such as note making or free writing.

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## Appendix C: 38-item Questionnaire Willingness to Write in English Questionnaire

- Name: .....
- Age: .....
- Education level: .....
- Major: .....
- Sex:  Male  Female
- How do you rate your writing ability?  High  Medium  Low

*Instructions: Please read the instructions before beginning to answer the questions. This questionnaire contains 64 statements in 2 pages. Read each statement carefully. For each statement, check the response that best represents your opinion from definitely willing (1) to definitely NOT willing (5). Make sure that your answer is in the correct box. Fill in only one response for each statement.*

- 1) I am **Definitely Willing** to write
- 2) I am **Willing** to write
- 3) I am **Moderately Willing** to write
- 4) I am **NOT Willing** to write
- 5) I am **Definitely NOT Willing** to write

	1	2	3	4	5
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- 
- 24 When I know how to write an article,  
25 When I plan to study abroad,  
26 When I have background information about the topic,  
27 When I am involved in a competition with my classmates,  
28 When I feel free to write,  
29 When I know how to write a C.V,  
30 When I plan to live abroad,  
31 When I need to learn expressions related to my field of study,  
32 When I know writing in English will help me make money,  
33 When I outline my ideas individually before I start writing,  
34 When my teacher uses different ways of teaching in the classroom,  
35 When my teacher corrects my mistakes indirectly,  
36 When I am involved in teaching writing in the class,  
37 When I plan to exchange cultural information with foreigners,  
38 When I have practiced writing in Persian,
-