AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN SPEAKING CLASS IN ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate students' willingness to communicate (WTC), the factors influencing students became reluctant to communicate, and teachers' strategies to encourage students to be willing to communicate. The research was conducted in speaking class during the synchronous online learning. The data were collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, so the mixed methods were employed. The respondents of this study were 25 students of eighth graders at SMPN 69 Jakarta. The results show that the students had low level of willingness to communicate, there were four factors influencing students become reluctant to communicate (self-confidence, anxiety, motivation, students' personalities, and situational variables), and three strategies that the teachers employed to encourage students to be willing to communicate in speaking class such as playing games, using technology, and providing a variety of interactional activities.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate, Online Learning, Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool used to deliver information, ideas, and feelings from one person to another. In other words, language is required to build good communication with others. As the global language, English is the language which is highly demanded in the globalization era. This can be viewed from the influence of English in several fields such as education, science, technology, finance, industry tourism and transportation (Jianing, 2007 cited in Agustina, 2018). In Indonesia, English is the most popular foreign language among other foreign languages; therefore, it becomes one of the compulsory subjects at schools from junior high school to senior high school levels according to the national curriculum which is the 2013 curriculum (Agustina, 2018). In addition to this, the globalized world in the 21st century requires the ability to communicate effectively because communication is one of the 4Cs of the century skills (i.e., communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity) (Chien, Hwang & Jong, 2020). So, being able to communicate in English as the global language will enable learners to participate in the 21st century.

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is one of the key factors for communication (Cao & Wei, 2019). McCroskey & Baer (1985 cited in Cao & Wei, 2019) propose the concept of WTC to understand why some people are more willing to speak in their native language. Similarly, Ningsih, Narahara & Mulyono (2018) argue that willingness to communicate is a condition in which someone is willing to communicate without any strain or burden. From several definitions of WTC above, it can be concluded that WTC is a condition of one's readiness to communicate. In other words, WTC plays an important role in language learning especially in speaking class where students are supposed to use the language.

Recent empiric studies on WTC in English classroom have been investigated in Indonesia too. Ningsih, Narahara & Mulyono (2018) have found that high school are more willing to communicate if they feel the need to do it and comfortable to communicate. Subekti (2019) shows that learners show a high level of WTC because they have good communication skill and their level of communication is at moderate level. These studies were conducted in the face-to-face learning context, while currently the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic in which the teaching and learning process is conducted online.

Simamora (2020) contends that students in Indonesia find online learning difficult because they are bored studying in a virtual environment. Besides, Simamora (2020) asserts that there are changes in mood which lead to emotional disturbances and student feel anxious during online learning which can affect their willingness to communicate in online learning. In addition, online learning is also difficult for teachers to create materials which involve students to be willing to communicate (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz & Santiague, 2017). Whereas in the speaking class, students should attempt to communicate to use the language meaning that they must have WTC (Havwini, 2019). Therefore, knowing the fact that WTC is important in language learning and the implementation of online learning in Indonesia which still have some challenges, this research is going to investigate students' WTC in speaking class in online learning. This research is also going to explore what factors which may influence students to be reluctant to communicate in speaking class in online learning and teachers' strategies to encourage them to be willing to communicate.

METHOD

This research used mixed methods because they provide a more detailed and complete interpretation and give more meaningful responses to get further information. The mixed method approach in this study adopts a triangulation design. Triangulation design is used in a mixed method approach to verify research findings by producing and comparing various types of data, as well as different respondents' viewpoints on the subject under investigation (Torrance, 2012). Different data collection strategies are needed in accordance with this concept of triangulation. As a result, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative method is used to analyze the data gathered from questionnaires and the qualitative method is used to analyze the responses elicited from interviews. The eighth-grade students at SMPN 69 Jakarta were the population of this research which consisted of 25 people in the academic year 2020/2021. The participants of this research were also three English teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

1. **Level of Students' Willingness to Communicate**

   The researcher distributed the five-point Likert scale questionnaire (strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly agree) which contains 16 questions under 4 categories (self-confidence, anxiety, communicative competence, and motivation) to examine the level of students' willingness to communicate. This questionnaire was completed by 25 students from SMPN 69 Jakarta in grade 8. Table 1 summarizes the

responses to questionnaire items. The percentages indicate the number of students who agreed and disagreed with the statements.

Table 1 Level of Students' Willingness to Communicate

No	Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I'm willing to present my opinion to my class	4%	24%	44%	12%	16%
2.	I'm ready to give presentation in front of students	4%	36%	20%	12%	28%
3.	I am willing to ask English teacher to repeat what she or he said	8%	4%	20%	28%	40%
4.	When I speak English, I'm afraid the other students will laugh at me	8%	16%	12%	40%	24%
5.	When given the opportunity to speak freely in English in speaking class, I am willing	4%	44%	16%	20%	16%
6.	When I have a group conversation in speaking class, I am willing to communicate	4%	40%	12%	24%	20%
7.	If an English teacher asked me a question in English, I will become nervous	4%	20%	12%	24%	40%
8.	I would feel uneasy speaking English in front of the students	4%	16%	16%	28%	36%
9.	I'm willing to greet someone in English	4%	8%	36%	40%	12%
10.	Talking to a friend using English in speaking class	8%	16%	52%	20%	4%
11.	In my English class, I'm not very good at volunteering answers	16%	8%	16%	48%	12%
12.	When I have to speak English in front of my class, I get nervous and confused	8%	8%	12%	48%	24%
13.	I always look forward to my English classes, especially the speaking class	4%	8%	52%	24%	12%

14.	Learning English is really great	4%	0%	28%	20%	48%
15.	I enjoy learning English	4%	4%	28%	32%	32%
16.	I'm having a great time learning English	4%	4%	20%	40%	32%

The findings from table 1 show that students at SMPN 69 Jakarta had a low level of willingness to communicate. This can be seen from the responses from the questionnaire which shows that students had poor self-confidence, high anxiety, low communicative competence, and moderate motivation as shown in table 2.

Table 2 Category of Level Students' Willingness to Communicate

Category	Level
Self-confidence	Low
Anxiety	High
Communicative Competence	Low
Motivation	Moderate

a. **Self Confidence**

Situations that caused students to have low self-confidence in communication in speaking class in online learning prompted students to be concerned that other students would laugh at them when they spoke English in class. One of the dominant trends in self-confidence is found in questionnaire number four with 40% of participants agreed and 24% disagreed.

Most participants agreed that they were afraid to speak English because they were not confident in their English skills and were afraid that their friend would laugh at them when they spoke English. It is also supported by students' interviews, *"tidak pede dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris"; "takut miss ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris."* According to these findings, students had low self-confidence which made them unwilling to speak English in a speaking class.

b. **Anxiety**

Similar conditions lead to the students having high anxiety in communication. In the speaking class in online learning, many students felt nervous when they spoke English. This can be seen from the answers in number 7 which shows that they felt nervous (24% agree and 40% strongly agree).

The bulk of participants stated strongly agree and agree that they felt nervous when teacher gave questions in English and they were afraid to answer the questions. Answer from students interviews back up these findings: *"malu dan gugup ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris"; "Paling yaa ragu, terus gugup gitu jadinya"; "perasaan saya kalau ditanya menggunakan bahasa Inggris deg degan sih ka, terus gugup juga takut salah jawab".*

c. **Communicative Competence**

Another possible cause to students' low communicative competence in speaking class in online learning is that students are hesitant to speak English and lack vocabulary knowledge, resulting in low communicative competence. It is as proven by the results

of responses number eleven with the "agree" answer reaches 48% and the "strongly agree" answer is 12%.

Almost half of the participants felt that they were not good at answering the questions given by the teacher. They were willing to answer when their names were called by the teacher, otherwise they were mostly silent and doubtful. Aside from the questionnaire results, this is supported by evidence from students' interviews confirming that students are doubtful and ashamed. As an example, *"kurang lancar dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris"; "tidak tau vocabulary dalam bahasa Inggris jadi ragu untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris"; "ragu jika ingin berbicara bahasa Inggris"*

d. Motivation

Despite having low self-confidence, high anxiety, and low communicative competence, grade 8 at SMPN 69 Jakarta exhibit modest motivation in speaking class. It was viewed from the responses number thirteen (I always look forward to my English classes, especially the speaking class) with 24% of participants' agreed and 12% of participants strongly agreed.

52% of those responses said they neither agreed nor disagreed (neutral) which means a half of eight-graders believe that learning speaking is sometimes enjoyable and sometimes tough. This is verified by the findings of students' interviews, *"menurut saya belajar bahasa inggris itu menyenangkan ka. Kalau untuk speaking sendiri susah susah gampang untuk dipelajari sih ka".*

Another supporting evidence were from teachers' interviews. There English teachers said that the students were rarely to communicate in English in class. *"Untuk anak-anak sendiri ketika di kelas cenderung pasif ya, jarang berbicara dengan bahasa Inggris"* (rT1)*; "yaa untuk anak-anak sendiri, ketertarikan untuk berbicara itu rendah ya…"* (rT2)*; "untuk kondisi anak anak sendiri mereka lebih ke pasif yaa, jarang ada interaksi gitu jadi kurang komunikatif di kelas"* (rT3). According to the findings of teacher interviews, it given an illustration that students had a low level of willingness to communicate in English in speaking class.

Based on the facts presented above, it is reasonable to conclude that the individuals are unwilling to communicate in English. The majority of participants felt they are embarrassed to speak English in class and were afraid to speak English because they didn't know how to pronounce words in English or had a limited vocabulary in English. They also had a high level of anxiety and low communicative competence, which made students anxious and hesitant to speak English. Even though they had a poor level of communication, they found it enjoyable to learn English.

2. Factors Affecting Willingness to Communicate

Factors affecting students' willingness to communicate were elicited from the five-point Likert scale questionnaire (strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, strongly agree) which contains 25 questions. Table 2 summarizes the questionnaire answers. The percentages represented how many students agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Table 3 factors Affecting Willingness to Communicate

		Factors Affecting WTC				
No	**Questions**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**

1.	I am sure that I will able to use the English vocabulary and expression that I have learned to communicate with my English teacher or friends	4%	4%	24%	44%	24%
2.	I'm sure in my ability to use sentences to describe myself in English	4%	8%	36%	44%	8%
3.	You are willing to speak if you know your classmates are better at speaking English than you are	4%	16%	24%	36%	20%
4.	You are willing to talk even though the teacher often corrects the grammatical error	4%	12%	24%	44%	16%
5.	You are willing to answer when the teacher asks you a question in English	4%	0%	52%	28%	16%
6.	When you speak in English in front of the students, you feel anxious	0%	12%	16%	40%	32%
7.	If your teacher asks you a question, you become nervous	0%	12%	16%	24%	48%
8.	When speaking in English, you will become so nervous that you forget what you already know	0%	8%	16%	52%	24%
9.	You're worried that the other students would judge you when you speak English	12%	16%	12%	44%	16%
10.	When you asked to do perform in English, you get nervous	0%	16%	12%	32%	40%
11.	You should try to speak English even though you are aware that you might not do so correctly	4%	0%	8%	36%	52%
12.	Even if they do not have a large vocabulary,	4%	4%	36%	20%	36%

No.						
	students should actively speak English					
13.	Students should speak English in speaking classes	12%	16%	52%	4%	16%
14.	When you make a mistake while speaking English, you should be given the opportunity to correct yourself	4%	0%	16%	48%	32%
15.	The communicative practices planned by the teacher assist you in improving your communicate in English	4%	8%	16%	52%	20%
16.	You find learning English very enjoyable	4%	4%	24%	28%	40%
17.	You remember what you learned in English class	0%	4%	44%	48%	4%
18.	You don't seem to be particularly motivated to learn English	24%	32%	32%	8%	4%
19.	You are working hard to learn English	4%	0%	20%	36%	40%
20	Learn English is important to you	4%	0%	24%	20%	52%
21.	Activities in speaking class are clear so students know what to do	4%	4%	24%	32%	36%
22.	The tasks created in the speaking class are attractive	4%	4%	32%	32%	28%
23.	The teacher responds to the students' concern in a timely manner	0%	4%	36%	32%	28%
24.	The teacher poses questions to elicit students' perspectives or opinions	4%	0%	36%	36%	24%
25.	Students understand what they are supposed to do in class because the tasks are clear	4%	0%	24%	48%	24%

Table 2 illustrates that students at SMPN 69 Jakarta had several factors influencing their willingness to communicate in English in speaking class. These factors had an impact on the low level of students' willingness to communicate. The factors include:
a. Self-confidence

b. Anxiety
c. Motivation
d. Students' Personality
e. Situational Variables

a.   Self- confidence

The first factor influencing students' willingness to communicate is self-confidence. It shows from outcome responses' No. 3 *"You are willing to speak if you know your classmates are better at speaking English than you are"* the bulk of participants (36% agreed, 24% strongly agreed) and from outcome responses' No 4 *"You are willing to talk even though the teacher often corrects the grammatical error"* also the participants answer (44% agreed and 16% strongly agreed). Students' interviews backup these findings *"karena saya sudah percaya diri aja sih miss…"; "… kayanya sih karena emang saya pede aja miss, karena kan kalau kitanya pede juga jadi berani buat bicara bahasa Inggris di kelas".* Teachers' interviews also supported these findings *"pertama anak anak itu gak percaya diri, takut salah karena kan itu menggunakan bahasa asing ya jadi mereka takut salah mengucapkannya".* (rT2); *"ya, anak anak itu banyak yang kurang percaya diri ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris ya"* (rT1); *"anak-anak kalau disuruh bicara bahasa Inggris banyak yang malu ya…"* (rT3).

b.   Anxiety

Anxiety is the second factor influencing students' willingness to communicate in online learning speaking classes. Many students are anxious about speaking English in class and many students are apprehensive about speaking English in class. This is demonstrated by the findings of the questionnaire conducted by students in the number 6, 8, and 10. No. 6 *"When you speak in English in front of the students, you feel anxious"* 40% of those students said they agreed and 32% said they strongly agreed. No.8 *"When speaking in English, you will become so nervous that you forget what already know"* 52% students said agreed and 24% said they strongly agreed. No. 10 *"When you asked to do perform in English, you get nervous"* 32% participants said agreed and 40% participants said strongly agreed. According to the responses, students experience high levels of nervousness when speaking English in class. These findings also supported by students' interviews *"saya grogi, takut juga bu kalau ngomong bahasa Inggris"; "perasaan saya sih takut juga, kadang deg degan juga sih miss takut; "apa ya miss, saya tuh suka takut kalo ngomong bahasa Inggris miss"; "takut miss ngomong bahasa Inggris"*

c.   Motivation

Another factor that affecting students' willingness to communicate is motivation. In these factors, motivation can contribute to students' willingness to communicate. In this case, the findings of the questionnaire completed by students in the number 16, 18, and 19 reveal the students' motivation. No. 16 *"You find learning English very enjoyable"* 40% said strongly agreed and 28% said agreed. No. 18 *"You don't seem particularly motivated to learn English"* 32% said disagreed and 32% said neutral. No. 19 *"You are working hard to learn English"* 40% said strongly agreed and 36% said agreed. Based on the current results of this questionnaire, motivation is one of the elements that influence students' willingness to communicate. Despite the fact that some of them finding speaking English challenging, they continue to try learn English and find it enjoyable. This is validated by the outcomes of students' interviews. For example, *"menurut saya belajar bahasa Inggris itu menyenangkan kan, kalau untuk speaking*

sendiri sih susah susah gampang untuk dipelajari"; "senang bu, untuk speaking sendiri sih sayang kadang sulit ya bu…"; "walaupun kadang speaking sulit saya masih tetap berusaha sih bu belajar bahasa Inggris sendiri di rumah". These findings also supported by the teachers' interviews. For example, the teachers disclose that *"… yaa kadang anak semangat untuk belajar ya tergantung mood mereka…"* (rT1); *"siswa tuh kalau kegiatannya menarik mereka jadi semangat juga ya untuk belajar…"* (rT3)

d.   Students' Personality

Students' personality is another factor that influence students' willingness to speak. The personality of students is determined by the students themselves. This is evident from the questionnaire results, which imply that they have students' personality factors, as shown in questionnaire number 11 and 14. No. 14 *"You should try to speak English even though you are aware that you might not do so correctly"* 52% of those responses said strongly agreed and 36% of those responses said agreed. No. 14 *"When you make a mistake while speaking English, you should be given the opportunity to correct yourself"* 48% responses said agreed and 32% responses said strongly agreed. Aside from the questionnaire answers, there is further data gained from the outcomes of student and teacher interviews. An example, *"… saya sudah terbiasa juga berbicara bahasa Inggris jadi sudah tau cara berbicaranya dan vocabularynya" (rS4); "saya juga belajar bahasa Inggris lewat sosmed bu, terus juga punya temen orang luar negeri jadinya bisa belajar bahasa Inggris gitu…"* (rS2); rT3 state: *"mereka gabisa dan gangerti cara ngomong bahasa Inggris, terus juga mungkin mereka malas untuk ngomong bahasa Inggris…"*

e.   Situational Variables

A further factors that can influence students' willingness to communicate is the situational variables. These situational variables includes, task type, classroom environment, and teacher roles' and they are related to each other. It can show from the outcome responses in the number 21, 22, and 23. No. 21 *"Activities in speaking class are clear so students know what to do"* (36% said strongly agree and 32% said agreed), No. 22 *"The tasks created in the speaking class are attractive"* (32% said neutral, 32% said agreed, and 28% said strongly agreed), and No. 23 *"The teacher responds to the students' concern in a timely manner"* (36% said neutral, 32% said agreed, and 28% said strongly agreed). This indicates that the kind of assignment, the environment in the classroom, and the roles of teachers are all elements that influence the effect on students of speaking in class. These results also supported by teachers' interviews. For example, rT1 state *"… saya melihat itu anak pasif dan jarang untuk berkomunikasi dengan bahasa Inggris karena memang ya anak itu pengennya belajar tatap muka, artinya face to face dengan gurunya di kelas seperti semula…"; rT2 state "… faktor lingkungan mereka tidak biasa conversation menggunakan bahasa Inggris dengan gurunya…".* It means that environmental elements and students' learning environments have an impact on their ability to communicate in English.

3. **Teachers' Strategies for Encourage Students' Willingness to Communicate**

This study used semi-structured interviews for gathering the information from three English teachers at SMPN 69 Jakarta. The semi-structured interviews were conducted through WhatsApp calls. From the semi-structured interviews, the teachers used Zoom Meeting for the online platform for synchronous learning. The results of teacher interviews regarding their strategies to encourage students to communicate in speaking class are as follows:

a. Playing a games

2 out of 3 English teachers who have been interviewed used games at the beginning of learning to increase children's enthusiasm. For example, participants declared that:

"Ketika awal kegiatan saya mengadakan games untuk membangkitkan semangat siswa untuk belajar." (rT3);

"Iya, makanya saya juga ketika mengajar melakukan pembukaanya juga ada closingannya juga. Untuk pembukaanya sendiri saya suka kasih music dan games yang anak suka agar siswa juga semangat belajarnya." (rT1)

Teachers employed early activities before beginning the class by playing games so students enjoyed and had fun. Teachers were confident by doing so. Students became more enthusiastic about learning and may be more engaged in speaking class.

b. Using Technology

The use of technology in English language learning in speaking classes had a significant impact on encouraging students to speak in class. Teacher applied technology as one of the strategies they use to encourage students in speaking class because learning was also through online. This was evident by their answers from the semi-structured interviews.

"... pertama ada kita gunakan video dalam power point, kemudian setelah itu kita masuk google classroom, penjelasannya melalui zoom meeting."; "... saya sampai beli poen tablet untuk membantu menjelaskan ketika saya mengajar di zoom agar anak juga tertarik untuk belajar."; "contoh ketika kita memberikan tugas presentasi, si anak dapat mengembangkan presentasinya, mengembangkan videonya..." (rT1)

"Saya juga mengambil materi dari British council ya, karena disana materinya beragam dan membuat anak juga menjadi lebih tertarik untuk belajar" (rT2)

According to the findings of this interview, the teacher really took advantage of technology by assigning presenting tasks, creating videos, and then posting them to Google Classroom, which piqued the students' interest and increased their confidence in speaking English. *"... Artinya dari si anak itu timbul semangat, timbul kepercayaan diri, timbul kreativitas yang ditunjukan kepada orang lain. Walaupun masih ada salah kadang dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris, kita tetap berikan apresiasi, kita berikan semangat..."*

c. Providing a Variety of Interactional Activities

There are a variety of activities can be used to encourage students in this speaking class to participate in online learning. As did these three English teachers, they do activities in class that can encourage students to speak in class.

"... Saya suka bertanya satu satu kepada siswa agar siswa mau berbicara bahasa Inggris kalau gak gitu saya gak tau kemampuan mereka dan mereka juga jadi mau berbicara bahasa Inggris" (rT2).

"Biasanya yang saya gunakan untuk mancing mereka untuk berkomunikasi, saya menyuruh mereka membuat dialog berdua selama beberapa menit, kemudian nanti mereka memperagakan di depan teman temannya." (rT3).

"Misalnya kalau bagian-bagian yang sifatnya komunikatif kita awali dengan kelompok sehingga awalnya mereka bisa berdiskusi sehingga mereka tidak langsung monolog. Misalnya dari awal yang gampang dulu, misalnya dari percakapan yang sederhana tentang kehidupan sehari-hari… untuk pertemuan selanjutnya kita bisa coba yang monolog…" (rT1).

Based on the evidence above, it could then be presumed that the participants had different activities to encourage students in speaking class. The activity gave quizzes to students to get them speaking, had group discussions, had conversations and then presented them in front of the class. The teacher believed that this practice will boost students' willingness to communicate in speaking class.

Discussion

Based on the results, it is apparent that qualitative data gave results that strengthened the quantitative data findings in terms of recording students' willingness to communicate in English in speaking class in online learning. Firstly, the majority of students or participants believed they were too shy or hesitant to communicate in class. The other data indicated that they were also insecure while speaking English since they did not know how to pronounce English words and on average, they did not know the vocabulary in English. Furthermore, when their English teacher asked them a question in English, they became anxious. This data can be classified into four categories. First, students had low levels of confidence. Second students had high levels of anxiety. Third students had low levels of communicative competence, and fourth, students had moderate motivation. After classifying students into four categories, it is clear that the students in grade 8 had a low level of willingness to communicate. It is appropriate that students who have poor of self-confidence, lacks of communicative competence, lacks of motivation to speak, and an elevated level of anxiety are included in the category of having a low level of students' willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1992; Muamaroh & Prihartanti, 2013; Wijaya & Rizkina, 2015; Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Bielak, 2016; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2018; Elahi Shirvan *et al.*, 2019).

The categories of the factors affecting students' willingness to communicate are separated into two groups above. The first group includes psychological variables, while the second includes situational variables. The majority of students respond positively to motivation, personality, and situational variables. The students' motivation is fairly good and modest. Regarding the students' personalities, they are also fairly decent, with students having a strong willingness to pursue studying English even though it is done online. While for situational variables, the teacher has a bigger role to play in creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere so that students become more interested in learning English in speaking class during this online learning.
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a bigger role to play in creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere so that students become more interested in learning English in speaking class during this online learning.

CONCLUSION

Investigating students' willingness to communicate in speaking class in online learning is the first objective of this research. The finding reveals that students had low self-confidence, high anxiety, low communicative competence, and moderate level of motivation. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that students had low level of willingness to communicate in speaking class. The second aim of this research is to explore the factors influencing students becoming reluctant to communicate in speaking in online learning. The results showed that the factors were psychological variables and situational variables. The third objective of this research is to find out teachers' strategies to encourage students to be willing to communicate in speaking class in online learning. Three strategies were found such as playing games, using technology, and providing a variety of interactional activities.

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