

Promoting Growth Language Mindsets and Willingness to Communicate: A Six-Step Instructional Model in a Thai EFL Course

*Phakhawadee Chaisiri*¹

Chayachon Chuanon^{2*}

Khon Kaen University, Nong Khai Campus, Thailand¹

Khon Kaen University, Thailand²

*Corresponding author's email: chayach@kku.ac.th

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated the effectiveness of a Growth Language Mindset (GLM) Instructional Model in enhancing learners' GLM and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. Participants were 42 students enrolled in an English for Communication course at a Thai university. The six-step GLM Instructional Model—(1) Mindset Check, (2) Activating a Growth Mindset, (3) Language Practice, (4) Feedforward, (5) Setting a Challenging Goal, and (6) Reflection—was implemented over four cycles during one semester. Data were collected via pre- and post-assessments and focus group interviews. Quantitative results showed a statistically significant increase in learners' GLM, whereas the increase in WTC was not statistically significant. However, qualitative findings suggested that developing an understanding of a growth mindset may have supported learners' engagement in learning, which appeared to positively influence their WTC both inside and outside the classroom. Participants reported that Steps 1 and 2 were useful for evaluating their mindset and clarifying their misconceptions about language learning. They also found Steps 3 and 4 meaningful in boosting learning engagement, whereas Steps 5 and 6 were valuable for enhancing their intrinsic motivation to continue their self-improvement journey beyond class. This study demonstrates practical pedagogical steps for promoting GLM and provides preliminary evidence of improvements in learning engagement, intrinsic motivation, and communicative confidence in using English. It also highlights the crucial role of teachers in cultivating growth-oriented beliefs and underscores the value of a positive language learning environment that supports sustained learner engagement and may contribute to more successful language learning outcomes.

Keywords: language mindset, instructional design, Thai higher education, psychological constructs, communicative activity

In recent years, researchers have shown increased interest in positive psychology in second language (L2) education, with considerable attention to language mindset. Language mindset, an extension of Dweck's (2006) seminal work on mindset theory, pertains to learners' beliefs regarding the malleability of their language learning abilities, specifically whether they view linguistic competence as fixed or capable of development through sustained effort and strategic practice (Lou & Noels, 2019). On the other hand, a fixed mindset—the notion that traits such as language aptitude are unchangeable—can result in learned helplessness, reduced effort, and maladaptive reactions to educational problems (Lou & Noels, 2019; Sadeghi et al., 2020). GLM is an important motivational aspect that helps language learners stay focused, flexible, and successful overall. It encourages individuals to set objectives that focus on mastery and see setbacks as chances to grow instead of obstacles (Kim et al., 2024; Xu & Feng, 2024). Empirical evidence demonstrates that learners possessing growth language mindsets exhibit enhanced coping strategies for managing anxiety and negative emotions, display increased resilience in the face of challenges, and engage in more adaptive learning behaviors relative to those with fixed mindsets (Zhong et al., 2023).

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is another important psychological factor that leads to actual language use and is a key indicator of successful L2 learning. It is defined as a learner's readiness to start and take part in a conversation in the target language with a specific person at a specific time (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Recent studies increasingly indicate a dynamic interplay between GLM and learners' WTC. Research in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL) indicates that learners who view their language proficiency as adaptable tend to experience increased enjoyment, employ more effective self-regulatory strategies, and engage in greater linguistic risk-taking, all of which enhance their WTC (Wang et al., 2021; Yu & Ma, 2024). Evidence also shows that GLM can influence WTC both directly and indirectly through mediating factors such as grit, ideal L2 self, metacognitive strategy use, and self-efficacy (Ebn-Abbasi et al., 2024; Ho et al., 2025; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024). These studies highlight GLM as an important psychological resource that supports learners' L2 communicative engagement inside and beyond the classroom, while underscoring the need for further work on how GLM-oriented pedagogy can strengthen WTC in varied educational settings.

In Thailand, educational practices have been marked by teacher-centered instruction, frequently constraining students' options for active engagement and independent language use (Chaiyasat & Intakaew, 2023). This teaching method may unintentionally support fixed mindset assumptions by focusing on results rather than the process of learning. This limits students' chances to build their confidence in communicating via practice. Recent studies on language

mindsets in Thailand, where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL), have shown that university students usually have mixed language mindsets in different areas, such as their beliefs about general language intelligence, their beliefs about L2 aptitude, and their beliefs about age sensitivity (Chuanon, 2022; Wilang, 2024).

Previous research indicates that Thai students frequently demonstrate a reluctance to communicate in English, despite possessing sufficient linguistic competence. This reluctance is ascribed to various factors, including foreign language anxiety, fear of errors, communication apprehension, and culturally influenced communication norms (Imsa-ard, 2025; Pattapong, 2015). However, studies have shown that Thai undergraduate students have a greater WTC outside of class than in class, with the topic being appropriate and the classroom atmosphere being important variables (Rotjanawongchai, 2023). This constitutes a considerable instructional obstacle that hinders the advancement of practical communicative ability among Thai EFL learners.

Despite substantial evidence documenting the importance of GLM and WTC for language learning success and calls for holistic approaches that address multiple learning dimensions (Lou & Noels, 2019), critical gaps persist in the Thai EFL university context. Although existing interventions have demonstrated some effectiveness, they remain largely short-term and supplementary rather than systematically integrated into regular instruction (Wilang, 2024). This leaves a significant pedagogical challenge unaddressed.

To bridge this gap, the present study aims to design, implement, and investigate the effectiveness of a systematically integrated GLM Instructional Model in promoting GLM and WTC for Thai EFL university students. Theoretically, this study contributes by providing rare interventional evidence on the malleability of GLM and its relationship with WTC within a teacher-centered EFL setting. Practically, it offers a tested, replicable framework for EFL instructors, moving beyond supplementary activities to provide concrete, curriculum-integrated strategies that empower students to become more confident, persistent, and communicatively competent.

Literature Review

Mindsets in Language Learning

Language mindset is an essential concept in language education. It is based on Carol Dweck's mindset theory, which asserts that individuals' perceptions of the plasticity of their skills profoundly affect their motivation, effort, and resulting achievements (Dweck, 2006). Mindset theory serves as a foundational framework for understanding how learners' implicit beliefs regarding their abilities influence their learning strategies, responses to difficulties, and overall accomplishment. Mindset theory suggests that people have views about their

intelligence and abilities that range from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. A fixed mindset is the assumption that skills and intelligence are fixed, innate attributes that cannot be changed much. A growth mindset, on the other hand, is the view that skills and intelligence can be improved by hard work, devotion, and effective strategies (Dweck, 2006). This core belief system significantly influences multiple areas, especially in second language (L2) acquisition (Lou et al., 2021).

While mindset theory was initially developed in the context of intelligence and academic abilities broadly conceived, researchers have increasingly recognized the value of domain-specific mindset conceptualizations. Lou and Noels (2017) developed the construct of language mindset, defining it as learners' beliefs about whether their language learning ability is fixed or malleable. They argued that domain-specific mindsets may provide more nuanced predictions of domain-specific outcomes than general intelligence mindsets. The Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) evaluates three dimensions of language-related beliefs: 1) general language intelligence beliefs (perceptions regarding the malleability of overall language learning ability), 2) second language aptitude beliefs (views on whether aptitude for acquiring additional languages is fixed or developable), and 3) age sensitivity beliefs (opinions on whether age imposes limitations on language learning potential). Empirical studies utilizing the LMI have shown that these three dimensions are somewhat associated yet distinct, and that they differentially predict various language acquisition outcomes (Lou & Noels, 2017, 2019).

Lou et al. (2021) proposed a comprehensive framework that integrates language mindsets with other motivational constructs to explain language learning processes and outcomes, the Language-Mindset Meaning System (LMMS). This approach combines language mindsets with achievement objectives and L2 emotions, providing a complete picture of how these cognitive and emotional aspects function together when learning a language (Li et al., 2024). Within the LMMS framework, language mindsets are posited to affect several subsequent motivational processes. Specifically, growth language mindsets are posited to cultivate more adaptive goal orientations (favoring mastery goals over performance goals), more positive ideal L2 selves (vivid and compelling self-perceptions as a proficient language user), and more robust reactions to setbacks and failures. These motivational factors subsequently affect learning behaviors such as effort investment, method utilization, help-seeking, and persistence (Lou, 2025; Lou & Noels, 2020).

Importantly, Lou (2025) emphasized that the belief that abilities can be cultivated, while crucial, is insufficient on its own; contextual support and an environment that offers abundant opportunities to apply growth mindsets are essential for their full flourishing. The LMMS emphasizes that mindsets do not operate in isolation but rather interact with contextual factors including

classroom climate, teacher feedback practices, peer norms, and cultural messages about language learning. This contextual sensitivity has important implications for intervention design, suggesting that effective mindset interventions should address not only individual beliefs but also the environmental affordances and constraints that shape how those beliefs are enacted.

Evaluating the development of mindset often requires the use of validated assessments and psychometrically sound instruments. Dweck's (1999) initial assessment of implicit theories involved presenting participants with statements embodying entity theory and incremental theory, requiring them to express their agreement on Likert scales. Lou and Noels (2017) created the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) to assess language-related beliefs. The LMI employs 6-point Likert scales and has exhibited strong internal consistency and construct validity across varied samples (Lou & Noels, 2017, 2019). The LMI has been modified and validated in other contexts, including Finland, where Billington et al. (2025) confirmed the inventory's validity among higher education students, illustrating its cross-cultural relevance and psychometric strength. Additionally, mixed-methods research frequently employs journal entries and semi-structured interviews to obtain qualitative insights into students' language learning experiences and the shifts in their mindsets after interventions (Wilang, 2024). When analyzing mindset measurements, contemporary best practices advocate for dimensional approaches, recognizing that many individuals possess multiple mindsets, supporting elements of both fixed and growth perspectives (Lou et al., 2021).

Studies on language mindsets in the Thai context are emerging and provide valuable insights into their application in non-Western educational settings. Chuanon et al. (2022) explored the language mindsets of 160 Thai EFL university students using the LMI. The results revealed that students held mixed language mindsets and showed no significant differences in these mindsets by age or year of study. Wilang (2024) conducted a comprehensive quantitative study involving 1,184 Thai undergraduate students, which revealed considerable variability in mindset beliefs. Thayati et al. (2024) examined language mindsets among 400 Thai undergraduate students and found that an "evolving growth language mindset" was the most prevalent, underscoring the need for GLM interventions. In an intervention study, Wilang (2024) assessed the efficacy of a Language Mindset Toolkit among 67 Thai undergraduate students during a six-week mindset intervention. The results revealed that participants increasingly attributed language learning success to effort and persistence rather than innate talent. Recently, Sukklang and Wilang (2025) developed and validated the Foreign Language Speaking Mindset Inventory (FLSMI) to measure beliefs about improving their foreign language speaking abilities, highlighting the importance of supportive educational environments in fostering growth mindsets for speaking development. These findings highlight

considerable variability in students' language mindsets, the effectiveness of targeted interventions, and the role of supportive educational environments in promoting effort-based language learning and speaking development.

Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language (L2 WTC)

MacIntyre et al. (1998) introduced the concept of L2 WTC to explain why some learners actively initiate interaction in the target language, while others remain silent. They defined WTC as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547) and argued that it shapes learners' actual L2 use and contributes to their language development. Their model presents L2 WTC as a multifaceted construct intertwined with both stable individual factors (e.g., personality, attitudes) and dynamic situational factors that vary across contexts and over time (e.g., desire to communicate with a specific person, state communicative self-confidence). Subsequent studies have validated the factors influencing L2 learners' WTC (Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee & Hsieh, 2019) and investigated pedagogical approaches that foster learners' L2 WTC (Al-Murtadha, 2019; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023).

In EFL contexts, previous research has shown that learners' WTC is shaped by a complex interplay of various variables. These include affective factors (e.g., anxiety, enjoyment), personal factors (e.g., grit, motivation, confidence, mindset), and contextual factors (e.g., classroom climate, teacher support) (Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee, 2020; Sun & Wang, 2024). These studies also indicate that learners who experience more positive emotions, stronger personal attributes, or supportive learning environments tend to demonstrate higher levels of WTC. In particular, Wang et al. (2021) reported that EFL learners' language mindset and their WTC in the classroom can carry over to influence their WTC outside the classroom.

In Thailand, Pattapong (2015) found that Thai students frequently hesitate to speak English in front of peers due to concerns about negative evaluation. Likewise, Rotjanawongchai (2023) reported that students were least willing to communicate when speaking to the entire class but most willing with close friends. Moreover, the findings suggested that heightened language anxiety, limited familiarity or perceived competence of interlocutors, and a lack of supportive classroom conditions contributed to their reduced WTC. More recently, Imsa-ard (2025) identified several key psychological predictors of WTC among Thai learners, including heightened attention, enjoyment, and grit, along with reduced anxiety. These findings consistently show that learners' WTC is shaped by a multifaceted interaction among emotional, psychological, and contextual factors, with anxiety, confidence, grit, and classroom support emerging as particularly influential.

In terms of pedagogical methods for enhancing learners' L2 WTC, psychological interventions have emerged as effective strategies (Munezane, 2015; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). In EFL contexts, Munezane (2015) conducted experimental research with Japanese university students and found that combining visualization with goal setting significantly increased learners' L2 WTC compared to visualization alone or with no treatment. Similarly, Al-Murtadha (2019) observed enhanced WTC in rural high school learners in Yemen after a six-week visualization intervention. In another experimental study, Zarrinabadi et al. (2019) carried out a one-semester intervention that enhanced Iranian high school students' WTC by employing person-centered future time perspective techniques, which encouraged learners to visualize their future selves and link L2 learning to their long-term goals. More recently, Zarrinabadi et al. (2023) reported that praising effort improved students' growth mindsets, communicative competence, and WTC, while reducing speaking anxiety compared to groups praised for intelligence or those who received no praise. These findings underscore the value of curricula that integrate visualization and goal setting to promote L2 WTC, as well as the pivotal role of teachers in fostering a growth mindset.

While this line of experimental research has successfully incorporated psychological dimensions into language instruction, assessments of L2 WTC have been mainly confined to classroom contexts (Al-Murtadha, 2019; Zarrinabadi et al., 2019). Although Munezane (2015) extended the evaluation of WTC beyond the classroom, this was limited to self-report questionnaires. Consequently, there remains a need for studies that employ authentic tasks to measure learners' L2 WTC in real-world, out-of-classroom contexts. This study aims to encourage educators to adopt innovative teaching methods that prioritize the development of students' linguistic confidence and communication skills by integrating language mindsets into instructional design. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the Six-Step GLM Instructional Model promote Thai EFL university students' GLM?
2. How does the Six-Step GLM Instructional Model promote Thai EFL university students' WTC in English?

Method

Research Context

The study was conducted within an English for Communication course at a public university in northeastern Thailand. This course was a compulsory subject for first-year Business English majors aimed at developing students' communicative competence in academic and professional contexts. It was selected for both theoretical and practical reasons. Pedagogically, the course aims to develop foundational communication competencies, foster self-directed learning strategies, and cultivate lifelong learning dispositions through interactive learning, task-based activities, and authentic language use. This educational

context represents a critical developmental transition from secondary to tertiary education, characterized by heightened student anxiety and adjustment challenges. Introducing growth mindset interventions can foster positive attitudes toward language learning, enhance academic resilience, and promote success in both English language development and broader university achievement.

Participants

The study involved 42 first-year undergraduate students majoring in Business English who enrolled in the English for Communication course. The group comprised 34 females, four males, and four LGBTQ+ individuals, with an average of 13 years of formal English study corresponding to their primary and secondary education. Participants' self-assessed English proficiency ranged from very poor to fair, with the majority ($n = 28$) rating themselves as fair. While no standardized proficiency test scores were available, their placement in the course reflected an intermediate level of English ability. Most students ($n = 36$) had no overseas experiences. Outside the classroom, they reported engaging with English through activities such as watching movies or online videos ($n = 40$), listening to music or podcasts ($n = 36$), and playing English-language games ($n = 22$).

Research Design and Instruments

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of the GLM Instructional Model on learners' language mindsets and WTC. Data were collected through self-assessments and complemented by focus group interviews to gain deeper insights into the model's impact on students' learning experiences. The following section details the research instruments and the implementation of the GLM Instructional Model.

Pre- and Post-Self-Assessment on GLM and WTC in English

The self-assessment consisted of three main sections: (1) demographic information, (2) GLM, and (3) WTC in English. While the first part focused on learners' demographic information and their experiences in learning English, the second and third parts contained statements related to the investigated issues and utilized five-point Likert scales. The same set of statements was used for both pre- and post-self-assessments, with the demographic information section removed from the post-self-assessment.

The GLM assessment employed the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI; Lou & Noels, 2019), which has been tested for reliability and validity among ESL/EFL university students. The instrument consists of 18 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, divided into three subscales: (1) General Language Intelligence Beliefs (GLB), (2) Second Language Aptitude Beliefs (L2B), and (3) Age-Sensitive Beliefs (ASB). The statements include both fixed language mindset items (e.g., "You have a certain amount of language intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it.") and growth language mindset items

(e.g., “You can always change your foreign language ability.”). With minor adaptations, the instrument included a brief definition of language intelligence and added “(English)” after the term “foreign language” for greater specificity, since students were required to learn both Chinese and English at the time. Participants rated their agreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Growth mindset levels were interpreted as follows: fixed (1.00–1.80), low growth (1.81–2.60), mixed (2.61–3.40), growth (3.41–4.20), and high growth (4.21–5.00).

The WTC measurement, adapted from Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2016), is valid, reliable, and suitable for the EFL context, where English language learners typically have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. The WTC scale, comprising 12 items for in-class speaking and 10 for out-of-class contexts, was adapted for this study because the course under investigation and the context in which WTC was assessed were similar. Modifications were made to ensure a more comprehensive representation of English language learning in this study. For instance, the original statement concerning WTC outside the classroom, “I am willing to speak to exchange students enrolled in my program,” was revised to “I am willing to engage in activities involving foreigners through volunteering,” as the program mainly hosts short-term foreign visitors rather than long-term exchange students. Participants were instructed to indicate their level of WTC using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The levels of WTC were interpreted as follows: strongly unwilling (1.00–1.49), usually unwilling (1.50–2.49), moderately willing (2.50–3.49), usually willing (3.50–4.49), and strongly willing (4.50–5.00).

The statements in the second and third sections were translated into Thai and cross-checked by the authors. Subsequently, the self-assessment was piloted with 10 non-target students to ensure its reliability and identify any potential challenges in completing the form. Minor adjustments to the Thai translation were made before distributing the self-assessment to the target group.

Focus Group Interviews

To complement the quantitative findings, four focus group interviews were conducted at the end of the course with 20 volunteer students (five per group). Participants were purposefully selected to ensure diversity in language proficiency and gender, which enabled each group to represent a broad range of perspectives. Language proficiency was assessed through students’ self-assessments to accommodate learners with varying English proficiency levels, while gender balance was maintained to capture multiple viewpoints. This deliberate selection process enhanced the credibility and rigor of the study by ensuring that discussions represented a wide spectrum of experiences and attitudes. The focus groups were conducted in Thai and audio-recorded to explore students’ learning experiences. The interviews focused on how the instructional model

influenced their language mindsets and WTC in English both inside and outside the classroom. Each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

GLM Instructional Model

The GLM Instructional Model, adapted from Chuanon (2022), aimed at promoting a growth mindset in language learning. It integrated mindset theory (Dweck, 2006), Transformative Learning (1997), Communicative Language Teaching (Richards, 2006), as well as the concepts of formative assessment (Wheatley et al., 2015). The model comprises six steps: (1) Mindset Check, (2) Activating a Growth Mindset, (3) Language Practice, (4) Feedforward, (5) Setting a Challenging Goal, and (6) Reflection (Figure 1).

Figure 1

GLM Instructional Model



The model was implemented with flexibility, considering the specific context of a university course designed to improve students' daily English communication skills. The course comprised four units, each consisting of two subunits (1A–1B, 2A–2B, 3A–3B, 4A–4B), for a total of eight subunits. Classes met once a week for three hours, including a 15-minute break. Steps 3 and 4 were implemented in all eight subunits. During the language practice session, learners participated in communicative tasks such as information-gap and opinion-gap activities and problem-solving activities. While Steps 1 and 2 were introduced at the beginning of subunits A (1A, 2A, 3A, 4A), Steps 5 and 6 were conducted at the end of subunits B (1B, 2B, 3B, 4B). This structure formed one cycle of the GLM Instructional Model, which covered two classes (six hours). Throughout the semester, the model underwent four cycles. The teaching steps are described in Table 1.

Table 1
Description of the Teaching Steps (3-hour Lesson plan)

Teaching steps	Description
1. Mindset Check (15 mins)	Students reflect on their language mindsets using the Mindset Check worksheet (Five I-Statements).
2. Activating a Growth Mindset (15 mins)	The teacher shares information on the following topics: 1. What is a growth mindset? 2. Success stories of individuals with growth mindsets and age-related factors in L2 learning 3. Coping with mistakes and failures in language learning, and 4. Learning styles and learning strategies Students participate in discussions and share their experiences.
3. Language Practice (60 mins)	Students engage with language content and practices through communicative tasks, including pair, small-group, and whole-class discussions.
4. Feedforward (45 mins)	The teacher provides constructive feedback, focusing on the task and future improvement, in a friendly tone, and acknowledges their learning efforts while observing their language practices. For instance, the teacher could use questions or phrases such as “ <i>How could we make...better?</i> ”, “ <i>Have you considered doing...?</i> ”, or “ <i>Keep/stop/start doing ...</i> ”.
5. Setting a Challenging Goal (30 mins)	The teacher explains the language challenge task and assists students in setting their goals and planning using the My Growth Language Mindset Plan worksheet. Students are required to submit learning evidence, such as videos and related documents, on the online platform. Goals are categorized into five challenge levels, allowing students to choose freely: 1. Repeating one activity in the course book 2. Adapting more than one activity in the course book to review the lesson 3. Finding new vocabulary or strategies to review the lesson 4. Applying new vocabulary or strategies to review the lesson 5. Applying new knowledge and skills learned in real-life situations with someone new or foreigners
6. Reflection (15 mins)	Each student or group shares their learning experiences in class. The teacher facilitates group discussion on: 1. What was your language challenge? 2. What have you learned? 3. What have you learned from your peers? 4. What might be useful for your next language challenge?

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to data collection, the purpose of the research, the research procedures, and the potential benefits of the research were explained to participants during the course orientation. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Any questions or concerns were addressed before participants provided

informed consent. Participants first completed a pre-self-assessment of language mindsets and WTC in English, with the same assessment administered at the end of the course to capture changes over time.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the responses, and paired-samples *t* tests were conducted to examine pre- to post-course changes in language mindset and WTC.

Following the self-assessments, four focus group interviews were conducted, each with five students selected to ensure diversity in language proficiency and gender. Interviews were conducted in Thai to minimize language barriers and elicit authentic perspectives on the instructional model. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Qualitative data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis guided by the LMMS framework (Lou & Noels, 2025; Lou et al., 2021) and categorized mindsets into fixed, mixed, and growth language mindsets, following the teaching steps of the GLM Instructional Model. The first author performed initial coding, identifying meaningful segments and labeling them according to emerging patterns. The second author independently reviewed the transcripts and replicated the coding process. Codes were compared, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Themes were then developed by clustering related codes, and representative quotations were selected to illustrate key findings. This process ensured methodological rigor, transparency, and credibility of the qualitative analysis.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the instructional model's effects on learners' language mindsets and WTC.

Results

Pre- and Post-Self-Assessment of GLM and WTC Following GLM Instruction

Pre- and Post-Self-Assessment of GLM and WTC Following GLM Instruction
The results presented in Table 2 indicate that most participants agreed with the GLM statements in the pre-self-assessment, which could be interpreted as them having a GLM, except for the ASB subscale, which showed that participants had mixed language mindsets. However, the post-self-assessment results demonstrated higher mean scores of GLM across all subscales. Furthermore, the *t*-test results, $t(41) = 4.41, p < .001$, indicated that the total mean scores of the pre-self-assessment ($M = 3.53, SD = 0.43$) and the post-self-assessment ($M = 3.73, SD = 0.46$) were significantly different, with the 95% confidence interval, 95% CI [0.11, 0.29], confirming the robustness of these findings. Normality checks conducted prior to the *t*-test analysis confirmed that the data met parametric assumptions. The effect size (Cohen's

$d = 0.45$) indicated a small to medium practical significance of this difference. Therefore, it can be inferred that participants exhibited a higher level of GLM after implementing the instructional model in the English for Communication course.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' GLM (N = 42)

Language Mindset Subscales	Pre-self-assessment			Post-self-assessment		
	M	SD	Interpretation	M	SD	Interpretation
GLB	3.63	0.53	Growth	3.76	0.48	Growth
L2B	3.59	0.52	Growth	3.75	0.53	Growth
ASB	3.37	0.46	Mixed	3.69	0.55	Growth
Total	3.53	0.43	Growth	3.73	0.46	Growth

Based on the pre-self-assessment results in Table 3, participants predominantly agreed with WTC in-class statements, which can be interpreted as usually willing to communicate, whereas WTC outside-class statements were interpreted as moderately willing. Although the total mean score of the post-self-assessment ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.53$) was slightly higher than the pre-self-assessment ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.71$), the t -test results, $t(41) = 1.21$, $p = .235$, did not show a significant difference, with 95% CI $[-0.11, 0.43]$ confirming the robustness of these findings. Normality checks conducted prior to the t -test analysis confirmed that the data met parametric assumptions. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.25$) indicated a small practical significance of this difference.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' WTC in English (N = 42)

Willingness to Communicate	Pre-self-assessment			Post-self-assessment		
	M	SD	Interpretation	M	SD	Interpretation
WTC in class	3.71	0.68	Usually willing	3.83	0.58	Usually willing
WTC outside class	3.44	0.86	Moderately willing	3.65	0.64	Usually willing
Total	3.58	0.71	Usually willing	3.74	0.53	Usually willing

Focus Group on Learning Experiences in Relation to GLM and WTC

The effectiveness of the GLM Instructional Model was further examined through focus group interviews conducted at the end of the course to elaborate on the quantitative findings, which indicated improvements in learners' GLM and WTC in English. The results are presented according to the six steps of the instructional model as follows.

Step 1: Mindset Check

Prior to the intervention, participants were unfamiliar with growth mindset concepts and held beliefs reflecting both fixed and growth orientations. Through structured reflection activities embedded in the instructional model, participants developed metacognitive awareness of their beliefs about language learning ability and began recognizing the value of effort over innate talent. This transition was evident in one participant's evolving perspective: "It's true that if you're born lucky, you could improve (your English skills) faster than others. Anyway, I think we still have to work hard, and I really admire those who put in the effort" (P16). While this statement still acknowledges innate ability, it demonstrates a clear shift toward valuing effort and hard work, indicating movement from a fixed mindset toward a growth mindset. Post-intervention changes were also observed in age-sensitive beliefs, with participants showing gradual improvement in their perspectives. Although some participants initially expressed fixed mindset beliefs that earlier language exposure would have fundamentally determined their proficiency, many reconceptualized this view after the intervention.

Step 2: Activating a Growth Mindset

Participants reported that instructional content, including topics such as "The Story of Jack Ma" and "Learning Strategies," clarified misconceptions about language learning and reinforced growth-oriented beliefs. This session facilitated a shift from fixed or mixed mindsets characterized by passive acceptance of limitations to GLM marked by proactive engagement and increased effort during communicative tasks. One participant's reflection demonstrates this transition: "I became aware of my limitations in vocabulary, sentence structures, and speaking skills. This prompted me to recognize the need for increased study efforts to effectively communicate my thoughts" (P12). This illustrates movement from simply acknowledging deficits (fixed) to actively recognizing the need for effort and study as solutions (growth), reflecting the emphasis on effort beliefs and goal orientation. The learning styles and strategies sessions particularly strengthened participants' GLM development by providing concrete tools for improvement. One participant articulated this transformation: "I try to find a way to memorize vocabulary better like writing the words down or making visual notes. I know what works for me. Though I'm a bit slow, I'm sure that I can get better" (P14). Despite acknowledging current pace limitations, the participant demonstrates confidence in improvement potential, strategy experimentation, and self-efficacy, which exemplifies progression toward a stronger GLM.

Step 3: Language Practice

Building upon awareness developed in previous steps, participants demonstrated marked shifts in their attitudes toward mistakes and failures. Initially, many participants exhibited fixed mindset orientations, such as mistake avoidance and fear of errors. However, post-intervention, most participants reframed errors as learning opportunities, reflecting clear GLM development. One participant articulated this transformation: “The teacher made it clear at the beginning of the course that good language users generally make mistakes and learn from them” (P1). This statement demonstrates how explicit growth mindset instruction reshaped participants’ error perceptions from threats (fixed) to valuable learning experiences (growth). This cognitive reframing enhanced participants’ WTC and learning enjoyment, indicating positive affective and motivational changes aligned with GLM development. Randomly assigning partners and groups reinforced growth mindset cultivation by creating challenging yet supportive learning environments. Participants moved from potentially anxious or avoidant responses to communicative challenges toward embracing diverse interactions as opportunities for development. One participant reflected: “Throughout the course, we’d never been paired or grouped with the same classmates. I found it exciting and challenging to learn about the new interlocutors’ perspectives and thoughts” (P2). This positive reframing of challenges as exciting rather than threatening exemplifies the development of GLM.

Step 4: Feedforward

Applied language practice, particularly when supported by constructive and future-focused feedback, reinforced participants’ shift from viewing feedback as threatening (fixed) to viewing feedback as developmental guidance (growth). One participant articulated this transformation: “I became more willing to engage in English conversations in class due to the teacher’s feedback aimed at enhancing my future performance and the enthusiastic atmosphere among classmates, regardless of any errors or incorrect grammar I made” (P8). This demonstrates GLM consolidation through increased WTC, reduced error anxiety, and recognition of feedback’s developmental purpose. Participants also developed enhanced resilience when confronting mistakes. One reflected: “I made a lot of mistakes, and I learned that I should just move on. I don’t like it, but it’s not that bad at all” (P17), exemplifying GLM development through reframing setbacks. However, some participants exhibited mixed mindsets regarding real-world language use. One student noted: “I feel safe and enjoy learning in class, but I’m still a bit nervous to use language in real life” (P20). This indicates that while classroom-based instruction strengthened GLM, transfer to authentic communicative contexts remained challenging.

Step 5: Setting a Challenging Goal

The five-level goal framework enabled participants to progress gradually from avoiding challenges (fixed) to embracing appropriately challenging tasks (growth). Participants' progression from Level 2 (adapting course activities for review) and Level 3 (finding vocabulary learning strategies) to Level 5 (applying new knowledge and skills in real-life situations) illustrated the development of GLM. One participant's experience exemplifies this transformation: "We applied language lessons learned in class to give a lesson to a group of high school students. Although initially nervous about this challenge, they discovered that the learners' positive attention and feedback they received facilitated their growth and increased their willingness to use English" (P1). This statement demonstrates a shift from initial anxiety (mixed/fixed) to embracing challenge and recognizing feedback's developmental value (growth). Another participant articulated breakthrough confidence: "It was my first time speaking with a foreign stranger. Without this challenge, I wouldn't have overcome my fear of initiating conversations with foreigners. I really enjoyed the experience" (P1). This reflection shows clear GLM consolidation through reframing anxiety-provoking situations as valuable growth opportunities.

Step 6: Reflection

This final step facilitated the exchange of insights and strategies, reinforcing participants' shift from isolated learning and comparison with others (fixed or mixed) to collaborative learning and inspiration from peers' achievements (growth). Peer sharing particularly enhanced GLM and WTC, as one participant expressed, "My friend showed me her video talking to a foreigner at the night market. I found it fun and felt greatly inspired by her" (P3). Rather than viewing a peer's success as threatening (fixed), the participant felt inspired and motivated to attempt similar challenges, reflecting increased self-efficacy and WTC in authentic contexts. The reflection process strengthened participants' understanding of effort-based improvement and strategic learning approaches.

Overall, participants reported that the instructional model facilitated GLM development across multiple dimensions. They demonstrated deeper understanding of learning potential, increased valuation of effort over innate ability, and the development of adaptive strategies for overcoming communication challenges. Significantly, participants enhanced WTC both within classroom settings and in real-world contexts, indicating successful transfer of GLM to authentic communicative situations. The progressive movement from fixed or mixed mindsets to growth mindsets throughout the six-step model demonstrates the effectiveness of the GLM instruction in fostering resilient, proactive language learners with increased confidence and WTC in English.

Discussion

Effects of the Six-Step GLM Instructional Model on Thai EFL university students' GLM

The current study illustrates the efficacy of a structured six-step instructional model in fostering growth language mindsets (GLM) and improving willingness to communicate (WTC) among Thai EFL university students. Quantitative findings indicated statistically significant enhancements in GLM from pre-test to post-test, accompanied by a small to medium effect size. These results are consistent with Wilang's (2024) intervention study utilizing the Language Mindset Toolkit, which similarly recorded significant transitions from fixed to growth mindsets among Thai undergraduates, especially with views about effort and persistence. Nevertheless, the negligible quantitative improvements identified in both studies highlight the context-dependent characteristics of mindset interventions, as discussed by Yeager and Dweck (2020), indicating that cultural and educational factors profoundly affect the efficacy of interventions.

Qualitative findings provided additional evidence of mindset transformation, especially with participants' transition from mixed to growth language mindsets across the LMMS framework aspects (Lou et al., 2021; Lou & Noels, 2025). Participants gained metacognitive awareness through self-reflection, consciously acknowledging the necessity for effort and study as remedies rather than perceiving constraints as immutable. This change was clear in how participants saw mistakes as chances to learn, how they felt less anxious about making mistakes, and how they understood that feedback was meant to help them grow. This shows clear GLM development that fits with Elahi Shirvan et al.'s (2024) idea of adaptive language learning beliefs. Participants exhibited increased resilience in the face of mistakes and the ability to establish and modify challenging objectives, illustrating their transition from initial anxiety and avoidance—typical of fixed or mixed mindsets—to embracing challenges and acknowledging the developmental significance of feedback, characteristic of growth mindsets. These qualitative changes suggest a deeper understanding of learning potential, a stronger valuation of effort over natural talent, and more flexible strategies for dealing with communication problems.

The cultural context of Thai EFL education presents both unique challenges and opportunities for growth mindset cultivation. Thai students often experience high foreign language anxiety and communication apprehension (Punyaporn & Soontornwipast, 2022), while cultural values emphasizing face-saving and avoidance of public mistakes may initially constrain growth mindset development (Chaiyasat & Intakaew, 2023). However, this study demonstrates that culturally responsive instructional approaches can successfully leverage Thai values of educational respect, collective support, and perseverance to facilitate mindset

transformation. Strategies include integrating L1 use for mindset discussions (Steps 1: Mindset Check, 2: Activating a Growth Mindset, 5: Setting a Challenging Goal, and 6: Reflection) while maintaining L2 use for communicative activities (Steps 3: Language Practice and 4: Feedforward). Additionally, the relationships among GLM, self-regulated learning, and WTC observed in this study support the view that a growth language mindset influences metacognitive strategies, regulatory processes, and sustainable engagement (Bai & Wang, 2023; Teng & Mizumoto, 2024).

Effect of the Six-Step GLM Instructional Model on Thai EFL university students' WTC

The analysis of the pre- and post-self-assessments did not reveal a statistically significant difference in WTC. This suggests that the intervention did not immediately yield measurable effects. However, the qualitative insights provide a richer, process-oriented view of learners' perceived gains in confidence and engagement in English conversations. This divergence may reflect both the limited sensitivity of the self-assessment instrument to detect subtle shifts and the inherently dynamic nature of WTC, which may require a longer intervention period to produce a statistically measurable change.

Despite some variability in quantitative outcomes, evidence from the post-WTC self-assessment and focus groups suggests that learners experienced a heightened WTC in English both inside and outside the classroom. This positive trend seems to result from individual and situational factors. Individually, the intervention, particularly Steps 1: Mindset Check, 2: Activating a Growth Mindset, and 5: Setting a Challenging Goal, seems to foster learners' positive self-belief, autonomy, and agency in language learning. Unlike previous studies that primarily promoted L2 WTC through visualization paired with goal setting (Al-Murtadha, 2019; Munezane, 2015; Zarrinabadi et al., 2019), the current study provided students with actionable plans and opportunities to enact their goals in challenging situations throughout the semester. This practical engagement through risk-taking and learning experiences likely strengthened learners' GLM, which, in turn, enhanced their WTC (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024). It is suggested that embedding concrete, goal-driven activities may enhance the effectiveness of psychological interventions in promoting L2 WTC.

Situationally, classroom enjoyment emerged as a key factor that fostered learners' WTC. This appears to benefit from Steps 3: Language Practice, 4: Feedforward, and 6: Reflection, which together helped create a supportive, low-anxiety environment conducive to communication. Although participants initially feared making mistakes, likely influenced by cultural factors (e.g., fear of losing face) and psychological factors (e.g., language

anxiety) (Imsa-ard, 2025; Pattapong, 2015), their WTC likely increased over the course of the intervention. This gradual shift may be explained by the mediating role of classroom climate in shaping WTC, which is consistent with previous studies showing that a positive classroom climate and teacher support can enhance WTC (Khajavy et al., 2018; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). In contrast to earlier research that found a preference for speaking with familiar peers (Pattapong, 2015; Rotjanawongchai, 2023), participants in this study reported enjoying interactions with unfamiliar interlocutors. As one student remarked, “Throughout the course, we’d never been paired or grouped with the same classmates. I found it exciting and challenging to learn about the new interlocutors’ perspectives and thoughts” (P2). Their eagerness to connect socially suggests that the GLM model can enhance group cohesion, support socio-academic adjustment, and promote effective communicative engagement in language learning.

While quantitative gains in WTC were modest, the qualitative trends highlight mindset-based approaches as promising for nurturing the affective and motivational foundations necessary for the long-term development of WTC.

Conclusion

Language mindset is considered a foundational factor influencing language learning development, yet research on its practical application and classroom impact remains limited. This study addresses this gap by investigating the effectiveness of a six-step GLM Instructional Model in promoting Thai EFL university students’ GLM and WTC. The findings demonstrate statistically significant increases in participants’ GLM, suggesting its effectiveness in fostering growth-oriented learning perspectives through a systematic instructional design that incorporates mindset awareness, GLM activation, communicative practice, feedforward, feedback, metacognitive strategies, and reflection. While quantitative measures did not reveal significant WTC increases, qualitative evidence documented substantial enhancements in learning engagement, intrinsic motivation, communication confidence, and willingness to interact with diverse interlocutors both within and beyond the classroom. These convergent findings underscore the critical importance of integrating culturally responsive, mindset-focused pedagogy into language learning environments. Such approaches can equip learners with necessary psychological resources, including adaptive beliefs about learning potential, resilience in confronting challenges, strategic approaches to skill development, and reduced communication anxiety, for sustained language development and active English use across academic and authentic contexts.

Furthermore, the findings underscore teachers' critical role as "principal agents in the ecology of a foreign language class" (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2024, p. 25) in facilitating growth mindset development. The six-step instructional model provides a systematic, scaffolded framework that educators can adapt to their contexts. It particularly emphasizes self-reflection activities for metacognitive awareness (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), goal setting using Can-Do statements and learning portfolios, and feedforward-oriented feedback practices. Critically, teachers must demonstrate positive communication skills when providing developmental feedback and helping learners regulate emotions, as teacher support correlates significantly with growth mindset, academic engagement, learning achievements, and WTC (Vestad & Bru, 2023; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). The shift from teacher-centered, performance-focused pedagogy toward growth mindset-oriented approaches requires transforming not only students' beliefs but also instructional practices, assessment systems, and classroom cultures to create educational ecosystems where growth mindsets can flourish (Lou, 2025). Process-oriented formative assessment, growth mindset feedback, and learning mastery emphasis (Rissanen et al., 2019; Truax, 2018) should replace ability-demonstration focus to empower learners as self-directed agents of their language development.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's limitations include a small sample size and a single-institution context, which may limit generalizability and the assessment of long-term mindset stability. The marginal quantitative gains, despite substantial qualitative evidence, suggest the need for more sensitive mindset assessment instruments and longer intervention periods to capture the dynamic, developmental nature of mindset change (Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Future research should employ longitudinal designs examining how language mindsets develop over extended periods, how they interact with contextual factors, including teacher mindsets and institutional cultures, and how changes in mindsets relate to learning behaviors and outcomes. Investigation of the optimal role of L1 in fostering GLM, the mechanisms through which mindsets influence WTC and achievement (including mediating roles of goal orientations, self-efficacy, emotions, and metacognitive strategies), and culturally responsive intervention designs for diverse educational contexts would advance theoretical understanding and practical applications. As Lou (2025) emphasized, creating contextual supports and educational environments that enable growth beliefs to translate into effective learning behaviors remains essential for sustainable mindset development.

Biodata

Phakhawadee Chaisiri is a lecturer at the Department of Liberal Arts and Education, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Khon Kaen University, Nong Khai Campus, Thailand. Her research interests include second language learning and teaching, learner beliefs, language learning motivation, multilingualism, and intercultural communication.

Phakhawadee Chaisiri  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7776-1166>

Chayachon Chuanon, Ph.D. is a lecturer at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Thailand. Her research interests include instructional design, curriculum development, English language teaching and learning, technology enhanced language learning, and psycholinguistics.

Chayachon Chuanon  <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9328-7692>

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