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**Understanding the Notion of Interdependence,  
and the Dynamics of Willingness to Communicate**

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## **Abstract**

The current individual differences research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) addresses the issue of the situated nature of individual difference (ID) factors. Willingness to communicate (WTC) is a relatively new ID variable in SLA (Dörnyei, 2005) and it is seen as both a facilitating factor of SLA and a non-linguistic outcome of the second language learning process (MacIntyre, 2007). Previous research into WTC primarily focused on its trait disposition as remaining stable across situations. Only a handful of studies have revealed that the construct might be situation-specific rather than fixed.

The present study investigated the dynamic and situated nature of second language (L2) learners' WTC in class. Framed within a sociocognitive perspective on L2 learning which draws together social, environmental and individual factors, this classroom-based multiple case study involved 18 English as an additional language (EAL) learners in New Zealand over an academic year and was implemented in three phases. Data were collected through classroom observations, stimulated-recall interviews, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals.

Evidence from self-report and observational data suggests that the classroom WTC construct is best described as a dynamic situational variable rather than a trait disposition. The findings indicate that situational WTC in class results from the interdependence between individual characteristics, classroom environmental conditions and linguistic factors. These three strands of factors interdependently exert either facilitative or inhibitive effects on an individual student's WTC in class at any point in time. The effect of the combinations of factors differs between individuals and the interrelationship is too complex to be predicted. This study has attempted to describe and measure the WTC construct as situated in L2 classrooms and it serves as a stepping stone for further research on the role of WTC in L2 learning.

*Dedication*

*To the memory of my mother who has always been in my heart  
and who would be proud to see this achievement.*

*“I co-exist with the world, and everything in the world and I are one.”*

*Equality of All Substances*

*Chuang Tzu*  
*(Chinese Philosopher, 369-286 B.C.)*

天地與我并生  
而萬物與我為一  
莊子《齊物論》

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	I
<i>Dedication</i> .....	II
Acknowledgements.....	IV
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Theoretical Approach.....	3
1.3 The Notion of Interdependence .....	4
1.4 WTC in Context.....	6
1.5 The Purpose of the Study and Research Questions .....	8
1.6 The Significance of the Study.....	9
1.7 Organisation of the Thesis .....	10
CHAPTER 2 .....	12
A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE .....	12
2.1 Willingness to Communicate in L2 .....	12
2.1.1 <i>Defining WTC in L2</i> .....	13
2.1.2 <i>Heuristic WTC in L2 Models</i> .....	13
2.1.3 <i>Variables Underlying WTC in L2</i> .....	21
2.1.4 <i>Trait Versus Situational WTC in L2</i> .....	25
2.1.5 <i>Classroom WTC in L2</i> .....	27
2.2 A Situated Approach to IDs and WTC Research.....	34
2.2.1 <i>Gaps in WTC Research</i> .....	34
2.2.2 <i>A Situated Approach to IDs Research</i> .....	36
2.2.3 <i>Rationale for a Context-sensitive Perspective on L2 WTC</i> .....	40
2.3 Historical Context .....	41
2.3.1 <i>Reconceptualisation of SLA: The Social/Cognitive Debate</i> .....	41
2.3.2 <i>Sociocognitive Perspectives</i> .....	46
2.4 Ecological Approach.....	49
2.4.1 <i>Defining Ecology and Ecological Validity</i> .....	49
2.4.2 <i>An Ecological Approach in Language Education</i> .....	50
2.4.3 <i>Ecological Research Methods</i> .....	52
2.4.4 <i>Process-Person-Context-Time Model (PPCT Model)</i> .....	54
2.4.5 <i>Relevance of Ecological Theory to Researching WTC</i> .....	57
2.5 Research Aims and Questions .....	60
2.6 Summary .....	61
CHAPTER 3 .....	62
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	62
3.1 Research Design.....	62
3.1.1 <i>Multiple Case Study Approach</i> .....	62
3.1.2 <i>An Overview of the Research Design</i> .....	65
3.2 Phase I Study.....	66
3.2.1 <i>Context and Participants</i> .....	66
3.2.2 <i>Instruments</i> .....	68
3.2.2.1 <i>Classroom Observation</i> .....	68

3.2.2.2 <i>Diary/Journal Entry</i> .....	73
3.2.2.3 <i>Stimulated-recall Interviews</i> .....	74
3.2.3 <i>Data Collection Procedure</i> .....	75
3.2.4 <i>Changes Made to Instruments for the Phase II Study</i> .....	77
3.3 <i>Phase II Study</i> .....	77
3.3.1 <i>Context and Participants</i> .....	77
3.3.2 <i>Data Collection</i> .....	80
3.4 <i>Phase III Study</i> .....	82
3.5 <i>Data Analysis</i> .....	84
3.5.1 <i>WTC Behaviour</i> .....	84
3.5.2 <i>Microgenetic Analysis of Classroom Interaction</i> .....	86
3.5.3 <i>Qualitative Data</i> .....	89
3.6 <i>Trustworthiness of the Study</i> .....	91
3.7 <i>Ethical Considerations</i> .....	92
3.8 <i>Summary</i> .....	93
CHAPTER 4.....	94
THE DYNAMICS OF WTC.....	94
4.1 <i>Capturing WTC Trajectory</i> .....	95
4.1.1 <i>WTC Behaviourial Change over 3 Weeks</i> .....	95
4.1.2 <i>WTC Behaviourial Change over 5 Months</i> .....	98
4.2 <i>Factors Facilitating and Inhibiting WTC in Class</i> .....	100
4.3 <i>Qualitative Analysis</i> .....	106
4.3.1 <i>Environmental Dimension</i> .....	106
4.3.1.1 <i>Topic</i> .....	107
4.3.1.2 <i>Task Type</i> .....	109
4.3.1.3 <i>Interlocutor</i> .....	110
4.3.1.4 <i>Teacher</i> .....	112
4.3.1.5 <i>Class Interactional Pattern</i> .....	116
4.3.2 <i>Individual Dimension</i> .....	119
4.3.2.1 <i>Perceived Opportunity to Communicate</i> .....	119
4.3.2.2 <i>Personality</i> .....	121
4.3.2.3 <i>Self-confidence</i> .....	122
4.3.2.4 <i>Emotion</i> .....	122
4.3.3 <i>Linguistic Dimension</i> .....	125
4.3.3.1 <i>Language Proficiency</i> .....	125
4.3.3.2 <i>Reliance on L1</i> .....	127
4.3.4 <i>Summary</i> .....	131
4.4 <i>Intertwining Interrelationships</i> .....	133
4.5 <i>Summary</i> .....	135
CHAPTER 5.....	137
EMERGING INTERDEPENDENCE.....	137
5.1 <i>Triangulation of WTC Behaviour in the Phase I Study</i> .....	137
5.1.1 <i>Triangulating WTC: the Internal and the External</i> .....	138
5.1.2 <i>Triangulation in the Phase I Study</i> .....	139
5.1.3 <i>The Relationship between WTC and Assisted Performance</i> .....	147
5.2 <i>Case Study Description and Interpretation in the Phase II Study</i> .....	150



5.2.1 Case I: <i>Yi-yun – Sensitive to Interlocutors’ Performance</i> .....	154
5.2.2 Case II: <i>Chen-feng – Extremely Sensitive to the Environment</i> .....	164
5.2.3 Case III: <i>Cai-wei – A Shy Student</i> .....	173
5.2.4 Case IV: <i>Ai-ling – A Confident Speaker</i> .....	182
5.2.5 Case V: <i>Rong-rong – A Frequent User of Private Speech</i> .....	185
5.2.6 Case VI: <i>Mu-cheng – A Reticent and Introvert Student</i> .....	190
5.2.7 <i>Summary of Case Studies</i> .....	194
5.3 Fluctuations in WTC .....	198
5.4 Summary .....	198
CHAPTER 6 .....	200
CONCEPTUALISING SITUATIONAL WTC: .....	200
FUTURE ISSUES .....	200
6.1 A Classroom L2 WTC Model .....	200
6.2 Interaction between Environmental, Individual and Linguistic Dimensions .....	204
6.2.1 <i>Joint Effects</i> .....	205
6.2.2 <i>Driving and Restraining Forces</i> .....	208
6.3 Nested Environments: Future Issues to Address .....	213
6.4 Summary .....	220
CHAPTER 7 .....	222
CONCLUSION .....	222
7.1 Summary of the Findings .....	222
7.2 A Comparison between the Present Study and Previous WTC Research .....	224
7.3 Contributions to Theory and Research .....	226
7.4 Pedagogical Implications .....	230
7.5 Limitations of the Study .....	231
7.6 Suggestions for Future Research .....	232
APPENDIX A: WTC CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEME .....	235
APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS .....	237
APPENDIX C: JOURNAL ENTRY (PHASE I) .....	238
APPENDIX D: STIMULATED-RECALL INTERVIEWS (PHASE I & PHASE II) .....	239
APPENDIX E: BIOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .....	240
APPENDIX F: JOURNAL ENTRY (PHASE II) .....	241
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS (PHASE II) .....	242
APPENDIX H: PHASE III INTERVIEW .....	243
REFERENCES: .....	244

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3. 1 .....	68
Table 3. 2 .....	70
Table 3. 3 .....	75
Table 3. 4 .....	79
Table 3. 5 .....	81
Table 3. 6 .....	82
Table 3. 7 .....	83
Table 3. 8 .....	88
Table 4. 1. ....	96
Table 4. 2 .....	98
Table 4. 3 .....	99
Table 4. 4 .....	99
Table 4. 5 .....	102
Table 5. 1 .....	140
Table 5. 2 .....	150
Table 5. 3 .....	150
Table 5. 4 .....	152
Table 5. 5 .....	197

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 2. 1.</i> Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al. 1998, p.547). .....	15
<i>Figure 2. 2.</i> Variables moderating the relation between DC and WTC in the Chinese EFL classroom (Wen and Clément 2003, p.25). .....	19
<i>Figure 3. 1.</i> Triangulation of data collection. ....	64
<i>Figure 3. 2.</i> Timeline for data collection. ....	66
<i>Figure 4. 1.</i> Individual WTC ratios over 3 weeks. ....	96
<i>Figure 4. 2.</i> WTC ratios over 3 weeks by rank order. ....	97
<i>Figure 4. 3.</i> WTC ratio at six points in time for key participants. ....	100
<i>Figure 4. 4.</i> Factors facilitating and inhibiting WTC in the environmental dimension. ....	105
<i>Figure 4. 5.</i> Factors facilitating and inhibiting WTC in the individual dimension. ....	105
<i>Figure 4. 6.</i> Factors facilitating and inhibiting WTC in the linguistic dimension. ....	106
<i>Figure 5. 1.</i> Continuum of dynamic fluctuations in WTC. ....	154
<i>Figure 5. 2.</i> Profile for Yi-yun. ....	155
<i>Figure 5. 3.</i> Profile for Chen-feng. ....	164
<i>Figure 5. 4.</i> Profile for Cai-wei. ....	174
<i>Figure 5. 5.</i> Profile for Ai-ling. ....	182
<i>Figure 5. 6.</i> Profile for Rong-rong. ....	186
<i>Figure 5. 7.</i> Profile for Mu-cheng. ....	190
<i>Figure 6. 1.</i> A classroom L2 WTC model. ....	201

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ID	Individual Difference
IDs	Individual Differences
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second or Foreign Language
NNS	Non-native Speaker
NS	Native Speaker
PPCT	Person-Process-Context-Time
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
WTC	Willingness to Communicate
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development