

Willingness to communicate in English among secondary school students in the  
rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
CLT	communicative language teaching
DC	desire to communicate
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
ID	individual difference
IH	interaction hypothesis
L1	first language
L2	second language
SEM	structural equation modeling
SLA	second language acquisition
Std. Dev.	Standard deviation
WTC	willingness to communicate

## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Willingness to communicate (WTC), an individual difference (ID) variable, has gained an increasing amount of attention in the area of second language acquisition (SLA). Previous research into WTC has mainly focused on its trait disposition as remaining stable across contexts. Only a few studies have investigated the situational nature of WTC. The present study aimed to fill a gap in the literature that led researchers to call for a verification of self-report data by behavioural studies in the classroom to examine situational WTC. This study also attempted to examine the extent to which rural Chinese secondary students' self-report WTC corresponds to their actual WTC behaviour, and factors that might influence their WTC in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context. A mixed-method approach design was employed in order to explore the different aspects of the WTC construct. Data were collected through a questionnaire, classroom observations, and interviews. The participants, 124 Chinese rural secondary school students, completed the WTC questionnaire. Classroom observations were carried out with four of these participants in order to understand their behavioural WTC. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with these four participants. Findings from this study revealed that the selected rural Chinese students' self-report WTC did not necessarily predict their actual WTC behaviour, and thus confirming the dual characteristics of WTC. Trait-like WTC could determine an individual's general tendency to communicate whereas situational WTC predicted the decision to initiate communication within a particular context. A number of factors that appeared to influence their WTC were identified as: self-confidence, self-perceived proficiency, international posture, identity of interlocutors, and parental influence. The results of this study contribute to the theoretical foundation and methodology of the WTC construct. This study has also provided pedagogical implications for English language teachers. The limitations of this study and suggestions for future research were also identified.

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Recent trends toward communicative approaches to second language (L2) pedagogy have emphasized the significance of cultivating communicative competence in L2 learners (Green, 2000). These approaches to instruction are based on the premise that learners' L2 communicative competence is developed via performance and exchange of information (Ellis, 2008) and are supported by Long's (1996) updated Interaction Hypothesis which has proposed that second language interaction can facilitate language development by providing learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input, to produce and modify their output, to test out hypotheses, and to notice gaps existing in their interlanguage (Ellis, 2008). According to MacIntyre and Charos (1996), communication is more than a means of facilitating language learning, it is an important goal in itself. This focus on the authentic use of the L2 as an essential part of L2 learning has led to a growing body of research into the willingness to communicate (WTC) construct, an important construct in the field of L2 instruction.

Willingness to communicate (WTC), which was first conceptualized as the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), is of special importance in revealing learners' communication psychology and promoting communication engagement in class. MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) have suggested that a proper objective for L2 education is to create WTC in the language learning process, in order to produce students who are willing to seek out communication opportunities and actually to communicate in them. Kang (2005) has argued that we can increase L2 learners' WTC by creating opportunities that might

create an environment in which learners feel comfortable to initiate communication because learners with a higher WTC are more likely to use L2 in authentic communication, which can contribute to their successful SLA.

In the last two decades, WTC has gained a lot of attention in SLA and there has been a growing amount of research, which has focused on identifying factors affecting L2 WTC. MacIntyre et al. (1998) postulated a heuristic WTC model that captures the complexity of communication in a second language. It showed that a number of variables, including linguistic, communicative, and social psychological factors might influence one's tendency to communicate in an L2. This model has since stimulated research conducted in various learning contexts with the aim of identifying factors that influence L2 WTC. A number of factors have been identified as directly or indirectly predictive of WTC, including motivation (MacIntyre et al., 2002), perceived communicative competence (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), communication anxiety (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003), social support and learning context (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Clément et al., 2003), and international posture (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). Gender and age have also been found to impact on WTC (MacIntyre et al., 2002, 2003a).

Despite the rich findings from previous research, most of the previous studies have been conducted in Western countries, in particular, among Canadian Anglophone students learning French as a second language (e.g. Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2002). Until recently, little research (e.g. Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004) has been conducted in a foreign language learning (EFL) context where there is usually no immediate linguistic need for learners to use English in their daily life.

In a Chinese EFL context, empirical research into L2 WTC is still at a nascent stage.

Asker (1998) indicated that compared to their western counterparts, Hong Kong students exhibited a lower level of L2 WTC. Wen and Clément (2003) examined college language learners' willingness to communicate and presented a Chinese conceptualization of willingness to communicate in English based on the heuristic WTC model of MacIntyre et al. (1998). According to Wen and Clément (2003), the Chinese Confucian heritage, which contains elements such as the other-directed self, face protection, and a submissive way of learning, might account for Chinese students' reluctance to participate in classroom communication in English. Such covert cultural influence was also observed in Peng's (2007) qualitative study of 118 Chinese university students. Peng identified eight factors classified into two contexts, namely individual context and social context, which influenced L2 WTC. Liu and Jackson (2008) reported that Chinese students' unwillingness to communicate could be associated with language anxiety, perceived proficiency, and their limited access to English. These exploratory findings need more empirical support with larger samples before any generalization is possible.

However, these previous studies into L2 WTC in China were mostly conducted in colleges or universities (e.g. Peng, 2007; Liu & Jackson, 2008). However, at secondary level, especially in rural areas, factors that influence learners' L2 WTC remain under-investigated. In China, tremendous efforts and resources have been expended to improve English Language Teaching (ELT). Not all parts of China, however, have benefited equally from the invested efforts and resources. Therefore, there exist differences in English language teaching between economically and socio-culturally developed regions and the less developed ones. For example, there are differences between major cities and small cities, between rural towns and countryside, between

coastal and inland areas (Hu, 2003). Hu's (2003) study found that economic, social, cultural, and pedagogical factors have jointly created clear region-based differences in students' English proficiency, previous learning experiences, classroom behaviours, and language learning. Therefore, such factors influencing students' WTC in developed regions may differ from those in less developed ones.

## **1.2 Aims of the Research**

For these reasons, the primary purpose of the present study is to explore the extent to which rural Chinese secondary school students are willing to communicate in English. The study also aims to investigate the factors that might influence Chinese learners' L2 WTC in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) rather than ESL (English as a Second Language) context.

In general, the current study has utilized a multiple research approach in order to provide a more holistic and comprehensive view of the WTC construct in the field of SLA. This research was carried out in a secondary school in a rural area in Fujian in China with 124 students from two complete classes. Their self-report WTC was explored through a WTC questionnaire at the beginning of the program. Then, during the entire span of the program, four of the 124 students' WTC behaviour in a whole class situation was observed according to a classroom observation scheme. Lastly, factors that may influence their WTC in class were identified by means of interviews with these four participants.

This study contributes to an understanding of how WTC can facilitate second language instruction in an EFL classroom, with a primary focus on identifying factors that may influence L2 WTC. While there have been a number of studies into L2 WTC in

the past (e.g. Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003; Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2009; Hashimoto, 2002; Peng, 2007; Yashima, 2002), the data of these previous studies were predominantly collected from a questionnaire, which, according to Kang (2005), is not insightful enough to explore the situational characteristics of WTC. Following Cao and Philp (2006) and Cao (2009), the present study differs from these previous projects in that it incorporates a qualitative approach in order to examine L2 WTC by means of actual classroom behaviour, and reveal factors affecting L2 WTC in the classroom context. Consequently, the results of the current study may provide more comprehensive insights into both self-report WTC and behavioural WTC. If a fundamental goal of L2 education is the creation of willingness to communicate in the language learning process, as MacIntyre et al. (1998) have suggested, the findings of this study could therefore be of benefit in the field of L2 instruction.

### **1.3 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Following this introduction in Chapter One, Chapter Two reviews previous literature and research relevant to the research questions addressed in this study. It also introduces the fundamental theoretical claims underlying WTC, and reviews some major findings from empirical research studies concerning L2 WTC. Gaps in previous research are subsequently identified and as a consequence, three research questions are raised for investigation.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach employed in the current study. A mixed-method design is adopted to enrich the data from different perspectives. The major research instruments, the WTC questionnaire, a classroom observation scheme, and semi-structured interviews, are identified. A justification of

each method is also provided. This chapter also describes procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Ethical issues concerning the research process are clarified as well.

Chapter Four reports key findings from an analysis of the research data. These include results based on the use of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Results from a content analysis of the interview data are also considered. A detailed account and interpretation of the findings of the study, with reference to each of the research questions, are also presented in relation to previous relevant research findings.

Chapter Five summarizes the key findings of this study. Contributions to theory, methodology, and research are then presented, followed by the pedagogical implications of the study. The limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are also indicated.

## **CHAPTER 2     A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature associated with the main areas of interest in this study: communicative language teaching, the willingness to communicate construct (WTC), and research studies concerned with willingness to communicate in L2.

The first section introduces a dominant feature of current language pedagogy, the concept of communicative language teaching (CLT) and its relationship with WTC. WTC is of obvious interest in the area of CLT as it places a great emphasis on learning through communication (Ellis, 2008).

The second section presents the development of English language teaching (ELT) in China and identifies some problems of CLT in China. ELT in China is now taking on more communicative characteristics, but Chinese learners are often not willing to participate in language classroom interaction activities, which may frustrate many language teachers.

In the third section, Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, which had a dominant influence in early L2 WTC research, is presented in order to gain a better understanding of the WTC construct. Following that, in the fourth section, the definition of WTC is presented. The WTC construct is then considered from trait-level and state level perspectives, which is in line with the current trends in WTC research (Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005). Two influential heuristic models of L2 WTC, MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic L2 WTC model and Wen and Clément's (2003) WTC model in China, are then presented with a review of empirical studies which tested



these two models in order to illustrate the applicability of these models in different contexts. Variables underlying L2 WTC, as well as empirical studies of WTC in L2 in China, are also discussed in this section.

Finally, the limitations of previous studies are identified and the research questions of this study are then presented.

## **2.2 Rationale of the Study**

Current second language (L2) pedagogy has attached great importance to communicative interaction in class with the aim of developing learners' communicative competence. In examining the second language pedagogy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is almost certain that communicative language teaching (CLT) has taken the lead. The essence of CLT is the engagement of language learners in communication to allow them to develop their communication competence (Savignon, 2005). Therefore, the understanding and identification of learners' communication orientation and needs can help language teachers to improve language teaching effectiveness. According to Brown (2002), with the advent of CLT, classroom organization has been "increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks" (p.42) . MacIntyre and Charos (1996) have claimed that communication is not only a means of facilitating language learning but also an important goal in itself. This focus on the active use of L2 in language classrooms reflects the belief that learners must use the language to develop proficiency, that is, "learners have to talk in order to learn" (Skehan, 1989, p.48).

Language acquisition theories have also had a considerable impact on the pedagogical approach of communicative language teaching, in particular, Long's (1996)

Interaction Hypothesis (IH). Long's (1996) updated Interaction Hypothesis addressed the question of how second language interaction can facilitate language development by providing learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input. The updated version of the IH also afforded a much richer view of how negotiation can assist language learning. It posited two other ways in which interaction can contribute to acquisition: through the provision of negative evidence about what is not acceptable in the target language; and through opportunities for modified output when they notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say (Ellis, 2008). Long (1996) defines negative evidence as input that provides "direct or indirect evidence of what is grammatical" (p.413). It arises when learners receive feedback on their own attempts to use the L2. The comprehensible output hypothesis has been proposed by Swain (2005) as a complement to Long's (1996) IH. It claims that learners need the opportunity for "pushed output" (i.e., output that is precise, coherent, and situationally appropriate) in order to develop advanced levels of grammatical competence (Ellis, 2008) because in the process of struggling to produce output comprehensible to their interlocutors (Mackey & Gass, 2005), learners can recognize what they do not know, or know only partially. This may lead to greater linguistic awareness so that learners may pay particular attention to form (Swain, 2005).

One of the main aims of CLT is to provide opportunities for learners to participate in interaction where the primary goal is to exchange meaning rather than merely to learn the L2. How does this help acquisition? According to the IH, the comprehensible input which results from attempts to negotiate communication difficulties helps to make salient grammatical features which are problematic to learners, and thus acquisition is facilitated. This hypothesis emphasizes the importance of interactional

adjustments (e.g. requests for clarification and confirmation checks) which arise in two-way communication when a communication problem arises (Ellis, 2008).

WTC is of obvious interest in the area of communicative language teaching, which places a premium on learning through communication (Ellis, 2008). L2 researchers seem to agree that language students who are more active in language use have a greater potential to develop communicative competence by having more opportunities to interact with others (Ellis, 2008). Therefore, learners with a strong willingness to communicate may be able to benefit from CLT (Ellis, 2008). MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Conrod (2001) have argued that WTC should be expected to facilitate the language learning process, a view based on their findings that higher level WTC among students translates into more opportunity for practice in an L2 and authentic L2 usage.

With increasing emphasis on authentic communication as an essential part of L2 learning, WTC has been proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) both as one of the individual difference variables affecting L2 acquisition and as a goal of L2 instruction. According to Dörnyei (2005), WTC is a composite individual difference (ID) variable that draws together a host of learner variables that have been well established as influences on SLA, resulting in a construct in which psychological and linguistic factors are integrated in an organic manner. Thus, "WTC is a means and an end at the same time" (Dörnyei, 2005, p.210). It is also suggested that the combination of communication and second language learning research could provide insight into the study of individual differences in SLA (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). Kang (2005) also argues that WTC should be an important component of SLA and further research needs to focus on WTC in order to provide insights into and more effective suggestions for SLA.

Due to the importance of WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that it is essential for

L2 educators to design L2 teaching pedagogy and programs that can enhance L2 students' WTC. In order to achieve this goal, it is important for L2 educators to understand which factors affect L2 students' diversity in levels of WTC. The students may become more successful in learning a L2 if they understand the importance of WTC and what variables determine their degree of WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

In summary, as a complex but promising construct of obvious relevance to communicative language teaching, WTC has gained considerable attention in L2 research (Ellis, 2008), and given the important role that WTC plays in second language learning, it is necessary for L2 teachers to understand the variables underlying L2 WTC (Kim, 2004).

Given that some readers may not be familiar with the English Language Teaching (ELT) situation in China, the following section will introduce ELT in China and why WTC is important in China.

### **2.3 English Language Teaching in China**

China may have the largest number of EFL learners in the world (Peng & Woodrow, 2010), and the country's rapid economic development has given rise to a pressing demand for competent English users (Wu, 2001). In response to this ever-increasing demand for English, there has been a massive drive to expand and improve English language teaching (ELT) in the formal education system (Hu, 2002).

Therefore, English language teaching in China has undergone a profound reform in English teaching methods as well as curriculum in the last two decades. Before 1992, the guideline for English teaching in China was a structural curriculum, which focused on grammatical study rather than pragmatic language use. In teaching practice,

teachers tended to put primary emphasis on grammar instruction and vocabulary (Liao, 2000). Thus, “the students’ ability to use English was much lower than that of their knowledge”, and “students became almost ‘deaf and dumb’ and had little ability to speak and understand English” (Liao, 2000, p.4).

After a re-evaluation of these traditional English teaching methods, a new functional national unified curriculum was introduced in 1992, which set “being able to use English to communicate” as a major teaching goal (Yu, 2001). The new functional curriculum was designed to train students in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and enable them to “gain basic knowledge of English and competence to use English for communication” (Yu, 2001, p.195). Not until the implementation of the new English teaching curriculum in 1992 did the CLT approach start to draw serious attention from English teachers and researchers in China (Yu, 2001).

With increasing demands for improved oral proficiency in English teaching in China, a more student-centered communicative approach has been emphasized as educational reforms are being carried out (Wen & Clément, 2003), and the demands for communicative competence increase (Wu, 2001). However, the implementation of the CLT approach in English teaching in China has not been a smooth process for a variety of reasons. First, a large number of Chinese students who adopt a submissive way to learning regard the transmission of knowledge as a teaching requirement, and believe that teachers’ lectures alone are sufficiently effective to promote their English proficiency; thus, they may not feel that they are learning in a student-centered, communicative learning context (Hu, 2002). The grammar-oriented examination process is also suggested as one of the main factors to have imposed constraints on a real application of the CLT approach in the Chinese setting (Liao, 2000). In addition, in

many existing studies, Chinese EFL learners are portrayed as reticent and quiet in class. They are reluctant to participate in classroom activities; they hardly volunteer answers, let alone initiate questions; they seldom speak up about their opinions even if they have one; and they hold back from expressing their views (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2002). Their nonparticipation and reticence may be dissonant with the implementation of innovative curricula and impose constraints on CLT, thereby frustrating many EFL teachers (Yu, 2001).

Therefore, research into Chinese students' L2 WTC is of particular importance for ELT in China because it may help researchers understand language learners' communication orientations and behaviours, and then assist in a more effective application of the CLT approach in English classes. According to Wen and Clément (2003), generating students' WTC in a classroom setting in order to improve their oral proficiency has been a key issue for English language teaching in China because Chinese students, who are generally good at grammar-based written examinations, are often poor at oral communication in English. Moreover, a study of Chinese students' WTC could advance theoretical and practical insights into ways to improve English language teaching and learning in China and other similar EFL contexts (Peng & Woodrow, 2010).

To sum up, English language teaching in China is now taking on more communicative characteristics to foster learners' oral competence. Chinese learners, however, are often stereotyped as passive learners, who are not willing to participate in language classroom interaction activities (Liu, 2002). Therefore, understanding the factors which influence their WTC in L2 may assist with the application of CLT and raise the standards of ELT in China.

Some early WTC studies have been based on Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model which has played an important role in the development of WTC research. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce this model before the WTC construct is presented.

## **2.4 The Socio-educational Model**

Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model was originally developed to explain L2 learning in classroom settings, in particular the foreign language classroom, and was the dominant influence in early L2 WTC research. This model proposes that two basic attitudes – integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation –influence a learner's level of L2 learning motivation. The level of motivation, in turn, has an impact on the linguistic outcome (e.g. achievement or proficiency). Integrativeness refers to the desire to learn a second language in order to meet and interact with members of the L2 community. Attitudes toward the learning situation refer to the learners' evaluation of the language teacher and the course. Both integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation contribute to the learners' level of motivation, which was labelled "integrative motivation" by Gardner (1985). Integrative motivation, in turn, influences the activity level of the learner in learning situations. According to the socio-educational model, learners with a higher level of integrativeness and stronger L2 learning motivation will be more ready to communicate with a L2 language group than those with a lower level of integrativeness and motivation.

However, Dörnyei (1990) suggested that Gardner's (1985) model should be modified concerning the role of integrativeness in the foreign language learning context, where learners do not or cannot interact with the target language community, but learn the foreign language in an academic setting. He argued that "foreign

language learners often have not had enough contact with the target language community to form attitudes about them” (Dörnyei, 1990, p. 69). Due to this concern in the EFL context, Yashima (2002) proposed the construct of “international posture” in order to replace integrativeness to capture EFL learners’ attitudes toward what English symbolizes for them. Yashima and his associates’ studies (Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004) observed the direct influence of international posture on motivation and L2 WTC, and the indirect effect of motivation on L2 WTC among Japanese EFL learners. As a result, international posture was found to exert an influence on WTC in the Japanese EFL context.

Despite Dörnyei’s (1990) comments, many early L2 WTC studies were informed by Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model and identified significant correlation between L2 WTC, attitudes, and motivation (e.g. MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Yashima, 2002). Therefore, this socio-educational model has been seen as one of the most influential frameworks in early L2 WTC research. Given the similar EFL context between China and Japan, it is important to explore if these attitudes toward international community have an impact on learners in a Chinese EFL context.

## **2.5 Willingness to Communicate**

This section reviews the literature pertaining to the main area of interest in the current study, that is, the WTC construct. In order to gain a better understanding of WTC, WTC in L1 is first introduced, followed by the definition of WTC in L2. WTC is then considered from trait-like and state-level perspectives. Two influential heuristic models of L2 WTC, as well as empirical studies on L2 WTC in different contexts, are also considered in this section.



### **2.5.1 Willingness to Communicate in L1**

The construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) was originally developed by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in relation to communication in the first language (L1) and as an expansion of earlier work by Burgoon's (1976) on unwillingness to communicate (as cited in McCrokey & Baer, 1985), by Mostensen, Arnston, and Lustig (1977) on predisposition toward verbal behaviour (as cited in McCrokey & Baer, 1985), and by McCroskey and Richmond (1982) who took a behavioural approach toward shyness (as cited in McCrokey & Baer, 1985).

WTC in L1 is defined as a stable predisposition toward communication when free to choose to do so (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). McCroskey and Richmond (1990) treat WTC in L1 as a personality-based, trait-like predisposition which was relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers. In other words, even though situational variables might affect one's willingness to communicate, individuals exhibit regular WTC tendencies across situations. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) also identified introversion, self-esteem, communication competence, communication apprehension, and cultural diversity as antecedents that lead to differences in L1 WTC.

MacIntyre (1994) developed a path to predict WTC in the first language. His model postulates that self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension exert as direct influences on WTC. That is, higher levels of WTC are based on a combination of greater perceived communicative competence and a relative lack of communication apprehension. This model also shows the influence of personality traits. The personality trait of introversion contributes to both communication apprehension and the perception of communicative competence, and

self-esteem plays a role in reducing communication apprehension. MacIntyre (1994) suggested that future research explore the relationship between personality and specific situational characteristics in their influence on willingness to communicate. According to MacIntyre and Charos (1996), situations in which a communicator uses his or her second language represent an opportunity to both test the model and integrate it with existing language learning research. Therefore, they applied MacIntyre's (1994) model to second language communication. Using path analysis, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) conducted their pioneer study in an attempt to apply MacIntyre's (1994) model to second language communication among 92 Anglophone students in a Canadian immersion context. Employing the questionnaire method, they investigated the relations between affective variables, such as attitudes, motivation, perceived competence, and anxiety and their impact on the frequency of second language communication. The role of personality traits in WTC was also examined. Based on the results of their study, they suggested that the willingness to communicate model appeared to adapt well to the L2 context and might represent a profitable addition to WTC literature.

### **2.5.2 Willingness to communicate in L2**

MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998), however, maintain that in the L2 context, the situation is more complex because the level of one's proficiency, and in particular that of the individual's L2 communicative skill, is an additional powerful modifying variable. Thus, they stated that "it is highly unlikely that WTC in the second language (L2) is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1" (MacIntyre et al., p. 546). Accordingly, L2 WTC was defined by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as "a readiness to enter

into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using L2” (p. 547).

This definition suggests that although the chance to communicate will likely present itself, it is not absolutely necessary in order to possess the WTC. For instance, if a teacher asks his or her students a question, several students may raise their hands to show their desire to answer the question. Even if only one student among many has the opportunity to answer the question in L2, all of the students raising their hands can be considered as expressing L2 WTC. (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

In more recent studies, L2 WTC is treated as a function of situational contextual factors, such as topic, interlocutors, group size, and cultural background (Kang, 2005). Kang (2005) maintains that individual psychological conditions and situational variables have an effect on L2 WTC. She argues that the previous definitions of L2 WTC cannot serve as a theoretical foundation for investigating WTC in dynamic situations, where it can change from time to time. Based on his own findings, Kang (2005) proposes a new definition of WTC as a situational variable:

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is an individual’s volitional inclination toward actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables. (p.291)

Judging from the definitions of WTC discussed above, it can be seen that WTC may be regarded both as a situational as well as a trait-like characteristic, which will be discussed in the next subsection.

#### **2.5.2.1 Trait versus situational WTC in L2**

WTC in first language (L1) has been conceptualized as a personality trait that is stable across contexts and receivers (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), however, MacIntyre et al. (1998) have argued that in the L2 context, WTC should be treated as a situational

variable, open to change across situations. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), WTC in L2 is a situational variable with both transient and enduring influences. They distinguish and define the transient and enduring influences as follows:

The enduring influences (e.g., intergroup relations, learner personality, etc.) represent stable, long-term properties of the environment or person that would apply to almost any situation. The situational influences (e.g. desire to speak to a specific person, knowledge of the topic, etc.) are seen as more transient and dependent on the specific context in which a person functions at a given time (p. 546).

The dual characteristics (trait-like and situation-specific) of WTC were examined by MacIntyre et al. (1999) experimentally with 226 tertiary students in Canada. The participants in their study were enrolled in interpersonal communication, psychology, and introductory English university-level courses. The trait-level WTC was measured by means of a questionnaire including perceived competence, communication anxiety, self-esteem, extroversion, and emotional stability. The participants' self-rating of how willing, competent, and anxious they felt about performing two speaking tasks and two writing tasks were used to explore state measures for WTC, perceived competence, and anxiety. The trait-level and state-level WTC results were found to be complementary and could be integrated. Therefore, MacIntyre et al. (1999) argued that trait-level WTC prepared individuals for communication by creating a tendency to place themselves in situations where communication was expected; situational (state-level) WTC, on the other hand, influenced the decision to initiate communication within a particular situation. MacIntyre et al. (2001) later pointed out that the self-report method only tapped trait-like WTC in their study and suggested observational studies to be more suitable to examine situational WTC. MacIntyre et al. (2002) further called for a verification of self-report data by behavioural studies in the

classroom.

Kang (2005) also argues that a quantitative method using questionnaires is not insightful enough to explore the situational characteristics of WTC in an actual situation. Therefore, Kang (2005) examined L2 WTC as a situational variable by employing a qualitative method. Kang's (2005) study deserves special attention, according to Dörnyei (2005), because the qualitative method employed in the study allowed her to explore situational variables affecting WTC in detail. Kang (2005) collected her qualitative data by videotaped conversations, interviews, and stimulated recalls. Four male Korean students at an American university were studied for a period of eight months. From the inductive analysis of her data, she found that WTC in L2 could vary according to the influence of situational variables, such as interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context. These situational variables interacted with the psychological conditions of security, excitement, and responsibility to determine the degree of L2 WTC. She therefore proposes a multilayered construct of situational WTC, in which WTC is treated as a dynamic situational concept that can change moment-to-moment, rather than a trait-like predisposition (Kang, 2005).

Overall, the above empirical studies provide evidence for the dual characteristics of WTC at trait-level and state-level. Previous research studies on WTC have predominantly focused on its trait disposition using questionnaires as their only research tools. However, recent theoretical discussions of the construct WTC have emphasized the need to collect data that capture the dynamic and situational nature of this construct. As a result, observation is suggested as a more suitable method to examine situational WTC.

In order to gain a holistic understanding of the WTC construct, it is important to

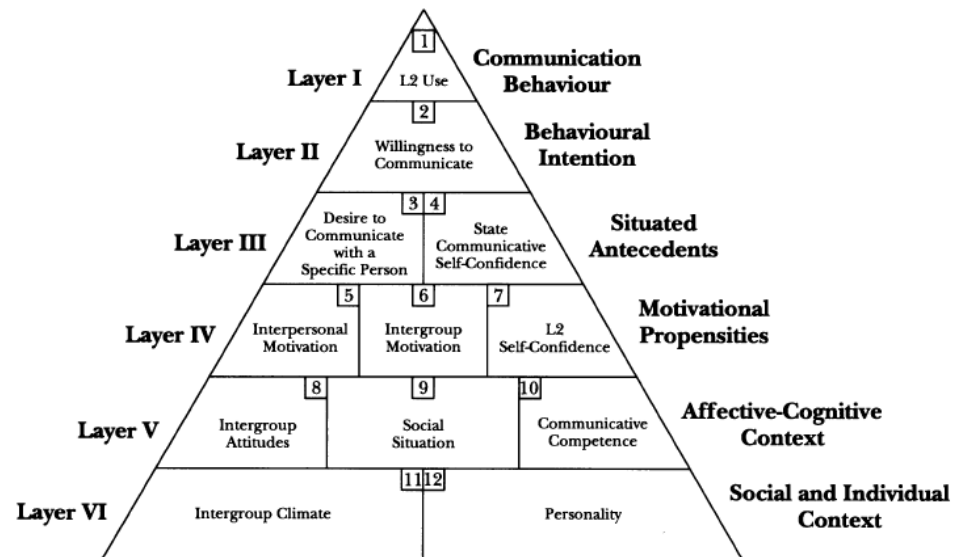
introduce readers to two influential heuristic models of L2 WTC proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and Wen and Clément (2003) because these two models have stimulated more research into L2 WTC.

#### **2.5.2.2 Heuristic Models of WTC in L2**

In this subsection, two heuristic models of L2 WTC are presented: MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model of WTC in L2 and Wen and Clément's (2003) L2 WTC model based on research in China. In order to illustrate the applicability of these models in different contexts, a number of subsequent empirical studies which tested these two models in different contexts are also reviewed.

##### **2.5.2.2.1 MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels's (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in L2**

In an attempt to explain the interrelations of affective variables influencing L2 communication behaviours, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) proposed a pyramid-figure model of L2 WTC, which incorporated a range of potential linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables that might affect one's WTC in L2 (See Figure 1). They placed WTC in Layer II and claimed that WTC strongly implies a behavioural intention, and this intention is the most immediate cause of communication behaviour if a person also has actual control over his or her actions. That is, they identified WTC as a behavioural intention, the final step before using L2 with a specific person.



**Figure 1 Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC**  
(Source: MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547)

In this model, as displayed in Figure 1, the factors contributing to WTC are divided into two groups: enduring influences and situational influences. Hypothesized to have situational influences on and to be the most proximal causes of L2 communication, the three layers closest to the top of the pyramid are Communication Behaviour, Behaviour Intention, and Situated Antecedents. These first three layers represent situational influences on WTC at a given time. The bottom three layers are Motivation Propensities, Affective-Cognitive Context, and Social and Individual Context. These latter three layers signify relatively stable and enduring influences on the process of L2 communication. Therefore, from the top to the bottom, the layers represent a move from the most immediate, situation-based contexts to the more stable, enduring influences of particular variables on L2 communication situations.

MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model illustrates the complexity of the concept of L2 use and explains WTC as cognitive affective variables interacting with social

factors. In general, the cognitive affective variables included in the model are personality, attitudes, motivation, L2 competence, and self-confidence. According to the model, affective variables such as personality, L2 competence, and attitude have only an indirect influence on WTC, while motivation and self-confidence have direct effects on WTC. In response to the socio-educational model by Gardner (1985), MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model describes how attitudes have indirect effects on WTC through motivation, and how motivation influences WTC so as to achieve success in SLA.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that their heuristic model of WTC can be of practical and pedagogical use in explaining individual differences in WTC, which is important for the success of SLA. The heuristic model was significant because it was the "first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of WTC in the L2" as a situation-based variable (p.558). It enriched the conceptualization of WTC by treating it as a situational variable with both transient and enduring influences. Therefore, the heuristic model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) is still regarded as the most comprehensive, powerful and influential so far in the area of WTC research.

Since its proposal in 1998, a number of empirical studies (e.g. Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003; Cetinkaya, 2005; Kim, 2004; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrad, 2001) have been conducted to examine and test the various aspects of MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model. These studies show that motivation, communicative competence, and language anxiety are predictors of WTC. MacIntyre and his associates have carried out several empirical studies in a Canadian context, which have focused on identifying the correlation of WTC with a number of factors from this model. For example, in order to investigate the effects of gender and an immersion versus a non-immersion program



on various variables in this model, Baker and MacIntyre (2000, 2003) conducted a study with 71 Canadian high school immersion and 124 non-immersion students, who speak English as their mother tongue and learn French as an L2. These variables included perceived competence, WTC, frequency of communication, communication anxiety, and motivation. Based on questionnaire data, the study revealed that anxiety and perceived competence strongly predicted WTC and frequency of communication. The results also found that immersion students reported higher WTC and lower communication anxiety than non-immersion students.

Similarly, in a L2 French immersion program (n = 79), MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conrad (2001) examined how WTC could be affected by motivation and social support. They examined the 9<sup>th</sup> grade French immersion students' WTC in speaking, writing, reading, and comprehension; these students' reasons for studying French; and the social support that they got from their parents, teachers, and friends. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire. The results indicated a positive correlation between students' motivation for language learning and their WTC in French as a second language, thus lending support to the pyramid model that perceived competence, communication anxiety, motivation, and social situation play a role in determining one's WTC in L2.

In the EFL context, there have also been empirical studies which tested MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic WTC model. For example, in a Korean EFL context, Kim (2004) carried out a study to examine the reliability of this model in explaining WTC in L2 among Korean students and its application to the Korean EFL context. Based on the assumption that WTC displayed the dual characteristics of being trait-like and situational, Kim (2004) employed structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse questionnaire

survey data collected from 191 Korean university students. The findings showed that these Korean students' WTC in L2 was directly affected by their perceived self-confidence and indirectly influenced by motivation through self-confidence. The findings, however, found no direct relation between attitudes toward the international community and L2 WTC. The results also demonstrated that the Korean students appeared to have low levels of WTC in English. Grounded in the theoretical perspective that WTC in L2 was an important factor determining success in SLA, Kim (2004) concluded that their low WTC in L2 was in part responsible for their limited or less successful results in English learning. The study also showed that WTC in L2 was more likely to be a personality-based predisposition than situational, and that MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model of WTC in L2 was reliable in the Korean EFL context.

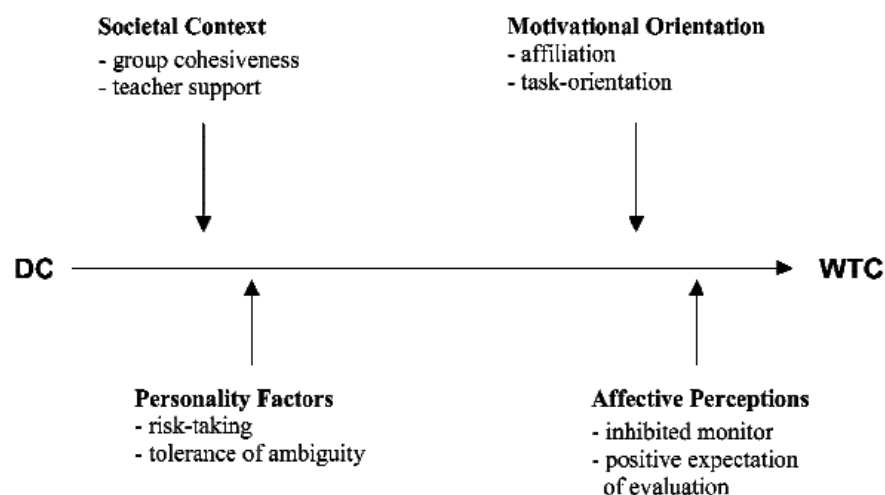
Similarly, in order to investigate whether MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model explained the relations between social-psychological, linguistic, and communication variables in the Turkish EFL context, Cetinkaya (2005) conducted an empirical study among 356 Turkish college students. The study was a hybrid design that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. By employing questionnaires, Cetinkaya (2005) investigated the interrelations among students' WTC in L2, motivation, communication anxiety, perceived communication competence, attitude toward the international community, and personality. Qualitative interviews were utilized to extend and elaborate on these quantitative results. Similar to Kim's (2004) study, students' WTC was found to be directly influenced by their perceived self-confidence and indirectly affected by their motivation through self-confidence. However, unlike Kim's (2004) study which found no direct relation between attitudes towards the international community and WTC, in

Cetinkaya's (2005) research project, SEM revealed a consistent relationship between the students' WTC in L2 and attitudes. Students' personalities in terms of being introverted or extroverted were also found to be indirectly related to their WTC through linguistic self-confidence.

In summary, these empirical studies above, which were carried out in different learning situations, provide some evidence to support the applicability of MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model across contexts.

#### **2.5.2.2.2 Wen and Clément's (2003) WTC Model in China**

Wen and Clément (2003) argue that the factors that MacIntyre et al. (1998) identified in their model may not explain Chinese EFL learners' WTC. They claim that the development of the heuristic model is based on research studies mainly conducted in the western context, which is quite different from that of China. They argue that under the influence of Confucianism, which has an emphasis on the collective, WTC in L2 in the Chinese EFL context is a far more complicated notion than that reflected in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model. Therefore, as an extension to this model, Wen and Clément (2003) made an attempt to conceptualize the factors that might affect WTC in the Chinese EFL context (see Figure 2). Thus, they revised MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model based on the perspective of Chinese philosophy and culture.



**Figure 2 Variables moderating the relationship between DC and WTC in the Chinese EFL classroom**

(Source: Wen & Clément 2003, p.25)

In the view of Wen and Clément (2003), under the influence of Confucianism in China, cultural values are the dominant force shaping an individual's perceptions and ways of learning, which may also manifest themselves in L2 communication. They suggest that Chinese students' lack of willingness to communicate in public is not just a language phenomenon, but deeply rooted in their other-directed self and submissive way of learning.

In Chinese philosophy and culture, the other-directed self includes a face-protected orientation and the insider effect. According to Confucius, the self does not exist as a single entity; its existential reality is dialectically related to the family, the community, the nation, and the world (Chai & Chai, 1965; as cited in Wen & Clément, 2003). Therefore, Chinese students are very sensitive to the evaluation of the significant others, which makes them less likely to get involved in classroom communication when learning English, thus impeding the development of their L2 speaking ability. The insider effect

refers to a sense of group belonging. It may lead to a certain feeling of distance from other members of other groups as in an L2 classroom, which in turn inhibits the interaction needed in order to succeed in L2 communication. Thus, face protection and the insider effect make it less likely for Chinese learners to risk speaking English. English is perceived as something different which entails the risk of losing face if they cannot speak it appropriately (Wen & Clément, 2003).

A submissive way of learning, dating back to Confucianism and the teaching of Confucian Classics, has been recognized as a tendency in Chinese culture. As a result, in China, teachers play an authoritative role in teaching, and the students submit to authority in the process of learning. The value they place on submission to authority prevents them from interacting freely with the significant others, both teachers and peers. It provides another explanation for Chinese learners' reluctance to participate in classroom communication (Wen & Clément, 2003).

Wen and Clément (2003) use a figure (see Figure 2) to represent the impact of Chinese cultural values on L2 WTC. Their specific concern is the relationship between the desire to communicate (DC, Layer III in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model) and WTC (Layer II in the same model). In their conceptualization, a distinction is made between desire and willingness, based on the belief that the desire to communicate does not necessarily imply a willingness to communicate. Desire refers to a deliberate choice or preference, whereas willingness emphasizes the readiness to act. They contend that between the desire to communicate (DC) and WTC, one may undergo a complex mental process with both cognitive and affective factors interacting with each other.

As shown in Figure 2, Wen and Clément's(2003) model consists of societal context, personality factors, motivational orientations, and affective perceptions. The societal

context is made up of group cohesiveness and teacher support. Group cohesiveness stems from motivational orientation among in-group members and generates a sense of belongingness. It is assumed that high group cohesiveness leads to more engagement and lower anxiety, and thus higher L2 WTC. Teacher support, including teacher involvement and teacher immediacy, is regarded in this model as a significant and determining socio-cultural influence on students.

Personality factors in their model (Wen & Clément, 2003) include risk taking and tolerance of ambiguity. They may facilitate or inhibit language learning. In the Chinese context, risk taking and tolerance of ambiguity are affectively related and culturally significant due to the Chinese collectivistic outlook. Risk-taking is defined as “any consciously or non-consciously controlled behaviour with a perceived uncertainty about its outcome” (Trimpop, 1994, as cited in Wen & Clément, 2003, p.29). Due to the cultural tendency to protect face in China, the relationship between DC and WTC is partially determined by the extent to which the learners will accept the risk of losing face. Because successful language learning necessitates tolerance of ambiguity (Brown, 1987, as cited in Wen & Clément, 2003), Chinese learners score rather poorly in this area because of their rule-dominated and face-protection orientations.

Motivational orientation consists of affiliation and task orientation. In the Chinese EFL context, these variables are assumed by Wen and Clément (2003) to explain most students’ motivational tendency, to fit into a group and accomplish tasks so as to gain the approval of the immediate co-members and thus feel emotionally secure.

The last element of the model is affective perceptions, including an inhibited monitor and the positive expectation of evaluation. These two components, according to Wen and Clément (2003), are most closely linked to anxiety in Chinese culture, in

which too much attention is focused on public verdicts and social acceptance. Therefore, they are conceptualized as directly involved in determining L2 WTC at a given time.

Wen and Clément's (2003) revised theoretical framework has provided a new way to test the original WTC model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) in a different EFL setting, where variables affecting WTC could be examined from a cultural perspective (Cao, 2009). Some subsequent studies have incorporated MacIntyre et al.' (1998) model and the adapted model proposed by Wen and Clément (2003) in Asian EFL contexts. For example, in the Chinese EFL context, Peng (2007) conducted a qualitative study integrated with quantitative techniques to investigate Chinese college students (n=118) WTC, with the aim of finding support for MacIntyre et al.' (1998) heuristic model and Wen and Clément's (2003) adapted WTC model. The results from the questionnaire and interview revealed that the Chinese students exhibited generally low L2 WTC tendencies in their EFL classroom. It also found that the female students seemed to be more willing to engage in L2 communication than the male students. The study identified two groups of factors contributing to Chinese students' WTC; namely, individual contextual factors and social contextual factors. The individual context included factors such as communicative competence, language anxiety, risk-taking, and learners' beliefs. The social context included factors of classroom climate, group cohesiveness, teacher support, and classroom organization. Among the eight factors identified as contributing to Chinese students' L2 WTC in this study, communicative competence and language anxiety were derived from MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model, whereas risk-taking, teacher support, and group cohesiveness were posited from Wen and Clément's (2003) model. Peng (2007) interpreted the factors from a cultural perspective, thus concluding predictors of L2 WTC among the Chinese students were related to the influence of their

Chinese Confucian heritage. She pointed out that communicative competence was not a priority in the culture of learning in China and was therefore still a downplayed variable. She argued that the classroom climate within the Chinese culture of learning and communication could be viewed as an environment built up by the majority of “others” to which the individual self is affiliated and oriented. She further argued that Chinese learners’ WTC encompasses their linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural readiness. That is, the lack of one or more of such readiness factors could contribute to their reluctant participation in L2 communication. She then proposed that the nature of the L2 WTC construct in the classroom setting warranted future research.

Based on the view that Asian countries, such as China and Japan, share similar Confucius philosophies and EFL context, Matsuoka (2006) conducted a study to test the applicability of the original MacIntyre et al. (1998) model and Wen and Clément’s (2003) modified model in the Japanese EFL context. The study investigated how a range of ID variables affected 180 Japanese university students’ WTC in English as well as their English proficiency. Data were collected with a questionnaire, a WTC test, and a computerized English proficiency test. The results revealed that perceived competence, communication apprehension, introversion, and motivational intensity were statistically significant predictors of L2 WTC, whereas perceived competence and L2 WTC were predictors of L2 proficiency. Thus, based on the results of her study, MacIntyre et al.’ (1998) model, and Wen and Clément’s (2003) model, Matsuoka developed a six-layered conceptual model in order to illustrate the relationships between factors related to L2 WTC. Following MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) model, Layer I - III are composed of immediate situational factors whereas Layers IV - VI in Matsuoka’s (2006) model consist of enduring influences. The bottom Layer represents



the societal/cultural context including other-directedness and international posture.

The fifth layer, called cognitive context, includes self-efficacy. The fourth layer is affective context consisting of predisposition against verbal behaviour. The third layer, situational antecedents composed of desire, tension, and confidence, is hypothesized to exert immediate influences on L2 WTC. The second layer is L2 WTC, named communication intention, which is believed to bring out the real communication behaviour, namely L2 use, which is the top layer.

To sum up, the above empirical studies, which combined both MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model and Wen and Clément's (2003) model, show that the relations between L2 WTC and its various variables are different when it is considered from a cultural perspective. These studies demonstrate the influences of affective/individual variables, such as motivation, perceived competence, and attitude on L2 WTC. In the next section, a more comprehensive review will be presented of empirical studies on L2 WTC which have identified different strands of factors affecting WTC.

#### **2.5.2.3 Variables underlying WTC in L2**

In order to gain insight into the relationship between WTC and its determinants, this section presents a comprehensive review of the empirical research which has focused on identifying factors that may exert an influence on WTC in L2.

In the past decade, a number of research studies into L2 WTC have been carried out in order to explore the relationships between L2 WTC and various ID variables, such as personality, self-confidence, attitudes, and motivation (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002). Among a number of individual variables, self-confidence has been frequently, by many researchers, found to be the most immediate antecedent of

L2 WTC (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002). A number of factors have also been identified as directly or indirectly predictive of WTC, including personality (Cetinkaya, 2005; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), L2 attitude and international posture (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004), gender and age, and social support and learning contexts (Clément, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). Some other factors such as security, excitement, responsibility, and classroom environment and so on, have also been found to have an influence on WTC (Kang, 2005).

- **Self-confidence**

In regard to self-confidence, Clément (1986) claimed that it included two constructs: perceived competence and lack of anxiety, and these two constructs represent relatively enduring personal characteristics. In contrast to Clément's concept of trait-like self-confidence, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested state communicative self-confidence as indicated in Layer III of their WTC model was a momentary feeling of confidence which might be transient within a given situation. For example, in an evaluation situation, an L2 interlocutor may experience a very high state of anxiety and low perceived competence, even though the individual may possess considerable and persistent self-confidence across other situations.

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), L2 self-confidence in Layer IV of their WTC model is somewhat different from the state communication self-confidence in Layer III, in that L2 self-confidence in Layer IV stands for "the overall belief in being able to communicate in L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner" (p. 551). This self-confidence can be affected by two components: "the self-evaluation of L2 skills, a judgment made by the speaker about the degree of mastery achieved in L2" (p. 551); and language anxiety when using an L2. Communicative competence, together with experience,

contributes to self-confidence. Higher self-perceived communicative competence leads to higher self-confidence, and perhaps a higher L2 WTC.

In some of earlier empirical research on L2 WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), self-confidence has been consistently found to be the most immediate antecedent of L2 WTC. For example, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) found that communicative anxiety and self-perceived communication competence had some influence on L2 WTC, and that communicative anxiety had a predicted effect on self-perceived communicative competence. Their study also revealed that having more opportunity to participate in direct L2 interaction might cause an increase in self-perceived competence, higher willingness to communicate in an L2, and more frequent L2 communication. As a result, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) postulated that the intention or willingness to engage in L2 communication was determined by “a combination of the student’s perception of his or her second language proficiency, the opportunity to use that language, and a lack of apprehension about speaking” (p. 17). Similarly, Baker and MacIntyre’s (2000, 2003) study found anxiety and perceived competence to be a strong predictor of WTC and frequency of communication.

In the Japanese EFL context, Hashimoto's (2002) study and Yashima's (2002) study found similar results to those of MacIntyre and Charos (1996) and Baker and MacIntyre (2000, 2003). Hashimoto (2002) conducted a study among 56 Japanese EFL students in the University of Hawaii to investigate the effects of L2 WTC and motivation on actual L2 use as a partial replication of MacIntyre and Charos’ (1996) study. Based on the conceptual framework of Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model and MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) WTC model, his self-report survey data yielded similar results to MacIntyre and Charos’ (1996) study. Lack of L2 anxiety and self-perceived communicative

competence were predictors of L2 WTC, which in turn led to more L2 use, whereas L2 anxiety was shown to negatively influence self-perceived communicative competence.

Yashima (2002) investigated the interrelations of affective variables that are believed to affect Japanese EFL learners' WTC in English by surveying 297 Japanese university students. Using Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model and the WTC model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) as basic frameworks, her study yielded similar results to Hashimoto (2002) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996). Based on the data analysis of questionnaires using structural equation modeling (SEM), it was found that a lower level of anxiety and a higher level of perceived L2 competence led to a higher level of WTC, thus supporting the results of Hashimoto's (2002) and MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) studies.

In addition, as mentioned in section 2.5.2.2.1, Kim's (2004) and Cetinkaya's (2005) studies also found self-confidence to be directly related to L2 WTC.

- **Personality**

Based on earlier research results that introverted people are less likely to communicate than are extraverts, McCroskey and Richmond (1990) have proposed that the personality trait dichotomy of introversion/extraversion is an antecedent to WTC. According to McCroskey and Richmond (1990), introverts are not required to communicate as often as they tend to be less socially active than extraverts; however, extraverts, on the other hand, require communication to facilitate social interaction and place a higher value on communication. Therefore, extraverts are more likely to be willing to communicate and have a stronger willingness to communicate than the introverts.

In MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model, although personality is not conceptualized as

a direct influence on an individual's L2 WTC, it still plays an indirect role on WTC through other affective variables such as attitudes, motivation, and confidence. For example, the possession of a certain personality can predict how an individual will react to members of the L2 community in regard to L2 communication. An L2 student with an authoritarian personality type may avoid having communication with L2 community members. According to Altemeyer (1988), "the authoritarian personality type is an individual who is highly conventional, submissive to authority, and aggressive toward those whom he or she believes are inferior or different" (as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 557). Therefore, such an individual would not engage in communication with L2 groups that he or she considers inferior (MacIntyre et al., 1998). MacIntyre and Charos' (1996) study suggested that the effect of personality on WTC was transmitted through some more specific variables such as L2 confidence and intergroup attitudes. As a result, MacIntyre et al. (1998) put intergroup climate and personality at the bottom of the pyramid model in order to suggest their less direct involvement in the determination of a person's WTC at a given time.

Some earlier empirical studies have established the role of personality traits in L2 WTC. MacIntyre, Babin, and Clément (1999) investigated, among other variables, the relationship between WTC and personality (extraversion and emotional stability) through SEM. The results indicated that personality traits, extraversion, and emotional stability influenced WTC through self-esteem, communication apprehension, and perceived competence.

Similarly, in Cetinkaya's (2005) study, results revealed that the Turkish participants were slightly extraverted and people-oriented, and their perceptions of their personalities were directly related to their linguistic self-confidence. The

extraverted students seemed to have higher self-confidence, lower communication anxiety, and higher self-perceived communicative competence than the introverted students. Thus, personality was found to be indirectly related to L2 WTC through linguistic self-confidence.

- **L2 Attitude and International posture**

As discussed before in section 2.4, according to Gardner (1985) language attitude consists of two dimensions: integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. The former is related to the student's desire to learn his/her target L2 in order to meet and communicate with the target language community members, whereas the latter is relevant to the evaluation of the teacher and the course.

In MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model, intergroup attitudes are interpreted as integrativeness, fear of assimilation, and motivation to learn the L2. Integrativeness and fear of assimilation are utilized here by MacIntyre et al. (1998) to represent two opposing attitudes toward a different language and cultural group. Integrativeness is related to adaptation to an L2 group which may be indicated by increased involvement in frequency and quality with that community. In contrast to integrativeness, fear of assimilation describes an apprehension about losing one's self-identity by learning an L2, thus resulting in less contact with the L2 community members. Therefore, as an individual displays a different propensity to either one of the variables, his/her L2 communication may be facilitated or encumbered. Motivation to learn the L2 is another affective variable which represents an individual's attitude towards the L2 itself. Therefore, according to MacIntyre et al. (1998), a positive or negative attitude toward the L2 may lead to different intensity and efforts towards language learning and communication.

In the Japanese EFL context, based on MacIntyre's (1998) WTC model and Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, Yashima (2002) postulated the "international posture" construct as a replacement for "integrativeness" in order to capture EFL learners' attitudes toward the international community whose language they are studying. She defined international posture as "an interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners and a non-ethnocentric attitude towards different cultures" (Yashima, 2002, p.57). Although her Japanese participants had limited opportunities to communicate directly with English-speaking people, Yashima (2002) maintained that the psychological tendency that she called "international posture" affected L2 learning and communication behaviour in Japan. She argued that in such EFL contexts as Japan, attitudes toward American and other English-speaking cultures were created through education and exposure to the mass media. Since language attitude is an important factor in predicting the level of success in SLA, Yashima hypothesized that both language attitude and international posture could affect L2 WTC and L2 communication behaviour. Based on questionnaire data collected from 297 Japanese university students, SEM revealed that international posture is directly and significantly related to L2 WTC. In addition, international posture was found to exert an indirect effect on motivation, while motivation influenced both L2 proficiency and L2 communication confidence, and this in turn led to L2 WTC. The study indicates the potential for using the WTC to account for L2 communication (Yashima, 2002).

Similarly, to further investigate possible relationships among variables underlying WTC in L2, Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004) conducted a comparative study employing SEM with two groups of Japanese adolescent learners of English. The

participants were 160 Japanese high school learners of English and 60 American ESL students. One difference from Yashima's (2002) study was that another construct "frequency of communication in English" was added, and it was found that WTC did in fact result in more frequent communication in L2. As in Yashima's (2002) study, Yashima et al. (2004) determined that international posture predicted WTC and L2 communication behaviour. In addition, their learners' self-confidence was directly related to their WTC in English while their motivation to learn English was indirectly related to WTC through L2 self-confidence.

In the Turkish EFL context, Cetinkaya's (2005) study found that students' L2 WTC was directly related to their attitude toward the international community and their perceived linguistic self-confidence, which was in line with the findings of the previous studies conducted in a Japanese EFL context. However, Kim's (2004) conclusion was somewhat inconsistent with these findings. Results indicated that the Korean university students' L2 WTC in her study was indirectly related to their attitudes and motivation through L2 communication confidence. She did not find a direct relationship between the students' attitude toward the international community and their L2 WTC.

#### • Gender and Age

In previous empirical studies, gender and age have also been found to have an impact on L2 WTC. The effects of gender and age on WTC have been studied by MacIntyre and his associates. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002, 2003a) investigated the effects of sex and age on WTC and other variables including anxiety, perceived competence, and L2 motivation among junior high school L2 French immersion students in a Canadian context. The participants were 268 students (96



males and 188 females) from grades 7 to 9 with an age range from 11 to 16. English was the dominant language, and the students were not likely to be exposed to French in their daily lives. The results from the questionnaire data demonstrated obvious changes in each variable across the grade levels, and differences based on gender were observable in WTC and anxiety. Students' L2 WTC, perceived competence and frequency of communication in French increased from grades 7 to 8 and were maintained between grades 8 and 9; however, L2 motivation between grades 7 and 8 decreased and the students' anxiety level remained stable across the three grades. In the study, MacIntyre et al. (2002, 2003a) called for verification of self-report data by behavioural studies in the classroom.

In another study, Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) examined age and gender differences in WTC, communication apprehension, and self-perceived competence. This study was conducted among three age cohorts of participants, consisting of students from junior high, high school, and university classes. Results indicated that females were more willing to communicate than males in the junior high group, but no significant differences in WTC between males and females in either the high school or the university group were found. Among the junior high and high school students, there were no significant sex differences in communication apprehension or self-perceived competence.

- **Social and learning context**

Previous research has also shown how WTC can be affected by social variables. For example, to examine the impact of learning context on L2 WTC, Baker and MacIntyre (2000, 2003) compared French immersion versus non-immersion students and found substantial differences in the non-linguistic outcomes between the

immersion and the non-immersion students. Immersion students displayed greater L2 WTC, lower communication anxiety, higher L2 communication competence, and more frequent communication in L2 than their non-immersion counterparts. Among the non-immersion students, perceived competence was the key factor in predicting WTC, while among the immersion students, anxiety was strongly correlated with WTC. There were also gender differences in attitudes toward and reasons for studying French.

Similarly, MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) study indicated that students with social support, particularly from friends, tended to have higher levels of WTC outside the classroom than students without supportive friends. Although social support played less of a role inside the classroom, the findings of their study confirmed the important role of social support from families and friends in developing WTC.

Clément, Baker and MacIntyre (2003) carried out a study among two groups of tertiary students - 130 Anglophone and 248 Francophone students in a Canadian context. In their study, MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model was combined with the social context model (Clément, 1980) (a model that emphasizes the importance of contact, L2 confidence, and identity in acquiring an L2). They examined the differences in the contextual and individual difference variables between the two groups, including the differences in L2 contact, self-confidence, WTC, and frequency of L2 use, and tested the interaction between L2 self-confidence and L2 norms in predicting L2 identity. The results from the questionnaire data and path analyses implied that contextual, individual, and social factors are all important determinants of L2 use. Their study emphasized the role of opportunities for L2 communication, which in turn suggested that WTC might not be relevant to L2 use when participants are not given the choice to use the L2. The study also pointed to the importance of taking into

account the aspects of the context in which L2 communication occurs and highlighted the importance of social support in promoting learners' L2 WTC.

Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) carried out a follow-up study to Yashima et al. (2004) in order to examine the effects of learning context on L2 WTC, frequency of communication, proficiency development, and changes in international posture. The study also highlighted the impact of different learning contexts on L2 WTC. They compared 165 study-abroad and study-at-home groups and contrasted two EFL program options (content based classes and grammar-translation classes) with considerably different exposure to an L2. The results from their questionnaire data showed that the study-abroad groups had a clear advantage in all the indicators over the study-at-home groups. The findings also revealed that international posture could develop with L2 proficiency and frequency of communication in both the study-abroad and the study-home context when learners fully participated in an imagined international community. An imagined international community implies that EFL learners have international interest envisioned beyond classroom walls, which they can be part of by using English (Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008). They claimed that combining observation and interviews in future studies would promote a more holistic understanding of learner development.

In summary, these empirical studies on L2 WTC, which were carried out in different contexts demonstrate that WTC can be determined by a range of affective/individual and social variables. However, they tended to collect data via a single instrument, that is, a questionnaire and relied on the use of quantitative methods such as SEM to examine the relationship between WTC and its antecedents. MacIntyre et al. (2001) pointed out that the self-report method only tapped trait-like

WTC , so observational studies were suggested as more suitable for examining state-level WTC. MacIntyre (2007) also called on researchers to use methodologies which could capture the dynamic nature of this construct. Dörnyei (2005) has suggested that qualitative methodology may help find more factors contributing to situational L2 WTC and offer fresh insights into the nature of WTC. Therefore, Kang's (2005) study, which employed a qualitative methodology, has been a welcome addition to the literature, according to Dörnyei (2005). Kang's (2005) qualitative study identified three variables that contributed to the participants' WTC: security, excitement, and a sense of responsibility. Each of these variables was further affected by factors such as topic, interlocutor, and conversational context. This study revealed the dynamic nature of situational L2 WTC, thus supporting MacIntyre's (2007) claim.

More recent studies have also attempted to address this gap in research on WTC by collecting data from a range of sources. For example, Cao and Philp (2006) employed triangulation as a technique to investigate the dual characteristics of L2 WTC. They compared the learners' self-reported WTC to their actual WTC behaviour in three interactional classroom settings (whole class, small groups, and dyads) by employing triangulation as a technique. How the learners' WTC behaviour differed in each of the three contexts was also examined. By comparing the students' self-reports and observations of their actual classroom behaviour, Cao and Philp (2006) found that these self-reports were not necessarily predictive of their actual classroom behaviour and that the students' WTC behaviour could be affected by both trait-level and state-level WTC. The results also indicated that situational WTC could fluctuate in the classroom across the three interactional contexts (whole class, group work, and pair work). A number of factors have been identified as influencing L2 WTC behaviour in

class: group size, familiarity with interlocutors, familiarity with topics under discussion, self-confidence, medium of communication, and cultural background. This study lent support to the claim that classroom observation is an appropriate way to examine situational L2 WTC in class. However, researchers question the usefulness of employing a generic questionnaire for WTC in an instructional context and call for the development of a separate L2 WTC classroom instrument specific to an EFL classroom setting.

Another study that employed the triangulation technique in investigating WTC in L2 was Cao's (2009) study. Cao (2009) examined the dynamic and situated nature of the L2 WTC of a class of 18 English learners in New Zealand. Data were collected through classroom observations, stimulated-recall interviews, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals. The findings of her study suggested that the classroom WTC construct can be described as a dynamic situational variable rather than a trait disposition. Cao's (2009) study identified three strands of factors which had an effect on situational WTC in class, i.e. individual characteristics, classroom environmental conditions, and linguistic factors. These factors interdependently exert either facilitative or inhibitive effects on student's WTC in class at any point in time. The study further confirmed the usefulness of observation when examining situational WTC.

Some other qualitative studies on L2 WTC have focused on learner perceptions of WTC in class. For example, using diaries and interviews, House (2004) examined L2 learners' own perceptions of factors contributing to L2 WTC and the relationships existing between these factors. Data were collected from six learners. These learners were asked to report on their English learning experiences over a five-week period,

and how the perceptions of these experiences influenced their L2 WTC inside the language classroom. Results from the data revealed that L2 WTC was affected by whether learners took up opportunities that they perceive as suitable for actually engaging in L2 communication. Factors such as perceived politeness, the role of physical locality, the presence of the opposite sex, mood, and the topic under discussion were also found to exert a minor influence on WTC. House's study was the first attempt to make learners' perceptions of WTC able to be voiced and heard (Cao, 2009).

Similarly, de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) investigated French L2 learners' perceptions of WTC. Instead of exploring general factors perceived to affect the learners' WTC in class as in House's (2004) study, this study focused on the role of learners' L2 speaking abilities, and of their contributions to and attitudes towards the speaking activities employed in whole-class and small-group interactional classroom settings, and how such perceptions influenced their L2 WTC. Based on the data collected from self-assessment questionnaires and focused group interviews over 12 weeks, the study found that the participants' perceptions of themselves as learners in the L2 classroom affected their WTC in class. As their self-confidence increased over time, their WTC in L2 also improved. The findings highlighted the complex and dynamic nature of the interplay between self-confidence, anxiety, and perception of the learning environment. Based on the findings, de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) argued that both cognitive and affective variables were socially grounded and could not be dissociated from the social setting in which learning takes place.

Overall, these empirical studies discussed above, which were carried out in different contexts, suggest that L2 WTC can be influenced by various

individual/affective and social variables including self-confidence, personality, motivation, attitude and international posture, gender and age, and social and learning contexts. Self-report questionnaires were the main data source and quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling, path analysis, and correlation analysis were widely used to identify casual relationships or correlations between L2 WTC and its underlying variables. However, recent studies on WTC have demonstrated the situation-dependent nature of WTC. As a dynamic situational construct, L2 WTC is shown to be affected by various variables including topic, interlocutor, conversational context, group size, medium of communication, cultural background, individual characteristics, classroom environmental conditions, linguistic factors, and learner perceptions. By employing the triangulation of self-report and observation, research has revealed that self-report WTC is not necessarily predictive of actual WTC behaviour in the classroom. Therefore, it appears problematic to measure state WTC just in terms of self-report, instead, observational research of WTC is warranted. Similar tools have also been used to investigate WTC in China. Therefore, in the next section, a range of recent empirical studies of L2 WTC in China are reviewed so as to provide an insight into the present state of WTC research in China.

#### **2.5.2.4 Empirical Studies of L2 WTC in China**

There is still scant research into variables affecting WTC among Chinese EFL learners. As discussed before, in a Chinese EFL context, Wen and Clément (2003) examined Chinese indigenous cultural influence on learners' WTC. According to Wen and Clément (2003), Chinese Confucian heritage with elements such as other-directed self, face concerns, and a submissive way of learning is the driving force shaping

Chinese students' perceptions and learning behaviours in class. Such covert cultural influence was also observed in Peng's (2007) qualitative study. Peng (2007) identified eight factors that influence WTC: communication competence, language anxiety, risk-taking, and learners' beliefs, classroom climate, group cohesiveness, teacher support, and classroom organization.

In order to examine a possible relationship between L2 WTC and integrative motivation among 174 Chinese college students learning English in an intensive program, Peng (2007a) conducted another research project as a partial replication of a study by MacIntyre et al. (2003). Unlike Yashima and her associates' (2002, 2004) studies, which found a direct relationship between attitude and WTC, questionnaire data revealed that attitudes toward the learning situation did not appear to predict L2 WTC among these students. However, the study found that motivation was the strongest predictor of L2 WTC, followed by integrativeness, which was in line with the findings reported in MacIntyre et al.'s (2003) study. Therefore, Peng (2007a) argued that in an EFL context, motivation is an important impetus in stimulating learners to persevere in both L2 learning and possibly L2 communication. The study recognized the correlation between L2 WTC and motivation in a Chinese EFL context. It was suggested by Peng (2007a) that future studies exploring interrelations among L2 WTC and its multiple contributing variables could provide policymakers and stakeholders of ELT with fresh heuristic insights.

As well, there have been several other studies carried out which are relevant to Chinese EFL students' WTC. For example, Asker (1998) carried out a study among 124 undergraduate students in Hong Kong aiming to examine the appropriateness of WTC among Hong Kong students. Based on the WTC scores attained by students with eastern



cultural backgrounds as compared with those of other nationality groups such as the U.S.A, Australia, Sweden, and Finland, his study indicated that the Hong Kong students exhibited lower WTC scores. Asker concluded that the comparatively low WTC scores attained by Asian students were a reflection of their cultural influences of Confucian heritage.

Several years later, Liu (2005) investigated Chinese tertiary students' reticence in their oral English language classroom by employing questionnaires, classroom observations, and reflective journals (n = 27). It was found that factors such as lack of practice, low English proficiency, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, cultural beliefs, personality, and fear of losing face inhibited students' WTC in class. This study stressed the importance of searching for reticence-coping strategies in order to promote learners' WTC in class.

Liu and Jackson (2008) carried out a study among 547 Chinese university students to examine the unwillingness to communicate and anxiety of Chinese EFL learners in English language classrooms. Based on questionnaire data, it was found that more than one third of the students felt anxious in their English language classrooms. The study also found that most of the students were willing to participate in interpersonal conversations. However, perhaps due to anxiety, low English proficiency, or for other reasons, many of them did not like to risk speaking English in class. A significant correlation between Chinese learners' unwillingness to communicate and their foreign language anxiety was also found in the study. Self-rated English proficiency and access to English were also found to be associated with unwillingness to communicate.

More recently, Peng and Woodrow (2010) carried out a large-scale investigation of WTC in Chinese EFL classrooms. Participants in their study were 579 university students

from entire classes recruited from eight universities in the eastern area of China. Using SEM, they tested a hypothesized model integrating WTC in English with communication confidence, motivation, learner beliefs, and classroom environment. Data were obtained with a questionnaire consisting of a demographic section and six scales. Results from SEM analysis showed that classroom environment predicted WTC, communication confidence, learner beliefs, and motivation. Motivation influenced WTC indirectly through confidence. The direct effect of learner beliefs on motivation and confidence was identified. The study also suggested that inside the classroom, students who had a high perceived L2 competence and less anxiety seemed to be more willing to enter into communication. Peng and Woodrow's (2010) study could be considered heuristic because it was the first effort to integrate classroom environment into a WTC model inside the EFL classroom. Considering the significance of L2 WTC research in English language teaching in China, they argue that it is essential to examine how various factors, both situational and personal, jointly lead to students' WTC. In the study, Peng and Woodrow (2010) also pointed out the limitations of only employing a questionnaire survey to investigate WTC, and suggested that classroom observation could provide a contextualized account of Chinese students' WTC.

Overall, investigating the factors influencing WTC in English is important for ELT in China considering the amount of criticism that has been generally directed at the relatively low level of communicative competence of students. However, research into L2 WTC in the Chinese EFL context is still at a nascent stage. In addition, although a number of factors have been identified, international posture, which has been found to have an influence on WTC in EFL contexts, was not considered in these studies. Clearly, more studies on both psychological and social factors such as self-confidence,

international posture, and parental influence should be undertaken in the Chinese EFL context in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese students' WTC in English. Furthermore, the participants in all these studies were university students and therefore, a survey of participants at secondary school level may produce different results given the possible role of age in WTC.

#### **2.5.2.5 Limitations of Previous Studies**

From the review of L2 WTC studies carried out in different contexts, it can be seen that rapid progress in WTC conceptualization and its measurement have been made, and many influencing factors such as self-confidence, international posture, personality, gender and age etcetera. have been identified through empirical research. It is noteworthy that a great deal of L2 WTC research has been conducted by MacIntyre and his associates in Western countries, in particular amongst Canadian Anglophone students learning French. Studies on WTC in an EFL context have also been carried out in a number of countries, including Japan, Korea, and Turkey. However, few studies have been conducted in China, which may have the largest number of EFL learners in the world (Cheng, 2008).

An examination of the methodology that previous studies on L2 WTC have employed reveals that early L2 WTC research has predominantly focused on questionnaires to measure trait WTC. The questionnaires employed in the majority of the studies were adapted from McCroskey and Richmond (1990) or MacIntyre et al. (2001). McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) WTC scale was developed to measure individuals' WTC in an L1, so it included items related to four communication contexts i.e. public speaking, talking at meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads

with three types of receivers – strangers, acquaintances, and friends. MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) WTC scale in L2 was operationalised in the four basic skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and it was intended to measure students' willingness to engage in L2 communication both inside and outside the classroom. This scale has been adapted in a number of studies to include communication tasks specific to EFL classrooms (Peng, 2007). Cao and Philp (2006) questioned the applicability of a generic WTC questionnaire in an instructional setting and called for the development of a separate L2 WTC classroom instrument. Weaver's (2005) WTC survey, specific to an EFL classroom, was suggested as a possible model.

Although a self-report questionnaire has been considered suitable to measure trait-level WTC, defined as a behavioural intention that remain stable across contexts, recent theoretical discussions have suggested the observation method as more appropriate to tap situational WTC, which may change across contexts. Previous empirical studies on L2 WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005) have pointed to the need to consider L2 WTC across situational context, and to include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thus, in order to gain a better understanding of both trait-like and situational L2 WTC, it seems that a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches would be preferable, in this way, producing a range of research data which can provide a more holistic insight into the dual characteristics (trait-like and state level) of L2 WTC.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the literature of theoretical and empirical studies aimed at conceptualizing and examining the WTC construct in L2 communication settings. The concept of WTC was developed from research in the field of communication literature

as an important construct which indicates an individual's tendency to approach or avoid communication. After WTC was established as a valid research area in SLA, it was studied as the final intention or step before an individual initiated communication in a second or foreign language.

WTC has attracted increasing interest in the SLA field over the last two decades. Factors such as self-confidence, personality, motivation, international posture, gender, and age have been found to play a role in determining WTC. Empirical evidence has also shown that social and learning contexts have an impact on WTC.

However, it should be pointed out that, until now, very little empirical research has been carried out concerning L2 WTC in China. English language teaching in China has undergone a profound reform in the past two decades. Research into Chinese learners' L2 WTC can provide theoretical and practical insights into ways of enhancing ELT in China. In addition, WTC research to date has predominantly employed questionnaires and tended to focus on self-report WTC. Some researchers have actually called for the verification of self-report WTC data by the interpretation of behavioural studies in the L2 classroom (MacIntyre et al., 2001; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). Very little empirical research besides that of Cao and Philp (2006) and Cao (2009) has combined both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore behavioural WTC.

This study is an attempt to fill these gaps by exploring learners' WTC in a second language classroom in a rural Chinese high school using both qualitative and quantitative methods including classroom observation. Three research questions are raised below to investigate these rural Chinese learners' L2 WTC.

- To what extent are rural Chinese secondary students willing to

communicate in English?

- To what extent does the self-report WTC of rural Chinese secondary students correspond to their behavioural WTC?
- What factors influence rural Chinese secondary students' willingness to communicate?

Previous studies have referenced the WTC construct to production modes of speaking and writing, both inside and outside the classroom. Given the scope of the present study, the focus was placed only on spoken communication within an L2 classroom. As the first research project (to the author's knowledge) investigating WTC in English in a Chinese secondary school in a rural area, it is expected that the results of the current study will have implications for secondary school English teaching and learning in China, and L2 pedagogy in other similar EFL contexts.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces and discusses the methodological approach and research design, which is considered as the most appropriate to examine the research questions set out in section 2.6. The first section introduces the rationale underlying the methodological approach of this study. A mixed methods design is described as being the most appropriate to provide answers to the research questions, followed by an overview of the research design, outlining the key methods employed, namely, self-report questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The second section addresses the data collection methods used, starting with an introduction to the setting and the participants. The research instruments employed for data collection then follow. Given the importance of design and validity when selecting research instruments, a justification of each method is provided, followed by an introduction to the data collection procedures. The subsequent section includes an outline of the data analysis methods appropriate to each of the research questions. In addition, ethical issues concerning the research process are clarified. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### **3.2 Methodological Approach**

With regard to the various research methods available, Patton (1990) has emphasized the importance of recognizing that “different methods are appropriate for different situations” (p.39). Hence, designing a study which is appropriate for a specific situation is largely determined by the purpose of the study, the questions being investigated, and the sources available (Patton, 1990). Considering the complexity of classroom reality and the limitations associated with a single research method, a mixed-method research approach

to data collection was chosen as the most suitable for this study.

### **3.2.1 Mixed methods Research Design**

The key issue associated with designing a mixed-method research design is how to combine quantitative and qualitative research effectively. A quantitative research approach focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In contrast, a qualitative approach is based on descriptive data that does not make use of statistical procedures (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Quantitative and qualitative approaches have their own separate strengths and weaknesses. Quantitative research can produce reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts, but is generally not very sensitive in uncovering the reasons for particular observations or the dynamics underlying the examined situation or phenomenon. That is, the general exploratory capacity of quantitative research is rather limited (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative research, on the other hand, has traditionally been seen as an effective way of exploring new, uncharted areas (Dörnyei, 2007), and describing second language acquisition in its natural context (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). However, Duff (2006) has warned that although qualitative research may be helpful in providing insights into a phenomenon, the specific conditions or insights may not apply broadly to others (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, mixed-method research which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods within a single research project has become common in recent years (Bryman, 2006). In this way, we can gain a better understanding of a complex phenomenon by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007), and therefore arrive at a more multidimensional and accurate view of the process of second language acquisition (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009).



As discussed in Chapter Two, previous studies of WTC in L2 tended to collect data by questionnaire and were predominantly quantitative in nature, but were useful in identifying factors influencing trait- level WTC in general. However, it has been argued that qualitative methodology may help find more factors contributing to situational L2 WTC and offer fresh insights into the situational nature of WTC (Dörnyei, 2005). Cao and Philp's (2006) study, which employed multi-method design, supported Dörnyei's (2005) acknowledgement. Based on their research findings, Cao and Philp (2006) suggest that the inclusion of a qualitative approach may be essential to investigating the situated nature of L2 WTC and the situational variables affecting WTC. Accordingly, combining a qualitative approach with a quantitative approach in the current study should provide fuller, deeper, more meaningful answers to a single research question (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), and enrich the ability of the researcher to draw conclusions about the problem under study (Dörnyei, 2007).

Although combining quantitative and qualitative research produces integrated knowledge that best informs theory and practice, it can be difficult for a single researcher to carry out both quantitative and qualitative research, especially if two or more approaches are expected to be carried out concurrently (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). It has been emphasized that the mixed methods approach demands that the researcher learn about these methods and approaches, and determine the most appropriate combination of data collection methods with reference to the research questions, research objectives, and the rationale for using mixed research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Triangulation is the term used when the researcher seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon

(Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This important concept is discussed in detail in the following section.

### **3.2.2 Triangulation**

The most common definition of triangulation is that it entails the use of multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation in order to arrive at the same research findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This design enables a researcher to gather information that uses the best features of both quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2008). As Johnson (1992) noted, “the value of triangulation is that it reduces observer or interviewer bias and enhances the validity and reliability (accuracy) of the information” (as cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.181).

According to Denzin (1978), there are four basic types of triangulation, including:

- time triangulation, involving multiple data-gathering occasions
- theoretical triangulation, using multiple perspectives to analyze the same set of data),
- investigator triangulation, using multiple observers or interviewers
- methodological triangulation, using different measures or research methods to investigate a particular phenomenon

Of the four categories of triangulation, methodological triangulation is the one used most frequently and the one that possibly has the most to offer (Cohen et al., 2007).

In the present study, two forms of triangulation are applied, namely methodological triangulation and time triangulation. Time triangulation indicates the collection of data at different times to determine if similar findings occur (Denzin, 1978). Methodological triangulation can occur by combining qualitative and

quantitative methods (Brown, 2001). Coleman and Briggs (2002) suggest that observation is most effective when combined with other forms of data gathering, e.g. interviews or a questionnaire survey. Used in combination with other methods, it offers the opportunity for findings to be validated through triangulation. Therefore, it can be seen as an effective form of triangulation to combine the qualitative methods of interviews and observations with the quantitative results of questionnaires (Brown, 2001).

In using this mixed-method design, two factors were taken into consideration in the present study. First, to satisfy the notion of priority, which means the researcher in a mixed methods design places more emphasis on one type of data than other types of data in the mixed methods design (Creswell, 2008), a quantitative approach is used to facilitate a qualitative approach in this study. The second concern is the sequence of data collection which may utilise a concurrent or sequential approach. Table 3.1 shows that three basic data collection methods (questionnaires, observations, and interviews) are carried out consecutively for the duration of four weeks to investigate learners' behavioural WTC. In the first week, questionnaire data were collected to answer the first research question, namely, to reveal the rural Chinese students' general level of L2 WTC. The observation of classes was carried out on a weekly basis in order to examine these rural Chinese students' actual WTC behaviour in the classroom, and interviews were conducted in the last week to explore factors that might affect their WTC.

**Table 3.1: Matrix of Methodological and Time Triangulation**

	Questionnaires	Observations	Interviews
Week 1	√	√	
Week 2		√	
Week 3		√	
Week 4		√	√

In summary, given the advantages of triangulation and the nature of the research questions in the present study, a mixed methods design was considered to be the most appropriate for the current study in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the target phenomenon and validate the conclusion by presenting converging results obtained through different methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

### **3.3 Data collection**

This section introduces data collection procedures. First, the participants and the context are presented, followed by the research instruments: questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. Next, data reliability and the validity of the research instruments are discussed. Data collection steps are also presented in this section.

#### **3.3.1 Participants and context**

This study was conducted at a secondary school in a rural area in Fujian Province in South China. According to my previous experience teaching in this school, the students have few opportunities to contact foreigners as there are almost no foreigners living there. However, guided by the national curriculum, one present goal of Chinese secondary school education is to develop an all-round ability to use English, that is, to develop their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ministry of Education,

2000). Just as MacIntyre et al. (1998) indicate, the aim of language teaching should ultimately be to foster learners' willingness to engage in communication and their willingness to talk in order to learn. Therefore, communicative interaction is increasingly justifying its place in the Chinese classroom. Classroom management takes on more communicative characteristics with various types of group work and pair work being organized in this rural Chinese high school. Teachers are encouraged to cultivate students' communicative competence. The target population in this school, therefore, is an appropriate one for the goal of this study.

For the quantitative part of the study, that is, to measure participants' self-report WTC, the researcher used cluster random sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) to select participants for the purpose of convenience. Cluster random sampling is a form of sampling in which clusters (a collective type of unit such as schools, and classrooms) rather than a single unit (such as individual students or teachers) are randomly selected (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The researcher randomly selected two intact classes (n=124) of students to take part in the questionnaire survey. The participating students, aged from 16-19, had studied English as a school subject for 3 years at junior high school and were in the first or second year of their senior high school. It is expected that students at this level have developed basic speaking skills after three or four years of study. Therefore, it is reasonable to choose students at this level to participate in this study. The students in the third (final) year of senior high school were not included because they were busy preparing for the National College Entrance Exam (NCEE, the most important national exam for students to enter into higher education such as college or university), and an oral English class was not offered as oral English was not tested in the NCEE.

For the qualitative part of this study, which could reveal the selected students' actual WTC behaviour and factors influencing their WTC, the researcher randomly selected 4 students from the 124 students who had completed the questionnaire to take part in the classroom observations and individual interviews. The sampling procedure for the observations and interviews was simple random sampling, in which each of these 124 students had "an equal and independent chance of being selected" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000, p. 106). The observations and interview participants were randomly selected by the researcher. It was hoped that the researcher would be able to observe or interview both willing and less willing-to-communicate students, but with only 4 randomly selected participants this could not be engineered.

The Oral English class was offered once per week in a forty-five-minute session taught by native Chinese English teachers, who are all professionally qualified. Therefore, the observational data from the present study were collected once weekly in the oral English class using the observation scheme. Interview data were collected in a lounge in the last week on an MP3 recorder.

### **3.3.2 Instruments**

The instruments employed in this study included a L2 WTC questionnaire, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews as detailed below.

#### **3.3.2.1 Questionnaires**

A questionnaire is one of the most common methods used to collect data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants, and has been used to investigate a wide variety of questions in SLA (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The advantages of collecting data through the use of a questionnaire include the provision of answers to

questions in a systematic and disciplined way, relative ease of construction, extreme versatility, and the ability to gather a large amount of information in a comparatively short amount of time and a readily usable form (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, depending on how it is structured, a questionnaire can provide both qualitative insights and quantifiable data, and thus is flexible enough to be used in a range of research (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As previously mentioned in the literature review chapter, previous empirical studies on WTC have predominantly employed questionnaires to measure trait WTC and have demonstrated that the questionnaire tool provides a high level of reliability (Asker, 1998) and validity (McCroskey, 1992).

In this study, a questionnaire, namely the WTC scale (see Appendix A ), was used to answer the first question of this study, that is, to measure the selected rural Chinese students' self-reported WTC, which should provide an overall picture of their L2 WTC. The questionnaire used was derived from Cao and Philp's (2006) and Weaver's (2005) studies, which in turn were developed on the basis of McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) operationalisation of the WTC construct in a more suitable form for the L2 classroom. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items related to students' willingness to engage in communication tasks during class time. It covered situations or tasks that students were familiar with or found easy to imagine, and with differing amounts of cognitive demand. For example, "read out the conversations in English from the textbook" was familiar to students, and the task "greet your classmates in English" was easier than that of "introduce yourself in English without looking at notes".

The 15-item WTC scale was administered with instructions which asked students to indicate how willing they would be to initiate communication on a percentage scale (0-100%) in each of the 15 situations. The anchors were "Never willing to communicate"

at one end and “ALWAYS willing to communicate” at the other end. The use of the 0-100 probability response format was chosen over an agree-disagree type format, according to McCroskey(1992), because it allows the respondent to use a response system common to most individuals from elementary school on. It is used as the measure of success in many instructional systems. That is, it is an estimation system commonly understood by lay people (McCroskey, 1992), which, from the researcher’s experience, is also familiar to Chinese students.

As noted by Seliger and Shohamy (1989), a ready-made instrument can be created to match the specific research context with some revisions and adaptations. The first WTC scale was developed for L1 communication research by McCroskey and Baer (1985). This scale measured WTC in four communication contexts (public, meeting, small group, and dyad) with three types of receivers (stranger, acquaintance, and friend). Many L2 WTC studies have adopted this scale to measure L2 WTC (e.g. Hashimoto, 2002; Peng, 2007; Yashima, 2002). This is relevant as long as the L2 contact or exposure described in the scale (e.g., talk with a garbage collector in the L2) applies to the L2 learners. In an educational context such as the classroom, however, the communicative situations described in this scale are less likely to occur. Cao and Philp (2006), in their study in a New Zealand L2 classroom, have questioned the usefulness of employing a generic questionnaire for WTC in an instructional context. Therefore they modified it for use in the L2 classroom by the addition of extra items related to initiating communication in the classroom. These items (Items 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 in Appendix A) are more likely to occur in a Chinese EFL classroom, for example, “volunteer an answer in English when the teacher asks a question in class” and “ask the teacher a question in English in class”. Therefore, these items from Cao and Philp (2006)



were adapted for the present WTC scale.

The remaining items (Items 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in Appendix A) of the questionnaire were adapted from Weaver's (2005) study. Cao and Philp (2006) call for the development of a separate L2 WTC classroom instrument and suggest that Weaver's (2005) innovative WTC survey covering different speaking and writing situations specific to an EFL classroom setting provides a possible model. Weaver's (2005) WTC questionnaire was designed to measure Japanese L2 learners' WTC. The questionnaire consisted of 34 items, of which 17 address students' willingness to speak English and the other 17 measure their willingness to write in English. Japan and China share a similar Asian and Confucian culture; therefore, it appeared to be more relevant and plausible for this study to adapt Weaver's (2005) questionnaire in order to investigate Chinese EFL students' L2 WTC. Because the present study focused solely on speaking in the English classroom, only the 9 items (Items 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in Appendix A) more closely related to students' willingness to speak in the Chinese EFL classroom were adapted for this study. For example, "read out the conversations in English from the textbook" and "give a speech in English with notes in class" are considered more appropriate to a Chinese EFL context.

### **3.3.2.2 Classroom Observations**

Classroom observations were employed to collect data with regard to the selected students' actual WTC behaviours. An advantage of observations over self-report methods is that it allows researchers to record actual behaviour rather than obtain reports of preferences or intended behaviour from the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Another distinctive feature of an observation as a research

process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In this way, the researcher can look directly at what is taking place in a situation rather than relying on second-hand accounts. Observations can focus on events as they happen in a classroom, for example, the amount of teacher and student talk (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007), and enable the researcher to gather data on an interactional setting (Morrison, 1993). Therefore, it is helpful when researchers collect observational data in addition to self-report data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) because adopting this approach can facilitate the exploration and better understanding of classroom behaviours and the meanings attached to those behaviours (Kumar, 1996).

As discussed in section 2.5.2.3, MacIntyre et al. (2001) pointed out the weakness of the self-report questionnaire as a reliable method for examining state WTC, which possesses a situated nature because "thinking about communicating in the L2 is different from actually doing it" (p.377). They suggested that observational studies would be more suitable for examining state (situational) WTC. MacIntyre et al. (2002) also called for verification of self-report data by behavioural studies in the classroom. Some recent studies have investigated WTC by collecting data from a range of sources, including observations (see Cao & Philp, 2005; Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005). These studies support the use of classroom observation as an appropriate way to measure situational WTC in L2 in class. Peng and Woodrow (2010) also suggest that further study would be more revealing if other sources of data such as classroom observation could be obtained to provide a contextualized account of students' WTC. Therefore, they suggested that it would be promising to examine learners' WTC behaviour related to their participation in classroom discourse.

In the present study, observation was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of a systematic observation instrument – a checklist of a number of selected variables relevant to WTC behaviour. Following Cao (2009), WTC behaviour in this study was coded by a classroom observation scheme (see Appendix C). The scheme was adapted from Cao (2009) based on suggestions made by a number of researchers (Ely, 1986; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Oxford, 1997). They had observed a range of classroom behaviours demonstrated by L2 learners who appeared to show high WTC in class. In Cao's (2009) study, she recorded observations of students in a whole classroom setting, and in pairs and groups. The current study only observed students in a whole class setting, given the large size of Chinese classes (usually up to 65 students in a class) and the fact that students have little opportunity to communicate in pairs or group. For this reason, talking to group members, talking to other group member, and volunteering to participate in class activities were excluded from this study. The observational scheme adapted from Cao (2009) was divided into seven categories and each category was coded as follows in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 WTC Classroom Observation Categories**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Volunteer an answer/a comment (hand-raising included)	A student answers a question raised by the teacher to the whole class.  A student volunteers a comment.
Give an answer to the teacher's question	A student responds to a question addressed to the group or a group member (teacher solicit);  A student responds to a question addressed to another group or an individual student (private response).
Ask the teacher a question	A student asks the teacher a question or for clarification.
Guess the meaning of an unknown word	A student makes an attempt to guess the meaning of a new word.
Try out a difficult form in the target language	A student attempts a difficult lexical, morphological or syntactical form.
Talk to neighbour/another group member	A student talks to another group member or a student from another group as part of a lesson or as informal socialising.
Present own opinion in class/respond to an opinion	A student voices his view to the class

### **3.3.2.3 Interviews**

It has been found by previous researchers that observation techniques can be usefully accompanied by interviews with individual students. In order to understand and illustrate the interconnected complexities of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English and the factors affecting this willingness, results of the questionnaire and observations were extended and elaborated by the use of qualitative interviews with participants. The advantage of using interviews as a data collection tool lies in that it can allow researchers to investigate phenomena that are not directly observable, such as learners' self-reported perceptions or attitudes (Mackey & Gass, 2005), and can "provide us with valuable information about language

classes...”(Block, 1997, p.348). In previous studies on L2 WTC, interviews have been used to identify factors that contribute to WTC (see Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005).

A semi-structured form of interview, a popular interview technique employed in qualitative interviewing, was adopted to collect the qualitative interview data. A semi-structured interview “has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequences and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given” (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). One of the advantages of a semi-structured interview is that it is sufficiently open-ended to enable the contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken (Cohen et al., 2007).

A semi-structured interview with each participant was conducted by using the interview protocol as a general guide in order that issues that had not been previously raised by the participants in the pilot study could be addressed (Kvale, 1996). The interview protocol was adapted from Cao and Philp (2006). The interview protocol included interview questions for the students which covered such aspects as their experiences in learning and using English, and factors including motivation, self-confidence, and language anxiety that may affect their WTC. In order to examine the selected students’ attitudes towards the English speaking international community, the following questions were added:

- Have you ever had the chance to communicate with a foreigner in English?
- Have you ever been abroad? Would you like to go abroad? Which country?  
Why?
- Do you want to live or work in a foreign country? Why?

- Do you often read or watch news about foreign countries?
- Do you often talk about situations and events in foreign countries with your friends and/or classmates?
- What do you think are the main factors that affect your willingness to speak English in English?

In case the interviewees might have difficulty understanding the questions in English or do not like speaking English, and in order to increase the validity of the interviews, all the interviews were carried out by the researcher in Mandarin Chinese, the instructional language of the school. Participants chose to answer the questions either in English or Mandarin Chinese.

### **3.3.3 Data Reliability and Validity**

The validity of data and its reliability are two important issues which need to be addressed in any study as both contribute greatly to the credibility of the study design, data collection, and data analysis procedure (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) have suggested, reliability and validity are “the two most important criteria for assuring the quality of the data collection procedures” (p.184).

#### **3.3.3.1 Data Reliability**

Reliability provides information about the consistency and accuracy of data collection procedures (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), using a ready-made instrument which has been developed by researchers and for which information regarding reliability and validity is available, or adapting an instrument is more advantageous than developing a new procedure. The instruments employed in

the present study, that is, the WTC scale, the observation scheme, and the interview protocol were all adapted from previous research and had been proved to be reliable.

In addition, to achieve reliability in the current study, the instruments and data collection procedures were thoroughly tested in a pilot study with 4 Chinese students, who were comparable to the sample population of the actual study. These four Chinese students registered in an English programme in a university in New Zealand. The aim of a pilot study is to uncover any problems, to address them before the main study is carried out (Mackey & Gass, 2005), and to revise or modify the procedure on the basis of new information, thus improving the reliability of the procedure (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). This early step in the research process is “an important means of assessing the feasibility and usefulness of the data collection methods and making any necessary revisions before they are used with the research participants” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.43).

In order to address the issue of the reliability of the questionnaire, the WTC scale was piloted with the aim to obtain information about the wording, relevancy and clarity of the questions, the comprehensibility of the instructions, as well as the amount of time required to answer the questions in the questionnaire (Seliger & Schohamy, 1989). A pilot study of a questionnaire allows the researcher to eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording (Cohen et al., 2007). It was found that the directions of the questionnaire were confusing because the students did not fill in the correct numbers as expected. Therefore, the direction “choose any numbers between 0 and 100” was added to the questionnaire. “Never communicate” and “always communicate” were replaced by “never willing to communicate” and “always willing to communicate” separately.

Silverman (1993) suggests that the reliability of interviews can be enhanced by

Careful piloting of interview schedules. Regarding the reliability of observations, Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that a pilot must be conducted to ensure that the observational categories themselves are appropriate, exhaustive, discrete, unambiguous, and effectively operationalize the purposes of the research (Cohen et al., 2007). In the present study, through the use of the pilot study, the researcher improved her interview protocol and observation skills, thus increasing the reliability of the interviews and observations carried out in the main study in a rural Chinese secondary school.

### **3.3.3.2 Data validity**

The validity of an instrument refers to the extent to which “the data collection procedure measures what it intends to measure” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p.188). It is an important key to effective research and is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007). The validity of observations and interviews in the current study was enhanced by the pilot study. An observational scheme and an interview protocol, both of which proved to have a good structure, were other measures to ensure validity (Cohen et al., 2007).

The questionnaire instrument was adapted from Cao and Philp’s (2006) and Kang’s (2005) studies, which originated from that of McCroskey and Richmond (1990). This method was shown to have strong content validity, and there is some support for its construct and predictive validity (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). However, a new procedure had to be tested for quality once some changes were inserted into the questionnaire (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was piloted to ensure validity.



It is believed that the presence of the researcher is helpful in that it enables any inquiries or uncertainties to be addressed immediately with the questionnaire designer. Further, it typically ensures a good response rate and ensures that all the questions are completed and filled in correctly. It means that the questionnaires can be completed rapidly and the researcher can gather data from many respondents simultaneously (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, the researcher appeared in the classroom and explained the design and purpose of this present study before delivering the questionnaires to the participants (Cohen et al., 2007). It was expected that this procedure would increase the validity of the questionnaire. It was also necessary to reassure the participants that participation in the study would have no negative or positive effects on their grades (Cohen et al., 2007).

Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating validity, particularly in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007). A triangulated approach to the research design and data analysis of the present study enhanced the validity of the findings.

Finally, in order to minimize misunderstanding and lessen any reliability and validity problems caused by the language factor (Cohen et al., 2007), all of the instruments involved in this study were translated into the participants' native language, Chinese. A back translation method was employed to verify the compatibility of item translations from English to Chinese. The American Psychological Association (2002) defines back translation as a method of translation in which "a text is translated into another language and then back into the first to ensure that it is equivalent enough that results can be compared." (p. 20). The back translation method allows the researcher to determine whether the intended meaning of scale items has been changed or lost in the translation by comparing the original and the back-translated versions of the

measure in the source language (Glidden-Tracey & Greenwood, 1997). Therefore, all instruments used in the present study were translated from English into Chinese by the researcher. The Chinese versions were then translated back into English by a Chinese English teacher in the research school. The original English versions and the back-translated English versions of the measures were compared to examine any possible discrepancies which might have arisen during the translation. The Chinese English teacher and the researcher herself then reviewed all of the translations to ensure that the original meaning was retained. Lastly, the translated Chinese versions were refined, based on discussions between the English teacher and the researcher to make sure that the Chinese versions accurately reflected the meaning and intentions of the original measures.

#### **3.3.4 Data collection procedures**

Permission for data collection was granted from the principal of the school. The information sheets, with regard to the purpose and procedure of conducting this study, were delivered to the two instructors of the two selected classes by the researcher. Then the researcher scheduled an appropriate time for data collection with the two instructors.

As Table 3.3 below shows, the data were collected in three main stages over a period of four weeks, from 11 October, 2010 to 5 November, 2010.

**Table 3.3: Three Stages of Data Collection**

Stage 1 Week 1	Stage 2 Week 1 - 4	Stage 3 Week 4
self-report questionnaires administered, completed and collected (n=124)	Participants (n=4) observed	Participants (n=4) interviewed

The first stage focused on the completion and collection of the WTC questionnaires on the first day of the study. The participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their participation in this study would not affect their achievement as regards to their grades. The participants were also informed that the data would be collected anonymously and kept confidential by the researcher. The questionnaires took about two minutes of class time to complete.

In the second stage, classroom observations of the four participants in the whole class setting were conducted during four class sessions, with each session lasting forty-five minutes. The selected students' behaviours according to the observation scheme were observed and coded in to the corresponding categories.

In observational research, in order to avoid bias, it is recommended not to become involved in any interaction with the subjects (Muijs, 2004), therefore, nonparticipant observation was employed to observe the participants' actual WTC behaviours. Nonparticipant observation is observation in which the researcher observes and records behaviours but does not interact or participate in the situation being studied.

Observations were conducted under classroom conditions that remained as natural

as possible, and the participants were observed during normal classroom activities. The teacher was advised of the specific objectives of the research and was also made aware that it was the students, rather than the teacher, who were the focus of the study (Ely, 1986), so that the teacher would not feel under any pressure to perform (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The observer should attempt to be unobtrusive so as not to affect what is being observed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), so the researcher in this study sat near the front of the room to one side where she was able to avoid physically intruding between the instructor and the students but could observe each of the four participants in the room (Chan & McCroskey, 1987).

The final stage of data collection involved face-to-face interviews (see Appendix E for interview questions) with the four participants who had been observed in the classroom. The participants received the interview questions one day before the interview so they could have enough time to prepare their answers. In order to establish rapport and trust with the interviewees (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), the interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. Interviews were conducted by the researcher in a quiet lounge. This avoided interruptions from outside and minimized distractions (Cohen et al., 2007). In order to make sure that the interviewees felt comfortable and willing to share their views and experiences (Cohen et al., 2007), warm-up questions were asked before each interview. Each interview took between twenty minutes to forty-five minutes, depending on the amount of detail each participant was ready to provide. Each interview was recorded using an MP3 recorder to ensure the accuracy of data collection and provide verbatim accounts of the sessions (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). An MP3 record also provides researchers with the

original data for use at any time (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2005). To compensate them for any expenses, each interviewee got a 10-yuan (RMB) notebook for their participation.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a critical stage in the research process that requires the researcher to know and understand the data (Gay et al., 2005). With regard to research questions, data should be analyzed in ways that can shed light on the specific questions asked in the study (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The data collection and analysis methods used in the present study were determined by the research questions which guided the study.

Data collected from the questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 to analyze the descriptive statistics of the WTC. Descriptive statistics provide a simple summary or overview of data, thus allowing the researcher to gain a better overall understanding of the data set (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In the current study, descriptive statistics of the overall WTC and each item in WTC were computed. The mean score and standard deviation for the whole class were calculated. The questionnaire data were used to identify the general level of the selected participants' WTC. Quantitative data from questionnaires were also factor analyzed. These factors then become themes that were compared with themes analyzed from the qualitative interview data.

Data from classroom observations were numerically coded. Descriptive statistics were also used to analyze classroom WTC behaviour. Measures of frequency were chosen because they indicate how often a particular behaviour or phenomenon occurs and they are obtained by counting the number of occurrences (Mackey & Gass, 2005). During the four week observation, each learner's participation was recorded according

to the whole class coding scheme. The number of times per week each learner participated was calculated and then added to a total number at the end of week four. Results were then converted to percentages, a percentage being calculated for each week and also for all observation sessions. The data from the observations of each participant were then compared to their self-report WTC.

Interview data were analyzed qualitatively in order to reveal factors that seem to contribute to the selected participants' willingness to communicate. First, the MP3 recordings of individual interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Then the transcripts were summarized in the form of matrices (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Finally, content analysis was used to analyze the interview data.

### **3.5 Ethical Issues**

In accordance with the ethical guidelines issued by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) (ethics approval reference number 10/161), privacy and confidentiality were respected throughout the research process.

Permission for data collection was granted from the principal of the secondary school in Fujian Province in China. All the participants were provided with copies of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix G), and the aim of the research and the nature of the study were clearly explained to them by the researcher. Requests were made to them to participate in the class observations and interviews on a voluntary basis after a random selection had been carried out by the researcher. Participants were assured that their participation or non-participation would not affect their grade or relationship with the school in any way. They were provided with copies of the Participant Information Sheets (Appendix G) and Consent Forms both in an English version (Appendix I, K) and a Chinese version (Appendix J, L) and were encouraged to

take the written forms away with them to think about their willingness to participate in the study for two days.

Signed consent was obtained from all participants and they were assured that no identifying information would be included in any report on the study. What is more, all participants were assured that the information they provided would be used to fulfill the aims of the research only, and were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time up until 5 November, 2010, which was the last day of the research.

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter has outlined in detail the design of this research study and has described the procedures undertaken. Taking the advantages of triangulation into consideration, a mixed method research design was adopted in order to provide the fullest answers to the research questions. A self-report questionnaire survey was used to capture trait-like WTC, while the classroom observations were intended to capture state WTC, namely, actual WTC behaviour in a particular context. A semi-structured interview was employed to reveal factors influencing the students' WTC. Data validity and reliability was achieved through pilot testing and the adoption of a triangulated approach. Finally, ethical issues were taken into consideration when designing and administering the research tools.

## **CHAPTER 4      PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports the results and discussions of the analysis of the data from this study, with reference to each of the research questions. The data analyzed in the present study were collected from the self-report questionnaire surveys of 124 participants, the classroom observations and interviews of 4 of these participants who took part in the questionnaire surveys. The research questions posed in Chapter 1 are restated and addressed. Quantitative results from the data, gathered by means of self-report questionnaire surveys and classroom observations, are examined and key findings are presented in tables and graphs. The findings from individual, face-to-face interviews with participants are also described. These interviews were carried out for the purpose of qualitative content analysis. The results relating to the three research questions are presented in turn, followed by a discussion with reference to previous research studies.

### **4.2 Results of Question One: Rural Chinese Secondary Students' L2 WTC**

This question examined the extent to which Chinese secondary students are willing to communicate in English by means of a WTC questionnaire. The WTC questionnaire consisted of 15 items, which were scored in such a way that the answer indicating the highest L2 WTC received 100 points, whereas the answer indicating the lowest L2 WTC received 0 points. As a result, the higher the respondents' scores on the WTC scale are, the higher and stronger his or her WTC inside the classroom is assumed to be. A score of more than 75 is taken to mean that students are always willing to communicate in English. A score of less than 25 signifies that students are never willing to communicate in English. A score of between 26 and 50 means that students are sometimes willing to



communicate in English, while a score of between 51 and 74 implies that students are usually willing to communicate in English.

In order to reveal the general tendency and characteristics of L2 WTC among Chinese secondary students, descriptive statistical analyses were performed on the data collected from self-report WTC questionnaires. Descriptive statistics of the overall WTC and each item in WTC were computed and are presented in tables 4.1 and 4.2 below.

Descriptive statistics are numerical representations of how participants perform on a test or questionnaire (Brown, 2001). In Table 4.1, the descriptive statistics of the overall WTC of Chinese secondary students are presented.

**Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Overall WTC (N=124)**

Mean	Std.Deviation	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
60.22	19.57	62.00	34.67	8.67	98.67

As shown in Table 4.1, with a possible range of scores from 0 to 100 (refer to explanation in methodology chapter), WTC in the present study actually ranged from 8.67 to 98.67, and the mean score for the 124 participants was 60.22 (SD=19.57). These findings, along with the median (62.00) and mode (34.67), which were all below the score of 75 but above 25, suggest that the majority of participants were at the important threshold of moving from “sometimes willing” to “usually willing”.

As indicated in Table 4.2 below, which is displayed according to the descending means of WTC items, the above finding was further confirmed by the 15-item mean (2.79) of the WTC scale. Except for 5 items, the mean score of the other 10 items ranged from 2.04 to 2.97. That is to say, students’ L2 WTC also lies between

“sometimes willing” to “usually willing” in 67% of the total items in WTC. In other words, Chinese secondary students’ L2 WTC in a rural area is generally not particularly high.

**Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Each WTC Item (N=127)**

Item	Mean	Std.D	NW (%)	SW (%)	UW (%)	AW (%)
8 (Say sorry in English when wrong)	3.64	0.77	3.1	8.7	9.4	78.7
12 (Say "thank you" in English when getting help)	3.56	0.83	3.9	10.2	11.8	74.0
11 (Read out conversations in English from the textbook)	3.52	0.84	3.1	13.4	11.8	71.7
14 (Greet classmates in English)	3.31	1.01	8.7	14.2	14.2	63.0
2 (Answer a question when called upon by the teacher)	3.23	0.96	5.5	20.5	19.7	54.3
10 (Sing a song in English)	2.97	1.23	21.3	13.4	12.6	52.8
13 (Introduce yourself in English without notes)	2.80	1.17	19.7	21.3	18.9	40.2
7 (Participate in pair discussions in English in class)	2.55	1.19	25.2	26.8	15.7	32.3
6 (Present opinions in English in class)	2.53	1.28	32.3	19.7	11.0	37.0
15 (Give a speech with notes in class)	2.42	1.22	33.9	18.9	18.9	28.3
9 (Help others answer a question in English)	2.41	1.14	29.9	22.0	25.2	22.8
4 (Ask the teacher a question in English in class)	2.33	1.22	35.4	23.6	13.4	27.6
1 (Volunteer an answer when the teacher asks a question)	2.30	1.06	28.3	30.7	23.6	17.3
3 (Talk to teacher in English before or after class)	2.28	1.17	33.9	28.3	13.4	24.4
5 (Ask the teacher a question in English in private)	2.04	1.12	42.5	29.1	10.2	18.1
Total	2.79	0.67				
<b>Notes: NW= never willing                      SW= sometimes willing                      UW= usually willing                      AW= always willing</b>						

As shown in Table 4.2, students were most willing to say sorry or thank you in English when they were wrong or their classmates helped them respectively, and least willing to communicate in English with the teacher in private when they were unsure about the course content. What is more, of the 15 items, the average score of 5 items (i.e., Items 8, 12, 11, 14, and 2) was above 3.00. Four of these (i.e., Items 8, 12, 11, and 14) are of low cognitive demand, for example, Item 8, “say sorry in English to someone when you are wrong”; Item 12, “say thank you when your classmates help you”; Item 11, “ read out the conversations in English from the textbook”; and Item 14, “ greet your classmates in English”. This implies that the students tended to be highly willing to communicate in English if the speaking task was easy and simple.

Table 4.2 also indicates that the average scores of the six items comprising Item 15, “give a speech with notes in class”; Item 9, “help others answer a question in English”; Item 4, “ask the teacher a question in English in class”; Item 1, “volunteer an answer in English when the teacher asks a question in class”; Item 3, “talk to your teacher in English before or after class”; and Item 5, “ask the teacher a question in English in private” are below 2.50, suggesting that students in these situations were never or only sometimes willing to communicate in English. Further analysis revealed that four of the six items concerned speaking with the teacher and answering questions in English in front of the class. This shows that students tended to be more unwilling to communicate in English with their teachers. However, students demonstrated higher WTC concerning Item 2, “answer a question in English when you are called upon by the teacher”, implying that students are willing to communicate with the teacher when they have to.

#### **4.2.1 Discussion of Results of Research Question One**

Research Question One investigated “to what extent Chinese secondary students in a rural area are willing to communicate in English”. The data analysis suggests that the selected Rural Chinese secondary students have generally low levels of L2 WTC. This finding is generally consistent with the results of previous research conducted in Asian EFL contexts. In a Korean EFL context, Kim (2004) collected data from 191 Korean university students by using 10 survey instruments. As a result of data analysis, he found that Korean students’ L2 WTC was generally low and he argued that the students’ low L2 WTC was in part responsible for their less successful results in achieving English proficiency. In a Japanese EFL context, Weaver’s (2005) study demonstrated that the level of Japanese college students’ WTC was at the important threshold of moving from “probably not willing” to “probably willing”. In a Chinese EFL context, Asker (1998) indicated that compared to their Western counterparts, Hong Kong students exhibit a lower level of L2 WTC. Shi (2008) conducted an empirical study of Chinese EFL learners L2 WTC inside and outside the classroom by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. After analyzing the questionnaire data, his study indicated that Chinese non-English major students’ willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom lay between ‘probably not willing’ and ‘probably willing’, and their willingness inside the classroom was a little higher than that outside the classroom.

Although these studies used different instruments, they achieved similar results, that is, the students’ levels of L2 WTC were generally low. Further analysis reveals that all these studies share the same learning context and similar culture, that is, an EFL context in an Asian culture. In foreign language settings, L2 learners learn the L2

primarily in the classroom. They may have access to authentic material in the classroom, but they have little opportunity to communicate with native speakers and can survive without the L2. That is to say, L2 plays only a small role in their daily communication. In terms of culture, in recent EFL literature, Asian English learners, especially Chinese learners of English, have been frequently described by researchers as reticent and quiet in class. They are reluctant to participate in classroom activities; they hardly volunteer replies; they seldom answer, let alone initiate questions; and they hold back from speaking up about their views (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jackson, 2002). Cortazzi and Jin's (1996) study accounted for their Chinese student subjects' reluctant participation by reference to Chinese traditional values, that is to say, cultural values (e.g. values of modesty and silence) are one of the factors that inhibits Chinese students' willingness to communicate.

In the Chinese EFL context, students have little opportunity to speak with native speakers and they mainly acquire the L2 in classroom settings. Therefore, the classroom is regarded as the most appropriate place to speak an L2. However, given that the participants in this present study have few actual English communication opportunities in the classroom, as a result their general L2 WTC is far from satisfactory.

Despite their generally low L2 WTC, the rural Chinese secondary students in the current study show very high willingness to say sorry or thank you in English when they are wrong or their classmates help them. They also tend to be highly willing to read out conversations in English or greet classmates in English. This could imply that Rural Chinese secondary students are highly willing to communicate in English when tasks are less cognitively demanding and psychologically safer (Ely, 1986). It seems to suggest that language anxiety may be a key factor affecting their L2 WTC. In China,

requiring students to read aloud a passage or dialogue from a set text is a traditional method of language teaching. Students' familiarity with the text helps reduce their language anxiety, and thus enhances their L2 WTC (Kang, 2005). Of course, saying sorry or thank you in English and reading aloud are cognitively simpler and psychologically safer than language production. Ely (1986) suggests that simply encouraging students to take more risks and participate more may not be effective. Students must be made to feel more psychologically comfortable and safe in their learning environment before they are expected to take linguistic risks. As students come to feel more secure, they can be encouraged to assume a more active role in the classroom (Kang, 2005).

In contrast to their high willingness to speak English in easy tasks, rural Chinese secondary students are least willing to talk to the teacher or ask the teacher a question both in private and in front of the class. This suggests that they are least willing to communicate in English with their teachers and in front of their peers. This might be explained in terms of Chinese culture, as is observed by Liu and Littlewood (1997), overseas Asian students typically take a low profile, rarely asking questions or volunteering answers, let alone making public observations or criticisms of course content. Under the influence of Confucian philosophy, students in China respect their elders and seniors by looking up to teachers as authority figures and not challenging or interrupting them with questions (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Therefore, Chinese teachers play an authoritative role, they are the authority, the source of all knowledge; and Chinese students tend to submit to their superior status in the process of learning. Students are submissive to the dominant role of the teacher and the atmosphere is formal with a clear distinction between the role of teacher and student. Although this traditional way of learning is gradually fading away, such cultural values die hard. In

English teaching today, this tradition still exists (Wen & Clément, 2003). The language teacher is regarded as an authority in the classroom as he or she is the source of language stimulation and provides the only model of the target language. In most Chinese classrooms, the passing on of knowledge is regarded as one of the basic professional obligations of a teacher, and in the second language classroom in particular, “providing background knowledge, explaining passages and contexts, giving answers to controversial questions, and lecturing on the subject” are seen as ways to pass on language knowledge (Yu, 1984, p.36). Therefore, students are reluctant to ask the teacher a question even if they are unsure about the course content because they do not want to challenge the teacher’s authority.

At a level which is similar to their unwillingness to communicate with their teacher, 59% of the participants in this study were less willing to volunteer an answer when the teacher asked a question. This might be explained by the Chinese cultural value - “face-protection”. In Chinese culture, the social and moral process of behaviour is to be aware of one’s relations with others. Chinese people care very much about the evaluation of others, so they pay careful attention to other people’s judgements of their activities and orient themselves toward the opinions of others. In an L2 learning context, which involves “an alternation of self-image, and the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.115), it is likely that Chinese students would be even more sensitive to the judgement by society of their language behaviours and would be more reluctant to get involved in classroom communication performance (Wen & Clément, 2003). This may contribute to the fact that many rural Chinese secondary students are reluctant or unwilling to volunteer to answer their teachers’ questions or to speak English in class. They are afraid of “losing



face”, especially when they are not totally sure of their answers. In other words, they are afraid of being labeled as “knowing nothing” but “liking to show off”. As a result, many Chinese students develop a habit of silently waiting for their teachers to call on them instead of volunteering answers even if they know the answer, in order to avoid being seen as a “show off”. When they are called upon individually to answer questions, the situation changes as their “face” can be protected no matter what the result. That is, it is an honor if their answer is correct, and they are not seen as a “show off” if their answer is wrong (Liu, 2005). This might explain why students are more willing to answer a question when they are directly called upon by the teacher.

To sum up, in a similar way to some other Asian students in the EFL context (e.g. Asker, 1998; Kim, 2004; Weaver, 2005), the selected Chinese students in this study generally display low trait-level L2 WTC. Self-confidence and cultural values may be the two key factors that contribute to their low trait-level L2 WTC. The mean L2 WTC score (60.22) obtained in this study was lower than that of the university students (88.39) in Peng’s (2007) study. This may suggest that the selected rural Chinese secondary students appear to have generally lower trait-level L2 WTC compared with students in urban areas in China. However, this finding is preliminary because the WTC scale employed in the present study was different from that in Peng’s (2007) study and no score norm has been established (Peng, 2007). In addition, there is a relative lack of relevant research involving international students for comparison, and given the wide cultural and social differences, it is rather difficult, if not impossible, to make a cross-cultural comparison of L2 WTC (Asker, 1998). Furthermore, there exist considerable regional discrepancies in socioeconomic development in China, which bring about diversities in beliefs, social expectations of language teaching, and

educational pedagogic approaches (Hu, 2003). Therefore, the findings of L2 WTC involving just one school in the present study should not be generalized.

#### **4.3 Results of Research Question Two: Relationship between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC**

This question aimed to investigate whether there were any relationships between the learners' self-report WTC ("trait WTC") and behavioural WTC ("state WTC") in a whole class setting.

Descriptive statistics were also used to analyze classroom WTC behaviour. During the four week observation, each learner's participation in class was recorded according to the whole class coding scheme. The number of times each learner participated was calculated for each week respectively and was then added to a total number at the end of Week Four.

Bivariate correlation (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) was used to identify relationships between self-report WTC and WTC behaviour in a whole classroom context. Participants were placed into one of the three groups, following an analysis of the distributions for each variable. Following Cao and Philp (2006), participants' WTC level was identified according to criteria based on an analysis of the frequency distributions, students whose scores were below 35 were classified as low WTC, while those whose scores fell between 36 and 70 were identified as mid-level WTC. Students whose scores were above 71 were recognized as high WTC.

Table 4.3 below presents the comparisons between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC in a whole classroom context. Each participant's score was included and their level of WTC was identified according to criteria based on an analysis of the

frequency distributions. Self-report WTC refers to their scores from the WTC questionnaire, and behavioural WTC refers to frequencies of participation occurring over four weeks.

**Table 4.3: Comparisons between Self-report WTC and Behavioural WTC**

Student	Self-report WTC		Behavioural WTC	
	Score	Level	Score	Level
Jerry	85	High	72	High
Henry	55	Middle	66	Middle
Mary	73	High	50	Middle
Janet	85	High	55	Middle

On the basis of the participants being identified as having low, middle, and high willingness to communicate, the two variables were analyzed by means of bivariate correlation. The mean and standard deviation of behavioural WTC was 60.75 and 10.04, while the mean standard deviation of self-report WTC was 74.5 and 14.5. This means that participants' self-report WTC was higher than their behavioural WTC.

It was found that self-report WTC correlated significantly and negatively with behavioural WTC ( $r = -0.57$ ). This result showed that self-report WTC appeared not to be able to predict WTC behaviour in a whole classroom setting; that is, if students reported high willingness-to-communicate in their questionnaire, they did not necessarily tend to participate more in class activities.

#### **4.3.1 Discussion of Results of Research Question Two**

The results indicated that self-report WTC sometimes negatively predicted WTC behaviour in class. Results from an examination of the relationship between self-report

and WTC behaviour in class on an individual basis were found to be mixed (see Table 4.3). For two of the participants (Jerry and Henry), self-report WTC was consistent with actual WTC behaviour in class, whereas for the other two (Mary and Janet), self-report WTC contradicted classroom WTC behaviour.

In fact, it was found that Janet and Mary, who reported high WTC in the questionnaire, appeared to demonstrate low WTC in class. The inconsistency between the self-report WTC and behavioural WTC of these learners may be due to an over-optimistic self-reporting of their WTC, suggesting perhaps, that their self-reported WTC was in effect paying “lip service” to the survey, without actually having made any commitment to participate actively (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000, as cited in Cao, 2009). Another possible explanation could be that they had high trait WTC (self-report WTC), that is, they had the desire to communicate, but for some reason, such as incompetent linguistic resources, they withdrew from participation. This is consistent with Wen and Clément’s (2003) suggestion that having the desire to communicate does not necessarily imply a willingness to communicate. In the interview, Janet attributed her low participation in classroom activities to her lack of confidence and L2 proficiency. For this learner, WTC appeared to be influenced by lack of confidence and L2 proficiency.

Mary, however, said that she was afraid of making mistakes because this would lead to embarrassment. This supported Tsui’s (1996) study of students’ reticence and anxiety in L2 learning, in which she found that the students’ fear of mistakes was reflected in their unwillingness to speak up in a whole class situation. In the interview, Mary also claimed that she was a quiet person, which was reflected in her low participation in the classroom. For this learner, the personality trait of introversion

seemed to inhibit her behavioural WTC.

Henry, on the other hand, who got the lowest self-reported WTC among the four participants, showed higher behavioural WTC in class than Janet and Mary. His self-report WTC appeared to contradict his claim in the interview that he was generally an extroverted and talkative person, a personality trait which was manifested in his actual behaviour in class. For this learner, the personality trait of extroversion seemed to play a role in his behavioural WTC.

The findings above seem to support MacIntyre et al.'s (1998, p.546) claim that WTC in L2 should not be limited to a trait-like variable but was also a "situational variable with both transient and enduring influences". In other words, the findings of this study appear to reveal the dual characteristics of WTC proposed in other studies: trait-level WTC and state-level WTC.

Therefore, learners' WTC behaviour in class could be influenced by both trait-level WTC and state-level WTC. As MacIntyre et al. (1999) suggested, trait WTC might bring an individual into situations in which communication was likely, but once in that situation, state WTC could influence whether communication would actually take place. MacIntyre et al. (1999) argued that state WTC predicted and affected the decision to initiate communication within a particular situation. This may explain the discrepancy between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC among two of the participants (Mary and Janet) in this study. These participants' trait-level WTC could determine their general attitude towards communication, but their state-level WTC seemed to have a significant influence on their actual communicative behaviour in a whole class context. Their state-level WTC appeared to be influenced by a number of factors, which will be discussed below in Section 4.5.

The findings of the relationship between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC in class in the present study were consistent with that of Cao and Philp (2006). Cao and Philp (2006) investigated the dual characteristics of L2 WTC and found a mismatch between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC. However, this relationship did not appear to fully support Chan and McCroskey's earlier (1987) study. In Chan and McCroskey's (1987) study, their observational data showed that the students who had high scores on the WTC scale participated more in class than those who scored low on the scale. In their study, more of the total participation in class came from students with high scores than from students from low scores. Therefore, they concluded that class participation may be in large a measure of the function of an individual's orientation toward communication (trait WTC), instead of a situation-specific response (state WTC). A possible explanation of this discrepancy is that Chan and McCroskey (1987) examined students' participation in an L1 class, while Cao and Philp's (2006) study and this study were conducted in an L2 context, since "it is highly unlikely that WTC in the L2 is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1"(MacIntyre et al., 1998,p.546).

The above findings also supported MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) claim that a self-report questionnaire was not an appropriate tool to examine state WTC because "thinking about communicating in the L2 is different from actually doing it"(p.377). While their study didn't find any evidence for the existence of state WTC by using the single method of a self-report survey, in the current study state WTC was identified through observation. Therefore, it could be suggested that classroom observation is a more suitable method for the examination of state WTC in class, a variable which is difficult to identify by using a single self-report tool.

#### **4.4 Results of Research Question Three: Factors Likely to Influence L2 WTC**

This section reports the qualitative results of the current study, with the aim of answering the question: What are the factors that may influence rural Chinese secondary students' L2 WTC?

Semi-structured interviews with individual students were conducted during the last week of the program. The four students who participated in the classroom observation phase were also invited to attend interviews. All four agreed to participate and did in fact attend the interviews, which could be regarded as indicating a willingness to communicate in a context where some interpersonal interaction between the researcher and the interviewees could be expected.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, each interview included general questions intended to reveal factors that may affect WTC. Table 4.4 presents summaries of interviewees' self-report details from the interviews.

**Table 4.4: Summary of Self-report Details from Interviews**

	<b>Jerry(S1)</b>	<b>Henry(S2)</b>	<b>Mary(S3)</b>	<b>Janet(S4)</b>
Reasons for studying L2	-To go abroad for further study -To get a better job -To communicate with foreigners	-Travel abroad and communicate with foreigners -Use it after graduation	-Communicate with foreigners - National college entrance exam	-Communicate with foreigners
Personality	-Generally extroverted	-Talkative and extroverted	-Quiet	-Not too quiet or too talkative - Talk more with acquaintances, but quiet with strangers
Self-assessed L2 proficiency	-Overall not very good -Good at speaking	-Above average -Not good at speaking, but better at pronunciation	- Above average -Average at speaking	-Above average -Average at speaking, good at pronunciation
Self-perceived communication competence	-Very competent, believes in oneself is first step to success	-Not very competent, seldom communicates with others in English	-Not competent	-Not very competent, nervous, no chances to use -Not very confident when speaking in L2,
Feelings towards the learning environment	-Feels relaxed, can study efficiently	-Feels relaxed	-Relaxed	-Relaxed
Motivation to study in L2	-Very motivated to learn L2 -Always reads English articles, keeps an English diary	-Motivated, affected by father who teaches English	-Motivated	-A little motivated



Language class anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-confident when speaking English</li> <li>-Not afraid of making mistakes, because everyone can make a mistake</li> <li>-Wanted to be corrected by teacher so as to make progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not afraid of being laughed at, everyone can make mistakes when studying</li> <li>-Wanted to be corrected by teacher</li> <li>-A little nervous when answering questions, afraid he can't express himself well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Afraid of making mistakes</li> <li>-Not afraid of being corrected by teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not very confident when speaking English</li> <li>-Afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at</li> <li>-Wanted to be corrected by teacher, can make progress in that way</li> </ul>
Favorite class organization for communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Small group preferred, more opinions, can help each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Small group, better atmosphere</li> <li>-In pairs, not very good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prefers small group</li> <li>-Helpful</li> </ul>
Interest in foreign affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sometimes watches news about foreign countries</li> <li>-Hopes to go abroad to travel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Often watches news</li> <li>-Hope to go abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reads news about foreign countries</li> <li>-Hopes to go abroad, fun to communicate with foreigners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not read news about foreign countries, but reads magazines</li> <li>-Hopes to go abroad to study</li> </ul>

Data from the interviews revealed that these four participants were predominantly learning English in order to communicate with foreigners or for travel purposes. When asked about perceptions of their personalities, Jerry and Henry regarded themselves as being extroverted, Mary thought she was quiet and Janet thought herself to be not too quiet or too talkative. It is interesting to find that their self-rated overall L2 proficiency was generally not consistent with self-perceived communication competence; in other words, those who regarded their L2 proficiency as being above average thought they were not competent in L2 communication, and in contrast, those who thought that their L2 proficiency was not good, regarded themselves as being competent in L2 communication

Comments from individual participants concerning their attitudes suggested that all participants felt relaxed in the English class. Their favorite class organization appeared to be as a small group.

Regarding their motivation to study English, all the four participants commented that they were mainly motivated to learn English so that they could communicate with people from other countries. Jerry and Henry hoped to travel abroad in the future and Mary was learning English for the national college entrance exam. Henry explained that he had shown great interest in English since when he was a child under the influence of his father, who was an English teacher. Jerry stated that he liked English very much, and that he often read English articles and even kept an English diary.

When participants were asked to rate their English proficiency in general, Henry, Mary, and Janet placed themselves at the above average proficiency level. However, it is interesting that Jerry, who was regarded by his teacher as being excellent at English, thought that his L2 proficiency was not very good. When questioned as to why, he explained that he thought many other students in his school and other schools were

doing better than him. However, in terms of their speaking proficiency in particular, Jerry viewed himself as being good at speaking; Mary and Janet thought their speaking proficiency was average, and Henry regarded himself as not being very good at speaking. Henry and Janet also mentioned that as they were better at pronunciation than fluency, they felt that overall they were not good at speaking.

When asked about their L2 communication ability, all except Jerry stated that they were not competent, with Henry and Janet explaining that a contributing factor was that they had no opportunity to communicate with others in English. Jerry alone viewed himself as being competent in L2 communication regardless of his perception that he had generally low L2 proficiency level.

During the interviewees' responses to the question concerning their view of their personality, Jerry and Henry claimed that they were generally extroverted. Mary thought that she was a quiet person, and Janet reported that she talked more with friends and family members and talked less with strangers; that is, she was more willing to talk when she was familiar with her interlocutors but reluctant to communicate with strangers.

In terms of their attitudes towards the learning environment, all interviewees stated that they felt relaxed in their English class. This may have been partly due to the atmosphere of the class. Their English teacher was humorous and always tried to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Teachers play an important role in shaping classroom atmosphere. If the topic and classroom activities are appropriate, students are more relaxed and are more willing to participate in class activities (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). All the participants interviewed claimed that they preferred to learn with their classmates, so they could help each other. Jerry suggested that in a small group everyone had his own opinion, and in that way he could hear more opinions and

that they could learn from each other and make progress together.

Concerning language class anxiety, the following questions were asked:

- Did you feel confident when you were speaking English in class?
- Did it embarrass you to volunteer answers in class?
- Did you get nervous when your English teacher asked you a question?
- Were you afraid that your English teacher was ready to correct every mistake you made?
- Did you feel that the other students spoke English better than you did?
- Were you afraid that the other students would laugh at you when you were speaking English?

As to the question concerning whether they felt confident when they were speaking English in class, Jerry, who displayed high willingness to communicate in his self-report and in his actual classroom behaviour as observed by the researcher, said that he was generally confident when speaking English in class. In contrast, Janet, who displayed relatively low WTC in the classroom, in spite of her high self-reported WTC, explained that the reason for her lack of confidence when speaking English was because of the fact that she felt some of the other students were better at, and more confident in, English than her. Henry and Mary chose not to answer the question.

All of the four interviewees except Janet declared that they were not afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. Just as Henry said, "When learning, one will make mistakes. If one makes mistakes one can learn again". In regard to corrections from the teacher, they all hoped that they would be corrected by the teacher because in that way they could make progress in their English.

Concerning attitudes towards the international community, the interview data suggested that these students generally had a positive attitude toward the

international community. In the interviews, all four participants expressed their desire to go abroad for travel or further study. They seemed to be curious about the lifestyle and people of foreign countries. In their opinion, English-speaking countries were more technologically developed and more powerful than China.

#### **4.4.1 Discussion of Results of Research Question Three**

In this section, factors likely to influence L2 WTC behaviour in classroom contexts are identified and discussed from the interview data. These factors include: L2 self-confidence, self-perceived L2 proficiency, international posture, interlocutors, and parental influence.

- **L2 Self-confidence**

L2 self-confidence, a combination of a higher perceived communication competence, and a lack of language anxiety, appeared to exert an influence on the selected rural Chinese learners' WTC. As Ganschow and Sparks (2001) have suggested, an L2 student's self-confidence in L2 communication is considered to be an important factor in predicting his/her WTC in an L2. In their heuristic model of WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested that L2 confidence is an immediate predictor of WTC in an L2, and L2 confidence can be determined by the levels of perceived competence in L2 and the lack of language anxiety. Previous studies (Cao, 2009; Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; Clément et al., 2003; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Yashima, 2002) have identified self-confidence as an individual difference factor that would directly affect WTC.

This study found that self-confidence could indeed be a major factor influencing WTC. The finding of a relationship between self-confidence and WTC in this study seems to support de Saint Léger and Storch's (2009) findings that as learners' self-confidence increased over time, so did their willingness to use the L2 in class. In other words, if learners feel more confident in an L2, they will be more willing to

communicate in the L2. In this study, Jerry noted that he was very confident when speaking in English because, he explained, believing in oneself was the first step in order to achieve success in learning English. During the interview, he answered all the questions in English, although I had told him that he could answer them in Chinese. This can be seen as an indicator of his willingness to communicate in the L2.

Regarding the interrelationships between perceived communication competence, language anxiety, and self-confidence, previous studies have found that perceived competence is positively related to self-confidence while language anxiety is negatively related to self-confidence (Clément et al., 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997). Kim's (2004) research among Korean university students found similar results. He suggested that the Korean university students' language anxiety in his study might have been partly responsible for their low WTC in English since language anxiety was negatively related to L2 confidence.

As with previous studies (e.g. Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003; Yashima, 2002), language anxiety was also found to negatively affect L2 WTC in this study: "I feel nervous when answering the teacher's questions, I am afraid I can't express myself well, and I will not answer the questions" (Henry). In the EFL classroom, Peng (2007a) identified a number of factors causing language anxiety, including stage fright, a sense of competing against others, and a fear of losing face. In the current study, similar reasons were found. For example, Janet stated in her interview: "I am afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by classmates". Anxiety could also be aroused in a whole-class situation where peer pressure was felt. As Mary stated: "I am nervous when speaking in front of so many classmates, I feel all of them looking at me, some students are better at English, so I don't feel confident". This finding is in line with Young's (1990) study which reported competitiveness between learners, a fear of

high-exposure, and a threat to self-esteem, as factors affecting L2 anxiety in the classroom. In a whole-class situation, learners felt “exposed” and perceived the classroom environment as competitive and threatening, and thus confidence was eroded (Young, 1990). Some studies on L2 anxiety suggest that a high level of anxiety is associated with low class participation and low motivation (e.g., Clément et al., 1994). According to de Saint Léger and Storch (2009), an environment generating such high anxiety is unlikely to be conducive to WTC or indeed to learning. However, Jerry, in this study, who appeared less anxious or concerned about losing face, did report a higher level of L2 WTC and exhibited high behavioural WTC in the classroom. He reported that “I don’t feel embarrassed if I make a mistake in English class, because everyone can make a mistake.”

The findings of the present study also lend support to MacIntyre and Charos’s (1996) acknowledgement that increased opportunities for interaction indirectly affect one’s WTC in the L2. In fact, three out of the four students stated that they did not feel confident speaking in English because they did not have many opportunities to practice English. This was reflected in Henry’s comments: “My communication competence is poor because we seldom communicate in English, we have little chance to communicate in English. So I will feel nervous. ” Opportunities for interaction lead to the development of greater actual competence, possibly through a combination of practice and the adjustment of learner beliefs. Obviously, the learners’ ability to communicate in the L2 will improve with practice (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Thus, the students’ intention or willingness to engage in L2 communication is determined by a combination of the students’ perception of his or her second language competence, the opportunity to use the language, and a lack of apprehension about speaking. It also makes sense that in the classroom situation, students with high perceived L2

competence and less anxiety arousal tend to be more willing to enter into communication.

- **Self-perceived L2 proficiency**

It appeared that self-perceived L2 proficiency influenced the rural Chinese learners' WTC in this study. As MacIntyre et al. (1998) have suggested, the degree of a person's L2 proficiency has a significant effect on his/her WTC. Previous empirical studies have found that low linguistic proficiency could prevent students from venturing to speak the L2 in class (Liu & Jackson, 2008). The current study found that a low level of linguistic proficiency could lead some students to feel anxious, which reduces their self-confidence, and consequently discourages them from communicating in the L2. During the interview, Mary and Janet stated that they felt nervous while communicating in English in class because their English proficiency was low. For example, Mary stated in her interview, "I think my English is not good enough. I feel nervous; I don't feel confident because I can't express everything that I want to. Some other students are more confident than me because they are better at English. If I am better at English, I will become more confident."

This finding seems to support MacIntyre et al.'s (1997) study examining young adult anglophone students' self-assessed L2 proficiency and L2 anxiety. The results indicated that anxious students underestimate their L2 proficiency and communicate less frequently than more relaxed students who overestimate their L2 proficiency. MacIntyre et al. (1997) claimed that speaking is more anxiety provoking than reading because there are "more public and ego involving activities, raising one's level of self-consciousness and reducing one's control over the environment"(p.179).

A number of studies (Cao & Philp, 2006; Liu, 2005; Peng, 2007) revealed that a lack of vocabulary in L2 was a factor affecting students' perceived proficiency, which in



turn influenced WTC. In Cao's (2009) more recent study, she revealed that a lack of linguistic competence impeded communication in terms of both comprehension and production. Difficulty with the comprehension of keywords in an article or oral language reduced students' willingness to talk in the L2. A lack of lexical resources was also found to adversely affect the students' communication with others. In the present study, Henry and Mary reported difficulty in finding appropriate words or structures to express their ideas. In this way an inadequate level of communicative competence might add to students' cognitive load, with the result that they were not confident about expressing their ideas, which in turn led them to feel anxious and frustrated and contributed to their reticence in class.

- **International posture**

L2 researchers have argued that positive attitudes toward L2 learning are important for success in the attainment of L2 proficiency because L2 students with positive attitudes tend to consider L2 learning enjoyable and beneficial, which then may lead them to become more active in their L2 use (Gardner et al., 1985). In their heuristic model of WTC in L2, MacIntyre et al. (1998) regard attitudes, as located in layer V, as having an indirect effect on L2 WTC through their influence on affective variables. That is to say, attitudes are important factors which influence WTC in English through their interaction with other affective variables. If L2 students have positive attitudes to English learning, this will increase their English learning motivation, leading to greater confidence in English communication, which is directly related to L2 WTC and important for the success of SLA (Yashima, 2002).

In the current study, international posture was also found to play a role in L2 WTC. Therefore, students who had a positive attitude toward the international community tended to be more willing to communicate in English. As shown in the results of this

study, all the four interview participants expressed their interest in going abroad for travel or further study. Janet, who had been to Singapore, said that the trip to Singapore gave her an opportunity to communicate with foreigners in English. She found that she had difficulty in expressing her ideas due to her limited vocabulary. Therefore, she decided to work harder to improve her English when she returned. As she put it in the interview: “After I came back from Singapore I worked even harder because I want to improve my oral English, so next time I meet foreigners, I can speak better English with them”.

The finding above is consistent with previous findings of some studies in EFL contexts. In Yashima’s (2002) study, international posture was hypothesized as a general attitude toward the international community that influences English learning and communication, in this case, among Japanese university EFL learners. The results of her study indicated that international posture was directly related to L2 WTC, and indirectly related to L2 WTC through L2 motivation and L2 confidence. Yashima (2002) pointed out that “it was not surprising that the more internationally oriented an individual was, the more willing he or she is to communicate in English” (p.62). Thus, international posture appears to play a significant part in promoting L2 WTC in the Japanese context. Yashima concluded that the results of her study supported MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) heuristic model of WTC in L2. Similarly, in the Turkish context among university EFL learners, Cetinkaya (2005) found that students’ L2 WTC was directly related to their attitude toward the international community.

- **Interlocutors**

As in previous studies (Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005), the role of interlocutors seemed to have an influence on learners’ WTC in this study. The interview data revealed that the number of interlocutors (group size) and familiarity with

interlocutors both exert an influence on learners' WTC.

Small group discussions are often seen as a means of reducing learners' performance anxiety, and providing greater opportunities for communicative interactions. Long and Porter (1985) posited that students received much more opportunity to speak in groups than in a teacher-fronted class. That is, the smaller the size of a group, the greater the number of opportunities presented for learners to communicate. Similarly, such a phenomenon also occurred in the current study. Two of the participants reported that they enjoyed speaking English with their peers in small group discussion as it brought a more relaxed and informal kind of interaction. Yet some studies (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009) suggest that not all learners prefer small group work to whole class discussions.

As for participation in the whole class situation, Janet stated that she felt discouraged about participating in this context because her initiative to speak up was overridden by more dominant members of the class. This, in turn, led to her reticence in such situations where opportunities for participation by each member were more limited. This seems to support McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) claim that the larger the number of interlocutors, the less willing the individual is to communicate. Shaw (1981) has also argued that the distribution of group member participation would become increasingly uneven with an increase in group size; and generally, in a larger group, the communication contribution gap between the most active group members and the others would result in a minority of the group being dominant, while the other members would feel left out and remain reticent. In a Chinese EFL classroom, according to my prior teaching experience in Chinese high schools, the most active learners to participate in classroom activities are almost always the same group of learners. This may explain why Janet displayed relatively low behavioural WTC despite

her high self-report WTC. This also appeared to be consistent with House's (2004) finding that a lack of opportunity to communicate in class resulted in an increasing sense of frustration for some of the participants and a consequent withdrawal from communication activities.

Similar to Cao and Philp's (2006) finding, the current study also found that familiarity with interlocutors exerts an influence on learners' WTC. Cao and Philp (2006) suggested that the more distant the relationship of the individual to the receivers, the less willing the individual is to communicate. McCroskey (1992) has also suggested that the extent of the social distance which exists in the relationship between the individual and the interlocutor(s) could affect his/her degree of willingness to communicate. In the current study, students seemed to be aware of the influence of such distance on their WTC in class because they were more willing to communicate in English with familiar interlocutors. For example, given the big size of Chinese classes, commonly with numbers of up to about sixty-five students in a class, Mary reported that she was more willing to speak English with people she was familiar with, such as friends, but did not initiate talk with classmates that she did not know. This also appeared to support Kang's (2005) claim that with unfamiliar interlocutors, participants tended to feel less secure about making mistakes and were more reluctant to speak English. In House's (2004) study, the importance of reducing social distance between classmates, which would then make communicate easier, was acknowledged by some of his participants.

Cao and Philp (2006) also suggested that distance within a relationship appeared not to be a static variable but a dynamic one, liable to change over time, as was also reported in House's (2004) study. However, given the limited research time and research scope of the present study, it was not discussed here.

- **Parental influence**

Support from parents also appeared to exert an indirect influence on learners' WTC in this study. Studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between the student's perception of parental encouragement and his/her motivation to learn a second language (Clément et al., 1980; Skehan, 1989). Gardner (1985) suggests that parents often play an active role in the language learning process by encouraging, supporting, and monitoring the curricular activities of their children. Parents may also play a passive role by modeling and communicating attitudes related to the learning of the second language and the second language group (Gardner et al., 1999). In this study, comments from Henry showed that his father had played an active role in his English learning: "I am interested in learning English. Because my father is an English teacher, he often encourages me to study English well. Therefore, I showed great interest in English when I was in primary school under the influence of my father".

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the influence of social factors may play a role on L2 WTC. Clément (1986) also suggested that language acquisition is bound to a social context, namely, social support for language learning could be particularly important in developing a willingness to communicate during the L2 acquisition process. Such support might come from several sources, including parents, teachers, and peers. In the present study, Henry was not the most active participant in classroom activities, but compared to Mary and Janet, whose levels of behavioural WTC were 50 and 55 separately, his level of behavioural WTC, which was 66, was a little higher. This should mean that he was likely to be more willing to communicate in English in class than Mary and Janet. This could be explained by the fact that his father played an active part in motivating his English learning, which in turn influenced his willingness to communicate in English.

The above finding did not appear to fully support that of MacIntyre et al. (2001), because they determined that social support was associated with higher levels of WTC outside the classroom, but played less of a role inside the classroom. A possible explanation of this inconsistent finding is that their study was conducted among L2 French immersion students in Canada while the current study was conducted among non-immersion students, and the classroom was the main situation where they could communicate in English. The relationship between social support and WTC outside the classroom was, however, beyond the scope of this study and was not as a consequence examined. It appears to be another area for further research.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This section summarized the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data of the present study. Analysis of the quantitative data aimed to identify rural Chinese secondary school students' level of L2 WTC while the qualitative data was intended to reveal factors likely to influence their L2 WTC. The relationship between self-report WTC and behavioural WTC was also examined.

After comparing the four students' self-report WTC and their WTC behaviour in class, it was found that the self-report WTC did not fully predict their WTC behaviour in the whole class setting. This discrepancy between the learners' self-report WTC and their actual classroom behaviour suggests that learner's WTC behaviour in the whole class situation was influenced both by trait-level and state-level WTC.

Quantitative results from the self-report WTC data revealed that the selected 124 rural Chinese secondary students' perception of their L2 WTC was generally low. Further analysis found that students' WTC varied across contexts, and they were most willing to communicate in English when tasks were less cognitively demanding and psychologically safer. This seemed to suggest that their actual L2 proficiency or

self-perceived level of communicative competence may be a key factor affecting their L2 WTC. This was further confirmed in the interviews with four self-selected participants. Data from the interviews suggested that if students had a higher level of self-perceived competence, they would feel more confident, and thus their L2 WTC would increase.

According to the quantitative data collected in this study, it was found that the participants were least willing to communicate with teachers in class, yet more willing to communicate with their teachers when directly called upon. This could be explained by the Chinese students' "submissive way of learning", and the Chinese cultural values of "face-protection" and "other-directedness". In other words, cultural values may have an influence on trait-level WTC.

Apart from the factors of L2 proficiency and cultural influence mentioned above, this study also identified some other factors possibly influencing rural Chinese secondary students' L2 WTC which were isolated from the interview data. These factors included L2 self-confidence (a combination of higher perceived competence and lower levels of language anxiety), international posture, the identity of interlocutors, and parental influence. These factors are consistent with previous studies which have been conducted into L2 WTC. For example, self-perceived communicative competence, L2 anxiety, and L2 attitude (i.e. international posture) have previously been found to be key variables affecting L2 WTC in several theoretical and empirical studies (i.e. Cao, 2009; Cetinkaya, 2005; Kim, 2004; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002; Wen & Clément, 2003). In addition, the role of situational variables, such as that of interlocutors, as identified by Kang (2005) and MacIntyre et al. (2001), have also been noted in the present study. The impact of personality characteristics (introversion and extroversion) as discussed by Cetinkaya

(2005); and Chinese culture as proposed by Wen and Clément (2003) have also been found to have some effect on the WTC of the participants in this research.

Based on the above findings, it can be argued that the definition of L2 WTC as “readiness to enter into discourse” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547) could encompass L2 learners’ cognitive, linguistic, and affective readiness. The lack of one or more such readiness factors may contribute to rural Chinese students’ low level of WTC. For some students, their insufficient cognitive readiness may inhibit their “desire” from developing into “willingness” to communicate, the last step before actual use of the L2 (Wen & Clément, 2003). Some students’ reticence in class may additionally result from inadequate linguistic resources, or affective concerns such as anxiety, face-protection, or the wish to avoid “showing off”. Thus, an L2 learner may undergo a complex process involving both cognitive and affective factors before developing the “desire” to communicate into readiness to enter into a discourse, namely, willingness to communicate.

This study’s use of a classroom observational tool also lent support to MacIntyre et al.’s (2001) claim that a single self-report method was not sufficient to examine state WTC. Thus, it is proposed by the researcher that classroom observation is a more suitable method for the examination of state WTC in class, a variable which is difficult to identify by using the self-report method alone.



## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Firstly, this chapter presents a reminder of the aims and methodological approach of the study. Secondly, the key findings of the research are summarized, followed by a consideration of its contributions to theory, methodology, and research, as well as pedagogical implications for EFL teachers. The limitations of this study are also assessed and recommendations for future research in this field are proposed. The chapter concludes with a final remark.

### **5.2 Aims and Methodological Approach of the Research**

Previous studies on L2 WTC have largely focused on trait-level WTC, which is stable across contexts, whereas only a few studies have investigated the situational aspects of this variable. The primary objective of the present study was to investigate these dual characteristics of WTC by examining rural Chinese secondary school students' WTC in English, and in particular, to examine what factors might influence their L2 WTC. The second aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between self-report WTC and actual WTC behaviour in a language classroom in the EFL context. The study focused on answering the following three research questions:

- To what extent are rural Chinese secondary students willing to communicate in English?
- To what extent does the self-report WTC of rural Chinese secondary students correspond to their behavioural WTC?
- What factors influence rural Chinese secondary students' willingness to communicate?

In order to fill a gap in the literature that led researchers to call for the verification of self-report WTC by behavioural classroom studies, the present study

employed a triangulated approach to collect data by means of a number of instruments including a self-report questionnaire, classroom observation, and a semi-structured interview. First, a WTC questionnaire was administered to capture the selected rural Chinese students' trait-like L2 WTC. In addition, the researcher invited four of the participants who had completed the questionnaire to be part of a classroom observation in order that their actual WTC behaviour (situational WTC) might be examined in a whole class setting. Lastly, the same four participants were interviewed in order to reveal factors that may have influenced their L2 WTC.

### **5.3 Summary of Key Findings**

The findings of the present study have revealed that the selected rural Chinese students' self-report WTC did not necessarily predict their WTC behaviour in the whole class setting, and as such provides empirical evidence for conceptualizing L2 WTC as a situational variable and not simply as a trait disposition in classroom interactional contexts. Thus, the WTC construct in L2 was identified to be both a trait-like variable and a state (situational) variable. The analysis shows that trait-like WTC appears to play a role in determining a general tendency to communicate, whereas situational WTC predicts whether communication in a particular situation will take place.

This study has correlated rural Chinese learners' self-report WTC and their perceptions of the factors impacting on their situational WTC with classroom observations of their WTC behaviour. The discrepancy between their self-report WTC and behavioural WTC confirms the distinction between "desire" and "willingness" in Wen and Clément's (2003) WTC model, that is, "having the desire to communicate does not necessarily imply a willingness to communicate" (p.25). Before a learner develops the "desire" into the "willingness" to communicate, he or she may undergo a complex process involving both cognitive and affective factors. This discrepancy

between actual behaviour and self-report also confirms the usefulness of employing the mixed-method approach of observation, self-report, and interviews in identifying WTC within the classroom context. To better understand the complexity of underlying WTC behaviour, an approach combining findings from both quantitative and qualitative studies is warranted (MacIntyre, 2007; Yashima et al., 2004).

Another focus of this study was on understanding the factors that might influence students' L2 WTC, including L2 self-confidence, self-perceived L2 proficiency, international posture, the identity of interlocutors, and parental influence. One aspect of the current study which differs from most of those previously undertaken is that this study identifies factors that influence L2 WTC in the classroom from the point of view of learners rather than merely revealing the antecedents of WTC via self-report survey.

#### **5.4 Contributions to Theory**

Theoretically, the current study provides further evidence confirming the assertion that WTC is a significant construct in L2 communication. It partially supports MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model of L2 WTC, in that some of the factors that emerged in this study appear to correspond to the variables noted in their model, such as L2 self-confidence (a combination of perceived competence and language anxiety) (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003). This finding may lend support to the claim that communication confidence is a primary and universal precursor to L2 WTC regardless of regional diversity (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). As the present study focuses on the L2 classroom context, specific classroom environmental factors identified as important in this study, such as the role of interlocutor, do not feature in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model, which applies only to general L2 conversational contexts. This study also partially supports Wen and Clément's (2003) conceptualization of Chinese WTC, in that it demonstrates the distinction between the "desire" and "willingness" to

communicate, and suggests that the former does not necessarily lead to the latter.

This research into L2 WTC in a Chinese EFL context also adds to the theoretical foundation of the WTC construct. Many previous studies into L2 WTC have been conducted in settings where the target language is learned and used as a second language. However, it is suggested that the differences between second language and foreign language settings could have a considerable effect on language learners (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Studies into WTC in English, especially in the classroom context, are significant for English language teaching and learning in China and other EFL contexts which have an increasing demand for oral proficiency in ELT. The current study is one of a few empirical studies which have aimed to examine the construct of WTC in a Chinese EFL context; therefore, it contributes to the conceptualization of the WTC construct in a Chinese EFL setting and leads to a better understanding of the causes of the diversity in WTC between Chinese students and nationality groups in other similar EFL contexts, such as Japan and Korea.

### **5.5 Contributions to Methodology**

Methodologically, this study has important implications for issues which arise when conducting research into WTC in the classroom. It has employed a mixed-method research design, and thus reinforces the importance of the triangulation of self-reported and observational data in revealing the situated nature of WTC in class.

While most previous WTC research has examined factors influencing WTC by means of surveys or interviews, very few have investigated WTC via observations as in this study. Observation has been considered a more appropriate tool for measuring situational WTC by researchers such as MacIntyre et al. (2001), and a number of previous studies have attempted to operationalize WTC in an L2 classroom by using

slightly different types of observation schemes(Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005). This study adapted the classroom observation scheme of Cao (2009), thus contributing to the validation and development of a more refined tool to capture behavioural WTC in class, which could be beneficial for future WTC studies.

Most previous quantitative research into WTC tended to rely on the WTC scale developed by McCroskey and Baer (1985). However, Cao and Philp (2006) have questioned the usefulness of using a generic questionnaire for WTC in an instructional context. This study has developed a WTC questionnaire based on Cao and Philp's (2006) and Weaver's (2005) studies in order to make it more suitable for a Chinese EFL classroom by adapting the items more relevant to EFL classroom situations. Thus it has contributed to the development of a more appropriate WTC questionnaire which could also be used to investigate L2 WTC in the classroom in the future.

## **5.6 Contributions to Research**

This study is distinctive in that it investigates the WTC construct through actual classroom interaction data, confirming the dual characteristics of the WTC construct, namely, trait-like WTC and state-level WTC, which is in line with current trends in WTC research (Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005). This study acknowledges that trait WTC prepares individuals for communication by creating a tendency for them to place themselves in situations where communication is expected; situational WTC, on the other hand, influences the decision to initiate communication in particular situations (Cao, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 1999). In addition, learners may undergo a complex process moderated by cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors which takes place between the "desire" and actual communication. Given the fact that WTC has been seen as an individual difference variable affecting L2 acquisition and a goal of L2 instruction (MacIntyre et al., 1998), this study of L2 WTC has been able to contribute to the body

of present SLA research, which focuses on the universalistic aspects of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2008).

Most previous studies have investigated the antecedents of WTC by means of a quantitative approach, whereas this study took a holistic view in order to investigate factors that might affect WTC by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Those quantitative studies have contributed to our understanding of WTC through descriptions of trait WTC and by measurement of the causal relationship between trait WTC and its antecedents. They have provided some suggestions about the nature of situational WTC, but due to methodological limitations, they were not able to explore this area in detail (Cao, 2009). As with other qualitative research on WTC, including that of Cao and Philp (2006) and Kang (2005), this in-depth qualitative study identifies factors influencing WTC by a triangulation of methods, thus adding to the understanding of the situational nature of this construct. Therefore, these two types of research, quantitative and qualitative, are complementary in that they investigate the dual characteristics (trait and situational) of the WTC construct (Cao, 2009).

### **5.7 Pedagogical implications**

The present study, through its detailed descriptions of WTC, offers valuable information for the purpose of teachers' reflection and classroom practice. The results of this study have confirmed that WTC needs to be seen as an important component of SLA (Kang, 2005). Language teaching should ultimately foster learners' willingness to engage in communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998) and their willingness to talk in order to learn (Skehan, 1989). Therefore, it seems that an increased knowledge of the nature of WTC, coupled with its potential effects on classroom interaction, would benefit both individual instructors and students. In EFL contexts like China, L2 learning mainly occurs in a classroom setting, so generating and enhancing students' L2 WTC in the

classroom plays a decisive role in improving students' L2 learning.

Considering the key role it plays in L2 WTC, teachers should promote self-confidence in communication among students. While doing so, it would be useful for teachers to foster students' self-perceived competence in English and reduce their language anxiety. An underestimation of their self-confidence in English may make students believe they cannot learn or perform adequately in the target language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). To build up their students' self-confidence, teachers should try various means (e.g. by showing empathy to anxious students in class and encouraging students to share their feelings) in order to increase their students' interest in and motivation to learn and use the language. This, in turn, may result in greater use of the language by the learners, leading to increased self-ratings of their English proficiency (Liu & Jackson, 2008), and thus increasing their WTC. It may be also advisable for teachers to give more reticent students the opportunity to speak and build up their self-confidence by fostering a less threatening and a more caring classroom atmosphere. For example, it is important for teachers to be friendly rather than strict and critical in class (Liu, 2007) because learners will be more active and participative when a suitable environment is created (Cheng et al., 1999). Also, when students feel more secure, they will be more willing to participate in classroom activities (Kang, 2005).

The findings of this study revealed that the students' low L2 WTC did not seem to be solely attributable to their self-confidence, it was also due to an absence of opportunities for interaction as a result of the large number of students in a typical Chinese classroom. As Wen and Clément (2003) state, class size appears to be "part of the contextual factors embedded in group cohesiveness" (p.27). The whole class context with a larger group of learners lacks the sense of cohesiveness that would

presumably lend support to learners and make them feel secure enough to speak in a smaller group. In addition, in a whole class context any sense of responsibility to communicate (Kang, 2005) is reduced. The fact that interlocutor familiarity was perceived to be a factor also points to the necessity of considering group dynamics, and the need to foster good relationships between class members. It is suggested that teachers should arrange more group activities (Cao & Philp, 2006) so that learners may have more opportunities and feel more willing to communicate. As Slavin (1990) suggested, group activities have the potential to increase learning. Students are able to help one another in groups in order to stretch the range of language they produce, thus leading to increased language development (Jacobs, 1998).

Because the influence of variables underlying WTC might change over time as students gain greater experience in the second language, teachers in a non-immersion program could increase their students' amount of mandatory L2 communication inside the classroom (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003). Teachers should create as many opportunities as possible for learners to use the language in the classroom. This should eventually make non-immersion students more comfortable when using the second language and possibly improve their perceptions of self-confidence in the L2.

### **5.8 Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

Several limitations to the present study are noteworthy. One obvious limitation stems from the small sample involved in the observations and interviews. The interview and observation data represent a sample of just four learners; therefore, it was not possible to adequately address the research questions except as they relate to these learners, or to generalize the findings to a wider L2 population. As a result, further research incorporating a similar design, and a larger sample size, would be of value.



The quantitative results of this study showed that the 124 rural Chinese students surveyed generally displayed low L2 WTC tendencies in their EFL classroom. However, this finding is rather preliminary because no score norm has been established (Peng, 2007). Furthermore, there exist considerable regional discrepancies in socio-economic development in China, which brings about diversities in beliefs, social expectations of language teaching, and educational pedagogic approaches (Hu, 2003). The findings with regard to L2 WTC involving a single school should not be the basis for wider generalizations. Future research into L2 WTC, conducted in other areas in China, would provide further opportunities for comparison and validation.

The focus of this study was confined to the speaking mode of L2 WTC. However, MacIntyre et.al (1998) argued that L2 WTC not only covers the speaking mode but also other modes of communication. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of L2 WTC, future studies could focus on L2 WTC not only in the oral mode but also listening, writing, and reading.

This study also relied considerably on semi-structured interview data. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to investigate learners' self-reported perceptions or attitudes (Mackey & Gass, 2005) and information about language classes (Block, 1997). However, in terms of research methods, it is suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005) that stimulated recall could be a better tool to "prompt learners to recall or report thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event" (p. 78), and thus the researcher could present to the reader various interpretations of what is occurring in the classroom. Because of time and resourcing constraints, the stimulated-recall approach could not be used in this study in a way that fully exploited its value as a research method. Therefore, future research into WTC in the classroom employing a stimulated-recall approach would be worth conducting.

With regard to classroom observation, as I was the sole researcher and observer in the classroom, the reliability of my observations could always be questioned. Mackey and Gass (2005) have suggested that it would be better to triangulate an observation coding scheme with video recording when conducting classroom observations because video recording enables the researcher to comment on all of the non-verbal communication that is taking place, thus providing more than just verbal information (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, it would be preferable to use video recording in similar future studies to provide a greater range of data, and also inter-rater reliability (Cao, 2009) if another researcher was also able to view the footage.

### **5.9 Final comment**

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate rural Chinese secondary school students' L2 WTC tendencies and examine factors which impact on their L2 WTC. Cognitive and affective factors appeared to influence the selected rural Chinese learners' L2 WTC. This study has shed more light on the dual characteristics of the WTC construct and points to the usefulness of employing a combination of self-reports, observations, and interviews in identifying WTC within the classroom context. Captured by a triangulation of data, this study has contributed valuable empirical evidence to the theory that WTC is an important component of SLA, and that EFL teachers should use a variety of pedagogical methods if they wish to increase their students' WTC. Further research on WTC should focus on the situational nature of this construct in order to provide a fuller understanding of WTC and more useful insights into its role in SLA.

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## APPENDIX A: WTC Questionnaire (English Version)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many years have you been studying English? (From primary to secondary) \_\_\_\_\_

DIRECTIONS: Below are 15 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate in English. Presume that you have *completely free choice*. Please indicate the percentage of time you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of time you would choose to communicate. Please choose any number between 0 and 100. 0%= NEVER willing to communicate in English 100%=ALWAYS willing to communicate in English

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Never willing					sometimes willing					always willing

- | _____ |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| _____ | 1  | Volunteer an answer in English when the teacher asks a question in class. |
| _____ | 2  | Answer a question in English when you are called upon by the teacher.     |
| _____ | 3  | Talk to your teacher in English before or after class.                    |
| _____ | 4  | Ask the teacher a question in English in class.                           |
| _____ | 5  | Ask the teacher a question in English in private.                         |
| _____ | 6  | Present your own opinions in English in class.                            |
| _____ | 7  | Participate in pair discussions in English in class                       |
| _____ | 8  | Say sorry in English when you are wrong.                                  |
| _____ | 9  | Help others answer a question in English                                  |
| _____ | 10 | Sing a song in English.   |
| _____ | 11 | Read out the conversations in English from the textbook.                  |
| _____ | 12 | Say "thank you" in English when your classmates help you.                 |
| _____ | 13 | Introduce yourself in English without looking at notes.                   |
| _____ | 14 | Greet your classmates in English.   |
| _____ | 15 | Give a speech with notes in class.  |
- (Adapted from Cao & Philp, 2006; Weaver, 2005)

## APPENDIX B: WTC Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

### 交际意愿调查问卷

名字: \_\_\_\_\_ 性别: \_\_\_\_\_ 年龄: \_\_\_\_\_

你学了几年英语（从小学到中学）? \_\_\_\_\_

说明: 以下是 15 种您在英语课堂上可能遇到的可能选择用英语进行交际或者不用英语进行交际的任务场合; 假设您有完全的自由决定是否用英语交际, 那么请您在空格中写上你选择用英语进行交际的时间比。0 % = 从不愿意用英语进行交际。100 % = 总是愿意用英语进行交际。所选答案没有对错之分。

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
从不愿意					有时愿意					总是愿意
_____	1	当英语老师面对全班不指名提问时, 您抢先用英语回答问题。								
_____	2	当英语老师提问时, 用英语回答问题。								
_____	3	上课前或课后与英语老师用英语交谈。								
_____	4	在全班同学面前用英语问老师一个问题。								
_____	5	私下用英语问老师一个问题。								
_____	6	当着全班同学的面用英语表达自己的观点。								
_____	7	在两人小组讨论中与同学用英语交谈。								
_____	8	当你有错时用英语说声对不起。								
_____	9	帮助其他同学用英语回答问题。								
_____	10	用英语唱首歌。								
_____	11	用英语朗读课本中的双人对话。								
_____	12	别的同学帮助你或者借东西给你时, 用英语说声谢谢。								
_____	13	不看笔记用英语进行简短的自我介绍。								
_____	14	用英语和别的同学打招呼。								
_____	15	带着笔记用英语做简单的演讲。								

(改编自 Cao & Philp, 2006 和 Weaver, 2005)

## APPENDIX C: WTC Classroom Observation Scheme (English Version)

<b>TEACHER-STUDENT(S) / STUDENT(S)-TEACHER</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S 4</b>
1a. Volunteer an answer [to <b>general</b> T-solicit]	Va				
1b. Volunteer a comment	Vc				
2a. Give [answer to] <b>group</b> [T-solicit]	Gg				
2b. Give [answer to] <b>individual</b> [T-solicit]	Gi				
2c. Give [answer to T-solicit] - Private response	Gp				
3a. Ask [the teacher a] question	Aq				
3b. Ask [the teacher for] clarification	Ac				
4. Guess [the] meaning [of an unknown word]	Gm				
5a. Try [out a difficult] Lexical [form]	TrL				
5b. Try [out a difficult] Morphological [form]	TrM				
5c. Try [out a difficult] Syntactical [form]	TrS				
<b>STUDENT-STUDENT / STUDENT-CLASS</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>S 2</b>	<b>S 3</b>	<b>S 4</b>	<b>S 1</b>
6. Talk [to] neighbour	Tn				
7. Present [own] opinion [in class]	Po				
8. Respond to an opinion	Ro				
TOTAL for each student					

(Adapted from Cao, 2009)

## APPENDIX D: WTC Classroom Observation Scheme (Chinese Version)

交际意愿课堂观察记录表

老师-学生 / 学生-老师	代码	学生 1	学生 2	学生 3	学生 4
1a. 主动提出一个答案 [一般情况下]	Va				
1b. 主动发表意见	Vc				
2a. 在小组里给出一个答案	Gg				
2b. 给个人一个答案	Gi				
2c. 私下给出一个答案(自语)	Gp				
3a. 问老师一个问题	Aq				
3b. 请老师讲清一个问题	Ac				
4. 猜测生词的意思	Gm				
5a. 尝试一种复杂的词汇形式	TrL				
5b. 尝试一种复杂的语法形式	TrM				
5c. 尝试一种复杂的结构形式	TrS				
学生-学生 / 学生-班级	学生 1	学生 2	学生 3	学生 4	学生 4
6. 与同桌交谈	Tn				
7. 与小组成员交谈	Tg				
8. 与另一小组成员交谈	To				
9a. 当众给出自己的观点	Po				
9b. 对一个观点做出反应	Ro				
10. 主动参与课堂活动	Vp				
每个学生的总分					

(改编自 Cao,2009)

## **APPENDIX E: Semi-structured Interview guide (English Version)**

### **Participant Interview Questions:**

1. How important is it for you to learn English?
2. How good are you at learning English?
3. What do you think your English level is like? What about your speaking skill in particular?
4. How motivated were you during learning English?
5. How much did you like learning English together with your classmates?
6. How would you describe your personality (quiet or talkative, relaxed or tense)?
7. How competent do you think you were to communicate in English?
8. Did you feel very sure and relaxed in English class?
9. Did you feel confident when you were speaking English in class?
10. Did it embarrass you to volunteer answers in class?
11. Did you feel that the other students spoke English better than you did?
12. How did you feel when you needed to use English to communicate? Did you usually feel nervous or at ease? Did you enjoy using English?
13. Were you afraid that other students would laugh at you when you were speaking English?
14. Did you get nervous when your English teacher asked you a question?
15. Were you afraid that your English teacher was ready to correct every mistake you made?
16. In what situation did you feel most comfortable (most willing) to communicate: in pairs, in small groups, with the teacher in a whole class? Why?
17. Do you often read or watch news about foreign countries?
18. Do you often talk about situations and events in foreign countries with your friends and/or classmates?
19. How do you like it if your teacher lectures in English?
20. Do you hope that your English teacher speaks more English in class?
21. Would you like to have more opportunities to speak English in class?

(Adapted from Cao & Philp, 2006)

## APPENDIX F: Semi-structured Interview guide (Chinese Version)

### 半结构访谈提纲

#### 个人访谈问题:

1. 学英语对你有多重要?
2. 你英语学得多好?
3. 你认为你的英语水平, 特别是口语水平如何?
4. 你学英语的积极性多高?
5. 你有多愿意与同学一起学英语?
6. 你认为自己个性如何(外向还是内向)?
7. 你用英语交际和能力如何?
8. 你在英语课堂觉得轻松吗?
9. 在课堂内讲英语时你觉得自信吗?
10. 在课堂上主动回答问题你会感到尴尬吗?
11. 你觉得其他同学英语说得比你好吗?
12. 你用英语交流时感觉如何? 感到紧张还是放松? 你喜欢用英语交流吗?
13. 你讲英语时会不会担心其他同学嘲笑你?
14. 英语老师问你问题时你会紧张吗?
15. 你担心英语老师会随时纠正你犯的错误吗?
16. 下列哪种情景中你最愿意用英语交流, 全班, 小组中还有人两人对话? 为什么?
17. 你经常了解国外的新闻吗?
18. 你经常跟朋友或同学谈论国外花生的事件吗?
19. 你喜欢如果英语老师用英语授课?
20. 你希望英语老师在课堂上多讲英语吗?
21. 你希望课堂上有更多机会讲英语吗?

(改编自 Cao & Philp, 2006)



## **APPENDIX G: Participant Information Sheet (English version)**

**Date Information Sheet Produced: 20 June, 2010**

**Project Title:**

**Willingness to Communicate in English among Secondary School Students in the Rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language ( EFL) Classroom**

### **An Invitation**

I'm Qiuxuan XIE, an MA student majoring in Education in the Faculty of Applied Humanities at AUT University. The study on **Willingness to Communicate in English among Secondary School Students in the Rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classroom** is the topic of my Master thesis.

You are warmly invited to participate in the study. Your participation will be highly appreciated. You may withdraw yourself or any information that you have provided for this project at any time prior to the completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If you withdraw, all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The research is to find out to what extent are Chinese Secondary School students in rural area willing to communicate in their English Language Classroom and what are the possible factors that contribute to Chinese Secondary School students' willingness to communicate in English in their EFL classroom in a rural area.

As a result, reports, papers and articles based on the thesis may be published in the future.

### **How was I chosen for this invitation?**

You are chosen because you are a high school student in a rural area in Fujian, China, and you are learning English as a foreign language as a compulsory subject.

Hence, you are warmly invited to be a participant of the study.

### **What will happen in this research?**

There will be a questionnaire on your opinions on your willingness to communicate in English and an audio-recorded semi-structured interview with the researcher. Questions on the same issue will be asked. The researcher will take notes during the interview. Some classroom behaviour will be observed and recorded using an observation scheme. The observation will be four class sessions. A classroom observation scheme consisting of a range of classroom behaviours such as volunteer an answer etc. will be used to record your interaction with your teacher and classmates. It aims to explore your actual WTC behavioural intention. These notes will be locked in a secure filing cabinet in the supervisor's office (WT1003, AUT) for a minimum of 6 years and will only be seen by the researcher and the supervisor. Participants will be given an opportunity to check the accuracy of the observations.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

There will be no risk at all and I do not expect that you will feel any form of discomfort. If you do, please feel free to discuss any issue with me, your class teacher, or the Head of the school.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you feel uncomfortable about the recording or interview, any question will be skipped without being answered, or the recording and/or interview will be stopped at any time you say so to the interviewer, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

If you feel uncomfortable about or during answering the questionnaire, you are free to quit it at any time or skip any question without answering it, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

If you feel uncomfortable about the observation, the observation will be stopped at any time, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

### **What are the benefits?**

The results of the study will inform L2 teaching and learning on the willingness to communicate among secondary school students in the rural Chinese EFL classroom and factors influencing this willingness—which has not received much attention in the research literature. Particularly, as a student participant, you will have a better understanding of your own willingness to communicate in English. Thus, it is expected that you will be able to make adjustments accordingly to facilitate your English learning.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Your questionnaire and observation scheme sheet will not have your real name on them. These will be identified by a pseudonym like an English name you prefer. These papers will be held by only the researcher and the supervisor. They will not be seen by anybody else. In the interview, a pseudonym will be used too instead of your real name. The tape will be transcribed by the researcher and checked by you. Only the student researcher and the supervisor have access to them, and they will not know your real name.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The questionnaire will take you about 20 minutes each. The interview will take about 30 minutes. And the observation will be four class sessions. A classroom observation scheme consisting of a range of classroom behaviours such as volunteer an answer etc. will be used to record your interaction with your teacher and classmates. It aims to explore your actual WTC behavioural intention.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You will have 2 days to think it over from now on. If you decide not to take part, it will have no effect on your final results for your class. Participating in this research project is purely voluntary.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

By completing the questionnaire, you are agreeing to take part in part of the study. For the interview and observation part of the study, you need to complete a Consent Form before you participate.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes. If you wish, please tick or circle accordingly the relevant item on the Consent Form and the questionnaire, and you will receive a copy of report on the research when it is completed.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999 ext7830.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

The researcher and the project supervisor.

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Qiuxuan, Xie, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz); [xqx310@hotmail.com](mailto:xqx310@hotmail.com)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext7830.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 August 2010 AUTECH Reference number 10/161**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form*

## APPENDIX H: Participant Information Sheet (Chinese Version)

### 参加通知书

制作日期: 2010 年 6 月 20 日

**课题名称:**中国农村地区中学生第二语言(含外语, 简称二语)交际意愿

#### 邀请:

我是谢秋璇,一名奥克兰理工大学人文系教育专业的硕士生。我的硕士毕业论文的题目是中国农村地区中学生第二语言(含外语, 简称二语)交际意愿。

诚邀你参与此课题研究并感谢你的参与。在数据采集结束前的任何时段, 你都可以退出研究, 或收回你为此课题提供的任何信息。此举不会对你产生任何负面影响。一旦你退出此研究, 所有相关信息, 包括磁带、访谈记录或相关部分, 都将被销毁。

#### 此课题研究的目的是什么?

此课题研究旨在探寻影响中学生二语交际意愿的因素以促进二语教学和学习。因此, 以此学位论文为基础的报告论文或文章将来可能会发表。

#### 为何邀请我参与此课题研究?

邀请你是因为你是中国农村地区的中学生,而且英语是必修科目之一。因此, 诚邀你参与此课题研究。

#### 研究将以什么方式进行?

研究将采用问卷调查、课堂观察和与研究者和进行访谈的形式。问卷调查将询问一些关于你的二语交际意愿的问题, 及一些相关信息。课堂观察将用表格记录你在课堂上二语交际意愿的行为,个人访谈将录音同时由研究者做笔录。录音将被

整理成访谈记录并由你核查。研究者将观察你的一些课堂行为并做记录。课堂观察四节课，一份包含一系列课堂行为如主动回答问题等的课堂观察表将用来记录你英语课堂实际交际意愿。这些记录将锁在导师办公室（W T 1 0 0 3， A U T）最少 6 年而且只有研究者与导师可以查看。参与者将有机会核查记录的准确性。

### **会有什么不适或危险吗？**

此研究不会带来任何危险。你也不会有任何形式的不适感。如果你有此感觉，请随时与我或你的班主任，老师或校长商讨。

### **有何措施减轻不适或危险？**

如果你在访谈或录音的过程中感觉不适，你可随时告知研究者，该问题可跳过不答，或者录音或访谈将立即中止，且不会对你产生任何负面影响。

如果你在被观察过程中感觉不适，你可随时告知研究者,对你的观察将立刻停止。任何一种情形都不会对你产生任何负面影响

如果你在回答调查问卷过程中感觉不适，你可随时中止答题 或跳过不答该问题。任何一种情形都不会对你产生任何负面影响。

### **参与此课题研究我有何受益？**

此课题研究旨在探寻农村地区中学生二语交际意愿以及影响这种意愿的因素。这是一个尚未受到重视的领域。研究结果有望为二语教学和学习提供有价值的信息。尤其是作为参与此课题的学生，你将更了解你自己的二语交际意愿，从而有望更有效地学好英语。

### **将如何保护我的隐私权？**

调查问卷上将使用你的假名，如英文名，而非真名。只有研究者及其导师能接触这些资料。课堂观察单上也将使用假名而非你的真名。只有研究者及其导师能接触这些资料。个人访谈中亦将使用假名而非你的真名。录音将由研究者整理

成访谈记录并由你核查。此后只有研究者及其导师能接触这些资料。他们将不知道你的真名。

**参与此课题研究我将有何花费？**

问卷调查将持续 20 分钟左右。个人访谈将持续 30 分钟左右。课堂观察四节课。

**我有何机会考虑此邀请？**

从现在起你有 2 天时间仔细考虑。若你决定不参与，对你不会产生任何负面影响。参与此课题研究纯属自愿。

**这样表示我同意参与此课题研究？**

完成调查问卷即表示你同意参与此课题研究的这两部分。参与研究中的课堂观察与个人访谈部分前，你须签一份同意书。

**我会得到此研究的反馈吗？**

是的。若你有此意图，请在同意书、调查问卷上的相关项目旁打勾或画圈。据此，在研究结束后，你将得到一份研究报告的副本。

**我将如何处理与此研究相关的事宜？**

任何与此研究性质相关的事宜请于第一时间通知此课题的导师, John Bitchener 教授, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649- 921 9999 ext7830.

与此研究操作相关的事宜请通知奥克兰理工大学道德委员会执行秘书, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) , 00649-921 9999 ext 8044.

**更多关于此研究的信息与谁联系？**

请与研究者及其导师联系。

研究者联系方式:

谢秋璇, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz); [xqx310@hotmail.com](mailto:xqx310@hotmail.com)

导师联系方式:

*Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999 ext7830.*

于 2010 年 8 月 11 日 由奥克兰理工大学道德委员会通过。参考文号:  
**10/161**

注: 参加者应持有一份此同意书的副本。



## **APPENDIX I: Consent Form for Interviews (English Version)**

*Project title: **Willingness to Communicate in English among Secondary School Students in the Rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language ( EFL) Classroom***

*Project Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener      Researcher: Qiuxuan Xie*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20 June, 2010.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research and allow my speech and information in it to be used for the second language teaching and learning study.
- ☐ I understand only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the tape with my speech. It will always be kept confidential.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate): .....

Date:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Qiuxuan, Xie, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz); [xqx310@hotmail.com](mailto:xqx310@hotmail.com)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999 ext7830.

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11***

***August 2010 AUTEC Reference number 10/161***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## APPENDIX J: Consent Form for Interviews (Chinese Version)

### 个人访谈同意书

**课题名称:** 中国农村地区中学生第二语言(含外语, 简称二语)交际意愿

**导师:** John Bitchener 教授    **研究者:** Qiuxuan Xie

☐ 我已阅读并理解 2010 年 6 月 20 日的课题参与通知书上关于此课题研究介绍。

☐ 我已有机会询问问题并得到解答。

☐ 我知道个人访谈会录音并同时由研究者做笔录。录音将被整理成访谈记录。

☐ 我知道在数据采集结束前的任何时段,我都可以退出研究,或收回我为此课题提供的任何信息。此举不会对我产生任何负面影响。

☐ 我知道一旦我退出此研究,所有相关信息,包括磁带、访谈记录或相关部分,都将被销毁。

☐ 我同意参加此课题研究,并允许我的言谈及其所包含的信息用于关于外语教学和学习的研究。

☐ 我知道只有研究者及其导师能接触含有我言谈的磁带。它将一直作为机密资料保管。

☐ 我希望得到一份这次研究报告的副本(请打勾) 是 ☐ 否 ☐

参与者签字: .....

参与者姓名: .....

参与者的联系方式(如果合适): .....

日期:

**研究者联系方式:** 谢秋璇, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz); [xqx310@hotmail.com](mailto:xqx310@hotmail.com)

**导师联系方式:** Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999 ext7830.

于 2010 年 8 月 11 日 由奥克兰理工大学道德委员会通过。参考文号: 10/161

注: 参加者应持有一份此同意书的副本。

## **APPENDIX K: Consent Form for Observations (English Version)**

***Project title: Willingness to Communicate in English among Secondary School Students in the Rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classroom***

*Project Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener*

*Researcher: Qiuxuan Xie*

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20 June, 2010.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand my actual WTC behavioural intention in class will be observed using an observation scheme consisting of a range of classroom behaviours and that notes will be taken during the four class sessions' observation and that they will also be transcribed.

☐ I understand that these notes will be locked in secure filing cabinet in the supervisor's office (WT1003, AUT) for a minimum of 6 years and will only be seen by the researcher and the supervisor.

☐ I understand that I will be able to view the observation notes in order to check their accuracy.

☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including observation scheme and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research and allow my behavioural intention in class to be used for the second language teaching and learning study.

☐ I understand only the researcher and the supervisor have access to observation scheme with me. It will always be kept confidential.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):  
Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date:

**Researcher Contact Details:** Qiuxuan, Xie, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz);

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz),  
00649-921 9999 ext7830.

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11  
August 2010 AUTEK Reference number 10/161***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## APPENDIX L: Consent Form for Observations (Chinese Version)

### 课堂观察同意书

**课题名称:** 中国农村地区中学生第二语言(含外语, 简称二语)交际意愿

**导师:** Professor John Bitchener

**研究者:** Qiuxuan Xie

☐ 我已阅读并理解 2010 年 6 月 20 日的课题参与通知书上关于此课题研究介绍。

☐ 我已有机会询问问题并得到解答。

☐ 我知道研究者将用一份包含一系列课堂行为的表格观察我在英语课堂的交际意愿。课堂观察期间持续四节课, 研究者将做记录, 记录将被整理。

☐ 我知道这些记录将锁在导师办公室(WT1003,AUT)里一个柜子里最少 6 年,而且只有研究者与导师可以查看。

☐ 我知道我可以查看这些记录以检查他们的准确性。

☐ 我知道在数据采集结束前的任何时段, 我都可以退出研究, 或收回我为此课题提供的任何信息。此举不会对我产生任何负面影响。

☐ 我知道一旦我退出此研究, 所有相关信息, 包括课堂记录或相关部分, 都将被销毁。

☐ 我同意参加此课题研究, 并允许我在课堂的二语交际行为及其所包含的信息用于关于外语教学和学习的研究。

☐ 我知道只有研究者及其导师能接触含有我课堂二语交际行为的记录。它将一直作为机密资料保管。

☐ 我希望得到一份这次研究报告的副本 (请打勾) 是 ☐ 否 ☐

参与者签字: .....

参与者姓名: .....

参与者的联系方式(如果合适): .....

日期:

本研究联系方式:

研究者联系方式: 谢秋璇, [ynm1161@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ynm1161@aut.ac.nz); [xqx310@hotmail.com](mailto:xqx310@hotmail.com)

导师联系方式: Prof. John Bitchener, [john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz), 00649-921 9999  
*ext7830.*

于 2010 年 8 月 11 日 由奥克兰理工大学道德委员会通过。参考文号: 10/161

注: 参加者应持有一份此同意书的副本。