Complex Interactions of Factors Underlying Thai EFL learners' Willingness to Communicate in English

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Abstract

This paper explores factors contributing to the willingness to communicate (WTC) in English as a foreign language (L2) in a Thai university setting. The study uses multiple methods within a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through interviews, stimulated recall, and classroom observations. Relevant contextually-related variables that emerged from the analyses were categorized into four dimensions: social- psychological context, classroom context, cultural context, and social- individual context. The findings revealed the overlapping nature of factors in all dimensions, which reflects the complex interactions among contextually dependent WTC variables within the language classroom. This paper contributes to the knowledge of WTC in a second language (L2) from a qualitative perspective.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in L2, English teaching in Thai culture, motivation, self-efficacy, self-concept

Introduction and background

English language teaching and learning in Thailand has long been viewed as having its own particular challenges, particularly when students' performance is measured through communicatively-based test methods. Within the current constructivist paradigm, a so-called successful language program is characterised by classrooms where students are active in using the target language in class so that they can develop their communicative competence and thus be able to communicate in a meaningful way in the foreign language (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément & Noels, 1998). However, in most EFL classrooms in Thailand, it is common to see students avoiding the use of English despite the teachers' best efforts to implement the communicative approach.

Getting to the bottom of the complex set of motivations and attitudes underlying this reticence is obviously difficult. One construct that could prove to be a useful tool in this regard is the concept of willingness to communicate in a second language. This construct reflects an individual's decision to speak in the second language class or to remain silent. The classic conceptualization of L2 WTC developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) includes social and psychological, personality, and linguistic variables. The model has been tested in a number of studies in both ESL and EFL contexts (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). However, research in L2 WTC in Thailand has been underexplored. This study aims to examine the factors behind WTC in English for Thai EFL learners and arrive at a more detailed explanation for the reluctance of Thai students to use L2 in their classrooms.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in a Second Language (L2)

The construct, willingness to communicate (WTC) in a second language (L2), was developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). It originated from communication research in a native language by McCroskey and Richmond (1990). WTC in L2 was proposed as a composite of situational and individual variables in a pyramid shape model (See Figure 1). L2 WTC is defined as "a readiness to

enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons" (Macintyre et al., 1998: , p.547). Many research studies have tested the variables from the WTC model and found a significant relationship between these variables and WTC through the use of quantitative lenses. Previous studies using a qualitative approach found that WTC is subject to change from moment to moment and thus it is dynamic (Cao, 2011; Peng, 2012). This indicates WTC is context driven.
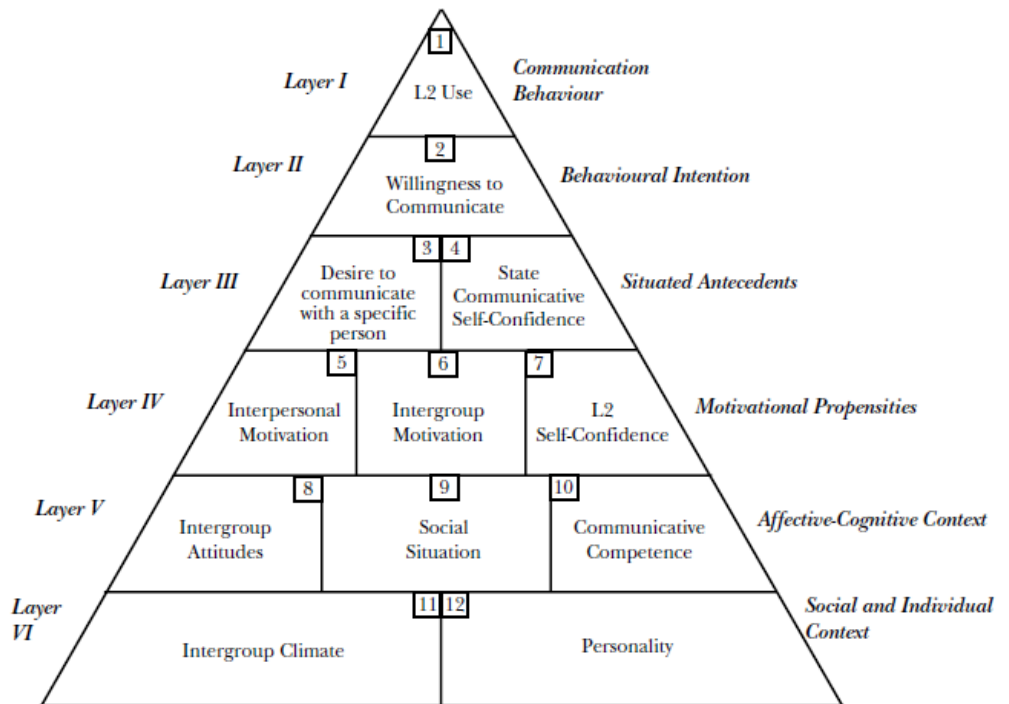

Figure1: The L2 WTC Model (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

It is important to note, however, that although different variables have been found to have varying impacts on WTC, depending on the individuals tested and on the context in which the teaching and learning is taking place, perceived competence (PC) and communication apprehension (CA) have been consistently found to be the most salient determinants of WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). A combination of high PC and low CA form the basis of

what is also termed high 'self-confidence' (Clement, 1980). Self-confidence is evident as it significantly contributes to WTC (Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). Self-confidence is a fairly general construct and for the purposes of this study it was found that the construct self-concept and efficacy are much more specific and more useful in terms of data analysis. In addition to self-confidence, the present study experienced the relevancy of self-concept and self-efficacy, as highlighted in the findings section of this article. Self-concept and self-efficacy are related, but they differ in their specificity (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Marsh, 1990). Self-concept concerns individuals' general evaluation of their ability developed from their past experiences and influenced by significant others. Self-efficacy, in contrast, refers to self-perception in conducting a specific task and the individuals' judgement about their abilities to do so (Bandura, 1997, Bong & Skaalvik, 2003).

WTC in L2 has been found to be associated with social support, language learning orientations, attitudes and motivation in L2 learning, for example, in the research findings of MacIntyre et al. (2001) and Peng & Woodrow (2010). Moreover, research on WTC L2 in classrooms using qualitative methods has established a strong body of evidence of the context dependent nature of WTC (e.g., Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005, Peng, 2007). These variables are the topic, group size, interlocutors (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005). Peng (2007) examined WTC factors in an EFL classroom in China adopting a qualitative approach using interviews and learners' diaries. Her findings indicated a cultural influence on L2 WTC and she argued that L2 WTC should comprise L2 learners' linguistic, cognitive, affective and cultural readiness. Cultural readiness refers to "EFL learners' consciousness of minimizing the impact of their mother culture which is incompatible with their language learning, and being open-minded toward the target language and culture" (ibid p.261). The cultural aspect which emerged from recent qualitative studies confirmed the need to re-examine this aspect of WTC using a qualitative approach (Pattapong, 2010).

Cultural influence on L2 communication for Thai EFL learners

Typical characteristics associated with Thai EFL learners in English communicative classrooms such as being quiet and unresponsive can be explained by cultural factors (Pattapong, 2011). According to Hofstede's (2001) survey of cross-cultural differences, Thailand was ranked high in collectivism. People in a collectivist culture are closely connected to their groups and prioritise social norms over their own personal goals. Members of the society have power over individuals' choice of actions (Triandis, 1995). Wichiajarote (1973) proposed that Thailand is an affiliative society, where an establishment of a personal network is a fundamental motive underlying interpersonal relationships. The analysis of Thai values on social interaction patterns suggests that an evaluation of others on self has a great effect on ones' decision on whether or not to speak in L2 classrooms (Pattapong, 2011).

Another important characteristic of Thai society is that it is a hierarchical-structured society (Wichiajarote, 1973). Thais feel the need to identify the rank of the persons they are talking to, whether they are 'superior' or 'inferior' to them, reflecting the hierarchical nature of the Thai society. Within this type of social system, Thais handle their social interactions carefully in order to maintain interpersonal relationships. This corresponds to the importance of specific persons in MacIntyre's WTC model as characterized by the affiliative and controlled motives. However, it was also found that ego-orientation appeared to have top ranking in a national survey of Thai values (Komin, 1990). Komin asserted that ego was the root of other key values in Thai mentalities such as "face-saving", "criticism avoidance", and "kreng-jai". She claims that face is equal to ego. It is important to avoid a risk of losing face of ones' selves as well as others. Criticism is certainly not to be directly revealed. To make a successful interaction, Thais rely on the adherence to the principle of Kreng-jai (being considerate) by all interactants. Komin's (1990) comprehensive definition of the concept of Kreng-jai is "to be considerate, to feel reluctant to impose upon another person, to take another person's feeling (ego) into account, or to take every measure not to cause discomfort or

inconvenience for another person" (ibid p.164). The practice of Kreng-jai is widely used in communication among Thais because of the great concern about face. Thais strive to protect 'face,' both their own as well as another's.

The power of others on self, resulting from Thai cultural values, should impact on students' WTC in a second language of Thai EFL students in classrooms. As observed by Pattapong (2010), the role of interlocutors greatly influences the choice of using English when speaking in Thai EFL classrooms. Those involved in the communication situation in EFL classes are teachers and classmates. When communicating with teachers, the concept of social hierarchy is very relevant. Students will invariably see themselves as 'inferior' and teachers as 'superior'. Students will feel obliged to obey and respect their teachers, because they appreciate their teachers' benevolence in passing on their knowledge (Komin, 1985). This may result in inhibition patterns when interactions are expected in class. Students tend to ask questions or participate in classroom activities using English only if required by the teacher. Similarly, for classmates, students may express themselves differently among intimates and non-intimates. They may appear talkative and take risks in making mistakes with their intimates, but they may be inhibited with non-intimates, because of concern that they may embarrass themselves and "lose face" (Pattapong, 2011). The issue of interlocutors is central to this research project and is still under-examined in current studies about English teaching practices in Thailand.

The overall picture of the previous literature shaped the data collection and data analysis of this study in order to explore the factors underlying WTC in L2 classrooms. Contextually dependent characteristics of WTC, as noted earlier, suggested that qualitative research would provide the best approach to examine issues affecting students' WTC because of its exploratory potential (Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005, Peng, 2007). The data collection methods involved were classroom observations, interviews, and a

stimulated recall technique. The primary question addressed in this study is:

> *What do the students consider as the factors influencing their willingness to communicate in English in their class?*

Participants

The participants were 29 undergraduate students from five English-speaking classes in two universities in Bangkok, Thailand. The English courses in these two universities (labelled as UA and UB) were selected because the students were enrolled in their first English communicative class and each classroom similarly focussed on communicative activities as observed from course syllabuses by the researcher. English was used as a medium of instruction in these classes. The students in these classes were mixed backgrounds. Brief information of student backgrounds is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Brief information of student backgrounds

Uni.	No. of students	Currently in year	Major
UA	21	1-4	Languages (7), Linguistics (6), Library Science (2), Business and Economics (4), Political Science (1), Undecided (1)
UB	8	1	English (8)

The 29 students were selected from a total of 84 students who completed a WTC questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items representing situations that the participants were likely to encounter in English speaking classes. It was adapted from the WTC questionnaire developed by Weaver (2005). The English translation of the questionnaire used in this study is presented in Appendix A. The one-third formula was applied to the total number of students in each class to select students at both the upper and the lower ends of the scale. This resulted in the

selection of 29 students, 15 had high WTC scores and 14 had low WTC scores. Table 2 shows the distribution of the student participants who were selected from each class. These students were invited to participate in the interview sessions of the research.

Table 2: Distribution of student participants

Class/ Universities	Students responding to WTC questionnaires	High WTC	Low WTC	Selected students
1/ UA	19	3	3	6
2/ UA	10	2	2	4
3/ UA	19	2	3	5
4/ UA	19	3	3	6
5/ UB	17	5	3	8
Total	84	15	14	29

Data collection

The data collection started two weeks after the mid-term exam in order to allow for the students' adjustment to the class experiences. The fieldwork was carried out over a period of 7 weeks. The data collection (see Table 3) was organized to accommodate class timetables and availability of students.

Table 3: Schedule of data collection procedures

Class/ Universities	Questionnaire	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Interview
1/ UA	Week 1	Week 2	Week 2	Week 3	Weeks 4-5
2/ UA	Week 1	Week 2	Week 2	Week 3	Weeks 4-5
3/ UA	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Weeks 6-7
4/ UA	Week 1	Week 4	Week 4	Week 5	Weeks 6-7
5/ UB	Week 1	Week 3	Week 4	Final exams	Weeks 6-7

Once participants were selected, following the questionnaire results in Week 1, they were invited to take part in classroom observations, and interviews which included general questions and stimulated recall questions. The data from classroom observations were in the form of field notes taken by the researcher. This method aimed to capture the characteristics of classroom teaching practices and teachers' actions. Following the three classroom observations, the participants were interviewed individually with extracts from the classroom observations used to stimulate recall of the classes by the participants. The students were interviewed in Thai and the transcripts were then translated into English by the researcher.

The interview questions were composed of two sections: general questions and stimulated recall questions. The general questions aimed to examine the reasons behind the participants' WTC with reference to the variables included in the theoretical framework of this study. These variables were cultural context, social and individual context, classroom context, and psychological context. The stimulated recall sections of the interviews aimed to encourage the students to recollect the moment they were performing speaking tasks in class. Video-tape data and notes from class observations were used to prompt the participants and help them remember what had happened. The interview questions (in English) are presented in Appendix B.

Analysis

Content analysis was applied to the interview data to establish coding categories that represented the meaning in the text (Weber, 1990). The students' interviews were repeatedly analysed until the coding was saturated (Stemler, 2001). NVivo7, a software program for qualitative analysis, was employed to help organize the codes and counting. Deductive analysis was performed at the early stage using the literature-derived concept in the theoretical framework as a guideline for creating the codes (Patton, 2002). In addition to this, concepts which emerged during the analysis process, that were not addressed in the theoretical

framework, that is concepts inductively derived from the data, were also accounted for. For example, students' responses concerning the value of being considerate were initially coded as 'culture', and then later labelled as 'Kreng-jai'. To ensure that the inferences made from the text are valid, a coding-check technique was used. The co-coder who had background knowledge of the research topic was invited to code the selected interview transcript using a list of code definitions. The intercoder reliability was 93%, using the formula provided in Miles and Huberman (1994). The coding guide ensured the reliability coefficient was not artificially inflated (Krippendorff, 1980).

Findings

The analysis based on the interviews and stimulated recall data showed that the students' responses can be categorized into four main contexts: Cultural Context, Social and Psychological Context, Classroom Context, and Social and Individual Context. Figure 2 presents the categories and the factors which emerged during the data analysis. Significant findings in each category will now be discussed.
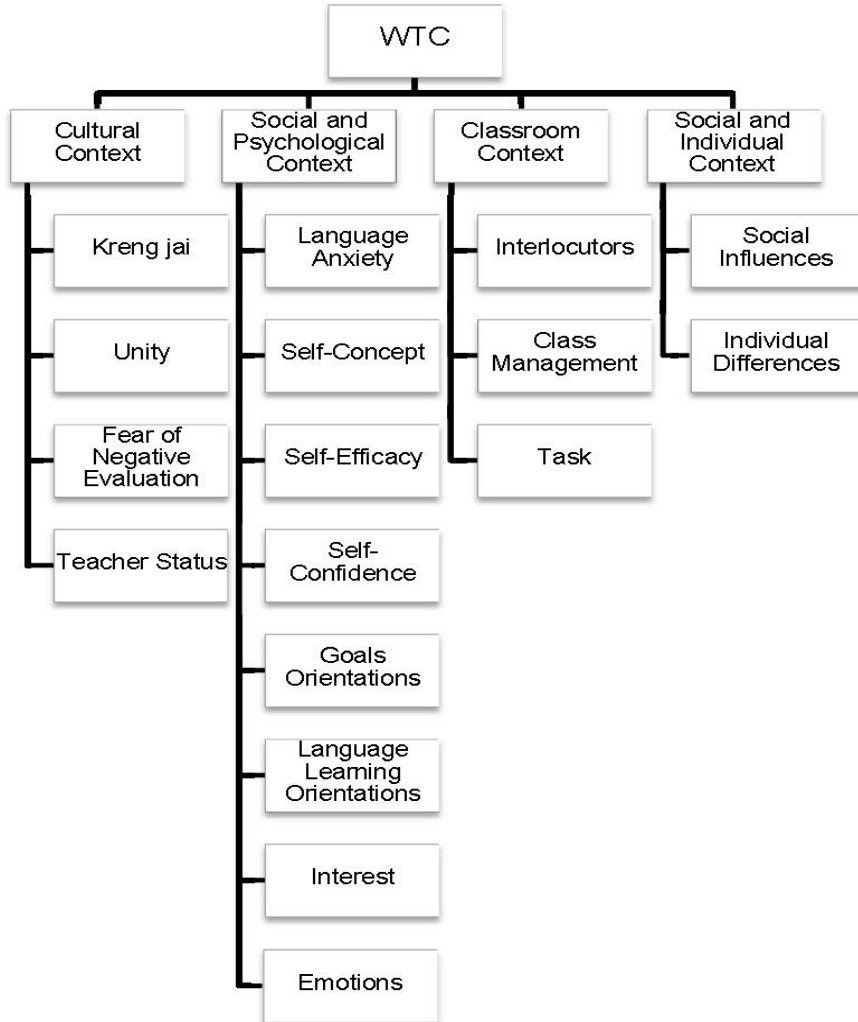
Figure 2: The variables contributing to the participants' WTC.

Cultural context

Influence of Thai culture on the participants' choice of speaking was evident. The data indicated that Thai culture seemed to undermine WTC in English. Framed by the analysis of Thai culture, the participants' responses were classified as: *"kreng- jai", unity, fear of negative evaluation,* and *teacher status.* Based on the previous analysis of Thai values, the core element underlying the attitudes of the students was a great concern about others' views towards oneself as this may result in "losing face".

Kreng-jai

As previously noted, Kreng- jai is the attitude one displays towards another in consideration for the other's feelings. Both high and low WTC students commented that their choice of speaking depended on how others felt. For example, the data showed that high WTC participants worried that others would not be given the chance to speak if they spoke too much. Kloy for example, who actively spoke up in class on occasion also held back her desire to speak to leave opportunities for others. She noted:

> We have to share the opportunities for other people to speak
> also because if we speak all the time, like if I speak all the
> time, it looks like I want to be the one who get the score. So
> I have to look at other people and see what they do.
>
> [Kloy/ Female - High WTC/ Class 3]

Those with low WTC perceived themselves as being low competent language learners and believed that if they spoke, it would be a burden to their higher competent peers. Pim was asked about how she would feel when she worked with people who were more competent than her. Pim was worried that others would be in trouble because of her low English competence:

> I'd feel upset. It's like, they are good, but I'm not. I'd feel
> disappointed. 'Why can't I do it?' Sometimes, I even think
> that my friends may think that I'm dragging them down.
>
> [Pim/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 4]

As appeared in the review of the collectivist characters, the participants' responses concerning the value of complying with others in order to remain in unity were labelled as *unity*. The participants sometimes hesitated to speak because their peers did not speak. Another group of responses was coded as *fear of negative evaluation*. Being afraid of how others might insult oneself seemed to relate to the issue of face. The participants were

concerned about how others would evaluate them when they speak which deprived them speaking. Finally, the theme of teacher status reflects the view of Thai people who consider the teacher to be a person of superior status and the student as being of inferior status, which is reflected in the hierarchical structure of Thai society. Some participants reported that they were not willing to speak with the teacher, because they felt there was great social distance between them. For example, Kim preferred to speak to her classmates, rather than with her teacher, despite having a high command of English. She stated:

> I'd prefer to speak with friends than the teacher...I still feel some distance when speaking with teacher. I don't know why. It's like he's the teacher. I don't know what to talk to him. Seniority, perhaps.
>
> [Kim/ Female – High WTC/ Class 2]

Social and psychological context

Interview responses grouped under this category were the factors in the social and psychological context including Language Anxiety, Self-Concept, Self-Efficacy, Self-Confidence, Goal Orientations, Language Learning Orientation, Interest, and Emotions. Language anxiety and self-confidence were the most reported factors.

Language anxiety and self-confidence

Language anxiety is a complex affective factor which resulted from other factors (Dörnyei, 2005). Based on the participants' interviews, the major element underlying the participants' anxiety was a fear of making mistakes. For example, Nuna voiced that she was concerned about vocabulary use:

> Sometimes, I would like to speak but I am not sure about the vocab to use. So I didn't want to speak because I'm afraid that I would make mistake everywhere. It's like showing my stupidity.
>
> [Nuna/ Female - High WTC/ Class 3]

Opposite to language anxiety, self-confidence refers to a student's belief in their own competency in speaking English which usually connected to experiences and linguistic competency. For instance:

> I think it's because I can speak, so I have more confidence to do it. Like last time, when I went to join the Work and Travel program, they told me to talk to the customers to build the friendly atmosphere and it makes me become more confident. Before this I don't like socialising much. I am the only one child so…. But after I came back from the US, I felt more confident and get to associate with people easier.
>
> [Kim/ Female – High WTC/ Class 2]

Self-concept and self-efficacy

Self-concept and self-efficacy were themes that emerged in the participants' responses. As previously discussed, self-concept concerns the self-perception that the participants have about their general English competence, whereas self-efficacy concerns the participants' perceptions of their English competence in doing specific task using specific skills. Self-concept may be determined by how the participants compared their English competency with their self-satisfaction (i.e., internal comparison) or how they compare their competency with other's performance (i.e., external comparison). However, self-efficacy comes from the participants themselves without social comparison.

The participants' responses reflected their overall English performance in association with their self-worth. The participants who perceived that they had poor English tended to be inhibited in speaking. Nim, for example, commented:

> I don't have a good English background, so learning in a higher level class made me nervous and I can't do it.
>
> [Nim/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 3]

Another type of self-concept, which mainly originated from external comparison, seemed to reduce students' WTC. The data showed that the participants tended to compare their competence with others. First, they often reported that they compared their ability with some of their friends in class:

> I looked at Tan and he was like so good. Then, I thought, 'Would I be able to beat him?'
>   [Golf/ Male - Low WTC/ Class 2]

The participants also compared their ability with the group-average ability or school-average ability. For example, Bay recalled:

> When I was in high school, my English was better than anyone in my group, so my friends always asked me for help. Sometimes, my old friends called me to help them prepare for their exams. Sometimes, when I was in a department store, I had to talk with my friends about the usage of English tenses. So, I was proud that I could help them.
>   [Bay/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 1]

Finally, some participants appraised their English competence based on significant others, like family members and friends. Joy felt that she was a weak member of her family because of her poor English:

> At home, my Mother is an English teacher. And, my relatives are also good at it. So it made me feel that I am the weakest.
>   [Joy/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 3]

Self-efficacy is another factor that appeared to influence the participants' WTC. Self-efficacy was found to influence both high and low WTC participants, particularly in specific domains of

language use. For instance, some student participants reported difficulty in pronouncing words correctly. Bua, who had high WTC, attributed her unwillingness to communicate to her incompetence in pronouncing certain sounds:

> I couldn't make /r/ and /l/ sounds. I wanted to say 'reef' I tried it so many times, but they didn't get it, so I lost my confidence
>
> [Bua/ Female - High WTC/ Class 1]

Some were not able to articulate their thoughts or had trouble with grammar. Tan, who also had high WTC, was reluctant to speak because he believed that he lacked specific skills to express himself fully:

> I don't think I'm good at speaking because I couldn't really express myself fully. I couldn't make it clear. I couldn't speak in a full sentence. It's not good... Sometimes, it's hard to answer (when the teacher asked). I didn't know how to answer...I'm not good at expressing opinions. I used to take the class, *Reading for opinion*, and I got a very low mark because I couldn't be able to voice my opinions. It's not right to the point.
>
> [Tan/ Male - High WTC/ Class 2]

Some others had trouble in speaking English due to an interference of translation from their mother tongue. Those with low self-efficacy beliefs tended to report low WTC. Apple, who had low WTC, declined to speak in English because of the interference of Thai:

> I understood what the teacher said. But I couldn't manage to say in English straight away. I have to think in Thai then translate it into English. It took me a long time to speak. I couldn't speak immediately.
>
> [Apple/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 4]

Goal Orientations, language learning orientations, interest, and emotions

Variables in this section are not directly related to participants' WTC at the moment of speaking. *Goal orientation* refers to purposes that participants set in their minds which are related to their choice of speaking English. The goals reported by the participants may be categorised into two main types: *mastery* and *performance goals*. The participants who adopted mastery goals tended to practice speaking English in order to achieve their own satisfaction in learning, whereas those who developed performance goals seemed to practice speaking English to outperform their peers and preserve their sense of self-worth. The performance goals seemed to be linked with self-concept. *Language learning orientations* refer to the reasons why participants chose to learn English. Most participants said that they could get a better job if they were good at English. They could communicate with anyone using English. They could gain access to a wealth of information, using English. These reasons may be classified into three types of orientations: job-orientation, communication tools, and knowledge seeking. *Interest* refers to the attention that the participants have towards learning English. The classification of interest reported by the participants was based on two types of interest, as suggested by Hidi (2001), who distinguished between individual and situational interests. The individual interest came from their internal drive, while situational interest derived from external influences. *Emotions* refer to how the participants felt before speaking or at the moment while they were speaking. Negative emotions that may decrease the participants' WTC were feeling bored, tired, unwell, and stressed. Positive emotions that increased the participants' WTC were having fun and feeling responsible.

Classroom context

Participants' responses regarding the effect of classroom situational factors which affected their willingness to

communicate were structured in three main groups: *Interlocutors, Class Management,* and *Tasks.*

Interlocutors

Interlocutors refer to those whom the participants communicate with in class including teachers and classmates. Because the participants had more opportunity to speak with their classmates than their teacher, their willingness to communicate markedly depended on the peers with whom they communicated. The participants attributed their WTC with peers as informed by the level of familiarity, similarity of attitudes and personalities, and the level of English competency. The participants who scored low on the WTC questionnaire usually preferred to speak English only with their close friends. Generally the participants were more willing to speak with their close friends than with other friends. Nim, who always stayed quiet in class, reported:

> If it's my close friends, they would know that I am not
> good. So if I made mistakes, like wrong structure, they
> would understand me.
>
> <div align="right">[Nim/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 3]</div>

Similarly, in the stimulated recall interview, Kai reflected that she refrained from speaking English in her group because she was not familiar with the group members:

> If I sat with Noi and Tei, it would be more relaxed
> because I feel familiar with them. You're more relaxed to
> speak with people you feel close to. If I couldn't think
> about the answer, I would ask my friends.
>
> <div align="right">[Kai/ Female – Low WTC/ Class 2]</div>

The participants' willingness to communicate in English also appeared to be markedly affected by the level of English competence of their peers. Speaking with their more competent peers seemed to encourage some high WTC participants. Aoi, who

had high WTC, contended that her English would improve if she spoke with friends who had higher ability than she had, she reported:

> Working with people who are better than me is like I found a treasure. They can tell me what is wrong. It's better than having people with the same English ability because they wouldn't tell me what's wrong. And I wouldn't be able to improve.
>
> [Aoi- High WTC/ Female]

On the other hand, as reported, highly competent peers would unintentionally discourage the WTC of some participants who might not be similarly competent. Based on the stimulated recall interviews, it was found that Nuna was afraid of negative evaluation from her more competent peers, as she noted:

> I paired with Cookie. We used Thai. When I got into this group, it's like their English is far better than me even though they are Law students. But I'm English major, why am I so stupid. I felt pressured, so I didn't share much of my ideas.
>
> [Nuna/ Female - High WTC/ Class 3]

Class management and Tasks

Class management referred to how the class was organised for the students to communicate in English. This category was further divided into *Communication Situations, Class Atmosphere,* and *Teaching Methods. Communication situations*, for example, based on the stimulated recall interview, Kai who did not usually speak English in class reported that she was comfortable to speak in pairs because her partner could help her: "*When I speak with my friends, I felt quite confident, but not much. If I didn't know how to say, Golf would help me*" [Kai/ Female – Low WTC/ Class 2]. Similarly, Joy who was always quiet in class enjoyed working in groups, because group members helped her build the English

sentences: "*We can help each other to build the English sentences. We did it word by word*" [Joy/ Female – Low WTC/ Class 3]. .

      Tasks referred to the characteristics of the activities in which the participants were involved and which affected their WTC. The task responses which affected the participants' WTC in English included *Topic, Nature of the Task, Task Difficulty*, and *Time Allotted*. Topic, for example, suggested that participants of both high and low WTC seemed to be willing to speak if they were interested in the topic. Kai explained for example that: "…*it was great when I had to speak about sports because I like playing tennis*" [Kai/ Female - Low WTC/ Class 2]. Likewise, Belle mentioned the topic of interest: "*There's one topic about cultural differences. 'Is it better to marry someone with the same cultural background?' We all spoke. It's fun. It's not stressful. Some of us even like foreigners. So we're vying to speak*" [Belle/ Female - High WTC/ 4/5]. On the other hand, if the topic is boring or stressful, students' WTC would be undermined: "…*it depends on the topic. If it's about stressful thing like laws, we wouldn't speak much*" [Teera/ Male - Low WTC/ Class 5].

      Social and Individual context

      The roles of social influence from socially significant others and individual differences factors were found to be associated with the participants' WTC in English in class, based on the students' interview responses. Social influences seemed to relate to the participants' attitudes towards learning and speaking English, which may lead to their WTC. The participants were willing to speak English in class, because they would like to be good at English to please their parents. Some had positive attitudes towards learning English because they received support from their significant others. As for individual differences, some participants chose to stay quiet while working in groups, because they enjoyed listening to others rather than voicing their opinions. Some were reluctant to speak, because they were not able to understand the language input or they did not know how to express their thoughts. Moreover, some were keen to speak in class, because

they used to participate in English conversation either inside or outside class in previous learning contexts.

An emergence of social influences from the participants' interview responses strengthened the role of 'significant others' in Thai social interaction behaviours, as was evident in the responses reported in the cultural context. Although social influences were found in the participants' responses, they did not appear to directly influence the participants' WTC. Despite the lack of an explicit relationship to WTC, the impact of social influences on students' attitudes towards learning English appeared to influence their WTC in English.

Unlike social influences, individual differences are internally related. Individual differences involved Personal Characteristics, Communicative Competence, and Language Learning Experiences. Personal characteristics and communicative competence seemed to directly impact the participants' willingness to communicate. However, language learning experiences seemed to form their attitudes which may have led to their WTC.

Discussion

The variables contributing to WTC were classified into four main contexts: cultural context, social and psychological context, classroom context, and social and individual context. The underlying core element consistently reflected in the participants' testimonies in the four contexts concerned '*who*' the participants communicated with. This signifies the manifestation of cultural influence on WTC variables in any categories. The overlapping and interconnected nature of variables found in all derived categories supported the previous WTC research findings of Cao (2011). Furthermore, the interaction of culture and motivation was affirmed by Zusho and Pintrich (2003) in their view of culture a process called "a custom complex."

The influence of culture on students' WTC found in this study is similar to a conceptualisation of WTC in the Chinese EFL context, Wen and Clément (2003), and also the empirical study by Peng (2007). Similarly, as MacIntyre (2007) has pointed out, the

role of interlocutors, generating either 'affiliation' or 'control' motives throughout the system of WTC process, has a great impact on L2 WTC (MacIntyre, 2007). Affiliation seemed to promote more WTC for this study because the participants reported that they were more relaxed and fun to speak with their familiar classmates. They were not afraid of making mistakes; however, in the presence of unfamiliar faces they would be more worried of making mistakes, which will result in losing face. Given that the participants were concerned about face-saving, teachers should be aware that allowing students enough time to adjust with their new classmates is important. At the beginning of a semester, giving them opportunities to choose whom they want to communicate with when performing classroom speaking activities should maximise their WTC in L2. Later when the class is relaxed and familiarized, teachers can then arrange their class to suit the objectives of the activities.

Another important issue relating to interlocutors is the level of English competency of those with whom the students speak. Given that they were concerned about the 'face' protection, we expected that students who were paired or grouped with their higher achieving classmates would feel uncomfortable conversing in English with them. However, we were surprised by some of the responses which indicated that the participants were content to participate in a conversation with those peers whose English was better than theirs. This finding is supported by the value of near peer modelling, proposed by Murphy and Arao (2001), who argued that near peer role models have a positive impact on students' attitudes and beliefs. In their quasi-experimental study, they found that after non-English major Japanese students watched the video of four university students talking about English learning, their attitudes and beliefs changed and became more positive. Near peer modelling helps learners develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards language learning (Yashima, 2009). Nevertheless, there were some participants who felt negative about talking in English with higher ability peers, as was predicted.

In addition to the cultural influences characterized by the role of *interlocutors* on students' WTC, this study has identified some specific psychological variables that have not been investigated extensively in studies in this field. These variables are *self-confidence, self-efficacy,* and *self-concept.* Adoption of self-concept derived from external comparison indicated the influence of others over self. In contrast, self-efficacy concerns with how individuals evaluate the skills and knowledge they have in order to complete specific tasks (Bong and Skaalvik, 2003). Self-concept seems to be closely connected to the issue of face-saving, which has been found to be important especially for Asian students, while self-efficacy has no reference to the cultural orientation. Given its direct link with WTC in specific classroom tasks, self-efficacy, which focuses on self-evaluation of skills may play an important role in enhancing students' WTC. Future research should then further examine the influence of different self-relevant beliefs on students' WTC.

Conclusion

This study provides validation of the interdependent nature of the factors underlying L2 WTC within the classroom environment as detected by multiple qualitative methods. This interdependence of WTC variables shows an interaction of culture and motivation to speak in L2. The discovery of a cultural impact on WTC in this study extends the original model of WTC in L2, proposed by Macintyre, Dörnyei et al. (1998) where cultural evidence is not explicitly spelled out. Variations between variables in this study and those of MacIntyre et al.'s model may be attributed to the different context of the two studies. The detection of cultural influences on WTC was an outcome of the use of qualitative methods. The triangulation of the three methods: interviews, stimulated recall and classroom observation, produced consistent results, confirming the trustworthiness and credibility of this study's findings. The advantages of the use of the stimulated recall method warranted it being employed in future research to complement the interview method. In addition to the

emergence of cultural influences, the use of qualitative methods also revealed some psychological variables (in particular, self-efficacy and self-concept) which have not been investigated in quantitative studies of WTC. The different methodological approach employed in this study offers a nuanced difference between the self-evaluation related beliefs – i.e., self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-concept. These variables identified in this study demonstrate the benefits of applying a qualitative approach to L2 WTC research. The message for teachers from this study is the need to create situations where students can make meaningful use of the language without feeling inhibited or worried. The results suggest that the use of pairs, groups and a focus on modelling are indispensable elements in the L2 classroom in Thailand.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1

WTC Questionnaire in English

WTC Questionnaire

Name_____ Email:_____Mobile:_____
Age:_____   Gender: [ ] Male   [ ] Female
Major of study_____ Minor_____Year_____
Class_____   Your teacher's name_____

DIRECTIONS: This questionnaire contains 25 items of situations. Please indicate how willing you are to communicate in each of the situation. Please use the 1-4 rating scale (with meanings shown below) to response to the situations.

   1= definitely not willing   2=probably not willing
   3=probably willing   4=definitely willing

No.	Situations	Rating scale
1.	Give a short speech in English about yourself with notes.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
2.	Give a short speech in English about yourself without notes.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
3.	Greet your teacher in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
4.	Greet your friend in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
5.	Say thank you in English when your friend lends you a pen.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
6.	Read out two-way dialogue in English from the textbook.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
7.	Sing a song in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
8.	Ask your teacher in English how to pronounce a word in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
9.	Ask your friend in English how to pronounce a word in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
10.	Ask your teacher in English how to say a phrase you know to how say in Thai but not in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
11.	Ask your friend in English how to say a phrase you know to how say in Thai but not in English.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4

12.	Ask your teacher in English the meaning of word you do not know.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
13.	Ask your friend in English the meaning of word you do not know.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
14.	Ask your teacher in English to repeat what they just said in English because you didn't understand.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
15.	Ask your friend in English to repeat what they just said in English because you didn't understand.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
16.	Interview your teacher in English asking questions from the textbook.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
17.	Interview your friend in English asking questions from the textbook.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
18.	Interview your teacher in English asking your own original questions.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
19.	Interview your friend in English asking your own original questions.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
20.	Do a role-play in English at your desk. (e.g. ordering food in a restaurant)	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
21.	Do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g. ordering food in a restaurant)	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
22.	Tell your teacher in English about the story of a TV show you saw.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
23.	Tell your friend in English about the story of a TV show you saw.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
24.	Give directions to your favourite restaurant in English to your teacher.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4
25.	Give directions to your favourite restaurant in English to your friend.	1 – 2 – 3 – 4

Appendix 2

Student interview questions in English

Student interview questions

Q1   What faculty are you from? What major are you in?

Q2   When did you start learning English?

Q3   Tell me about your experience in learning English.

    3.1   Did you only study English in Thailand? If not, where?

    3.2   Why did you choose to study English?

    3.3   (For English major students) Why did you choose to take English as a major?

    3.4   Do you enjoy learning English? Why? If not, why not?

    3.5   Are there any classes that impressed you the most? Or are there any classes that made you so disappointed?

Q4   How often you do use English?

Q5   How do you evaluate your own English ability? What about your speaking skill?

Q6   How would you describe your personality? Do you think your personality affect your choice of speaking? If so, how does it affect you?

Q7   How certain do you feel when you use English in this class?

Q8   Have you ever been abroad?

Q9   How important do you think English is?

Q10   How did you feel when you were speaking English in class?

    10.1 Were you confident?

    10.2 Were you afraid of making mistakes?

    10.3 Were you embarrassed when you made mistakes?

    10.4 Were you afraid that your friends would think your were showing off?

Q11   How did you feel when you use English to speak with your teacher in class?

    11.1 How did you feel when your teacher asked you some questions?

    11.2 Did you choose to ask your teacher some questions when you didn't understand something in class?

    11.3 How did you feel when your teacher corrected your English?

    11.4 What did you feel when your teacher was watching you while you were speaking?

Q12   How did you feel when you had to use English with your friends in class?

    12.1 Did you feel that your friends outperformed you?

12.2 Were you afraid of your friends laughing at you?

12.3 Were you afraid that your English was not as good as your friends'?

12.4 Did you have a feeling that your friends were looking at you when you used English in class?

Q13 In what situation would you speak most, between speaking in pairs or speaking in groups?

Q14 Did you choose to speak English with some particular people only?

Q15 Who did you speak English with most, between your teacher and your friends?

Q16 What were the reasons why you didn't want to speak English?

Stimulated recall questions

Did you like this activity? Why? Why not?

How did you feel when you were doing this task?

Were you confident when you did this task?

Were you worried during the task?

Do you think you did well in this activity?

Do you like working with the members in this group?