

# THE PREDICATORS OF STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: STATE-OF-THE-ART REVIEW

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## Abstract

*The concept of willingness to communicate in a foreign language classroom describes the readiness to enter foreign language communication at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a foreign language influenced by situation-specific circumstances and individual variables. This state-of-the-art review deals with outcomes of eleven selected studies in the period 1999-2018 based on a computerized database search in the Web of Science database. The selected studies focus on the relationship between willingness to communicate and (a) context and (b) individual variables like foreign language anxiety and motivation. The review presents samples, instruments, and outcomes of each study. Based on the literature review it is possible to assume that the role of the student's motivation plays a more significant role concerning willingness to communicate than foreign language anxiety. The article attempts to answer the question whether it is the fear of speaking a foreign language or motivation that is more significant for student's willingness to communicate.*

**Keywords:** willingness to communicate, foreign language, teaching, situational variables, individual characteristics

## STUDENTS' TALK IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

A common goal of language teachers is to help students develop their communicative competence that should enable them to accommodate to a particular situation and communicate successfully. However, competence itself does not assure speaking. Sometimes the less proficient students are those who tend to get involved in classroom communication while the more proficient remain silent (Yashima, MacIntyre & Ikeda, 2016). The decision one makes to enter a conversation is called willingness to communicate (WTC). Although WTC was first introduced for mother tongue communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985), MacIntyre et al. (1998) adapted the model for second/foreign (L2) communication and defined L2 WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2". They proposed a six-layered model that considered the linguistic, communicative, and social-psychological perspectives of L2 learning. Their model has been widely used in L2 research focusing on the study of L2 WTC antecedents with results aligned into two broad categories i.e., individual characteristics of students (e.g., self-evaluation of communicative competence, the fear of communication in a foreign language and motivation of a student) and situational variables (e.g., classroom climate and the relationship between a teacher and a student(s)).

The theoretical knowledge contributes to understanding the various antecedents of L2 WTC which cannot all be influenced by a teacher. In the context of the classroom, the question is whether the student is motivated and wants to get involved in the conversation and whether there are (situational and/or individual) obstacles that would prevent him or her from speaking. For teachers, who control most of the classroom communication and who may significantly affect students' involvement in communication during lessons, would be beneficial to understand what classroom practices support students' L2 WTC. Therefore, the research was conducted with the aim to answer the question whether it is the fear of speaking a foreign language or motivation that is

more significant for student's willingness to communicate. The review narrows the scope of age groups and focuses only on students in higher education with a long history of L2 learning who are supposed to be self-motivated to study. It provides a detailed description of the outcomes of selected studies with possible pedagogical implications for L2 teaching and instruction at a higher educational level.

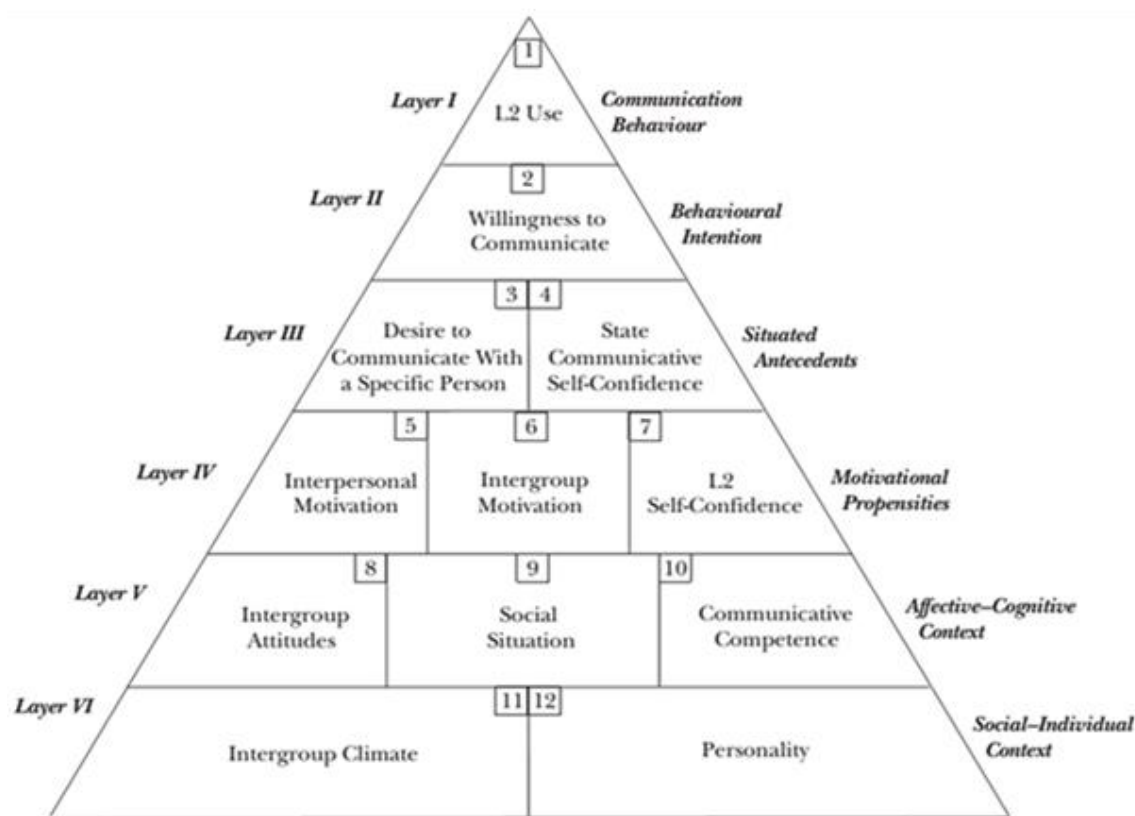
## RESEARCH ON WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

Based on the works of unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), predispositions toward verbal behaviour (Mortensen et al., 1977), and shyness (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982), McCroskey and Baer (1985) introduced the concept of willingness to communicate in the mother tongue (L1 WTC). The authors described willingness to communicate in the mother tongue as an individual tendency (relatively stable in all situational contexts) to start communication when the choice was given. Several psychological variables were related to L1 WTC i.e., self-perceived communication competence, communication apprehension, shyness, alienation, or culture. A communication partner seemed to have greater influence on the degree of WTC rather than the situational context (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990, p. 24). Concerning L2 learning and instruction, WTC is viewed both as a personality trait and a situational construct.

In their work, MacIntyre and Charos (1996, p. 17) suggested that "...the intention or willingness to engage in L2 communication is determined by a combination of the student's perception of his or her second language proficiency, the opportunity to use the language, and a lack of apprehension about speaking." Later, MacIntyre et al. (1998) adapted this model of L1 WTC to L2 WTC. Their model shows the variables that at some point influence an individual's decision to verbally share their thoughts, knowledge, and opinions with others in an L2 (Fig. 1). Situational variables that correlate positively with the concept of L2 WTC are, for example, a positive classroom climate, a teacher-student relationship, or a language study stay (Clément et al., 2003; Lee, 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2003). The context of a specific teaching situation is completed by the individual characteristics of students and their WTC during lessons (Yashima et al., 2016). Individual characteristics of a student include, for example, the level of self-assessment of one's language or communication competence (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010; Halupka-Rešetra et al., 2018), fear of communication in a foreign language (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2016) and student motivation (Peng, 2007; Yashima et al., 2016).

Initial studies focused on the study of individual characteristics, such as sex and age, and their relationship to L2 WTC. Based on the general presumption that girls tend to converse more than boys in L1, MacIntyre et al. (2002) investigated the relationship among sex, age, and WTC. They found that L2 WTC was significantly higher in grades 8/9 than in grade 7. However, boys did not show significant changes in WTC over the three grades, but grade 9 girls reported higher WTC than grade 7 girls. Further, Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) found that this does not apply for either a high school or university level. Contrary to that, in the university group women reported higher communication apprehension and lower self-perceived competence than men. Parallel studies focused on psychological variables such as motivation (integrativeness), anxiety, and one's orientation towards the L2 environment represented by international posture. In line with the previously mentioned study of Donovan and MacIntyre (ibid.) communication anxiety and perceived communicative competence were the strongest predictors of L2 WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2001) together with a student's positive orientation towards the L2 community (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Yashima, 2002) and, for example, integrative motivation (Peng, 2007; Yashima et al., 2004). For a recent overview of research on trait WTC see Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak (2017).

Figure 1 MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) heuristic model of L2 WTC



A shift in the research in L2 WTC occurred when it began to capture the dynamic nature of WTC at the state level using mixed research methods, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. In the last decade the research turned to the study of contextual factors and L2 WTC. That is the shift from a macro-perspective to a micro-perspective (Zhang et al., 2018) with the focus on students. Among the situational antecedents of state WTC are e.g., classroom interaction context, security and responsibility (Kang, 2005), the role of a teacher (Zarrinabadi, 2014) or the type of task and its performance (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2016). A common research objective of studies focusing on state WTC is to better understand whether, how, and why learners show more WTC in some situations than in others. Previous review articles mapping the research focused on the difference between trait and state WTC (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018), WTC and in-class and out-of-class learning at all levels (Zulkepli & Hussin, 2021) or situational antecedents of L2 WTC (Zhang, Beckmann, N. & Beckmann, J. F., 2018). The greatest asset of the present article is in its focus on university students. As mentioned earlier the level of WTC differs across age and sex and stabilizes at a higher educational level for both men and women. The following paragraphs offer detailed descriptions of studies which bear possible implications for practitioners on how to facilitate L2 WTC at the university level.

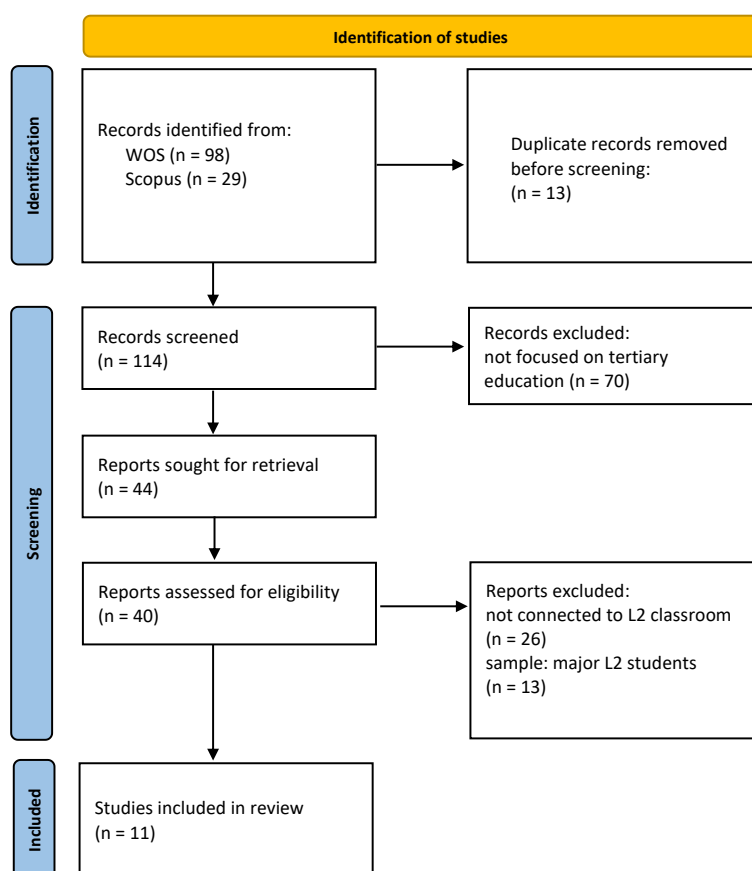
## METHODOLOGY

The principal eligibility selection criteria for the review were the quality and relevance of results in selected studies in journals that were registered in The Web of Science and Scopus. Based on the focal point of the research, studies published in English (from 1999 to 2018) in the above-mentioned databases providing information on research methodology and result processing were included. To identify articles that investigated a link between WTC at a university level and its predictors, a combination of the following keyword was used: willingness to communicate, L2, tertiary education, classroom. A computerized database search generated 127 articles (Fig.2). Afterwards, the selection was narrowed to studies focused on tertiary education that resulted in forty-four articles. Further, the search was restricted to studies set in the L2 class environment which resulted in twenty-one studies related to the research aim. Since there is an expected inequality in the amount of language input in the classroom between major and non-major students of a

foreign language only studies concerning non-major language students were considered. Following the restrictions, I examined eleven studies<sup>1</sup>.

The presented studies on willingness to communicate in foreign language classrooms applied a quantitative approach based on a questionnaire survey studying predictors of WTC (Halupka-Rešetar, Topalov & Knežević, 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2003; Peng, 2007) and mixed methods designs (Bernales, 2016; Yashima, MacIntyre, & Ikeda, 2016) focusing on students' motives for entering communication and obstacles hindering classroom communication. The authors studied the influence of a speaking situation on a student's willingness to communicate and the teacher's teaching style concerning other predictors. There are also studies shifting their attention from various predictors of WTC to fluctuations in WTC over a longer period (Bernales, 2016; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2018).

**Figure 2 PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for the state-of-the-art review**



## The Analysis of the Selected Studies

Participant in studies on WTC were university students, including undergraduates and adult language learners (the oldest was 53). Four studies were conducted in North America (the USA and Canada), four studies were conducted in Asian countries (Japan, China, and Korea) and three European countries (Poland, Serbia, and Turkey). All studies included both males and females, but one, which included only female participants (Lee, 2018).

Eight out of the eleven selected studies applied quantitative research design to examine the degree of WTC in relation to different situational variables and individual characteristics. Two studies applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches using class observation and a follow-up semi-structured interview. The combination of both approaches attempted to find the relation between the level of WTC reported by students and their actual participation in class activities during an extended period (in these cases a semester and a course of six

<sup>1</sup> A table summary is attached in the appendix.

lessons). These two studies focused on a significantly smaller number of respondents (Table 1) in comparison to the studies collecting quantitative data. I also included a case study focusing on identifying variables that mostly remain within the control of the teacher.

Instruments that were used and modified to measure willingness to communicate were scales used by McCroskey and Baer (1985) and MacIntyre et al. (2001). They both measure the intention of a speaker to initiate communication if there is an opportunity; the latter was adapted to measure WTC specifically in a second/foreign language. Other scales measuring individual characteristics in connection to WTC were

- a) Student communication motives scale (Martin et al., 1999),
- b) Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986),
- c) Students' orientation towards learning English (MacIntyre et al., 2001),
- d) International posture (Yashima et al., 2004),
- e) Attitude/Motivational Test Battery (Peng, 2007).

**Tab. 1 Summary of respondent' characteristics**

Sample	Studies with quantitative approach	Studies using mixed methods approach
Number of studies	8	3
Number of participants	Max = 701 Min = 59 Me = 196	QN part = 1 - 21 QL part = 1 - 4
Age range	18 – 25	18 – 21

## RESULTS

There are three main areas the research of students' WTC revolved around: the learning environment, student's motivation, and students' fear of speaking foreign languages.

### Willingness to communicate related to the learning environment

The following section is divided into two parts mapping students' WTC in relation to different contextual settings. Earlier studies were focused on study abroad stays in contrast to traditional language courses while subsequent studies shifted the attention to students' WTC inside and outside the classroom.

#### Willingness to communicate in relation to various learning settings

MacIntyre et al. (2003) compared differences between 59 English-speaking students who (a) studied French language in immersion programmes<sup>2</sup>, (b) intensive language courses participants, and (c) participants studying French in standard language courses. They assumed that students with previous experience of studying French in an immersion program would be more willing to communicate in French than the participants who did not have this learning experience. They found significant differences particularly between the immersion programmes group and the standard language courses group in terms of WTC, perceived communication competence, and the frequency of communication. Students who took immersion programmes not only showed a higher level of willingness to communicate, but also rated their communication skills better. However, this was not demonstrated in relation to communication apprehension. We can assume that being exposed to and being surrounded by the target language encouraged students to communicate but did not play a significant role in reducing their fear of communicating in L2. Also, the research of Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre (2003) focused on monitoring the contextual impact and frequency of contact with the target

<sup>2</sup> "...immersion (programmes) provides students with more second language (L2) contact and greater opportunities to master the language than do non-immersion programmes." (MacIntyre et al., 2003, p. 590)

language on WTC, a self-reported level of competence in a foreign language, and the frequency of use of the foreign language. The research was conducted at the Ottawa University, which is defined as a bilingual institution supporting the Francophone minority and the research outcomes implied that being exposed to L2 in the environment of the target language plays a significant role. Francophone students (compared to English-speaking students) showed higher frequencies of communication in English, a higher level of willingness to communicate in English, and a higher self-reported level of English.

The impact of a different language environment in relation to students' WTC, their L2 anxiety, and international posture was also found by Lee (2018) who focused on Korean students learning English and Chinese and participating in four different study abroad programmes. The sample consisted of women only. They reported motivation to improve their L2 proficiency (81.2%) and considered learning L2 very important for their future career. Although coming from a different cultural background the students reacted in a similar way to being exposed to the target language. The reported level of students' WTC after the study abroad stays increased in comparison to the measured level before the stay. Lee (ibid.) also found out that there was a significant relationship between a student's self-perceived proficiency level and their WTC. Further t-tests for each proficiency level suggested that a study abroad stay was more beneficial for students reporting their L2 proficiency as a beginner and intermediate (than advanced) in terms of their WTC. An interesting and beneficial finding is that there was no significant difference among the four study abroad programmes in terms of testing the mentioned variables, i.e., L2 WTC, anxiety, and international posture.

### **Willingness to communicate inside and outside the classroom**

An interplay of the learning environment and learner characteristics in connection to WTC has been studied by Yashima et al. (2016). They focused on Japanese university students during a semester attending English as an FL discussion classes<sup>3</sup>. They conducted an interventional study in which Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) patterns were avoided during the sessions to encourage the students to initiate communication volitionally. The participants took part in a 20-minute discussion followed by a 10-minute reflection at the end of each class. The whole-class discussion was based on the content of the textbook the participants studied in the first half of each class. They were first given a chance to prepare and discuss the topic in pairs, and then in small groups prior to the whole-class discussion. During the whole-class discussion, the teacher's control was kept to a minimum while any student could take the initiative to speak at any time. Observations, student self-reflections, interviews, and scale-based data on trait anxiety and WTC were used to analyse the differences in the frequency of self-initiated turns. On the group level, the amount of student talk reached a higher-than-expected level (mean = 46%) although varying over the semester immensely from 19% to 66%. Comparing the number of turns, the number of contributors, and the mean length of each turn, it was the students' familiarity with the topic that increased the student talk. To address considerable differences among individual student's talk, the researchers focused on individual analyses of three participants. All of them received comparable scores on TOEFL but differed both in the number of self-selected turns during discussions and self-reported levels of L2 anxiety. Based on their data Yashima et al. (ibid.: 18) assumed that "students' momentary psychological reactions to contextual factors both facilitated and constrained their participation in the discussion, showing interesting situational dynamics." Although a long silence may discourage some students from talking, it can on the other hand activate others to want to break the silence. To conclude, the selected students perceived the context of the learning situation as the key predictor of their WTC.

The important role of environment in respect to L2 education was also tested in a study by Halupka-Rešetár et al. (2018), which focused on WTC in relation to students' attitudes towards the learning of an L2 and self-assessment of linguistic competence. Their sample of 171 students, who attended courses on ESP, showed almost identical values for WTC inside the classroom and WTC outside the classroom. Students' willingness to speak inside and outside the classroom ranged from medium to high levels. However, there were differences among individual language skills. The lowest score was found for the students' willingness to speak inside the classroom, whereas the highest score was recorded for students' willingness to read outside the classroom. Receptive language skills received higher scores in comparison to productive language skills, with speaking ranking among the least favourite activity inside as well as outside the classroom. Also, Başöz and Erten (2018) were interested in measuring students' WTC inside and outside the classroom. They worked with a larger sample of 701 Turkish students studying English as an L2 and reached comparable outcomes to the previous study of Halupka-Rešetár et al. (2018). The participants' overall WTC in English inside as well as outside the

<sup>3</sup> Both student-initiated communication in EFL classes, as well as the total amount of student talk, is traditionally very low, reaching less than 1% for the student-initiated communication and around 5% for the total amount of student talk (King, 2013). Japanese students often use face-saving silence instead of initiating communication (Nakane, 2006).



classroom was revealed to be moderate. However, the findings of the paired samples t-tests suggested there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' levels of WTC inside and outside the class.

### **Willingness to Communicate Related to Foreign Language Anxiety Environment**

The concept of WTC was often examined in given studies in relation to the fear of communication in a foreign language (communication apprehension, communication anxiety). To understand the process of learning the English language in the Japanese context Yashima (2002) used the WTC model (MacIntyre & Clément, 1996) and the Socioeducational model of Clément (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985) as a framework for her research. Data from 297 freshmen with no previous study abroad experience was used to measure the influence of four concepts on students' L2 WTC, i.e., international posture, L2 learning motivation, L2 proficiency, and L2 communication confidence. The concept of L2 communication anxiety together with communication confidence in an L2 formed, in Clément's model, a higher order construct, i.e., self-confidence. Whereas in the mentioned WTC model it is assumed that these concepts influence WTC independently, in her model Yashima (ibid.) included L2 communication confidence aggregated by a Communication Anxiety in English scale and a Perceived Communication Competence in English scale. The study presented structural equation modelling with a good fit to the data. She expected that higher L2 proficiency would lead to higher L2 communication confidence but that was not supported by the data. She suggested that this may be because of the nature of standardized proficiency measures (which focus mainly on academic requirements) and students' evaluation of their face-to-face communication skills. As we mentioned earlier, student talk in a Japanese setting usually accounts for only 5% of classroom communication which is in line with Yashima's assumption. Further, there was a direct link between L2 learning motivation and L2 communication confidence. The latter had a strong and direct influence on L2 WTC. The author suggested that motivation itself does not constitute a student's willingness to communicate. A student needs to be also self-confident (having a lower level of anxiety and perceiving his or her competence as higher) in his or her L2 communication. Thus, L2 communication confidence (constituting of communication anxiety in L2 and L2 communication competence) may be regarded as a stronger predictor of WTC than L2 proficiency.

MacIntyre et al. (2003), also focused on the study of foreign language anxiety (FLA) in Anglophonic students studying French. They found that the level of exposure to the studied language during the teaching and outside the classroom did not affect the level of FLA. The reported fear of communication in the foreign language did not differ in the compared groups of students (full immersion, summer immersion, and standard foreign language courses). It has not been confirmed that the more students are exposed to a foreign language, the less their FLA will be. In other words, the influence of language context on students' fear of communication is different from the influence of language context on students' willingness to communicate, as reported above. Further insight into the matter has been offered by Lee (2018), who tested groups of Korean female students learning English and Chinese and participating in different study abroad programmes. The participants were asked to rate their L2 proficiency in four basic language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) prior to their study abroad stay. Based on the self-perceived L2 proficiency, the participants ranged from beginners to advanced. After the study abroad stays the intermediate and beginner level groups, achieved a significant reduction in FLA anxiety while their WTC level increased whereas this was not repeated for the advanced level students.

To understand why foreign language students, avoid communication in L2 classes, Yashima et al. (2016) observed Japanese university students during L2 seminars (as mentioned above). Based on the recording sheets from the observation of the lessons, they found that if the responsibility for the discussion was passed on to students, their share of classroom communication increased. However, the level of involvement in communication differed between students. Based on semi-structured interviews and reflection sheets the authors collected data describing factors influencing students' active participation in the classroom. They included factors under the direct influence of a teacher, such as the choice of the topic for discussion, as well as factors out of the reach of the teacher e.g., a student's past learning experience, self-consciousness, or contextual factors like other students' fluency. There is no discussion about the influence of students' learning history and low self-confidence on their communication during lessons as was also illustrated in this research by Nachi (one of the respondents): "I was frightened to participate in the discussion, though I wanted to say something." Although previously discussed research (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Clément et al., 2003) supported the argument that studying abroad contributes positively to students' increased WTC, the detailed analysis of Yashima et al. (2016) suggests that it cannot account for students' WTC. Two of the participants experienced study abroad stays yet their participation, as well as self-reported WTC and anxiety levels, differed extremely. What seemed to decrease students' WTC and increase their self-reported language anxiety were their classmates if they were regarded as "too" fluent and active. On the other hand, it also motivated some to

participate: "People talked actively today, which encouraged me to speak as well." Also, during the semester students adapted to classroom procedures as well as to each other, and that "helped soften the atmosphere, reducing ... anxiety (p. 16)". These factors can be influenced by teachers only indirectly but what can be planned or influenced directly is the course of the lesson. Factors supporting students' WTC and alleviating their FLA appeared to be the time to prepare for discussions (during pair work or small group work) and being asked a question directly which gave them the only opportunity to talk. The detailed analyses of the three students contributed to the description of the process by which individuals' state WTC emerges.

The teacher's role was considered by Myers et al. (2007) when they studied the relationship between perceived instructor aggressive communication and college student involvement. Instructor verbal aggressiveness is closely related to a student's self-concept and a student's assessment of the classroom environment, thus influencing students' classroom participation. "Even those students who are inclined to interact with their instructors might limit or eliminate their interactions altogether with their verbal (sic) aggressive instructors (Myers et al., 2007: 503)" since the teacher's verbal aggressiveness is negatively linked to students' willingness to participate in and out of class.

### **Willingness to Communicate Related to Motivation**

It may be inferred that the context of a learning situation plays a vital role in a student's WTC, nonetheless it may be the person whom language students are supposed to talk to who motivates them to "cross the Rubicon". It was Dörnyei (2005) who in his process model included the metaphor describing the moment when a language learner makes a decision to take an action, in other words, it is the moment when he or she decides to speak when given the opportunity. In the following section we will look at interpersonal and intergroup contacts with natives of the target language, foreigners using English as a lingua franca, or teachers and classmates in a classroom setting which motivates students to talk.

#### **Willingness to communicate in relation to students' integrative motivation**

MacIntyre et al. (2003) focused their research also on students' WTC as predicated by integrative motivation, a concept closely related to L2 learning. The relatively broad concept of integrative motivation encompasses three separate variables: attitudes toward the learning situation, integrativeness, and motivation.

"Attitudes toward the learning situation refer to the learner's evaluation of the L2 teacher and course. Integrativeness refers to the willingness and interest in social interaction with members of the target language group. Motivation, in this conceptual context, includes positive attitudes, desire to learn, and effortful behaviour. (MacIntyre et al., 2003, p. 592)"

When testing a group of students with non-immersion experience and a group of students with immersion experience for correlations, two main results were obtained. Among English-speaking students of French with immersion experience, integrativeness was significantly correlated with L2 WTC, but this result was not significant for a group with non-immersion experience. An even higher correlation was found between L2 WTC and motivation for students with an immersion experience, but not for non-immersion students. Overall, it is not possible to state that there is a clear link between motivation to learn L2 and students' WTC as the results were different for students with and without immersion experience. What must be taken into consideration is the difference between the groups in terms of integrativeness, which was significantly higher with students with immersion experience. Further, the authors explain the connection between communication and motivation for learning "...those who are most willing to initiate communication are also most motivated to learn (MacIntyre et al., 2003: 601)." It was the necessity to use the target language actively that was stated as the main motive for studying the language.

Not quite the same results were obtained by Yashima et al. (2002), who examined students' motivation to study and international posture or attitude toward the international community with Japanese students. The authors described international posture as an interest in the international situation, the intention to stay abroad or travel abroad on business trips, and the readiness to interact with foreign partners. Based on the results of SEM the authors reported that L2 WTC was directly influenced by international posture and by students' L2 communication confidence. The authors also suggested that L2 WTC was indirectly influenced by L2 learning motivation through students' L2 communication confidence (which was described above in a more detailed way). However, a direct path from motivation to the WTC was not found. It seems that motivation itself was not sufficient for the participants to be willing to communicate. The different results may have been related to the different cultural contexts of the studies. Further, it is possible to conclude that international orientation supports students' motivation and WTC.

Peng (2007) followed the research on L2 WTC with the aim of gathering empirical data concerning Chinese students which in comparison to Western countries are viewed as inactive in classroom communication and



who do not need to use English in day-to-day communication. The aim of her research was to examine the relationship between L2 WTC and integrative motivation among college students in China. The author used a short version of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) based on Gardner's instrument measuring individual variables situated within the socio-educational model. The study provided evidence that among this particular and rather small group of students (n=174) motivation followed by integrativeness were the strongest predictors of the students' WTC in English. This result is in line with findings reported by MacIntyre et al. (2003). Students motivated by the omnipresence of English on the internet and other global media are more willing to overcome their potential fears and communicate in English. Further, attitudes toward the learning situation (including the English teacher and the language course) did not appear to predict L2 WTC. A result which will be further discussed in connection to one of the following studies.

Halupka-Rešetar et al. (2018) examined long-range goals which support student's motivation to learn English and their relation to students' WTC in the Serbian context. They based their research on the five-item classification of reasons for learning, an L2 introduced by MacIntyre et al. (2001), i.e., job, travel, friendship, general knowledge, and school achievements. The authors reported, based on the descriptive tests, that future career possibilities were the most significant reasons for learning English, closely followed by reasons connected to travelling. The motivational orientation of studying ranking the lowest was a quite surprising result for the authors as they assumed that university students would have perceived the English language as more important for their study and general knowledge. However, if we consider that the data were gathered via a six-point Likert scale, reaching the mean from 5.18 for Job and 5.10 for Travel motives to 4.68 for General knowledge motives, the means scores were found to be from moderately high to high. When looking at the relationship between L2 WTC (both inside and outside the classroom) and students' motivational orientation of Studying, there was no statistically significant correlations with WTC inside and outside the classroom, whereas the motivational orientation of Friendship yielded statistically significant correlations with WTC inside and outside the classroom.

### **Willingness to communicate and motivation related to a language classroom setting**

In later years, the research shifted from the focus on integrative motivation to motivation that is related to a classroom setting and can be partly influenced by the teacher. Carolina Bernales (2016) focused her research on students' predicted and self-reported L2 WTC within one semester during German lessons in the USA. Using a mixed-methods design, she collected both quantitative and qualitative data via an in-class survey, video-recorded class observations, and interviews. The data revealed that students' expectations of their participation in the class steadily increased within the course of the semester while their actual articulated participation decreased. The author suggests that although students' planned participation increased they failed to match their expectations for various reasons, e.g., they lost the opportunity while preparing to articulate their thoughts, they were not able to respond on the spot, their language skills began to fall behind or it was due to their social concerns. The motives behind their planned and articulated participation in L2 lay in students' personal choice or preference, the conviction of the benefit of L2 use, and/or it was guided by the teacher's expectations or rationale. Also, Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2018) in her case study searched for variables that might be within the control of the language teacher. During one semester, she studied the WTC fluctuation of one student who outperformed all the other group members. A detailed analysis of the student's behaviour was done based on self-reported WTC grids<sup>4</sup>, a learning styles survey, and a semi-structured interview. Without any attempt to generalize her findings, the author brings up three relevant conclusions. Firstly, it was the significance of an appealing topic and secondly the nature of the task itself that had a significant impact on the student's motivation to participate in the communication. In this case study, the highest WTC was reported in game-like activities since they generated feelings of success and satisfaction. The last and the least evident factor related to students' WTC was the way students were grouped for speaking tasks. If the student was to interact with a partner whose language skills were significantly lower, it decreased his or her motivation to engage in the activity.

Moving further from students' characteristics and attitudes we focus on the role of the teacher and his or her communication style which affects the classroom climate and students' classroom involvement. Myers et al. (2007) tried to establish a relation between the teacher's communication style – argumentative and aggressive, and students' involvement indicated through their motives to communicate and their willingness to participate in and out of class. The data analysis supported the obvious assumption that the teacher's verbal aggressiveness is negatively correlated with some of the students' motives to communicate with the teacher

<sup>4</sup> All students in the group, in response to a pre-recorded beep, indicated on a seven-point scale how willing they felt to interact with other group members or the teacher during the lesson.

(the relational, the functional, and the participatory motive) as well as their willingness to participate. A more significant result was that the teacher's argumentativeness<sup>5</sup> did not correlate with students' motives to communicate with him/her. The authors suggested that two factors need to be considered, firstly the specific setting of a classroom and specific pre-defined relations. The majority of students would prefer not to stand out and be negatively perceived by their peers than to be perceived favourably by the teacher.

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this paper was to describe the research related to WTC at a university level in relation to various predictors, to study the construct in relation to the students' reported fear connected to L2 classroom, and to outline further implications for L2 teaching. The goals will be addressed successively. The presented findings support the link between a student's self-reported WTC and contextual as well as individual characteristics. The more contact with the target language students have, the more they show their willingness to use the target language (Clément et al., 2003; MacIntyre et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2016). Not only direct contact with the L2 but also a student's motivation to be part of the target language community (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Peng, 2007; Yashima et al., 2016) proved to be positively correlated to students' WTC irrespective of the respondents' country of origin. In particular, future job possibilities, travelling opportunities, and creating and maintaining friendships play an important role (Halupka-Rešetár et al., 2018). Altogether, respondents reported a moderate to high level of willingness to communicate, however, with L2 willingness to talk during the lesson ranking the lowest and reading outside the class the highest (Halupka-Rešetár et al., 2018; Başöz, & Erten, 2018).

The evidence of a positive correlation between FLA and WTC was also reported (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). While there is a positive correlation between a supportive environment and WTC, the research differs in terms of the impact of the environment on FLA (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Lee, 2018). Nevertheless, the evidence mentioned is based on studies dealing with diverse target groups in terms of gender and cultural background. While Canadian students did not report a connection between the environment and FLA, Korean and Chinese female students reported a positive correlation between a significant reduction in FLA (at beginner and intermediate levels) and a short study stay abroad. A detailed analysis of situated WTC at an individual level supported the relation between FLA and students' motives to interact during a lesson (Yashima et al., 2016). Over the course of a semester, the overall anxiety level tends to fall as students adapt to the flow of lessons and the class atmosphere softens. On an individual level, it may arise partly due to their self-imposed expectations. They feel anxious because they do not communicate enough, or they feel they monopolize the discussion.

The diverse research on students' WTC has yielded clear results concerning the influence of study abroad and self-confidence on WTC. Students who took language courses abroad, were motivated to integrate into an L2 and were self-confident about their language skills. Consequently, they reported a higher degree of WTC. The analysis of studies shows that students' WTC is rather situational. The question is to what extent a language teacher can influence a student's willingness to interact in the class. Other factors that positively correlate with the WTC are positive emotions, and a teacher's teaching style. The research on the fear of communication in an L2 in relation to WTC has not yielded clear results. The fact that students are not willing to interact is not exclusively connected to the fear of communication but also to a student's hesitation or the selection of a topic, etc. In order to encourage students to be more willing to communicate in English, EFL lessons should be designed to enhance students' interest in different cultures, international affairs, and activities, as well as to build their L2 communication confidence, include activities that would encourage students' motivation to participate and engage in activities, put them at ease with using the L2 without the teacher's immediate control. Bernales (2016) mentioned "a free speaking" activity that took place at the beginning of every class and was considered to be the driving force behind the improvement of students' language skills. Students were asked to mingle with classmates for 10 minutes to talk about a topic of their choice as long as they used L2. The students appreciated the unrestricted conditions for many reasons i.e., frequency, quantity, the familiarity of topics, and spontaneity.

Also, special consideration should be given to the less salient participation practices in which students engage during the lesson since they may represent and reflect students' involvement in their language learning process (allowing students time to prepare for speaking activities – checking vocabulary, searching for factual information). As teachers have limited power in influencing students' characteristics, the contextual factors need to be thoroughly considered, e.g., discussion topics, lesson structure, and grouping arrangements.

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<sup>5</sup> Argumentativeness refers to a predisposition to defend one's position on controversial issues while refuting another person's position (Myers et al., 2007).

## CONCLUSION

In the paper, I outlined the approaches applied to the study of WTC as reported by students at a university level, summarized the outcomes of presented studies, and offered possible pedagogical implications for L2 teaching. Based on the review of the literature we can see the shift in the focus of the research from the study of individual differences to situational factors in relation to WTC alongside the change of research design from quantitatively oriented studies to surveys employing mixed methods designs, the latter focusing on gathering data that would cast light on understanding situational specifics of WTC. Concerning L2 classroom instructions, there are various factors that teachers need to consider in order to enhance students' WTC, e.g., building students' interest in studying the culture of the L2, supporting students' motivation by considering the selection of topics and teaching methods as well as allowing students time for preparation and non-restricted activities. Although being exposed to the target language may positively influence students' WTC, it seems that for classroom communication it is the teacher and his or her teaching style that plays a significant role in students' WTC. As MacIntyre (2007: 567) pointed out "it is the critical decision for language learning success...that bridges the social processes of interpersonal and intergroup contact, the educational process of language learning, as well as interpersonal communicative processes." Further studies exploring situational factors and changes in the self-reported level of WTC could bring detailed information explaining students' (un)willingness to communicate and offering possible guidelines on how to facilitate discussions at the university level in L2 teaching.

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## Appendix 1

### The overview of the selected studies

Authors	Sample	Instruments used	Results
Başöz, T. and Erten, I.H. (2018)	n=701	WTC in English in the classroom/outside (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001)	Moderate level of WTC inside/outside the classroom, WTC outside is higher than WTC inside the classroom.
Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2018)	n=1	Student Self-reported WTC grids for each lesson  General level of classroom WTC  Learning Styles Survey (Cohen et al., 2002)	Contextual influences:  topics chosen for discussion, lesson structure, type of activities, grouping arrangements.
<u>Halupka-Rešetar</u> , <u>Topalov</u> , and <u>Knežević</u> , (2018)	n=171	Self-assessment scale of perceived English language competence (3-point Likert scale)  Modified version of WTC Scale inside and outside classroom (MacIntyre et al., 2001)  Adapted MacIntyre et al. Students' orientation towards learning	WTC inside and outside the classroom: medium – high levels,  Significant difference between WTC speaking inside and outside the classroom,  Correlation of WTC with friendship,  WTC is tied to students' self-perceived level of proficiency.
<u>Lee, J.H.</u> (2018)	n=69  Korean (n=44), Chinese (n=25)	L2 anxiety (FLCAS, Horwitz et al., 1986), international posture (Yashima et al., 2004),  L2 WTC (McCroskey, 1992),  Perception of adjustments (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004),  Self-perceived L2 proficiency	Short-term SA:  gains in international posture and L2 WTC, anxiety level decreased, different results for intermediate and beginner level groups compared to the advanced level,  no significant difference among different SA programmes.
Bernales, C. (2016)	n=20	WTC scale  Class-observation/videotaping + field notes	Gradual compliance with classroom norms about speaking behaviour/the kinds of interactions/oral participation that was expected of them.



		Semi-structured interview	Immediate antecedents of WTC: state communicative confidence and desire to communicate
<u>Yashima, T., MacIntyre, P.D., Ikeda, M.</u> (2016)	n=21	Observation (turn-taking during 15week interventional study + student perceptions of the sessions)  Semi-structured interviews  Trait anxiety (Ryan, 2008) and WTC (Yashima, 2002)	Group level analyses: a variation in student participation, as a whole-student talk took up nearly half of all session; repeated discussion tasks reduce situated anxiety in a class  Individual analyses (three selected participants): proficiency alone cannot account for differences in communication. All components of context interact to trigger psychological reactions and lead in WTC.
Peng, J. (2007)	n=174	L2 WTC scale adapted from MacIntyre et al. (2001)  Integrativeness adapted from Hashimoto (2002)  Attitude towards learning situation in Hashimoto (2002)  Motivation in Hashimoto (2002)	Correlations of L2 WTC to integrativeness and motivation were of medium effect.  The effect size of the correlations between L2 WTC and attitude toward the learning situation was small – applies rather to the sample.
Myers, Edwards, Shawn, and Matthew (2007)	n=218	Modified version of Argumentativeness Scale (Infante and Rancer, 1982)  Verbal aggressiveness Scale (Infance and Wigley, 1986)  Student communication motives scale (Martin et al., 1999)  Overt Information-seeking strategy subscale (Frymier, 2005)  Out of class communication scale (Knapp & Martin, 2002)	Students' reports of teacher's verbal aggressiveness were negatively correlated with some of their motives to communicate as well as participate in and out of class.  Data on class size, instructor status, type of course and course status should be considered.
MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan, (2003)	n=59	WTC in French and English (McCroskey & Baer, 1985)  Communication Apprehension in French and English based on McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey's (1987)  Perceived Competence in French and English based on McCroskey, Richmond and McCroskey's (1987)	Full immersion experience is associated with increased WTC, perceived competence, and frequency of communication compared with FL study experience.  Differences in communication apprehension are not significant.  Correlation between L1 and L2 WTC and also communication

		Frequency of Communication in French and English based on MacIntyre and Charos (1996)  Integrativeness, Attitude toward the learning situation, Motivation based on Gardner and MacIntyre (1993)	apprehension was found to be non-significant in both intensive and standard language courses.
Clément, Baker, and MacIntyre (2003)	n=248 Francophone  n=130 Anglophone	WTC based on McCroskey and Baer (1985)  Situating ethnic identity (Clément & Noels, 1992)  Frequency and quality of contact with the second language group based on Clément (1986) and Labrie & Clément, (1986)  Frequency of L2 communication adapted from WTC scale  L2 confidence	significant effect of ethnic group  context provides greater opportunities and more pressure to use the L2.  L2 confidence and pressures from significant others
Yashima, T. (2002)	n=297	TOEFL  International posture questionnaires (items adapted from Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gudykunst, 1991; Kim, 1991; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Tanaka, Kohyama, & Fujiwara, 1991; Yashima, 1999, 2000)  WTC in English scale (McCroskey, 1992)  Communication Anxiety scale (adapted MacIntyre & Clément, 1996)  Perceived Communication Competence scale (adapted MacIntyre & Charos, 1996)	L2 communication confidence and international posture directly influence WTC  International posture indirectly affected WTC through motivation to learn L2 and com. confidence in L2

FLCAS = Foreign language classroom anxiety scale, FL = foreign language, SA = study abroad, L2 = second language, WTC = willingness to communicate