



Book Review

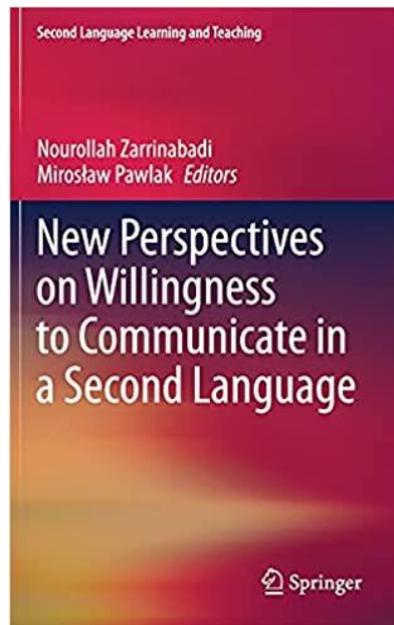
“New perspectives on willingness to communicate in a second language”

Yıldırım Kurnaz 

Instructor, Trabzon University, Trabzon, Turkey, email: yildiraykurnaz@gmail.com

APA Citation: Kurnaz, Y. (2022). Book Review: New perspectives on willingness to communicate in a second language. *Focus on ELT Journal*, 4(2), 101-106. <https://doi.org/10.14744/felt.2022.4.2.7>

New perspectives on willingness to communicate in a second language, Zarrinabadi, Nourollah, and Mirosław Pawlak (Eds.). Springer, (2022). 264 pages. ISBN: 978-3-030-67634-6,



The term Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which has an important place in the foreign language learning, teaching, and performing process, was first used in mother tongue teaching (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Later, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) first used this term in second language teaching. Then MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined WTC as the effects of various psychological components on linguistics in foreign language teaching with the model they developed. In the following years, there has been a rapid increase in the number of studies on WTC in foreign language teaching. In these studies, motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality have been observed to have significant effects on WTC (Alishah, 2015; Mahmoodi

& Moazam, 2014; Peng, 2013; Şener, 2014; Tan et al., 2016; Vongsila & Reinders, 2016; Watanabe, 2011, etc.). On the other hand, there are also studies claiming that there is no direct relationship between motivation and WTC (Öz et al., 2015). After all, there are various perspectives and claims regarding not only the background of WTC but also the influence it has on using a foreign language.

In this context, the editors of the book “New Perspectives on Willingness to Communicate in A Second Language”, Zarrinabadi and Pawlak (2022) have made a significant contribution to the field by bringing together eleven different qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-type studies carried out by different researchers on WTC, which has an increasingly important place in second language learning and teaching process in recent years.

As a whole, the book consists of thirteen chapters including one introduction chapter in the beginning by Zarrinabadi and Pawlak to give brief information about the book’s content. There is also an implication chapter in the end by Zarrinabadi aiming to make further suggestions for further research on the topic in the light of the information provided by the studies included in the rest of the book.

To begin with, in the chapter “Second Language Willingness to Communicate as A Complex Dynamic System (CDS)” by Nematizadeh and Wood, readers are provided with discussions based on a specific literature review on WTC from the point of the linear and non-linear dimensions comprising it. In the chapter, the authors define WTC as a complex dynamic system as a result of making inferences from the definitions and claims made for WTC in the literature. In this context, the dynamics of WTC are examined to make implications for further research on the topic. Eventually, the authors argue that WTC is just one dimension of personal differences that can vary with the influence of other language skills. In this respect, focusing on the “end-point” product with a “from-till” view is unacceptable. On the contrary, “from-through” should be the point to be focused on. Finally, despite its contribution to the topic, there is a lot more to be contributed by CDS to WTC.

In Chapter “Case Studies of Iranian Migrants’ WTC Within An Ecosystems Framework: The Influence of Past and Present Language Learning Experiences”, Cameron makes inferences from a qualitative and longitudinal view into Iranian migrants' WTC. The migrants’ linguistic presence in their past Iranian English classrooms, present New Zealand pre-university classrooms, and community outside are investigated from the perspective of WTC. For this aim, questionnaires, observations, stimulated recall, and multiple interviews with not only learners but also their teachers are consulted. In this regard, the possible influence of their past learning experiences on their present WTC, and response of their readiness to speak to the elements of classroom and community context are questioned. Based on the results found, the authors claim that numerous factors stem from both past and present educational and personal experiences in the participants' home countries and the countries they migrated to. Ultimately, they say, all of these factors dynamically contribute to the likelihood of these students’ oral participation on any occasion, not only in but also out of the classroom. When this issue is considered in terms of CDS, it is emphasized once again that there are strong connections between the linguistic, social, cognitive, and emotional systems that produce WTC.

In Chapter “Building Dialogue Between Cultures: Expats’ Way of Coping in A Foreign Country and Their Willingness to Communicate in A Foreign Language”, Gertrud Tarp deals with WTC in German, an issue less discussed in comparison to English, from the point of mobility. In her study, in which qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were

applied, Tarp worked with expatriates. By including expatriates working and/or studying in Germany, all members of the network “Expats in Germany” in the study, Tarp attempts to lean over expatriates’ statements and their experiences about their stay in Germany, intercultural communication, and foreign language learning. Again claiming and implicating the emphasis of not underestimating individual differences, the study reports the constructive influence of cultural immersion on WTC depending on the individual determinants such as age, education, gender, language skills, occupation, and country of origin while it is also claimed that the existence of English as a Lingua franca still plays an important role in various situations.

In Chapter “The Mediating Effect of Culture on the Relationship Between FL Self-Assessment and L2 Willingness to Communicate: The Polish and Italian EFL context” by Baran-Lucasz, it is deduced that the relationship between students’ self-assessment of FL skills and L2WTC is related to students’ past experiences and cultural perceptions. The data of the mixed study were collected through three questionnaires: an FL Self-Assessment Measure, a Measure of WTC in the FL Classroom, and a Measure of WTC outside the FL Classroom. The participants of the study are Polish and Italian learners. The results of the analysis showed that the WTC levels of the Italian participants were at higher levels than the Polish participants. The reason behind this is argued to be that Italian participants tend to use their English sub-skills more effectively. Depending on their cultural background, Polish speakers were found to care more about how they speak rather than what they speak. The author rationalizes this situation with the words: “Not only might some cultures benefit more than others from training leading to opening the students to communication, encouraging risk-taking and raising their self-worth as a nation, but also from changing the culturally-based attitudes towards and views upon the importance of learning particular subskills” (p. 112). Still, the limited number of the group of participants from both countries suggests we consider the results more carefully when generalizing them to two cultures.

The chapter “What Does Students’ Willingness to Communicate or Reticence Signify to Teachers?” by Negah Allahyar provided us with the chance of reviewing WTC or reticence of learners through the eyes of their teachers. The authors’ claim is the presence of an increase in teachers’ prejudiced perceptions of students’ attitudes and behaviors in this sense. As a result of the thematic analysis made upon data collection through semi-structured interviews with six Iranian teachers, the authors of the chapter claims that reticent students are not appreciated by the participant teachers. The author implicates that the findings of the research can be benefitted by teacher educators to prevent the undesired influence of teachers’ negative perceptions of students’ WTC or reticence.

Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel in Chapter “Positive Predictive Value of Extraversion in Diagnosing L2 WTC” reports on a quantitative study carried out with 494 randomly selected Polish students. The instruments are divided into 6 parts for measuring collecting information, measuring participants’ WTC levels in and outside the classroom, their extraversion levels, their anxiousness during classes, and their real and self-expected grades. The findings again revealed the strong positive influence of extraversion on learners’ WTC levels. Even though the study lacks the multifaceted nature of a complex dynamic system, the author still argues that investigating such a relationship could be beneficial to offer significant data about the interference of distinctive personalities in the process of language learning.

Zarrinabadi, Khodarahmi, and Shahbazi, in Chapter “On the Effect of Using A Flipped Classroom Methodology on Iranian EFL Learners’ Willingness to Communicate”, make

implications about the positive influence of using flipped classrooms on students' willingness WTC. The results of their qualitative and quantitative analysis show that flipped classroom motivates learners, makes language learning more enjoyable, and decreases students' anxiety. As an implication, the authors suggest teachers provide students with chances of integrating their smartphones, tabs, and laptops, which are already with them all the time, into the learning and teaching process through technology-integrated tasks activities such as the flipped classroom.

Khajavi, MacIntyre, Taherian, and Ross, in Chapter, "Examining the Dynamic Relationships Between Willingness to Communicate, Anxiety and Enjoyment Using the Experience Sampling Method", used the experience sampling method to examine the dynamic relationship between WTC, foreign language anxiety, and foreign language enjoyment. The results of multiple correlation analysis showed that while moving correlations between WTC and anxiety, and anxiety and enjoyment are inconsistent and the majority of them are negative, correlations between WTC and enjoyment are remarkably consistent, strong, and positive. The authors implicate in the light of the findings that language teachers can be the source of enjoyment in the language classrooms even though they are not often the source of anxiety in the classroom. Although there are various unpreventable reasons behind the learners' anxiety, anxiety could be managed through a carefully created classroom atmosphere that fosters enjoyment.

In Chapter "The Opportunity to Communicate: A Social Network Approach to L2 WTC and Classroom-Based Research", Gallager and Zarrinabadi combine L2 WTC and the social network approach. The chapter includes the introduction and definition of the social network approach with its various aspects and its integration with L2 WTC research. In this sense, the concept of "opportunity" in L2 WTC research is discussed from perspectives of opportunities as group boundaries, opportunity in talk, and opportunity as a system. In conclusion, longstanding concepts related to groups, classes, social categories, and individual differences are argued to be further developed, refined, and re-conceptualized with the theoretical integration of a network approach properly into L2 research.

The chapter entitled "Teachers' Immediacy, Self-Disclosure, and Technology Policy as Predictors of Willingness to Communicate: A Structural Equational Modeling Analysis" by Amirian, Rezazadeh, and Rahimi-Dashti report an investigation of the effects of teachers' immediacy, self-disclosure, and technology policy on developing students' WTC. The study carried out in Iran included 220 EFL learners attending a private language institute. The participants answered a questionnaire measuring their WTC and three questionnaires measuring their teachers' immediacy, self-disclosure, and technology policy. As a result of the analysis, the authors implicate that those language teachers should never ignore how important their understanding and empathy for learners promote their WTC. At this point, technology, the inevitable dimension of learners' daily life, should not be ignored. On the contrary, technology integration should be increased as much as possible for more stress-free and enjoyable classroom environments. To conclude, the authors argue the importance of multi-dimensional future research on the role of teacher variables on learners' WTC.

Sen and Oz, in Chapter "Vocabulary Size as A Predictor of Willingness to Communicate inside the Classroom", report a qualitative study carried out with 100 pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey to analyze the learners' vocabulary size and in-class L2 WTC. Although the focus of the study is on vocabulary size, personal, psychological, and educational factors are also

discussed in the theoretical background considering their influence on L2 WTC. Not being a surprising but a supporting result, the findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between learners' vocabulary levels and L2 WTC regarding their classroom performances. Upon making implications to language teachers, pre-service language teachers, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers, the authors emphasize the importance of lexical knowledge for a higher level of willingness and better performance in L2.

The final chapter "Some Directions for Future Research on Willingness to Communicate" by Zarrinabadi provides a guideline for sustaining the production of research on L2 WTC. The author focuses on willingness to communicate in other skills, pedagogical practices and WTC, psychological interventions and WTC, examining WTC in L3-LX, and finally WTC and technology.

This book, contributed by many different researchers and edited by Zarrinabadi and Pawlak, has made very important contributions to the present and future of WTC, which is a dimension that should not be ignored in foreign language teaching. Presenting similar contents with different methods (quantitative, qualitative, mixed) has increased the book's contribution to the field. On the other hand, the inclusion of studies on the attitudes, perceptions, and qualifications of both students and teachers has provided the reader with the opportunity to look at the subject from different aspects. However, besides the fact that the book includes studies that deal with classroom learning environments or out-of-class experiences, it can be considered a weakness of the book that it does not include studies that specifically address online learning environments, which have increased in importance and prevalence with the pandemic process. So, it would be much better to add a chapter(s) focusing on WTC in online learning, as well. To conclude, as I have mentioned above, the book makes a significant contribution to the field by providing crucial support to both language teaching and research into language teaching through the perceptiveness of WTC.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

- Alishah, A. R. (2015). *A study of factors affecting Turkish EFL learners' willingness to speak in English* (Thesis No: 381463) [Doctoral dissertation, Gazi Üniversitesi]. Ulusal Tez Merkezi/National Thesis Center
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Charos, C. (1996). Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 15*, 3-26.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in an L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal, 82*(4), 545-562.
- Mahmoodi, M. H., & Moazam, I. (2014). Willingness to communicate (WTC) and L2 achievement: The case of Arabic language learners. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98*, 1069-1076.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Baer, J. E. (1985). Willingness to communicate: The construct and its measurement. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, Denver, CO.
- Öz, H., Demirezen, M. & Pourfez, J. (2015). Willingness to Communicate of EFL Learners in Turkish Context. *Learning and Individual Differences, 37*, 269-275.
- Peng, J. (2013). The challenge of measuring willingness to communicate in EFL contexts. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 22*(3), 281-290.
- Şener, S. (2014). Turkish ELT students' willingness to communicate in English. *ELT Research Journal, 3*(2), 91-109.
- Tan, S. M., Ong, C. S. B., Sim, C. P., Hoi, W. W. Y., & Sia, P. C. (2016). Willingness to communicate in English and motivation level among Chinese secondary students in Northern Malaysia. *International Journal of humanities and management sciences, 4*(3), 283-287.

Vongsila, V., & Reinders, H. (2016). Making Asian learners talk: Encouraging willingness to communicate. *RELC Journal*, 47(3), 331-347.

Watanabe, M. (2011). *Motivation, self-determination, and willingness to communicate by English learners at a Japanese high school* (Thesis No: 3477796) [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. ProQuest.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the Journal.