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Abstract

Willingness to communicate (WTC), a recent affective construct of SLA research, has experienced a paradigm shift regarding its nature. Current WTC research tends to define it as a dynamic and context-bound structure rather being in a linear and static disposition. New conceptualization is based on Complex Dynamic System (CDS) theory. This theory has been applied to SLA research to explain dynamic, non-linear and complex nature of SLA process. The convenience of CDS theory's basic principles has led existing WTC structure to be re-shaped and revised to define it as a dynamic structure in contrast to its former definition which would recall WTC as a static and trait-like variable.

Keywords: Willingness to communicate, Complex dynamic system theory, Individual differences

Introduction

Dörnyei (2009) has described individual differences (ID) as "the characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other" (p. 6). He argues that individual traits or ID constructs tend to show some differences among people as they are relatively stable attributes or personal characteristics that are unique to everyone. In classifying the ID taxonomies, he identifies a number of principal learner variables, such as motivation, aptitude, ability, and personality. He mentions two other factors, namely learning strategies and learner styles, as two significant variables that contribute to learners' success in a foreign or second language. Similarly, WTC, anxiety, creativity, and self-esteem are considered among learner characteristics that influence L2 learning process. Dörnyei (2009:182) also indicates that IDs have an essential role in the SLA process as they serve a crucial function in leading to L2 attainment or failure.

Recent research on second language acquisition (SLA) has shown that communicative competence is not sufficient in providing and explaining actual L2 communication in various contexts. As Kang (2005) suggests, highlevel of WTC is a pushing factor and facilitator of language learning as well as high language proficiency. Also, it is regarded as one of the crucial personality factors to explain learner choices and behaviours to start or involve in communication inside or outside classroom (Akdemir, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Zarrinabadi & Tanbakooei, 2016). Until recently, WTC was regarded as a personality factor isolated from task, topic, context or other dynamic elements. The trait-like or stable nature of WTC formed the basics of WTC research during the last two decades.

However, the very recent research has shown that WTC should not be taken for granted as being a static structure, rather it has a multi-dimensional dynamic structure. The paradigm shift on the nature of WTC is expected to affect the future of WTC research. This paper aims at investigating fixed and dynamic predictors of WTC through an extensive review of current literature. The paper is expected to provide an extensive landscape of research on WTC.

Fixed Predictors of WTC Revisited Attitudes as Predictors of WTC

Language attitude has been indicated as one of the important factors in predicting the level of success in L2 learning. Baker (1992) describes attitude as 'a hypothetical construct which is used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour' (p. 10). However, Jung (2011) indicates that, for students, the attitudes they develop are not just toward the English language but reflect all the subjective feelings associated with learning a new subject. Johnson (2001) takes a new approach to this argument and suggests that attitudes towards society are important in L2 and foreign language teaching. In accordance with what he argued, Schumann (1978) put forward acculturation theory by stating that it is a process by which the learner becomes adapted to a new culture, learners' view of the L1 speakers and their culture, society, and her willingness to become a member of that group is an important factor in learning a second language (1978, as cited in Ellis, 2011). Positive attitudes towards the target language, its people, and their cultures were found to be significant factors facilitating L2 learning. According to Johnson, attitudes towards the native speakers of the foreign language you try to learn may be very important. It is believed that when people dislike or hate the native speakers of a particular language, it is a waste of time trying to learn that language. As Gardner (1985) points out, unlike other school subjects, learning a second language requires learners to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of other cultures and the success of the learner depends on the attitude held towards these other cultures.

Gardner's (1985) Socio-educational Model proposes that two basic attitudes, that is

integrativeness, and attitudes towards the learning situation, influence the learners' level of L2 learning motivation. In MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model, intergroup attitudes are interpreted as integrativeness, fear of assimilation, and motivation to learn L2. In the Japanese EFL context, Yashima (2002), and similarly Bektaş(2005) in the Turkish EFL context, assumed the 'international posture' construct as a replacement for 'integrativeness' in order to capture EFL learners' attitudes toward the international community.

Jung (2011) investigated Korean students' WTC in English and individual difference factors related to WTC. The findings revealed that students had positive attitudes, which indirectly affected WTC in English. The findings of her study in terms of the paths from communication confidence to WTC, motivation to confidence, and attitudes to motivation were supported by previous research studies (Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002). Attitudes indirectly affected WTC in English. Students' attitudes and their personality were found to be correlated with each other. Sun (2008) investigated motivation of non-English major students in Taiwan and found that students' attitudes toward learning English were not positive. The researcher concluded that students' motivation and WTC using English in conversation class may change when the socio-cultural factors such as teacher's attitude and learning environment changes.

Yu (2009) examined the WTC construct in a Chinese ELT college setting and found that attitudes of the participants towards the learning situation were the best predictor of WTC in English (beta=. 192) among the four predictors, integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation, motivation, and instrumental orientation. Ghonsooly et al. (2012) examined the WTC in the second language and its underlying variables among non-English major students in Iran and their study results revealed that L2 self-confidence and attitudes towards international community were two significant predictors of L2 WTC.

In the Turkish context, Kızıltepe (2000) attempted to investigate the attitudes and motivation of Turkish learners towards English and found that the most important reasons for learning English for

Turkish students are instrumental purposes: finding work after graduation, after university, and using the internet. In her study, she also revealed that most of the Turkish learners in her study have only a moderate interest in the British and the American communities and culture and having conversations with British and American people was regarded as unimportant.

Üzüm (2007) investigated the attitudes of university students towards English language and English speaking societies by employing a mixed research design. He found that Turkish learners at sampled universities had favourable attitudes towards English language and speakers as a result of their interest in the cultural products of the English speaking societies and the instrumental value of English as a global language. However, a significant finding of the study was that students possess undecided opinions regarding American movies. It was also revealed that most of the respondents are of opinion that Turkey has not had friendly relations with Britain throughout its history. He concluded that the students like the people, language, culture of these groups, but what they do not like is mainly their state policies.

Another example from the Turkish EFL context is Bektaş's (2005: 129) study, the results of which indicated that non-major college students had positive attitudes toward international community, and their willingness to communicate in L2 was found to be directly related to their attitudes toward the international community and SPCC. According to her, students who have positive attitudes toward international community are motivated to learn English, and their level of motivation leads to WTC by affecting their perceived competence. Her findings are consistent with Yashima (2002) and Yashima et al. (2004), but in the Korean context, Kim (2004) found an indirect relationship between their motivation and attitudes through confidence in English communication.

Emotional Intelligence as the Predictor of WTC

Bar-On (1988), a clinical psychologist coined the term EQ (emotional quotient) to assess emotional intelligence according to his approach. However, emotional intelligence as a concept formally

introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in an article titled "Emotional Intelligence" in a journal named Imagination, Cognition, and Personality. They gave the first formal definition and also described the related skills to the concept (Salovey& Mayer, 1990). They suggested that emotional intelligence is "the subset of social intelligence and involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey& Mayer, 1990:189). They put special emphasis on Gardner's personal intelligences (interpersonal and intrapersonal) and remarked that the feelings referred in personal intelligences are close to emotional intelligences.

In conceptualization of emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1990) found out the common features by compiling scattered set of findings of the preceding works and stated that in emotional intelligence there are appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion. Their model enabled the development of ability-based tests of emotional intelligence (Salovey& Grewal, 2005) and contributed to the scientific development of emotional intelligence. In 1997, Mayer and Salovey refined their definition and described four distinct abilities which are: perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions. For them, emotional intelligence is a set of interrelated skills that lets people use emotional information in an efficient and accurate way. In 1997, Bar-On developed an alternative model of emotional intelligence and created EQ-i, known as the first test to measure emotional intelligence.

After Salovey and Mayer's (1990) introduction of emotional intelligence, a great number of studies have been conducted on the role of the emotional intelligence in many fields from health to business. Upon realizing the possible outcomes of the concept, also academic environment struggled to assemble emotional intelligence with school curriculums (Fernandez-Berrocal&Extremera, 2006), stating that emotional and social learning is a missing piece in education (Kristjansson, 2006). Most of the studies in the context of education dealt mostly with the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success giving valid and reliable results

in varied conditions with varied models of measure (Bar-On, 2006).

The reason why emotional intelligence was welcomed by many authors can lie in the problems of traditional standards in education. For Fernandez-Berrocal and Ruiz (2017), until the end of 20th century, only intellectual and academic dimensions of education have been prioritized lacking the skills to deal with negative and destructive emotions. By the same token, there have been many confrontations and doubts about the design of curriculum or the approaches adopted and even some claimed that the emotional intelligence-related skills such as emotional awareness or social interaction are indispensable for educational context (Romaszet al., 2004). This idea questions the earlier view of focusing on core curriculum and seeks ways to equip learners with skills which will address their emotional being to challenge life (Humphrey et al., 2007), and increase the quality of a learner's life experience (Blair, 2002).

There appeared many researches in the field supporting emotional intelligence integrated school education. For example, Walker (2001) conducted a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success of college students. The number of participants was 1205 and students' scores from EQi were compared to their grade point averages (GPA) suggesting that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success. In her study, the researchers found positive correlations between GPA and emotional intelligence scales (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability and general mood).

Shuford (2003) is also of the opinion of implementing emotional intelligence in schools suggesting that emotional intelligence and academic achievement are correlated. For him, students with an inability to deal with emotions cannot concentrate on cognitive tasks. Therefore, emotional literacy cannot be separated from education context.

In another study, in 2004 Parker and his colleagues studied with 667 high school students in Canada using Bar-On EQ-i. The correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement was found to be .41 indicating that there is moderate

but statistically significant relationship between the variables. The results showed that emotional intelligence has at least 17% role in predicting academic achievement of learners. Their study also displayed the capability of emotional intelligence measure (EQ-i) in distinguishing students' performance.

In 2001, Jaeger did a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence, academic achievement and learning style. There were 158 participants, half of whom were educated with a curriculum in which emotional intelligence skills were implemented and the other half followed an ordinary curriculum for one semester. At the beginning and at the end of the semester, the researcher applied EQ-i to differentiate the effectiveness of emotional intelligence-based curriculum. To determine students' academic achievement GPA was used and the results signified that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Moreover, by the end of the semester, students in emotional intelligence-based curriculum had higher scores compared to the other half implying that emotional intelligence level of students can be increased and an increase in emotional intelligence leads to an increase in achievement. As Bar-On (2006) also claims "the enhancement of the weaker emotional-social intelligence competencies and skills is expected to increase performance at school" (p. 19).

Some studies have also been conducted in language learning context giving a special focus on the relationship between anxiety and emotional intelligence. For instance, Rouhani (2008) studied with literary excerpts as reading materials in order to understand the effect of cognitive-affective course. In this course, literary excerpts were used as learning materials and guided classroom activities. The group work, discussion or journal writing activities gave a chance to the learners to empathize with the characters and by so doing helped them to express emotions and use them to solve the problems that occur in the events. The results showed that the students in experimental group had higher emotional intelligence skills and their foreign language anxiety lowered by contributing to their performance.

With the implementation of emotional

intelligence-supported programs the outcomes may lead to "a caring school community where students feel understood, respected, and cared about, and this spirit of empathy and care will gradually spread to the wider community so that family and society benefit" (Kristjansson, 2006:53).

The New Paradigm in WTC Complex Dynamic System and WTC

Even until recently, language has been regarded as a homogeneous and static system in which it has been assumed that language development takes place through certain fixed stages. However, in the past two decades, a new paradigm has emerged whose tenets differentiate it remarkably from the conventional way of thinking or paradigms. This new paradigm which is labelled as Complex Dynamic System (CDS) has introduced a number of significant changes and perspectives with respect to the process of second language learning, individuals' roles in this process, and individual difference variables affecting this process (de Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011; de Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2007; Ellis & Larsen Freeman, 2006; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Nagle et al., 2019). This new paradigm suggests a set of 'non-linearsystem dynamics' which caused a 'dynamic turn' in SLA (Dörnyei et al., 2014). From a complex dynamic point of view, Larsen-Freeman (1997) argues that language is not a fixed or stationary system. Rather, it changes and evolves as it is used between and among different individuals dynamically. She further states that this dynamism also applies to the language of native speakers as well as the L2 learned by language learners. In other words, the development of a L2 is not discrete or stage-like, but it is more like an organic system which is constantly undergoing some motions and fluctuations (Ellis, 2007, p.23). According to Van Geert (2008), some years ago it was not even considered appropriate to mention a target-centric perspective and utter the idea that learners' language proceeds through a series of developmental stages that are not in a linear line, contrary to what was conventionally assumed beforehand.

Considering the learners' individual variation and their performances in a L2 from a dynamic approach, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008)

indicate that it is virtually untenable to conceive individuals' learner characteristics and linguistic performances as stable and monolithic (p. 593). In support of this argument, Van Geert and Van Dijk (2002) state that language is in nature an integrity of social phenomena and it is used for social actions such as interaction and communication. Therefore, learners' individual differences, their affective states and goals, and also external as well as internal pressures and affordances will all have a considerable effect on their performances. Similarly, Ellis (2007) suggests that language learners' progress in L2 process does not take place in a consistent manner as there is considerable variation in their affective states and performances at different times. He also states that since the L2 learning context has a dynamic characteristic that is always likely to change, variation and fluctuation in individuals' learner characteristics is inevitable in nature too.

According to Ellis, this dynamism in the classroom context exerts an inextricable influence on how they will adapt their linguistic resources to the context and what attitude or behaviour they will exhibit during this adaptation. Thus, he indicates that there is a dynamic relation between the variation in individuals' learner characteristics and their performances in the L2 classroom context. Lemke (2000) also suggests that variation in learner characteristics is an outcome of the combination of various internal and external factors that work in conformity rather than working discretely. Considering this, Davin and Donato (2013) further state that a combination of cognitive, affective, and motivational factors function in an integrated unity to culminate in L2 communication behaviour.

CDS theory has caused WTC proceed and ground itself on a complex dynamic structure which is a major shift from WTC's previously suggested 'stable trait-like disposition' (McCroskey&Baer, 1985). Based on the theoretical conceptualization of CDS, several studies have been conducted to investigate the practical reflections of the new paradigm for WTC. Nematizadeh and Wood (2019) have investigated the 'interactions between cognition and affect manifested through WTC and speech fluency' (p. 213). They conducted aretrospective recall session with the participants, and explored that there

is a non-progressive, two-way interaction between WTC and L2 speech fluency. In another classroom-based research, Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, and Bielak (2016) conducted a multi-dimensional investigation to explore what shapes or lowers the learners' WTC during classroom activities. They have found that WTC levels are prone to change regarding task, topic and interlocutor. There are several recent studies conducted with idio dynamic method to capture the changing nature of WTC in different contexts or tasks (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Wood, 2012; Wood, 2016).

Conclusion

It is obvious that the nature of WTC is not confined to an enduring, trait-like disposition. The initial conceptualization of WTC was shaped according to the theoreticalresearch conducted according to cause-effect relationships or linear progression theories. Yet, recent research has shown that WTC has a dynamic nature with both transient and enduring features. In this sense, it is much more context-bound than ever before. There are several factors such as task, topic, previous experiences, ambience and momentary psychological reactions determining the level of WTC.

The new paradigms of WTC will inevitably direct the research to implement new instruments and research designs. The questionnaires or other cross-sectional survey studies will not be capable of explaining dynamic structure of WTC which might be affected by ephemeral conditions of various contexts.

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