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„... A szakdolgozathoz csatolni kell egy nyilatkozatot arról, hogy a munka a hallgató saját szellemi terméke...”

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a hallgató aláírása

EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
Bölcsészettudományi Kar

ALAPSZAKOS SZAKDOLGOZAT

*A nyelvtanulók társalgás kezdeményezését
befolyásoló helyzet-specifikus tényezők*

*Situation-specific Influences on L2 Learners'
Willingness to Communicate*

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Abstract

During the past decades, willingness to communicate (WTC) has been an important and intriguing part of academic research within the field of second language (L2) pedagogy. Several studies have examined the influencing factors of L2 WTC, especially those that have an influencing role in the specific situation of the communicative interaction, in order to predict learning outcomes and facilitate L2 learning. The present thesis aims to synthesise some of the recent studies investigating the situation-specific factors influencing L2 WTC. Four studies presenting a model of L2 WTC were selected and compared along the lines of two research questions: what situation-specific factors influence L2 WTC directly, and how do these factors interact to construct situational L2 WTC. From the studies reviewed, it can be concluded that L2 WTC is influenced directly by situation-specific factors related to the interlocutors, the conversational topic, and the learner's self-confidence. Furthermore, it appears that the factors of the interlocutor and self-confidence have a more complex relationship with the other situational factors. It is suggested that the factors specific to the classroom context should be investigated in the future with a special emphasis on the relationship between the factor of the teacher and the learner's L2 WTC.

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Introduction

During the past decades, willingness to communicate (WTC) has been a crucial and intriguing part of academic research within the field of second language (L2) education. In an L2 learner group, there might be students who are perfectly capable of fluent and grammatically correct speech in the target language, nevertheless, they do not take the opportunity to initiate conversation. Conversely, there might be students who are confident in being the first to speak in front of the group, even though they might not be fluent in the target language. This obvious individual difference (ID) variable cannot be neglected for pedagogical reasons, as communication centred language instruction is believed to facilitate L2 learning (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). Exploring the nature of L2 WTC has been the primary objective of several studies over the past decades. In terms of L2 learning, MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined the concept of WTC as the momentary readiness of the language learner to engage in a conversation with a particular person, provided that the opportunity arises. According to the authors, the significance of L2 WTC as a subject of research could be explained by the belief that making a student willing to enter into communicative interaction should be the primary aim of language learning and instruction.

Both enduring and situational factors have been theorized to influence L2 WTC. For instance, in the study of MacIntyre et al. (1998), there are different types of enduring factors—motivational, affective-cognitive, social, and individual—that have indirect influences on L2 WTC. However, the situational factors—the interlocutor whom the student is willing to communicate with, and the student's self-confidence during the conversation—have direct influences on L2 WTC and are tied to the actual context of the communicative interaction. Consequently, it is highly important to shed light on the

situation-specific factors influencing L2 WTC in order to shape L2 classroom instruction and facilitate L2 learning.

The present thesis aims to synthesize some of the recent studies which primarily focus on the situation-specific factors of L2 WTC. The studies will be synthesized along the lines of two research questions: (a) what situation-specific factors influence L2 learners' WTC directly, and (b) how do these factors interact with each other to construct situational L2 WTC. With the two research questions in mind, four studies were chosen for comparison, all of which present a model of L2 WTC: one theoretical (MacIntyre et al., 1998), one qualitative empirical (Kang, 2005), and two quantitative empirical studies (Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi, 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The rationale for choosing these particular studies was that all had been published in prominent journals and steadily follow each other in time, illustrating the development of academic research on the situational factors influencing L2 WTC. Furthermore, the pyramid model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) has prompted research on L2 WTC in applied linguistics, and the exploratory qualitative and quantitative studies can suggest other situation-specific factors that directly influence L2 WTC. The qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted in different classroom contexts (Korean, Chinese, and Iranian) thoroughly presenting the specific context of the classroom.

First of all, the concept of WTC will be examined and described as situational (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 1998); volitional (MacIntyre, 2007); and dynamic and changing (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). A brief summary of the studies will follow, then the situational factors that directly influence L2 WTC will be explored one by one. These factors are the interlocutor whom the L2 learner is willing to communicate with, the topic of the conversation, and the self-confidence of

the L2 learner. Next, the interaction between the influencing factors will be discussed. Last but not least, conclusions will be drawn at the end.

Background

The Nature of WTC

Originally, the concept of WTC emerged in the communication literature in connection with the native tongue of the speaker, and it was defined by McCroskey and Baer as a personality trait (as cited in MacIntyre, 2007). In other words, first language (L1) WTC was recognized as a trait-like ID variable that refers to the learner either entering into or refraining from communication. Then, the focus of research shifted to investigate the WTC of L2 learners. MacIntyre et al. (1998) pointed out in their conceptualization that L2 WTC is not a personality trait but a situational construct that is influenced by long-term as well as short-term factors. The permanent characteristics of the language learner or the permanent context the communication takes place in are said to be the long-term influences. Those characteristics determined by the immediate context and the exact time the communication takes place are said to be the short-term influences. Kang (2005) also recognized the importance of L2 WTC as a situational construct, and emphasized that it could and should be engendered in L2 instruction.

L2 WTC is further defined to be volitional in nature (MacIntyre, 2007). When a L2 learner is willing to initiate communication, the decision the learner makes at that specific point in time is a voluntary act. This volitional act arises from the converging mechanisms that affect the L2 learner to either attempt communication or remain silent. MacIntyre (2007) borrowed the terms *driving* and *restraining forces* from social psychology to describe the converging mechanisms that influence this volitional act.

Apart from its situational and volitional characteristics, L2 WTC was found to be changing and dynamic in nature (e.g. MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). As opposed to previous research which has examined L2 WTC retrospectively, an idiodynamic perspective was employed by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011). To examine the fluctuation of L2 WTC on a moment-to-moment basis, the authors surveyed a small number of French immersion students with mixed methods, including questionnaires, recorded communication tasks, and self-ratings of the participants. The authors considered the four features of dynamic systems, that is, they change with time in a way that the achieved state is an alteration of the preceding state itself; they are intertwined and affect each other; states arrange into preferred and dispreferred ones; and they are affected by change in a way that a small change can affect the whole system. The results show that L2 WTC is dynamic as it clearly had the characteristics of dynamic systems. One of the supporting examples is that participants often explained their rising or falling WTC score during a topic in terms of the previously discussed one. When a rather difficult topic had come up and the student lacked the appropriate vocabulary, low WTC scores had affected the scores on the next topic as well.

Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) further investigated the dynamic nature of L2 WTC with the aim of identifying its typical changing patterns. As opposed to the above mentioned study, the authors chose a discussion topic that was familiar to the students and for which no specific terminology was required. Furthermore, the participants were rating their WTC and performing the task simultaneously, as opposed to retrospective ratings. This method provided immediate feedback, although the authors themselves pointed out the fact that the interruptions might have slightly biased the ratings. Nevertheless, it was found that L2 WTC was changing dynamically with a fluctuating pattern influenced by the immediate environmental factors of the situation. On the basis of

the above studies, it can be concluded that L2 WTC is influenced by situational factors, and it is volitional and dynamically changing in nature.

Overview of the Four Selected Studies on L2 WTC

In this section, the four selected studies will be briefly summarized, beginning with the one in which the first model of L2 WTC was introduced (for a summary of the situational factors affecting L2 WTC presented in the models of the selected studies, see Table 1).

Table 1

Situational Factors Affecting Second Language (L2) Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Presented in the Selected Models

Study	Situational factors affecting L2 WTC
MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels (1998)	<i>Direct:</i> desire to communicate with a specific person, state communicative self-confidence
Kang (2005)	<i>Direct:</i> topic, interlocutors, conversational context; security, excitement, responsibility
Peng & Woodrow (2010)	<i>Direct:</i> communication confidence in English, classroom environment (teacher support, student cohesiveness, task orientation) <i>Indirect:</i> motivation to learn English, learner beliefs
Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi (2016)	<i>Direct:</i> communication confidence, classroom environment (teacher support, student cohesiveness, task orientation) <i>Indirect:</i> attitudes, motivation, foreign language achievement

Note. Adapted from MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998, p. 547; Kang, 2005, p. 288; Peng & Woodrow, 2010, p. 853; and Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi, 2016, p. 168.

The study of MacIntyre et al. (1998) has been widely discussed and referred to by numerous researchers exploring L2 WTC (e.g. Kang, 2005; Cao, 2011). With their heuristic model conceptualizing L2 WTC, the authors aimed to list its influencing factors employing linguistic, communicative, and social-psychological perspectives. Also, they attempted to shed light on the connection between the influencing factors with a theoretical model that would also help foresee the possible communicative outcomes. It is also strongly emphasized that WTC should be a language learning goal instead of linguistic and communicative competence. According to the authors, the various components that determine the WTC of L2 learners can be arranged into a pyramid-shaped model consisting of six layers with L2 WTC at the top. These layers can be further divided into two categories depending on whether the components have a long-term (enduring) or a short-term (situational) effect on L2 WTC. The enduring factors from the bottom of the pyramid are intergroup climate and personality; intergroup attitudes, social situation, and communicative confidence; and interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and self-confidence. These constitute a trait-like predisposition to be willing or unwilling to speak, and they are labelled social and individual; affective-cognitive; and motivational propensities. The components more closely related to L2 WTC in the top layers are the situational factors. These factors are determined as the desire to communicate with a particular interlocutor and state communicative self-confidence.

After the theoretical study of MacIntyre et al. (1998), the qualitative empirical study of Kang (2005) was chosen for comparison. The purpose of this study was to explore the situational components affecting L2 WTC as well as the connection between them during communicative interactions. In addition, the author attempted to investigate the changing process of situational L2 WTC. In this empirical study, four Korean students'

participation was observed in a conversation program over eight weeks. The students took part in face-to-face conversations in which they were paired with a nonnative interlocutor. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview previous to the conversation sessions. Further sources of data comprised the recorded conversations and stimulated recall interviews following the sessions. After identifying the influences that students had pointed out, the researcher organized them into common themes. Three psychological states—namely, security, excitement, and responsibility—seemed to appear as a construction influenced by the joint effect of the situational factors of topic, interlocutor, and the context of the conversation. These psychological states and influencing factors were incorporated into a model of situational L2 WTC.

The third selected study that generated a model of WTC was carried out in a Chinese foreign language (FL) learning context, rather than an L2 environment (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The purpose of this distinction between the two terms is to indicate that Chinese FL learners are not as exposed to authentic communication in the target language as L2 learners might be. For instance, in a study conducted by MacIntyre, Burns, and Jessome (2011), Canadian immersion students learning French as an L2 had the opportunity to communicate in the target language with their immediate or extended family members outside the context of the classroom. In their study, Peng and Woodrow (2010) aimed to highlight situational factors that influence language learners' WTC in this particular context, that is, in the Chinese classroom context. Influencing factors were examined in two phases with university students, participating by filling out questionnaires during their regular classes. For the main phase, 503 cases were taken into account and analysed to test the intertwined relationship between the factors. The results were presented in the data-driven model. The factors of classroom environment, communication

confidence in the target language, motivation to learn the target language, and learner beliefs were found to influence WTC in both direct and indirect ways.

Lastly, the most recent study discussed in the present thesis (Khajavy et al., 2016) is similar, in some respects, to the previously mentioned study of Peng and Woodrow (2010). First of all, it also surveyed FL learners in a classroom environment, although the Iranian classroom context was the subject of investigation here. Similarly, this study aimed to explore the linguistic, contextual, and psychological factors of L2 WTC. Employing the framework of the first and the third studies mentioned above (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), 243 students participated in the survey by filling out questionnaires concerning six situational components. These components were selected from the three thematic categories of ID variables, linguistic variables, and contextual variables on the basis of previous studies and were incorporated into a data-driven model. The factors that construct this model are communication confidence, L2 motivation, attitudes, FL achievement, and classroom environment.

These studies altogether perfectly present the theoretical and empirical investigations on the situational WTC of L2 learners and the direct and indirect factors that might play a role in influencing situational WTC. With the background now established, a closer examination of the influencing situational factors directly contributing to L2 WTC will follow.

Situation-specific Factors Influencing L2 WTC

In this section, the aim is to identify common situational factors in the selected studies that have a direct influence on L2 WTC. Therefore, those situational factors that appeared in only one of the studies or those that were not a direct influence on L2 WTC

are not considered here separately. For instance, learner attitudes will not be considered here, as it only appeared as a situational factor in one of the studies and only as an indirect influence on L2 WTC. Three common groups of factors were found labelled with different terms in the studies that are situational and have a direct effect on L2 WTC: the interlocutor whom the speaker decides to engage in a conversation with, the topic of the conversation, and the speaker's self-confidence during the conversation. These situational influences can be further specified as the following situational factors: the number of the interlocutors, the familiarity of the interlocutors, teacher support, the status of the interlocutors; background knowledge about the topic, the learner's interest in the topic, the perceived usefulness of the topic, and the learner's feeling of responsibility; and the learner's level of anxiety and the learner's perceived competence. These situation-specific factors, that is, those factors that have a role in directly affecting L2 learners' momentary WTC will be discussed in this section as Interlocutor, Topic, and Self-confidence (for a summary of the direct situational factors influencing L2 WTC that are common among the selected studies, see Table 2).

Interlocutor

The interlocutor, that is, the person whom the L2 learner is willing to communicate with appears in all four of the studies though with different terms and to a different extent. It appears as *the desire to communicate with a specific person* in the study of MacIntyre et al. (1998), and it is called the *interlocutor* in the study of Kang (2005). In the studies of Peng and Woodrow (2010); and Khajavy et al. (2016), the interlocutor does not appear as a separate factor, rather as a significant part of the factor called *classroom environment*. Out of the three contributing parts of classroom environment, *teacher support* can be related to the notion of the interlocutor.

Table 2

Common Direct, Situational Factors Influencing Second Language (L2) Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Identified in the Selected Studies.

Study	Common situational and direct factors		
	<i>Interlocutor</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Self-confidence</i>
MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels (1998)	number, familiarity, status		level of anxiety, perceived competence
Kang (2005)	number, familiarity, teacher support	background knowledge, interest, perceived usefulness, responsibility	
Peng & Woodrow (2010)	familiarity, teacher support, status	interest, perceived usefulness	level of anxiety, perceived competence
Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi (2016)	number, teacher support	interest	level of anxiety, perceived competence

Note. Adapted from MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998; Kang, 2005; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; and Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi, 2016.

The interlocutor might be, for example, another member of the language learner group, a native tutor, or most likely the teacher in a classroom environment. The desire to engage in a conversation with a particular interlocutor is believed to be not only a direct but also one of the strongest influences on L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This desire appeared to be motivated by different characteristics in the selected studies, for example, by the number of the interlocutors, the familiarity of the interlocutors, teacher support, L2 fluency, or the status of the interlocutors.

It is suggested that conversations between interlocutors can be conducted in different patterns, depending on the number of persons participating in the communicative interaction (Cao, 2011). These patterns include conversations conducted in small groups, in pairs, or in teacher-fronted classrooms. Small groups, for example, could negatively influence L2 learners' WTC as learners might feel insecure about making mistakes (Kang, 2005). In addition, in the boxes constructing the layers in the pyramid model of MacIntyre et al. (1998), both enduring and situational factors influencing L2 WTC are grouped according to the number of the interlocutors. Regarding the situation-specific factor of the interlocutor, the authors suggest that control motives might vary depending on the number of the interlocutors during the communicative interaction, ultimately influencing the L2 WTC of the interlocutors. On the basis of previous research, Khajavy et al. (2016) also emphasize that the number of the interlocutors affects the learner's L2 WTC. In case the conversation is initiated in pairs or in small groups, the L2 WTC of the learners is likely to increase, as the learners perceive these conversational patterns to be comfortable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the number of the interlocutors influences L2 WTC as a direct and situation-specific factor.

The familiarity of the interlocutor also emerged as a decisive factor in the case of L2 WTC. An unfamiliar interlocutor who does not know the learner well enough to be accurately informed about the level of his or her language proficiency is likely to make the learner feel humiliated (Kang, 2005). On the other hand, the results of the study of Peng and Woodrow (2010) show that student cohesiveness emerging from the familiarity of the interlocutors could lead to a more pleasant environment for L2 learners. MacIntyre et al. (1998) also point out in their study that a person is more likely to initiate conversation with a familiar interlocutor. Apart from the selected studies, in a study conducted by Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, and Bielak (2016), it was also confirmed that a familiar

interlocutor would most probably increase L2 learners' WTC. The participating students also pointed out that they would be least willing to communicate with the teacher, and less willing to communicate with a less familiar interlocutor, than a familiar one. In other words, the familiarity of the interlocutor is confirmed to be one of the direct and situational factors that affect L2 WTC.

Provided that the teacher is able to assist and help the L2 learners, their WTC is believed to increase (Kang, 2005; Khajavy et al., 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Teacher support, for example active listening, smiling, or occasional nodding has a crucial part as it could increase L2 learners' WTC and make them feel secure in the conversational environment. It is also of crucial importance that teachers are regarded as more proficient interlocutors; therefore, they are believed to be able to help the L2 learners (Cao, 2011). On the other hand, if the teacher is not supportive enough, the student's L2 WTC could drastically decrease. This decrease in L2 WTC is illustrated in the following response of one of the participants in the study of Kang (2005):

The tutor did not smile. Sometimes she nodded her head, but did not show any verbal responses. She looked at her watch and outside while I was talking...I felt that she was having conversations with me just to get the credit and she did not like to talk with me. So I felt uneasy to talk to such a person...I did not feel like talking.
(p. 283)

Although it has not been thoroughly researched, the social status of the interlocutors might also be a characteristic that determines whether the L2 learner is willing to engage in a conversation or not (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In the Chinese context, the status of the teachers is highly important (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Teachers are perceived to be the authority; thus, they should be well-respected. For this reason, the authors add, the results concerning this part of the research might be slightly biased. All in

all, the situation-specific factors of the number of the interlocutors, the familiarity of the interlocutors, teacher support, and the status of the interlocutors are believed to directly influence the WTC of L2 learners.

Topic

Apart from the interlocutor, the factor of topic, that is, the subject matter of the conversation appeared in the examined empirical studies as one of the most significant situation-specific influences on L2 WTC. It is referred to as *topic* in the study of Kang (2005) and as *task orientation* in the studies of Peng and Woodrow (2010), and Khajavy et al. (2016). In the studies of Peng and Woodrow (2010), and Khajavy et al. (2016), the topic does not appear as a separate factor; it appears as a significant part of the factor of classroom environment along with teacher support and student cohesiveness.

Whether L2 learners have the necessary background knowledge about the topic of the conversation is claimed to be the most important part of the influencing factor of topic (Kang, 2005). When the participants of the study did not have the necessary background knowledge about the topic during the face-to-face conversations, they tended to feel insecure; thus, their L2 WTC decreased. Moreover, the participants expressed feeling apprehension when they could not offer any new ideas or could not understand what the interlocutor said during the conversation. According to one of the L2 learners, a characteristic behaviour in these cases was the avoidance of eye contact with the interlocutor. However, when the participants did have background knowledge about the topic of the conversation, especially when the topic concerned their own cultural background, they tended to feel more secure, and as a result their L2 WTC tended to increase.

Apart from the selected studies, the importance of background knowledge is further emphasized in a study conducted by Cao (2011). One of the participants expressed that the background knowledge he had gained previously affected his ability to take part in the conversation task: "Today we were doing the project in a group and that was more concrete...for the project I had to search for information based on the topic we chose yesterday...I can communicate with classmates" (Cao, 2011, p. 472). The author also states that half of the participants in the study expressed feeling insecure and less confident during the tasks they did not have the sufficient background knowledge about. Therefore, the participants' L2 WTC were considerably lower than when they had been more familiar with the topic of the conversation. This is in line with the findings of another study conducted by Pawlak et al. (2016) who also pointed out that the participants of the study reported in the surveys that new ideas about a familiar topic contributed to a higher L2 WTC during the tasks.

Another essential part of the situation-specific factor of topic that appeared in the studies is the level of interest it creates in the L2 learners. The L2 learners felt excited when they were interested in the topic of the conversation during the classroom tasks (Kang, 2005). This interest is believed to be caused by the familiarity of the topic and previous experience with discussing the topic. However, even if the participants had previous experience with the discussion of one particular topic, it often made the participants' level of interest decrease if they were required to elaborate on something that had been discussed several times before. Furthermore, interest could be triggered, for example, by a topic that L2 learners have no previous experience with, and they want to gain more knowledge about this specific topic. This was the case with one of the participants in Kang's (2005) study, as the learner wished to have a driver's licence and since the topic concerned the skills required to get one, the learner felt highly interested.

The significance of L2 learners' interest in the topic of the conversation is further highlighted in the quantitative study of Peng and Woodrow (2010). The authors state that an interesting and challenging topic that engages the L2 learners increases the learners' L2 WTC. This finding is in line with the results of the study of Khajavy et al. (2016) as the authors emphasize the classroom environment's (the topic, the support of the teacher or student interlocutors) strong influence on L2 WTC.

Apart from the selected studies, it was also observed that during the introduction of a new conversation topic the L2 WTC of the language learners is likely to increase, but it is likely to decrease when a topic is not perceived as interesting any more (Pawlak et al., 2016). When the topic is not interesting for the L2 learners even from the start, it is likely to decrease the learners' L2 WTC. An example for this is shown in the response of one of the participants in the study of Cao (2011): "But the topic is so boring, she just play a tape and we listen to different kind of noise like the car, make some noise and something, and to choose the word to describe this voice, it's so boring" (p. 472).

Although to a smaller extent, the perceived usefulness of the task and the L2 learner's feeling of responsibility was also found to be part of the factor of topic (Kang, 2005; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). If L2 learners perceive the task to be useful, their interest in the topic as well as their L2 WTC will increase (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). It is also suggested that the perceived usefulness of a task and its importance for L2 learners is likely to generate the feeling of responsibility in the learners (Kang, 2005). This responsibility tends to surface when the topic is introduced by the L2 learner. For instance, if the language learner introduces a topic, he or she feels responsible to explain it when it is necessary; thus, the L2 WTC of the learner is likely to increase. In conclusion, the situation-specific factor of topic is a direct influence on L2 WTC. It increases L2 WTC if

the language learner has the appropriate background knowledge, he or she is interested, perceives the topic as useful, and feels responsibility.

Self-confidence

Along with the interlocutor and the topic of the conversation, the self-confidence of L2 learners during the communicative interaction is confirmed to be one of the situation-specific influences on L2 WTC (Khajavy et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). In the theoretical study of MacIntyre et al. (1998) it is called *state communicative self-confidence*; in the study of Peng and Woodrow (2010) it appears as *communication confidence in English*; and in the study of Khajavy et al. (2016) it is referred to as *communication confidence* by the authors.

Apart from the interlocutor with whom the L2 learner is willing to engage in a conversation, the L2 learner's momentary self-confidence during the actual communicative interaction is claimed to be the strongest direct influence on L2 WTC in the pyramid model of MacIntyre et al. (1998). The authors agree with the findings of Clément in the respect that self-confidence is constituted by the two important elements of the language learner's low level of anxiety and his or her perceived competence (as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998). However, in the study of MacIntyre et al. (1998), the L2 learner's lack of anxiety and his or her perceived competence is understood as momentary components of the learner's momentary self-confidence, rather than trait-like components of the trait-like self-confidence. These momentary alternatives are referred to as *state anxiety* and *state perceived competence* by the authors. If the L2 learner is highly anxious at a particular moment during the communicative interaction, it is likely that the momentary self-confidence, and thus the momentary L2 WTC of the learner will decrease. The perceived competence, that is, the perception of the language learner about his or her

own competence to be able to communicate with ease at a specific moment is further believed to momentarily affect L2 WTC. For instance, during a conversation in which the topic is familiar to the L2 learner, and so the learner has the sufficient background knowledge, his or her high momentary communicative competence will lead to high self-confidence and L2 WTC.

Self-confidence, referred to as communication confidence in English, appeared as the strongest situation-specific factor that directly influences L2 WTC in the study of Peng and Woodrow (2010). The authors further emphasize that based on previous research, the self-confidence of the L2 learner during the communicative interaction is the most crucial factor that influences L2 WTC without having the characteristic of cultural dependence. The results of the study of Peng and Woodrow (2010) is in line with the findings of MacIntyre et al. (1998) in the respect that low levels of anxiety along with the high perceived competence of the L2 learner leads to higher levels of self-confidence and a higher willingness to engage in a conversation in the L2. Khajavy et al. (2016) also found self-confidence, referred to as communication confidence, to be one of the most significant situation-specific factors that has a direct effect on L2 WTC, even though the factor of classroom environment seemed to have a stronger influence compared to the study of Peng and Woodrow (2010). All in all, the factor of self-confidence is claimed to have a situation-specific and direct influence on L2 WTC, and it is constructed by the L2 learner's lack of anxiety as well as his or her level of perceived competence at the time the conversation is conducted. In the following section, the interaction of the situation-specific factors that directly as well as indirectly influence L2 WTC will be discussed.

Interaction between the Situation-specific Factors

First of all, it has to be clarified that the intertwined relationship and interaction between the situation-specific factors that directly influence L2 WTC as well as between those that influence it indirectly is exceptionally complex, and it heavily depends on the immediate context the communicative interaction takes place in. In the present thesis, the second aim is to highlight those interactions that were identified in the specific context of the selected studies. It appeared that in the case of the selected studies, the situational factors of the interlocutor and self-confidence tend to have a more complex relationship with the other factors; therefore, these interactions will be discussed thoroughly.

The situation-specific factor of the interlocutor that directly affects L2 WTC is influenced by the direct and situation-specific factor of self-confidence in the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The authors indicate the relationship between the two factors by presenting them side-by-side in the model. The two factors constitute the layer of the pyramid that is immediate to the layers of WTC and the actual L2 use at the top. The authors further suggest that the two factors will have an immense connection to the indirect and enduring factors in an actual communicative interaction. This connection is indicated with the shape of the model, as MacIntyre et al. (1998) claim that the factors from the bottom to the top of the pyramid will have a cumulative effect on L2 WTC.

In the model of Kang (2005), the factor of interlocutor could also interact with the situation-specific factors of the topic and the conversational context to jointly construct the situational WTC of the L2 learner. Each of these factors are believed to constitute the psychological states of the feeling of security, excitement, and responsibility that also affect L2 WTC. For instance, one of the learners participating in Kang's (2005) study

pointed out the distinctive feeling of security while speaking with a familiar interlocutor. Even though the participant might have made mistakes, it did not make the participant feel humiliated. On the other hand, the same participant remarked on his feeling insecure while having a conversation with the familiar interlocutor and an unfamiliar interlocutor whose background knowledge about the topic had been more extensive than the participant's.

Another example shows how the situation-specific factors of the interlocutor and the topic can create the psychological states of security and excitement in the model of Kang (2005). One of the participants in the study claimed that at the beginning of the conversation he felt insecure as a result of the interlocutor's lack of support. However, later on, the participant experienced higher L2 WTC regardless of the feeling of insecurity as the topic of the conversation was more important to the participant than the lack of support from the interlocutor:

That week, I was planning to buy a laptop computer and wondering if it was safe to buy one through the Internet...I was also excited to talk about the topic. I wanted to ask many questions to the tutor despite my negative perceptions of her. (Kang, 2005, p. 287)

These examples show how the situation-specific factors of the interlocutor and the topic jointly create the psychological states, together influencing the WTC of the L2 learner.

The situation-specific factor of self-confidence is believed to directly influence L2 WTC, and at the same time it is directly affected by the conversational context of the classroom as well as by the factors of motivation and the beliefs of L2 learners that are indirect influences on L2 WTC (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). This is in line with the results of the study of Khajavy et al. (2016) with the exception that instead of the factor of learner beliefs, the authors claim that the FL achievement of the learner is one of the influencing factors, apart from the conversational context of the classroom and the learner's

motivation, affecting the situation-specific self-confidence of the learner. The perceived competence is likely to be higher, and the level of anxiety is likely to be lower in the case of a highly motivated language learner (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). In addition, in the Chinese educational environment, the situation-specific factor of the conversational context affects the self-confidence of the learner in the respect that the belief of the learner about the usefulness of the task and the supportive behaviour of the interlocutor are exceptionally important in the mainly exam-driven Chinese classroom. The factor of FL achievement in the study of Khajavy et al. (2016) is claimed to be a strong influence on the learner's self-confidence during the communicative interaction; therefore, the two factors together affect the WTC of the language learner. Those students that have previous positive perceptions of communicating in the L2 tend to be less anxious and more self-confident during a communicative interaction in the L2. In other words, the situation-specific factors seem to be in interaction with other indirect factors, and these altogether influence the L2 WTC of the learner.

Conclusions

The present thesis aimed to examine and compare four studies (Kang, 2005; Khajavy et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010) that investigate the situation-specific factors influencing the L2 WTC of language learners. The four studies were compared along the lines of two research questions: what situation-specific factors influence L2 WTC directly, and how do these situation-specific factors interact with each other to construct L2 WTC. First of all, the nature of WTC was discussed, and it appeared that WTC is a situational (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 1998); volitional (MacIntyre,

2007); and dynamically changing (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015) construct. Then, the summaries of the examined studies were presented briefly to establish the background.

Addressing the first research question, each of the situational and direct influencing factors were discussed separately. From the studies reviewed, it seems that three groups of situational factors affect L2 WTC: the interlocutor with whom the learner is willing to initiate a conversation, the topic of the conversation, and the self-confidence of the learner during the communicative interaction. The factor of interlocutor can be further divided into the following factors: the number of the interlocutors (Kang, 2005; Khajavy et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998), the familiarity of the interlocutors (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), teacher support (Kang, 2005; Khajavy et al., 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), and the status of the interlocutors (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Related to the conversation topic, there seems to be four situation-specific factors that directly influence L2 WTC: the language learner's background knowledge about the topic (Kang, 2010), the language learner's interest in the topic (Kang, 2005; Khajavy et al., 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), the perceived usefulness of the task (Kang, 2005; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), and the learner's feeling of responsibility (Kang, 2005). Furthermore, the influencing factor of the L2 learner's self-confidence at the time of speaking appears to be constructed by the learner's level of anxiety and his or her level of perceived competence (Khajavy et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010).

Addressing the second research question, the four studies were examined with special interest in the interaction between the direct as well as the indirect factors that situationally affect the WTC of L2 learners. This relationship appears to be intertwined and complex. It seems that the situational factors of the interlocutor and self-confidence

tend to have a more complex relationship with the other factors. The factor of the interlocutor appears to interact with self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998) and the topic of the conversation (Kang, 2005). The factor of self-confidence seems to interact with the direct factor of the classroom conversational context (perceived usefulness of the task and teacher support), the indirect factor of motivation, and the indirect factor of learner beliefs (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Self-confidence also seems to interact with the direct factor of the conversational context (perceived usefulness of the task and teacher support), the indirect factor of motivation, and the indirect factor of FL achievement (Khajavy et al., 2016).

On the basis of the findings discussed in the present thesis, it can be concluded that L2 WTC is a complex construct that is influenced by direct and indirect situational as well as enduring factors. It is of crucial importance that the situation-specific factors that affect the WTC of L2 learners are thoroughly researched in a variety of contexts, since engendering WTC in the learners should be the primary aim of L2 instruction. The most significant context in which WTC should be further examined is the classroom environment where L2 instruction mostly takes place. In addition, the closer examination of the classroom context will also require researchers to pay special attention to the relationship between the situation-specific factor of the teacher and the WTC of the L2 learner in order to predict language learning outcomes and shape classroom language instruction. Apart from this relationship, the interaction between the situational factor of the interlocutor's status and the learner's L2 WTC, as it has not been thoroughly researched yet, should be also examined in the future. The examination of these relationships could help researchers and language instructors to understand and clearly define the nature of L2 learners' WTC.

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