

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC) AS A KEY FACTOR IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Since the late '90s attempts have been made to conceptualise *willingness to communicate* (WTC) to explain an individual's degree of readiness to participate in discourse in an L2 (MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998). Motivation, attitudes, personality and other psycho-social variables have been examined as factors which combine to influence the learner. Some researchers have argued that a fundamental goal of second language education should be the creation of WTC in the language learning process (MacIntyre et al., 2003). It is suggested that higher WTC among learners translates into increased opportunity for practice in an L2 (Second Language) and authentic L2 usage (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

The aim of this research project was to investigate the willingness of English as Another Language students to speak English in their language classroom. A comparison was made by means of a questionnaire of the students' willingness to speak in different classroom situations, such as dialogue with the teacher, with another student in group or pair work, and speaking in a whole class setting. Another area of investigation was the difference between the confidence or desire to speak of students in a class in an English speaking country (NZ), and their experience in classrooms in the country they came from. An interview with 8 randomly selected students explored their individual motivations and levels of confidence about speaking English in the classroom situation. It was hypothesised that the students would feel more relaxed about speaking in small groups in the classroom, and that they would be more willing to speak in English now they were in an English-speaking environment, and hence their motivation to communicate would be increased.

The research project focused on adult learners who were learning English at the Certificate level of tertiary education in an endeavour to better integrate into an English-speaking culture. Therefore it would benefit them, if their teachers knew more about the appropriate environment to encourage oral communication in the classroom in order to prepare students for real life communication in the English speaking world of work and study in NZ.

Other studies had been made into WTC but many had been in the EFL (English as Foreign Language) situation where the students had been studying English in their own countries (e.g. Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004) or they were international students temporarily in NZ to learn English (Cao & Philp, 2006). No previous study had looked at the difference between the WTC of students in their native country (EFL) setting as opposed to their WTC in an English language classroom in the country to which they had migrated as permanent residents.

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