Dynamics of factors underlying willingness to communicate in a second language

ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to explore the situational variables and their interaction determining the willingness to communicate (WTC) in English (L2) of six postgraduate business students in a university classroom in Pakistan. While much research has been undertaken to examine trait-like psychological antecedents, only a few studies have examined the nature of the interaction between situational variables affecting L2 WTC in a classroom context. Adopting the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) framework, the present study utilised classroom observations, learners' diaries, stimulated recall interviews and biographic questionnaires to collect the data over 10 weeks. The study results showed that participants' L2 WTC emerged as a result of the complex, dynamic and non-linear interaction between contextual, psychological, linguistic and physiological factors. The current study reinforces the theoretical shift from positivist and process-oriented approaches towards DST. Pedagogically, this study strongly proposes pre-service and in-service teacher training for Pakistani English language teachers to understand the complex and fluctuating nature of L2 WTC and not misinterpret learners' silence as an unwillingness to communicate.

KEYWORDS: Willingness to communicate; Dynamic System Theory; Interdependence; Non-linearity; Teacher education

INTRODUCTION

Willingness to communicate in a second language (henceforth L2 WTC) is a relatively recent entry into the list of individual difference variables. Defined as a volitional decision to engage in L2 communication with a specific person or group, it is conceived of as the most immediate predictor of L2 use and has been proposed as one of the primary goals of L2 pedagogy (MacIntyre et al., 1998, pp. 545–546).

The conceptualisation of L2 WTC has been largely shaped by the famous pyramid model by MacIntyre et al. (1998). MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualised L2 WTC as a complex variable determined not by a single variable but a host of situated and enduring variables. While the situational antecedents included a desire to communicate and state self-confidence, the enduring variables included motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context and social-individual context. Thus, the model is based on a linear, cause-and-effect relationship between psychological and contextual variables (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002).

Influenced by the pyramid model, a number of studies have been designed to tap into trait-like L2 WTC using quantitative measures, such as questionnaires and self-report surveys (MacIntyre et al., 2001). However, due to theoretical and methodological constraints, these studies have only confirmed the existence of a linear, cause-and-effect relationship between variables, with psychological variables behaving as proximal antecedents and the contextual variables as only indirectly affecting learners' L2 WTC

(Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Dornyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 207; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2002). For example, it has been shown that psychological variables such as communication apprehension (CA) and perceived communicative competence exert a direct influence on L2 WTC, while contextual factors, such as social support, ethnolinguistic vitality and culture exert an indirect impact on L2 WTC (Clement et al., 2003; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Wen & Clement, 2003).

Recently, however, the pyramid model with its emphasis on the linear interaction of the variables affecting learners' WTC and the overstated significance of psychological variables over other variables has been questioned. It has been argued that contextual and other variables could also interact with learners' WTC directly and that the interaction is not always linear. For example, it has been shown that while sometimes the psychological variables such as the desire to communicate and self-confidence play a major role in students' WTC, a number of other contextual variables, such as topic, interlocutor and conversational context, also exert a strong influence on L2 WTC (Cao, 2014; Kang, 2005; Peng, 2014). Thus, to account for the dynamic and nonlinear behaviour of L2 WTC, these studies have called for an alternative approach.

The Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) has been offered as a highly promising framework to explain the complex nature of L2 WTC. According to the theory, learners' communication in L2 is not determined by a single variable, for example, their L2 proficiency; rather, it is characterized by a complex interaction of a multiplicity of

psychological, contextual and linguistic variables (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Most importantly, the interaction between variables is dynamic in that it changes on a number of timescales, months, weeks, days and even seconds.

However, while the theory seems promising in helping to understand learners' L2 WTC, more studies are needed to confirm its validity. Thus, to contribute to a better understanding of how the DST could help to explain learners' L2 WTC, this exploratory case study adopts the DST approach to further examine the interaction between learners' L2 WTC and its underlying variables in an unexplored ESL university classroom in Pakistan. Focusing on six postgraduate business students, it utilises classroom observations, learner diaries, stimulated recalls (StRs) and biographic questionnaires to determine factors affecting students' L2 WTC and the nature of the interaction between the factors.

In this article, we will first outline the key studies that have explored learners' L2 WTC from a dynamic perspective by focusing on the dynamic interrelations between the construct and its determining variables within specific contexts. We will then explain the DST and how it has the potential to contribute to our better understanding of learners' L2 WTC. We will then proceed with the explanation and justification for our research design and present the results in line with the research questions posed in this study. Implications for both researchers and teachers will also be provided.

L2 WTC FROM A PROCESS-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE

Recently, viewing L2 WTC as a state-like phenomenon, a handful of qualitative and mixed method studies have offered a fresher look into the complex nature of L2 WTC and the relationship between underlying psychological and contextual variables (Cao, 2014; Leger & Storch, 2009; Peng, 2014). Employing socio-cultural and socio-cognitive frameworks and a variety of research methods, such as classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, learners' diaries, stimulated recall (StR), these studies have increasingly demonstrated that L2 WTC is constructed as a result of a dynamic interplay between both psychological variables, such as perceived opportunity and emotions, and contextual variables, such as topic, interlocutor and conversational context (Cao, 2009; Pattapong, 2010; Peng, 2014; Suksawas, 2011).

For example, Cao's (2014) study examining the relationship between variables affecting learners' (n=12) L2 WTC in a university classroom in New Zealand showed that interaction between variables occurred in a non-linear manner, whereby some variables such as topic, teacher and interactional context, exerted a powerful impact at a specific time but demonstrated a lower strength at other times. Based on the findings, the study concluded that the relationship between variables was 'too complex to be predictable' (Cao, 2014, p. 807). Other studies have also proved that higher self-confidence does not always lead to higher L2 WTC. Instead, sometimes self-confidence or motivation exert strong impact, while at other times, it plays a relatively less significant role in determining

L2 WTC (MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Pattapong, 2010; Yashima, Ikeda, & Nakahira, 2016).

Furthermore, in addition to providing evidence for a non-linear interaction between the variables affecting L2 WTC, these studies have also shown that L2 WTC varies not only from situation-to-situation but also from moment-to-moment within a conversation situation (Cao, 2009; Kang, 2005). Some of the studies have even demonstrated the complex nature of change by variations in L2 WTC on multiple timescales, such as seconds, days, weeks and months (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Peng, 2014). For instance, Peng's (2014) longitudinal study in a Chinese context showed that learners' (n=4) L2 WTC displayed variations within a classroom situation and across classroom situations over a semester.

To summarise, with an overarching focus on psychological and macro-contextual variables, previous research into L2 WTC has glossed over the integral relationship between psychological, contextual and physiological variables. Most of the studies focusing on the examination of individual variables have, however, offered only linear and componential explanations of the behaviour of L2 WTC and, therefore, failed to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of L2 WTC and its idiosyncratic nature (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 196). As a result, there is an incomplete understanding of the construct of situational WTC, as pointed out by Kang (2005), and more studies adopting different

theoretical frameworks to capture the complex nature of learners' L2 WTC are, therefore, needed (289–90).

L2 WTC FROM THE DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE

The DST has been argued to have the potential to explore the underlying variables and to encapsulate the complex and dynamic behaviour of L2 WTC (De Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Lowie, 2013). According to this theory, language development is a dynamic system predicted by a complex and dynamic interaction between a variety of interdependent psychological and contextual variables. From a DST perspective, a system is defined as any natural, social, psychological or linguistic phenomenon which constitutes a whole and comes into being as a result of interaction between numbers of underlying constituents (De Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 8). The dynamic systems constantly undergo variations on complex timescales ranging from years, months to milliseconds (Lowie, 2013, p. 6). For instance, while learners' L2 development can change on a longitudinal scale, such as an academic semester or mid-term, their motivation, anxiety and perceived competence can fluctuate from moment to moment.

The variables determining dynamic systems are interrelated and act interdependently rather than independently. That is, change in a variable occurs as a result of change(s) in interrelated variables. For instance, a learner's motivation to participate in a class activity might increase or decrease due to the nature of the task or discouraging behaviour of his/her peers. However, change in dynamic systems is disproportionate and non-linear. The

property of non-linearity is also referred to as the butterfly effect (Dornyei, 2009, p. 104). That is, sometimes a slight change in a variable might have a disproportionate effect on learners' L2 WTC, while at other times even major perturbations in the underlying variables cause little impact on their L2 communication. In addition, non-linearity also means that an increase in a single variable, such as higher self-confidence or motivation, does not always result in higher L2 use.

In addition, dynamic systems adapt to the overall micro– and macro–environment they exist in. For instance, change in a learner's motivation to engage in classroom activities occurs due to changes in learners' classroom environment, such as task or interlocutor (Waninge, Dornyei, & De Bot, 2014, p. 719). Due to co-adaptability, the dynamic systems display self-organisation. It refers to the process whereby dynamic systems enter a new state as a result of the complex and nonlinear interaction of underlying variables (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011, p. 165). For example, when a previously silent learner demonstrates L2 communication in the class, his L2 WTC can be said to have self-organized from a previous state, that is, silence, into a new preferred state, that is L2 communication.

Thus, an increasing number of studies have shown that the DST allows to capture a variety of factors influencing L2 WTC as well as to understand their complex relations. In addition, it offers to examine change in L2 learners' communicational behaviour on different timescales, such as months, weeks, situations and moments. This theory, thus,

appears to be particularly promising in shedding more light on the complex nature of learners' L2 learning process. However, despite its promising potential, it has been little utilised to confirm its suitability to understand the nature of learners' L2 WTC. Thus, in order to contribute to our better understanding of the L2 WTC construct, this present study adopts the DST approach and examines the interrelations and interaction between a number of psychological, contextual and linguistic variables in a university classroom context in Pakistan. Specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the factors which influence postgraduate business students' L2 WTC in a university classroom in Pakistan?

2) What is the nature of the interaction between factors underlying L2 WTC of the participants?

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the complex and dynamic behaviour of L2 WTC, the current study adopted a multiple case mixed method approach. The case study approach suited the aims of the present study, for it allowed us to investigate how and why questions regarding learners' L2 WTC (Duff, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009) and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the variables and their role in determining students' communicational behaviour in a bounded context such as a Business Communication (BC) class in the Pakistani university context.

Context

Macro-context: University culture in Pakistan

University classrooms in Pakistan are characterised by content-focus, whole-class teacher-fronted interaction, frequent reliance on L1 and large class size consisting between 45 and 100 students. The classrooms are predominantly teacher-centred with the teacher exercising considerable power over planning lessons, conducting classroom activities, controlling students' participation and deciding assessment criteria. While the module/course is primarily decided by the board of studies of the university, classroom-specific matters, such as text and topic selection for class discussion, are decided by classroom teacher (Akhter, 2013; Bughio, 2013; Rehmani, 2006).

Micro-context: BC classroom

The context of the current study was BC class of a Master of Business Administration (MBA-II) programme. The BC was aimed at developing students' understanding of the forms, functions and process of verbal (and non-verbal) communication in order for them to be able to cope with the communication challenges at the workplace in future. More specifically, the course was meant to enable students to develop a variety of communication skills, such as effective presentation skills, good reading and writing skills, including writing memos, letters and reports, and editing, proofreading and revising drafts. Since English is used for correspondence in both public

and private sector organisations in Pakistan, students of BC were supposed to be able to make effective use of English for communication.

The module was led by a teacher (pseudonym, Ahmed) possessing Masters of Arts (MA) degree in English (Literature) and four years of experience of teaching BC. One of the BC classes (that is, the 4th observed class) was also conducted by a substitute teacher (pseudonym, Faiz) who possessed an MA in English (Literature) as well as an MA in Applied Linguistics (AL). Most notably, the teacher exercised greater control over classroom activities. For instance, classroom activities, such as discussion, debate or presentations, and students' talk time were regulated by the teacher. Most importantly, students' marks, including marks on class participation, attendance, assignments and mid-term exams were under the control of the teacher. Students displayed respect for the teacher and exercised relatively little say in these matters.

One of the most interesting features of the BC class was its multilingual and multicultural student population. The class consisted of 45 students belonging to a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds from across the country. While a greater majority of students spoke Sindhi as their L1, a small number of students also used Punjabi, Urdu and Buroshski as their respective L1. Despite the official policy of English as the medium of instruction (MOI) (NEP, 2009), class interaction predominantly involved code switching between English, Urdu and Sindhi. Thus, this unique multicultural context was deemed especially suitable for enhancing our understanding of factors that could influence learners'

L2WTC. We predicted to uncover a multitude of factors and to observe a multitude of complex relations that have not been recorded by previous studies so far.

Participants

Six postgraduate students out of 45 postgraduate students were recruited using purposive sampling strategy. The sampling was purposive because the study was looking for information-rich and specific cases. That is, all the students had to be doing the same major, be in the same study year, had the advanced English proficiency level, were willing to participate in this study and attending the BC class. In addition, the sampling was convenient since there was only one class doing BC that semester. According to Newby (2010), convenient sampling is used 'when the population is not known or when the population is very small' (251-2). It was convenient because not many studies have been conducted with postgraduate students in the context of Pakistan.

Participants were between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-three. While Dua, Hina and Aliza were females, Zubair, Zeeshan and Umair were males (all names are changed). It is worth noting here that although all of them spoke Sindhi as their mother tongue, they were also proficient in Urdu and English. The profile of the participants is presented in Table 1:

Table 1

Biographic Information of Participants

Data Collection

Since researching complex and dynamic systems requires a complex apparatus including a variety of empirical methods (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008, p. 229), the current study employed methodological triangulation involving classroom observations, learners' diaries, StR interviews and biographic questionnaires. First of all, participants were administered questionnaires in order to obtain their biographic information, including personality, education, linguistic background, the experience of English language learning and self-perceived L2 WTC. The questionnaires were administered to the participants at the beginning of the data collection process. The queries in the questionnaire were also followed up in the interviews. For example, participants were provided with opportunities to describe their personalities, educational background and trait-level L2 WTC in detail.

Fourteen non-participant, structured classroom observations were conducted to observe participants' communicational behaviour in the BC classroom (Dornyei, 2007, p. 185). Participants were observed and video-recorded in the two-hour long BC class twice every week for nine weeks. Instances of participants' verbal and non-verbal communication, for example, hand-raising and private response, were recorded during five minute intervals using a structured observation scheme initially adopted from Cao (2009) but later modified to suit the context of the present study. In addition, brief field notes were also taken during classroom observations recording the topic(s) of discussion, activities

and verbal and non-verbal interaction between teacher and students and between students (Bryman, 2009, p. 447).

Participants' diaries and StR interviews were also used as introspective methods to explore their psychological processes as they engaged in L2 classroom communication (Bailey, 1991, p. 60). In total, 84 diaries were collected over nine weeks. Diaries consisted of two open-ended questions asking the participants to elaborate on the situation(s) when they were willing or unwilling to communicate in that particular class. Diaries were given out to participants before the class and were collected on the same day.

The video-recordings of the observed classes were watched recursively and the diaries examined iteratively to note down the specific events to follow up with each participant in the StRs (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 17). Three rounds of StRs were conducted. The first and second rounds of StRs were conducted after six classroom observations respectively. On average, the length of each interview in the first two rounds was around one hour. The third round of StRs was conducted immediately after the last two classroom observations. The length of each interview was around 35 minutes. Although the instances to be followed up in StRs were selected before the interview, the participants were also given complete freedom to stop and play the video to share their recollections of any instances in the observed classes.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed from the vantage point of the research questions of the present study. The data from individual cases were analysed to explore the factors contributing to a participant's L2 WTC and the dynamic features of their interaction (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 90–172). First, classroom observations were examined using the frequency measure to calculate the number of occurrences of L2 use by each participant in each observed episode (MacKey & Gass, 2005, p. 251). The number of instances of L2 use by a participant were calculated and checked across 14 observed classes.

Additionally, the qualitative data from learners' diaries and StRs were triangulated and examined using a qualitative context analysis and constant comparison approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 476). The data were read recursively to identify the specific features of the interaction between variables that caused fluctuations in each participant's L2 WTC. The patterns of interaction between variables were compared and contrasted across individual participants to examine the idiosyncratic nature of their L2 WTC. The frequency measure was used to identify, calculate and check the number of occurrences of particular variables in the data from each participant. This helped to identify specific variables that shaped participants' L2 WTC in the classroom. In order to maintain the trustworthiness, the data were triangulated and corroborated. Moreover, thick details of the context, participants and data collection procedures have also been provided for the future

research (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 180; Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 277–8; Yin, 2009, pp. 79–82).

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' L2 WTC

In this section, we will first address the first research question regarding the variables affecting students' L2 WTC in a Pakistani classroom context and will then consider the dynamic interplay between the variables.

The study results revealed that a number of contextual, psychological, linguistic and physiological factors co-determined students' L2 WTC, with the contextual factors exerting the major influence on students' behaviour. The following Figure 5 represents the types and categories of these factors in total.

Figure 5

Types of Factors Underlying L2 WTC

Contextual Factors

Contextual variables refer to the factors 'embedded in the immediate classroom context' (Cao, 2009, p. 106) and encompass such sub-variables as topic, teacher, classmate, task type, classroom atmosphere, interactional context and physical location. The following Figure 5 presents the frequency of contextual variables identified in this study.

Figure 5

Frequency of Contextual Factors

Topic

The data showed that interesting and familiar topics evoked higher L2 WTC, while difficult, boring and irrelevant topics excited lower L2 WTC. Interest refers to participants' curiosity in and engagement with and feeling of enjoyment associated with the topic (Dornyei, 2009, p. 184), while familiarity involves pre-class preparation, participants' prior knowledge. Sometimes interest, familiarity and relevance jointly promoted participants' L2 WTC. For example, the following quote from Umair's diary best illustrates the influence of topic on L2 WTC,

> Because there was my favourite topic of management (organisational communication) and also there were some practical examples in my mind.

The majority of participants reported that the topics relevant or related to their life-experiences enhanced their L2 WTC, as the following quote from Aliza shows,

> At that time many experiences are running in my mind. Because I had gone through many experiences related to this superstition. And at that time I was really willing to talk and share my experiences.

Teacher

It is important to note here that the interaction in the BC class was predominantly teacher-fronted and teacher-mediated; therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that the teacher emerged as the most significant determinant of students' L2 WTC. The teacher's behaviour had a strong bearing on participants' anxiety, emotions and motivation to participate in

class activities. Familiarity with and friendly, encouraging and respectful behaviour of the teacher were the strongest determinants of students' L2 WTC.

Students demonstrated higher anxiety in Ahmed's class because of his jocular nature, while they displayed higher self-confidence and L2 WTC in Faiz's class due to the latter's friendly and respectful attitude. For example, all the participants displayed higher L2 WTC in the fourth observed class due to their familiarity with the teacher (that is, Faiz) and his congenial attitude. The subsequent quote from Aliza' data presents a comparison between the two teachers. Reporting on her higher L2 WTC in Faiz's class, Aliza stated,

We had been his [Faiz's] students before that. And it is his nature that he always listens but never taunts anybody; but I have noticed this habit [of taunting] in Sir Ahmed who always taunts which I don't like. That is why I am more willing to talk in this [Faiz's] class as compared to sir Ahmed's class.

Peers

The majority of students preferred to engage in L2 conversation with classmates they were familiar or friendly with, while they avoided engaging in L2 communication with disrespectful and non-serious classmates. For example, Aliza stated the following,

I wanted to give my comments but I remained quiet because…I personally don't like him…He is not the one I would like to make friends with…I thought if I said something to him and he did not take it as a comment but as criticism, he might say something bad to me in return.

Task Type

All the participants exhibited high motivation to participate in tasks, such as role-playing, Chinese Whisper, video-presentations and quiz, although the majority of them displayed higher L2 WTC to perform in role-plays. For instance, Dua, Hina and Zeeshan were generally interested in role-plays. Quite strikingly, while Zeeshan exploited less opportunities for L2 use compared to the rest of the participants, he demonstrated higher WTC to perform in role-plays involving L2 use. Zeeshan expressed his thoughts as following,

> When we were given this activity [i.e. role-play] to perform, I was thinking that it's going to be fun….when there is an activity, no one is missed out; everyone is given the task to perform. So I was feeling good about that activity.

Zubair and Umair specifically preferred to play the roles of 'a group leader' and 'manager' respectively. Compared to other participants, Umair demonstrated higher L2 WTC to do class presentations.

Classroom Atmosphere

Classroom atmosphere involves 'the mood, emotions or climate sensed and shared by the students' (Peng, 2012, p. 208). In this study, stress-free and friendly ambience of the class enhanced participants' L2 WTC, while atmosphere involving face-threat, humiliation, a general silence and non-seriousness of the classmates inhibited participants' L2 WTC. For example, Umair stated the following,

Due to debate between class mates and the environment, class was very talkative; in other words, we can say everyone was participating and also girls ask questions from me.

It is interesting to note here that the majority of the students also avoided communication when the mood of the class was humorous. For instance, Hina articulated her feelings as the following,

Because sometime classmates make jokes and say something very bad which does not sound good, so I just try to avoid communication.

Interactional Context

All the students were observed in a whole-class teacher-fronted context. The class mainly consisted of the teacher-fronted activities, including discussion, tasks, readings or lectures. Teacher-fronted activities refer to the tasks which students performed while the teacher was present. All the participants unequivocally preferred activity-based classes involving discussions, presentations and tasks. For example, in Umair's words,

I was willing to talk because there were presentations and debate on general topic and practical knowledge for being a good speaker.

Conversely, students displayed strong aversion to classes exclusively based on teacher-talk or lectures, or activities involving listening, reading or writing on the part of

the students. For example, Zeeshan attributed his silence to the lecture-based class in the words as follow,

> Whole the time we listen to teacher who was teaching about written communication.

Physical Location

Students were free to sit where they liked in the class. Students arriving early occupied front seats while late-comers were forced to take back seats. Data suggest that students preferred to sit on the front or middle seats but attached a stigma to back seats. Whether a student was seated in the front row or a back bench also strongly affected their L2 WTC. Sitting on a front bench provided students with the opportunity to draw their teacher's attention and to use L2. Conversely, sitting on a back bench destroyed their self-confidence, affected their self-esteem, caused hurdles in their making their voice heard. For example, Zubair's quote is a classic example of students' perception and feelings while sitting on a back bench.

> So when I am sitting on the back benches, I am a back bencher, it prevents me from active participation. Whenever I try, everybody looks at me and I get confused whether whatever I am saying is right or wrong.

The quote shows that Zubair perceived a back bench to be a disadvantageous, anxiety-inducing and confidence-threatening position.

Linguistic Factors

Linguistic factors affecting students' L2 WTC included their L2 proficiency and reliance on codeswitching. The following Figure 5.2 illustrates the frequency of these linguistic factors.

Figure 5.2

Frequency of Linguistic Factors

Code switching

As the data analysis showed, the students frequently used codeswitching between English, Sindhi and Urdu. Students' reliance on codeswitching was not just reflective of their lack of L2 proficiency but was also situated in the micro-level situational factors, including use of codeswitching by interlocutors and the nature of the task and the macro-level, multilingual social context. Students switched between English and Sindhi or Urdu depending on the use of L1 and codeswitching by their interlocutors. For instance, in the role-play that Dua performed, she frequently switched between English, Urdu and Sindhi depending on the language that her interlocutors used.

Moreover, codeswitching also served as a strategy to maintain or continue conversation in L2. For example, in the fourth observed class, Dua told the class a story. While the entire narration was in English, she codeswitched using an Urdu word to be able to continue and complete the story. Additionally, students were also observed using codeswitching during both informal off-task or pre-task conversation in class. For example,

Hina boldly reported that she used Sindhi for informal communication with her friends in the class.

L2 Proficiency

L2 proficiency refers to participants' ability to comprehend or produce L2 vocabulary or grammatical structures at a given moment in conversation. In this study, students varied in their levels of proficiency in L2 grammar and vocabulary. Aliza and Hina explicitly attributed lower L2 WTC to their lower proficiency in L2 grammar, while Zeeshan, Umair and Dua expressed a lack of vocabulary as a hurdle. For instance, Zeeshan candidly expressed, 'vocabulary is a hurdle...'. Notably, students' lack of L2 proficiency was negatively related to their self-confidence. For example, Aliza's trait-like lack of proficiency in English grammar also involved a deep feeling of anxiety and face-threat. In her words,

> When I speak without grammar and all…my friends laugh at me and say 'please don't talk like an illiterate person'….it [grammar] is a hurdle.

Psychological Factors

Psychological factors identified in this study included perceived opportunity, anxiety, motivation, emotion, pre-occupation, perceived appearance and cognitive block. The following Figure 5.3 presents the occurrence of psychological factors in the data.

Figure 5.3

Frequency of Psychological Factors

Perceived Opportunity

Students' L2 use strongly depended on their perception of the opportunity to talk. The majority of the students reported that their L2 WTC was hampered by their classmates' interruption. Some of the students avoided communication because the teacher was engaged in communication with another classmate. Interestingly, it was observed that Dua, Hina and Umair actively sought out and exploited opportunities for L2 use, while Zeeshan, Zubair and Aliza demonstrated dependence on their interlocutors, especially the teacher, for the opportunities. For instance, the following quotes show that while Hina actively appropriated the opportunity, Zubair preferred to wait for the teacher to provide him with the opportunity to make L2 use.

> I was thinking that lest the time goes off and I miss the opportunity, I must grab a chance to read out my letter. (Hina)

> When my teacher openly invites me to participate; so it is the invitation that matters which encourages me to talk. (Zubair)

Anxiety

Anxiety worked as the most debilitating psychological factor. Most importantly, students' anxiety was mainly related to contextual factors, such as real or anticipated fear of the teacher's or classmates' criticism and jokes, lack of preparation for the topic, face-threatening atmosphere, losing marks, sitting on the back bench and perceived physical

appearance. The most frequently cited anxiety-inducing factor included the teacher's or classmates' attitude, remarks or mood. For example, Hina stated that she avoided communication due to the teacher's funny mood and face-threat.

I was fearing from the response of the teacher as sometimes he makes fun of students which makes me feel embarrassed.

Some of the participants also displayed anxiety regarding their lack of perceived competence. For instance, Umair experienced anxiety when he was struggling with vocabulary to express his thoughts and feelings. This is what he said,

I was thinking that what type of words I should use in my sentence that really impresses the teacher and the whole class. But there were no words at that time. Because I was thinking that I am not good in English...

However, the relation between anxiety and perceived competence was less strong than relation between anxiety and interlocutors.

Motivation

Students' motivation displayed a complex mix of intrinsic and extrinsic as well as trait and state motivation. Students' intrinsic motivation was related to factors, including their interest to learn, desire to participate in tasks, become good professionals and improve their communication skills in L2 English, while their extrinsic motivation was related to grades in exams and impression made to the teacher or classmates.

Students' trait-level motivation was related to their desire to become good managers and L2 communicators and their interest in the MBA programme, while their state-level motivation was regulated by situational factors, such as preparation for topic, interest in class tasks, desire to talk to the teacher and encouragement by the teacher or classmates. For example, Umair's L2 WTC was influenced by his intrinsic motivation to do classroom presentations in order to become a good leader, L2 communicator and manager.

I want to be a good leader; I want to be a good communicator; a good manager.

Conversely, Aliza's L2 WTC was affected by her extrinsic motivation to appease her parents. She stated the following,

To do an MBA was my parent's choice; it had never been my field of interest.

Appreciation and encouragement by the teacher or classmates also served as the sources of participants' extrinsic motivation and L2 WTC. Conversely, discouragement and critical comments deteriorated their motivation and L2 WTC. For instance, Aliza said that hearing 'good comments from the teacher and classmates' promoted her L2 WTC.

Emotions

Positive or negative emotions also affected students' L2 WTC. The positive feelings that the students reported included empathy and good mood, while the negative feelings involved anger, revenge, humiliation, feeling hurt, sadness, being upset, boredom

and shyness. For example, the majority of students avoided offering negative comments on their classmates' class presentation because they would discourage their classmates and deteriorate their relations with them. For example, Zeeshan stated the following,

> If I had said that to him in class, his mood would have gone off; he would have thought, 'even my friend gave negative comments to me'.

In contrast, students experienced feelings of humiliation or frustration if they were ridiculed by the teacher or the classmates. Quite strikingly, the feelings of anger or revenge not only decreased but also increased their L2 WTC in class. Hina, for example, said her L2 WTC plummeted because she was angry at a classmate for addressing her disrespectfully. Conversely, Umair stated that his L2 WTC increased with a purpose to criticise a classmate's presentation since she had criticised his presentation a few days back.

Zeeshan reported that he felt bored during the class on an irrelevant topic. This is what he stated, 'because when a person does not enjoy topic he does not want to communicate'. Somewhat differently, Dua and Aliza reported that they experienced being emotionally hurt by their classmates' remarks.

Pre-Occupation

Pre-occupation refers to a state of mind wherein a participant is engaged in reflection on the topic of discussion, assignment or class presentation or thinking about

personal matters not related to the topic. In this study, this factor also played a role in determining students' L2 WTC. For instance, Dua reported that her L2 WTC was lower because she was thinking about some domestic issues at that moment. Zubair was engaged in an inner dialogue about a class activity.

I was thinking that maybe I should write another letter. So that was going on in my mind. And I was also trying to figure out problems in others' letters.

Similarly, Umair reported that he was not willing to talk because he was pre-occupied with the presentation he had to give in that class. He stated the following,

I was talking to myself in my mind, 'whether I should have written that note or not; whether I should do the presentation or not?'

Cognitive Block

Students also reported experiencing cognitive blocks, that is, lack of ideas, which then led to an impediment of their L2 WTC. Sometimes students lacked ideas relevant to the topic of discussion, while, at other times the ideas slipped off their mind or the ideas they wanted to share were already presented by their classmates. For instance, Hina reported that because of an unpleasant event in the class, the ideas slipped off her mind, and Zubair stated that he remained silent because the ideas he wanted to share were already shared by his classmates. Moreover, Dua reported that she was not participating in the discussion because she had forgotten the ideas. Here is what she said,

Here when the teacher was talking I was not participating because I had forgotten most of the points I had studied.

Perceived Appearance

Students' perception of their own appearance, such as looks and dressing in the class also affected their L2 WTC. Whether a student was satisfied with their shirt, shoes or shaving, affected their self-confidence and L2 WTC. For instance, Umair attributed his lower L2 WTC to his dissatisfaction with his shirt and shoes. Zubair also displayed a trait-like relation between L2 WTC and physical appearance.

Sometimes when I am not dressed well and that prevents me from going before the class and talk.

Physiological factors

A number of physiological factors affected students' WTC in both L1 and L2 in class. The following Figure 5.4 displays the frequency of these factors.

 Figure 5.4

Frequency of Physiological Factors

Physiological factors emerged as the debilitating factors in this study. Whether a student was feeling hungry, sick or unwell, this prevented them from active participation in class. For instance, Umair reported feeling hungry as a major factor destroying his L2

WTC in a number of classes. He stated, 'I was sitting in class but my mind was not 100% in class…because I was hungry'.

On certain occasions, Aliza's L2 WTC was affected by sickness and feeling tired due to sleeplessness. For example, in the thirteenth class, Aliza said, 'at that time, I was feeling like …err…vomiting. Feeling sick'. Similarly, Zubair's throat infection prevented his participation in L2 communication.

THE DYNAMIC INTERPLAY BETWEEN VARIABLES

The second research question focused on the nature of interrelations and interaction between the variables. As the data analysis revealed, a dynamic interdependence between contextual, psychological, linguistic and physiological variables emerged. The variables displayed interconnectedness and interdependence in the sense that a change in a variable caused changes in other related variables. The variables interacted in complex configurations to determine students' L2 WTC. The following quote by Hina is a classic example of the interconnectedness of contextual (i.e. topic and discussion) and psychological (anxiety and self-confidence) variables that promoted her L2 WTC in the class.

I was willing to communicate in class because today's class is totally based on discussion. The topic is quite interesting that made me talk. It seems that when you are much confident about any topic and you don't have the fear of audience too, you can better express your opinions, feelings and ideas.

It can be noticed that an interest in topic and the task type worked interdependently to affect the student's L2 WTC.

Nonlinear interaction between variables

The interaction between variables was not linear but nonlinear. Sometimes a slight change in a variable produced dramatic changes in students' L2 WTC, while at other times, even a conglomeration of facilitating variables made little effect on it. For instance, it was noticed that interest/familiarity did not always result in students' higher L2 WTC and L2 use. Students highly interested in a topic sometimes recoiled from communication due to a fear of criticism or jokes by the teacher or classmates or a stressful, face-threatening classroom environment.

Conversely, sometimes even anxiety or face-threat did not prevent them from L2 communication. For instance, Aliza reported that she experienced higher L2 WTC in the fourth class due to her interest in the topics, liking for the teacher, interactional context (teacher-student and student-student) and the task type (whole-class discussion).

At that time, suddenly those experiences crossed my mind. At that time, I was willing to talk and share my experiences.

However, despite a number of facilitating factors, Aliza's willingness dropped due to her lack of perceived communicative competence. She stated that '[her] English [was] not that good'.

In contrast, despite a higher trait-like L2 proficiency, Zubair demonstrated lower L2 WTC compared to other students, especially Hina, Dua, Aliza and Umair. This, thus, shows that higher L2 proficiency does not necessarily translate into higher L2 WTC in class and that a number of interrelated factors operate to increase or decrease L2 WTC.

Co-adaptation and self-organisation

Students' L2 WTC exhibited a remarkable tendency to co-adapt with the classroom environment. L2 WTC underwent variations as a result of change in contextual factors, such as stress-free environment, inspiration from peers, verbal or non-verbal behaviour of the teacher. Students' L2 WTC showed a gradual increase as a result of their classmates' participation in class activities or encouragement by the teacher or peer(s). For instance, Aliza attributed her higher L2 WTC in the first session of the fifth observed class to encouragement by the teacher, while in the second session, she reported lower L2 WTC due to feeling discouraged by the teacher.

The property of co-adaptability is closely associated with the property of self-organisation. Due to co-adaptability, participants' L2 WTC self-organised into and out of attractor or repeller states. Attractor state refers to a preferred state in which L2 WTC entered as a result of facilitating factors, such as interest in topic, friendly behaviour of interlocutors and higher motivation. Repeller state is a stable state which L2 WTC entered due to the impact of debilitating factors, such as anxiety or lack of perceived opportunity.

In the second session of the twelfth observed class, Umair displayed a downturn in his L2 WTC due to his lack of self-confidence. However, his L2 WTC increased as result of inspiration from his classmates and an introspection regarding his silent behaviour in the classroom that day. Here is how his L2 WTC self-organised into an attractor state:

> I was confused and was asking myself why I am silent? why should I feel myself inferior to others? I got inspiration from my friends that they have questions but they don't want to ask, why? Then I thought that I need to ask the question and inspire them how to ask the question.

The previous example shows how Umair's L2 WTC self-organised and emerged from silence, confusion, feeling of inferiority, into L2 communication, that is, asking question, as a result of the complex, dynamic and non-linear nature of interaction between variables.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to explore factors and the complex nature of their interaction that determine postgraduate students' L2 WTC in a Pakistani university classroom where English was used as the medium of instruction. Adopting the DST approach, it utilised a number of data collection methods, such as classroom observation, learner diaries, stimulated recall interviews and biographic questionnaires to collect the data for over fourteen classes.

The study findings revealed that students' L2 WTC was affected by a number of contextual, linguistic, psychological and physiological factors. While the study confirmed that psychological factors, such as perceived opportunity, anxiety and motivation, interacted with L2 WTC, it has also highlighted how contextual factors, most specifically topic, teacher and task type, played a major role in determining L2 WTC. Learners' L2 WTC was strongly influenced by interest in topic, teachers' behaviour, task type and interactional context. For instance, both interest in topic and task type interacted with motivation to determine L2 WTC; teachers' behaviour was strongly related to learners' L2 WTC through anxiety; and, whole-class interactional pattern affected learners' lack of perceived opportunity.

In addition, this study has highlighted a generic character of factors influencing learners' L2 WTC. That is to say, while previous studies in ESL/EFL contexts have shown that most of the factors, such as perceived communicative competence, anxiety, motivation, interest in topic and interactional context, are explicitly related to and affected learners' WTC in their second language (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; Peng, 2014), the present study demonstrated that factors including anxiety, motivation, topic, task type and interactional context, could also affect participants' WTC in their first language. For example, the teachers' taunting, lack of interest in topic or perceived opportunity inhibited participants' WTC in both L2 and L1. These generic factors were observed frequently in learners' classroom interaction.

The relative frequency of these generic factors influencing students' L2 WTC could be attributed to the students' advanced level of English language learning and the content-driven nature of the BC module. Firstly, the students already possessed several years of experience of L2 learning. Secondly, since the BC module was aimed at theoretical and practical aspects of written and oral business communication at workplace, the students were more concerned about mastering the content rather than focusing on L2 learning per se. It is also worth emphasising here that although the behaviour of L2 WTC at a specific moment was determined jointly by contextual, psychological, linguistic and physiological factors, the contextual factors, especially the teacher, topic and task type, and the linguistic factor, that is, codeswitching, exerted a relatively stronger impact than other variables.

Furthermore, the data analysis showed that factors, such as pre-occupation, waiting for the teacher's attention and empathy with peers, which apparently inhibited students' L2 use, indicated dynamic silence (King, 2013, pp. 142–145). However, silence was not always reflective of a complete dissociation from the class activities on the part of the students. Rather, the students showed a keen interest and active mental involvement in the class proceedings even when they appeared to be silent. Thus, while students' L2 use reflected on their willingness, their silence did not necessarily indicate their avoidance or unwillingness to communicate in L2.

To summarise, the current study has demonstrated the suitability of DST framework for an in-depth and holistic understanding of L2 WTC. This study further

confirms that the interaction between variables underlying L2 WTC is characterised by interdependence, non-linearity and co-adaptability and self-organisation. Sometimes a single variable, for example topic, inspired learners' L2 WTC, while at other times, even a combination of higher perceived competence and higher motivation did not work to break their silence. Furthermore, the strength of variables determining L2 WTC varied from moment-to-moment. For example, sometimes the teacher's behaviour exerted a strong negative impact, while at other times, it played less influential role in affecting L2 WTC. Due to the non-linear interaction of variables and variations in their strength, the behaviour of L2 WTC can, therefore, be too complex to be predicted at a specific moment. It is also crucial to point out here that students' silence also displayed dynamic features involving mental engagement, pre-occupation, cognitive block and inner speech and that their silence should not, therefore, be misconstrued as unwillingness to communicate in L2. However, more studies are needed to better understand students' silence in class.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the current study find resonance with studies regarding the ES/FL learning and teaching (Pattapong, 2010; Peng, 2011; Wen & Clement, 2003). The students in the present study showed strong concern for face-protection and observed respect for teacher's authority. More specifically, the study showed that postgraduate students both showed respect to their teachers and demanded respect in return. In the light of these findings, it is suggested that teachers need to be sensitive to learners' cultural-orientations

and avoid passing judgments that could likely threaten students' face and undermine their confidence. They need to demonstrate sincere concern for students' learning by offering support and feedback which may, then, enhance learners' L2 WTC and help them to improve on their current level of L2 proficiency (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 159).

Additionally, opportunities for learners' L2 use are essential for promoting their L2 WTC. Research in ES/FL contexts has shown that learners get most of the opportunities for L2 use inside the classroom (Cao, 2009; Peng, 2014). However, one of the biggest hurdles in providing equitable opportunities for L2 use is the large size of the class in the Pakistani context (Bughio, 2013; Harfitt, 2012; Shamim, 1996), which could affect group cohesiveness and induce anxiety eventually leading to lower L2 WTC (Liu, 2005; Wen & Clement, 2003). A large class in a Pakistani context, also makes it difficult for teachers to, first, examine the non-linear and idiosyncratic nature of WTC of individual students, and, thereupon, and devise specific strategies to enhance students' L2 WTC (Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Shamim, 1996). Reducing class size seems to be an obvious alternative. However, in a Pakistani context this practice could face a number of challenges. One of them is the costs associated with the expansion of the university infrastructure and increasing teaching faculty (Sarwar, 2001). There seems to be less willingness on the part of both public and private sector higher education institutes to incur more costs. While the public sector universities in Pakistan receive limited funds from the government, the private sector institutes are profit-oriented and wish to make more profit with little investment. However,

given the limited funds universities receive from the government in Pakistan, the reduction of class size is currently not viable.

The financial constraints should not, however, discourage teachers from finding alternative ways of engaging their students. One of the possible solutions we would suggest is to make large classes work. As Cooper and Robinson (2000) suggest, teachers can 'make large classes small by systematically creating occasions for students to spend more time together in active, meaningful learning and thinking' (p. 14). This can be achieved by getting the teachers to make informed use of various interactional contexts. For instance, while lecturing is inevitable in a postgraduate context, teachers can get students to work in small groups or dyads making sure every student gets equal share of opportunities to talk. This could, then, help to mitigate the lack of opportunities and stressful class atmosphere to a greater extent.

Furthermore, the present study confirms that L2 WTC is a complex, dynamic and nonlinear variable. It is, therefore, essential for L2 teachers not only to be aware of the dynamic and nonlinear interaction of contextual, psychological, linguistic and physiological factors, but also to be sensitive to the individualistic and co-adaptive behaviour of learners' L2 WTC. Teacher education programs should specifically be designed to train pre-service and in-service ES/FL teachers into understanding and managing the non-linear and idiosyncratic behaviour of learners' L2 WTC.

This study focused on six cases of postgraduate university students in a Pakistani context. We acknowledge that there are likely many other factors that may exist in other contexts and that we need to further investigate them to better understand learners' WTC and then to help them in their learning. The DST is a promising tool to achieve this goal. Furthermore, while there was no attempt to generalise the findings of the present study to a larger population, we do, nevertheless, suggest that students participating in a number of different classroom situations and working with different ESL teachers should also be observed. This would, then, allow a fuller understanding of the factors affecting students' L2 WTC and their interaction in changing learning situations.

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