The influence of macro-level factors on L2 willingness to communicate

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Willingness to communicate (WTC), originally conceptualized as a stable, personality-based, trait-like predisposition in research in L1 communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987, 1991), was reconceptualized as a situated variable in L2 learning (MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, & Noels, 1998). Although initial studies on the situated nature of WTC focused on the structural complexity of L2 WTC through survey-based research (e.g., Yashima, 2002), situated L2 WTC has also underlined the dynamic nature of L2 WTC (Dornyei, 2005; Cao, 2006). Some studies have focused on fluctuations in WTC over lessons (Kang, 2005; Cao, 2006, 2011, 2014), over minutes (Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Bielak, 2015) and even over seconds in idiodynamic studies (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). All types of studies show how situational variables such as topic, task, time, context, and interlocutors influence L2 WTC.

Despite the several attempts to address the influence of various variables on L2 WTC, gaps still lie in that further longitudinal research is needed to document the macro-level factors that influence L2 WTC of high school EFL learners from different L1 backgrounds in today’s globalized world as most previous studies have focused largely on either ESL or university learners.

The present longitudinal study considers how macro-level factors influence L2 WTC of 12 high school learners of English in Yemen through identifying the influence of larger-scale cultural and institutional factors such as nation, culture, religion, and war on L2 WTC. The study employed a mixed research approach through using surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and weekly journals collected over one semester in 2015. Content analysis was then used to code and analyze the data deductively and inductively. This presentation will first offer a short overview of previous L2 WTC research and then will present the methodology, research findings, and pedagogical implications of the present study.

Keywords: WTC, EFL, L2.