Willingness to communicate in L2 writing: An exploratory study of Japanese EFL learners’ writing development

Sachiko Nakao
Anaheim University, Japan

Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to a readiness to use the second language (L2) in a particular setting (MacIntyre and Doucette, 2010). Based on the heuristic model of WTC consisting of multiple layers of learner variables, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) assert that an examination of WTC provides L2 researchers with the opportunity to integrate psychological, linguistic, and communicative approaches, which have often been treated in an isolated manner. The exploratory study presented here evolved from the reexamination of data from a quasi-experimental study investigating the effects of different types of written corrective feedback (WCF) on L2 writing proficiency. The experiment was conducted over 10 weeks with 27 beginner adult Japanese learners of English, who were assigned to one of two treatment groups. They completed a weekly writing assignment, on which each group received a different type of WCF from the teacher. Regardless of the types of WCF, however, the amount of writing produced each week by certain students increased significantly over time. These students not only produced longer essays, but their writing improved as well. An analysis based on questionnaire responses found a relationship between participants’ WTC and their written production. They wanted to share with the teacher their everyday life events, thoughts, feelings, and concerns through the written texts. In other words, their WTC was the driving force behind their motivation to write, which as a result facilitated their L2 learning. Based on the findings, implications for L2 writing pedagogy in relation to WTC will be discussed.

Keywords: L2 writing, willingness to communicate, corrective feedback.