



Section 3. Philology

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WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A REVIEW OF PETER MACINTYRE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

*Aybolgan T. Borasheva*¹

¹ PhD Student of Nukus State Pedagogical Institute Nukus, Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This paper discusses Peter MacIntyre's research on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition. MacIntyre pioneered the study of WTC in L2 and developed an influential model outlining factors that shape an individual's readiness to communicate in a second language. His work highlighted the roles of psychological variables, social context and classroom environment in influencing WTC. While influential, MacIntyre's research has also received some criticism regarding reliability, validity and generalizability. Comparison with other WTC researchers reveals differences in focus and approach. MacIntyre's work has implications for future SLA research, language curriculum design, teacher training, and use of technology to promote WTC.

Keywords: *Willingness to Communicate, second language acquisition, Peter MacIntyre, WTC in L2, psychological factors, social context, reliability, validity*

Introduction

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in a second language (L2) is a crucial factor that affects language learners' success in improving their linguistic and communicative skills. The concept of WTC in L2 was first introduced by Peter MacIntyre and colleagues (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) as the inclination of an individual to initiate communication in a second language when free to choose to do so. Understanding WTC in L2 has significant implications for both

language learning and teaching. Language learners with high WTC tend to participate more actively in communicative activities, which in turn, enhances their language proficiency (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002). In addition, teachers can develop instructional strategies that foster students' WTC, creating a more engaging and effective language learning environment (MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011).

This paper will focus on the research conducted by Peter MacIntyre and his colleagues

on WTC in L2. MacIntyre's work has provided valuable insights into the factors influencing WTC and has contributed to the development of pedagogical approaches that promote WTC in language learners.

Background on Peter MacIntyre

Peter D. MacIntyre is a Canadian psychologist and professor who has made significant contributions to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, MacIntyre completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Prince Edward Island before obtaining his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Western Ontario. He is currently a professor at Cape Breton University, where his research focuses on the psychological aspects of language learning. Throughout his academic career, MacIntyre has held various research and teaching positions at institutions around the world, including the University of Oxford and the University of Tokyo. He has been recognized with several awards for his research and teaching, including the Canadian Psychological Association's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Education and Training in Psychology (CPA, 2015).

MacIntyre's research primarily focuses on the psychological processes and factors involved in second language acquisition (SLA). His work has contributed significantly to our understanding of the role of anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, and other affective factors in language learning.

Perhaps MacIntyre's most well-known contribution to the field is the concept of "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) in a second language. Along with R. Clément, MacIntyre developed the WTC model, which posits that the decision to initiate communication in a second language is determined by a complex interplay of factors, including language anxiety, perceived communication competence, intergroup attitudes, social situation, and individual personality traits (Clément & MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al, 1999).

MacIntyre's Conceptualization of Willingness to Communicate in L2

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in a second language (L2) is a concept that has been extensively researched and articulated

ed by Peter D. MacIntyre. MacIntyre defines WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular moment with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). This readiness is not a fixed trait but an evolving state that can change based on a variety of factors such as the situation, the interlocutor, and the speaker's mood, among others (MacIntyre et al., 2001). MacIntyre proposed a heuristic model of variables influencing WTC in L2, which is underpinned by a layered structure of variables that interact in complex ways (MacIntyre et al., 1998). At the core are the immediate precursors to WTC — communicative self-confidence and desire to communicate with a specific person. These are influenced by a layer of situational variables, which in turn are influenced by a layer of individual variables, such as personality and intergroup attitudes. The model also recognizes the impact of social and individual context, as well as long-term and short-term environmental influences. MacIntyre's research has highlighted several key factors that influence WTC in L2. At the individual level, personality traits like extroversion and self-esteem can significantly impact one's WTC (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Moreover, self-perceived communication competence can also affect one's willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 2002). Another significant factor is the learner's emotional state. Anxiety, for instance, has been found to have a negative impact on WTC (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). On the other hand, positive emotions like excitement or interest can enhance WTC. At the situational level, the topic of conversation, the relationship between interlocutors, and the setting can all influence WTC (MacIntyre et al., 2001). For instance, individuals may be more willing to communicate in a comfortable setting with familiar people and topics.

Empirical Studies on WTC in L2 by MacIntyre

Dr. Peter D. MacIntyre, a renowned researcher in the field of applied linguistics, has extensively studied the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second language (L2) learning. WTC in L2 is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that explains why some individuals are more inclined to en-

gage in communication in a second language than others.

MacIntyre's research studies have primarily focused on the socio-psychological factors that influence an individual's willingness to communicate in a second language. He has explored various factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, motivation, intergroup climate, and social context, among others (MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). MacIntyre's research methodology has typically employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques. He has utilized a variety of data collection methods, including questionnaires, interviews, observations, and diary studies. For instance, in his 1994 study, MacIntyre used a questionnaire method for gathering data from a large sample of high school students in Canada. The questionnaire focused on several variables, including L2 class anxiety, perceived competence, and L2 use in the classroom. The data was then subjected to a statistical analysis to determine the relationships between these variables and WTC (MacIntyre, 1994).

In his 2001 study, MacIntyre and his colleagues used a longitudinal design and diary study method. Participants were asked to keep a daily diary of their L2 communication experiences over a four-month period. This qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the dynamic nature of WTC in L2 (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2001).

MacIntyre's studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of WTC in L2 learning. His research has revealed that WTC is influenced by a complex interplay of factors. His 1994 study found that self-perceived communication competence and L2 class anxiety were significantly correlated with students' WTC in L2. Students who felt more competent and less anxious were more willing to communicate in L2 (MacIntyre, 1994). In the 1998 study, MacIntyre and his colleagues proposed the "Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC," which includes both situational and enduring influences (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This model has been influential in guiding subsequent research in this area. The 2001 longitudinal study revealed that WTC is a dynamic construct that can change over

time and vary according to the context. The study also highlighted the role of emotional variables, such as excitement and enjoyment, in shaping WTC in L2 (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2001).

Implications for Language Learning and Teaching

MacIntyre's research on Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second language (L2) acquisition has profound implications for language learning and teaching. It offers unique insights into how learner's readiness to engage in communication in L2 can significantly enhance their language learning journey. MacIntyre's research emphasizes the importance of the psychological and social context of the learner in shaping their willingness to communicate in L2 (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). It has been found that learners with a high level of WTC are more likely to seek out opportunities to use the language, leading to better fluency and proficiency.

For educators, this highlights the need to foster a classroom environment that encourages WTC. Learners should be motivated to engage in L2 communication, and feel safe and supported when doing so. Instructors should consider incorporating activities that promote positive attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers, and boost learners' confidence in their L2 abilities. Teachers can promote WTC in their classrooms through several strategies. One way is by creating a safe and non-threatening environment where students feel comfortable to express themselves in L2 (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). This includes reducing anxiety, promoting positive attitudes, and providing meaningful interaction opportunities.

Another strategy is to use tasks that promote both prepared and spontaneous communication. Prepared tasks can help learners build confidence, while spontaneous tasks provide more authentic communication experiences (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Teachers should also provide feedback in a supportive, non-threatening way. This can help learners feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities to communicate in the L2. Promoting WTC in L2 learning and teaching has several potential benefits. Firstly, it can lead to increased use of the L2, which

can result in improved language proficiency (Peng, 2007). Secondly, promoting WTC can enhance learners' motivation to learn the language. As learners become more comfortable communicating in the L2, their motivation to continue learning and improving can increase (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003).

Critique of MacIntyre's Research on WTC in L2

MacIntyre's work on WTC in L2 acquisition has undeniably been influential, contributing significantly to our understanding of the sociopsychological factors that shape language learning. However, a number of criticisms have been raised against his research, questioning its reliability, validity, and overall applicability.

One of the main criticisms of MacIntyre's research has been its reliance on self-report questionnaires to measure WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). Critics argue that self-report measures are subject to bias and may not accurately reflect an individual's actual willingness to communicate in a second language. For instance, Dörnyei (2005) suggests that self-reported WTC may not correspond with actual communication behavior, and thus the construct's predictive validity is questionable. Moreover, MacIntyre's model of WTC is criticized for its heavy emphasis on individual psychological factors, neglecting the role of social and contextual factors (Yashima, 2002). As Norton and Toohey (2011) argue, the willingness to communicate cannot be completely understood outside of its social context, suggesting that MacIntyre's model is overly simplistic.

The validity and reliability of MacIntyre's research findings have also been scrutinized. Peng and Woodrow (2010) argue that the operationalization of WTC as a stable trait-like construct may be problematic. They suggest that WTC may be more accurately conceptualized as a situational state that fluctuates depending on the context, thereby questioning the validity of MacIntyre's research. Reliability concerns have been raised in relation to the scales used in MacIntyre's research. While his WTC scale has been widely used, its reliability coefficients have shown considerable variation across studies (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). This inconsistency in reliability raises

questions about the robustness of his research findings. MacIntyre's research on WTC in L2 has further limitations. Despite its broad influence, the research is primarily based on studies in Western, English-speaking contexts. This raises questions about the generalizability of his findings to other socio-cultural contexts (Kim, 2004). Additionally, MacIntyre's research has been criticized for its lack of longitudinal studies. Such studies are necessary to understand the development of WTC over time and the potential reciprocal relationship between WTC and L2 proficiency (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

Comparison with Other Researchers' Work on WTC in L2

When exploring the field of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in a second language (L2), it is essential to compare and contrast the conceptualizations of various renowned researchers. This section focuses on comparing the work of Peter D. MacIntyre with other notable researchers in the field.

MacIntyre's research on WTC in L2 has been pivotal, especially his conceptualization of the construct. He has proposed a heuristic model that considers both situational and enduring influences on the willingness to communicate in a second language (MacIntyre, 1994). Comparatively, other researchers have also offered their perspectives. For instance, Yashima (2002) emphasizes the role of international posture on WTC, where learners who are more interested in international affairs and cultures are more willing to use their L2. This aspect is less prominent in MacIntyre's model. On the other hand, researchers like Kang (2005) have focused on classroom environmental factors, such as the classroom climate and teacher support, on students' WTC. This approach seems more context-specific compared to MacIntyre's which takes a more holistic view.

While there are differences in the focus of various research, there are also some similarities. For example, both MacIntyre and Yashima recognize the importance of individual learner's variables such as self-confidence in the L2. However, while MacIntyre's model places a significant emphasis on the role of anxiety and motivation (MacIntyre, 2007), Yashima's model concentrates more

on international posture and its impact on L2 communication. Kang's study shares some common ground with MacIntyre's work in acknowledging the role of situational variables in shaping WTC. However, Kang's focus is more classroom-oriented, considering factors such as classroom environment, teacher support, and pedagogical methods. This contrasts with MacIntyre's model, which is more comprehensive, incorporating both situational and individual influences.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the research conducted by Peter MacIntyre and colleagues on the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition. MacIntyre pioneered the study of WTC in L2 and proposed an influential model outlining the various factors that shape an individual's willingness to use and communicate in a second language. His research highlighted the role of both enduring and situational influences on WTC, including motivation, personality traits, intergroup attitudes, social context, self-confidence, and language anxiety. MacIntyre utilized varied research methods in his studies on WTC in L2 contexts, making important contributions to our understanding of this multidimensional construct. While his research has been highly impactful, it has also received some criticism regarding issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability. Comparison with other notable researchers in the field reveals some similarities as well as differences in conceptualizing the determinants of WTC in L2.

MacIntyre's work on WTC in L2 has opened up new avenues for exploration in the field of SLA research. MacIntyre argues that the decision to engage in communication isn't solely dependent on language proficiency but also on the speaker's willingness to communicate. This shift of focus from language competence to communicative willingness has several implications for future SLA research:

a) Inclusion of Psychological Factors. The WTC model stresses the importance

of psychological variables such as anxiety, self-confidence, and attitudes towards the L2 community. Future research in SLA needs to incorporate these psychological elements to provide a more holistic view of L2 acquisition.

b) Role of Social Context. MacIntyre's research has highlighted the significance of social context in influencing WTC. Future studies could explore how different social settings impact WTC and, consequently, language learning.

c) Longitudinal Studies. More longitudinal studies are needed to understand the dynamic nature of WTC over time. These could provide insights into how WTC evolves as learners' proficiency and comfort with the L2 increase.

2. Implications for Language Learning and Teaching

a) Curriculum Design. MacIntyre's WTC model suggests that curricula should be designed to foster not just language proficiency, but also a willingness to communicate in the L2. Language programs could, for instance, include activities that build students' confidence and reduce their anxiety about speaking in the L2.

b) Role of Teachers. Teachers play a critical role in creating a safe and supportive environment that encourages students to communicate in the L2. Future teacher training programs might emphasize techniques for reducing classroom anxiety and boosting students' self-confidence.

c) Use of Technology. Technology can play a crucial role in facilitating communication in the L2. Online platforms allow learners to interact with native speakers, providing opportunities for authentic communication that can increase WTC.

In conclusion, MacIntyre's research on WTC in L2 has broad implications for both SLA research and language learning and teaching. By highlighting the importance of psychological factors and social context, this research suggests new directions for understanding and facilitating L2 acquisition.

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© Borasheva, A.T.

Contact: a.borasheva@ndpi.uz