○ WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AS A STABLE TRAIT OR CONTEXT-INFLUENCED VARIABLE: CASE STUDIES OF IRANIAN MIGRANTS TO NEW ZEALAND

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Whether Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is a permanent trait or is modified by situational context has previously been investigated in various studies (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). However, most research into WTC has been quantitative or conducted in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or Study Abroad situation in countries such as Canada, Japan, Korea and China. This article reports on the qualitative component of an exploratory mixed methods study in a New Zealand (NZ) university with participants who are permanent migrants from Iran. These students completed a questionnaire and participated in further in-depth semi-structured interviews. The article provides an overview of previous research into WTC and motivation in Iran and NZ as the context for these three case studies. In this study, six factors, both trait and situational, were identified as having an effect on these students' WTC in both countries: self-perceived competence; personality; anxiety; motivation and the importance of English; and the learning context. Finally, this article discusses the contribution of this study to the WTC field of research, identifying the implications of these results for teachers of English in the ESL (English as a Second Language or migrant) context and possible avenues for future research.

KEY WORDS: L2 willingness to communicate, L2 motivation, case studies

INTRODUCTION

According to MacIntyre and Doucette (2010, p. 162) 'the willingness to communicate (WTC) can be conceptualized as a readiness to speak in the L2 at a particular time with a specific person, and as such, is the final psychological step to the initiation of L2 communication'.

A number of factors have been investigated over the last two decades as to their influence on WTC, but more recently MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) have suggested Kuhl's (1994) theory of *action control*, which has as its basis *hesitation, preoccupation,* and *volatility,* as a precursor for WTC. These Action Control factors are considered by MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) to be more the result of stable individual differences (traits) rather than dynamic situational reactions to events inside or outside the classroom.

In the past WTC was regarded as an enduring, trait-like disposition, but more recently it has been recognised as dynamic with both transient and enduring characteristics (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Indeed the effects of hesitation, preoccupation and volatility may be influenced by situational variables according to MacIntyre and Doucette (2010). Kang (2005, p. 291) as a result of her qualitative study of Korean Study Abroad students proposed another definition of WTC as a situational variable: 'Willingness to communicate (WTC) is an individual's volitional inclination toward actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables'.

Previously published research studies have investigated the trait or situational/contextual nature of WTC, but most have been limited geographically to countries such as Canada, Japan, Korea and China and their participants were either EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students studying English in their own countries or Study Abroad students who were not intending to stay permanently in an English speaking country.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Over the last two decades, SLA researchers such as MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998), Yashima (2002), Kang (2005), MacIntyre (2007), and MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), have all emphasised the importance of WTC as a crucial component of modern language instruction. Communicative competence alone may not result in actual L2 communication inside or outside the classroom (Dörnyei, 2005). 'L2 learners with a high level of WTC are more likely to use L2 in authentic communication and facilitate language learning' (Kang, 2005, p. 278).

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), WTC in L2 is a variable with both transient and enduring influences. They developed a heuristic model, which still has a powerful influence on WTC research, in order to graphically demonstrate the nature of WTC. Since its proposal a number of empirical studies have been conducted to test various aspects (e.g. motivation, communicative competence, and language anxiety) of this model. Many have used French (as an L2) immersion students in Canada as participants (e.g. Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

In the EFL context there have been studies in Korea (Kang, 2005; Kim, 2004), China (Peng, 2007; Wen & Clément, 2003), and Japan (Matsuoka, 2005; Yashima, 2002). Variables such as self-confidence, personality, attitude and international posture, gender and age, and social and learning context have also been isolated as possible affective/individual and social variables which may have an influence on WTC.

Although this study took place in NZ, in order to better understand the English language learning background of the Iranian interviewees, it seemed appropriate to explore the nature

of the EFL teaching environment in Iran over recent years as reported by Iranian researchers in regard to communicative language teaching (CLT), motivation and WTC.

Razmjoo (2007), in his comparative study of Iranian high school and private language institute textbooks, concluded that CLT principles are not utilised in high schools because of the inadequacy of the government produced textbooks. However, in the private language institutes overseas English texts are used which are based on the principles of CLT.

A similarly negative picture of EFL in Iran is painted by Ghorbani (2007, para. 12), who states that 'very few students leave the system with the ability to speak English fluently'.

Recent studies in Iran which have been published in English and investigate factors affecting SLA have focussed primarily on motivation. For example, Vaezi (2008) found that the university level students in her study had a very high motivation towards learning English, although their level of instrumental motivation was higher than their integrative one. On the other hand, Moiinvaziri (2008) found her undergraduate participants to be both instrumentally and integratively oriented and highly motivated towards learning English.

Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009) undertook a comparative study of the motivation of Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English. They suggested that although Iran shares certain similarities with Japan and China, because of the political obstacles which have hindered economic, professional and academic relations with English-speaking countries, Iran has fewer native speakers of English than Japan or China, but its urban youth are similarly quite westernised and strongly motivated to learn English.

WTC research has from the beginning included motivation as one of its significant components (MacIntyre et al., 1998), but the specific WTC area of study has only recently begun to be investigated in Iran. For example, Vaezi and Sadeghilar (2009) used similar research tools to the present study to carry out a largely quantitative study of WTC among high school and university students in Iran. In general, most of their subjects stated that they were willing to communicate in English. One of the implications they derived from their study was that a crucial goal of EFL instruction should be to produce students who are willing to use the language for communication. In a recent report on his interview-based study, Riasati (2012) has suggested that task type, topic of discussion, interlocutor, teacher, class atmosphere, personality, and self-perceived speaking ability all have a role to play in Iranian EFL learners' WTC. In his opinion these factors add to the perception of WTC as a dynamic and complex phenomenon.

This survey of previous studies into the nature of English-language teaching and learning in Iran suggested to the present author that migrants to NZ from Iran would be worthy subjects to investigate in regard to their motivation and WTC when moving from an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to an ESL (English as a Second Language) language learning

environment. In specific reference to WTC, Ortega (2009) suggests that 'the shape of WTC may change as learners move from one learning context to another' or ' as they gain substantial competence as a result of a myriad voluntary or involuntary changes in their life circumstances that are related to work, immigration, marriage, and so on' (p.204).

Recent research in NZ has investigated the WTC of Study Abroad students. Cao and Philp (2006) undertook a study at a NZ university-based private language school, comparing the trait-like and situational WTC of a group of international learners of English. These students were temporarily in NZ to learn English, a fact which could have affected their motivation as they were not intending to settle permanently. According to the participants, their WTC was affected by the size of the group they were communicating with; their familiarity with their interlocutor(s); the interlocutor's participation; their familiarity with the topics discussed; their self-confidence; the medium of communication; and their cultural background. Thus they seemed to be affected by both trait and situational WTC.

Cao (2011) investigated the WTC of another group of international students studying EAP (English for Academic Purposes) during one academic year at an NZ university. The evidence she collected from her data suggested that classroom WTC is 'a dynamic situational variable rather than a trait disposition' (Cao, 2009, p. I). She used classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews, and reflective journals to determine that the students' situational WTC emerged from the joint effects of individual characteristics, including self-confidence, personality, emotion, and perceived opportunity to communicate; classroom environmental conditions, such as topic, task, interlocutor, teacher and group size; and linguistic factors. She suggests that these three dimensions overlap and interrelate in order to inhibit or facilitate learners' WTC. Thus an 'ecological' perspective is drawn, whereby an individual is seen as interacting in a complex fashion with his/her environment.

As no other published studies, as far as the present author is aware, have investigated the WTC of permanent migrant learners of English in NZ, more specifically Iranians, the study which is the focus of this article was conceived and carried out in the period 2009-2010.

THE STUDY

AIMS

The first aim of this study was to elicit from the learners which factors, situational or trait-like, enhanced their willingness to communicate in the English language classroom. The second aim was to investigate whether the nature of the learners' WTC was unchanged when the participants' English learning context altered from their native country to their country of migration. Two research questions were therefore framed to investigate these aims:

1. From the learners' perspective, what predisposes them towards a willingness to communicate in the English language classroom context in Iran/NZ?

2.   Is the learners' WTC a stable personality-based, trait-like characteristic or does it vary in different learning situations i.e. from an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment in a non-English speaking country (Iran) to a classroom in the learners' new country of migration (NZ)?

DESIGN

Dörnyei (2001, p. 239), a leading researcher in the motivation field to which WTC studies belong, suggested that the adoption of qualitative research methods was very timely and might provide 'new slants on old questions'. He also recommended interview studies as being 'more appropriate to uncover the complex interaction of social, cultural and psychological factors within the individual learner' (p.240).

Therefore, supported by these recommendations this study was designed as a largely qualitative investigation based on in depth semi-structured interviews. A multiple case study approach was adopted and three participants selected with some homogeneity or commonalities i.e. their original nationality was Iranian, although now they had been accepted as permanent residents of NZ; all were women; all had previous English language learning experience in Iran; and all were members of the same English class level. However, there were variations in their ages (20-32); lengths of time in NZ (7 months - 6 years); their abilities to speak English despite being in the same class level; and in the initial WTC questionnaires which they completed they showed a range of self-perceived WTC in class. Such purposive sampling is recommended by Dörnyei (2007) to deal with such a small sample size, and he maintains that combined with analytic generalisation case studies can offer as valid results as any other research method.

PROCEDURE

In accordance with the requirements of the university's ethics committee, the researcher deputised a colleague (not their class teacher) to invite the students in the Advanced class to take part by supplying them with information sheets about the study, questionnaires to complete, and consent forms to sign if they later wished to take part in an interview. Three of the students who contacted the researcher by email were selected on the basis of their country of origin (Iran) and were sent copies of the interview questions (see Appendix). The semi-structured interview was designed with a set of pre-prepared guiding questions, but the format was open-ended and the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on any issues raised. They were interviewed individually by the researcher in English, as their level of English was sufficiently high to understand the questions and communicate freely with the interviewer, but they were also encouraged to ask for clarification. The data were recorded and later transcribed. The participants were given copies of the transcripts to check and approve. The focus of the interview was to establish their present perceptions of their English speaking level, their learning experiences in their current NZ class and their WTC in a variety of classroom

interaction situations. In the second part of the interview they were asked to describe their English language learning experiences and their level of WTC in the past in Iran. They were also asked to compare their present level of WTC with that which they felt or demonstrated in their Iranian classrooms. Discussions also took place with the participants' present teacher in order to establish her view of the students' WTC in their NZ class.

Participants

Iranian students were selected as they made up a substantial group in the mixed nationality classes at this university, and all had had English language learning experiences in Iran before migrating to NZ. Moreover, the researcher had previously attended a paper presented by a lecturer from a Tehran university (Vaezi, 2007), in which she described her difficulties in encouraging her Iranian EFL students to communicate in English. As this was not normally the case with Iranian migrants in the researcher's NZ classes, questions were added to the interview to investigate the WTC of the participants in their Iranian English classes before they came to NZ. The three female participants in the study were from an Advanced (approx. 5.5 IELTS) EAL class at a university in Auckland, NZ. They were permanent migrants to NZ, who had been accepted as asylum-seeking refugees or as part of a family reunification scheme. This fact could have influenced their motivation to learn and communicate in English as a return to their country of origin would be difficult if not impossible. This was the students' first semester at this university, but like most Iranian students in this institution they all had had previous English learning experience in Iran. Tahereh, however, had been in NZ considerably longer than the other two students, although her level of English was not noticeably better, and they had all been tested and placed in the same class. They were fulltime students (4 hours per day) studying for one semester in this class. Their ages are in brackets after their names (pseudonyms).

Student (T): Tahereh	*(32)*	*(6 years in NZ)*	*Female*
Student (S): Sahar	*(28)*	*(1 year in NZ)*	*Female*
Student (E): Elham	*(20)*	*(7 months in NZ)*	*Female*

Instruments

Questions that were appropriate for a semi-structured individual interview (see Appendix) were adapted by the researcher from Cao and Philp's (2006) instrument, but additional items about the students' previous language learning experience and WTC in Iran were added as a point of comparison. An interview was also conducted with their class teacher posing similar questions about the learners' WTC in NZ.

Analysis

The interviews which are the focus of this report were transcribed and analysed for common emerging themes or codes, which were noted under these headings: self-perceived competence; personality; anxiety; motivation and the importance of English; and the learning context in both Iran and NZ. Although most of these themes were predicted by the interview questions and related to established theory about WTC, some topics arose spontaneously as the participants gave their answers to the interviewer's questions.

Subsequently these themes were discussed with a colleague who concurred with the choices made (inter-coder reliability). Member checks were made by submitting the transcriptions of the interviews to the participants for their approval. Comparisons between the participants were drawn by the researcher in relation to these themes, commonalities and differences noted, and pertinent individual comments on these topics were selected for quotation. Findings from discussions with their class teacher were examined, and finally the participants' overall level of WTC in NZ was assessed in comparison to that which they had demonstrated in the past in Iran.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the results and findings from the interviews will be discussed in relation to Research Questions One (RQ1) and Two (RQ2). In response to RQ1 certain major factors or themes were isolated from the interview data which the learners felt were important contributors to their WTC both in Iran and NZ, while RQ2 focussed on the changes which may or may not have taken place in their WTC as a result of their move to NZ.

RQ1: From the learners' perspective, what predisposes them towards a willingness to communicate in the English language classroom context in Iran/ NZ?

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND PERSONALITY

In terms of MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Pyramid Model, communicative competence and personality are found in the lower layers of enduring influences which bear on the ultimate goal – WTC, so these will be discussed first as they relate to the participants in this study. These factors form part of the social-individual (Layer VI) and affective-cognitive contexts (Layer V) for WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Self-perceived communicative competence

Tahereh felt that at high school in Iran she did not achieve much more than a few words and some grammar, particularly as the teacher spoke Farsi most of the time. Sahar and Elham expressed a much higher opinion of their language competence at their private English institute. This lack of ability to communicate in English by many Iranian EFL students, and

the superiority of private language schools continues to be remarked on by various Iranian researchers such as Maleki and Zangani (2007), Vaezi (2008), Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012), and Ahmadi Darani (2012).

However, all three students expressed satisfaction with their competence in NZ, although they were self-aware enough to realise that they were more proficient in some skills than others. Speaking was their best skill in their opinion, so their WTC in this area appeared quite high. According to writers on WTC such as MacIntyre, Clément & Noels (2007), a self-perceived high level of competence is a key precursor to using the L2 with confidence. It is possible that their NZ classes were now meeting their perceived needs in terms of classroom learning and teaching, or simply that the environment outside the classroom made the need to communicate in English more imperative.

Personality in class

In regard to their personalities in their NZ classes, the three students placed themselves on the talkative scale as 'medium' (but enjoying participation); 'talkative'; and 'too talkative'. They were relaxed in class and only one student (Sahar) admitted to being concerned about other students laughing at her. Elham said she was anxious when she first came to NZ but that was due to the change in accent (she was only familiar with a United States accent), and she related her fear to the outside community rather than the classroom. In her description of how she came to be friends with the other Iranian women in the class, she revealed how being alone in NZ made her gravitate to speakers of her own language, even though she had resolved to make foreign friends when she first came:

> When you are in a foreign country you are alone and when you see somebody from your country you think like you are near friends, you are near a family, you have something in common and it makes you to make a relationship with them more.

This feeling of companionship in the class could have contributed affectively to her WTC, although she did suggest that she was always outgoing in social situations. As a self-described extravert, Elham implied that her outgoing nature was a stable trait unaffected by a change in environment, as she felt relaxed in both her Iranian and NZ classrooms – '*I'm always like this*'. However, it did fluctuate in the world outside the classroom:

> First when I arrived in NZ I can say I was scared because I didn't realise what people exactly say in spite of I was learning English in my country.

The advantages of an extraverted personality when learning an L2 have been debated over many years in L2 research. MacIntyre et al. (2007) still feel that extraversion may be the more desirable personality orientation for SLA (Second Language Acquisition) and communication. However, they recognise that introverts can sometimes compete more effectively in verbal learning and academic achievement. In the cases of Tahereh, Sahar, and

Elham, their fairly outgoing personalities made them quite willing to communicate orally in the classroom, but their writing in particular was not on a par with their speaking, and they were not so keen to practise this skill by completing writing homework for the teacher.

ANXIETY AND MOTIVATION

MacIntyre et al. (1998) assign a lack of anxiety to Layer IV of their Pyramid Model as a reciprocal variable to self-confidence. Interpersonal motivation and intergroup motivation are also found at this level and are regarded as transitional factors between the enduring and situational influences on WTC. They are all termed 'motivational propensities' by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and will be discussed below in regard to the findings of this study. The way in which the participants are affected by their learning contexts in both Iran and NZ will also be explored.

Anxiety in class

Sahar and Tahereh were both worried about the variation in ability levels in their Iranian classes and expressed apprehension and discomfort about participating. For example, Tahereh confessed that:

> Sometimes really I was worried, maybe my answer wasn't like correct or sometimes
> you know, some student, some of them was really high and some educated and I was
> shy to answer the question.

In Dornyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System the *ought-to self* is associated with the duties and obligations individuals perceive they have towards others. Papi's (2010) suggestion that EFL students' anxiety in Iran was due to their *ought-to self* may have some currency here, but it only seemed to apply to Sahar and Tahereh. In fact, when these two moved to NZ, they reported a *decrease* in anxiety, although the necessity of learning English had become even stronger.

Anxiety has been considered by researchers as both trait and situational to L2 learning (see Horwitz, 2010) and L2 specific anxiety has long been cited as a factor in levels of WTC (see MacIntyre et al., 2007), but in the case of these three students it did not seem an issue, certainly in their oral contributions to class. *Hesitation* as a factor which negatively affects WTC has been proposed by MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) under a theory of *action control,* but if as they claim, it is an example of a stable personality trait, these three students should exhibit the same lack of hesitation in the NZ as well as the Iranian classroom. In fact they admitted to a greater level of apprehension about contributing orally to their Iranian English classes.

Two later incidents with Elham and Sahar (as observed by the researcher) when they were not accepted into their desired class did show they were capable of anxiety in other situations when their academic career seemed under threat.

Motivational Orientation - Iran

Tahereh described her motivation at school in Iran as: '*it* [English] *wasn't really important for us at that time'*. Initially she stated that English in Iran was only essential for those students going on to do a Bachelor of English. As she was older than the other two women her comments may reflect an earlier social and educational situation in Iran. However, she did suggest later that in fact English was important for both finding a job and as a criterion for promotion.

Sahar was motivated to study by the desire to join her family in an English-speaking country, as well as by the fact that she had personally paid for the private school tuition. On the other hand, Elham showed a stronger desire to learn the language for its own sake (i.e. a more integrative motive) – '*I loved English'* - although later she had also decided to emigrate to NZ.

Vaezi (2008) has expressed the common concern that Iranians learn English only for instrumental reasons and have little interest in the culture of English-speaking countries. The fear may be that by identifying with English cultures they may negatively affect their Iranian identity. Such instrumental motivation, however, can be considered understandable, when it is unlikely that a majority of the millions of Iranian English language learners will be able to travel to and reside in English speaking countries or have contact outside class with English speakers. Therefore, their investment in English is to improve their social mobility and gain prestige in Iran. In fact, the university students interviewed by Ghassemi and Shahsavari (2011) describe English as 'not just a subject for cultural enrichment' but 'a need, and learning it is a must' (p.51).

On the other hand, it is possible that the situation in Iran, as in many previously more conservative societies, may be changing in response to the exposure of young people to western driven technology such as the internet (see Taguchi et al., 2009). An interest in aspects of English-speaking cultures such as music and the media may be increasing as a result. Sahar also suggested that nowadays: '*Most of people travel overseas and because of access to the internet, most of people like English'*.

Motivational Orientation – NZ

In contrast to their experience in Iran, two of the students described their motivation in NZ as high or good, and one (Sahar) related this to her desire to train as a midwife in the future. She also wished to '*have a better communicate with English people'*. It was clear from the three students' replies that they both see an instrumental need for learning English in NZ – for work and for study, and also integrative – to settle in this country.

In Dörnyei's (2005) Motivational L2 Self System such work and study motives relate to a *promotion* focus and the *ideal L2 self* (a desired end-state). As two of these students (Tahereh and Sahar) were older women (32 and 28), they may not have been affected by instrumental

motives with a *prevention* (avoidance of a feared end-state) focus e.g. trying not to disappoint their parents, although this could still be true of Elham, who was only 20. According to Dörnyei this would be connected with the *ought-to L2 self.*

Language Learning Context – Iran

Public schools – methods and approaches

The youngest student, Elham, had the most exposure to English language teaching – from primary school in Iran – whereas the other two began from high school. However, they all described a very limited amount of English input and a focus on vocabulary, grammar and reading (see Moiinvaziri, 2008; Ghassemi & Shasavari, 2011). Tahereh also painted a picture of her school English classes as lacking interest: '*No one was interested in learning English and just as an exam, they have to pass an exam'.* Sahar also explained her situation:

> Yes, we have some course at school but it's not in high level and you just learn about some words. It's not important for them to communicate in English language, just learning some words and grammar.

Private Learning Institutes – methods and approaches

In contrast, their private language school experiences in Iran were considered to be much more conducive to learning, although by this stage in their lives they would also have had a clearer view of why learning English was beneficial to them. The advantages of this type of teaching as expressed by the students were that the learners were pre-tested and levelled, and they had smaller classes and '*better'* teachers. However, Tahereh admitted that students even in her private school classes did not use English when they were communicating in small groups, although the teachers tried their best to speak English to them. Tahereh described these private schools as: *'Now it's so popular in my country'.*The relative success of these teaching institutes is acknowledged by even the strongest apologists for the EFL system in Iranian public schools (Ahmadi Darani, 2012). Texts based on CLT methodology prepared by native speakers are used and the buildings are purpose built for English teaching, unlike the general classrooms of public schools. Students in these classes in Iran are prepared to pay a reasonable but affordable sum to prepare them to study or work overseas or even to emigrate (Taguchi et al., 2009). But as Ahmadi Darani (2012) points out, 'going to a language centre is an intentional, voluntary act, which no doubt results in a higher level of motivation' (p.181).

The role of the teacher

The three students had mixed opinions of their Iranian teachers and were prepared to admit that the fault lay with themselves rather than their teacher, as their motivation was not high. Elham: '*He* [the teacher] *taught us well, but I think I didn't study at home or after the class*

as much as I needed to'. Tahereh, however, was prepared to criticise her teacher: '*We had a difficult exam and very hard to pass and teacher doesn't help at all'*. She also suggested that: *'Maybe the teacher speaks some English but most of the time speaks Farsi and it still wasn't helpful for us, maybe we just learn words or grammar'*. She felt that having a teacher who was confident enough in their spoken English would have made her also more willing to communicate in the language.

Vaezi (2008) explains that, while high school teachers in Iran may not be competent to speak English, university instructors are, but a lack of communicative teaching resources and little contact with the target language makes teaching English a difficult task. She also states that although 'Iran has visibly been opening up to the world … few native English speakers are permitted to teach in Iran, therefore, Iranian students don't have the opportunity to benefit from native speakers' teaching language' (p.58).

Not even the private schools in Iran attended by the women in this study employed native speaker teachers, although according to Elham, some now are Iranians who have lived or studied outside Iran for some considerable time.

Language Learning Context – NZ

University English classes – methods and approaches

Groupwork with other students of different language groups was remarked on as a particular feature of their NZ classes which the participants found most disconcerting. When asked why, Tahereh said:

> Because I'm sure, once I'm talking to my teacher, I know what subject about, sometimes I talk to my small group and sometimes doesn't speak and doesn't understand really what the topic is about and doesn't helpful for me.

Sahar explained that:

> Because we have different students, from Korea or China or something like that, because of that different accent that they have I have a problem with this.Just I listen to [the teacher] and my classmates that are the same as me, they are Iranian.

Elham's problems were with the varied levels of spoken English in her classes:

> I think the class wasn't balanced, you know. Some of the students were not as good as others and some of the students for example were good at listening, some of them were good at writing, some of them were good at speaking.

Thus their WTC was affected when communicating with other members of the class, but not other Iranians and the teacher.

The role of the teacher – NZ

In NZ these three students were equally prepared to answer the teacher's questions and ask their own questions, as well as be corrected when necessary. For example, according to Elham: '*Actually I was expecting* [corrections]*, because I was here to learn, I was here to get someone to correct my mistakes'*. Therefore, this did not seem to be an inhibiting factor for their WTC. All three students were complimentary about their NZ teachers, if only indirectly by comparing them favourably to their Iranian teachers. Naturally, as this was a study being carried out by a NZ teacher/researcher their remarks might have been concessionary.

However, the positive role of the interlocutor in promoting the WTC of learners has been discussed in many previous studies (see Kang, 2005; Cao & Philp, 2006; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Riasati, 2012), so it would seem that the behaviour of the teacher can be an important component in their readiness to speak the L2.

Teacher's estimation of the students' WTC in their NZ classrooms

When interviewed about the WTC of these three students, their class teacher concurred with the learners' own estimation of their WTC as being generally high, and remarked that they readily took part in oral classroom activities. She had also noted that they quickly formed a physical group with the other Iranian woman in the class (who declined to take part in the study), but certainly did not refuse to take part in pairwork with students of other language groups. The student who described herself as *'talkative'* (Elnaz) was noticeably more confident and outgoing.

RQ2: Is the learners' WTC a stable personality-based, trait-like characteristic or does it vary in different learning situations i.e. from an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment in a non-English speaking country (Iran) to a classroom in the learners' new country of migration (NZ)?

COMPARATIVE LEVELS OF WTC IN IRAN AND NZ

When asked about her overall level of WTC in Iran and now in NZ, Tahereh said: *'Oh yes it's* [WTC] *very much different'*. She pointed out the importance of the change in learning environment from Iran to NZ as requiring more effort in WTC. She remarked that '*you cannot just watch people*' or '*hide from people*', if you want eventually to settle in an English-speaking country.

Elham related her increase in motivation and WTC in NZ to her need to study and get a job, although she saw her 'talkativeness' as part of her character and a stable trait.

Sahar also felt there was a big difference in her WTC now that she was living in NZ. In regard to her English classroom she said: *'I think here I'm more comfortable in comparison*

with my country'. But she also recognised her level of contribution to the class as typical of her behaviour now and in the past in Iran.

Therefore, it seems that the WTC of these students in the classroom remained similar in Iran and NZ, but their WTC in the community outside underwent a dramatic change. This is quite understandable when living permanently in an English-speaking country. From the descriptions given by the participants of the limited opportunities for using spoken English outside the classroom in Iran, they would not have often been able to demonstrate their WTC.

Moreover, despite the participants' lack of exposure to CLT methods in Iran they rapidly adjusted to the greater oral demands of their NZ courses, where questioning and interaction with peers and teachers is more highly valued. Therefore, the more structure and text-based learning context they had experienced in Iran did not seem to impact negatively on their WTC in NZ. It would be interesting to contrast this finding with L2 learners from other parts of the world, but except for a study of Japanese Study Abroad students (Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), who had a clear advantage over stay-at-home groups in their levels of L2 WTC, no similar comparative studies to the present one have been published for migrants moving into different language learning contexts.

To sum up, in respect to the first research question (RQ1), which investigated the most significant conditions for WTC, a variety of factors was mentioned by the participants as contributing to their WTC both in Iran and NZ. These were self-perceived communicative competence, personality, motivation, anxiety, and learning context, including classroom methods and approaches and the role of the teacher.

Concerning the second research question (RQ2) as to whether the students' WTC was stable or situational between their classroom experiences in Iran and NZ, the WTC of one student largely remained the same, but for the other two it was affected positively by their move to NZ. In fact, there was the suggestion by one student that her WTC may be a stable personality trait unaffected by her move from Iran to NZ. It was also noted that their WTC outside the classroom increased significantly in NZ as would be expected when moving to country where English is the L1.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to identify various factors which were perceived by the participants as impacting on their WTC in both their Iranian and NZ EAL classrooms. It also endeavoured to measure any changes in their WTC as a result of their migration from one country to another. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three Iranian women learners and the findings analysed using qualitative methods.

In terms of theory development many factors have been isolated as contributing to WTC, both trait and situational. This study, however, has revealed for its participants that self-perceived competence, personality, motivation, anxiety, and learning context, including methods and approaches and the role of the teacher, were all important aspects of their language learning experience, and as such led to their overall WTC. Therefore, at times these learners' WTC was indeed affected by their context and situation. As other researchers have previously suggested (see Kang, 2005; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011), the factors which make up the phenomenon of WTC could be regarded as mostly dynamic rather than stable predispositions. Moreover, it seems likely that the individual variables discussed above may all combine to spur on or discourage a learner when making their final decision to communicate. Support for this ecological point of view of WTC can be found in Cao (2011, p. 474), who posits 'a specific coordination of individual, environmental and linguistic factors [as being] involved in facilitating or inhibiting learners' WTC'.

This study highlights the significance of the environmental factor 'change in language learning context' for WTC research. Moreover, although many WTC studies have been done with Study Abroad students or those studying an L2 within their country of origin, no publicly published studies have yet been reported using permanent migrants in their new country of origin as participants. Also investigations into such students' previous language learning experiences do not yet exist.

Given the communicative approach to second language teaching, where the emphasis is on communicative effectiveness (Allwright & Bailey, 1996), being aware of the communication orientation students bring to the second language classroom enables the teacher to more effectively support them in their efforts to achieve communicative competence. The more knowledge teachers have about students, the better equipped they will be to work with them in such a way that their anxiety is minimised and their 'state of readiness' to communicate is maximised. A focus on the learning environment and how changes in the physical location of the L2 process affect students can only be helpful in understanding how they learn and their varying levels of WTC. Therefore, the contribution of this small exploratory study could be to heighten teachers' awareness of possible differences in the present and past WTC of their students as a result of their levels of exposure to CLT methods and approaches. It would be helpful for the class teacher to provide an introduction to the aims of this type of course and the expectations and requirements which will be made of the students in terms of oral contributions to the class and cooperation with other class members. It should be noted though that fluctuations in WTC may also be due to personal affective and cognitive factors, both transient and permanent, which are outside the teachers' sphere of control but require sympathetic understanding.

This study has the usual limitations of similar qualitative case study research i.e. a small sample size and lack of generalisability. The researcher is not claiming that the implications

drawn from these results would be duplicated in another similar study, but if such a study were to be carried out the comparisons would be a further contribution to this area of research. In further studies the addition of triangulation in the form of classroom observations by the teacher and/or researcher, interviews with the participants' past and present teachers, and a longitudinal investigation of the WTC of the participants over a semester or more involving more interview events, could add validity to and corroboration of the findings of this study. Comparisons of the learners' WTC inside and outside the classroom would be an interesting added dimension, although possibly more difficult to implement to a level of adequate validity.

Many studies on WTC and motivation have been completed in countries such as China, Japan and Europe, but further research into areas of the world which are other sources of migration for NZ, such as the Middle East and Africa, could provide fertile ground for this or other NZ researchers' investigations.

Thus this small but unique study of three migrant Iranian women in NZ, which compares their learning experiences in their native country and their country of adoption, may provide some insight into the factors that have affected their WTC. In the words of Elham, when asked if she had stronger motivation for learning English in NZ than in Iran: '*Yes, I need a job, I need to study, I need to live, I'm going to be living here so I need this language, I have to learn it*'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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APPENDIX: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important is it for you to learn English?
2. How good are you at learning English?
3. What do you think your English level is like? What about your speaking skill in particular?

In New Zealand

1. How motivated were you during this language course?
2. How much did you like learning together with your classmates in this course?
3. How would you describe your personality in class (quiet or talkative, relaxed or tense)?
4. How competent do you think you were to communicate in English during this course?
5. Did you feel very sure and relaxed in this class?
6. Did you feel confident when you were speaking English in class?
7. Did it embarrass you to volunteer answers in class?
8. Did you feel that the other students speak English better than you did?
9. Were you afraid that other students would laugh at you when you were speaking English?
10. Did you get nervous when your English teacher asked you a question?
11. Were you afraid that your English teacher was ready to correct every mistake you made?
12. In what situation did you feel most comfortable (most willing) to communicate: in pairs, in small groups, with the teacher in a whole class? Why?

In Iran

1. Did you learn English in Iran?
2. How long for?
3. At primary, secondary or tertiary level?
4. How motivated were you during this language course?
5. How much did you like learning together with your classmates in this course?
6. How would you describe your personality in class (quiet or talkative, relaxed or tense)?
7. How competent do you think you were to communicate in English during this course?
8. Did you feel very sure and relaxed in this class?
9. Did you feel confident when you were speaking English in class?
10. Did it embarrass you to volunteer answers in class?
11. Did you feel that the other students speak English better than you did?

12. Were you afraid that other students would laugh at you when you were speaking English?

13. Was your teacher in Iran a native English speaker?

14. Did you get nervous when your English teacher asked you a question?

15. Were you afraid that your English teacher was ready to correct every mistake you made?

16. In what situation did you feel most comfortable (most willing) to communicate: in pairs, in small groups, with the teacher in a whole class? Why?

17. How would you describe the biggest differences for you in your willingness to communicate in English now that you are learning English in NZ instead of Iran?

Questionnaire adapted from Cao & Philp (2006).