



**Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak, Mirosław Pawlak,  
*Willingness to Communicate in Instructed Second  
Language Acquisition. Combining a Macro-  
and Micro-Perspective.* (Second Language Acquisition).**

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The book written by Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Mirosław Pawlak entitled *Willingness to Communicate in Instructed Second Language Acquisition. Combining a Macro- and Micro-Perspective* is a compendium of knowledge on willingness to communicate and perhaps the most recent update on empirical findings in this area of second language acquisition. The volume consists of three major sections, an extensive bibliography, seven appendices and additionally author and subject indices.

The volume starts with the Introduction, which constitutes a convincing justification for taking up the topic of willingness to communicate (WTC), a classic construct in psycholinguistics, second language acquisition, and communication studies, just to name a few disciplines in which WTC features as a significant variable. WTC has become of special interest especially in the era of globalization, when the need for communicative effectiveness has come to the fore in the world of travel, professional and personal interaction, and, importantly, immigration. The authors place WTC within studies of contextualized individual learner differences as well as studying interaction as an important facilitative factor and in fact predictor of success in second/foreign language acquisition/learning. Such an understanding derives from psycholinguistic (in-

dividual determinants) and sociolinguistic (contextual) perspectives from the Interaction Hypothesis (1985), Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000), Skill-Learning Theory (DeKayser, 2007) or Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf, 2006). First of all, this introductory part of the book presents the construct of WTC, following MacIntyre et al.'s (2011) understanding of it as a multidisciplinary concept deriving from psychology, linguistics, education, and communication. The authors offer a brief overview of the first empirical studies on WTC, the focus of which was on cause-and-effect and which were carried out as quantitative statistical analyses in relations to individual variables. They juxtapose these with the more recent studies of MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) and the authors' own research which departs from the above focus and represent a so-called situated approach emphasizing the role of immediate context and dynamic model of WTC. Thus, they also suggest that perhaps because WTC is not stable and fluctuates, the dynamic systems theories (DST) proposed by Larsen-Freeman & Cameron (2008) among others can best demonstrate the dynamic interplay of different factors. Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak stress the role of context and in this case the Polish tertiary educational environment as typical of Central Europe. They offer a comprehensive overview of studies as well as their own pioneering contribution in this area.

The volume looks at the concept of WTC from a macro-perspective, in which variables relevant to it are identified and also from a micro-perspective, in which fluctuations of WTC are observed during specific moments of time, like for example during a single class. The three main sections of the volume focus on the following:

Part One, "Overview of Theoretical, Methodological and Empirical Issues."

Part Two, "Exploring WTC in a Foreign Language Context: A Macro-Perspective."

Part Three, "Investigating WTC in the Course of Speaking Classes: A Micro-Perspective."

Each section of the book has a clear structure, as it is preceded by an introductory commentary and is rounded off with a conclusion

Part One "Overview of Theoretical, Methodological and Empirical Issues" (pp. 3–72) constitutes the background to the subsequent parts of the book. It comprises three chapters. The opening Chapter One "WTC: Definitions and Evolution of the Concept," as the title suggests, offers a discussion of the understanding of WTC from a diachronic perspective. The authors demonstrate the origins of the concept in L1 referencing the research of McCroskey, Richmond, and Bear (1992) among others, and proceed in their discussion to the L2 context of WTC. In initial studies, WTC was perceived as a personality trait. However, with the work of MacIntyre et al. (1998) and later MacIntyre (2007), a hybrid model of L2 WTC was proposed. More WTC antecedents were introduced, among them anomie, alienation, communicative anxiety, motivation and contact with language. WTC started to be perceived not as a stable personality feature

but a dynamic one. Such a perception had far-reaching consequences for research, as WTC became a multidimensional construct relating to psychological, linguistic, social, and pedagogical concept.

Chapter Two “Methodology of Empirical Investigations into L2 WTC” presents an overview of studies with focus on their design and research methods. It offers an extensive comment on quantitative studies using scales and self-report questionnaires, this critical tool being the adapted version of the L1 WTC questionnaire of McCroskey (1992). The reader will find here a representative selection of studies from the first attempts to research WTC (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996) to more recent ones (among them, MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010; Gallagher & Robins, 2015; Choi, 2016). These studies are mostly large scale statistical analysis projects. However, the authors are fully aware of the evolution in research on L2 WTC and point out the shift in research methods towards mixed ones, in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and the new focus is not only on WTC as stable behavioral pattern, but also on dynamic changes resulting from contextual factors, such as for example a learning context, contact with language, attitude, topic focus, etc. An outline overview of studies is presented here in a tabular form (Table 2.1, p. 21) to be followed by a more substantial discussion of the individual studies that offer new insights into L2 WTC. The chapter concludes with the proposal to view WTC within a complex dynamic systems framework.

The last chapter in Section One, Chapter Three: “Empirical Investigations of L2 WTC Antecedents” presents the most important research carried out in different contexts of language learning/acquisition. The studies overviewed focus on anxiety (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2002, 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Clement et al., 2003; Dewaele, 2007), WTC and motivation (e.g., Ryan, 2002; Dörnyei, 2002; Noels, 2003, 2005; Lockley, 2013), self-concept (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Yue, 2014), age and gender (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Baker & MacIntyre, 2005) and personality (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Ghonsooly 2012). The most extensive overview relates to the research focusing on WTC and contextual factors, both cognitive and affective, such as classroom interaction context, security and responsibility (Kang, 2005), instability and thus, variability of WTC (Cao, 2006), the role of a teacher in WTC (Zarrinabadi, 2014), a type of task and its performance (Weaver, 2007 or the authors’ own contribution to researching L2 WTC from a dynamic perspective (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2016). The authors also point to new data collection tools used in these studies such as an FL learner journal and narrative texts. The previously-mentioned multiplicity of factors perceived now as antecedents of L2 WTC adds to the difficulty of designing valid and reliable tools of measurement, of which the authors are fully aware. The next parts of the book comment on macro- and micro- perspectives in researching WTC on the basis of the authors’ own research.

Part Two “Exploring WTC in a Foreign Language Context: A Macro-Perspective” (pp. 73–116) constitutes a well-structured sequence of three chapters. The authors’ aim here is to present the design of the study and the validation process of a new tool used as a data collection instrument. The study conducted is to contribute to further extensive L2 WTC research but it is contextualized here and focuses on a specific FL learning environment of a Polish university. This part starts with Chapter Four “The Rationale for and Design of the Study,” which presents the aims of the research carried out as following the tradition of large-scale quantitative studies and importantly discusses the stages of the development of a new measurement tool designed by the authors as an adapted version of existing WTC questionnaires, which is suitable for the Polish context. A detailed analysis of the modifications adopted are presented and justified. In the same chapter, a detailed description of the two studies, the pilot and the study proper, is offered.

The following Chapter Five “Findings of the Study” demonstrates the results relating to factors underlying the construct of L2 WTC and the relationships between them as well as their contribution to WTC of Polish students studying English as a major. The authors meticulously describe the first stage of the study in which the six-factor WTC tool piloted earlier (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2016) was implemented in a group of 107 subjects. Considering their sample not to be big enough, the authors carried out the same task in a group of 614 subjects to validate the tool, which resulted in establishing an eight-factor model of WTC, at the same time reducing the number of scale entries from 105 to 55. The eight identified factors comprise communication confidence, ought-to self, classroom environment, international posture (openness to experience), unplanned-in-class WTC, international posture (interest in international affairs), practice-seeking WTC and planned-in class WTC. These factors were presented by means of correlational analysis in their data analysis.

A detailed discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter is offered in Chapter Six “Discussion of the Findings.” It not only offers a fairly extensive commentary on their findings but is also fully aware of the limitations of their study; the authors refer to these and point out sensitive areas which may not have been fully taken into account, such as individual learner differences (ID). Thus, the authors suggest lines for further research. The discussion focuses on the components and correlates of WTC in Polish students majoring in English. It demonstrates the relationships between WTC components and their correlates. On the basis of their analysis, a hypothesized model of WTC as predictor of L2 communication is constructed. The factors and variables identified in it are discussed comprehensively here. As mentioned above, the authors are cautious and realize that there are weak points in their research. Thus, they conclude that perhaps a more fine-grained model of some constructs could be adopted (e.g., in the case of motivation or learner beliefs). Also, the

fact that the sample was not really homogenous, as it embraced both B.A. and M.A. students, might constitute a weak point, too. They are fully aware that ID will have a significant role in WTC. So generally, a cautious attitude to the results is expressed here and the need for more research is strongly recommended. Nevertheless, some of the findings discussed are worth mentioning. Interestingly, what emerges as a major finding is that readiness to speak is determined by planned and unplanned in-class WTC and practice seeking, which strongly correlates with communication confidence.

Part Three “Investigating WTC in the Course of Speaking Classes: A Micro-Perspective” (pp. 117–186) presents in detail another study conducted by the authors, this time it is, as they put it, “a more fine-grained picture of the factors shaping learners’ readiness to contribute to ongoing classroom interaction” (p. 117). The study is contextualized and aims to demonstrate the situational and dynamic character of WTC. The opening Chapter Seven “The Rationale for and Design of the Study” provides a detailed discussion of the reason for designing a study that would enrich previously-carried-out large-scale research projects and add to the understanding of the construct of WTC as a fluctuating feature of learner readiness to communicate in a specifically selected context of a FL, a conversation class. In justifying the use of a micro-perspective, the authors emphasize its complimentary character in the context to large-scale research, which results in establishing tendencies and patterns but does not tap into the individual learner differences which constitute important variables in learners’ readiness to communicate. On the other hand, a micro-perspective is rich in substance, as it is grounded in the specific context of an FL class, here, FL speaking class. Additionally, at the present stage of SLA research, it is generally assumed that the dynamics of the process constitute one of its main characteristics. The most recent studies cited by the authors, investigating for example the construct of motivation, are designed to account for it from a complex dynamic systems theory (Dörnyei et al., 2015; MacIntyre, 2015). As rightly stated, a micro-perspective is compatible with recent research on motivation. At the same time, as is pointed out, there are very few studies that are actually set in real-time classroom events in which for example motivational levels are measured by “moment-by-moment fluctuations” (p. 121). The micro-perspective study of WTC presented here is an extension of previous research (Pawlak et al., 2016) which was based on a single FL conversation class, whereas now more extensive data was collected in the course of three conversation lessons. The general aim of the study was to pinpoint individual and contextual variables in WTC and fluctuation of participants’ readiness to communicate. The clearly formulated questions specifically refer to the extent of fluctuation of WTC during each class, its possible patterns of and factors determining either increase or decrease in WTC, the degree of individual variation of the above and the factors significant for it and also the differences between WTC in these three

conversation classes (p. 123). The authors provide a fairly detailed description of the participants grouped in three samples of two first-year B.A. majors in English and one group of year two students. The participants are described as a relatively homogenous group due to their learning profiles, study background but also their self-perception of language ability and especially their speaking skills. An important part of this chapter focuses on a detailed description of the three conversation classes both in terms of the topics discussed (crime and punishment and dreams and imagination) and classroom management in terms of forms of work (group and pair work or whole class discussion), emphasizing simultaneously that although the topics came from the obligatory syllabus, ways of running the classes were determined by individual lecturers. Out of 90 minutes, the 60–65 minutes of each class when speaking actually occurred were the focus of analysis. The data was collected by means of WTC grids (tapping into fluctuation of participants' readiness to communicate at specified interval times and recorded (Appendix 6) and end of the lesson learner questionnaires, the aim of which was to identify learner-internal and learner-external factors contributing to their WTC but also their profiles and self-perceived levels of language competence. The variables enumerated were, among others, modes of work, interlocutor and his/her language proficiency. The questionnaire also included individual comments on speaking instances in terms of most and least conducive to WTC, to be identified by the participants. Additionally, the authors implemented detailed lesson plans of each conversation class as prepared by the teachers and supplemented by their comments on their execution in terms of tasks, timings, and students' reactions to the procedure of grid filling (beeps). This chapter introduces the readers to the way of analyzing the data, presented in the following chapter. The study data was analyzed quantitatively (WTC grid) by means of descriptive statistics, qualitatively (open items in the questionnaire and teachers' comments) by identifying recurring themes and by mixed method of both.

Chapter Eight "Findings of the Study" reports in a very detailed manner on the observed dynamics of WTC in each of the classes, complemented by participants' perceptions as to the factors having an impact on individual WTC. The text starts with a general comparison between the groups as to variation in WTC in each of them. A more fine-grained analysis is then provided for each group separately, every time focusing on the fluctuation in the levels of WTC and the factors that have an impact on it, all this being discussed from the perspective of time within the whole group and in individuals and factors influencing WTC as perceived by the students in each of the groups. The analysis is quite extensive, but meticulously presented. On the basis of the WTC grids and questionnaire responses, the authors draw their main conclusions from the extensive data gathered. The data demonstrates that WTC varies considerably and fluctuates due to different contextual and individual factors

and their interplay, either contributing positively to the increase or negatively to the decrease in readiness to communicate in a given context.

Chapter Nine, “Discussion of the Findings” offers deep insights into the phenomenon of WTC as situated in the reality of FL conversation classes and within the framework of complex dynamic systems theory and can be considered a significant contribution to micro-perspective research on the phenomenon of WTC. This text is built around the answers to the five research questions posed—as well as a comment on the drawbacks and challenges the authors faced in their research. As described earlier, the five research questions posed related to: (1) The fluctuation of WTC during a speaking class in each of the groups; (2) identification of (possible) patterns of this fluctuation in relations to factors determining it; (3) contextual and individual factors and their influence on decrease or increase of WTC; (4) an individual variation and factors contributing to it; (5) the differences between three groups. The answers given to each question are extensive and grounded in the data presented in clearly designed figures and tables and then discussed at length in the text. The authors are aware of certain limitations of the study and they elaborate on those pointing out, first of all, certain limitations of the tools, for example, the disruptive character of the WTC grid or lack of additional instruments that might have enriched the data (for example, class observations, post-class interviews, etc.). It is also suggested here that perhaps more information on learner profiles such as their learning strategies and experiences or beliefs might have added to the study. The challenges experienced in the course of study are seen by the authors as including the practical difficulty caused by the necessity to interfere with regularly run classes and the need to gain the trust of the participants, as well as non-anonymous responses for the purposes of correlation of different tools’ data. In terms of suggestions for future research, the authors suggest that perhaps the parameters of this study can be used in longitudinal studies at different levels of participant language competence and also not only in language but also in content classes. Additionally, recommendations are made here for a methodology with strong emphasis on the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative tools, among others, teachers’ and learners’ narratives.

In the final text, “Conclusions, Implications and Directions for Future Research,” the reader will find a content summary of the three sections of the book with some tentative implications for FL classroom pedagogy, which refer to guidelines for teachers in their speaking classes and address the need for awareness-raising of FL learners in terms of their attitudes, beliefs, preferences as to the topics and tasks, as well as suggestions for training in communication strategies. The final sentiment of the chapter offers encouragement to carry on research in FL learners’ readiness to communicate.

The book finishes with seven appendices (pp. 192–215) containing research tools used in the studies presented, as well as some of the data collected and

an extensive references section. The authors also provide the Author Index (pp. 228–229) of over 140 names and the Subject Index (pp. 230–231) containing 41 entries.

I can fully recommend the volume by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak as a scholarly text, which is well-written, coherent, and well-informed both on the theoretical and empirical levels. First of all, it will be of interest to researchers in second language acquisition as it offers both a historical angle and a thorough update on research into L2 WTC. It can also offer valuable insights for FL instructors at different levels of the educational process, but mostly in the context of advanced FL instruction. The text is well-structured as the authors decided to divide it into three separate and yet connected parts, moving from a thoroughly discussed theoretical background defining the basic construct (WTC), the evolution and research methodology used, which are richly illustrated in the presentation of the sample studies. This theoretical background is followed by a presentation of a set of studies designed by the authors and looking at WTC from varied perspectives. The readers will find here an example of a large-scale study in the tradition of WTC research, but at the same time, the study introduces a contextualization and adaptation to the specific domain of a Polish advanced learner of English. However, the authors went further in their investigations and applied a dynamic systems model to another study presented here, a study carried out from a micro-perspective which looks the WTC as not a permanent feature but undergoing modifications even within a given didactic unit such as a conversation class.

The text is very dense, however, thanks to the logical and reader-friendly structure of each chapter starting with a general introduction, which allows readers to see what to expect in each chapter of the volume and finishing with a concluding section. Despite its density, it is not difficult to follow the data and arguments presented, however, it requires some concentration on the line of thinking and rich data. What I personally found interesting is the innovative study of WTC from a micro-perspective, which demonstrates the complexity of both the construct discussed and individual variation. The authors combined two of the main research interests they have been investigating for years: WTC and individual learner differences (ILD). So this volume can be treated as their finest achievement.

However, some minor critical remarks need to be made. First of all, it would be useful to have a tabular presentation of the summary of the study description: aims, focus, timing, participants, tools, etc. (Chapter 7). As mentioned by the authors, one of the tools used in the study were the lesson plans including teachers' comments. It is not clear whether they relate to the description of each lesson and thus they are included in Chapter 7 describing the study. Additionally, it would make sense to include the main findings in the concluding part of the book instead of commenting on the issues already discussed,

thus avoiding repetition. The book is very carefully edited but because it is extensive, it is inevitable that some minor slips have occurred. One of them is the incomplete heading on page 170 (research question 2). Also, because of the way the appendices are presented, they are not fully referenced. Each of the tools included as an appendix should be clearly described as to its source, which would for example make it possible to see the difference between Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, which is only clarified in the chapters themselves. It might be interesting for readers to see a sample lesson plan in the appendix section. The reader may also be a little disappointed with the Subject Index (pp. 230–231) as containing only 41 entries, which for a book of almost 230 pages seems to be too few. To conclude, it is clear that the minor slips pointed out do not diminish the scholarly value of the volume. Congratulations to the authors.

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