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**A Literature Review and Data Analysis of Willingness to Communicate in a Second
Language among International Students**

By

Luyao Tan

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2023

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**A Literature Review and Data Analysis of Willingness to Communicate in a Second
Language among International Students**

by

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December 1, 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper employs a document analysis method to investigate the multifaceted dynamics that underlie the willingness to communicate (WTC) in a second language among international students. This paper reviewed and analyzed more than 65 studies in the past two decades on international students' WTC in a second language in the country where they study. Utilizing a comprehensive review of these existing studies, this paper elucidates the pivotal role of various motivational, emotional, social, and belongingness factors in shaping international students' WTC experiences. Motivation is a key determinant of WTC in a second language, with findings indicating higher levels of motivation positively affect international students' readiness to engage in second-language communication. Emotions, both positive and negative, are essential in the context of WTC in a second language among international students. Furthermore, the sense of belonging plays a significant role in fostering WTC in a second language in different ways. Finally, the findings reveal that supportive social networks, a culturally diverse environment, and engaging communication patterns can enhance WTC in a second language among international students. Recognizing these influences can aid educators, institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders in fostering an academic and social environment conducive to the development of international students' language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

As interconnectedness across the globe has become an undeniable force shaping the modern world, education has become increasingly globalized as well. Since 2000, international students in higher education programs have gradually increased. According to the report from the Institute of International Education (2022), in the 2021/22 academic year, there were 948,519 international students enrolled in higher education programs in the United States. This number represents around 4.7% of total enrolments. In Canada, the total number of international students has reached 638,300 in 2019. There is a 17% decrease in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it increased to 621,600 in 2021 rapidly (Crossman et al, 2022). In the United Kingdom, the number of international students was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has still grown up sharply in the 2019/20 academic year and reached 605,130 in the 2020/21 academic year (Studying-i-UK.org, 2023).

As one common kind of second foreign language learners, international students' academic success is largely predicated on their ability to speak in a second language. This success is largely dependent on their Willingness to Communicate in a second language, a phenomenon that has gained significant attention in the fields of language education. In addition, with the increasing number of international students, educators should not only understand how to more effectively help international students improve their second language, but also help them integrate into the new cultural and social environment better and faster. It is therefore important to identify how willingness to communicate affects this population and which strategies can be used to facilitate willingness to communicate

and in turn foster cultural exchange, establish global collaboration, and facilitate personal growth. To this end, it is important to first understand the background that has led to the globalization of education and the influx of international students, as well as the barriers that this population encounters with regards to speaking in a second language. It is likewise important to define the key terms involved in conversations surrounding international students.

Another reason why this topic was chosen is based on my own experience studying abroad and teaching international students. From 2012 to 2019, I studied at Indiana State University in the United States, where I completed my undergraduate and first master's degree. During this time, I was not only an ordinary international student, but also a second language learner. I sympathize with the various challenges and difficulties that international students encounter while studying abroad, especially the communication barriers caused by language. In 2017, I had a chance to teach ESL courses to freshmen with international backgrounds at Indiana State University (due to the lack of instructors, the university hired graduate students of the Linguistics and TESOL program as graduate assistant to teach ESL courses). When I teach, I noticed that my students' willingness to communicate was different based on various reasons, and some of the same barriers that affected me also happen to my students. But this time I had the opportunity to observe and think about these barriers from a different perspective. These two experiences gave me a strong interest in studying willingness to communicate in a second language, especially for international students.

Once the background information is established, it is then important to review current literature on this phenomenon to determine what factors and features can cause

impacts on international students' willingness to communicate in a second language. By analyzing the findings from current research through a document analysis, it is then possible to identify factors and features that correlate with willingness to communicate in a second language among international students.

Definitions

To establish a clear understanding of what the terms mean relate to willingness to communicate in a second language and better discuss the topic of this paper, it is critical to define the key terms that associated with it.

Second language acquisition (SLA) is defined as individuals acquiring a language that differs from their native language. It is a process of establishing a new language system and using it for purpose, and this is a long and continuous process. For international students who spend most of their time in a second language environment, language learning that only focuses on grammar and vocabulary is not enough. Rather, it should extend to the willingness to use the target language in real-world interactions.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is a critical concept in the language acquisition area. It refers to language learners who are willing to use language (both native language and additional language) in communicative activities with other learners or native speakers. WTC in a second language (L2) as one extended concept of SLA pays more attention to an individual's readiness and willingness to participate in communicative activities in a non-native language. In general, this concept acknowledges that language proficiency alone does not lead to effective communication. Individual's willingness to engage in interactions in a second language plays an important role in language development and social/cultural integration. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing WTC in a second language, as it can positively

influence international students' language learning process, their language abilities would be improved greatly as well. In addition to promoting the acquisition of a second language, WTC in a second language can also facilitate international students to better understand and accept the cultural and social aspects of the language they are acquiring.

Purpose of the Study

This paper draws on a wide range of research findings, theory, and practical implications to explore multiple aspects of WTC in a second language and aims to delve into a complex field of this phenomenon that has gained significant attention in the fields of education. Through a comprehensive review of previous literatures and studies, the goal of this paper is to elucidate the key factors that influence international students' WTC in a second language, ranging from personal psychological factors to external contextual variables. Furthermore, this paper tends to discuss how WTC in a second language can be fostered and enhanced in a variety of educational and social contexts, with a particular emphasis on implications for language teachers, learners, and policy makers. Based on this premise, the primary objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To review and synthesize existing research on the determinants of WTC in a Second Language.
2. To analyze the relationships between WTC and factors of motivation, emotional impacts, sense of belonging, and social aspects.

As delving more deeply into the area of WTC in second languages, we are better able to understand the complex relationships and interactions among motivation, emotions, belongingness, social/cultural factors, and some other variables that shape international students' willingness to participate in meaningful real-world

conversations in a non-native language context. This exploration could provide valuable insights into promoting effective language learning and promoting intercultural understanding in an increasingly diverse global society.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Willingness to Communicate is an essential concept for language acquisition area. It originally refers to the willingness to use the first language in communicative activities (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Later, this concept was extended to the realm of second language acquisition. Comparing the first language (L1) and second language (L2), the L2 learning progress is more complicated, it usually involves uncertainty and complexity. Therefore, the concept of WTC in L1 and WTC in L2 would be highly different, and there are more features that should be considered in L2, for instance, levels of cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness will be highly different with huge age differences among L2 learners; different learning contexts and different first language backgrounds can lead to different consequences as well (Lightbrown, & Spada, 2021, p.37 - 38). These distinctions tend to cause both positive and negative effects on second language learners, and WTC in L2 would also be affected. Due to the importance of WTC to second language learning, scholars has begun to study it a long time ago. MacIntyre et al. (1998) defines the willingness to communicate in L2 as being ready to use L2 to have conversations with specific people at specific times and contexts. Lee (2019) generalizes that WTC in L2 is a tool to inspect why some language learners would be more willing or unwilling to participate in L2 interactive activities. MacIntyre et al. (1998) mention that it is highly unlikely that WTC in L2 is a simple manifestation of WTC in the L1.

To further explore the WTC in L2, MacIntyre et al. (1998) set up a pyramid model that described different variables that influence L2 learners' usage of the second language and WTC was included as well. Moreover, this model describes the construct of WTC in

L2 and the complex interrelationship among variables affecting WTC in L2 (Dörnyei, 2003; Bukhari et al., 2015). MacIntyre et al. (1998) separates this six-layer pyramid model into two basic structures. Layers I, II, and III are the first structure that represents the influences on WTC of the second language at a specific given time. They are claimed as situational influences (Bukhari et al., 2015). Layers IV, V, and VI are other structures that represent some stable, lasting, and enduring influences on WTC (Bukhari et al., 2015). Moving from the bottom to the top of this pyramid, L2 learners can be more powerful in controlling the communicative acting in the second language in different stages. MacIntyre et al. (1998) point out that the top of this pyramid model is the most immediate and situation-based contexts, and the bottom is the enduring and stable situations of L2 communication as well. This heuristic model can be used to explain the WTC of different individuals practically, and it is significant to second language acquisition. Since MacIntyre et al. presented their ideal, this model has been used in lots of different studies (Ahmed Mahdi, 2014; Bukhari et al., 2015; Dörnyei, 2003; MacIntyre, Babin et al., 1999; Yashima, 2002). All these studies show that communication intention, motivation, language learning anxiety, personality etc. are influencing features of WTC in L2.

From Box 1 in Figure 1, the Communication Behavior is put in the top layer, and it represents the top purpose of L2 learning. Analogously, MacIntyre et al. (1998) point out that the ultimate goal of the language learning process is to instill in language learners a desire to actively seek out communication opportunities and a readiness to engage in these interactions. Communication in L2 is a broad area, and it includes many different relevant activities, such as answering questions in L2 classes, presenting in front of the

class, and speaking with friends or strangers in L2, etc. It is hard for L2 learners to practice a specialized kind of activity only due to the limit of time and energy. Similarly, just practicing in L2 class is not enough as well. Therefore, it requires L2 learners to participate in relevant activities outside classes. Moreover, A high-quality L2 education program should help L2 learners to establish the WTC concept naturally. A program that does not result in students who are motivated to utilize the language is fundamentally unsuccessful.

The intricate network of second language acquisition goes beyond vocabulary and grammar learning and limited activities inside the classroom; it also requires an in-depth exploration of learners' motivations, anxieties, sense of belonging, and the social structure of language communities. Together, these interrelated factors shape an individual's willingness to communicate in a second language, creating a dynamic and complex interplay, which we explore in the following sections.

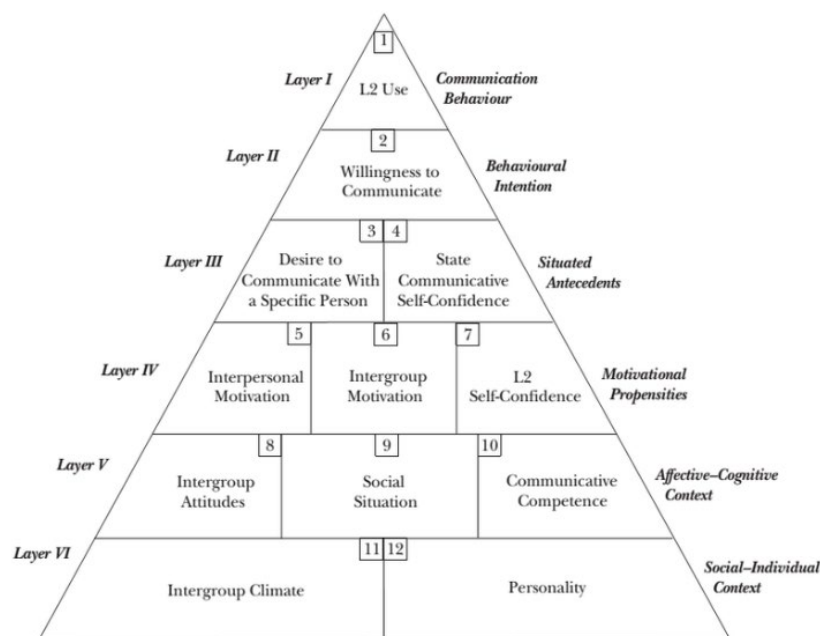


Figure 1: Pyramid Model of WTC (MacIntyre et al.,1998)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study aims to develop a deep insight into the willingness to communicate in a second language. The research also seeks to identify factors that correlate with it. Thus, document analysis is employed. To this end, it is essential to understand how documents were selected.

Research Question

This paper seeks to explore the relationship between various factors with willingness to communicate in a second language for international students in higher education programs. Hence, one research question is raised: What factors correlate with international students' willingness to communicate in a second language?

Research Design

Document Analysis

Bowen (2009) defines the document analysis as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (p.27). He further mentions that this method is an important research tool for social research, and it encompasses systematic techniques used to analyze and make sense of data obtained from the documents. There are several advantages listed, for instance, document analysis is a more efficient method compared to other research methods as it involves selecting existing data instead of collecting new data, thus saving time; its availability is acceptable because many documents are published in academic journals and peer-reviewed (Bowen, 2009).

In this paper, the findings of different studies are going to be analyzed and discussed to help me find possible factors that affect the willingness to communicate in a

second language for international students. This aims to lay a solid foundation for me to conduct more in-depth research in the future.

Documents Search Methods

Bowen (2009) indicates some limitations as well, such as low retrievability, biased selectivity, etc. Therefore, it is essential to set up a document search criterion for this paper. It aims to ensure that enough suitable studies can be found for analysis. Moreover, Chen and Zhou (2019) explained an exhaustive search in their studies as the literature search method to identify and locate the literature they need. It contains four parts, *Database Search*, *Search Terms*, *Manual Search*, and *Selection Criteria*. In this paper, I applied a similar method to find the literature I need. To be more specific, I used keywords such as, “willingness to communicate”, and “international students” as initial search elements. Then, other terms such as “sense of belonging”, “emotions”, and “social aspects” were added to expand the search area. Moreover, there were *two selection criteria* applied: 1. *The literature must be written in English, and peer-reviewed preferably.* 2. *It must be involved with international students in higher education programs or language learners who stay in a second language environment.*

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Motivation

Second language learning motivation continues to play an essential role in the language education area. Dörnyei (2003) indicated that learning L2 is deemed to be different from other subjects and it is actually highly correlated with learners' motivation. In the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC, motivation is mentioned as well. MacIntyre et al. (1998) classified motivation into three different aspects: interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and self-confidence (p.547). As mentioned above, motivation could be considered as a stable, lasting, and enduring influence on WTC. Motivation is a key factor in language learning, and its transformation into a stable, long-lasting, and long-lasting impact on willingness to communicate in a second language is a complex process. This transition is critical for continued language development and proficiency.

Dörnyei (2003) discusses Alternative Theoretical Approaches, and outlines three influential cognitive approaches: self-determination theory, attribution theory, and goal theories. Self-determination theory is usually used to test the relationship between student autonomy and the teacher's communicative style (Dörnyei, 2003). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two main aspects correlated with self-determination theory and both are often used in the L2 area. Peng (2010) indicates that intrinsic motivation represents the pleasure and satisfaction that an individual derives from activities. It is mainly related to the individual's internal factors. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves regulations and incentives that originate from outside and have sources beyond one's influence. Attribution theory is a link to connect learners' experience and their future

achievement efforts (Dörnyei, 2003). For many second language learners, goals have always been a central feature to motivate them to improve themselves (Dörnyei, 2003). The goals of learning a new language refer to a direction of effort. Gardner et al (1985) mention integrative motivation and instrumental motivation and these two motivation concepts would be described more specifically then. A number of studies approved that language learning motivation is one of the most essential factors of language learning and it can lead to positive effect on L2 learning. WTC is a central part of second language learning, the motivation could affect it effectively as well.

Dörnyei (1990, 2003) discuss that Gardner and Lamert did a ten-year program then they found out that the success in language learning was highly dependent on integrative motivation. “[Integrative Motivation] is associated with components such an interest in foreign languages, ... desire to interact with the target language community, and attitudes toward the target language community” (Dörnyei, 1990, p.46). This means a high level of drive on the part of the individual to acquire the language of a valued second-language community in order to facilitate communication with that group. According to their research, the integrative motivation is actually closely related to second language WTC. Peng and Woodrow (2010) also mention a similar opinion in their research. Therefore helping L2 learners develop their integrative motivation could be a key to improving their willingness to communicate in a second language. “Integrative motivation is effective because language skills are perceived as integral to participation in the social groups that use the target language” (Chen et al., 2005, p.612).

Dörnyei (1990) points out that there is another kind of motivation, which is called instrumental motivation, and it refers to learning a language to gain real benefits,

such as money or a better job (Chen et al., 2005). Dörnyei also defines instrumental motivation similarly as language learners' desire to learn a foreign language is driven by the real advantages of language proficiency, such as improved career prospects or increased earning potential (Dörnyei, 1990). Chen et al. (2005) also put forward very similar views that instrumental motivation can be a powerful motivator for language learners, especially when they place a high value on the potential benefits or returns they can receive from their investment in learning. The findings that Wu and Lin (2014) obtain through statistical analysis showed that both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation have a positive interaction with willingness to communicate in a second language.

Peng (2010) indicates that willingness to communicate in a second language can be predicted by measuring learning motivation of students. Similarly, Lao (2020) also points out that there is a connection between second language learning motivation and willingness to communicate in a second language, and this relationship reveals a positive mutual influence between these two.

Emotions

In the Pyramid Model of WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998), the level of Motivational Propensities (Layer IV) represents a shift in WTC from a relatively consistent situational characteristic to a more flexible and individualized condition. MacIntyre (2007) further described this level as:

This layer shows that roles and motives combine with L2 self-confidence that represents perceptions of communicative competence coupled with a lack of anxiety (p.568).

The expression “a lack of anxiety” indicates that this level is the position for emotions (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018), and this further demonstrates that emotion is a factor that needs to be considered. Research (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021) also shows that second language learners experience both positive and negative emotions, and the mixing of two kinds of emotions complicates the learning process.

Negative emotion

Negative emotions play a key role in the intricate web of personal emotion and the language learning process. As one of the most common negative emotions, **anxiety** has been investigated widely. Multiple studies (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Teimouri et al., 2019; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, et al., 2004; Zhang, 2019) show that anxiety can cause a negative correlation with the language learning outcomes during the second language learning progress. Almost every language learner has experienced language learning anxiety at different stages of learning or in different situations. The anxiety can be viewed as one of the most common emotional impact to second language learning negatively, and the second language WTC would be affected as well. MacIntyre et al. (1999) emphasizes that if communication does occur, variables such as anxiety that have a significant impact on communication become more noteworthy. To more specifically measure language learners' anxiety, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al, 1986) has been designed to assess language learning anxiety in three different components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation. This scale assumes that the communication is a very important part of language learning that can cause anxiety (Yashima, 2002). Teimouri et al. (2019) apply FLCA Scale as a research tool in their study and conclude that anxiety affects the second

language learning negatively from different aspects, further pointing out that anxiety influences listening performances of second language learners than others due to more complicated situations that second language learners need to deal with during the listening process, such as uncertainty of income information and time pressure. Moreover, Dewaele (2019) indicates that anxiety becomes a powerful factor that affects WTC in L2 negatively, and learners' anxiety reduces their WTC significantly. Furthermore, if second language learners are limited in their ability to flexibly adapt their language output by applying linguistic and non-linguistic tools to effectively convey their desired information, miscommunication can occur due to this aspect, they will feel anxious and face challenges when trying to understand and interpret what their conversation partners are saying. These anxious emotions and obstacles will further reduce their willingness to communicate in a second language.

On the other hand, anxiety can cause some positive effects. MacIntyre (1995) presents a U relationship between the effect of anxiety and language performance (Figure 2). In Figure 2, it is easy to identify that proper anxiety, which is named Facilitating Anxiety (MacIntyre, 1995, p.92) can be beneficial to second language learners' language performances. Wu and Lin (2014) also indicates that Facilitating Anxiety appears to motivate second language learners to tackle difficult tasks.

In general, negative emotions, especially anxiety, are unavoidable factors in second language learning. Most of the time, they lead to negative effects only in various aspects of the learning process. Communication, as a necessary step in language learning, is affected by negative emotions as well. Therefore, it is significant to understand consequences led by anxiety and examine the anxiety level resulting from communicating in a second language.

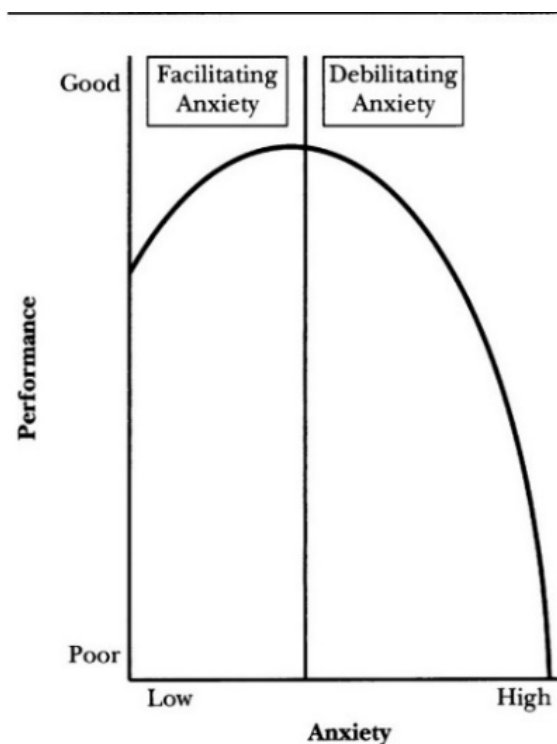


Figure 2: “U” relationship between anxiety and performance (MacIntyre, 1995)

Positive Emotion

Just as negative emotions, positive emotions can also affect the willingness to communicate in a second language, and these effects play a role in facilitating generally. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) claimed that there is already a large amount of SLA research focused on negative emotions, especially anxiety. Positive emotions should be

explored in a broader sense as well, such as enjoyment. Cao (2011) points out that various emotions can have impact on second language learners' willingness to participate in communication and discussion, and these emotions range from negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, embarrassment, etc. to positive emotions such as enjoyment and contentment. Khajavy et al. (2018) claim that their study marks the first attempt in the field of SLA to use a hierarchical approach to model how specific emotions, such as enjoyment influence willingness to communicate. According to the findings of this study (Khajavy et al., 2018), there is a correlation between enjoyment, which indicates a role of positive emotions, and willingness to communicate in a second language. Further, they point out that enjoyment has a more significant impact on willingness to communicate in a second language than anxiety. Nadeem et al. (2023) show that the findings of their study indicate a strong and meaningful connection between positive emotions and WTC in L2, which further highlights that positive emotions can predict WTC in L2 as well (Dewaele, 2019). Feng et al. (2023) investigate how positive emotion, enjoyment particularly, causes effects on WTC in L2, and they found a significant positive correlation between enjoyment and WTC in L2 as well.

Sense of Belonging

The sense of belonging does not have a significant impact on all foreign language learners, but it plays a more important role in influencing international students' willingness to communicate than other L2 learners in a second language environment. A deep sense of belonging can create a dynamic interplay between international students' identities and languages, and this kind of connection is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including cultural distance, cultural differences, acculturation, emotions (positive and negative), and social and academic support. As this interaction strengthens,

international students' familiarity with the new context will increase as well. Consequently, language learners' familiarity with their interlocutors and the communication environment will have a significant impact on their willingness to communicate in a second language. Kang (2004) conducts that in the presence of unfamiliar conversation partners, language learners tend to have less confidence in their ability to avoid errors and show greater hesitation when communicating in a second language. In studies of Riasati (2012) and Zhang et al. (2017) they all mention that second language learners' willingness to communicate can be affected by their conversation partners, and their familiarity with their conversation partners is one of the most important attributes. In addition, familiarity with the communication environment will also greatly affect language learners' willingness to communicate. The communication environment needs to consider both the social environment and the academic environment. It is important for second language learners to learn the language of a specific second language community with the purpose of enhancing communication within that specific group (MacIntyre et al., 2001). In the process of establishing connections with a specific second-language community, social support becomes indispensable (MacIntyre et al., 2001). For this reason, a sense of belonging, as a key factor that can promote profound connections between international students and a new community and environment (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Pittman & Richmond, 2007), also plays a large role in facilitating their willingness to communicate in a second language.

Need to Belong

The need to belong, also known as belongingness is the central ideal of the sense of belonging, and it is identified as one fundamental motivation and one of the most fundamental needs of human beings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Caligiuri et al., 2020;

Chen & Zhou, 2019; Johnson, 2013; Zhang et al., 2022). Human beings tend to establish interpersonal connections with others and this tendency can be viewed as an instinct of human beings all around the world (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Chen & Zhou, 2019). To better understand the concept of belongingness, there are two famous models, **Maslow's hierarchy model of needs** and **Self-Determination Theory** discussed.

Maslow (1954, p. 80) set up five levels model of needs to point out the importance of belongingness for humans. From the bottom upwards, they are physiological needs (food, water, warmth, etc.), safety needs (security, safety), belongingness & love needs (intimate relationships, friends), esteem needs (prestige, the feeling of accomplishment), and self-actualization (achieving one's full potential, including creative activities). The first two levels are regarded as basic needs, the 3rd and 4th levels are regarded as psychological needs, and the last level is called self-fulfillment needs. Individuals must fulfill the lower level to move to the next level. Belongingness is located in the 3rd level as the foundation of humans' physiological needs. In addition, this model discusses two aspects of the need to belong, firstly, the interpersonal relationship is essential for human beings, and secondly, human beings tend to pursue a stable relationship with context. As mentioned before, establishing positive connections with other people and the environment can promote the willingness to communicate in a second foreign language.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is another famous theory related to the concept of the need to belong. It (Ryan & Deci, 2002) is applied to analyze the motivation and personality of human beings, and there are three components in this theoretical model, Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2002) discussed this model in

detail and define relatedness, which is described as one basic psychological need for human beings, as connections and belongingness for individuals. Moreover, SDT suggested that human beings tend to integrate into the community instead of only being accepted by other people. Based on this theory, previous studies (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2002) emphasized that belongingness can facilitate human beings to establish solid connections with others and contexts.

According to the above discussion, scholars identified the need to belong as one essential aspect of human beings and it should be considered as “a desire to form and maintain social bounds would have both survival and reproductive benefits” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Sense of Belonging for International Students

Before exploring how the sense of belonging affects international students, it is essential to briefly describe the basic concepts of sense of belonging. Chen and Zhou (2019) point out that the sense of belonging is a cognitive evaluation and motivation that can help individuals to have significant affective responses. It refers to a kind of feeling about security, support, and inclusion. It is developed based on the concept of the need to belong, but with more specific explanations and identifications. Zhang et al (2022) emphasize the sense of belonging as a relationship and in an academic context, different relationships can provide various and important support to international students from both living and academic environments. Chen and Zhou (2019) further argue that the sense of belonging could effectively promote the security of interpersonal relationships and it could also affect individuals' life experiences positively. Different levels of sense of belonging can lead to various consequences for individuals. A higher level of sense of belonging could facilitate individuals to make connections with others as well as lead to

positive impacts (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bertram et al., 2014; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Caligiuri et al., 2020; Cena et al., 2021; Chen & Zhou, 2019; Rivas et al., 2019).

Sense of belonging is highly context-based, and this characteristic makes international students' sense of belonging unique. Compared with other groups of people, international students usually face more complicated internal and external contexts and more challenges. Chen and Zhou (2019) argue that international students require more support from society and universities and this support can help international students overcome social and academic exclusion. Cena et al. (2021) mention that the investigation of international students' sense of belonging should draw more attention to the connections within the campus particularly. They define the campus as a "broader community" where international students live, and most relationships of international students exist here. Caligiuri et al. (2020) suggest that the development of meaningful relationships between international students and new contexts can be facilitated by the feeling of believing they belong to a certain academic and social unit, such as a team with other students, a university club, etc. Other scholars (Bertram et al., 2014; Caligiuri et al., 2020; Rivas et al., 2019) suggest correlating academic context with the social context when investigating the sense of belonging among international students. It is important to consider different contexts for international students while exploring their sense of belonging, from the internal context, international students are generally young and with less living experience, from the external context, they must deal with various issues all by themselves; both of these contexts can affect their sense of belonging.

When international students study abroad, challenges are common and inevitable. These challenges affect international students' sense of belonging negatively. Rivas et al,

(2019) point out several challenges faced by international students such as severe cultural distance, lower language ability, and poor interpersonal skills would lower the level of the sense of belonging among international students and hinder their integration process socially and academically. Cena et al. (2021) mention there are several difficulties such as homesickness, social isolation distance, the lack of social support, etc. can impede their adjustment process to a new context. Zhang et al (2022) mention that international students who come from different countries usually experience isolation from others and contexts. This negative feeling can lead to various negative consequences as well.

For international students, a higher level of sense of belonging is beneficial and critical. Zhang et al. (2022) suggest that a sense of belonging can enhance abilities to feel cared about, accepted, and respected in the campus community for international students. As Chen and Zhou (2019) mention, international students with a higher level of sense of belonging tend to have better academic performance. In addition, international students who have a stronger reliance on the social and academic context tend to perform better in social and academic aspects (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Thus, for educators who are interested in the international education area, it would be meaningful to figure out a way of improving the level of international students' sense of belonging. In this section, social and academic support are mentioned repeatedly, which further emphasizes the importance of these two factors. As mentioned before, adequate support from many aspects can better help international students improve their willingness to communicate in a second foreign language.

Cultural Impacts

Cultural Distance & Cultural Differences: Lee and Ciftci (2014) define cultural distance as individuals having difficulties fitting into a new environment in cultural aspects. Besides cultural distance, cultural differences are another factor that can be considered a cultural impact. International students usually have very different backgrounds other than the host country. They tend to have different personal interests, interaction methods, and perceptions of values. Zhou and Zhang (2014) note that cultural differences play an essential role when international students try to fit into a new context. With these two factors, the lack of concepts about the host country's culture will lead international students to have no idea how to deal with issues in social and academic contexts (Chen & Zhou, 2019). Thus, the degree of cultural similarity between a student's home culture and the host culture affects their sense of belonging. Larger cultural distance and significant cultural differences can lead to feelings of isolation and hinder willingness to communicate.

Acculturation is defined as a process of individuals creating cultural, psychological, and social adaptation to a new culture (Cao et al, 2017; Bertram et al, 2014). It is a process to help international students to better fit into a new cultural context. Moreover, the acculturation process can be viewed as an essential cultural fact that influences the sense of belonging among international students. According to Bertram et al. (2014), acculturative stress is caused by cultural differences between the home country and the host country. It occurs when international students try to integrate into a new environment, and it usually leads to problems in psychological, physical, and social aspects. With social and academic support, acculturative stress can be released, and the acculturation process can be promoted. Cao et al. (2017) suggest that one of the ultimate

goals of the acculturation process for international students is to set up new social ties in a new and unfamiliar environment, and communicative activities are important ways to maintain social ties effectively. Furthermore, these social ties are essential and can help international students reduce their stress and insecurity, and then build positive social connections to better integrate into new social and academic contexts. Rivas et al. (2019) point out that for international students, one major issue that leads to acculturative stress is English proficiency and a higher level of language proficiency can affect their academic experience and performance. The study of Zhang et al. (2022) focuses on international doctoral students' sense of belonging specifically. They pointed out that the acculturation process as a cultural factor plays an important role when students establish their sense of belonging effectively. Acculturation as a process of adapting to the host culture affects students' sense of belonging. When students are successfully integrated, they tend to feel more connected to the new community, which can have a positive impact on their willingness to communicate.

Emotional Impacts

Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that belongingness could be affected by different emotional implications. Positive emotions can promote belongingness status and negative emotions tend to lower the level of belongingness. Besides, mental health plays a significant role in the development of the sense of belonging among international students.

Positive Emotions: Zhang et al. (2022) argue that positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, and confidence can lead to positive statuses of psychological well-being. According to their investigation, psychological well-being in international students is volatile and can be easily affected by different factors such as uncertainty of self-

performance, feeling of insecurity, and social and academic issues. Furthermore, they also note that psychological well-being plays an essential role in the process of acculturation and international students' sense of belonging can be promoted as well. Another important feature of positive emotions is mental toughness. It refers to the multidimensional and psychological attributes that can facilitate individuals to overcome difficulties in stressful situations, there are three aspects of mental toughness: confidence, constancy, and control (Sheard et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). Zhang et al. (2022) confirm that greater mental toughness can promote international students' abilities to conquer challenges such as cultural differences, language barriers, and social/academic issues. As a result, mental toughness can facilitate the acculturation process and then influence the sense of belonging among international students.

Negative Emotions: there are different stressors such as a low level of belongingness, the feeling of exclusion socially and academically, and acculturative stress leading to different negative emotions. **Anxiety** is one of the most common ones to lower levels of sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It can damage interpersonal, academic, and social relationships, and then cause exclusion in certain contexts. Like anxiety, **depression** is another common negative emotion that affects the sense of belonging among international students negatively (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Mental Health Disorder is one negative factor that highly correlates with negative emotions and affects international students' sense of belonging negatively. In a mental health survey report carried out by Auerbach et al. (2018), the survey was designed to screen "six common lifetime and 12-month *DSM-IV* mental disorders: major depression, mania/hypomania, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, alcohol use disorder, and

substance use disorder”. 13,984 international students from 19 universities responded to the survey. After the data analysis, the authors found that 35% of participants admitted that they had at least one common lifetime mental disorder, and 31% of participants admitted that they had at least one common 12-month mental disorder. Severe negative emotions and mental health disorders occur more commonly when international students have difficulties or fail to integrate into new contexts or build positive relationships with others socially and academically. In turn, the integration process and establishment of relationships can be negatively affected by different negative emotions and mental health disorders as well. As a result, international students’ sense of belonging will be damaged inevitably. Therefore, it is important for universities and instructors to further develop an awareness of mental health for international students. A sense of belonging can produce positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, and confidence. These emotions can facilitate students’ willingness to communicate in a second language. Conversely, negative emotions such as anxiety and depression will act as barriers to prevent students from participating in communicative activities.

Academic and Social Support

International students need help, especially when they leave their comfort zone and enter a new and unfamiliar environment. Cena et al. (2021) argue that social relationships and healthy social contexts for international students who live far away from their homes are more needed and universities should provide support to international students to set up social connections. With help from universities, international students can adjust themselves better and quickly in a new environment. The sense of belonging of international students is highly correlated with the environment, which is “an emotional feeling of feeling safe and being attached to a

place” (Cena et al., 2021). Moreover, Chen and Zhou (2019) point out that international students tend to deal with more challenges and difficulties than domestic students. Thus, support from the university and society becomes more important and valuable and it is essential for universities to understand international students’ needs, then the school will be able to provide a more comfortable and friendly environment for living and learning.

Language proficiency is one of the central factors that promote the acculturation process as well as setting up social bounds for international students (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Rivas et al, 2019). Therefore, providing language practice opportunities for international students to enhance their language proficiency can be one significant support provided by the university. Chen and Zhou (2019) set Chinese international students as an example to explore the importance of language proficiency. In their research, they confirmed that low language proficiency is one of the primary obstacles for Chinese international students engaging in interactive activities and making friends with domestic students. Moreover, the language barrier affects the reading and writing process of international students negatively, which further hinders their academic performance as well (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Rivas et al, 2019). In addition, a new and unfamiliar education system would lower the sense of belonging for international students as well. These language practice opportunities could also be used to help international students get familiar with it. In the sociocultural aspect, “international students, who are away from their friends and family (i.e., their sources for belonging), are especially motivated to seek a sense of belonging in the possibly unfamiliar host country (Caligiuri et al, 2020, p.360). With a higher level of language proficiency, international students find it easier to create social bonds in the host country. One important feature of having supportive social

and academic networks is to provide encouragement and opportunities for language practice to improve student's language proficiency, which can further increase students' confidence in using a second language for interactions and academic purposes.

In summary, there is a correlation between international students' sense of belonging in a second language context and their willingness to communicate. Factors such as cultural distance and differences, acculturation, emotional state, and availability of social and academic support can enhance or hinder their willingness, ultimately shaping student's learning and life experiences.

Social Aspects

In the past decade, there has been increasing attention to the impact of social aspects and sociocultural environment features on second language acquisition (SLA), and willingness to communicate as an important component of second language learning is also profoundly affected. Therefore, the sociocultural perspective, which increasingly emphasizes the consideration of interrelated cognitive and social characteristics when learning a second language, provides some new learning and teaching strategies to both language learners and teachers, and in developing this concept, the Sociocultural Theory that proposed by Vygotsky originally plays a crucial role (Aimin, 2013; Kao, 2010; Jang & Jiménez, 2011; Lantolf, 2007; Lantolf & Beckett, 2009).

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) defines that individuals can develop their cognitive and mental function by participating in social activities. It usually draws more attention to children's cognitive development in a sociocultural environment. However, SCT could also be applied to the field of SLA. Vygotsky expressed that language learners could develop and enhance their language abilities primarily through social interactions

(Vygotsky, 1978; Schwebel, 1979; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Several studies have also mentioned that SCT could be applied in the area of SLA as a useful theoretical framework to positively affect the second language learning process by connecting learners' cognition with the sociocultural environment (Aimin, 2013; Kao, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Therefore, SCT provides a new perspective and theoretical framework for the process of SLA, which language learners should better build up a bridge to connect their thought and language learning process with others and the sociocultural environment. In addition, under this theoretical framework, language learners could mediate, internalize, or regulate what they received from social interactions (Aimin, 2013; Kao, 2010; Lee, 2014). These are three essential concepts that can help international students to enhance their language abilities, especially the ability to participate in real-world communications. Moreover, going through the zone of proximal development could help language learners learn more than working independently by themselves (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Therefore, four central features of SCT, mediation, internalization, regulation, and the zone of proximal development, are going to be discussed next.

Mediation is one central concept of SCT, and it can be defined as using tools to solve problems in the real world, and language could be viewed as a powerful symbolic tool that humans can use to mediate connection to the real world (Aimin, 2013; Kao, 2010; Lantofl, 1994). Lee (2014) conducted as well that interactions between individuals and the real-world are affected by variety of representational tools, such as the language. This concept allows international students to transcend the linguistic concepts of language and enable them to establish a deeper connection with the target language and the social and

cultural environment of the target language through active participation in real communication activities. **Internalization** is defined as the process of converting external support into personal internal resources (Aimin, 2013). It can help international students to set up interconnection between themselves in a certain sociocultural environment. Applying this concept to SLA, particularly to WTC in L2 can encourage international students to participate in interactions with others and these significant interactions could further assist them to set up connections with the sociocultural environment of the target language. **Regulation** is a process of controlling an activity or process. Under the concept of SCT, regulation was considered as enhancing the capacity of individuals to regulate their mental and physical activities, control their behaviors, and fit into a sociocultural environment. Applying this concept to conditions of international students, it allows them to make voluntary decisions to participate in communicative activities rather than being forced to make choices against their will. **The Zone of Proximal Development** is an important concept in SLA area, and it has been widely researched. Vygotsky (1978) define the ZPD as follows.

“... the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent. Problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”
(p. 86)

In other previous studies, scholars pointed out that individuals could acquire skills or knowledge that go beyond their actual developmental level with the help of a more capable person (Aimin, 2013; Kao, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Moreover, this is one essential reason why the importance of WTC in L2 has been repeatedly mentioned.

Actively participating in effective and real communication activities can help international students improve their second language skills.

Social Features

The concept of social aspects covers a wide range of factors, such as social and cultural values, interpersonal dynamics, and communication methods. From my perspective, language is a fundamental component of social aspects, and it plays an important role in human society because it allows individuals within social groups to communicate effectively. Richards (1972) as well conduct as that “language reflects social processes. Different varieties of language reflect different settings for language learning and language use” (p.243). Under this premise, WTC in L2, as a key factor affecting second language use in real-world activities, is naturally connected with social aspects. Understanding the relationship between the two can better understand how various social factors affect international students’ willingness and ability to use a second language in social interactions.

Identity and language learning have enabled a conceptual shift in SLA and provided important insights into the language learning process (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Language learners’ identities could be considered as a process of constructing relations between language learning and social aspects. Moreover, Norton and Toohey (2011) developed seven points about how identity could be correlated with social aspects and language learning:

- “1). Contemporary identity theories offer ways to see the individual language learner situated in a larger social world.
- 2). Identity theorists highlight the diverse positions from which language learners are able to participate in social life.

- 3). Language learning theory and research needs to address how power in the social world affects learners' access to the target language community.
- 4). Identity, practices, and resources are inextricably linked and mutually constituted.
- 5). L2 learning is not entirely determined by structural conditions and social contexts, partly because these conditions and contexts are themselves in states of production.
- 6). The sociological construct of INVESTMENT complements the psychological construct of MOTIVATION in SLA.
- 7). the theoretical constructs IMAGINED COMMUNITIES and IMAGINED IDENTITIES contribute usefully to understanding SLA.” (p.414)

From these seven points, identity can be generalized as one primary factor that correlates with and affects language learning from social aspects, and WTC in a second language is affected as well while international students seek to integrate into a second language community. Moreover, Richards (1972) conclude that different roles and statuses in different community groups affected the conditions of language learning. From existing studies, it is essential for language educators to realize the diversity of their students and explore their identities, then offer flexible and greater social interactive activities to them. Each international student is unique, perception and social identity of each of them can affect their willingness to use a second language. Some of them prefer to maintain a close connection with their native language and culture, while others may find it easier to embrace an identity associated with a second language and culture.

Social media: The internet invention and technological advancements changed the method of communications to a degree. It facilitated the use of technologies for social communication. It transforms second language learning from a traditional method to

social aspects by increasingly using social media technologies. “It (social media) becomes a venue for a variety of socially engaging learning activities and edutainment purposes” (Barrot, 2022, p. 2535). Manca (2020) defines social media as internet-based applications used to share information such as pictures, videos, and different messages. In current studies, social media can provide a potential language learning environment and it can enhance learners’ interaction by producing and sharing information with others in web communities (Barrot, 2022; Hew & Cheung, 2013). In other studies, social media, for instance, Instagram, Skype, Twitter, and Facebook, was adopted as a pedagogical tool that allowed international students to interact, collaborate, and share their words, ideals, and opinions. It provides an increasing enhancement of socially engaging context to learners (Barrot, 2022; Mao, 2014). Hattem and Lomicka (2016) published a critical analysis of how Twitter affects language learning. They conclude that Twitter is a useful learning tool for second language learners. It can enhance learners’ willingness to communicate, establish flexible learning communities, and facilitate various language abilities. Barrot (2018) reviews some studies on Facebook as a learning environment for language teaching and learning and concluded that Facebook can be applied to language pedagogy, and it is helpful to promote learners’ overall proficiency and various abilities of a second language. In current studies, it is advantageous for international students to adopt social media in the second language learning process. It provides a significant method to promote their language abilities from various aspects, especially communication skills. Moreover, social media not only provides multiple opportunities for language learners to participate in interactive activities with others but also creates a relaxed and flexible learning environment, and this can facilitate international students

reduce the impact of negative emotions effectively. One primary function of social media is to help international students to build up a web community in the host country, therefore they can discover a clear identity within this certain community.

The usage-based language learning approach is a way that language learners engage in interpersonal interaction and set up connections between their cognitions and personal experiences (Ellis, 2015; Ellis et al, 2013; Lightbown, Spada, 2021). It emphasizes the acquisition and improvement of language skills through active participation in social communication and cognitive activities. In other words, language plays an important role in social interactions, and learners need to use language they learned in the realworld actively. Ahmed Mahdi (2014) clarify that the primary goal of language learning should be using it for meaningful and effective interactive activities. “Thus, shared attention, shared cooperative activity, and shared cognition are key to meaningful language usage” (Ellis, 2015, p.62). In this method, the language learning process involves not only linguistic elements but is also highly correlated with meaningful interactive contexts.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This paper aims to review and analyze multiple existing studies to explore various factors that affect international students' willingness to communicate in a second language from different aspects. Therefore, two main research objectives are proposed, which is to review and synthesize existing research that related to determinants of WTC in a L2, and to analyze the relationship between WTC in a L2 and factors, such as motivation, emotional impact, sense of belonging, and social aspects. To achieve these two research purposes, this paper raised a specific research question, which is what factors correlate with international students' willingness to communicate in a second language? A document analysis method was applied in the process of research design. This analytical approach assists me to identify different factors closely related to WTC in a L2 from the findings and discussions of various existing studies. Through the analysis of existing studies, motivation, emotions, sense of belonging, and social aspects can all lead positive or negative impacts on international students' WTC in a L2. Furthermore, these relevant factors mentioned in this paper are going to be discussed in more detail next.

Motivation, as a factor that has been studied and discussed widely, and multiple studies (Dörnyei, 2003; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng, 2010) have shown that motivation plays an essential role in the field of SLA; moreover, WTC in a L2, as an integral part of the SLA process, is also affected by motivation. In this paper, different types of learning motivation are mentioned, and integrative and instrumental motivation are analyzed and discussed in relative detail. Dörnyei (1990), defined integrative motivation as components, such as a strong interest in the foreign language, the learner's desire to

participate in the target language communicaty, and to enhance language learners to learn a foreign language. The instrumental motivation refers to the learners' desire of learning a new lanugage are driven by some real advantages, such as money or better job opportunities, et al. (Dörnyei, 1990; Chen et al., 2005). From existing studies (Peng, 2010; Lao, 2020), these learning motivations can be viewed as a strong predictor of WTC in a L2, and there is a positive interaction between WTC in a L2 and the motivations. Based on the findings and discussions from all studies that I reviewed, it is significant to investigate the correlation between motivation and WTC in a L2 for several reasons. First, to understand this positive correlation can enhance language learners' language learning outcomes from different aspects. Specifically, understanding how the motivation influences WTC in a L2 can facilitate language educators and language programs adapt their teaching methods and materials to improve students' language proficiency. When students have more motivation to use language, they are more likely to actively participate in language learning and thus acquire the language better. Just as Chen et al. (2005) mentioned, there is a positive interaction between each other. Second, to understand this correlation can facilitate the process of cultural integration for international in a new environment. For international students learning a second language, it is important for them to integrate into a new social and cultural environment. As Dörnyei (1990) discussed that the desire to participate in the targe language communicate can improve international students' integrative motivation and speed up the integration process. Furthermore, their ability to progress effective communication with others can be promoted as well as the consequence. Lastly, to understand this correlation can lead to economic and career benefits. As the explanation of instrument motivation

given by Dörnyei (1990) and Chen et al. (2005), economic and career benefits can positively influence language learners' motivation and further affect their WTC in a L2. In this case, individuals and institutions can better develop language education strategies to prepare students for future career opportunities.

Emotional impacts on WTC in a L2 can change depending on different emotions. Positive emotions, such as enjoyment, and negative emotions, such as anxiety, have completely different effects (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018; Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021; MacIntyre, 2007). Moreover, anxiety as one of the most researched negative emotions in SLA field has been approved that can lead to a negative effect on WTC in a L2 (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Teimouri et al., 2019; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, et al., 2004; Zhang, 2019). On the other hand, facilitating anxiety can enhance WTC in a L2 to a certain extent (MacIntyre, 1995; Wu & Lin, 2014). Several studies (Cao, 2011; Kajavy et al., 2018; Nadeem et al., 2023; Dewaele, 2019; Feng et al., 2023) showed that there is a positive correlation between WTC in L2 and positive emotions, such as enjoyment. Therefore, investigating the connection between emotions, particularly enjoyment as a positive emotion and anxiety as a negative emotion, and WTC in a L2 holds significance or reasons. First, understanding how emotions affect WTC in a L2 leads to more effective language learning methods and strategies. It is beneficial for students to learn while they experience enjoyment and reduce anxiety during learning process. They are more likely to participate in communication activities in L2, thus improving language proficiency and communication abilities. Second, both positive and negative emotions can affect WTC in a L2, and their effects are opposite. Thus, it is essential for language learners to reduce

negative, particularly anxiety, during the learning process. Anxiety is one primary barrier to L2 learning and use, especially in real-communication settings. Investigating this concept can facilitate language educators to develop interventions and techniques to alleviate language learning anxiety and make language learning and communication easier and more enjoyable. Lastly, emotions are not only correlate with the language learning only, but also plays a crucial role in the psychological well-being of learners. Reducing negative emotions can effectively contribute to a more positive emotional state for language learners and this state can further facilitate their overall mental health during the language learning process.

The sense of belonging plays an essential role on international students' integration and acceptance of a new living and academic environment. And these influences, such as familiarity with the communication context and communication partners, can further affect their WTC in a L2 (Kang, 2004; Riasati, 2012; Zhang et al., 2017). Further investigating how the sense of belonging correlates with WTC in a L2 holds significance for reasons. First, effective communication in a L2 usually requires adequate cultural competency. A sense of belonging can facilitate international students better understand cultural differences and cultural distance between their own culture and culture of the host country (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Zhou & Zhang, 2014), then accelerate the process of acculturation (Cao et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). Second, the sense of belonging is an essential part of forming support networks. These networks provide different opportunities for international students to ask for help. As Cena et al. (2021) indicated that strong social relationships for international students are more needed to adjust themselves into healthy social environments. Moreover, these networks can also

assist international students with language practice opportunities, effective feedback, various support, all of which contribute to improving communication in a L2. Lastly, a sense of belonging is closely associated with the psychological well-being state of international students. As mentioned ahead, both positive and negative emotions affect the sense of belonging. Furthermore, emotional impacts cause direct influences on WTC in L2 as an important factor. Understanding the relationship among psychological outcomes, the sense of belonging, and WTC in a L2 emphasized the emotional and psychological benefits of language integration significantly.

With the rapid development of social networks and tools, the way of communication is changing. International students need to learn and accept new social differences while studying and living in a different country other than their home country, and communication can be an effective way to accelerate this process (Barrot, 2022; Mao, 2014; Ellis, 2015; Ellis et al., 2013). There are several points to discuss the significance of correlation between social aspects and WTC in a L2. First, language is inherently used for social interaction and communication, which is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. Understanding how social aspects influence WTC in a L2 can help language educators better understand how individuals learn and use language in a world of rapidly evolving social technologies. Moreover, investigating this correlation can help identify various social skills and strategies that contribute to effective communication in a L2, which is valuable not only for language learners, but also for language educators and researchers. Second, cultural competence as one important concept has been discussed repeatedly in this paper. Studying the relationship between social aspects and WTC in a L2 can assist international students gain a deeper

understanding of cultural norms and social etiquette, then leading to more effective cross-cultural interactions. Lastly, social aspects can enhance social interaction and thus affect learning motivation. Belonging to a social group that attaches importance to and supports second language use in social context can motivate international students to participate in communication in a L2 more actively. Furthermore, identity perceptions are closely linked to social aspects as international students adopt new linguistic and cultural identities within their L2 communities.

Overall, through analysis of extant research, I found that the effects of these factors on WTC in a L2 are not all independent of each other. While affecting WTC in a L2, there are varying degrees of mutual influence among them as well. For example, emotions will have a direct impact on WTC in a L2, but it will also have an unavoidable impact on international students' sense of belonging and thus have an indirect impact on WTC in a L2. It is difficult but significant to sort out these interactions, and this also leads to the focus of my further research.

Identifying these four factors is a crucial step in understanding the complexities of the L2 learning process. With these findings, educators and language instructors can create a more supportive environment and design interventions to facilitate L2 communications. For example, integrative motivation can foster a love for the language itself by incorporating interesting and culturally relevant content into the L2 courses. Moreover, instrumental motivation will emphasize the practical benefits of L2 proficiency such as career opportunities or academic success. These can encourage L2 learners' participation in language-related activities. By understanding the importance of emotions, L2 instructors can create a positive and inclusive learning environment where

students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear. Providing counseling services or peer support can help international students cope with negative emotions, such as language-related anxieties and frustrations. To strengthen the sense of belonging, it can be helpful to encourage interaction between international students and local students through language exchange programs, buddy systems, or multicultural activities. From the sociocultural perspective, designing collaborative projects, and group discussions that require more L2 communication outside the classroom can promote peer interaction and collaborative learning. Furthermore, applying language learning apps and online communities can assist students in practicing their L2 outside of the classroom. In summary, the key of this paper is to create an environment that not only addresses various factors but also adapts to the individual needs and preferences of international students.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The international students' pursuit of effective L2 communication is a journey that is fraught with various factors. This paper delves into the intricate web of correlations, through an analysis of existing studies, revealing the dynamic interplay between WTC in a L2 and various important components: learning motivation, with a focus on integrative motivation and instrumental motivation; emotions, with anxiety as a negative emotion and enjoyment as a positive emotion; the sense of belonging and social aspects within the target community. As I conclude this exploration, we reflect on the broader implications and future directions of my investigation.

Correlations between WTC in a L2 and multifaceted factors discussed is a dynamic and interrelated phenomenon. Future research should continue to explore these correlations and interactions, and other factors should be considered as well. Moreover, the following topics can be further investigated. The topic of **Peer Relationships and L2 Use** aims to study the dynamics of peer relationships among international students and how these relationships influence language use. Investigating the impact of peer support on L2 learning process and L2 communication. **Technology-Mediated L2 Learning** will explore the role of technology in facilitating L2 learning for international students and investigate the impact of language learning apps, virtual communities, or online platforms on the L2 learning process and L2 communications. **Cross-cultural Communication Competence** will focus on the development of cross-cultural communication competence among international students, and explore how proficiency in a L2 contributes to effective communication in diverse cultural settings. Additionally, the practical implications of my findings can be helpful to educators, institutions, and

policymakers better design and adapt L2 instruction process to assist international students participate more actively and effectively in social interactions and integrate new L2 communities.

Two limitations of this paper should be addressed as well. First, some theories that I cited in this paper were proposed a long time ago, such as MacIntyre's (1998) model of WTC and Maslow's (1954) model of needs. With the intensification of educational globalization and the increase in the number of international students. These early theories may no longer be applicable to the current environment to some extent. For example, many studies have predominantly approached international students from a deficit model perspective, focusing on providing assistance to those perceived as in need. There is a noticeable gap in research that explores the positive contributions international students bring to host institutions and the learning community. Shifting recipients of support may foster stronger influences within the host institution. This change in perception could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the valuable role international students play in enhancing the learning environment. Therefore, it is essential to find new theories or combine different theories based on specific circumstances. Next, this paper is based on document analysis and is lack of empirical research. All the findings were the Documents Analysis of other published research. Dr. Bowen (2009) points out that the Document Analysis method can be limited by low retrievability and biased selectivity. This paper must also have these limitations. Therefore, to better prove the correlation between the four factors and L2 WTC, I plan to conduct an empirical study in my doctoral study. Finally, this paper discusses the complex relationship between international students' WTC in a L2 and motivation,

emotion, sense of belonging, and social aspects. The process of effective language use is not solitary but collective, shaped by various factors. These factors are intertwined to inspire and empower learners' competence of language learning.

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