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Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canada

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Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada

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Abstract

This study examined how Chinese students at a Canadian community college were willing to communicate (WTC) in English, and the sociocultural factors that enhanced or limited their willingness to communicate in English in and outside class. The study used a mixed-method design that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. Data were collected through a survey, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. First, a questionnaire was administered to 120 Chinese students enrolled in a Canadian college and 46 students responded. From the 46 respondents, twelve participants were selected for semi-structured interviews. Four participants were further selected for a focus group meeting from the interview group.

The results of the survey revealed that Chinese students tended to be generally willing to and frequently communicate in English. These participants' willingness to communicate in English was found to have a significant relationship with their perceived communication behaviours; however, their willingness to communicate did not have a significant relationship with their international posture. Semi-structured interviews revealed that face protection, feedback seeking and the Chinese value of quality talk were the major sociocultural factors that contributed to Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English. These interviews further revealed that Chinese participants did not connect language learning with cultural learning, which negatively impacted their willingness to communicate in English. Educational implications are addressed in the end for enhancing cultural awareness of both students and instructors regarding Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A recognizable goal of English as Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning is to facilitate better communication and understanding among individuals from different cultural and language backgrounds. It is not uncommon to find that some English language learners are willing to communicate in English in the classroom, while others are reticent. It is also noticeable that less proficient learners may communicate in English outside school when they are willing to, while on the contrary, highly proficient learners may be much less likely to talk.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC), a construct originally developed to account for some of individual differences in first language (L1) communication, has gradually expanded to become an important factor to explain second language (L2) learning and communication. There are a number of studies that examine the underlying systems and closely related variables of WTC in English, among which MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noël's (1998) heuristic model is prominent. Over the past two decades, studies have examined the relationship between WTC and affective and psychological perspectives such as self-confidence, L2 confidence, communication anxiety, and self-perceived communication competence (see Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Hashimoto, 2002; Lin & Rancer, 2003; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; Roach & Olaniran, 2001; Wang, 2004). Considerable evidence exists that none of these factors alone could explain the complexity of WTC in English.

In the last decade, several empirical studies have investigated WTC in English in non-English speaking countries, including Asker (1998) in Hong Kong, Cetinkaya (2005)

in Turkey, Kim (2004) in Korea, Yashima (2002) and Yashima, Zenuk-Nishida and Shimizu (2004) in the Japanese context. Wen and Clément (2003) explored English language classrooms in China, and their study reveals that cultural values are the dominant force shaping individual's perception and ways of learning English among Chinese students. These studies indicate that sociocultural dimensions have gained a growing importance in explaining WTC in English. Furthermore, international posture is generated as a new construct that takes into account ESL students' attitudes towards learning English (Yashima, 2002), and it has been found to have direct link with WTC in English.

Following the above studies, the aim of this study was to build on Wen and Clément's (2003) research related to the Chinese conceptualization of WTC in English to investigate Chinese students' Willingness to Communicate in English in an English-speaking country, Canada. On the one hand, people habitually attribute the inefficiency of English language learning and language use to the lack of an authentic language context. On the other hand, most English language learners noticeably adhere to their home cultural group, as is the case, for example, of Chinese students when they enter Canadian classrooms or communities. Some Chinese people have been observed not to make much improvement in English after years of living in Canada. This lack of improvement may be because they are used to keeping a reticent posture, or that they are deep rooted in their unwillingness to communicate in English that they cannot make better adjustments, or because of other reasons that influence their WTC in English, all factors of which this study sought to explore further.

1.1. Background of the Study

Widely used in areas ranging from diplomacy, international trade, tourism, international media, to technology, English has become an international language of communication among a variety of countries and cultures (Alptekin, 2002). In the 1990s, it was estimated that English was used by more than one and a half billion people as a first, second, or foreign language (Strevens, 1992). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, English seems to be playing such a crucial role that the purpose of English teaching and learning has changed from enabling students to master the linguistic structure to establishing overall competence of using the language for oral communicative purposes.

Since oral communication is a major goal of language instruction in both English speaking and non-English speaking countries, a renewed focus on the significance of second or foreign language education has developed. Many developing countries have adopted policies that are designed to reform English education in order to enable citizens to achieve greater success in English communication proficiency because English remains by far the dominant world language. In China, students who enter university, for instance, study English for a minimum of two years as a required subject. In Japan and Korea, the growing interest in intensive English programs also demonstrates that English is perceived as a key means of international communication (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001; Yashima, 2000). Yashima (2000) found that Japanese youth typically had dual orientations in studying English: a short-term objective for examinations and grades, and a long-term aim of acquiring English communication competency to use it in international communication.

Additionally, Canadian colleges and universities are increasingly recruiting international students in the 21st century with over 100,000 international students attending Canadian colleges and universities each year. Between 2004 and 2005, university registrants from China rose by 60% to a record high of 17,600 (Statistics Canada, 2006). One reason for Chinese students to study in Canada is that for many years, Chinese public institutions of higher education were not able to meet the space demands corresponding to the number of high school graduates. Consequently, only those students with A averages were admitted in universities. This meant that some graduates with good grades could not further their education at Chinese universities forcing them to look elsewhere. In fact, even though the chance of enrolling in higher education increased from 10% before 1999, to 15% by 2002 (Asian Pacific Bulletin, 2004), this increase still did not help accommodate the number of high school graduates who qualified for university education. As an alternative some Chinese students pursue studies overseas. By 2002, more than 10,500 young Chinese had been studying in Canada, representing almost 16% of all international students in the country (Holroyd, 2006).

In addition to international students, another large population of Chinese students at Canadian colleges and universities are immigrants with permanent resident status who speak English as their second language. Hu (2005) stated that since the 1990s, Mainland Chinese professionals and skilled workers have immigrated to Canada thus becoming the leading group of immigrants to Canada. Records indicate that upon arrival, because of lack of English language skills and information about the local market, these newly arrived immigrants find their search for employment in Canada very challenging

(Dlamini & Martinovic, 2007; Wang & Lo, 2004). Such problems underscore the growing need for Chinese immigrants to attain English language proficiency and communicative competence. Therefore, one solution to these language challenges is for Chinese immigrants to attend Canadian schools in order to improve their English language skills.

When Chinese students or immigrants pursue studies in Canadian colleges or universities, English language is regarded as the main determinant of academic success (Kilbride & D'Arcangelo, 2002; Tomich, McWhirter, & King, 2000). In particular, communicating in English is of great importance to Chinese people who pursue studies either for better education or for career advancement.

Personal Background

I myself am one of hundreds of Chinese students who pursue studies in Canada. Born in a teacher's family, I was familiar with English since childhood. My mom is a very responsible yet traditional teacher of English at an adult college in China. She devotes her whole life to her school and her students. She never taught me English on a regular basis, even before I started to learn English in Junior high school. My grade in the ABC course was never a bad one. My peers admired me so much when I recited a paragraph correctly and quickly. In retrospect, I believe that, it was mainly because my mother's work enabled me to get so familiar with the language, consciously or unconsciously. Even when I went to the washroom, the cassette recorder was still playing. I remembered vividly every time before the exams, my peers surrounded me, asking grammatical questions.

The third year in my Junior high school, there was a national exam for Olympics English Contest. I wrote the test, and failed. When the teacher mentioned the names of students who were to enter the second round of the test, I noticed that I was not there. I was not upset about it. Probably I did not think seriously about this extracurricular test, nor was my mother bothered about it. Perhaps I was overjoyed by the respect that I possessed among fellow students, despite not having to move on with the competition. I did not realize then that there was something missing in my English studies.

However, the truth never fails. The same thing happened again, when I applied to the university. I chose Beijing University as my first choice. The whole university entrance examinations went very well, except for one thing, my English listening test. I got 134 out of 150 in my English exam, but only 80 out of 100 in the listening test. Beijing University refused my entry, because that was not what they were looking for among the examinees. In the end, I went to Hubei University. My mom said to me later, the main reason for my denied entry was because of my physical disability. Our family could not afford to equip an artificial leg for me at that time. The famous Wuhan University, and the Central China Normal University also did not accept me because, using the president's words, "your daughter will influence our campus appearance and university reputations." But I thought, if only I could get a much higher score in the listening test, outstripping all the other ordinary competitors, Beijing University would acknowledge my superiority, and confirm that I will not be a bad choice for them given my disability. In my analysis, failure to obtain the highest marks in English further disadvantaged me in the entrance competition for Beijing University.

Entering Hubei University, I became really enthusiastic about studying English. I listened to VOA special English, and BBC news. I read English aloud, polishing my accent. Subsequently, I made success in achieving the top in the grade when we took the national Band-four exams. Similarly, I was the only one in the grade who received an award in the provincial translation contest. After graduating from the university with honours, I became a teacher of English in the same adult college as my mother. The teaching experience was exciting and enjoyable. I was again, highly respected by many adult students. Meanwhile, I was considering applying for a Master's degree in North America. One main purpose of course, was to go to the big world.

Pursuing studies in an English speaking country was a life dream of my mom. I was excited all the way from our local airport to Toronto, finally to Windsor, where I was faced by native English speakers. It was all of a sudden that I realized how poor my English was. I had always been grammatically correct in written exams, but I made the simplest stupid mistakes when I talked. An example of mistakes I made was "This box is much more bigger than that one." I uttered statements such as "He is such a good girl." A definition of cultural shock cannot explain this embarrassing situation. Curious about how other ESL students communicate here in Canada given their language background, I finished a Master thesis entitled: *The Role of Grammatical Instruction with Communicative Language Teaching among Chinese Students*. However, I was still making grammatical mistakes in daily life while trying to speak English fluently.

While listening was no longer a headache for me, I paid more attention to improve communication skills, which was a challenge for many Chinese students studying in Canada. The neat thing is that my attitude towards personal communicative

achievement varies from time to time. I felt it was best to speak a sentence with no grammatical error at first. Then I realized that the effectiveness of making myself understood was far more important than a slow-pace grammatically error-free sentence. I noticed that no native speakers responded to or corrected my mistakes during conversations. So I started to speak faster. It is interesting shortly after that I noticed that my interactions with native speakers, and my selection of words were totally Chinglish. That is, I think in mandarin, and talk in English. The expression seemed weird sometimes, because it was translated literally from Chinese. In other words, my English is not "DI DAO" (native like). I searched for the reasons why my English was not native like, shared with my friends, and appeared to find one rule among us: speak too less, worry too much. I had actually limited communicative interactions with native speakers, except with my advisors, faculties, and a few classmates at school. No matter how often I watched TV, no matter how purposively I take notes and remember new fancy words or slangs, I made slight progress in the attainment of English communication proficiency. This lack of progress is mainly because I normally do not initiate or take part in communication activities.

As illustrated, willingness to communicate in English is a research area in which I myself have encountered in language learning upon my arrivals in Canada. Coming from Mainland China, I have similar cultural and educational backgrounds as the participants who I was to approach. It became easy for me to approach those with whom I share similar language learning experiences of struggling. By uncovering ways to overcome the reasons behind the challenges in communication skills, I hope that Chinese and other

ESL students will have opportunity to better focus on the academic aspects of their studies and fulfill their dreams of meaningfully studying abroad.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In non-English speaking countries, especially Asian countries, there is an increasingly important need for people to develop English language communicative competence. In China, for example, parents urge their children to develop English proficiency by attending intensive language programs such as "Crazy English" to achieve higher social standings. Crazy English is a non-traditional method of learning English in Mainland China conceived by Li Yang in the 1990s. Li Yang's method places heavy emphasis on practicing English orally, which is best described by the famously repeated classroom assertion, "Shout out loud, and you learn." Using this method, teachers put effort in ensuring that students achieve the goal of high English language communicative competence. However, despite these efforts, many Chinese learners are seen to be shy and silent when they study in English-speaking countries. Even though they are strong in their knowledge of grammar from their learning in China, some of them make slow or little improvement in spoken English despite of the authentic English language context. Some even become frustrated and stressed when they realize that the English they had learned intensively for years does not work as expected in an English speaking context.

Yet, despite the uniform challenges in communicative competency, students' socialization patterns and their willingness to communicate are not uniform. That is, some students who have limited language proficiency are noticeably active in associating

with native speakers, get adjusted to the new environment quickly and smoothly; others are the opposite as they struggle with both language proficiency and adjustment issues. For instance, I have noticed that some students may struggle in their academic studies, but their social connections are not constrained by their English language competences. Some students are willing to get involved in a variety of activities that require communication whereas some others are worried about, hesitant, or are reluctant to communicate with native Canadians even when the opportunities are easily available. This latter group of students may be puzzled about why they have limited success in attaining English proficiency in authentic language contexts because they see their language learning efforts as worthy success.

To address this communication challenge, Willingness to Communicate in English has drawn increasing attention among researchers and educators, who put great effort into generating a comprehensive theoretical model, to provide support for English language learners to achieve greater success in oral proficiency and general language competence (MacIntyre, et al., 1998). Yashima et al. (2004) strongly suggest that future research on WTC in English should focus on contextual or situational variables that make a person more or less willing to communicate both in English language classroom settings and outside classes. That is, it is necessary to look into how sociocultural contexts influence communication behaviour and how learners' interactions with their environment (teachers and co-learners) make them more or less willing to communicate. Accordingly, this study examined the role of culturally specific factors in enhancing English language communicative competence for Chinese language learners.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study first examined the relationship between the two variables (perceived *communication behaviours* and *international posture)* and *WTC in English* among Chinese students who are undertaking studies in Canada. These two variables are generally believed to be important determinants of levels of WTC in English across ESL groups. The second purpose of the study was to investigate what sociocultural factors influence Chinese students' communication behaviours, and consequently how these sociocultural factors make students more or less willing to communicate in English. The ultimate goal of the study has been to present a theoretical lens that would help explain the limited success of Chinese students in the acquisition of English language skills regardless of evident efforts and commitment to language learning. This lens could then be used by both learners and teachers in pursuit of better English language learning and teaching in terms of willingness to communicate.

1.4. Research Questions

Given the above purpose, this study addressed the following research questions:

(a) How willing are Chinese students to communicate in English; and (b) what sociocultural factors contribute to Chinese college students' willingness to communicate in English?

Subquestions:

Quantitative Research Question 1:

> How willing are Chinese students to communicate in English in Canadian classrooms and in the general Canadian society?

Quantitative Research Question 2:

Is there any significant relationship between perceived communication behaviours and Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canadian settings?

Quantitative Research Question 3:

Is there any significant relationship between international posture and Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canadian settings?

Qualitative research question 1:

What sociocultural factors promote Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canadian settings?

Qualitative research question 2:

What sociocultural factors inhibit Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canadian settings?

Qualitative research question 3:

What are the educational recommendations for enhancing Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English?

1.5. Definitions of Terms

Chinese culture: refers to those people who are geographically located in East Asia and who are predominantly influenced by Confucianism. Confucianism is characterized by emphasis on the five hierarchical social relationships: sincerity between father and son, righteousness between ruler and the ruled, distinct roles between husband and wife, order between older and younger brothers, and faithfulness among friends. Confucian concept of these social relationships dominates large geographical region in Eastern Asia with customs and traditions

although varying between cities, provinces and countries. Chinese overseas are also observed to adhere to the concept of Confucianism.

Chinese participants: Chinese participants in this study refer to students enrolled at the college studied who come from mainland China and Taiwan and speak Mandarin. Some are international students in Canada, while some are permanent residents of Canada. However, they are all referred to as Chinese students regardless of their immigration status.

Chinese people: an overall term to refer to any person of Chinese descent, including those living in China and abroad. This term is more commonly used in referring to people who reside in and hold citizenship of the People's Republic of China (mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau) or the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Communicative competence: Canale and Swain (1980) suggest that communicative competence can be identified by four dimensions: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. MacIntyre et al. (1998) state that language proficiency can also be defined as communicative competence.

EFL (English as a Foreign Language): Oxford and Shearin (1994) state that a "foreign language is one that is learned in a place where that language is not typically used as the medium of ordinary communication (for example, French as it is usually learned in the U.S.)" (p. 14). EFL contexts can be described as places/countries where English is not spoken as a medium of daily communication. China, where people speak Chinese as the native language, is an example of an EFL context.

ESL (English as a Second Language): Oxford and Shearin (1994) state that a "second language is the one that is learned in a location where that language is typically used as the main vehicle of everyday communication for most people" (p. 14), in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. ESL contexts are defined as the places/countries where English is spoken as the medium of daily communication. The most recently coined terminology that refers to the same group of learners is EAL (English as an Additional Language). This concept recognizes that within North American context, English may not necessarily be the chronological second language of those learning it (Windle, 2006).

International posture: In contexts where students can seldom have direct contact with native speakers of English, that is, in typical EFL context, language learners may view the English language as something that connects them to foreign countries with English speaking foreigners or strangers. Yashima (2002) defined this inclination by the Japanese to learn English to communicate with the world as international posture: a general attitude towards the international community that influences motivation in learning an L2, which in turn predicts proficiency and L2 communication confidence.

Language anxiety: According to Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986), anxiety associated with language learning can be explained as a negative reaction to a variety of language learning situations. These situations may include classroom settings, public speech, etc.

Motivation: "the combination of effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner, 1985, p. 361). Motivation to learn a second or foreign language is defined as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10).

Perceived communication competence: It is the learner's self-evaluation of his/her language proficiency in oral communication situations.

Self-confidence: refers to student's perception of the ease of L2 learning (Sparks & Ganschow, 2001). Clément (1980) claims that self-confidence can be measured according to two dimensions: perceived communication competence and language anxiety.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English: Refers to the "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2" (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547), or in simple words, L2 student's intention or desire to communicate in L2 when he/she is free to do so. The levels of the participants' WTC in English in the current study were measured by the WTC in English scale with 12 items developed by McCroskey (1992).

CHAPTER II

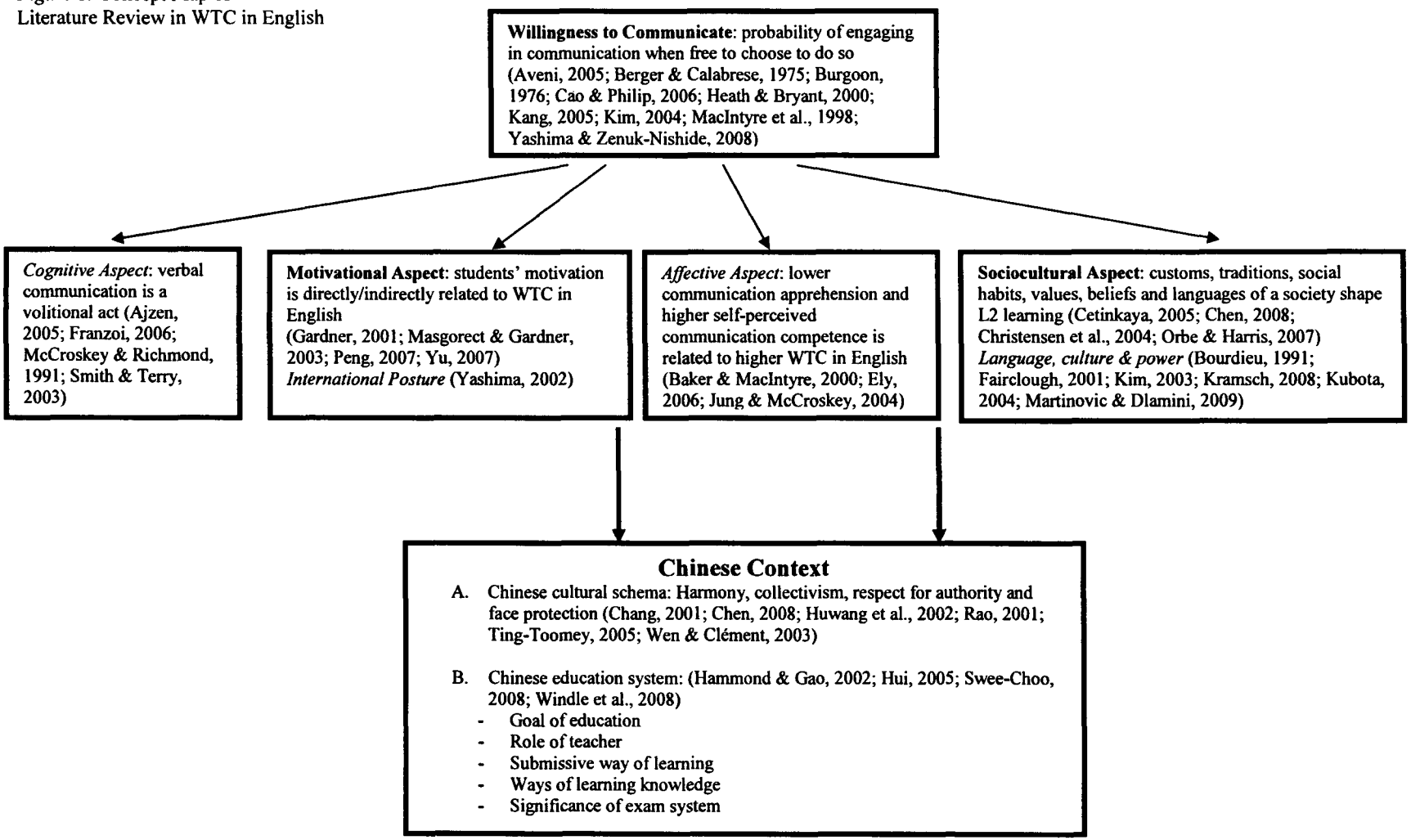
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I start by reviewing the literature that offers definitions of Willingness to Communicate in English. I then address cognitive, affective, motivational, and sociocultural aspects that are believed to relate to WTC in English. For each aspect, I present the thrust of the perspectives and illustrate them by reference to recent studies central to the fields of WTC in English. I also discuss studies on language and power, and present historical information on the complexity of education in China and how it related to English language learning. I end the chapter with a description of the conceptualization of WTC in English by Chinese people, and an elaboration of underlying cultural factors for the WTC in English. While each of the studies offers a window into willingness of communication across a variety of perspectives and address important theoretical issues in the field, read together they help portray the complex paradigm that the construct of WTC in English constitutes.

The following concept map offers a summary of literature and studies thoroughly discussed in this chapter. Under willingness to communicate in English, the main studies reviewed include MacIntyre et al. (1998) and Yashima et al. (2004). Major variables that were found to associate with willingness to communicate in English were examined from the perspectives of cognitive (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991), affective (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), motivational (Gardner, 2001), as well as sociocultural factors (Kim, 2003; Martinovic & Dlamini, 2009). International posture is discussed as part of the focus of this study. Chinese culture and Chinese education system were addressed

considerably as the basis of Chinese conceptualization of willingness to communicate in English (Wen & Clément, 2003).

Figure 1. Concept Map of Literature Review in WTC in English



2.1 Willingness to Communicate

Talk plays such a central place in interpersonal communication that Berger and Calabrese (1975) put great emphasis on the amount of talk in the initial stage of an interpersonal relationship claiming that all interpersonal relationships must pass through this stage before reaching more intimate stages. At the outset of interaction between two strangers, considerable uncertainty often exists. As amounts of verbal communication and nonverbal expressions increase, the levels of uncertainty in the minds of both communicators decrease, thereby leading to possibility for higher levels of intimacy (Berger, 2005; Heath & Bryant, 2000; West & Turner, 2007). The development of strong interpersonal relationships relies heavily on the amount of communication people are willing to engage in. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) conclude that, "the more a person is willing to talk and to be nonverbally expressive, the more likely that person is to develop positive interpersonal relationships" (p. 19).

Although talk is crucial in interpersonal communication, people differ dramatically from one another in the degree to which they actually talk. Some people talk little whereas others tend to verbalize frequently. One person may talk more to some people than he/she does to others. Likewise, in English language classrooms, it is commonly seen that some students are reluctant to communicate if English is their second or foreign language whereas others are willing to communicate whenever opportunities are available. This variability in talking behaviour is generally referred to as Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991).

The concept of Willingness to Communicate was originally developed in L1 communication by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) and was based on the notion of

Unwillingness to Communicate (Burgoon, 1976). In 1985, McCroskey and Baer first introduced WTC with reference to native language use and conceptualized it as the probability of initiating conversation when given the choice to do so. The probability of initiating conversation in communicative encounters is postulated to be the best predicator of actual communication behaviour (McCroskey, 1997).

Later, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) successfully combined a focus on second language acquisition with WTC in English. Over the years, the issues of whether language learners would like to initiate communication in English as their second or foreign language when they have the chance and what would contribute to their willingness to communicate in English has gained importance. L2 research has used psychological, educational, linguistic, and communicative approaches to explain why some individuals seek, whereas others avoid L2 communication (Compton, 2007; MacIntyre, 2007; Yashima et al., 2004). These approaches have been independently used to examine WTC in English; therefore, the heuristic model of WTC in English generated by MacIntyre et al. (1998) offers an opportunity to integrate them. They further proposed that WTC in English should be regarded as the primary goal of language teaching.

2.2 Willingness to Communicate in English

MacIntyre et al. (1998) state that pursuing L2 proficiency should not be regarded as the primary goal of learning a second or foreign language; rather, it should be viewed as a means to achieve interpersonal or intercultural relations. In order to achieve the final goal of high communicative competence for English language learners, educators and

researchers of second language acquisition need to search for a better way that can improve language competence of second language learners in general as well as stimulate the individual learner's motivation and meet their diverse needs. Willingness to Communicate in English is developed as one possible solution that addresses both learner's language competence and related personal goals.

It cannot be assumed that patterns in L1 WTC will automatically transfer to L2 WTC, since L2 communication carries a variety of issues, social and political implications that are usually not obvious in first language usage (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Among the varying factors, communication apprehension and perceived communication competence are considered as two major predictors of WTC in English. There is evidence that perceived competence is predictive of language learning and communicative behaviours (MacIntyre, 2003). Motivational factors also play a crucial role in promoting L2 communication (Clément & Gardner, 2001). Yashima et al. (2004) investigated the influence of learners' attitudes and their effects on WTC in English and second language communication. They find that those students who are more willing to communicate in various interpersonal situations in L2 tend to initiate communication in the classroom. MacIntyre (2003) came to another conclusion that when examining relations among variables influencing L2 communication behaviours, it is of importance to consider learners' experience and engagement with the target language. In this regard, factors such as personality, attitudes, motivation, self-confidence, and language anxiety have been identified to explain individual differences in WTC in English (Lin & Rancer, 2003; Roach & Olaniran, 2001; Strohmaier, 1998). In addition to these factors, social and learning contexts are believed to affect WTC in English as well.

The importance of WTC in English has been widely accepted and highly valued as a crucial component of today's L2 education. First, WTC in English in classroom settings may improve students' oral proficiency, which is a key to further improve the effectiveness of English language learning. L2 researchers have indicated that WTC in English - the result of a complex system of interrelated variables, generate individual differences in communication behaviour and consequently produce differences in the attainment of L2 proficiency (Aveni, 2005; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008). L2 students who are more active with L2 use have more potential to develop L2 communication competence. Second, greater willingness to communicate facilitates students' language learning process, leading to increased opportunity for L2 practice and authentic L2 usage (Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre et al., 2001). Third, MacIntyre and Charos (1996), in their study examining how native speakers of English learned French as a second language, add that increased contact with L2 is associated with reduced communication apprehension among adult learners in a conversational French course. In their view, WTC in English is the most important step in preparing L2 students for L2 use. In other words, students who are more willing to communicate can be more successful in their language learning if they have more opportunities to interact with native speakers. This assertion has also been documented by other studies including the study of Korean students in Canada (see, for example, Windle, 2006).

Hence, it is essential for educators to design lessons that can enhance L2 students' WTC in English. In order to achieve this goal, there is a need to first understand what factors affect L2 students' WTC in English, which will be addressed in the following sections.

2.2.1. Personality and Situational Traits of WTC in English

The issue of whether WTC in English is influenced by personality or situational traits has been an important debate since the development of the WTC construct. The WTC construct evolved from the earlier work of Burgoon (1976) on unwillingness to communicate; Mortensen, Arntson, and Lustig (1977) on predispositions toward verbal behaviour; and, Leary (1983), McCroskey and Richmond (1982) on behavioral approach toward shyness. All of these theorists seem to concur on the trait-like predisposition toward communication (Cao & Philp, 2006).

Specifically, McCroskey and Richmond (1991) support the notion that WTC can be "a personality-based, trait-like predisposition which is relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts" (p. 23). Kim's (2004) study also supports the notion that WTC in English is trait like. In his study Kim collected data from 191 Korean university students, and examined their nature of willingness to communicate. From the study he concluded that WTC in English is more likely to be trait-like than situational.

In a similar vein, MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Donovan (2002) also claim that because of the consistency of the personality trait of WTC in language learning, the level of a student's WTC in a communicative context is assumed to be predictable in other contexts. For instance, how willing a person is to communicate in talking in a small group is often consistent with how willing he/she is to communicate by making a speech in public.

Along with the personality trait construct, WTC is also arguably situational in that the level of a L2 student's WTC in English will be different according to communication situations. MacIntyre et al. (1998) stated that WTC in L2 should be treated as a

situational phenomenon that has both transient and enduing influences rather than strictly as a personality trait. Affective variables such as the degree of familiarity with the topic discussed, the degree of the formality of the communication context, and the degree of the speaker's perception of others' evaluations may result in the differentiated level of WTC in English. For example, it is likely that a foreign language learner's level of WTC in English in a small group will be different from when that learner is with a stranger or in a large meeting. Given the situational characteristics of WTC in English, a L2 student's level of WTC in English in a communicative circumstance is, therefore, difficult to predict, and most likely dependent on other factors involved in that context (Cao, 2006; Kang, 2005).

It is recognizant that individuals exhibit regular WTC in English tendencies across interpersonal communication contexts. Such regularity in communication behaviours across diverse situations suggests the existence of a consistent predisposition, which possibly explains why one person will communicate whereas another will not under identical situations. Nevertheless, whether a person is willing to communicate with another person in a given interpersonal encounter is largely affected by the situational constraints of that encounter, e.g., how the person feels that day, who the other person in the conversation is, what the other person looks like, and what could be gained or lost through communication. The construct of WTC in English, is assumed to be trait-like yet situationally dependent.

2.3. MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in English

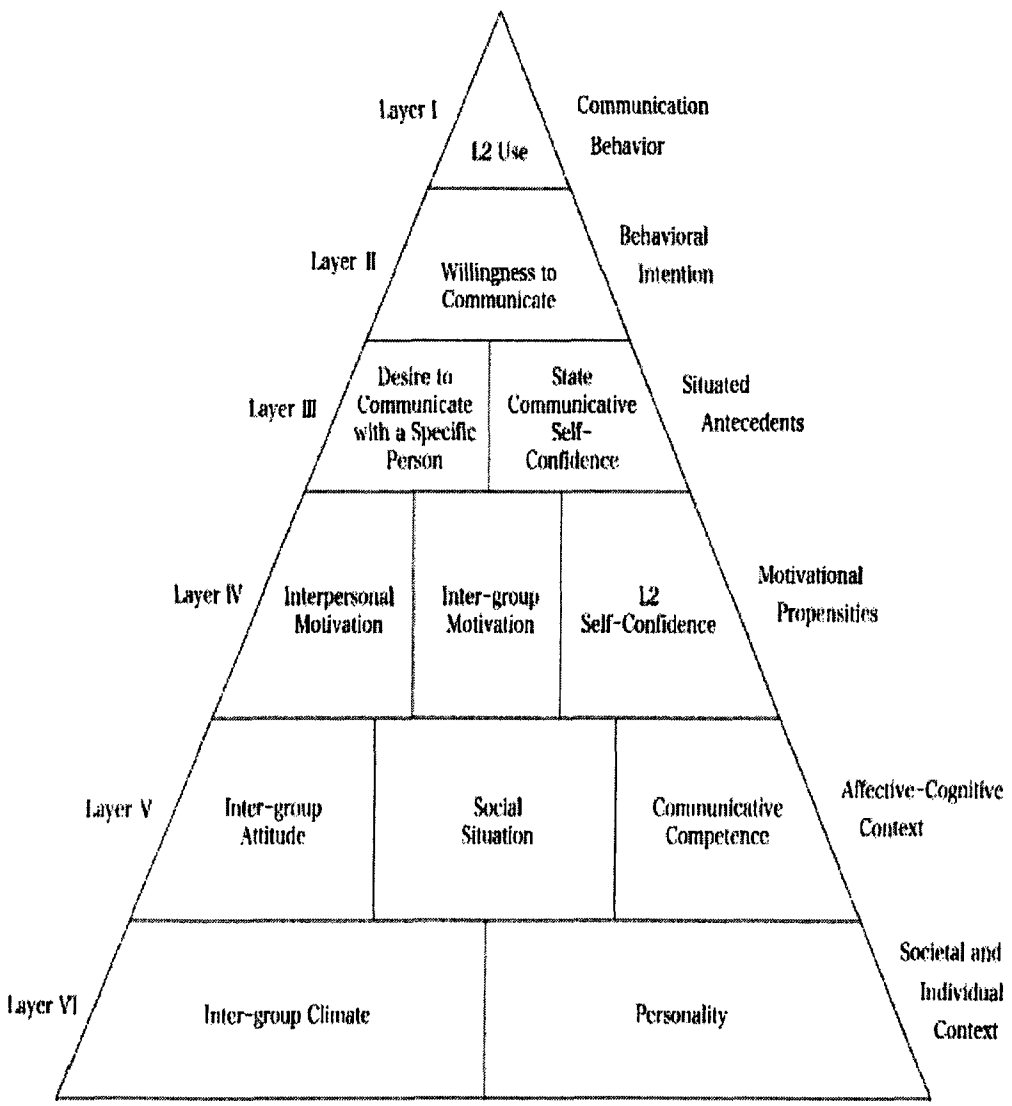
In the development of WTC in English, MacIntyre et al.'s model of WTC in English is predominant and significant. This model is constituted of twelve variables in a layered pyramid (see Figure 2). One reason for giving theoretical recognition to their model of WTC is that, it provides overall insights into the linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables that might attribute to one's willingness to communicate.

The pyramid-like model, containing six layered categories, demonstrates the construct of WTC in L2 and the complex interrelationship among variables affecting WTC in L2. The first three layers (I, II, III) are believed to have transient influences and can be treated as situation-specific variables through which WTC in L2 is measured, whereas the remaining three layers (IV, V, VI) are seen to have enduring influences on WTC in L2. Situational factors are: L2 use, willingness to communicate, desire to communicate, self-confidence in communicating, and anxiety in communicating. These factors may vary as the topic of the conversation or the conversation partner changes. Enduring influences are: motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context, and societal-individual context. MacIntyre et al. (1998) intended to explain individual and contextual influences in a person's choice to initiate L2 communication. The model does not, however, put much emphasis on the need for examining the social or cultural dimensions.

In order to demonstrate the complexity of MacIntyre et al.'s heuristic model of WTC in English, the following section first addresses the reasoned theory and studies on language, culture, and power, which have close link with the model. Subsequently, the model of WTC in English is examined from cognitive, affective, motivational as well as

sociocultural perspectives. But it should be kept in mind that these theories and related factors have impact on WTC in English collectively, not in a piecemeal manner.

Figure 2. MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in English



2.3.1. Theory of Reasoned Action

MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model of WTC in English is grounded on the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). As demonstrated in Figure 2, the pyramid model of WTC in English traces L2 usage through a number of influences, ranging from the most immediate behavioral intention (Layer 2) to the social and individual context as the most remote influence (Layer 6). To explain the model, it is important to include a brief discussion of the contributions of the theory of reasoned action behind its hierarchical layers.

The theory of reasoned action claims that the most immediate cause of behaviour is that an individual intends to engage in certain behaviour and attempts simultaneous control over his or her own actions. Before deciding whether or not to engage in a given behaviour, people normally consider consequences of their actions (Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2002). Intention, which is at the core of the theory of reasoned action, is based on three factors: subjective norms, attitude toward the behaviour, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991, 2002, 2005).

First, subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social pressures put on him/her, thereby leading to the decision of whether or not to perform the behaviour. Subjective norms indicate that other people expect us to get engaged in certain behaviours while we attempt to comply with their expectations. Generally speaking, if a person believes that others should perform the behaviour, he/she will think he/she should do so as well. Conversely, if a person believes that others should not perform the behaviour, he/she will have pressure to avoid performing the behaviour. Many Chinese students, for example, are accustomed to a passive role in the classroom because Chinese

culture regulates students to respect and obey their teachers. Thus, the subjective norm may exert pressure on Chinese students to not raise questions in class to challenge teachers independent of their own attitude toward questions.

Second, attitudes towards behaviour refer to attitudes about the consequences of behaviour and the desire to bring about the consequences. It simply refers to an individual's evaluation of whether performing a behaviour is positive or negative. Second language speakers, for instance, may make decisions about public speaking by first evaluating others' attitudes toward their talk. Their evaluations are, as Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) state, a function of beliefs. If they believe that performing a given behaviour will lead to mostly positive outcomes, they will hold a favourable attitude toward that behaviour. They will tend to hold an unfavourable attitude if they believe that performing the behaviour will lead to mostly negative outcomes. Therefore, the beliefs that underlie a person's attitude toward the behaviour are crucial in performing the behaviour. Chinese people deeply rooted in Confucianism, wherein talk is not highly valued, would most likely seriously consider the expected outcomes before they talk.

Third, perceived behaviour control refers to the degree in which an individual can succeed in performing anticipated consequences. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behaviour, the more successful the individual will be to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1988). However, attitudes toward the behaviour and subjective norms may have direct influence on individual intentions to perform that particular behaviour, and cause people to behave inconsistently (Franzoi, 2006; Smith & Terry, 2003).

Given that behaviour is strongly predicted by one's intention, and that a person is more likely to perform a behaviour of which others approve, the theory of reasoned action can be adapted in the model of WTC in English. It helps explain why individual language learners choose to do certain things under a given context. An individual has some control over his/her own actions (e.g. desire to communicate), and consequently, behaves in a reasoned manner to achieve desirable goals (e.g. willingness to communicate). Of course, there are several factors behind the intention of behaviours such as cultural beliefs. For instance, shyness is valued as virtue of human beings in Confucius culture, in contrast to the value of talk in North American countries. These cultural differences may result in different attitudes towards certain behaviours in communication.

2.3.2. Language, Culture and Power

This section presents literature that addresses how culture and power are related to language learning. This literature serves to demonstrate the importance of cultural learning in language learning, as well as how power affects language learning, which is vital to an understanding of the sociocultural aspect in relation to language learners' willingness to communicate in English.

Language Learning and Culture Learning

Language is the symbolic representation of historical and cultural backgrounds as well as interpretation of beliefs, values and systems of living. Culture refers to "the composite of cohesive behaviour within any social grouping" (Holliday, 1999, p. 247). Embedded in

and influenced by a system of social relationships (Gordy, 2005), culture has particular meanings and value in human's daily behaviour (Chen, 2008).

Theories of language learning suggest that learning a language is inseparable from learning its culture (see, for example, Canale & Swain, 1980; Cummins, 1981; Hymes, 1974; Pennycook, 2001). On the one hand, language can be used to express and exchange thoughts, which are seen to be a function and reflection of culture, traditions and beliefs of a society; on the other hand, however, language is rooted in, influenced and shaped by culture (Jiang, 2000; Liddicoat, 2002). Liddicoat et al. (2003) purport that the actual use of language is "never de-contextualised and abstract but, rather, it is a set of practices which are deployed in context to achieve meaning" (p. 44). If language use is contextual, then language learning is also contextual; context is an expression of cultural mores necessitating that language learning is viewed as culture learning (Jaszczolt, 2001; Martinovic & Dlamini, 2009). Furthermore, since cultures vary, different historical and cultural backgrounds, natural conditions as well as social environment will lead to varied interpretations and specific reactions to language (Wang, 2007).

Since culture and language are intricately intertwined, learning a second or foreign language inevitably involves the learning of a new culture (Kim, 2003; Kramsch, 2008; McDevitt, 2004; Thanasoulas, 2001). However, often foreign language teaching is done in ways that suggest separation from cultural learning; it is presented as providing the learners language knowledge, expressions, and grammatical skills, which are not linked to the native English-speaking countries' cultural knowledge. The traditional focus of language teaching has been on four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are believed to enrich overall development of language skills (Kohler,

2005). That is, traditionally, language learning is often separated from its cultural context: one learns language first and then, when one has acquired enough language knowledge, one starts to learn about the culture. Yet, in reality, foreign language teaching and learning requires not only mastering pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, but also learning the conventions, customs, beliefs, and systems of the language.

To begin, literature suggests that in language learning, culture provides a broad and deep context for the way one knows or determines what is valued, or appropriate, and why (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Coleman (1997) explains that the development of cultural awareness is of vital importance to language learning because it allows learners to understand and accept the perspective of the other, and to look into their own culture from outside. Kitao (1991) adds that culture learning enables learners to observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups, thus increasing their motivation towards the target language.

Furthermore, literature indicate that language learners need to be aware that in order to be successful in communication, language use must be associated with appropriate cultural knowledge and social behaviours (Hawkins, 2004). When language learners master foreign language knowledge, they may still make mistakes in the actual language use when they lack related knowledge of social and cultural background of that language. L2 learners need to understand that behaviours and communication patterns appropriate in their home culture might be perceived differently by members of another culture. Genc and Bada (2005) and McKay (2003) agree that language study seems meaningless for L2 learners if they are unaware of the people and cultural aspects of the

target language, and, more importantly for this study, this would affect their class participation and social interaction (McCafferty, 2002).

Language and Power

Social and linguistic theorists have acknowledged the relationship between language and power (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2001; Foucault, 1972; Kubota, 2004). Power can be thought of as "socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated" (Norton, 2000, p. 7). In other words, a society is comprised of individuals or groups who hold power. The power the group holds enables its members to enjoy specific resources and their associated benefits.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) maintain that language must be theorized as a vital part of the interplay of language, culture, and power. Fairclough (2001) also supports the theory that language is an integral part of society and its culture; therefore, it cannot be separated from discussions of power in society. That is, people not only interact within social practices, but also, through language they represent themselves to others; these representations shape and reshape what they do (Fairclough, 2003). In addition, language is imbued with power, as Blackledge (2005) points out, language itself is not powerful, rather, it "gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (p. 6). The language people use during interaction is largely determined by social beliefs, norms as well as conventions.

Yet, as Fairclough (2001) suggests, power occurs sometimes unnoticed because power is exercised in natural discourses. Gee (1996) defined discourses as "ways of

behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or types of people) by specific groups of people ..." (p. viii). In Chinese classrooms, for instance, communication between Chinese teachers and students is, to a large extent, socially and culturally shaped by social conventions in Chinese culture. The uneven power teachers and students hold are revealed most saliently when teachers deliver lectures while students keep taking notes and do not challenge teachers by, for instance, asking questions. Wodak and Meyer (2001) claim that, language provides a means of articulating and reflecting differences of power between social hierarchical structures. In this regard, the role Chinese teachers play in their classrooms together with the expected behaviours of Chinese students are all shaped by and experienced within the specificities of hierarchical practices within Chinese culture. The language Chinese teachers use together with the authority they generally hold in society often exerts power and control over students in and out of classes. The common consequence is that many Chinese students study diligently and answer questions properly in class, showing respect to their teachers.

English Language and Power in China

World political and economic events indicate that the powerful force of the English language cannot be denied since English has spread as a universal language. Government after government around the world recognize the role of English as a language of trade and commerce; therefore, it has been made a priority in foreign language teaching curricula in many countries (Crystal, 2004). It has been projected that over 2 billion

people worldwide will be learning or teaching English by 2020; as well, English now stands as the world's international language (Phillipson, 2006).

In China alone in 2005, over 176 million Chinese studied English as a foreign language through formal education (Graddol, 2006). Today 300 million people speak English in China, with more children learning English in Chinese schools than in British schools. In 2001, the government of China has implemented a policy stipulating that English language should be taught in Chinese primary schools. In Beijing alone over 200,000 adults also take English lessons outside school. It is projected that by 2025, the number of English speakers in China will exceed the number of native English speakers in the world (Yang, 2006).

Pennycook (1994) acknowledges that the spread of global English is related to class, education and culture; and English has direct and powerful implications for individual success in terms of social and economic advantages (Crystal, 2004). Pütz, Fishman and Aertselaer (2006) support the notion that the power of language is intimately connected with social power. The most cited reason for the success of English comes from the historical role of England as a colonial power - a period in which language was used as a weapon to control other countries and to have advantage over them in scientific research, technology and world affairs. Fishman (1996) lists other reasons for the dominance of English around the world: its propensity for acquiring new identities, its power of assimilation, and others. It is worth noting that in many former British colonies, English is still the language of the social elite.

A good example of how English as a language maintains its power can be found in the changes that occurred in Hong Kong in 1997. Up until 1997, Hong Kong was

under the British rule, and during this era, English came to be the language of the legal system, higher education, administrative network, science and technology, trade and commerce. In 1997, following the Treaty of Nanjing, the British government transferred the sovereignty of Hong Kong back to China. However, even after Hong Kong came under the rule of the government of China, the English language remained the most spoken language even though Mandarin was introduced as the official language. The reasons for this popular use of English are multitude and often complex and range from English looked at as providing a convenient vocabulary, to English considered as prestigious and powerful force for economics, business and trade, as well as its ability to enable people to communicate across ethnic groups and nationalities. Despite these many frequently cited advantages, some scholars such as Thiong'o (1986) caution about the role of English in the post colonial context, including its colonizing role in African literature. He argues that colonialism destroyed local cultures and local ways of living and knowing. Similarly, in the case of Hong Kong, a relationship of privileged culture and subordinated culture between the colonizer and the colonized was established, which has remained despite changes of powers - the English to the Chinese.

Even though studying English is prevalent in China, the Chinese context is very complicated. Historically, China refused to be penetrated by many foreign cultures and languages including English - which then prevented Chinese citizens from enjoying the benefits of commerce and culture associated with the English language. Through much of the 19th century and well into the 20th century, China went through compromises and bitter resistance to modernization from defenders of traditional culture. In the 1980s, the open-door policy was implemented, and since then, Chinese people formally

acknowledged the importance of English as international tool in their lives. The Chinese economy remains mainly industrial and agricultural in style, and there is desire to change to a service model similar to western developed countries. All these changes inevitably imply the need for more English language competence by those involved. The openness of China's government determines the significance and necessity of the English language in China.

It should be noted that no matter how learning English is prevalent in China; Chinese people maintain their own culture. What's even more, with the recent rise of China as a global economic player on the world scene, there are talks of China's challenging the United States' economic dominance and the rise of the Chinese language as a competitor to English as the world language. Today, more than 1.3 billion people worldwide speak Chinese, and about 885 million of those people speak Mandarin, China's official language. Graddol (2006) cautions about the existing complacency amongst native English speakers, and argues that "we are now nearing the end of the period where native speakers can bask in their privileged knowledge of the global lingua franca" (p. 118). It is worth extending Graddol's point by arguing that English native speakers will be left behind if they fail to recognize the emergence of Mandarin as another global lingua franca.

The interplay between language and power in the Chinese context is complex. On one hand, because of China's reform and the 1987 open policy, more and more people from other countries began to learn Chinese. On the other hand, in China itself, it is still strongly believed that those Chinese who have the ability to communicate in English are superior to those with lower or no English proficiency. That is, English remains one of

the most influential tools in Chinese life; it is not only a tool for communication, but also a necessity to enhance social status, therefore, power.

2.4 Variables that Relate to WTC in English

There are a number of variables that have potential impact on WTC in English, from the cognitive, motivational and affective perspectives, as well as sociocultural factors. Some of them have been found to influence an individual's WTC in English directly while others do so indirectly (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Yashima, 2002). Of primary concern is that none of the variables alone explain individual differences; rather, the factors may interconnect with one another in affecting the diversity of WTC in English, thus resulting in the success of English language learning.

2.4.1. Cognitive Aspect of WTC in English

Much behaviour in everyday life can be thought of as largely under volitional control. That is, "people can easily perform these behaviours if they are so inclined, or refrain from performing these behaviours if they decide against it" (Ajzen, 1988, p. 112). In accordance with the theory of reasoned action, verbal communication is largely believed to be a volitional act. People have the ability to choose whether or not to communicate, which points to the essentially cognitive nature of human communication. Although it can be argued that some choices are made so consistently that communication behaviour becomes habituated, and little cognitive involvement is required unless some intervening

situations occur, in cognitive theory people are believed to make conscious choices about communication behaviour (McCroskey, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2002). For example, the greeting "How are you?" is naturally and commonly followed by the ritual expression "Fine" or "All right". McCrosky and Richmond (1991) argues that although everyone participates in this kind of communication in daily lives, this type of ritualized behaviour is also subject to volitional control and modification.

In L2 communicative contexts, a person may encounter similar situations. For instance, to continue a casual conversation with a Canadian native teacher requires a newly arrived Chinese student to possess sophisticated cognitive abilities. Under such contexts, lack of cognitive sophistication in the English language may lead the student to withdraw from the interaction.

2.4.2. Affective Aspect of WTC in English

In the late 1990s, plenty of research indicated that two of the strongest predictors of WTC in English are communication apprehension and self perceived communication competence (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2001). Communication apprehension (CA) is the anxiety that one experiences while communicating in a foreign language. It represents an individual's fear of or wish to avoid communicating with others (Jung & McCroskey, 2004), based on how a person feels about communication, rather than how they communicate (Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003). Research has consistently found significant high correlation between CA and WTC in English (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), indicating that CA may have an influence in communication learning or communicative skill development.

With regard to self perceived communication competence, the nature of the discrepancy between the real self that a learner can express in his/her native language and the presented self in the foreign language seem to lead to his/her unwillingness to communicate. McCrosky (1997) proposed that there is a strong relationship between self-perception of communication competence and WTC in English (see also, Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). There is evidence demonstrating that students' perceived language competence (instead of their actual competence) combined with communication anxiety directly impact WTC in English (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Clément et al., 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002). Among others, McCroskey & McCroskey (2002) found that many second language learners were not prepared to communicate largely due to L2 communication apprehension and perceived lack of L2 competence, even though they had the desire to interact. WTC in English is therefore based on a combination of greater perceived communication competence, and a lower level of communication apprehension (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2005).

Some studies (Clément et al., 2003; Yashima, 2002) suggest that combining self perceived competence and communication apprehension results in a high level of construct - self-confidence in second language. Several studies support the claim that L2 confidence can predict language achievement (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999). The study conducted by Noëls, Pon, & Clément (1996) with Chinese university students in Canada revealed that self-confidence in English leads to greater involvement in Canadian society and frequent use of English.

2.4.3. Motivational Aspect of WTC in English

Since the 1960s, motivational studies in second language learning have been informed by Gardner and Lambert's social psychological framework (Dörnyei, 2003; Gardner & Lalonde, 1985; Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Motivation is defined as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language. According to Gardner (2001), learning a second language requires learners to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of other cultures, and the success of the learner somewhat depends on his or her attitude toward other cultures. Favorable attitudes towards another culture may have positive influence on the frequency of the L2 use which in turn affects second language proficiency. It has been widely recognized that students' motivation is related to WTC in English (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre et al., 2002; Noëls, Clément, & Pelletier, 2001; Peng, 2007; Yashima, 2002; Yu, 2007).

Peirce (1995) acknowledges that motivation must be perceived and understood with reference to social context wherein language learners vary across time and space. Contextual factors may include the effect of the learning situation, language teacher, parents, the status of the first and second language in the society, as well as interethnic contact in the ESL context. Added to the need to understand contextual factors in WTC in English is the role of international posture, which is a relatively new construct in L2 learning and use. The concept, international posture, which originated from Gardner's motivation theory, basically involves learners' positive attitude toward the target language group, and their interest in learning foreign languages to interact with and even become a member of target language group (Yashima, 2002). It is believed that learners'

attitudes toward the target language group affect their success in learning the target language (Bake & MacIntyre, 2000).

International posture refers to: "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures, among others" (Yashima, 2002, p. 57). There are four variables that combine to form international posture: interest in foreign affairs (IFA), intergroup approach-avoidance tendency (AAT), interest in international vocations/activities (IVA), and intercultural friendship orientation in English learning (IFO). To briefly illustrate how these variables work, AAT will be used. Approach-avoidance tendency refers to "an individual's tendency either to approach or to avoid interaction with people from different cultures" (Yashima, 2002, p. 58). If L2 is used for intercultural communication, as is often in the case in interactions that Chinese have with native speakers in Canada, the approach-avoidance dynamic is likely to be related to L2 communication tendency. The four variables will be discussed in detail in the instrumentation section.

International posture was first studied in relation to WTC in English in the studies of both Yashima (2002) and Yashima et al. (2004). Yashima (2002) hypothesized that learners' international posture is directly related to learners' willingness to communicate in English, and is related to their motivation to learn English. Yashima (2002) showed strong evidence that international posture influences motivation, which in turn, influences proficiency in English and self-confidence; consequently leading to WTC in English. Furthermore, a significant direct path was found from international posture to WTC in English, suggesting that those who tend to focus more on intercultural communication

goals will have greater intention to communicate and use it more frequently. Shortly following Yashima's (2002) study, Yashima et al. (2004) found that the path from international interest to WTC in English was significant, although not strong. It is reasonable to think that the more internationally oriented an individual is, the more willing he/she is to communicate in English, and the more motivated he/she is to study English.

Yashima's (2002) findings imply that in order to encourage students to be more willing to communicate in English, English language lessons should be designed to enhance students' interest in different cultures and international affairs and activities; as well, such activities would help reduce anxiety and build confidence in communication. Yashima (2002) adds that international posture should be fostered through the process of learning a foreign language, either with the materials students are taught, or through life experience.

While Yashima (2002) demonstrate that a direct relation exists between students' WTC in English and their international posture in EFL context, Clément et al. (2003) shows an indirect relation through linguistic self-confidence between WTC in English and international posture in an ESL context. Similarly, Kim (2004) replicated Yashima's (2002) study in a Korean context and did not find a direct relationship between students' international posture and their WTC in English. Since findings remain inconsistent in the relationship between willingness to communicate and international posture, in this study, Chinese students' international posture was also assessed in relation to WTC in English in the Canadian ESL context.

2.4.4. Sociocultural Aspect of WTC in English

To put it simply, culture refers to the pattern of customs, traditions, social habits, values, beliefs and languages of a society. As cultures are inclusive, they permeate virtually every aspect of human life, conditioning and determining all behaviours including linguistic behaviours (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Culture can be either material or symbolic. Material culture is concrete, substantial and observable (e.g., language habits, eating habits), whereas symbolic culture is mostly hidden and abstract (e.g., ideologies, beliefs, and values). These abstract areas of culture are indeed indiscernible and implicit, not only presenting problems to foreign language learners, but also constituting potential troubles or barriers in intercultural communication.

People learn to think, feel, believe, and communicate in different ways because of the diversity of cultures. Verbal communication deals with the language itself, how people use the language verbally, speed of talk, turn-talking behaviour, politeness, use of interruption, all of which differ significantly across cultures. Such communication behaviours are regulated within a given culture by specific norms (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Chen, 2008; Christensen et al., 2004). Some cultures are seen as quiet while others are characteristically loquacious. It is noted that, although communication practices and social acts may differ substantially from culture to culture, there are major variations among people in any given culture, no matter how homogeneous that culture is.

In North American culture, interpersonal communication is highly valued and in most instances, people who communicate well typically are evaluated more positively than people who do not (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). In school settings, students with high WTC are looked upon favourably; teacher expectations of their performances

are high; consequently, they are usually high academic achievers. That is, teachers have positive expectations for students who are highly willing to communicate compared to the expectations of those who are less willing to communicate. Strohmaier (1998) found that instructors were quick to label students as communicatively apprehensive or unwilling to communicate, and treat them differently based on these labels. Also, students who are less willing to communicate are most often seen in negative ways by their peers.

McCroskey and Richmond (1990) researched WTC in English not only in the USA but also in Sweden, Australia, Micronesia, and Puerto Rico. They conducted a comparative study and investigated the relations among WTC in English, communication apprehension, communication competence, and introversion in these countries. They found that while American students were found to be more willing to communicate, Micronesian students were least willing. They stressed that any kind of generalization should be done with reference to culture. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) combined WTC in English and social context models to examine individual and contextual factors that affect L2 use for both Anglophone and Francophone groups. Results indicate that Francophones, the minority group, are more willing to communicate in English, have more L2 confidence, more frequently interact in L2, and have a higher identification with L2 group in comparison to Anglophones.

Considering the importance of cultural factors in communication, McCroskey & Richmond (1991) suggest that a primary direction for future research in WTC in English is in the intercultural arena. With the global expansion of business and other intercultural contacts, the need for people to communicate effectively in multicultural settings has far

outweighed academic needs. To develop successful social relationships within a certain culture, a person must comply with certain communication skills within accepted boundaries of that culture's norms. When an individual enters another culture, his/her behaviour will be inevitably judged through the norms of that culture, rather than his/her own home culture. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) suggest whenever a person finds her/himself in an environment in which her/his own subculture is in a minority position compared to others with whom she/he must interact, that person may be described as culturally divergent. Donovan and MacIntyre (2005) further report that culturally divergent individuals do not know how to communicate effectively so they are much less willing to communicate to avoid failure and possible negative consequences (Orbe & Harris, 2007). They acknowledge that the culturally divergent individual may have excellent mother tongue communication skills but not in the second language. In this regard, cultural divergence is seen as highly related to the willingness to communicate. MacIntyre et al. (1998) propose that by enhancing willingness to communicate, language instruction may achieve the goal of bringing cultures and nations together.

The impact of willingness to communicate within the general North American culture is now fairly well understood. However, the crux of the problem is that these conclusions may not hold true in many other cultures, since cultures vary in the degree of value they place on oral communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). The most basic difference in communication patterns between cultures may actually reside in the amount of verbal communication preferred, and the circumstances for talk as opposed to those for silence. Hence, it is important that researchers examine language learning in a

variety of communicative contexts before applying the model of WTC in English to a specific context, for example, Chinese students in this study.

To sum up, this section illustrated that recent theories of WTC in English draw upon cognitive, affective, motivational and sociocultural variables to essentially explain language learners' WTC in English (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2002). In addition to looking into the roles of affective variables such as communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence, research has shifted focus to social and cultural dimensions of WTC in English. So far, a limited number of studies have been conducted with students learning English as a second language (Clément et al., 2003; Hashimoto, 2002), or as a foreign language (Cetinkaya, 2005; Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004) with slight variances. Yet, little has been explored among Chinese students in terms of WTC in English.

Furthermore, studies of Yashima (2002) and Yashima et al. (2004) were conducted in an EFL context, where the participants studying English may not have had the opportunities to talk in L2 even if they were willing to. This study investigated intercultural learning situations in which the learners have the freedom to decide to communicate or not in an English-speaking country. Under such circumstances, two variables - communication behaviours and international posture, are primary targets for further examination in relation to Chinese students' WTC in English. WTC is believed to be highly connected to language use and communication behaviours. Unlike communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence, international posture is newly developed construct that relates to WTC in English, therefore, deserve further investigation.

2.5. Chinese Conceptualization of WTC in English

Blood, Blood, Tellis & Gabel (2001) state that reduced WTC in English may cause language learners to be less effective in communication and subsequently generate negative self-perceptions. Quite differently, Chinese traditional culture treats shyness and silence as important moral values or rituals. Old sayings such as "let the matter rest so as to annoy nobody," and "silence is the most precious," teach people to value reserved mannerisms and seriousness. From the perspectives of Chinese educators, studies conducted by researchers in western countries seem insufficient to explain what causes the difficulty of developing English proficiency among Chinese language learners, or what contributes to learner differences of willingness to communicate in English. Considering that WTC in English and many variables involved can be culture specific, Wen and Clément (2003) proposed a Chinese conceptualization of WTC in English, arguing that cultural values are the dominant force shaping individual's perception and way of learning in L2 among Chinese students.

Wen and Clément (2003) were the first to examine the Chinese conceptualization of WTC in English by integrating substantial linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables. Their reconceptualization of WTC in English largely enriched MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model and offered new insights to improve English language learning and teaching. The following section will address their theory, starting from an understanding of Chinese cultural schema. Major cultural themes in Chinese education processes are elaborated in relation to Chinese students' communication behaviours in class and language learning experiences.

2.5.1. Chinese Cultural Schema

Cultural schemas, interchangeably called cultural models, are representations of generic concepts distributed among cultural members. Chinese cultural schema of education refers to abstract knowledge about the nature of education that is distributed among Chinese cultural members (Hui, 2005). It has profound influence on Chinese people and contributes to an array of social, educational and cultural consequences.

Chinese cultural knowledge emerges from thousands of years of "interaction among the Chinese social need for developing harmony in a collective and stratified society, the Confucian philosophy of education and the political utilitarianism of education" (Zhu, 1992, p.4). The appeal for national peace gave rise to the Chinese value stressing harmony between people of different social hierarchical orders (Chang, 2001; Chen, 2008). Chinese people tend to speak less in order to keep harmonious relationships, unity, and loyalty among people. Talking too much or talking about unnecessary things is mainly regarded as inappropriate behaviour, which would lead to a loss of face (Gu, 2005). Some studies argue that talk in Chinese culture is highly related to the need to protect one's self-esteem (Lee, 2006; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001), or save face (Chen, 2008), or to the management of one's impression before others (Matsudaira, 2003). Some of these studies also suggest that talk in Chinese culture is also highly related to feedback-seeking behaviours (Hwang & Arbaugh, 2006), and to notions of collectivism (Matarazzo & Abbamonte, 2008).

One distinguishing cultural characteristic between Chinese and North Americans is the Chinese value of face - the need to be respected by others and not be embarrassed in social interaction. Face, which literally translates to the face, is "not what one thinks of

oneself, but what one thinks others should think of one's worth" (Lim, 1994, p. 210). The sanctioned norm of face protection to avoid shame and embarrassment, taught and nurtured in Chinese societies, are important means through which the society socializes individuals to conform to cultural expectations for overarching relational orientation (Gao, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Face protection is a concern not only of the individual but also of the family. Normally, a student must avoid poor performance, which would otherwise mean a loss of individual face and of the whole family status (face) (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Merkin, 2006; Oetzel et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Accordingly, Chinese learners tend to be less willing to communicate, less likely get involved in communication, in order to avoid embarrassment and to build defences to protect the ego (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Criticism of another person may also result in loss of face, which is regarded as an unacceptable communication practice among the Chinese (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998).

Rao (2001) also noted that respect for authority influences the learning styles and behaviours of Chinese. High respect for authority may cause a Chinese student to consider raising questions before those in power (the instructor) to be inappropriate because the act of questioning may imply a challenge to the knowledge and the teachers. In this regards, Chinese students are often more reluctant than their western counterparts to raise questions or speak up in class (Wong, 2004). In contrast, such a notion would probably be less of an issue among students from western countries (Cho, Roberts, & Sherron, 2008).

2.5.2. Chinese Education System

The following section discusses the Chinese education system using the framework of the Chinese culture schema mentioned above. The section discusses the goal of education, the role of the teacher, the submissive way of learning, ways of gaining knowledge, and the significance of the exam system.

2.5.2.1. The Goal of Education

教书育人。 - *Teaching books and cultivating people.*

In Chinese culture, the word education means to teach, cultivate, and reveal crucial cultural knowledge; therefore, teachers play a crucial role in cultivating the soul of Chinese people. Chinese cultural schema suggests that imparting knowledge is, to a large extent, a means to cultivate people. The essence of Chinese teaching is not confined to professional knowledge, but hinges on the notion that moral cultivation is the paramount means to shape students to become well-educated and useful members of the society (Hui, 2005). Chinese cultural schema has had pervasive and profound influences on Chinese education which is revealed in the consistent emphasis on moral education in schooling, and high respect for teachers in society.

2.5.2.2. The Role of the Teacher

言传身教。 - *Teaching by personal example as well as verbal instructions.*

In contemporary Chinese education, teachers have the role of cultivating the souls of Chinese students who come with high expectation to be the future of the nation (Hui,

2005). Due to their primary role as moral cultivators with high social status, Chinese teachers are authoritative practitioners with power to control all class activities including communication. In addition to delivering knowledge to students, teachers serve as role models as civilized and useful contributors to society. They aspire to instill in students core values such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness and citizenship. By and large, most Chinese teachers are willing to give extra instructions about classroom knowledge to students or solve students' problems in their spare time, which then helps to reinforce their roles and consolidate their respectable status. Such kind of teacher support is of great significance in the Chinese setting. As a result of the traditional role of teacher, Chinese students are expected not only to pay respect to teachers in class, but also to the material that teachers have taught or assigned. Chinese students are expected to demonstrate good attention, to memorize class notes, and are also expected to achieve good grades through reading and learning.

2.5.2.3. A Submissive Way of Learning

Hammond and Gao (2002) state that contemporary Chinese education is characterized by memorization, rote learning, and repetition. In Chinese classrooms, the language learners' English proficiency is built on the teacher's lectures instead of on their own practice (Xie, 2008). Thus, Chinese students are accustomed to a submissive and passive way of learning, referred to as a conserving attitude to learning or surface learning (Swee-Choo, 2008).

Hu (2002) suggest that once students are no longer in teacher-centered classrooms, they may not feel comfortable since they do not think they are learning as

they used to. Biggs & Tang (2007), however, warn against generalizations or simplification about Chinese student learning, noting that they do seek to understand, reflect, and question knowledge for later deployment; at times they are deep learners. Despite that they are accustomed to a formal system of education, a rigid syllabus, and formal exams (Zheng, 2008), Chinese learners are largely successful in completing their papers, displaying aspects of deep learning - understanding, reflecting, and questioning (Hammond & Gao, 2002). Nonetheless, most literature indicate that Chinese students who have been educated in a system where there is greater allegiance to established authorities place greater emphasis on acquiring information rather than contesting it (Holmes, 2004).

One major consequence of the submissive way of learning is lower risk-taking. Risk-taking in language classes is when an individual tend to use the second language in class (Ely, 2006), which may result in embarrassment in front of others (Jonassen, 2004). Heavily influenced by face protection, Chinese students are generally low language risk takers or over emphasize self-correction (Zhang & Xu, 2007).

2.5.2.4. Ways of Learning Knowledge

温故而知新。

-Re-reading old knowledge is the prerequisite of gaining new knowledge.

Re-reading is a recommended learning strategy in Chinese education. However, re-reading and self-reflection are not sufficient to produce ideal students, that is, students who model all the required society's norms, values and behaviors at school. Since knowledge and norms found in books are vast, Chinese culture of learning demands that

in addition to respecting teachers and listening carefully to the information they deliver, students should be determinative, diligent and persistent (Hui, 2005). Also, most Chinese students hold the belief that putting one's whole heart into the process of constant improvement is an effective learning strategy. The types of knowledge that are sought should be rigorous, meticulous, and scrupulously applied throughout the entirety of a study.

Believing in determination, diligence and perseverance, most Chinese students consequently tend to be self-critical if failure occurs in their learning (Hui, 2005). They do not attribute their learning failure to teachers; instead, they see failure as their own responsibility. Any open discussion with a teacher for a solution about not doing well at school, in their views, may expose that the teacher has failed to teach effectively and the student would rather save the teacher's face.

Chinese students' belief about books and their acquired learning strategies have a strong impact on their overseas learning experience. Beliefs about books and learning strategies frequently lead a large number of students to a situation where they are not always capable of integrating themselves with the local academic communities in Canada (Windle, Hamilton, Zeng, & Yang, 2008). Opposite to knowledge-gaining methods used by students while still in China, a L2 situation is considered ambiguous because grammatical, phonological, lexical, and cultural information are unfamiliar and insufficient for them to bring about a meaningful interpretation. Some may view such an ambiguous nature of learning as discomforting or even threatening (Harding & Ren, 2007), since guessing is not valued as a good learning strategy in Chinese culture (Wen &

Clément, 2003). Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that some Chinese students evidently lose confidence and interest in communication activities.

2.5.2.5. Significance of Exam Systems

千军万马国独木桥。

- *Thousands of cavalrymen and infantrymen cross a single-plank bridge.*

A distinguished product of Chinese education system is that the weight of examinations in the curriculum has not been reduced. Success in examinations developed a class of degree holders whose status gives them superior influence in their communities (Cohen, 1994), or paves the way to glorify the ancestors (Yu, 2001), and to gain face and dignity for the family. Chinese examinations therefore function as a yardstick measuring not only directly the knowledge that students possess, but also indirectly their morals and virtues. Successful students are seen as talented and possessing social values, all of which motivates other students to study diligently for themselves, their parents, and their teachers.

The metaphor of *thousands of cavalrymen and infantrymen crossing a single-plank bridge* shows the intense competition for national entrance examination. The course work demands are so heavy that students rarely have time to develop an in-depth understanding of knowledge, as well as share experiences and undergo pleasant interaction with peers. Relative to the conceptualized significance of examinations on Chinese students, Chinese learners are task oriented; they concentrate on their growth ability, sense of self value, and public recognition (Wen & Clément, 2003).

2.5.3. English Education in China

Since this study focused on Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canada and the sociocultural factors that affect these students' willingness to communicate in English, background information about the educational system from which the participants migrate from and the English education they receive prior to migration is essential. The Chinese school system is built on a 6-3-3 frame. The first six years are the compulsory elementary education, followed by three years of compulsory middle school (junior high school) and three years of high school (senior high school). Institutions of higher education accept students depending on their scores in the nationwide entrance examination. Apart from the exam tradition, Hui (2005) states that one unique characteristic of the Chinese education system is that its various forms and levels, are widely conceptualized as integrating the cultivation of human souls with the provision of students with knowledge. As a developing country, the Chinese government considers universities as instruments for national development and students approach higher education as a way of upward mobility (Hui, 2005).

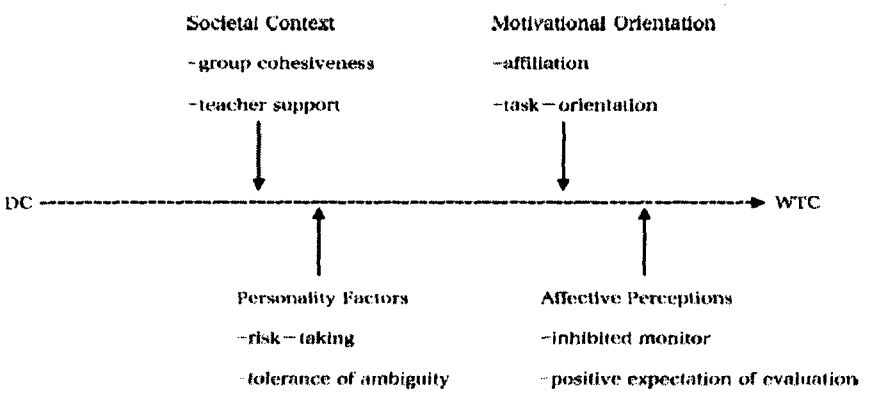
Shortly after People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, foreign language became a compulsory school subject. During the early days of the Republic the primacy was given to the Russian language, followed by English. Later, in the 1970s English began to gain primary foreign language status due to increasing connection with the free market economies which brought into Chinese many new products, concepts and thoughts, and popular American culture and media (Hui, 2005). Currently, English is the dominant foreign language taught at schools and used mainly in international business and tourism. Until 1997, English instruction started in junior high schools; however with

a new educational law passed in 1997, English instruction now starts as early as the 4th grade of elementary schools. Students who graduate from junior high schools are required to obtain basic English language knowledge and have to write a nationwide English proficiency test for entering universities among other academic tests.

2.5.4. Wen and Clément's Chinese Conceptualization of WTC in English

As previously stated, culture is about how individuals behave and react in different situations (Heine, Buchtel, & Norenzayan, 2008). Chinese culture commonly recognized as more collectivistic, significantly shapes Chinese people's self perception and their relationship with the outside world. Chinese people learn sociocultural norms and practices from experiences they have had, and these experiences are shaped and reshaped by the social and cultural groups which they belong to (Gee, 2005). Given the premises in the previous sections, it is therefore postulated that cultural values are essential factors influencing Chinese students' perceptions and ways of learning, as well as their willingness to communicate in second language learning. The communicative behaviours of Chinese entering a western learning environment, who appear to be highly apprehensive, uneasy, or shy, might actually stem from unwillingness to communicate rather than merely shyness or communication apprehension in the western manner (Wen & Clément, 2003).

Figure 3. Wen and Clément's (2003) Chinese Conceptualization of WTC in English



Wen and Clément's (2003) model focus heavily on the relation between Desire to Communicate (DC) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC in English). Desire is defined as a deliberate choice or preference, whilst willingness emphasizes the readiness to act. Having the desire to communicate does not necessarily mean having the willingness to communicate. Many students do not feel ready to communicate even though they may have the desire to improve their oral competence, largely because of many factors as illustrated in Figure 3. Four major factors are included in this model: societal context, personality factors, motivational orientation, and affective perception.

Firstly, societal contextual variables impact one's willingness to communicate in a given situation from two important aspects: group cohesiveness and teacher support. Cohesiveness means "the degree to which the group coheres or hangs together" (Shaw, 1981, p. 197). Wen and Clément (2003) stipulate that high group cohesiveness leads to engagement, reduced anxiety, and consequently willingness to communicate. As described earlier, teacher support is of great significance in the Chinese setting, where the hierarchical social relationship is dominant. Secondly, among personality factors, risk-

taking and tolerance of ambiguity seem more culturally bounded when taking into consideration notions of collectivism and face protection within Chinese culture.

Next, affiliation and task-orientation seem to account for Chinese students' motivational tendency. Wen and Clément (2003) indicate that most Chinese students traditionally tend to seek company of, and establish relationship with ingroup members. This tendency may either exert a powerful influence on classroom interactions, or, on the contrary, prevent interpersonal communication. Finally, affective-cognitive perceptions seem to be directly related to Chinese students' WTC in two aspects: inhibited monitor and expectation of positive evaluation. Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model states that an inhibited monitor entails reduced self-consciousness and anxiety. Always face-protected, Chinese students are sensitive of structure and correctness, as well, they focus on avoiding errors and embarrassment. Wen and Clément (2003) remark that expectations of a positive evaluations create a feelings of social acceptance and reward attainment thus creating an increased self-esteem, strong engagement as well as reduced anxiety. Teacher support and task orientation are believed to contribute to a positive communication environment, which "tears down students' personal emotional barriers and enhances their engagement in connecting with others" (Wen & Clément, 2003, p. 33). In contrast, when students do not have confidence or take risks, they cannot create opportunities to initiate interactions.

Wen and Clément's (2003) reinterpretation of MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model is culture-specific and stimulating to Chinese students overseas. Empirical research is imperative in order to confirm these proposed factors and their effects on WTC in English in the school settings as well as in daily contact with English speakers. It is of

essential importance to examine how these factors of social and cultural feature operate among Chinese students across different contexts, in better explaining what makes it more or less likely for Chinese to participate in communication in English.

2.6. Summary

Although WTC is a recently developed model in second language studies, there is a growing body of research in the second language learning field which focuses on WTC in English. Together, studies in this chapter paint a picture of willingness to communicate in English from a wide range of cognitive, affective, motivational, and more importantly for this study, sociocultural perspectives. These studies also document Chinese education and cultural schemas in terms of theory, and suggest directions for new research.

When the purpose of English teaching and learning is highly related with language usage and communication, the issue of whether learners will choose to communicate in English whenever they have the opportunity and what factors will have impact on their willingness to communicate gain importance. The general conclusion drawn from the research and theory presented above is that WTC in English has a major impact on second language learners regarding interpersonal communication in a wide variety of environments. While WTC in English in a given situation can be affected by situational constraints, the trait-like nature of WTC in English has potential impact in all communication settings. High willingness is associated with increased language use and communication behaviours, and a wide variety of positive communication outcomes (e.g., L2 confidence, motivation, self-perceived communication competence, and

international posture), and vice versa. It is also found that those who had higher WTC scores tended to communicate more often in the classroom, ask teachers questions or talk to teachers outside of class more frequently, or communicate with friends more outside the school context (Yashima et al., 2004). Among these factors, international posture and perceived communication behaviours are the focus of the quantitative component of this study. As may be seen in the wealth of literature available, it is also indicative that the above conclusion appears to be true in North American culture and other similar cultures.

Another conclusion drawn upon in the literature is that sociocultural factors (e.g., face-protection and submissive ways of learning) are closely related to Chinese students' communication behaviours and patterns in second language learning. When Chinese students bear the constraints from Chinese cultural schema, they cannot create opportunities to initiate interactions. The focus of the qualitative component of this study therefore, was to explore whether the social values and educational beliefs addressed in the literature presented in this chapter have influential impacts on Chinese students in Canada with respect to their willingness to communicate in English.

Moreover, it is noted that willingness to communicate in the second language has been studied mostly in classroom settings. Comparable knowledge concerning how WTC in English is actually experienced beyond textbooks and exams in an authentic native-language environment is virtually nonexistent. MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that traditional grammar-based education produces students with high linguistic competence with little authentic language usage. As a result, these students are technically capable of communicating in class, but may not be practically effective outside class. How second language learners approach their teachers, peers, and other local speakers outside class in

English-speaking countries is rarely examined. Since there are a variety of sociocultural and contextual factors involved in addition to linguistic factors, there is a need to examine these factors among Chinese students both in and outside Canadian classrooms, where English is the primary language both of instruction and of their social activities.

Although there are studies indicating factors linked with Chinese students' unwillingness to communicate, they are still not sufficient and very few researchers investigate their willingness to communicate from the insider perspective. Filling this void should be the primary concern for scholars interested in conducting research in this area.Therefore, following a quantitative investigation on the interrelations between variables (*international posture* and *perceived communication behaviours*) with *WTC in English* among Chinese students, vital qualitative interviews and a focus group meeting were conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese students' WTC in English both in and outside the classroom. The methodological approach to the study is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the mixed methodology approach that was employed in this investigation of Chinese students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canadian settings. The opening section of this chapter introduces the mixed method design, followed by a section presenting the type of methods used in the present study. The study first quantitatively examined Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English, their international posture, as well as their perceived communication behaviours in English through an online survey. The second part of the study qualitatively investigated the underlying sociocultural considerations in Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English through semi-structured interviews and a focus group meeting.

3.1. The Mixed Method Design

Mixed method research emerged in the 1960s, when qualitative researchers Campbell and Fiske (1959) proposed mixing methods to measure a psychological trait accurately. Since then, mixed method research has been widely used in the fields of social sciences and other applied disciplines (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). A mixed method research design, as Creswell (2005) states, is a procedure for mixing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single study to understand a research problem. The method of mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches can be

best defined as an approach that draws upon predetermined and emerging theories, diverse methods of data collection such as open or close ended questions, and involves the analysis of both statistical and text data. It advances diverse types of data collection, which provides a better understanding of a research problem (Creswell, 2003).

Although there has been a continuous debate over whether or not quantitative and qualitative paradigms can be combined in one single study (Mertens, 1998; Morse et al., 2002), the significance and benefit of merging different approaches has been well evidenced (Creswell, 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 2003). One of the distinguishable features of the mixed method is that it provides ways to explore a phenomenon in comprehensive and exhaustive ways (Morse, 2003), to draw convincing inferences, thus enriching the quality of research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). In an extensive literature review, Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) investigated 57 mixed methods studies from the 1980s and defined five purposes for using mixed method designs: (a) triangulation, or seeking the convergence of results; (b) complementarity, or examining overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon; (c) initiation, or discovering paradoxes, contradictions, and fresh perspectives; (d) development, or using the methods sequentially, such that results from the first method inform the use of the second method; and (e) explanation, or mixed methods adding breath and scope to a project (pp. 258-260).

There is a rationale for using a mixed method approach in this study of examining Chinese students' Willingness to Communicate in English. This approach allowed me to gather more information by combining the results of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Statistical data gathered through a Likert-scale survey at the beginning of the

study offered information of how Chinese students are willing to communicate in English. Open-ended questions in the subsequent interviews and focus group meeting built upon survey results and explored further the sociocultural factors that contributed to Chinese students' WTC in English. Emergent information at this later phase helped explain the differences of individual student's WTC in English.

In selecting the best suitable mixed method approach to address research questions, I built on the criteria suggested by Creswell (2003). Firstly, it should be determined what implementation sequence will be employed for the study, e.g., first the qualitative aspect then the quantitative aspect, or the opposite. Secondly, it should be determined which part of the analysis will be given the greatest priority, either the qualitative aspect or the quantitative aspect. Thirdly, it should be determined at what stage the results of the data will be integrated. Based on these criteria, a researcher can either decide to conduct a sequential study - one phase is contingent on the other; or a concurrent study - the data is gathered simultaneously and then integrated at the end. In this study, the quantitative survey was first administered and followed by semi-structured individual interviews; therefore, this study employed a sequential mixed method design.

In a sequential mixed method design, a multiple of approaches to data collection and data analysis are employed in a sequence of phases (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In this study, the data were collected and integrated in three sequential phrases: the first phase was a survey, results of which were used to recruit participants for the next stage; the second phase was individual semi-structured interviews; and the third phase was a focus group meeting. Results of the quantitative survey shaped the selection of the individual interview participants while at the same time were extended to help design

guiding questions for these interviews. The consecutive focus group meeting provided a deeper insight that helped capture the complexities of Chinese students' WTC in English and the interconnected sociocultural factors. The rationale for this approach, as Creswell (2005) put it, is that the quantitative data and analysis results provide a general picture of the research problem; specifically, qualitative data collection and analysis tend to refine, extend, or explain the general picture.

3.2. Quantitative Component – Survey

Since the purpose of the present study was to gain an overall understanding of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in the Canadian context, a survey was chosen to obtain an overall picture of WTC in English patterns of the participants.

A survey is a quantitative method using systematic collection of facts about a defined social group. A survey can be designed and carried out in a number of ways. The most prevalent method is a self-completion questionnaire (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). Surveys can be mailed or emailed, asked in person or on the phone. In this study, an online survey was administered. Once email lists were obtained with permission from the college, every member was emailed an invitation to the online survey with the survey link.

One advantage of online surveys is that they are relatively accessible to groups and individuals who would be difficult to reach through channels other than the Internet. Also, internet-based survey research may save time and money for researchers (Taylor, 2000; Yun & Trumbo, 2000), since survey responses can be submitted back to the

researcher immediately via email to an HTML document. However, there are some disadvantages that should be considered in using online surveys. Problems may include multiple email addresses for the same person, multiple responses from participants, and invalid/inactive email addresses – all of which make random sampling online a problematic method in many circumstances (Couper, 2000). One solution is that participants are required to submit their email addresses when completing the survey, as they did in this study. Self-selection bias is another major limitation of online survey (Thompson et al., 2003). There is a general tendency that some people choose to respond to an invitation to participate in an online survey, while others ignore it, leading to a systematic bias and therefore, inhibiting researchers from making generalizations about the findings.

The quantitative portion of this research aimed to obtain a general picture of Chinese students' WTC in English in Canadian context and availed the correlation of the variables: *perceived communication behaviours*, *international posture*, and Chinese participants' *WTC in English*. The survey aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How willing are Chinese students to communicate in English in Canadian classrooms and in the general Canadian society?
2. Is there any significant relationship between perceived communication behaviours and Chinese students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canadian settings?
3. Is there any significant relationship between international posture and Chinese students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canadian settings?

3.3. Quantitative Data Collection Procedures

The data were gathered from June to November 2007 at a community college in Ontario. With assistance from the director of the East Asian student office, about 120 students identified as Chinese were informed by email of the purpose of the study and they were asked to participate in the study. During the first three months of the study, quantitative data were collected from 46 students who responded with completed surveys.

3.3.1. Research Site

As evident in the literature review, little has been examined language learners' WTC in English from the perspective of Chinese students overseas; therefore, in this study, Chinese students who studied in a Canadian community college were the target of investigation. To restate, Chinese participants in this study refer to those students enrolled at the college who come from mainland China and Taiwan and speak Mandarin. Some are international students in Canada, while some are permanent residents of Canada.

Overall the college in this study was fairly diverse, with Chinese students making up the largest group of the international student population, accounting for roughly 34% in the year 2006-2007. These Chinese students continue to study English in order to get a local diploma for the convenience of career development. By and large, they use English as a second language in an English-speaking country rather than studying English as a foreign language and as a school subject as they had done in China. This particular group of Chinese people are usually referred to as Chinese ESL students regardless of whether they are enrolled in a formal ESL program, and regardless of whether they hold the status of international students or permanent residence in Canada.

The main reason why college students were targeted in this study is that they provide a more heterogeneous population regarding gender, age, background, and programs sought. Most Chinese students who study at the college level are those who normally score under 550 on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test, which is the baseline for university entry. This means that this group of learners may have encountered bigger challenges in English learning than their counterparts in Canadian universities; therefore, they may provide a different picture of English communication behaviours from university students.

The research site from which the students were recruited - a community college, is located in Ontario, and it offers approximately 70 programs (certificates and diplomas) in eight departments on three campuses. Several programs offer Bachelor degrees as well as online learning. There are approximately 6,500 full-time and 14,000 part-time students each year. This community college also provides English as Second Language courses to hundreds of international students as well as newly arrived immigrants. Most international students or newcomers have to take an English proficiency test at the beginning of the academic year. Since the required level of English proficiency is high, a significant number of students need to take ESL courses before starting academic programs. Depending on the proficiency test results, students are grouped at basic, intermediate, or advanced levels and are required to take level-appropriate English courses in oral, listening, reading, and writing skills before advancing to other areas of study. Only when the students achieve the required language proficiency in tests such as TOEFL or GED (General Education Development), are they able to start academic

studies. Overall, the college has characteristics similar to other Ontario community colleges in programs, facilities, and services.

3.3.2. Participant Selection

For the survey, convenience sampling was used to select participants. Convenience sample refers to a strategy where the participants are selected in part or as a whole at the convenience of the researcher. In other words, the participants are selected because they are easily accessible. This community college in Ontario was selected because of its geographical convenience to my location. A survey was sent out online to about 120 Chinese students who had been identified through the college's East Asian student office and were enrolled during the academic years of 2005-2006 (66 students) and 2006-2007 (54 students).

A total of 46 respondents completed the survey and accounted for 38% of 120 Chinese students contacted. The 46 survey respondents also constituted the initial sample for the subsequent qualitative interviews. 36 of them were enrolled in regular academic courses in the years of 2005-2006 and of 2006-2007, and ten others were enrolled in ESL program. The forty-six students included 19 males and 24 females, and three who did not identify their gender. The respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 49; nearly 50% were between the ages of 23-40. 97% of the respondents reported that they completed university studies in China, and only three of them had high school as their highest education level. The number of years of English instruction that these respondents had received in China varied from 3 to 20 years. Some of them were new to Canada, and had just started English entry-level courses. Others with higher language competence had

selected regular academic programs, which were somehow linked to their past working experiences in China, such as business, computer science and engineering.

Permission to carry out the study at the college was first obtained from the East Asian student office and official approval of the study was obtained from the Ethics Board at the University of Windsor. An email with a website link to the online survey questions were forwarded to Chinese students through the assistance of the East Asian Students Office, and included a clear introduction of the purpose of the study, which were written in Chinese. Participants were asked to take their time answering the questions and to submit them once completed. The online survey questions took roughly 10 minutes to fill out. The data collected from the completed survey questions served to reveal how willing Chinese students were to communicate in English, and concurrent relationships with two study variables: international posture and perceived communication behaviours in English. All questions were presented to the participants in both English and Mandarin. The online survey asked demographic information of the participants, and contained three sets of instruments: WTC in English, perceived communication behaviours in English, and international posture.

3.3.3. Instrumentation

The survey questions were grouped into three themes: international posture, willingness to communicate in English, and perceived communication behaviors.

International Posture

The section of International Posture was modified from studies by Yashima (2002) and Kim (2004) exploring the level of interest a second language learner has in international culture and in living in English speaking countries. This section included four indicators designed to define respondents' international posture: a) interest in foreign affairs; b) intergroup approach-avoidance tendency; c) Interest in international vocations/activities; and, d) intercultural friendship orientation in English learning. The respondents indicated their degree of agreement on a 7-point scale by choosing a number between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

a) *Interest in foreign affairs.* Two items modified from Kim (2004) were used to measure the respondents' interest in international matters. An example item is "I often read and watch news about Canada."

b) *Intergroup approach-avoidance tendency.* Seven items modified from the studies of Yashima (2002) and Kim (2004) were used to measure the respondents' tendency to approach or avoid speaking to native Canadians. An example item is "I want to make friends with Canadian students."

c) *Interest in international vocations/activities.* Six items were used to measure the degree of interest that respondents showed in having a career or living in Canada (Yashima, 2002). An example item is "I want to live in a foreign country."

d) *Intercultural friendship orientation in English learning.* On the basis of Yashima's (2002) investigation, four items were used. The respondents indicated the degree to which they agreed with each statement in relation to their reason for studying

English. An example reason is studying English "will allow me to get to know various cultures and people".

Willingness to Communicate in English

To capture Chinese respondents' Willingness to Communicate in English, the section of WTC in English scale was taken from Kim (2004). The instrument of Willingness to Communicate in English attempted to assess a personality-based, trait-like predisposition, consistent across communication contexts and types of receivers (McCrosky & Richmond, 1987). The scale has 12 items, related to four communication contexts (public speaking, talking in meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads) and three types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends). The respondents chose the percentage of the time ranging from 0% (never) to 100% (always) that they would be willing to communicate in each context.

Perceived Communication Behaviours in English

The section modified from Yashima et al. (2004), was used to assess how often respondents volunteered communication, and it involved five self-report items to assess, on a 10-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (always).

Reliability

The reliability coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. While 0 indicates that the whole measurement is error, 1 shows that the measurement is totally error free. Cronbach's alpha had been calculated for each section of the instrument: *interest in foreign affairs,*

.80; *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency*, .77; *interest in international vocations/activities*, .76; *intercultural friendship orientation in English learning*, .84; *willingness to communicate in English*, .97; *and, perceived communication behaviours in English*, .70 (Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002). The statistics support the reliability of the instrument in this study.

3.4. Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis consists of examining and categorizing data and tabulating the evidence, in order to address initial propositions of a study (Yin, 2009). From the initial stage, certain procedures were followed in order to analyze the data in a holistic and logical way. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 15.0) was used to conduct the descriptive analysis of the survey data.

The quantitative data from 46 completed surveys were analyzed in three categorical variables: *WTC in English*, *international posture*, and *perceived communication behaviours in English*. In particular, WTC in English (12 items in total) was determined for WTC in English with friends, WTC in English with acquaintances, and WTC in English with strangers, and under four circumstances (in dyads, in small group, in small meeting, in presentation). International posture was measured through four indicators: interest in foreign affairs; intergroup approach-avoidance tendency; interest in international vocations/activities; and intercultural friendship orientation in English learning. The variable of perceived communication behaviours in English was measured with five items on a Likert Scale.

For the instrument of *Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English*, each of the twelve items (possible range of scores was from 0-100%) was put as raw data into SPSS in sequence for all 46 respondents. Dividing the total score by 12, a score of *WTC in English* was obtained for each respondent, which put respondents immediately into two groups: respondents with higher scores of *WTC in English* (50-100%) and respondents with lower scores of *WTC in English* (0-50%). According to individual scores, participants were selected for the interviews to follow. Then, an average score for the whole sample was obtained for each item, as the total score per item was divided by 46. Descriptive statistics of each item were analyzed through SPSS, such as minimum, maximum, standard deviation and mean. Next, subcategories of *WTC in English* were analyzed in terms of communication partners (friends, acquaintances and strangers) and communication context (in a dyad, a small group, a large meeting and presenting a talk). First, the score of *WTC in English with friends* (items 3, 5, 8, and 11) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by four. The score of *WTC in English with acquaintances* (items 2, 6, 9, and 12) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by four. The score of *WTC in English with strangers* (items 1, 4, 7, and 10) was obtained by dividing the sum score by four. Next, the communication context in terms of score of *WTC in English in a dyad* (items 2, 5, and 7) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by three. The score of *WTC in English in a small group* (items 4, 9 and 11) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by three. The score of *WTC in English in a large meeting* (items 3, 6, and 10) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by three. The score of *WTC in English presenting a talk* (items 1, 8, and 12) was obtained by dividing the sum scores by three. Then, descriptive statistics of each subcategory were obtained through SPSS, such as the

minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation. The average score of *WTC in English* of each respondent had been analyzed through an independent sample T-test as the respondents were grouped according to their *gender* (male or female), *major* (ESL program or non-ESL program), and *age* (below 22, 23-30, 31-40, and over 40). T-tests were conducted to compare the differences of *WTC in English* among different groups of respondents.

For *perceived communication behaviours in English*, each of the five items (possible range of scores was from 1 to 10) was put as raw data into SPSS in sequence for all 46 respondents. Dividing the total score by five, a score of *perceived communication behaviours* was obtained for each respondent. Then, an average score for the whole sample was obtained for each item, as the total score per item was divided by 46. Descriptive Statistics of each item were obtained through SPSS, such as minimum, maximum, standard deviation and mean.

For *international posture*, each of the 19 items (possible range of scores was from 1 to 7) was put as raw data into SPSS in sequence for all 46 respondents. The total of 19 items were categorized into four sections: *interest in foreign affairs* (2 items), *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency* (7 items), *interest in international vocations/activities* (6 items), and *intercultural friendship orientation in English learning* (4 items). An average score for the whole sample was obtained for each item, as the total score was divided by 46. In particular, under the section of *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency*, two items (item 2 and item 6) were reverse coded due to their negative statement. Under the section of *interest in international vocations/activities*, items 1, 5 and 6 were reverse coded, too. Descriptive statistics of each item in four

sections were obtained through SPSS, such as minimum, maximum, standard deviation and mean.

In the end, SPSS Version 15.0 was used to examine correlations matrix of the three main variables (*WTC in English, perceived communication behaviours, and international posture*), and their reliabilities. Based on recent studies, one's *willingness to communicate in English* is hypothesized to be positively related to two constructs: *international posture* and *perceived communication behaviours in English.* If the correlation coefficient is significant at .01 levels, it will support the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between *WTC in English* and *perceived communication behaviours in English*, and a significant relationship between *WTC in English* and *international posture*. If it is not significant at .01 levels, it will support the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between *WTC in English* and *perceived communication behaviours in English*, and no significant relationship between *WTC in English* and *international posture*.

Since the quantitative portion of this study did not employ experimental research design, many of the internal validity threats that are normally associated with an experimental design are minimized (e.g., history or maturation threats). By drawing upon sources through the college's East Asian Student Office, no direct interactions occurred between the researcher and the respondents at the beginning of the study; therefore, no treatment effect was administered.

Since instrumentation was utilized in the study, issues of reliability and validity concerning the research instrument were of primary concern. In a broad sense, validity is based on systematic collection of data and acceptable research procedures, allowing the

procedures and findings to be open to systematic critical analysis from other researchers in this area. The quantitative data collected in this study were presented within the framework of those actual practices so that they can be examined and scrutinized by other researchers for replication purposes or for the advancement of knowledge in the field of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English in Canadian colleges.

3.5. Qualitative Component - Interviews

In the qualitative aspect of this mixed method research, semi-structured interviews and a focus group meeting were used to enrich the survey data. Structured interviews usually leave little room for flexibility in response while unstructured interviews provide greater breadth in variation in response (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Semi-structured interview refers to a type of interview in which the interviewer asks a series of structured questions and then probes more deeply with open-ended questions to obtain additional information (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). A semi-structured interview is more flexible than structured interviews, allowing new questions to emerge during the interview. Interviews have a clear advantage over mailed questionnaires in that the interviewees tend to be more likely to answer the questions asked because of personal involvement with the researcher or interviewer (Johnson, 1992). During interviews, researchers can clarify certain questions that may be confusing or ambiguous to the interviewees. Interviewing also enables researchers to establish rapport and confidence with the interviewees.

The qualitative process in this study entailed the outlining of a set of questions that were carefully designed to elicit information related to the issues of willingness to

communicate in English. In particular, semi-structured interview questions asked participants with whom and about what topic they were more willing to communicate, and what sociocultural factors would influence their WTC in English. These questions were asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order. Kvale (1996) stated that "the number of interviews tends to be around 15 or 10" (p. 102). Following Kvale's suggestion, the number of individual interviews in this study was set at 12.

The qualitative data were crucial to examine how various cultural factors operated in Chinese students' WTC in English in the Canadian context wherein Chinese participants experienced language instruction at school and were exposed to authentic language environments in daily lives. These opportunities include conversations with local people in grocery stores, or conversations in financial institutions such as banks. Examining patterns of interaction in these environments is best gathered through qualitative methods. More specifically, the qualitative part of the research intended to answer the following questions:

1. What sociocultural factors promote Chinese students' WTC in English in Canadian settings?
2. What sociocultural factors inhibit Chinese students' WTC in English in Canadian settings?
3. What are the educational recommendations for enhancing Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English?

3.5.1. Qualitative Component – Focus Group

In the final stage of the study, a focus group meeting was conducted, which followed the

analysis of semi-structured interviews. A focus group is basically the process of using interviews to collect data with a group of people. One of its advantages is that a large quantity of data emerges in a short time from a large number of people. Another advantage of focus groups, as Berg (2006) proposes, is that meanings conveyed during focus group interviews are constructed collectively rather than individually. It allows one participant to draw from another; as well, participants can brainstorm collectively with other members of the group, therefore, data and insights that would otherwise be less accessible, emerge (Berg, 2006). Further, a focus group provides an opportunity to obtain rich data in the participants' own words (Krueger & Casey, 2000), enabling researchers to obtain information in depth, make important connections and inferences, and discover subtle meanings in expression (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007).

In view of the limited qualitative research in WTC in English combined with the absence of research examining Chinese ESL students, a focus group meeting was viewed as equally appropriate to use in this mixed method study. The main purpose was to offer participants interpretations of the results collected and analyzed from the individual interviews, and to ask them for clarification, elaboration and modification of previous findings.

3.6. Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

The participants were purposefully selected for interviews using criterion sampling. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), "criterion sampling involves the selection of cases that satisfy an important criterion" (p. 234), particularly useful in studying

educational programs. The criterion used for the interviews was significantly connected to the participants' WTC in English, which was attained at the first stage of the study through the survey. The survey of WTC in English was designed with a maximum score of 100. A higher score of WTC in English as self-reported by respondents would be above the mid score of 50, while a lower score of WTC in English would be lower than the mid score of 50.

Specifically, 12 participants were selected for semi-structured interviews, from the 46 survey respondents based on the following criteria: (1) six students with scores indicating the highest WTC in English (i.e., 50-100); (2) six students with scores indicating the lowest WTC in English (i.e., 0-50). If someone selected was not interested in this qualitative component of the study, I selected another participant with similar score levels indicating either a high or low in WTC in English for replacement. This criterion enabled me to offer a diverse array of perspectives on the qualitative research questions in terms of Chinese students' WTC in English.

Measures were taken to ensure informed consent from all parties involved in the research investigation, i.e. East Asian student office, and from participants. In the survey sent to participants through the East Asian office, those consenting to participate in subsequent interviews were asked to leave their contact information and names. Special attention was given to establish rapport and trust with the study participants. In order to achieve it, the intent of the study as well as the benefits of study outcomes was at the foremost carefully explained. In this way, no form of deception was involved in the study and participants were able to ask questions about the nature of the research design and investigation. Also, upon collection of the data, participants were reassured of their

privacy and the confidentiality of the information they disclosed during the interview process. As a means of preserving and protecting confidentiality of those involved in the study, numbers were assigned to the interview transcripts and any identifying information was been deleted during the data analysis process. Thus, no names were disclosed in the presentation or the write-up of the data in order to uphold the ethics of this study.

A total of 12 interviews, each roughly 45 to 90 minutes in length, were conducted. After the targeted participants had been selected, a letter of invitation was emailed to each explaining the purposes of the study, and informing them of the general interview questions. The letter was followed up with a phone call to arrange interview times and locations. Due to the preference indicated by participants, the interviews were conducted in their first language, Mandarin, which is also my first language.

At the outset of the interviews, participants were given a brief overview of the study and the interview process. The interviewees were asked to consent to be audio taped. To assure consistency in all interviews the interviews were conducted following protocol (see appendix) specifically constructed for this study. The themes that were covered in the interviews were the following: a) with whom the participants were more or less likely to communicate; b) what content would make them more or less willing to communicate; c) and, what sociocultural factors would influence their WTC in English.

The final phase of the study was a focus group meeting, which served to extend the interview data in previous stage. The participants of the focus group were four Chinese students selected from the 12 participants who have been part of earlier individual interviews. Two of the four members were with scores indicating higher WTC in English and the other two were with scores indicating lower WTC in English. The interviewees

for the focus group meeting were chosen due to their rich responses to the preceding semi-structured interview; and also because they had demonstrated diverse perceptions of willingness to communicate. Through phone calls, participants were asked to choose a date that met their schedules. They were also informed that their views were valued and would be kept confidential.

The focus group meeting took about one hour and a half. Similar to the individual interviews, the meeting was audio-taped, conducted in Mandarin and was later translated into English by myself. At the beginning of the meeting a summary of the results was presented from the preceding individual interviews. Following my interpretation of the results, participants were asked to respond and to offer their perspectives of my interpretations. This was done following Bogdan and Biklen (2003) who suggest that the main topic of a focus group should be one that will arouse a variety of perspectives, and also one that participants have personally experienced. Therefore, the major part of the focus group meeting focused on central findings emerging from the previous interview transcripts that were closely related to their willingness to communicate in English. The group members were allowed to concur or argue, modify or add on the results. During the focus group session I asked questions according to the prepared question guide, and observed the participants' expressions and behaviours while maintaining the flow of the meeting. Immediately following the focus group meeting, I jotted down my impression of the entire meeting and interactions among the participants.

3.6.1. Participant Summary

The 12 interview participants were selected according to the sampling criteria mentioned above. There were six interview participants with scores indicating higher WTC in English, which consisted of three males and three females. Two of these participants were enrolled in an ESL program, two were enrolled in a regular academic program and the remaining two participants had graduated from the college a year before the study begun. Similarly, the six interview participants with scores indicating lower WTC in English consisted of three males and three females. Among these participants, one was enrolled in the ESL program, three in a regular academic program, and the remaining two participants had graduated a year from the college before the study begun. Altogether, three of the interview participants were in an ESL program, the other nine were or had been enrolled in a variety of professional programs such as nursing, computer technology and business.

Further analysis of the participants' demographic information indicates that these interview participants could also be classified according to the length of time they had lived in Canada together with the reasons they offered for studying in Canadian college.

At the time of the study, four participants (Lian, Le, Hua, and Liang, all pseudonyms) had been in Canada for more than 10 years. They pursued studies at the community college after receiving university degrees in China and years of working. Their main purpose of studying at the college was to get a better job. The other six participants had been in Canada for no more than 3 years. Their studying duration at the college ranged from four months to 2 years.

Overall, four of the twelve participants chose to study in Canada because they

wanted to experience a different life style abroad. The other six chose to study because English was a big language barrier for their living and job searching activities in the new country. A fuller description of each of the participants is offered in chapter 4.

3.7. Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative interview data were analyzed through the processes of translation and transcription. First of all, translating from Mandarin into English required my language competence in both languages and the embedded cultures as well. Literal translation may be easy but sometimes loses authentic meaning while confusing the readers. It required that appropriate words be carefully selected to give the true meanings that participants actually conveyed. Also, it was possible that the translations could have been slightly modified from the actual spoken words. In an attempt to produce accurate representation of taped interviews, the colloquial language that the participants expressed in Mandarin were highlighted, and several alternative translations in English were written down. In addition, to maintain the trustworthiness and reliability of data translated from Mandarin to English, I asked for and received assistance from another graduate student who is fluent in English and Mandarin who checked my translations for accuracy.

Next, the translated interviews were transcribed into written texts. O'Connell and Kowal (1999) regard transcription as a tool for analysis and intelligibility. The transcribing process involves a systematic selection of information accurately recorded; yet, it also involves a bias related to the intentions, purposes, and abilities of the transcribers. Incorporating the interview participants' background, thoughts and true

meanings into English written texts were the challenging task in the transcriptions of the interview data. Tilley and Powick (2002) suggest that "transcription is an interpretive act" (p. 292) rather than a purely objective transference of words from tape into text. In this regard, in this study, the tone of participant voice was clearly marked in some parts of the transcription to allow for a more meaningful understanding of the participants' feelings. For example, the simplest "mm" may exert different meanings from different participants or at different times from the same participant. It could show agreement, or a degree of doubt. Sometimes, when the words were missing or hidden in their expressions, I made decisions about the participants' intended meaning. In their transcription work, Tilley and Powick (2002) returned to listen to the audiotape after completing transcription, and compared tape and written text to ensure the best transcription quality as possible. In line with what they did, I went back to listen to tapes with completed transcripts in hand to minimize mistakes that may otherwise influence transcript quality.

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed following general qualitative analysis techniques, content analysis (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and specific interview analysis techniques, which are meaning condensation, and categorization (Kvale, 1996). Content analysis refers to a set of analyzing techniques to identify and systematize categories, themes, or specific characteristics reflected in transcripts (Merriam, 1998). Meaning condensation compressed the meaning expressed by the participants into briefer and more succinct statements (Kvale, 1996). Meaning categorization implies that a large number of interview transcripts are reduced into categories, and structured into tables (Kvale, 1996).

In order to effectively analyze the data, following the interviewing, the next step was to organize the transcripts. First, interview data were transcribed in the sequences of the interview questions. A filing system was also created for the coding phase of the research through the use of Microsoft Word. Files and subfolders were developed for the 12 interview transcripts. Then I engaged in microanalysis, reading each transcribed script line by line. The data were classified and major themes pertaining to sociocultural factors about WTC in English were identified. Each transcript was categorized into briefer and concise sections for each theme. From this process, marginal notes were typed and added on a coding sheet and salient quotes were marked as well. This helped me to formulate initial codes related to participants' WTC in English, with corresponding experiences and underlying cultural indicators. In addition, these coding sheets were completed in thematic coding tables with the actual words of each participant. Based on the thematic coding sheets, categorical lists of arising constructs and themes were generated and integrated, thus offering rich descriptions (Merriam, 1998). For this study, data were classified according to participants' communication experiences in two contexts: inside and outside the class. Under each context, communication partners, and communication contents, and sociocultural factors were addressed. Interview data were then sorted and rearranged according to the above segments for all respondents.

By reading the transcripts and comparing the participants' comments, the initial data interpretation and meaning were formed. In order to establish evidence for these findings, the transcripts were reviewed multiple times and searched for confirming and disconfirming evidence. Direct quotes from the interviews were used to support the findings. The results were organized in relation to major themes.

For the purpose of clarification and modification on the major themes constructed from analysis of individual interview transcripts, the focus group interview mainly dealt with three research questions: what sociocultural factors facilitated Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English, what sociocultural factors impeded their willingness to communicate in English, and what educational suggestions were recommended to enhance their willingness to communicate in English. Focus group participations were asked to offer their perceptions about my interpretation of previous interview data (agreement, disagreement, or modification); as well, they were asked to offer their suggestions about ways to enhance willingness to communicate in English. The focus group meeting was audio-taped. Immediately following the focus group interview, I jotted down my impression of the entire meeting and interactions among the participants, and identified several key ideas that represented the findings. After relevant information was sorted under big ideas, the data were perceived under considerable comparison and contrast methods with individual interview results. The big ideas, as Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub (1996) stated, are those arising after reading, rereading, and careful analyzing of data. In the end, qualitative data analysis from individual interviews and focus group interview were integrated and negotiated to identify and develop themes, categories, and supporting evidence. Analytically distinct themes and subcategories were examined together to draw conclusions concerning research questions. The quotations from interview transcripts were used in a concise manner, in support of the themes emerged. In doing so, a descriptive summary of qualitative interviews was constructed.

3.8. Role of the Researcher: Insider Viewpoints and Challenges

As a researcher, I saw myself primarily as an observer listening to the participants' views and opinions about their learning experiences in Canada in terms of WTC in English and made minimal comments on the issues. As an investigator, I also brought cultural awareness and sensitivity to the study through my familiarity with the issue of WTC in English in particular and second language learning in general.

I have similar cultural and educational backgrounds as the participants, and I have experienced social interactions and feelings that might resemble those described by the study participants. As a way of developing a relationship with the participants, I felt it was important to share my experiences with them. Having common background with the participants, I thought it would be easy not only to establish good rapport, but also to obtain honest responses from them. In this sense, I saw my role as a Chinese overseas student potentially enabling me to have more insights than would have a researcher without similar background. Clifford and Marcus (1986) indicate that "insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding" (p. 9).

Given my knowledge about WTC combined with familiarity with participants' backgrounds, it was unavoidable that I possessed some preconceived notions about the questions investigated in the study, and that I had already formed some assumptions about Chinese students' willingness to communicate. That is, as a Chinese student, and as a result of the experiences I have had as a student studying in Canada as well as my knowledge of the literature in WTC in English, I brought into the study some assumptions about Chinese participants' communication behaviours. For example, I had observed that Chinese students tended to be very shy and less likely to communicate in

most circumstances including in learning situations. Therefore, some of the questions I asked were informed by this knowledge and personal experiences. One of the questions I had had even before beginning the study regarded motivating or inhibiting factors for Chinese students to talk to native English speakers. I had wondered if it was because of shyness, embarrassment, or respect for teachers. When conducting the interviews, I also wondered if, in asking these questions to participants who knew or guessed at my background, they may have simply agreed on my points and followed my trend of thoughts. Was it also possible that they may have been misled by the way I asked and sent out different messages because of my preconceived notions? Tilley (1998) commented that "the researcher's familiarity with the context does not always guarantee that the research conducted will be any less hazardous to the participants than the research directed by someone stepping in from the outside" (p. 327).

Equally, my assumptions were also influenced by the reality that I was highly aware of the sociocultural backgrounds of the Chinese participants in the study; as well, I was aware of what Chinese participants were used to in terms of learning and of other related cultural factors. Therefore, it is possible that it may have been difficult for me to accept some of the thoughts or opinions relating to WTC in English; in this way unconsciously directing the participants to reach conclusions that reflected my assumptions. Sherif (2001) also stresses that insiders are also constrained in their research and analyses not only by boundaries imposed through the discipline but also by personal experiences in the field. Such methodological challenges are worth noting in how the researcher makes meaning of the findings. For example, through literature review of recent studies, I believed that Chinese students preferred teacher-centred class settings

where they receive direct instruction and correction from the teachers. Consequently, I perceived that Chinese students might not be accustomed to the Canadian class settings where they are fully exposed to interaction in a dynamic learning environment.

To minimize the influence of my pre-conceived notions during data collection, I was more careful about probing questions, and ensured to not judge the participants; rather, I attempted to listen to their ideas, which in turn enabled me to hear a variety of opinions about the same question rather than my assumptions. When conducting the qualitative interviews, I had to frequently remind myself of my role as a researcher and to minimize my personal feelings, which would otherwise influence the interviews, and transcription and analysis of the data. It became important to ask the same questions during interviews, to avoid leading for particular answers, and to respect the responses I received even if they contradicted my assumptions of Chinese student's learning styles as well as knowledge of the educational settings. In addition, in order to conduct a respectful study, I dealt with participants in the same way during each interview, regardless of their gender and age. I always asked their permission before they agreed to participate in my study. In doing so, I managed to reduce my subjectivity and interpreted the data as here presented. As is evident from students' responses, the research helped inform and clarify preconceived notions held by many including me. Also, the study resulted in minimal intrusion on the typical activities that students engaged in at the college. Sometimes, a close relationship was developing soon after the start of the interview, and sometimes, participants kept to their own personalities and behaved somewhat reserved.

Further, a researcher would of necessity go back to participants, and ask them to see if the interpretation of their own accounts described all the components that were

reflected through interviews (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Thus, the use of a focus group meeting was involved in the study to ensure that interpretations were consistent with what the participants meant to convey. During the focus group meeting, participants were provided a summary of the interview findings. After sharing the summary of the findings, participants were asked for clarification, elaboration, confirmation, or discrepancy identification regarding my interpretation of semi-structured interviews. The participants were offered the choice to look at either the English or the Chinese transcripts if they requested. However, none of the participants requested to see any of the transcripts.

I also kept a journal during the research process to ensure reflexivity as well as allow me to be sensitive to existing biases that have arisen during the research (Johnson, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I wrote journal notes immediately after each interview and dated it. In my notes, I focused on my impressions of the participants (e.g., whether they appeared comfortable, or if they were shy or reluctant to talk, and the things I had to do in order to encourage them). I also jotted down how I could ask probing questions differently to get more information. I dated the journal entries and filed them in accordance with respective interview transcripts. In the end, I referred back to the journals in order to remind myself of the actual interactions during the interviews. In other words, my journals helped me make associations between the contexts and the participants, since the information provided a reflection of personal feelings during the interviews. Although the journal notes were not analyzed, they served to monitor of my personal reactions to the interviews, and reflective accounts of interviewee-researcher relationships.

My familiarity with Chinese educational culture and Canadian educational system was beneficial for me to get closer to interviewees, while at the same time this insider perspective prevents my acceptance to different perceptions from my own to certain degree (Tilley, 1998). As Smith (1999) argues, no qualitative inquiry is value free. In this regard, I must acknowledge that given my knowledge of Chinese culture, there were some instances in which the participants may have equated my position of a researcher to that of a teacher worthy pleasing, listening to without contradicting, which consequently would have made them to take cues from me during interviews. My position as a Chinese student researcher meant that data interpretation would embody the parameters of my Chinese culture schema, my knowledge of relevant research domain, and the position of power participants perceived me as holding. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize there are no canons for establishing the validity of qualitative research. To minimize the biases and preconceptions that may affect the data interpretations, I have engaged in rigorous methods to maintain the credibility of the study as described above.

3.9. Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in this research that need to be addressed. Firstly, I acknowledge that the generalizability of a study requires a random sample that can represent the target population (Creswell, 2005). It was difficult to secure a random sample of human subjects in this study. Since the accessible population is the students who are taking courses at an Ontario college, the results can be generalized to this group with some certainty. Due to time and monetary constraints, and limited accessibility to

the target population, I could not randomly select students among all colleges in Ontario. Therefore, it is not appropriate to generalize the results to all Chinese college students in Canada. I also asked students not to write their names on the survey questions if they were not interested in the interview. However, this confidentiality process made it difficult to follow up with students who had very low WTC in English and did not like to expose themselves in the interview, or students who showed no interest to the study and did not answer all parts of the questionnaire. Therefore, I could not control the no-response cases, which may have led to different results on willingness to communicate for Chinese students.

Further, no generalization is appropriate based on the interviews and a focus group meeting in this study. As a result, the data will not reflect the breadth of responses that would be given by the entire population of Chinese ESL students in Canadian colleges. Any generalization from this study should be done with caution, taking the context and the participants of the study into consideration.

The qualitative aspect of this mixed method employed semi-structured interviews and a focus group meeting, which were all conducted in Mandarin. The standard method for checking consistency in translation is to have the tape record translated into English and then have another translator retranslate the translated text into Mandarin. If the original and retranslated versions are identical, the accuracy of the translation is ensured. In this study, for practicality reasons, a different consistency checking method was used. Another graduate student assisted and reviewed the translation, and where they were discrepancies, we together discussed the better way for representing the participants' ideas. While this is not considered the standard method, in my view, it is valuable and

legitimate given the cultural and linguistic knowledge of both me and the graduate student. I include it here thought, for those who may consider it otherwise, that is, as a limitation.

Unlike other comprehensive studies (e.g., Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002), in this study, not all related variables were examined, such as self-perceived communicative competence, and motivational factors. Also, since this was not an experimental study, causal statements are not possible. The present study only examined the relations among variables and does not indicate cause and effect relations.

In addition, it is important to note that I am not concerned in this study with the gender of Chinese students, various learning strategies, or courses taken, though interesting factors. The sample size was relatively small, for example, there were only 10 respondents enrolled in ESL program. Although no significant relationship was found, it is expected that there are differences between respondents enrolled in an ESL program and those in regular academic programs if a larger sample was to be used. Rather, my concern is with sociocultural factors that influence Chinese students' communication behaviours, and how they differ in their choices for a given situation, recognizing of course, that these answers will be affected by factors such as age of the learner, gender, personality, and level of language ability.

What is more, I used the narrow definition of WTC in English that focused only on the communication mode. The quantitative aspect of the study did not consider listening, writing, and reading modes, which are also important in communication. Furthermore, self-reported data collected through interviews and questionnaire has its limitations, since it offered students' perceptions of willingness to communicate rather

than observable facts. Therefore, the applicability of this study within Chinese students cannot be generalized solely based on statistics or text evidence.

Another limitation comes from the reliability and validity of the instrument. Kvale (1996) stated that reliability pertains to the consistency of research findings. Some respondents felt confused about small group, or large meeting in the instrument of WTC in English. The concept of "acquaintance" proved ambiguous for many Chinese respondents, as they were unsure if that meant a Chinese acquaintance, or native speaker as classmate or friends. A couple of respondents left an approximate value besides the items of WTC in English (50%~60%), and they turned out to be those used to calculate the sub-score for acquaintance on the WTC in English scale. Further research into a possible cultural bias in this testing instrument is warranted, as WTC in English instrument are used for members across cultures in EFL or ESL context.

3.10. Summary

To sum up, data collection of this research was divided into three phrases: a survey, semi-structured interviews and a focus group meeting. The survey questions were distributed to 120 Chinese college students; 46 surveys were received, thus reaching 38% responding rate. Among the 46 respondents, using a criterion based on levels of willingness to communicate in English, 12 respondents were selected to participate in semi-structured individual interviews. In the end, a focus group meeting with four participants who had been part of the semi-structured interviews was conducted. The following chapter presents the findings of this mixed method study in details.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter begins by presenting findings of statistical analysis of data collected through completed surveys, continues to present qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, and concludes by describing the findings from a focus group meeting.

4.1. Description of Survey Respondents

As previously stated, the online survey was administered to about 120 students who had identified themselves as Chinese at the college. Forty-six students responded to the survey and submitted back their responses, reaching a respondent rate of 38.3% (46/120). Among the 46 respondents, 36 were enrolled in regular academic courses in the years of 2005-2006 and of 2006-2007, and ten others were enrolled in ESL programs. There were 19 males (41%) and 24 females (52%), and three who did not identify their gender. Female students accounted for slightly more than half of the survey respondents.

The respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 49 (M=30.8); nearly 50% were between the age of 23-40, and 15% non-response. Table 1 presents the respondents' ages. Seven respondents did not disclose their ages. The majority of respondents were between the ages 31 to 40 (n=15), and, according to their responses to the questions, "how long had you studied English in China?" indicated that most of them had acquired basic English language instruction in China.

Table 1

Age Group of the Respondents

Age group difference	Number	Percentage (%)
Below 22	8	17
From 23 to 30	8	17
From 31 to 40	15	32
Above 40	8	17
Missing	7	15
Total	46	

About 97% of the respondents reported that they completed university studies in China, and only three of them had high school as their highest education level. According to survey results, the number of years of English instruction that these respondents had received in China varied from 3 to 20 years. When asked "how long have you been studying English in Canada?" 41% reported that they had been studying English in Canada for a year or less, 36% of them for one to more than 5 years; however, 19.5% did not report.

Table 2 presents the variety of college courses that participants were enrolled in, which included architecture, fashion, engineering, education, business, accounting, and ESL. Of the 46 respondents 23% chose to not respond to the question, 22% had enrolled in ESL courses, 13% specialized in engineering, 10% in accounting, and 9% in business. The remaining 6% were distributed among other vocational and technical programs.

Table 2

Respondents' Course Distribution

Major	Number	Percentage (%)
Accounting	5	10%
Architecture	1	2%
Business	4	9%
Chemistry	1	2%
Computer	3	6%
Engineering	6	13%
ESL	10	22%
Fashion arts	1	2%
Maths	1	2%
Nursing	2	4%
Model Design	1	2%
Missing	11	23%
Total	46	

To further enrich the understanding of who the respondents were, the survey demographic section asked two questions concerning participants' lives and language learning experiences. Participants were asked the question, "What made you decide to come to Canada?" and were requested to give their reasons in written texts either in English or in Chinese. The following reasons were given: family; better education; career development; and, different life experiences.

Family as a reason was the most frequently reported; that is, most respondents immigrated to Canada to join their family members (husband or parents). The second most mentioned reason for migrating was that respondents wanted to improve their education and consequently, English skills. About 15% of the 46 respondents explained that "[their] family decided to immigrate to Canada because they believe that Canada provides better education and environment." One respondent wrote "I'd like to improve

my English skill, so I decided to come here." The third reason was that participants wanted to pursue careers in Canada, especially after completion of college studies. One respondent stated, "I came to Canada because I want to learn more English. I feel staying in Canada [would make it] easy to get a job." A couple of respondents stated that they would like to have different experiences and try a new life style. They would like to "learn more things which are different from those in China" or "I like the peace, freedom and fresh air in Canada." Finally, some respondents stated that they simply followed the guidance of older generations. As one respondent stated, "[my] Parents told me to." Ten respondents did not respond to the question.

It should be mentioned that many of the respondents reported one or two of the above reasons, implying that they had a variety of reasons and had made thoughtful decisions to live abroad. Additionally, phrases such as "Changing my life," though a simple statement, might incorporate a lot of personal, social and cultural factors more than the three words literally presented. This phrase encompasses the notion that respondents were in attempts to improve life environments for them and their children, to find new careers, to make progress in their language skills, all of which is captured by the words "changing my life".

Chinese students were also asked to respond to the question "What is the main purpose of your study in Canada?" and were requested to give their reasons in writing. In response to this question, three main reasons were given: language, education, and career development.

First, respondents wanted to improve their English proficiency in order to get a university degree in Canada or to look for jobs easily. Many respondents linked their

goals of language improvement to success in future career advancement in Canada. They expected "to communicate better with people, to find a suitable job for myself". Additionally, some respondents wrote that they would like to "learn about North American culture and make myself more competitive in career road". The second reason was that some respondents would like "to educate my child in the future". Compared to these practical reasons, a third reason offered was "the need of life," in other words, to support life, and family.

4.2. Quantitative Results

There were three variables in the survey: *Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English, perceived communication behaviours in English*, and *International Posture*. In order to assess the three variables, a total of six indicators were specified. Chinese respondents' *willingness to communicate in English* was assessed through one indicator: second language willingness to communicate. Chinese respondents' *international posture*, also referred to as attitude toward the international community, was measured through four indicators: interest in foreign affairs; intergroup approach-avoidance tendency; interest in international vocations/activities; and, intercultural friendship orientation in English learning. Finally, the variable of *perceived communication behaviours in English* was assessed through five self-report items on 10-point scale. The purpose of the quantitative part of the study was to test the following hypotheses:

1. There is significant relationship between respondents' *perceived communication behaviours in English* and respondents' *willingness to communicate in English.*

2. There is significant relationship between respondents' *willingness to communicate in English* and their *international posture*.

The construct of *willingness to communicate in English* contained 12 items. Respondents were asked to choose the percentage ranging from 0% (never) to 100% (always) that they would be willing to communicate in each item. The maximum score of the 12 items was 100 % and the mid score was 50%. As table 3 demonstrates, the 46 respondents' self-reported WTC in English had a wide range, increasing from 17.5 to 93.3. With the mean of 53.06, it was illustrated that Chinese respondents' *Willingness to Communicate in English* was slightly above the mid score.

The maximum score of *perceived communication behaviours in English* among Chinese respondents was 10.0 and, as Table 3 indicates, this score ranged from 2.6 to 10.0. The mean of 6.48 implied that the Chinese respondents were somewhat involved in communication activities in English.

International posture among Chinese respondents varied from 3.6 to 6.8. The mean of 5.44 indicates that Chinese respondents were slightly interested in international community and affairs.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Three Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Willingness to Communicate in English	46	17.5	93.3	53.06	19.42
Perceived Communication Behaviors in English	46	2.6	10.0	6.48	1.55
International Posture	46	3.6	6.8	5.44	.91
Valid N (listwise)	46				

4.2.1. Chinese Respondents' WTC in English

In terms of *WTC in English*, Chinese respondents were somewhat willing to communicate (M=53.06). Respondents did not show great differences between talking with friends, with acquaintances, or with strangers. They prefer talking in English with acquaintance while standing in line (M=61.09). Respondents showed slight differences in contexts of a dyad, a small group or in large meeting. They are least willing to present a talk in English to a group of strangers (M=45.65).

Table 4

Chinese Respondents' Willingness to Communicate in English

Willingness to Communicate in English	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. Present a talk in English to a group of strangers	46	0	100	45.65	28.00
2. Talk in English with an acquaintance while standing in line	46	0	100	61.09	28.38
3. Talk in English in a large meeting of friends.	46	0	100	52.72	24.56
4. Talk in English in a small group of strangers	46	0	100	58.59	24.33
5. Talk in English with a friend while standing in line	46	0	100	56.96	25.96
6. Talk in English in a large meeting of acquaintances	46	0	100	51.20	24.39
7. Talk in English with a stranger while standing in line	46	5	100	56.52	30.15
8. Present a talk in English to a group of friends	46	0	100	48.48	26.73
9. Talk in English in a small group of acquaintances	46	0	100	53.37	24.86
10. Talk in English in a large meeting of strangers	46	0	100	49.67	27.94
11. Talk in English in a small group of friends	46	0	100	55.76	23.09
12. Present a talk in English to a group of acquaintances	46	0	100	48.70	26.53
Valid N (listwise)	46				

The instrument of *WTC in English* was designed from two aspects: with whom respondents were willing to talk, and under what conditions they were willing to talk. In this way, WTC in English was detailed as follows.

Table 5

Chinese Respondents' WTC in English in terms of Communication Partners

WTC in English	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Willingness to communicate with friends (items 3, 5, 8, 11)	46	15.0	95.0	51.55	20.09
Willingness to communicate with acquaintances (items 2, 6, 9, 12)	46	12.5	95.0	53.42	21.37
Willingness to communicate with strangers (items 1, 4, 7, 10)	46	10.0	100.0	52.45	23.69
Valid N (listwise)	46				

Regarding the question asking with whom the respondents would be most willing to communicate, respondents did not show great differences between talking with friends, with acquaintances, or with strangers.

Table 6

Chinese Respondents' WTC in English in terms of Communication Context

WTC in English	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Willingness to communicate in a dyad (items 2, 5, 7)	46	13.3	100.0	58.19	21.76
Willingness to communicate in a small group (items 4, 9, 11)	46	16.7	100.0	55.47	20.67
Willingness to communicate in a large meeting (items 3, 6, 10)	46	3.3	90.0	51.19	21.84
Willingness to communicate when presenting a talk (items 1, 8, 12)	46	10.0	100.0	47.39	23.47
Valid N (listwise)	46				

Regarding the question about the context in which they were willing to communicate in English, respondents showed slight differences in four categories: most willing to communicate in a dyad, less when talking in a small group and in large meeting, and least willing to communicate when presenting a talk. The survey data indicated that, the more public the situation became, the less likely the person would be willing to communicate in English.

Although gender and age were not explicitly examined in this study, an overview of the differences in these two variables in relations to WTC in English may offer a full picture of Chinese respondents' willingness to communicate in English.

Table 7

Chinese Respondents' WTC in English in terms of Age Group

Age group difference	Mean of WTC in English	N	Std. Deviation
below 22	66.76	8	9.57
from 23 to 30	60.46	8	20.58
from 31 to 40	50.36	15	20.98
above 40	40.59	8	16.29
Total	53.79	39	19.79

Although seven people did not indicate their ages in the survey, among the rest of the respondents, table 7 shows that as the age gets higher WTC in English decreases.

Table 8

Chinese Respondents' WTC in English in terms of Gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	54.46	19	19.99
Female	55.71	24	17.24
Total	55.16	43	18.29

Table 8 indicates the difference between male and female's WTC in English; females were found to be slightly more willing to communicate than males.

Table 9

WTC in English between Respondents Enrolled in ESL and Non-ESL Programs

ESL or non-ESL	Mean of WTC in English	N	Std. Deviation
ESL	60.760	10	16.19
non-ESL	50.925	36	19.89
Total	53.063	46	19.42

Table 9 shows that the WTC socres of students enrolled in the ESL program was greater than the number of those enrolled in regular academic programs. The above comparison illustrates that students enrolled in ESL program had higher WTC in English than those in regular programs. T-test was conducted; however, no significant difference was found between these two groups of respondents. It should be noted that the sample of respondents in ESL program was relatively small. There is a possibility that there exist differences between groups in different programs, given a larger sample size.

To sum up, the survey respondents were reported to be somewhat willing to communicate in English (M=53.06). They preferred to communicate in English with

acquaintances rather than with strangers. Similarly, they seemed to prefer to communicate in a dyad or a small group rather than in front of a large group. It is worth noting that age also impacts the respondents' *willingness to communicate in English*; that is, as people get older, WTC in English decreases. T-tests were conducted; however, there was no significant variation between different groups of age, gender, or major, or the length of years respondents had lived in Canada in terms of their *WTC in English.* It seems that the respondents of this study were more uniform in their perceptions about factors associated with their *WTC in English.*

4.2.2. Chinese Respondents' Perceived Communication Behaviours

Table 10

Chinese Respondents' Perceived Communication Behaviours

Perceived communication behaviours in English	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I volunteered to answer or ask questions in class	46	1	10	5.61	2.57
2. I answered when I was called upon by the teacher	46	1	10	6.83	2.98
3. I participated in classroom activities such as pair work.	46	2	10	7.57	2.27
4. I asked teachers questions or talked to them outside the class period	46	2	10	6.41	2.29
5. I talked with friends or acquaintances outside school in English	46	2	10	6.04	2.21
Valid N (listwise)	46				

Table 10 shows statistical data of Chinese respondents' *perceived communication behaviours in English.* As illustrated, the mean of each of the five items was above the mid value of 5.0, revealing that respondents frequently communicated both inside and outside their classroom settings. They were found least frequent to volunteer "to answer

or to ask questions in class" (M=5.61). They were most likely to participate in pair work and other classroom activities (M=7.57).

4.2.3. Chinese Respondents' International Posture

International posture has four categories: *interest in foreign affairs, intergroup approach-avoidance tendency, interest in international vocations/activities*, and *intercultural friendship orientation in English learning*. In general, the respondents were found to be interested in foreign affairs, had positive attitude toward English speakers, were interested in international activities and getting a job, and expressed positive attitude towards different cultures.

Table 11

Chinese Respondents' Interest in Foreign Affairs

Interest in Foreign Affairs	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. I often read and watch news about Canada	46	1	7	4.43	1.71
2. I often talk about situations and events in Canada with my family and/or friends	46	1	7	4.67	1.65
Valid N (list wise)	46				

On a seven point scale, the respondents' *interest towards foreign cultures* was slightly above the mid score of 3.5. Overall the respondents were fairly interested in foreign affairs.

Table 12

Chinese Respondents' Intergroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency

Intergroup Approach-avoidance Tendency	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. I want to make friends with Canadian students	46	1	7	5.52	1.69
2. I try to avoid talking with Canadians if I can	46	2	7	5.98	1.55
3. I would talk to an English-speaking student if there were one at school	46	1	7	4.96	1.58
4. I wouldn't mind sharing an apartment or room with a Canadian student	46	1	7	5.30	1.85
5. I want to participate in a volunteer activity to help people living in the surrounding community	46	3	7	5.57	1.31
6. I would feel somewhat uncomfortable if I move to live with a Canadian next door	46	1	7	5.93	1.61
7. I would ask for help from a Canadian when I am having trouble communicating in a restaurant or at a station	46	1	7	5.78	1.41
Valid N (listwise)	46				

*Item 2 and Item 6 are reversed.

In terms of their *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency*, respondents seemed to have positive attitude toward English speakers and were willing to interact with them in English. They would not mind living with a Canadian next door or talking with Canadians if they could.

Table 13

Chinese Respondents' Interest in International Vocations/activities

Interest in international vocations/activities	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. I would rather stay in my hometown (China)	46	1	7	5.37	1.78
2. I want to live in a foreign country	46	1	7	5.30	1.60
3. I want to work in an international organization such as the United Nations	46	1	7	5.07	1.89
4. I'm interested in volunteer activities in developing countries such as participating in Youth International Development	46	1	7	4.67	1.75
5. I don't think what's happening overseas has much to do with my daily life	46	1	7	5.15	1.63
6. I'd rather avoid the kind of work that sends me overseas frequently	46	1	7	6.07	1.39
Valid N (listwise)	46				

*Item1, 5, and 6 are reversed.

In general, the Chinese respondents were interested in international activities and in getting jobs abroad. They would not avoid working overseas (outside China) (M=6.07), which was consistent with their written statement about reasons of coming to Canada.

Table 14

Chinese Respondents' Intercultural Friendship Orientation in English Learning

Intercultural friendship orientation in English learning	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. It allows me to meet and converse with more and varied people	46	1	7	6.00	1.52
2. It allows me to get to know various cultures and people	46	3	7	6.09	1.24
3. I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups	46	2	7	5.72	1.44
4. I'd like to make friends with foreigners	46	3	7	5.91	1.26
Valid N (listwise)	46				

The respondents showed the strongest agreement to the statement that studying English allowed them to get familiar with different cultures and people (M=6.09).

To sum up, the survey respondents were fairly interested in foreign affairs and international activities and they demonstrated positive attitude toward native English speakers.

4.2.4. Correlation Analysis Results of the Three Instruments

Table 15
Correlation Matrix

Variables	WTC	PCB1	PCB2	PCB3	PCB4	PCB5	PCB	IFA	AAT	IVA	IFO	IP
WTC	1											
PCB 1	.353*	1										
PCB 2	.139	-.166	1									
PCB3	.474**	.297*	.231	1								
PCB 4	.528**	.503**	-.123	.508**	1							
PCB 5	.675**	.394**	.167	.451**	.447**	1						
PCB	.658**	.615**	.407**	.760**	.692**	.744**	1					
IFA	.360*	.457**	.107	.527**	.580**	.439**	.644**	1				
AAT	.121	.143	-.060	.472**	.248	.150	.280	.481**	1			
IVA	.045	.192	-.016	.439**	.265	.154	.309*	.399**	.784**	1		
IFO	.216	.166	.076	.186	.158	.225	.250	.364*	.444**	.488**	1	
IP	.180	.240	.008	.485**	.330*	.246	.393**	.602**	.906**	.895**	.705**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH (WTC); PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOURS (PCB); INTEREST IN FOREGIN AFFAIRS (IFA); INTERGROUP APPROACH-AVOIDANCE TENDENCY (AAT); INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONS/ACTIVITIES (IVA); INTERCULTURAL FRIENDSHIP ORIENTATION IN ENGLISH LEARNING (IFO); INTERNATIONAL POSTURE (IP)

The correlation matrix demonstrates the correlation of the three variables – *Willingness to Communicate in English, perceived communication behaviours in English,* and *international posture*. Person's correlation coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength of the association between the three variables.

For the relationship between *WTC in English* and *perceived communication behaviour*, it was found that there was a significant relationship between *WTC in English* and *perceived communication behaviours* (coefficient = .658, $p<.01$), and a significant relationship was found between *WTC in English* and the four items on the instrument of *perceived communication behaviours*. There was no relationship, though, between WTC in English and their frequency of answering when called up by teacher.

With regards to the relationship between *WTC in English and international posture*, it was found that a significant relationship only existed between *WTC in English* and respondents' *interest in foreign affairs* (coefficient =.360, $p<.05$), while there was no significant relationship between WTC in English and the remaining three categories, namely, *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency, interest in international vocations/activities, and intercultural friendship orientation in English learning.* Altogether, it was demonstrated that *WTC in English* and *international postures* had no significant relationship among Chinese respondents.

4.2.5. Reliability of the Three Instruments

Table 16
Reliability Statistics

Instruments	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Willingness to Communicate in English	.925	12
Perceived Communication Behaviours in English	.611	5
International Posture	.884	19
Interest in Foreign Affairs (IFA)	.398	2
Intergroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency (AAT)	.767	7
Interest in International Vocations/activities (IVA)	.689	6
Intercultural Friendship Orientation in English Learning (IFO)	.898	4

The reliability of each of the three variables was Cronbach's Alpha = .925 (*WTC in English*), Cronbach's Alpha = .611 (*Perceived Communication Behaviours in English*), and Cronbach's Alpha =.884 (*International Posture*). The instrument of *WTC in English* had the highest reliability. Consistent with recent studies (Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2004), the finding of this research was in support of the applicability of the instrument. The instruments of *perceived communication behaviours* and *international posture* had similar reliability.

In summary, the Chinese respondents were generally willing to communicate in English, frequently communicated in English, and showed interest in international community. Correlation between *WTC in English* and *perceived communication behaviours* (correlation coefficient =.658, $p < .01$) support the hypothesis that there was a relationship between *perceived communication behaviours in English* and *willingness to communicate in English*. However, there is no significant relationship between *willingness to communicate in English* and *international posture*. T-tests were conducted to compare the differences of *WTC in English* among different groups of respondents; however, there was no difference between different groups of age, major, or gender.

4.3. Semi-structured Interview Results

Among the 12 interview participants, six were female and six were male. The twelve participants included six that were selected from the group with scores indicating higher WTC in English and six from the group with scores indicating lower WTC in English. All of the participants had studied English at Chinese universities before they entered the Canadian college.

Table 17

Semi-structured Interview Participants

	Gender	Pseudonym	Major	WTC Scores
1	Male	Le	Computer Science	30
2	Female	Lu	ESL	24
3	Male	Hui	Pharmacy	63
4	Female	Lian	Accounting	42
5	Female	Hu	ESL	76
6	Male	Hua	Mechanical Engineering	93
7	Female	Lou	ESL	43
8	Male	Liu	Computer Science	40
9	Female	Hei	Nursing	62
10	Female	Huo	Accounting	56
11	Male	Liang	Mechanical Engineering	18
12	Male	Huang	Art Design	69

To uncover their communication patterns, which ultimately informed their willingness to communicate, participants were asked the following guiding questions: "*could you tell me about your communication experiences inside/outside class? What was the experience like for you? What encouraged you to be willing to talk to your teachers, peers, or other English speakers? If not, could you tell me why it is hard for you to*

communicate? What would make it easier for you to initiate interactions with English speakers?"

The results in this section are presented according to participants' levels of willingness to communicate in English and are further subdivided according to two contexts: inside the class and outside the class. Under each context, four major themes emerged: a) communication partners, b) communication contents, c) the sociocultural factors that would enhance willingness to communicate, and, d) the sociocultural factors that would hinder willingness to communicate.

4.3.1. Participants with Scores Indicating Higher WTC in English

Interview data indicate that participants with scores indicating higher willingness to communicate in English can be categorized into two groups.

4.3.1.1 Group 1

The first group of participants with scores indicating higher willingness to communicate were very willing to communicate both inside and outside class. The maximum WTC in English score that a respondent could get was 100. This group is constituted of Hua (*WTC in English score: 93*), Hu (*WTC in English score: 76*), and Hei (*WTC in English score: 62*).

Summary of participants

Hua had been living in Canada for 15 years. He had worked in Canada as engineer for some years. Then he went back to college for career advancement. At the time of the study he had studied Mechanical Engineering at college for two and a half years.

Hu had been in Canada for one year. She started to take English courses immediately following her arrival and had decided to study at college because her friends had suggested that she should improve her English first in order to increase chances of career development.

Hei had been living in Canada for three years and was in her second year of college at the time of the study. She had been a physician in China. Because it was difficult for her to get licensed to practice medicine in Canada, she had switched to a nursing program at college.

Members of Group 1 were always willing to communicate inside class. For them, willingness to communicate was not an issue. The main sociocultural enhancer in class, as they mentioned, was that they had strong goal orientation in developing communicative competence. Another reason that motivated them was the classroom setting wherein teachers and peers positively supported and encouraged them to talk. Also, as they became familiar with the environment, they tended to talk more. One more enhancer mentioned was personality.

Outside class, this group of participants was also very willing to participate in a lot of communication activities; as well, they generated more communication opportunities for themselves. They regarded familiarity with the environment and goal orientation as the main enhancers to their willingness to communicate. Others' positive

responses and their personalities were mentioned repeatedly. Face protection arose as an important factor that had some impact on their willingness to communicate. Shyness might lead to over concern with the communication consequences and being less likely to talk. Sometimes, negative responses from others added negative effects.

In the end, from this group of interviewees came the following suggestions that could promote willingness to communicate: Chinese students should be made aware of the importance of willingness to communicate; in order to take initiatives to communicate, they should develop common interests with local people, which would enable them to easily get involved in communication; and, they should learn to share personal concerns or to speak out inner thoughts to alleviate their over concerns about communication consequences.

Communication in class

In class, "there are a lot of communication opportunities for us" (Hu). Communication usually happened during class discussion and group work.

> These courses contain many *group work*[1]... under such circumstances, we often talk. (Hua)

Topics for communication were diverse, from daily activities to professional topics.

> Talking about the weather... I remembered at college we discussed mainly about the marketing and economic situation, professional areas, one is about the course, and we also talked about other areas such as sports, politics. (Hua)

When asked with whom it was easier for them to communicate, they answered

> I communicate mostly with people my age... I also talk with people older than me, but less. We have different social experiences or thinking ways. (Hua)

[1] Italicized words in participants' quotations are the exact words they stated in English during the interviews (bearing in mind that all interviews were carried in Mandarin).

> Actually, it does not matter whether it is the teacher or my peers. (Hu)

This group of participants expressed that they were "always, all the time" willing to communicate (Hua).

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

When asked about the reasons why they were active in communication activities, they believed the factor of goal orientation played an important role in facilitating their willingness to communicate as exemplified by Hei's statement:

> You have to ask if you have questions. Besides, the most important is, I thought that I had to pass the language part in the first two years, especially during practical nursing, so I became more likely to communicate. It is not because I am very willing to communicate; instead, it is that you are forced to speak. It is not **willing to**[2], instead, it is **have to**. (Hei)

Secondly, the classroom setting led them to naturally speak and think in English. As well, teachers together with positive responses from peers in class had worked as enhancers for WTC in English.

> The whole atmosphere is very easy going, teaching atmosphere in classes here, is generally very harmonious, and encourages you to speak and ask. Also, among peers, if you have questions, you can communicate to peers. Here, the more you talk, the happier the teacher becomes. Once you ask questions you don't understand, she will be very happy… When you communicate with them, you can feel that she is likely to communicate with you. She likes to talk to you. So, you are willing to communicate with her. (Hu)

Thirdly, familiarity with local environment and classroom settings encouraged them to talk.

> When I went to college, I had already lived and studied with local people, English speakers in Canada for a while. So this was a big help for me. (Hua)

An interesting factor mentioned by members in this group was personality.

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[2] Bold words in quotations of all participants were the words they put a great deal of emphasis in their expressions during the interviews.

> I think, from my own side, I am very willing to communicate with others in my first language. At least, after getting along with them for some time, I would be likely to communicate with people. (Hua)

Interestingly, Hei found that she changed her personality into someone who became more likely to talk.

> I have to make changes. So I become more and more likely to talk... When I was in China, I was a very reticent person. I don't really like talking. Because I feel an accomplished person is not the kind of person who likes showing off. (Hei)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

When asked if they knew some reasons that caused lower willingness to communicate, this group of participants recalled the time when they first arrived in Canada. They were not willing to communicate back then because it was hard to be understood by others; therefore, they decided to talk less in order to avoid embarrassment. "I felt embarrassed speaking out." (Hua)

Additionally, they believed that when a person entered a culture different from one's home culture, he/she might find it very difficult to find something in common to talk about. Also, because of differences in interests such as sports, it was relatively hard to reach common topics with English speakers.

> We fail to reach agreeable agreement, that is, what you are thinking is different from what they are thinking. Take the simplest example of watching sport; we normally watch soccer, volleyballs, while they watch football and ice hockey. (Hua)

They pointed out one more factor that limited their WTC in English in class, which is, when teachers were not supportive sometimes.

Communication outside class

Outside class, this group of participants also had many communication opportunities; as well, they generated communication and spoke about diverse topics.

> Outside school, many things will happen. For example, you go shopping, or go to the library to borrow books... Dealing with problems is a very good chance of taking initiatives to communicate. (Hua)

> So for me, after class, I try to have contact with local people as much as possible. Also, take part into local activity. The usual way is, because at Church, there are a variety of activities... Sometimes, I will go to do volunteer. (Hei)

> Everything, we talk about everything, sometimes, we may talk about your immigration, your family, children, parents' career, everything, I think it is very broad. (Hu)

When asked about communication partners, the three participants hold different opinions about whom they would like to talk to most outside class. Hu was the only participant of the twelve interviewees who expressed that she had established good relationships with teachers outside class. Among the other two participants, one would interact with classmates while the other thought interaction with classmates was only meaningful when focused on studies.

> There are not many communication opportunities with the teachers outside the class... you won't be able to see them after class. Outside school, I communicated with my classmates more... when we all do something together, and during work, we may go out and play, drink, things like that. (Hua)

In contrast,

> Communication with the peers is very little in general... I think it is not helpful. Both teachers and peers are very busy, they don't have much time. (Hei)

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

When asked of their strong willingness to communicate outside school, again, goal orientation emerged as an important factor. Others' positive responses also played a role in promoting their willingness to communicate.

> For me, why I am so willing to communicate, because my purpose is to take major courses. So I have to communicate. I won't understand major courses if I don't communicate. Also, if I can't pass the exams, I won't be qualified to apply (laugh). This is key. So I think purposes are very important. ... It is very important, normally when I am willing to do something. (Hu)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

Reasons offered as hindering WTC in English were shyness, the Chinese culture that values less talk, as well as the emphasis put on face protection, which is linked to the responses received from others in communication encounters. The following quotations demonstrate these barriers.

> I think their most concerns is that they are afraid of speaking things wrong, they are afraid of misunderstanding, afraid of being laughed, such kind of things. ... Afraid of offending others, afraid of being laughed, this is the key point. Actually, your instinct is that you still really want to protect yourself. You don't want to make mistakes. This is a huge barrier. (Hei)

One participant offered an interesting point that she has observed from some Chinese people who were less likely to communicate.

> There is a common word among many Chinese parents; I think you may hear it somewhere. It says, "if my children can speak very well after a while, as long as she/he can understand, then I don't have to understand." Chinese parents just place their responsibility to their children.... Therefore, for them, there is no urgent situation to improve the language to change the lives. (Hu)

Finally, personality coupled with limited language knowledge was mentioned as having some influence on some Chinese students' lower willingness to communicate.

> So the most important of this *willingness* is your personality. Yes, I think personality take account of at least, 50%. (Hei)

> It was not because I didn't want to communicate, it was because I didn't know how to say.... and sometimes, it is because I didn't understand what others say, you couldn't get involved into it. (Hu)

Suggestions

Group 1 offered suggestions to facilitate Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English. At the foremost, goal setting regarding willingness to communicate, and finding common conversation topic with local people were mentioned as key to WTC in English.

> I mean, you have to set them a goal, a short-term goal... Then, you, you will do whatever, work towards your only goals. (Hei)

> I think you need to develop a little bit more interests and hobbies. When you develop many different interests and hobbies, you can have common topics with more people. For instance, I like watching ice hockey. I can communicate about it with many people. Because you are interested in it, you absolutely will talk about it. So the key is you will tell others what you think, because they can't understand you like Chinese do. If you speak out, when they know what you want, they will help you. (Hua)

4.3.1.2. Group 2

This group of participants expressed strong willingness to communicate both inside and outside class, however communication activities were not as many as they expected. This group consisted of Hui (*WTC in English score: 63*), Huo (*WTC in English score: 56*), and Huang (*WTC in English score: 69*).

Summary of participants

Hui had been in Canada for more than three years and had started to study at college six months prior to the study. He had to study in an English program in order to write the TOEFL test.

At the time of the study, Huo had been in Canada for about one and a half years and had been studying ESL at the college for almost a year. One reason she came to the local city was because her husband found a career nearby and because of the favourable local weather.

Huang had been in Canada for one year and had started to take courses in art design since arrival. He chose the city because of the peaceful environment.

Similar to Group 1, in class, participants in this group mentioned goal orientation, familiarity with the surrounding environment, positive responses from others, as well as personality as major enhancing factors. They expressed that when they had confidence in their language proficiency, they would be more likely to talk sometimes.

Outside class, this group of interviewees did not have many communication opportunities. The main reason for limited communication was difficulties finding common interests to establish "agreeable" or comfortable communication with English speakers. They also explained that some people were afraid of making mistakes or tended to avoid embarrassment. In the end, they added that a relaxing environment might be useful for facilitating willingness to communicate.

Communication in class

This group of participants had some communication activities in class. The main communication activities were asking questions to teachers or peers. They communicated with anyone in class but only about course content.

> There are some communication experiences, but there are not many. When I have some questions, I will ask others; ask the teacher or other students. Sometimes, they may ask me. There are such kinds of communication activities. (Huang)

> It really doesn't matter to me. If some students can answer it, then I will go to them, it is easier, I don't have to ask the teacher, since the teacher has other students. If the students, I think, may not answer my questions, I will go to the teacher. So [we talk] mainly about the course content, it is very easier to talk about. (Hui)

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

One primary reason why they were willing to talk to teachers was again, the factor of goal orientation, which related to academic studies or tasks. Most of the time, they chose to communicate in class for the purpose of solving course related problems.

> I take initiatives to ask about the stuff I learned from teachers... If the teacher couldn't teach that part, or they couldn't explain well, there is no way for us to get it. We really want to make it clear. (Huo)

Also, they believed that when they became familiar with the classroom setting, they became more likely to talk, especially when others showed positive response.

> Later you got to know that their culture is, even if you make mistakes, they don't really care much. Then you become likely to talk. (Huo)

Another factor found helpful in explaining one participant's willingness to communicate came from his confidence in language proficiency.

> Because I feel like, the reason why I am willing to ask questions in English is because my basic knowledge of English language is not bad... So, I have such confidence, that is, I can make others understand what I am saying. So, in this area, I never have doubt in my expression ability. As long as I have questions, I will ask immediately. (Hui)

Hui also added that the factor of personality facilitated his WTC in English:

> I can get along with all kinds of people... So once I have questions, I will ask immediately, and make it clear. In this way, I can communicate with people. (Hui)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

When they thought about factors that limit WTC in English, similar to group 1, they mentioned that in Chinese culture, people did not like talking a lot or asking questions. They were also afraid of making mistakes or getting embarrassed, which then links to face saving. Language competency was another limiting factor.

> We didn't ask questions, sometimes, we are afraid of getting embarrassed if asked, wondering what others would say... and thinking that they would say to themselves, 'why is he asking such stupid questions, or why is it that everybody understand but you.' Therefore, all these things make you not likely to ask questions. (Huo)

Communication outside class

Outside class, this group of participants were also willing to communicate; however, there were not many opportunities.

> Communication experiences, there are not many.... When I have something to do, I will have chance to communicate with people. For example, go to the hospital... to the bank.... job application, you also need to communicate. These are the communication experiences outside school. There are, but very little. (Hui)

This group also had different opinions about their interactions with teachers outside class. One participant talked with her teachers sometimes outside class while for the other participants, teachers were not approachable after class.

> We would talk to her, because she knows that our language ability is not very good at the beginning, but we still try our best to talk. (Huo)

> Because here, you can't find the teacher outside class.... so I will solve problems in class as much as possible. (Hui)

According to the two participants, communication encounters outside school were rather limited; that is, there were few chances for them to get to know local people.

> Here, it is totally merchandized, like supermarket. You go shopping in a supermarket. You select whatever items you want, you take them and leave. Everyone does his own stuff, goes back to his dormitory, cooks by himself, buys on his own, everything is independent.... Communication among people of same age is very little. (Hui)

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

Despite limited chances to communicate outside class, Hui and Huo were likely to communicate because talking in English was not a problem for them and, as indicated by the statements below, they had high perceptions of their language competence.

> The main factors, I think, it is crucial, you should, at first, have confidence to communicate.... The confidence may come from the language. (Hui)

> I find that as long as my listening and speaking are all right, I can go outside and do as we did back in China. I can just talk, and chat. (Huo)

Similar to Group 1, the participants mentioned that familiarity with the people, and personality enhanced their WTC in English.

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

The reason why there were not many communication activities outside class was because of the same reason mentioned in the previous group - there were no common activities to generate favourable communication. Also, Chinese people would usually choose to talk less, which is another way to avoid embarrassment.

> Because, I feel like there is nothing to talk to them about, that's the main reason. It is hard to have an agreeable chat... If there is a comfortable chat, then I will be willing to communicate. But, it is very hard to reach this point. If you can't have a good talk with him, if you hurt him, it will be bad.... Chinese saying goes: 'if there is not an agreeable chat, even half a sentence is too much'. So, if you don't know, you can't have a congenial chat. So just forget it, don't talk. If you can't have a comfortable chat, it will be very embarrassing. (Huo)

> Always worry about making mistakes, always concern about making trouble, always concern about getting awkward (laugh), yes, but it is unavoidable. (Hui)

Huang added that Chinese preferred staying with their home culture people: "Chinese people would always like to get together, speak to their own fellow folks. Exactly."

Suggestions

One suggestion from this group of participants was the need to heighten the importance of WTC in English among learners.

> I become not afraid of it.... Encouragement comes from my own motivation, I have to learn English well, study better, so I force, no, I push myself to talk more. (Huang)

Also, familiarity with the local community and new environment could help solve the problem of not having communication topics. Enhanced social involvement was an

additional way to generate communication opportunities outside class. Participants suggested that more practical conversation topics should be developed in class.

> As long as you think the language is very important to you, you will try your best to do it well. I think English is very important. So I try to talk as much as possible, to do it. (Huo)
>
> If they are with us for a longer time, for example, we work in the same company, you will know his likes in the long run, and then you can have a talk with them. (Huang)
>
> Teachers will set many topics. Students will practice around them. Communication activities like these, discuss about one topic, transportation problem, environmental pollution problem... You know everyone will talk, and there is no embarrassment. (Hui)
>
> As well, asking for advice might be a very helpful technique.
>
> Because you have to find a topic for talk... So I asked for some advice from him. (Huo)

4.3.2. Participants with Scores Indicating Lower WTC in English

Interview data indicates that, participants with scores indicating lower WTC in English fall into two groups.

4.3.2.1 Group 1:

The first group of participants with scores indicating lower willingness to communicate had little communication both inside and outside class. This group contained Lu (*WTC in English score: 24*), Le (*WTC in English score: 30*), Lou (*WTC in English score: 43*), and Liang (*WTC in English score: 18*).

Summary of participants

At the time of the study, Lu had been living in Canada for a year and had been studying ESL at college for about three months. She had decided to come to study in Canada

because she had friends in the local area and had been informed that the environment was nice.

Le had been living in Canada for about 10 years and had studied at college for four years. Although he already had a Canadian university degree, he wanted to get a computer certificate from college in order to keep up with the world.

Lou had been in Canada for two years and, at the time of the study, she had been taking ESL courses at the college for half a year. She thought studying at college was intense. In order to finish assignments and other homework, she worked very hard particularly in grammar and writing.

Liang had been in Canada for nearly six years, and, at the time of the study, he had been at the college for six months studying Mechanical Engineering. He came to the local city because of his professional major in Engineering.

Group 1 participants had very little communication inside and outside class. The primary stated reason for limited communication was that participants did not want to cause troubles to others because of their limited language ability. They were very anxious that they could not express themselves clearly and that they may leave bad impression to others. This group of participants were very concerned about communication consequences, particularly personal feedback. They mentioned that others' negative responses might have negative influence. Face protection was stated to be an important factor that contributed to their unwillingness to communicate. They also liked to stay with home cultural group of people.

Communication in class

This group of participants had little communication in class. Their communication activities were limited to asking and answering questions.

> There is little communication between classmates, because the teacher teaches. We only ask questions to the teacher. (Lu)
>
> Most of the time, I answer the questions... Other than that, it is seldom. (Le)

The participants were not very likely to participate in class communication activities. Sometimes, even though they had questions, they tried to solve them on their own rather than ask for help directly from teachers. They usually chose to communicate when they really needed help.

> Once there are questions, I will go home and check other references, to understand them by myself. (Lu)

When asked of communication topics in class, the participants said that usually they talked about "stuff related to classrooms, easy to communicate" (Le) or about things in their daily lives.

> I usually ask her, how long have you been to Canada? Normally, I will ask, after your studying English? What are you going to do? What program will you choose? Or what is your former major? Questions like these... Very simple. (Lu)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

Talking about reasons behind their lower willingness to communicate, this group of participants stated that the first reason came from "the problem of language expression. When we want to ask questions, we don't know how to ask." (Lu)

When asked if there were any sociocultural reasons behind their low WTC in English, the participants responded that there were none; however, as the interview continued, one cultural factor that emerged was the concern to not be able to express

themselves clearly; consequently causing troubles to others or even leaving bad impressions.

> I think if I can't ask questions clearly, the teacher will not understand, and consequently I am anxious, so is the teacher. Therefore, I think this is not very good. (Lu)

> We always worry that we can't talk very well... We feel that we are not as good as them, so we become more timid, become constrained... So we talk less. (Lou)

They were also over concerned of personal negative feedback. Liang felt embarrassed when he brought up different opinions and received negative feedback. Sometimes, these negative feedbacks made him very uncomfortable and even disrespected. In Chinese context, to be disrespected is similar to be insulted.

> Because of the opinions we bring out, the questions we ask, they will have negative views towards us in person, which is the biggest headache for us. For us, we feel sometimes, scared at first sometimes, and even feel insulted, towards the end. (Liang)

In order not to leave bad impression, they decided to talk less to save their faces, which is a cultural norm for Chinese people.

> Chinese people seem to be very careful about their faces.... If we say something wrong, we will be concerned about what others say, what others think, and what others will talk about you. It is very restricted in our mother tongue, exactly. (Lou)

Additionally, cultural differences between Chinese and Canadian people may sometimes cause misunderstanding because of miscommunication.

> It is due to the *difference*, they treated it entirely *negative*, or *different point of view*.... Because we had such experience first time, second time, we didn't want to ask such questions at the third or fourth time. (Liang)

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

At the foremost, this group of participants regarded teacher support as an important factor helpful in increasing their willingness to communicate in class.

> Actually the teacher is very *nice*... When you don't know how to express, they will show you how. I think if there are more of such chances, it will be better to increase my communication ability. (Lu)

Familiarity with the people or the topic arose as another useful aspect that may promoted their willingness to communicate.

> For those I am most familiar with, I will be most willing to communicate in English. The *topic* I am familiar with, I like to communicate. (Liang)

This group of participants also supported goal orientation as an important contributor to promote their willingness to communicate.

> Then, you have to improve your language… It **has to** be like this; otherwise, you can't survive here. Right? (Lu)

Communication outside class

This group of participants reported to have little communication opportunities outside class. Generally speaking, they were likely to talk when they met certain problems. They did not approach and talk with teachers outside class.

> Sometimes, we don't even need to talk. (Liang)

> The chance is very little. Such kind of chance is very rare... except you go shopping, buy things, or the like, but even there, there are very little, little communication chances. Regularly, after school, there is nearly no communication. (Lu)

> Generally speaking, I am not very willing to communicate with teachers. (Liang)

Since they did not usually ask for help from teachers, they resorted to their peers instead; however, even this happened when absolutely necessary. Some participants tried to ask for help from college tutors.

> But most of the time, when you have questions, you prefer to talk to peers first. If you go to the teachers, sometimes, you will have to wait in line, outside his office. And he may not give you direct or definite answers either. (Le)

> *Tutors*, there are some at our school, who have helped me a lot. She helped me with our homework, such as *a report*, she helped me to write like native English, but it [communication] is only limited to our homework. (Liang)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

One interesting aspect that explained why participants had so little communication outside class was because they really did not feel the need to talk. Sometimes when they encountered some problems, they did not know how and whom they should ask for help. "If we encounter problems at school we feel like we don't know whom we are going to ask." (Lou)

Also, this group of participants spoke of lack of security and self confidence as limiting factors "because we lack *security*.... we lack *confidence*. The lack of confidence comes from the general cultural difference. Language is only a small part of it" (Liang). From Liang's understanding, the barriers to oral communication are limited language proficiency and more importantly, lack of self confidence. When he encountered difference between Chinese and Canadian culture, he felt less confident since he did not know how to face it.

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

Goal orientation also emerged from this group of participants with scores indicating lower willingness to communicate. Positive responses from others and familiarity with the environment were again mentioned as factors that enabled them to speak, sometimes.

> For example, foreigners, he is also very willing to communicate with you, under such context, we are also willing to communicate. (Lu)

Suggestions

When asked what suggestions could be made to help them to take initiatives in talk, participants suggested that communication courses at college should be more real-life and practically oriented. Mixing up people from different cultures would also be beneficial.

Developing common interests came out as another necessary skill. They added that familiarity with the environment and goal orientation could enable them to become more likely to talk. They recommended that a relaxing environment should be established to promote willingness to communicate. In the end, as illustrated by the quote below, participants even suggested that they themselves needed to make efforts to assimilate and learn Canadian culture and that teachers should help in this initiative.

> Mix us with the class. Ask them to do group projects, but Chinese group can't group with other Chinese in one group... You should leave your difference aside, and accept their cultures. First, their living styles ... If you can, have some good friends .... And you can talk to them. (Le)

As Le suggested, it is better to appreciate Canadian culture to a greater degree, such as accepting to Canadian living styles and making friends with local people. The more she gets used to the new culture, the easier it would be for her to develop common interests with local people and make friends.

4.3.2.2. Group 2

The second group of participants had little communication inside class but they had more communication outside class; that is, were comparatively willing to communicate outside class. They generated some kinds of communication activities for themselves when they realized the importance of communication. This group of participants included Lian (*WTC in English score: 42*) and Liu (*WTC in English score: 40*).

Summary of participants

Liu had been in Canada for about nine months when the study began. He had started to take ESL courses as soon as he arrived in Canada, and, at the time of the research he was

ready to take regular courses. He came to Canada because his sister was in the local city. He chose to study at college because he wanted to improve his English abilities. He enjoyed the college teaching environment, which mainly focused on practical skills' development.

Lian had been in Canada for eight years. At the time of the study, she had taken courses in accounting for eight months. She moved to the city because her husband worked nearby. Before she took courses in accounting at college, she also learned English at some local English teaching centers.

This group of participants had some communication activities inside and more outside class. They stated that as they got more familiar with the environment, they became more involved in interactions. Still, they mentioned that negative responses from teachers and others were the main reasons behind their unwillingness to communicate. Different thinking styles and personality had negative impact on their willingness to communicate. Outside class, they tried to break through limited communication activities by generating opportunities such as volunteer work or church visits. The relaxing environment and familiarity with it were again mentioned as factors contributing to willingness to communicate. In the end, they suggested that the best way to overcome their concern with communication was to enhance awareness of the importance of language.

Communication in class

For this group of participants, there were few opportunities to communicate in class. Additionally, they stated that teachers were sometimes not very friendly.

> Actually in the classroom, communication experiences are very few. (Liu)

> Also, when they hear your accent, they become very impatient. (Lian)

Despite limited opportunities, this group of participants expressed that their willingness to communicate had improved, as they became more familiar with the environment. They had more chances to communicate than group 1.

> At the beginning, if I am not very familiar with the peers, when I first came here, I was not very willing to communicate with others at class.... So towards the end, I communicated in English with peers or teachers, or discussed, or asked questions, or communicated, I mean, my willingness, I should say is very strong. (Liu)

When asked of the conversation topic, they believed that they covered very broad topics. The things they talked about range from serious topics to making fun of politicians.

> We talk about almost everything. Wedding, boyfriend or girlfriend, or their *stupid leader* in Poland, and also, about Tibet, almost everything, and sometimes we talk about recent quizzes, or things like that. Yes, almost everything. (Liu)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

Similar to other groups, reasons underlying their unwillingness to communicate were that when they felt they were not understood or misunderstood by communication partners, they did not want to continue talking. If others showed patience, they would like to talk more; therefore, to them, communication largely depended on others' positive responses. Different styles of humour for example joking were another factor that made it difficult for them to get involved in communication.

> Because when they make jokes, you don't understand at all. You have no idea of what they are joking about. Nor do you know what they talk about. Anyway, I think, it is very hard to get yourself involved with it. (Lian)

Again, participants mentioned that they did not want to cause troubles for others due to weak language expressions. Consequently, they decided not to communicate.

> From my point of view, because my language problem causes an unhappy conversation, or things like that, or the overall change of the atmosphere, in this case, I will not be willing to communicate. (Liu)

Communication outside class

This group of participants did not have many communication activities outside class but they tried to generate some opportunities on their own such as volunteer or church visit.

> There are not many. It is occasionally. For example, applying for the driving license, going to see the doctor, things like these, or go shopping. (Liu)

> I want to communicate, so I find this *volunteer* job. I am thinking, in the area outside school, I am thinking that I need to solve the problem through communicating with people. (Lian)

Factors limiting willingness to communicate

Similarly, the main reason why they hesitated to communicate outside class was because they did not want to get into embarrassment. Others' unfavourable responses may also hinder their willingness to communicate.

> From a cultural perspective, I feel Chinese have strong self-esteem, however, they have a *little* self-esteem than the foreigners. Sometimes, I personally feel, if you think your performance is not very well, you will not be willing to talk, unless you are very close.... Sometimes, once others show a little impatience, he will not be willing to talk. (Liu)

The problem of language especially pronunciation also arose as an aspect of unwillingness to communicate. In one word, language was still a big concern for them to be active in communication.

> Just because of pronunciation problems, it inhibits you from communicating with others. (Lian)

> The most consideration is, first, whether I can express my meanings clearly... whether I can pronounce it clearly. Second, whether the others can understand me. (Liu)

In order to overcome their concern with communication outcomes, they had to prepare well before they spoke.

> For example, I made a phone call to buy insurance, I have to prepare in advance, I mean, the vocabulary. What should I do? What am I supposed to say? I am thinking it for a while in my head... In particular, if I meet those unfamiliar things, I have to organize my words… in my head before making calls. (Liu)

Sometimes, the reason why they were not very willing to communicate was because they had little interest in talking unless they needed some help.

> I think I don't want to ask questions about what they say. I think there is nothing to ask. Even if I ask, there is nothing for me… I have no interest in it. Yes. Only when I have problems, I will ask, since I have to solve my problems. (Lian)

Factors facilitating willingness to communicate

This group of participants mentioned one factor that may promote willingness to talk was a relaxing environment.

> If I can feel it is not too uncomfortable and it is relaxing, I will talk more if I can, only comparatively speaking. (Liu)

> I will take initiatives when I am doing the *volunteer* job. Because according to my observation of the atmosphere, the environment, everyone is very *nice*. I am relatively free. I can say whatever I want. Although I will make mistakes, I am not afraid of. (Lian)

Enhanced awareness of communication was also useful to facilitate their willingness to communicate.

> Before, I was afraid of speaking, and also I didn't have such strong desire… Now I have the desire to communicate with others, speak more. I want to talk to others. (Lian)

The reason behind Lian's desire to communicate more outside class was that "Because if I don't talk, there is no help in finding a job at all." As seen, she took positive attitudes towards communication when she realized its importance and more importantly, when she set a practical goal in relation to communication competence.

> I was not likely to talk; I didn't have the desire at all, to communicate. I just wanted to finish my work and go home right after everyday… Only when I have to find a job now, do I finally realize the great importance of language. I never thought the *communication* was so important. (Lian)

Therefore, an enhanced awareness of language communication combined with goal orientation stimulated her strong desire to communicate outside class. When she realized the importance and set certain objectives, she worked hard towards those goals. It was very practical driven. In her words, "There is a purpose involved". (Lian)

Suggestions

Towards the end of the interviews, this group of participants came up with suggestions to overcome their concern during the course of communication was to enhance awareness of communicative language. They suggested that students should set up goals regarding language learning. The goal from the perspective of participants was that if one wanted to survive in Canada, one needed to speak good English. For that purpose, one had to communicate more, study more, and overcome the uneasiness. Motives and personal needs were closely connected, thus enhancing the awareness of communication.

> So the foreign language, in my view, is not a question of interest, it is an issue of necessity. If you want to learn well, it will depend on how well you want to learn the foreign language, then to what degrees you are going to overcome uneasiness when you communicate with others. (Liu)

> Some people didn't realize the importance of communication. It may be late by the time they realize... because since you live within the society, you have to master the *communication.* (Lian)

Similar to other groups' suggestions, this group emphasized that students should get involved in the new community. The participants recommended some ways to generate communication opportunities such as volunteer work and going to a predominantly Canadian church.

4.3.3. Conclusion

Taken together, in an attempt to answer the qualitative research questions, semi-structured interview data indicated that Chinese participants had a variety of English language communication experiences in and outside their classrooms. It is noteworthy that several participants with scores indicating higher WTC in English were willing to communicate regardless of time, location and interaction partners.

The participants with scores indicating lower WTC in English seldom talked in class, whilst the participants with scores indicating higher WTC in English had relatively diverse communication activities. Outside class, some participants with scores indicating lower WTC in English were found to have little communication, whereas a couple of them tried to generate communication activities. Similar to their behaviours in class, some of them were not willing to communicate unless they needed help or had to do something necessary. Comparatively, participants with scores indicating higher WTC in English were found to more actively seek communication experiences.

Further, participants from both groups of higher and lower willingness to communicate scores expressed varied preferences on communication partners in the classroom. Some participants preferred to communicate in English with their classmates and teachers. Positive teacher support seemed to play a crucial role in determining whether participants would like to communicate with teachers in class.

In terms of communication content, participants from both levels of WTC in English were likely to communicate about many things both inside and outside class, including family, shopping, food, part-time job, current career, clothing, and Chinese culture. For some of them, it did not matter what content they were talking about, and

with whom they were talking. Some participants, however, indicated that they had trouble finding topics. They would prefer to talk about topics they were familiar with or things closely related to their lives, such as work and study, family or home culture. For example, for some, it was easier to talk about academic issues, while for those with children, it was easier for them to find a common topic about family or children's education. Another example would be when local people show interest in Chinese culture, participants would likely provide as much information as they could. If they received good responses, they would become more actively engaged. In short, familiar topics, and positive responses from those they talked with might be facilitative in their willingness to communicate and their further progress in communication.

Regardless of WTC in English survey scores, participants identified similar sociocultural factors that facilitated or hindered their willingness to communicate. Cultural or contextual factors such as the support of Canadian teachers, others' positive response, practical goal orientation, familiarity with the new environment, value of talk, and relaxing environment, among others, may contribute to Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in Canada as illustrated through the above findings. Other factors were identified through the interviews as well, such as personality and language.

Factors including negative feedback, face protection, Chinese value of no or less talk, or over concern with the consequences for communication may contribute to the hindrance of participants' willingness to communicate. According to the interview data, negative teacher response was found to have negative impact on Chinese participants, hindering willingness to communicate. Second, Chinese participants reported during the interviews that they were worried that others might misunderstand what they talked

about, and consequently some of the participants may withdraw from interaction. The third factor was China's value of talk. Chinese participants believe that they should choose not to say anything which might leave bad impression, or when they had no choice but to communicate, they had to say something excellent. Another factor frequently mentioned was Chinese participants' awareness in terms of willingness to communicate. If they were less aware of the importance of willingness to communicate, they were less likely to take initiatives in interactions with English speakers.

In the end, Chinese participants made some recommendations to address the issue of willingness to communicate inside and outside class. Their suggestions included enhanced awareness of communication competence, goal setting in relation to communicative language, provision of relaxing environments, development of common interests, and others. First, a relaxing environment meant that when one was with familiar people, or people from the same culture, one may feel relaxed. Also, it may refer to a safe, secure and less risk-taking context, wherein others respond friendly and encouragingly. As well, if the teacher encouraged learners to talk more, it would be effective to promote their willingness to communicate. Finally, specific goals should be set up meaningfully in connection to communicative language so that Chinese participants may be more willing to communicate.

4.4. Focus Group

The focus group meeting was the final stage of the study and served to triangulate the data from the two preceding stages. Based on the qualitative interview findings, major themes were drawn about the sociocultural factors that may either enhance or hinder the

Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English both inside and outside class. For the purpose of clarification, elaboration, and modification of individual interview data, I chose three sociocultural enhancers and four sociocultural inhibitors as central to the focus group discussion.

The three significant sociocultural enhancers were teacher support, goal orientation and others' positive response, all of which were stressed from both groups of participants with higher willingness to communicate and those with lower willingness to communicate. The four major sociocultural inhibitors were negative teacher response, face protection, value of talk in Chinese culture, and awareness of the importance of oral communication. These sociocultural factors, facilitative or inhibitive, were under intensive discussion in the focus group meeting with four Chinese participants who had already been involved in the individual interviews.

Furthermore, the four participants were asked to provide more specific teaching activities or learning strategies that would benefit their willingness to communicate in English. According to the individual interviews, three educational recommendations were highly offered: providing a relaxing environment, raising awareness about the importance of WTC in English, and setting goals to improve communicative skills.

In accordance with the above findings, discussion questions were prepared in advance to guide and facilitate the focus group discussion:

A) Which one of the three sociocultural enhancers (teacher support, goal orientation and others' positive response) plays the most important role in your willingness to communicate?

B) Which one of the four sociocultural inhibitors (negative teacher response, face protection, value of talk, and issue of awareness) has the most influential impact on your willingness to communicate?

C) Could you think of some teaching or learning strategies that incorporate the three educational suggestions (offering a relaxing environment, raising awareness, and setting goals) to enhance Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English?

The participants were asked to put the above sociocultural factors in order rather than to elaborate on each of them because they might mostly agree on the significance of these sociocultural factors, as already demonstrated in the individual interviews. The focus group meeting did not attempt to answer the same questions twice. When asked to rank sociocultural factors, participants were expected not only to show their understanding of all the factors involved, but also to elaborate the one that was most important to them. Further, participants were asked to examine the three educational recommendations because they might contribute concrete and practical skills through dynamic and interactive focus group, which was lacking in the individual interviews.

4.4.1. Focus Group Results

The four focus group participants were Hu, Huo, Lou and Liang.

1. Which one of the three sociocultural enhancers plays the most important role in your willingness to communicate – positive teacher support, goal orientation, and others' positive response?

Two participants (Hu & Huo) stated that they put goal orientation in the first place. Hu listed her present goals of studying in this way:

> I had to adapt to the environment here. So I went to study. The second, for immigrants to survive in the society, it would be very troublesome if you don't know English. (Hu)

She added that she realized the importance of willingness to communicate in language improvement and consequently connected her personal goals with communicative language learning.

> There was no choice. I had to learn. Only at that time did I realize. (Hu)

Another participant, Lou, put teacher support in the first place by showing its benefits to her willingness to communicate in class.

> Teacher support is the most important for me. Quite often, in class, sometimes I am willing to communicate, but I don't know how to talk. If you don't know how, the teacher will guide you. So only at class will you have more opportunities to talk more.... So this is a facilitative factor. (Lou)

She added that others' positive responses had much similar effects. Unlike the above two participants (Hu & Huo), the reason why Lou put task orientation in the last place was that she thought the function of goal orientation in one's willingness to communicate is "very obvious. Under the environment, you have to". Her expression indicated that she agreed upon the importance of all the three factors; however, she preferred to rely on teacher encouragement more than on the other factors.

The remaining participant, Liang, put others' positive responses in the first place, and claimed that teacher support was not very important since "the teacher... acts as the role of leading us." He firmly believed that language learning "depends on our own work" rather than on teacher support.

As a whole, Chinese participants in the focus group shared and exchanged their perceptions of the three sociocultural enhancers. Each of the three enhancers plays a role in their willingness to communicate to different degrees.

2. Which one of the four sociocultural inhibitors has the most influential impact on your willingness to communicate – negative teacher support, face protection, value of talk and issue of awareness?

One participant put face protection as the biggest inhibitor (Huo) in her willingness to communicate. However, it is interesting that she claimed that face protection had actually enhanced her willingness to communicate after they had studied for some time. "Later it feels like it transfers into a facilitating factor, [because you do not want to be shamed]. You will force yourself to study." (Huo)

Two other participants placed the value of talk at the top. Luo described it this way:

> I am always thinking before I talk. I am always thinking about the correct expression before I talk... So I would choose not to communicate if I could. (Lou)

Another participant, Liang, also placed China's value of talk in the first place, but with different reasoning. For him, the problem lay on the difference of value orientation between Chinese and Canadian culture.

> The reason why this inhibits my willingness to communicate is because my previous value orientation and current value within present environment is quite often different. There exists a *gap* in between... at the beginning, I think it inhibits my willingness to communicate, greatly inhibit my *communication*, because we couldn't make a comfortable conversation. (Liang)

He also admitted that value of talk might play a facilitative role as he got more adjusted to the new culture.

> However, as we get integrated into the new environment, we form a common view, under such context; this will play a facilitative role then. But at the beginning, I personally think it inhibits. So it is due to the differences between value beliefs. (Liang)

Hu put the issue of raising awareness about the importance of WTC in English in the first place by sharing experiences she had with her coordinator.

> After communicating with her, we reached a common understanding. Then it transfers into a good thing... I felt much more comfortable. When I felt more comfortable, I would be willing to communicate with her. (Hu)

Taken together, it is surprising to discover that face protection, value of talk, and awareness-raising acted in both ways; that is, these factors acted as both facilitators and barriers of WTC in English.

3. Could you think of some teaching or learning strategies that incorporate the three educational suggestions to enhance Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English - offering a relaxing environment, raising awareness, and setting goals?

According to individual interview data, relaxing and stress-free environment could be encouraging and supportive to Chinese students. The participants of the focus group meeting proposed teaching strategies such as group discussion, and game with connection to individual characteristics or previous background. Also sensitive discussion (such as some cultural beliefs or social practices not acceptable in another culture) or closed-ended questions should be avoided to minimize disagreement or unpleasant conversation. It is believed that under the context wherein similarities were appreciated and differences were tolerated, participants were more likely to communicate.

> The teacher uses games, enabling you to achieve the goal of learning language through the interaction with peers. But you will talk. No matter what game it is, we even play numerical games, play cards, or even competing for answering questions, and you have to explain it in English. (Huo)

> I would, at the foremost, get an understanding of the individual student's personal interest. (Hu)

> Try to encourage them more, and to liven up class atmosphere, in all kinds of ways. Because our present teachers are very good in the way she encourages you to talk in group discussion.... Exactly, you will feel at ease, relaxed. You won't feel nervous. (Lou)

> I think the first is to educate through indirect instruction, for example, game-playing, TV program, through this kind, you don't have to go through direct instruction... Next, don't design prepared answer... discuss some familiar, commonly agreed topics. In this way, people are relatively relaxed. (Liang)

In terms of awareness raising about oral language, participants recommended that instructors should enhance students' awareness of communicative language and design the course according to each student's level.

> All she can do is to point out key points and talk about it repeatedly. Let everybody realize it. And then according to individual different background or knowledge, explain it from individual perspective. (Liang)

> Have every one talk.... people will get inspired and will like to communicate more, to make it open, to become more willing to communicate. (Lou)

In terms of goal settings, participants thought it was mostly up to students themselves. Students should set up their specific goals according to individual requirements.

In sum, the focus group participants proposed teaching activities such as group discussion, game playing to generate a relaxing, culture accommodating, and conducive environment. Teaching activities should be designed based on individual needs and background. Teachers should encourage students to communicate more while students should enhance their awareness of communicative language skills and set up goals accordingly.

4.5. Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the statistical analysis of the data collected through completed survey, and of qualitative analysis of semi-structured individual interview transcripts and the subsequent focus group meeting. Consistent with the key research questions, this section addressed the results of both quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate the complex nature of Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English and sociocultural factors involved. The next chapter is going to discuss the above findings, revealing the underlying sociocultural inhibitors (e.g., traditional Chinese ways of language learning) and enhancers (e.g., familiarity with the new environment) in relation to Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to examine the degree to which Chinese students were willing to communicate in English in Canadian settings and the sociocultural factors that impacted on their willingness to communicate in English. Chapter four presented the findings of this hybrid research design that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. In the discussion section, results from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis are combined to illustrate and elucidate the complex nature of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English and the related sociocultural factors.

5.1 Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English

The construct of willingness to communicate addresses the conditions under which one might feel free to choose whether or not to communicate. These conditions depend on one's consistent tendency of communication in combination with situational characteristics. Communicating in a second language forces a learner into highly cognitive processes, which are made complex by the learners' original culture and different social locations. In this study, willingness to communicate in English was examined through looking at how and when Chinese participants became involved in communicative encounters with English speakers in Canada. For students who had studied English intensively in Chinese classrooms, their encounters in an English-speaking country became a highly sophisticated process.

The results of the study are consistent with those of recent studies conducted in EFL and ESL contexts. Similar to Japanese (Yashima, 2002: Yashima et al., 2004), Korean (Kim, 2004) and Turkish students (Cetinkaya, 20005), Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English is positively related to their perceived communication behaviours. In this study, those students who frequently communicated in class demonstrated higher willingness to communicate with Canadian speakers. Liu (2001) added that students who considered themselves as active participants in their classes also considered active classroom participation as an opportunity necessary for their language improvement.

Also, the findings are in support of the impact of self-perceived communication competence on WTC in English; that is, lower self-perceived communication competence seemed to have negative impact on one's heightened willingness to communicate in English (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Clément et al., 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002). In this study, examples of unsuccessful communication experiences were provided during the interviews. Some participants attributed failures of interaction to their poor pronunciation and limited language proficiency while others attributed it to native speakers' lack of accommodation of non-native speakers' low language proficiency. Studies in second language learning show that uncertainty in linguistic skills led to poor communication attempts by second language learners (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; McCroskey, 1997).

The findings are consistent with Wen and Clément's (2003) proposition, which underline the connection between the desire to communicate and willingness to communicate. Regardless of whether participants had high or low scores indicating WTC

in English, most strongly desired to change their limited communication experiences. It is also worth mentioning that some participants showed a strong desire to communicate during interviews whilst the survey scores categorized them as belonging to the group of those who were less willing to communicate. This finding confirms Wen and Clément's (2003) proposition that desire for communication does not guarantee the same degree of willingness to communicate.

In terms of communication partners, some participants with scores indicating lower willingness to communicate were more likely to communicate with their peers in class than with their teachers. Another segment of this group was found to be more willing to communicate with teachers who encouraged them to speak. Further, some of the participants with scores indicating higher WTC in English demonstrated similar variance in their preferences with whom they were more willing to talk. Several participants in this group reported that they had no preferences with whom they would talk. Instead, they were usually willing to communicate with whoever was available. All in all, the participants with higher WTC in English generally had more communication experiences with teachers, peers and local people than those with lower WTC in English. They had a variety of communication partners outside the school context; nonetheless, even within this group, it is worth noting that many of their communication partners were still limited to those they were familiar with at school.

In terms of communication topics, one of the most notable difficulties for participants with lower willingness to communicate was finding suitable topics with which to begin conversation. Although language proficiency was regarded as a significant reason for communication difficulties, many interview participants indicated

that limited knowledge of Canadian conversational topics, coupled with the differences dictated by culture on how to talk to a stranger, were part of the main reasons for aborting interaction. Study participants noted that they would maintain a conversation with students from other countries most on safe topics such as greetings and weather, studies, food, and on other general topics such as sports. When they desired to talk more, which would require a change from the latter topics to those that are more culturally Canadian in nature, they found that they had limited knowledge of or little interest in these topics. Consequently, they would lose interest, and lacked motivation in seeking further interaction.

Chinese students' willingness to communicate demonstrated a similar trend with language learners across other EFL and ESL contexts (Cetinkaya, 2005; Kim, 2004; Yashima, 2002). There is one variation in this study, that is, Chinese participants' willingness to communicate was not closely connected to international posture. International posture refers to the general attitude towards the international community that influences learners' motivation in learning English, "which, in turn, predicts proficiency and L2 communication confidence" (Yashima, 2002, p. 63). International posture is found to be highly connected to second language learners' willingness to communicate in English (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004). However, the findings of this study showed that there was no significant relationship between Chinese students' international posture and their willingness to communicate in English in Canada. Chinese participants recognized that there were many reasons for their difficulties in interacting with English speakers. Although language ability was considered a significant reason, many thought that most of the difficulties they encountered resulted from cultural

differences and lack of experience and knowledge of other cultures, especially the Canadian mainstream culture. It is speculated through this finding that Chinese participants may have little interest in Canadian culture or that they disconnect their cultural learning from language learning.

This might be partially attributed to the fact that the instrument of international posture might be a more relevant factor for individuals learning in EFL context in their native county, than expatriates, for example, international students or immigrants in English-speaking countries. In this study, the instrument of international posture could be restructured into two subcategories: intercultural relationship and international orientation. Intercultural relationship refers to the degree of acculturation or assimilation towards the host country where Chinese participants currently stay, which consists of interest in foreign affairs and interest in international vocations/activities. International orientation refers to the attitudes towards natives or nationals in a given English-speaking country, which consists of intergroup approach-avoidance tendency and intercultural friendship orientation in English learning. Analyzing these two subcategories may reach different interpretation for the relationship between WTC and international posture.

In my desire to attach more general significance to research results, I find it encouraging that the findings match closely with those noted by Wen and Clément (2003) in terms of sociocultural attributes to Chinese conceptualization of willingness to communicate in English. As stated in the previous chapter, cultural factors such as face protection, feedback-seeking, and China's value of less talk, among others, may contribute to Chinese participants' willingness to communicate in English in Canada. Many participants, especially those with lower willingness to communicate in English

stated that they usually entered an interaction after they made considerable preparations; as well, they entered after making appropriate judgment about consequences. They added that this judgment resulted from the need to form and maintain a positive and harmonious peer relationship. Some may not be willing to say anything for fear that their views may be unacceptable to other students or the teacher. Some participants with higher willingness to communicate in English also believed that if others did not understand what they tried to convey, it would cause trouble to others.

Why do some seek while others avoid opportunities to speak up in their classes? It is believed that individuals have some control over their desire to communicate (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This implies that their willingness to communicate in a given context is in fact the intention to communicate under consideration, and sometimes, serious preparation (Nelson & Carson, 1998). As addressed above, it is postulated that the communication behaviour of Chinese participants in Canada is highly connected to their cultural background. Chinese societies are generally considered more collectivistic in value orientation than many western ones (Hofstede, 1986; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). This greater emphasis on collectivism influences norms and expectations on acceptable social behaviours including those within the classroom (Hwang et al., 2002). Distinguishable norms of collectivism in Chinese culture are harmony, expectation of reciprocity, and saving face (Chen, 2008; Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Holmes, 2008; Miike, 2003). Chinese students are less socially extroverted (McCae, Costa, & Yik, 1996), less expressive (Gao, 1996), more modest and humble (Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996), and engage in more self-effacing behaviours (Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1982) than North Americans. Collectively, these latter factors provide an infrastructure

for Chinese students' intended communication in English and remain influential in the way that they interact with others in Canadian classrooms and in the general society. Studies have shown that the reason Chinese speakers sometimes remained silent during discussion is because they do not want to embarrass their fellows by saying negative things (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Garson, 1998). As demonstrated in this study, a higher degree of Chinese participants' willingness to communication is contingent on their successful control over these sociocultural factors. Although a couple of these factors may admittedly exist among all ESL/EFL cultural groups, these latter factors make Chinese participants largely distinguishable from second language students from other non-English speaking countries. Regardless of their WTC in English scores, the participants agreed on the functions of these factors; at the same time, however, what distinguished participants from each other was the way they individually responded to these factors. The differences in response to the sociocultural factors resulted from the participants' differences in family background, language proficiency level, and more importantly, their individual communication patterns. The findings of the study as a whole revealed that participants' willingness to communicate is more or less due to the interconnection among sociocultural, motivational and linguistic factors.

5.2. Findings Specific to the Study

While there are findings that are in line with other studies in ESL and EFL learning by Chinese students, three key findings are characteristic to this study; therefore, worth singling out for detailed discussion. At the foremost, it is indicated that Chinese

participants did not connect language learning with cultural learning, which in turn negatively impacted their willingness to communicate. Another finding is that Chinese participants still depend on traditional Chinese EFL classroom ways of language learning in the new Canadian context. These traditional ways of language learning largely restrict their involvement in communicating with English speakers. Finally, the data in this study indicates that the situational factor of familiarity with the new environment has differential effects on Chinese participants' willingness to communicate.

5.2.1. Cultural Learning and Language Learning are Separate

In this study, Chinese participants' interests toward Canadian community and culture were explored through the investigation of their international posture. International posture, a critical component of WTC in English, coined by Yashima (2002), refers to a person's tendency to connect to the international community, to have concerns about international affairs and an interest in interacting with people other than those from one's home culture. In this study, international posture refers to whether or not Chinese participants see themselves as connected to the Canadian society in general, and the activities that indicate this connection.

Chinese participants' levels of interest in international posture were explored with a Likert-scale survey using items such as "I often read and watch news about Canada" or "I want to make friends with Canadian students." The findings showed that in the context of Canada, Chinese participants' international posture was not significantly related to their willingness to communicate in English. In other words, the reason why they were willing to communicate has little relation to their interest in Canadian culture. Even when

they had interest in the culture of the language they were learning, their interest had little connection with their tendency to interact with English speakers.

The survey also asked Chinese students to write short answers to questions like "What made you decide to come to Canada?" The results revealed that Chinese participants wanted to learn English mostly to get better jobs, to earn more money, to have an above average lifestyle, or to provide better education for their children. Only five of them answered that they would like to explore the new life in Canada and wanted to experience Canadian culture. This finding reflects that Chinese participants believed that they would gain practical benefits in their social lives through studying in Canada; however, this studying was not linked to acquiring familiarity with the new culture.

The subsequent interviews addressed questions such as "What made you decide to come to Canada for studying?" The data showed that Chinese participants also believed that being proficient in English would allow them to have better lives in Canada. Anticipated benefits of WTC in English were quoted as motivation factors by those participants with higher WTC in English scores. These benefits included academic achievement, higher social status, decent jobs and better education opportunities for children. In order to achieve these outcomes in a new environment, English language proficiency is believed to be critical. These participants realized that communication competence played an important role in helping them have a better command of English in a short time. As a result, they were actively engaged in social activities, which helped them gain first-hand knowledge and experience with English speakers in real life communication context. In doing so, they practiced meaningful expressions in authentic interactions; also, they became familiarized with cultural habits. However, as many

participants said, it was still difficult for them to fully accept the new lifestyle. For example, some found Canadian ways of joking were hard to understand and therefore difficult to appreciate. Even participants who possessed good language skills mentioned that they sometimes misinterpret or misunderstand these jokes because of lack of supporting cultural knowledge.

As previously stated, those participants with lower willingness to communicate were less involved with interactions with local Canadians. Similar to their survey responses, their interview data reveal that very few of them expressed interest in the new culture. Some even claimed that they did not communicate with Canadian natives unless they thought it was absolutely necessary. They stated that "I will ask for something only when I need some help (Lu)," or "if it is not useful, I won't learn it (Luo)". Most often these participants would only talk to solve existing problems rather than to communicate in a more casual way. A couple of them felt their language learning inefficiency was due to lack of local cultural background knowledge. They suggested that more cultural aspects of Canada should be taught in the classroom.

The above findings suggest that Chinese participants' attitude towards Canadian culture was not connected to their determination to improve English skills in Canada, as well as to their willingness to communicate. It is postulated that from participants' perspectives, learning the English language is separate from learning the new culture. Such beliefs are traceable to the traditional Chinese classroom where Chinese participants have learnt English for years (Liao, 1996; Xu, 2009). Within the EFL context in China, Chinese students are used to learning English through textbooks, memorization, and teacher instruction with little emphasis on the cultural knowledge of the target language

(Rao, 2002). In the English language classroom in China, cultural learning is often "relegated to the end of a language teaching plan," and, as a result, "the students' socio-cultural competence is much weaker than their language competence" (Xu, 2009, p. 121). The insufficient emphasis on cultural background knowledge lead Chinese students to habitually put cultural learning separate from their language learning, or place little interest in cultural aspects of that language even though they have learnt the language for years.

In second language learning, successful intercultural communication requires good foreign language competence, understanding of differences across cultures, as well as proper language usage during communication. Cultural knowledge of the language is central to intercultural communication because, as Liddicoat et al. (2003) state, "language cannot be separated from its social and cultural contexts of use" (p. 1). Regardless of whether or not the language of communication is the native language of speakers, intercultural communication encounters require a fundamental understanding of the relationship between language and culture. Therefore, the purpose of foreign language teaching is to facilitate communication of language learners' ideas and culture (McKay, 2003), raise cultural awareness, as well as foster cross-cultural understanding (Thanasoulas, 2001). Combining language learning and cultural learning enables language learners to communicate across cultures, as well as contributes to social cohesiveness through better communication and understanding (MCEETYA, 2006).

There are several benefits of raising cultural awareness. Firstly, it enhances language skills and enables learners to communicate properly in real life cross-cultural conversations. Furthermore, some studies suggest that learners cannot truly master a

language until they have mastered solid knowledge and gained understanding of the culture of the target language (Hinkel, 1999; Janks, 2005; Krasner, 1999; Santoro, Kamler, & Reid, 2001). Cultural knowledge is not simply to know information about the culture. Instead, "it is about knowing how to engage with the culture" (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 7). One important part of cultural learning is how to deal with social interaction in the native language environment: "knowing how to express ideas and interpretations and how to understand and respond to those of others" (ILTLP, 2007, p. 42).

In this study, participants were either not interested in cultural learning, or did not put sufficient attention towards acquiring cultural knowledge. Consequently, participants with lower willingness to communicate struggled for appropriate expressions when they resorted to asking for help from native language speakers. They attributed this to their limited language abilities. However, they did not inform themselves of local cultural knowledge, which was vital for an effective interaction with local people. In contrast, participants with higher willingness to communicate realized the benefits of cultural knowledge by suggesting that language learners should develop common interests with local people so that they could develop a comfortable conversation with other English speakers. But even this group still struggled to get full access into the cultural aspects of the targeted language, English.

Secondly, cultural learning enhances learners' motivation and improves the efficiency of learning language. Motivated language learners with a positive attitude toward the target language and culture are more likely to be successful than those whose feelings toward the same things are less or even negative (Driscoll, 2005; Gardner et al., 2004). Further, the kind of attitude a language learner holds toward another culture

determines and shapes success in learning the associated new language (Cetinkaya, 2005; MacIntyre, 2002; Martinovic & Dlamini, 2009; Yashima, 2002). Xu (2009) also agrees that language learners' motivation and ability to learn English are "influenced by their degree of involvement in the English language and culture" (p. 121). In my study, it is shown that Chinese language learners invested in second language learning in hopes they would have a good return on that investment: career advancement, and better education. It is notable that their investment in English language facilitated their exchange of information with English language speakers, as evident in Chinese participants with higher willingness to communicate.

Some studies indicate that Chinese English learners are most often preoccupied with a kind of "certificate motivation", a sub-type of instrumental motivation (Chang & Wong, 2008; Hua, 1998; Salili & Lai, 2003; Shi, 2000). Accordingly, as reported in this study, Chinese students were more interested in getting better jobs than in knowing the Canadian culture. Their lack of attention in the cultural associations attached to the language they were learning not only inhibited them from getting involved in the new culture and their willingness to approach native English speakers, but also influenced them to talk with people from the same home culture with whom they felt most comfortable, as demonstrated by participants with lower willingness to communicate. My study showed similar results with Windle's (2006) investigation of Korean students' behaviour in Canadian classrooms. Windle reported that her participants chose to socialize mainly with other Koreans because of fear of speaking English incorrectly. Even when they were in English-speaking countries, they were still deficient in the ability to actually use English and to understand its appropriate use in normal intercultural

communication. She concluded that a gap exists between the English courses conducted in academic environments and actual communication situations in the real world, which needs to be given more attention.

To sum up, traditional EFL context in China with little emphasis on the cultural knowledge of English lead Chinese students to habitually put cultural learning separate from their language learning, or to be not fully aware of the inseparable connection between cultural learning and language learning. The lack of desire to speak in English for cultural knowledge lowers the willingness to communicate in English, and therefore decrease the use of English for Chinese participants.

5.2.2. Old Learning Habits Inform Learning in the New Environment

It is noteworthy that Chinese participants of this study were found to still employ their traditional ways of classroom language learning in the new Canadian context. Theories of language learning postulate that part of the differential success rate among second language learners may be attributed to the varying strategies that learners bring to the language learning process (Jiang & Smith, 2009). In the Chinese classroom, students are occupied with the intense, often painstaking examination systems, which require a strong emphasis on grammatical structure as well as the correction of mistakes. The use of memorization and rote learning, and the use of translation (mainly through using a Chinese-English dictionary) are regarded as basic acquisition techniques (Rao, 2002). These are the learning strategies that the study participants brought with them and used in the Canadian classroom. Results of the study demonstrate that these old learning strategies hindered Chinese participants' language learning in Canada. Participants still

depended on teacher guidance and grammatical correction; they did not take initiatives to approach teachers or ask questions in class and they believed exams and rote memory practice were most important to their English studies.

One participant described that he usually studied in a grammar-based classroom setting with a lot of writing and reading practices.

> I am busy with the grammar and reading, day and night, since there are books, textbooks, and clues of grammar and reading. I act according to the usual procedure, one lesson after another, one after another, consistently. And when you touch upon the latter, you will use the previous one, and use it to review and move on to the next one. And after the chapter, this unit finishes; quizzes follow immediately, in accordance to this unit. In this way, it is strengthened, and the grammar is mastered. (Liang)

Another participant expressed her preferences for drill practices and the exam system, believing that it was good to receive grammar or pronunciation corrections from teachers or others "because in China, we don't use English at all, although we have studied English for such a long time." (Huang)

Studies have revealed that the Chinese educational system is distinguishable with the following features: teacher guidance and supervision over students' academic studies; students' respect for authority in class; deep roots in Chinese norms of less talk; and, teacher directed learning styles (Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004). In comparison, the Canadian educational system is characterized by the following features: student independence in studying; dynamic classroom interaction; highly valued talk in Canadian culture; and student-centered learning styles. These differences between the two classroom cultures define Chinese and Canadian educational culture (Zhong, Myers, & Buerkel, 2004). It is important to note that the cultural differences between Canadian and Chinese classrooms are presented in this way mainly for the purpose of clarity; these factors may be reflected somewhat differently in both cultures.

The first educational difference between Chinese and Canadian classrooms is that Chinese teachers usually provide guidance and extra help to their students regardless of whether or not they ask for it whereas Canadian teachers encourage students to approach them in a more proactive way. For instance, Chinese college students take programs of study mostly with guidance from their academic advisors whilst Canadian college students enjoy more choices in selecting courses (Hui, 2005). In addition to lectures, Chinese teachers oversee every student's academic achievement and personal growth throughout the school year. These kinds of teacher directed support are often credited for the development of teacher-student interaction, to facilitate the acceptance of knowledge, and to motivate student academic engagement (Biggs, 1996). One participant in this study said that "once the teachers let you go free, the Chinese students will have no idea of how to learn." (Lu) In contrast, Canadian teachers were reported to have differing styles of supporting students from Chinese teachers, who were said to have taken more initiatives in providing extra tutorials or guidance for students outside the class. In this study, Canadian teachers were reported to be "always in a hurry and were not easily approachable" (Luo), and that they were only available during certain office hours. Additionally, participants noted that sometimes their Canadian teachers were not very tolerant of their heavy accents and awkward expressions; nor were they appreciative of participants' extra academic efforts. As a result, when they could not receive enough teacher support as they usually did in China, they felt "disliked, or ignored, and therefore, [they] chose not to talk" (Luo) to instructors any more. Acknowledging this difference of teacher approach to engaging students, Hui (2005) explained that western instructors might consider it inappropriate to offer extra help to adult students who did not ask for it

explicitly; instead, teachers were supposed to foster critical thinking and independent learning among learners.

The second educational difference between Chinese and Canadian classrooms is that Chinese instructors are highly respected (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994) and regarded as revered authority figures (Lu, 1997) who would normally tell students what to do and what not to do (Gao, 1998). In Chinese classrooms, teacher-student relationships are bounded by Confucian rules of piety (Lee, 1996), and by the desire to maintain harmony (Greenholz, 2003; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Liu (2002) maintained that students would not consider open and direct communication or posing questions with teachers as polite practice. Respect for authority may cause Chinese students to consider raising questions before instructors to be inappropriate because the act of questioning may imply a challenge to the knowledge and authority of those in power (Hwang et al., 2002). Therefore, the guidance that Chinese teachers offer to their students is mediated by these principles of piety, harmony, and respect for authority. Many Chinese participants in this study still regarded their instructors as authority figures. It took a while for some to work out the differences in teachers' roles and accept the dynamics of the Canadian classroom. One participant described her feelings about the Canadian classroom communication culture this way: "the more you talk, the happier the teacher becomes. Once you ask questions you don't understand, she [the teacher] becomes very happy." (Huang)

The third educational difference between Chinese and Canadian classrooms is that in Chinese culture, people tend to consider carefully their thoughts before making any comments or commitments most of the time, even for everyday casual conversations (Zeng, 2006), whilst talk is highly valued in Canadian classroom. It is part of Chinese

social norms that it is always better to speak less, and not to be shallow and impetuous. Saying something without carefully thinking is not respectful to others or that the person who speaks unnecessarily is considered irresponsible (Hui, 2005; Zeng, 2006). When teachers transmit knowledge, students are supposed to be quiet in class and if they have any questions, they are supposed to note them down and ask their instructors after class (Homels, 2008). Tan (2007) reported the findings of a study examining Chinese classroom questioning behaviour and revealed that questioning was employed by the teachers to check text comprehension, protect students' face, establish teacher authority, and gain student respect. Participants in this study stated that they were not used to asking questions in Chinese classroom; however, when they entered the Canadian classroom they found that active participation and talk are valued and silence is often perceived as a lack of preparation. Their silence as a way to show respect for teachers is often negatively perceived (Liu, 2001). However, it should be noted that such overemphasis on talk in Canadian classroom may make some Chinese participants feel uneasy, or even ignored.

The last difference between Chinese and Canadian classrooms is that the Chinese classroom is more teacher-centred and exam-oriented while the current Canadian classroom tends to be more student-centred and constructivist in approach. In a typical Chinese classroom, students' major role is to receive knowledge through listening attentively and to understand the lectures. They are not expected to speak unless given permission by the teacher (Liu, 2001). Understanding of student-teacher communication is made complex by the Chinese understanding of teacher as authority. Furthermore, in Chinese culture, a mark in the examination is an achievement that is strongly indicative of gaining face in the eyes of others (Liu, 2002), and is frequently associated with

meeting parents' expectations (Hui, 2005). Achieving parents' expectations is considered a form of respect for the older generation. Canadian instructors, however, often treat examinations as one small part of the learning process, rather than as a fundamental measurement of student's knowledge and character (Maley, 1986).

Based on interviewers' narratives, Canadian instructors were unaware of the role that Chinese participants expected them to play; as well, they were not aware of the high value that these learners placed on every single achievement that was based on studying and reproducing teacher/book knowledge. Hwang et al. (2002) argued that foreign teachers at colleges may assume Chinese students, after years of intensive English instruction, should have obtained basic communication skills, and should have the strategies to tackle their learning difficulties, which is not always the case. Therefore, it is understandable why Chinese participants in this study might perceive teacher support to be insufficient in facilitating their acceptance and management of new cultural adaptations.

The classroom differences mentioned above have significant influence on the learning process of the Chinese participants in this study. One group of participants became aware of the differences and gained success in their integration in the new environment while another group of participants remained restricted in their interaction with English speakers.

In a similar study of Chinese students at the University of Canberra in Australia, Liu (2004) investigated how Chinese students made the full use of speaking environment in Australia to improve their communicative competence. Liu found that "only one third

of Chinese students are actively involved in interactions with Australian students" (p. 24) while the majority are "inactive or incapable" of communicating with the local students.

In this study, interview data also revealed that difficulties resulting from inabilities to understand lectures and course contents were compounded for Chinese participants if instructors did not follow the textbook with clear course outlines or emphasis on key concepts. As a result, participants were constrained in class participation. During the focus group meeting, some participants proposed more explicit and intensive training under the guidance of teachers.

As described, the major differences between the Canadian and Chinese classrooms result in gaps about teachers' roles and student-teacher communication, which in turn, impact on the accessibility and support Canadian teachers are able to offer. These influences affect student engagement and classroom participation as well as student-teacher interaction. It would be beneficial for Chinese participants if teachers would offer explicit instruction to heighten students' awareness of learning styles, teacher roles and the value of talk typically found in Canadian culture. Cross-cultural understanding of classroom participation and socializing outside class is needed for both teachers and students to encourage and facilitate classroom participation.

5.2.3. Familiarity with New Environment has Differential Effect

Studies of migration indicate that upon settling in the new place, the process of acculturation, which is partially embedded in language use, is harder in the first twelve months, but as time goes on, immigrants become used to the new place and adjust better (Kramsch, 2008). My study indicates that Chinese participants did not fit neatly with this

assertion in that within the group of participants with scores indicating low WTC were found students who had been in Canada for over three years. Similarly, within the group of participants with scores indicating high WTC were found students who had been in Canada for less than a year. Regarding language use, this means that the exposure to authentic English environment does not necessarily speed their communicative English as might be expected.

As a matter of fact, educators believe people from non-English-speaking backgrounds would learn English best with full exposure to the target language and maximum opportunities to use that language (Kramsch, 2008; Liddicoat, 2008; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Gonzalez (2004) emphasizes that "the more an individual is familiar with the culture of the host country, the easier it will be to communicate; and these factors in turn will promote... a more rapid L2 learning" (p. 58). Language proficiency and communication competency require familiarity with the target culture, such as family structures, roles in interpersonal relationships, discipline, and religion (Banks, 2006; Bennett, 2006), polite expression, direct and indirect acts, and acceptable norms (Giambo et al., 2006). Through exposure to the cultural context of the target language, language learners can promote attainment of higher level of language proficiency (Derwing, Munro, & Thomson, 2008; Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2002), and contribute to reading comprehension (Erten & Razi, 2009; Pulido, 2003).

The findings of this study however, show that familiarity with the new environment acts as both a facilitator and/or inhibitor towards communication. That is, this situational factor has differential effect: for some participants, the more familiar and knowledgeable they were with classroom settings and people, the more they wanted to

engage in communication activities. Conversely, for other participants, the more familiar and knowledgeable they were with the classroom settings and the people, the more they want to avoid communication with others.

Familiarity can be defined within two contexts: in the classroom settings, familiarity refers to the degree of which Chinese participants get used to their teachers' ways of teaching and classroom systems. In the Canadian community and society, familiarity refers to the extent of how Chinese participants adapt to communication styles of interactions with English speakers in various social situations. Under different contexts, familiarity has differential impact on Chinese students' communication patterns.

In the classroom settings, as Chinese participants became familiarized with the school system in Canada, they gradually developed some knowledge of how to perform when communicating with English speakers, and developed knowledge of guessing the kind of responses they were to receive from others. When participants put efforts to be engaged into interactions with English speakers, they might receive positive responses from teachers, peers, and others, which then affirmed their efforts and motivated them to approach others. In this way, their willingness to communicate increased as they gained more confidence and, in Chinese culture, positive feedback received during communication helped participants to "gain face".

However, not all responses during interactions were positive. If participants frequently received negative responses from teachers, peers and others, they became embarrassed during interaction. As they became familiarized with the environment and developed a sense that they would receive negative feedback from the people they already knew, they tended to avoid interaction with these people as well as avoid

establishing new communicative encounters. In this way, using the same Chinese cultural framework, these participants "saved their faces" by avoiding embarrassment and shame while, at the same time, their willingness to communicate dropped.

In the Canadian society, familiarity may exert similar meanings to Chinese participants as in class. Furthermore, communication situations in daily lives vary according to the interlocutors, topics, and conversational contexts, among other possible situational factors. When Chinese participants go to the bank, go shopping, take transportation, see a doctor, etc., they may have a brief routine exchange of information, or ask for assistance. There are situations where they can access services with ease through little language input, buying groceries for example; while there are situations where they have language difficulties but have problems solved with professional support, on-site interpretation service for instance. The convenience to these services on the one hand helps them solve the problem effectively, but on the other hand make some participants feel that speaking English is not very important. Chinese participants in this study who have been in Canada for years have reported that they simply established a social network that would enable them not to use English as frequently, and subsequently perceive communication competence as not important.

This differential effect of familiarity is consistent with the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1988). In accordance with the theory of reasoned action, it is postulated that Chinese participants have some control on their willingness to communicate, and this control is embedded in their cultural background. The differentiated effect of this situational factor on participants' willingness to communicate in English is closely linked

to face protection and feedback-seeking behaviours in Chinese culture, which has been addressed in the literature presented in Chapter 2.

The following two subsections further explore the Chinese notion of 'face' and feedback-seeking in order to give meaningful exploration of these three study based findings.

Face Protection

Gaining face refers to "the need to be respected by others and not be embarrassed in social interactions" (Hwang et al., 2002, p. 74), widely known as the norm of face protection. Hwang et al. (2002) divided the Chinese value of 'face' into two themes: face-gain and face-loss. Face-gain refers to a need to manage one's impressions and image in front of others in order to receive respect and recognition. Face-loss refers to a deep need to avoid embarrassment in front of others.

Whereas such feelings are devalued in the West (Harrington, 1992), these feelings are significantly influential on individual behaviours in Chinese society (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996; Seiter & Bruschke, 2007; Ting-Toomey, 1994; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). In particular, Chinese students' silence in the classroom is partially ascribed to Chinese concept of saving face (Liu, 2001; Sebenius & Qian, 2008). Interview data of this study indicated that participants who were afraid of losing face or becoming embarrassed demonstrated lower willingness to communicate whilst participants who expected to gain the respect of others (face gain) demonstrated higher willingness to communicate.

It is noteworthy that the Chinese value of face protection plays either a facilitative or inhibitive role in participants' willingness to communicate in English, as explored during the focus group meeting. When some participants became familiarized with highly valued talk in Canadian culture and people in the new environment, they realized the importance of communication in their schooling and social lives. If the desire to gain honour overrides the fear of embarrassment, participants might become more active in communication activities with familiar people. In contrast, if participants were more driven by face-loss concerns than the desire to gain face, they would be less likely to take part in communication activities, even within familiar contexts.

The impact of face protection on Chinese participants in this study reflects issues of power in relation to their English learning. That is, loosing and gaining face are about relations of power. Power is "a relation which always implies social exchange on a particular set of terms" (Norton, 2000, p. 7). Second or foreign language learners encounter the issue of power in their English learning especially in English-speaking countries. Communicative inequality is inevitable in situations that involve intercultural communication (Pennycook, 2001), regardless of intent. The findings of the study demonstrate that some Chinese participants tended to be more likely to talk in the hope of gaining power through achieving language proficiency in the dominant culture, whilst other Chinese participants attempted to avoid unnecessary interaction, afraid of losing power due to mistakes or embarrassment. To a certain extent, it is the power aspects of the particular situation of ESL context and their own cultural backgrounds that affect Chinese participants in their language use and communication behaviour in Canada.

In a multicultural classroom like ESL classes in Canada, it is vital to recognize an enhanced role for language in the exercise of power. As the number of interactions between people of various cultural backgrounds is increasing (Pauwels, 2000), foreign/second language educators refined their theory and practices to aim for strong communication skills that enable learners to effectively participate in varied interactions (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). However, communication practices are determined largely by the cultural background that students bring with them, and for Chinese students, these practices are grounded in Chinese culture. At the outset, Chinese students may not be fully aware of the relation between teachers and students in Canadian schools. They may assume that they will experience teacher authority in similar ways that they had while in China, which is not necessarily the case. When Chinese students enter Canadian classrooms, they have the tendency to show respect to Canadian teachers by not asking questions. As a matter of fact, the teaching style changes together with patterns of interaction in Canadian classroom. While their teachers expect their growth with more class participation, incongruent understanding of classroom practice may break down the communication between students and teachers. As addressed in Heller's work (2003), the different interests of teachers and students vary according to their respective linguistic, cultural, and educational values and practices. The differences create contradictions, misunderstanding or even conflicts, and manifest themselves in different forms of language use in interactions.

As a matter of fact, participation in classroom activities enables students to demonstrate competence of classroom and school culture in the socially appropriate ways (Corno, 2001), which also helps teachers evaluate and judge students accordingly. It is

indicative that these practices privilege students who can demonstrate good communication skills through acceptable means but put silent students at a disadvantage (Bourdieu, 1991). In Canadian contexts, Chinese students demonstrated lower levels of classroom participation and social interaction and this is largely due to their lack of social, cultural, and educational knowledge of the Canadian context. To not have the contextual information necessary to learn may lead Chinese students to feel powerless in controlling their new lives in Canada (Windel et al., 2008). This means that Chinese students, as new members of the class may have to acquire familiarity with and align themselves to values and practices of Canadian classroom with the help of teachers.

There are several sources of power issue within the classroom settings: power between students from different countries or even the same country, power between student and teacher as well as the language and textbook teacher use. First, there exist issues of power between student and student. In this study, because of the command of the language of education, Canadian native students can be said to have power over students from other non-English speaking countries. This is demonstrated by incidences where Chinese students are excluded from participating in group work because of their limited oral English ability, which is believed by their native peers would lead to low grades. Second, there are issues of power between Chinese students and other Chinese students. Those Chinese students with scores demonstrating higher willingness to communicate were found to sometimes utter judgmental statements about their Chinese peers such as "they don't want to mix with Canadians", "they should develop common interests with local people". Third, there were power issues between Chinese students and their Canadian native teachers. Chinese students with scores demonstrating lower

willingness to communicate sometimes approached the teachers after class with questions while Canadian teachers encouraged them to talk in class. Chinese students who were not familiar with the cultural aspect of the knowledge when teacher delivered their lecture in the textbook were possibly at risk of lower class involvement. Under such circumstances, one has to negotiate competing identities in various discourses of power (Peirce, 1995). In the attempt to successfully deal with the interplay of these power sources, Chinese participants with higher willingness to communicate realize that to achieve linguistic standards and pragmatic competence in English would enable them to access the dominant cultural group in a better way. In a certain sense, they are using English as a strategic power to ensure success into the new environment.

Feedback Seeking

In this study, feedback seeking was discovered to play an influential role in informing Chinese participants' thoughts and behaviours. Data indicate that before communicating, participants with lower willingness to communicate would be more concerned about how others would respond to and evaluate their statements. More often, they expected to receive positive evaluation or feedback from others in interaction. In other words, they wanted to have their opinions acknowledged and positively responded to. Positive or favourable feedback, in turn, helped them guess what to expect the next time they communicated and whether communication outcomes would be desirable, thereby motivating them to take more chances to talk. However, if negative expectations of communication outcomes outweighed positive ones, participants would decide to withdraw from communicating or avoid speaking.

Similar findings in the literature show that feedback seeking is vital for performance improvement (Hwang et al., 2002; Morriosn & Bies, 1991). Chinese students prefer to identify others' responses, comprehend meanings, and accordingly make positive investments in interpersonal relationship with others (Hui, 2005). It is also because Chinese participants are culturally collectivistic that they are over concerned with their communication consequences and others' responses to maintain harmonious relationships.

Another attitude about feedback seeking regards teachers. Both participants with higher and lower WTC in English revealed that positive teacher support was beneficial to maintain a favourable teacher-student relationship; as well, it contributed to their willingness to communicate with teachers. Interview participants who were enrolled in ESL programs commonly expressed that their teachers were supportive and generous. When they received positive teacher support, they felt motivated and became likely to communicate more. Also, they preferred an environment where they could be held accountable from teachers and people around them. Classrooms where teachers encouraged students to talk could form an interactive atmosphere that relieved anxiety among some Chinese participants. Fraser and Walberg (2005) showed evidence that positive teacher-student relationship promoted improvement of student outcomes.

In education literature, studies conducted on the effects of teacher praise in the classroom suggest a potential impact of positive feedback (Burnett, 2002; Reigel, 2005). Mallows (2002) proposed that in second language learning, when learners receive positive feedback from teachers, they may gain improvement in their language learning.

My study also indicates that sometimes lack of teachers' feedback made participants feel ignored, thereby hampering their desire to approach teachers. "They do not take your words seriously; sometimes, it is just like you are being ignored." (Le) Similarly, outside class, if the conversation partner did not show interest or patience, or indicated lack of understanding, Chinese participants would most likely keep silent instead of taking extra efforts to change the situation. "Under such context, I wouldn't like to talk to you." (Hu) Negative feedback may negatively affect learner' motivation and discourage them from actively participating in authentic communication (Carroll, 1995; Truscott, 1999).

Corrective feedback, however, is argued in some instances as necessary for second language. Chaudron (1988) identifies corrective feedback as "any teacher behaviour that minimally attempts to inform the learner of the fact of error" (p. 150). A growing body of research agrees that corrective feedback plays a pivotal role in successfully facilitating second language acquisition (El-Tatawy, 2002; Han, 2001; Iwashita, 2003). Some participants in this study also showed their preference for grammar correction or direct feedback from teachers since it highlights student error and effectively elicits their interaction.

In this study, interview data indicate that when Chinese participants become familiar with the environment, they get to know how to address others, how to agree or disagree with others, and more importantly, they know what kind of feedback or responses they will receive during communication with others. If they know they will receive positive feedback, they are more likely to approach people and gain recognition from others. On the contrary, if they believe they are going to receive negative feedback, they tend to avoid or withdraw from conversations. This reliance on feedback is

indicative that interaction with English speakers would be easier for participants if others offered positive feedback.

This section has mainly discussed the three unique findings of the study. It is found that the lack of interest in cultural knowledge of Canada during their language learning process hampered their willingness to communicate to a greater extent. Chinese students cannot gain full access to Canadian society and enhance their willingness to communicate to their potential until they are able to recognize the importance of cultural learning in their English language usage. In addition, Chinese participants unsuccessfully transferred their traditional learning ways from Chinese EFL context to the Canadian ESL context, which led to limited involvement in social interaction with English speakers. Finally, it is interesting to discover the differential effect of familiarity with the new environment on Chinese participants' willingness to communicate. Chinese norms of face protection and feedback seeking behaviours are among the major sociocultural considerations that contribute to all of the three findings highlighted as unique to this study.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted using a mixed-method research design. The quantitative aspect involved statistical analysis of survey questionnaire data that described Chinese respondents' *willingness to communicate in English* in Canada, *international posture*, and *perceived communication behaviours in English*, as well as interrelations among the three variables. The qualitative aspect of the study involved the analysis of interview and focus group data, which expanded on quantitative results and explored sociocultural factors underlying WTC in English. Collecting data through the mixed method provided an understanding of the research questions exploring how willing Chinese students are to communicate in English and what sociocultural factors contribute to their willingness to communicate in Canada.

The quantitative findings are consistent with recent studies in the field of willingness to communicate in English (Kim, 2004; Yashima et al., 2004). One variation in this study is the relationship between international posture and willingness to communicate. This study also indicate that the length of staying in Canada do not seem to differ higher or lower willingness to communicate in English.

The qualitative findings further explored the specific cultural consideration missing from the quantitative findings. Situational factors (familiarity with the environment) were found to have some effects on the influences of sociocultural factors (face protection, feedback seeking, and value of talk) deep rooted in Chinese participants.

6.1. Educational Implications

The following section offers suggestions on teaching and learning strategies that can enhance Chinese students' willingness to communicate in the Canadian classroom and society in general. Through the interviews, the difficulties and experiences participants encountered when they interact with others call for some measures for facilitating efficient intercultural communications. Intercultural communication is a difficult process especially when it results in misunderstandings and a failure to achieve a common understanding (Gao, 2005; Samovar & Porter, 2003). Because of the challenging nature of intercultural communication, coupled with the aforementioned Chinese culture to avoid causing troubled for others this study suggests that there need to be a conscious effort made by the hosting Canadian teachers to ensure that Chinese student Chinese participants are learning in a conducive environment.

A conducive environment is a harmonious intercultural space which takes into consideration the home culture of Chinese students while acknowledging their efforts of adjusting to and learning the host culture. To create a conducive learning environment, Canadian instructors must also be prepared to familiarize themselves with cultural knowledge of their Chinese students by, for instance allowing them to share their cultural beliefs and values. At the same time, as indicative from the data in the study, Chinese students should also develop new ways of learning that fit in Canadian classrooms. In doing so, they will be more likely to adapt to the different ways of learning in the new cultural environment and be able to communicate with English speakers both in and outside classrooms. Thus, cultural awareness of both teachers and students is expected to

increase, and cultural misunderstandings and communication barriers are more likely to be minimized or at least reduced.

This suggestion is supported by literature that stipulates that in general, instructors should be equipped with knowledge of the culture of their students (Liao, 1996). When native instructors know little of, and are not sensitive to or appreciative of diverse cultural constructs or beliefs, second language students may be at risk (Gee, 2005; Locke, 1992) of experiencing lower academic expectations and self-concepts, as well as lower willingness to communicate with teachers. There is, accordingly, an increased demand for Canadian teachers to consider ESL students' cultural identities and background. Canadian teachers' knowledge of Chinese cultural schema can also lead to better student-teacher relationships, with the end result being a more effective and harmonious educational experience for Chinese students in Canada. Enhanced knowledge and experience of how to deal with cultural variables can assist instructors in becoming more effective as communicators; therefore, enable them to accommodate different ways of learning and communication. It is essential for instructors to see that cultural differences do not always negatively impact a student's academic experience and communication activities (Kennedy, 2002). In fact, all second language learners, not just Chinese students, can benefit from increased instructor awareness of cultural diversity.

Similar to Holmes (2004), findings in this study suggest that Chinese students should reconstruct and renegotiate their primary culture learning and communication styles to accommodate other styles. In the Canadian context, Chinese students are often unsure about how to manage their interactions, due to lack of understanding of communication style differences between Chinese culture and Canadian culture (Berno &

Ward, 2003; Burnett & Gardner, 2006). Further, their choices for how to communicate in this complex and unfamiliar environment are guided and shaped by their own cultural and social beliefs or rules for communication, as substantially evidenced in this study. Moran (2001) added that culture learning is based on cultural comparison, a "process [which] runs back and forth between the learner's culture and the culture under study" (p. 126). Asking learners to describe what they know about their own culture can increase their ability to compare and contrast it with other cultures. In doing so, students become more aware of their own culture and more knowledgeable about the target culture, thereby forming positive expectations for themselves, and raising the consciousness of practical solutions to intercultural communication challenges students may face in daily lives. It is also an effective way to avoid misunderstanding caused by lack of cultural awareness, and to help build a person's confidence in promoting the relationship with people from different cultures.

To enhance their cultural awareness, it is recommended at the foremost to inform Chinese students of teachers' role in the Canadian classroom. Students who arrive in Canada with years of education from China normally perceive teachers as authority and dominant classroom figures. Speece (2002) proposes that students who hold such teacher views, rather than distancing themselves, they should learn to value teachers differently and to consider them as additional educational resources in the new environment. To help them form a new perception of teachers' role in class, teachers could outwardly demonstrate typical Canadian learning processes with the help of local Canadian students in the same class. Teachers should highlight the differences of learning process through constant comparison and encouragement. Chinese students should then be motivated to

ask questions to clarify material, and to determine the pace of course content through feedback. In doing so, Chinese students will be able to learn to question teachers and knowledge in class, and to engage in student-teacher dialogue outside school in the wider community (Holmes, 2008; Pennycook, 2001). Further, to establish an effective and continuous teacher-student relationship, teachers should assign productive tasks for sustained communication by, for instance, encouraging students to explore the social practices in Canadian society and report their observations to the class. Teachers can then accordingly facilitate Chinese students talk and think about authentic contexts through clarification, illustration and explanation. Researchers believe that learning opportunities are reliant upon positive teacher-student relationships, thereby promoting classroom dialogue and learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Holmes, 2008). Additionally, teachers in Canadian classrooms can adjust their teaching methods in response to the learning styles, values, beliefs, and experiences of Chinese students (Bennett, 2006; Blair & Jones, 1998; Singer, 1998; Stachowski, Richardson, & Henderson, 2003) through careful observation, reflective study, and cultural participation. They should take time to reflect on the teaching process and course content with Chinese students to meet the need for sensitivity toward and understanding of students.

The findings of the study suggest that Chinese participants are more concerned about how to communicate well rather than whether they would like to communicate, since in Chinese culture, the quality of talk is more important than the amount. Talk should be good quality talk with meaningful substance. Accordingly, findings suggest that for the majority of participants, it is important to avoid negative talk which may result in undesirable consequences such as embarrassment. Benson and Lor (1999)

stressed that how learners conceptualize the language learning process may influence how they actually approach the task of learning the language. It is proposed that students take courage to communicate as much as they can in class, and share their concerns outside class. When they share their thoughts and feelings with teachers and peers, it will be possible to remove misunderstandings and develop closer relationships with English speakers. Teachers should help students learn to be less self-consciousness through discussions or activities in small groups rather than large groups. As well, as suggested by some participants in this study, it is important that teachers should not design discussion topics that would stimulate argument or sensitive feelings. It is best to put students within a relaxing environment wherein similarities are appreciated and differences are tolerated. An understanding of individual student's personal interest and cultural background should be incorporated into curriculum design and class activities. Also, it should be kept in mind that not every Chinese student can deal with the challenges he or she faces at school or in life effectively; that is, there are times when Chinese students will not know how to express their feelings even if they have ideas. Under such circumstances, teachers should ask about their feelings directly, or pay attention to each individual with different needs and interests so that they do not feel neglected.

In order to increase daily communication, participants with scores indicating higher willingness to communicate recommend that Chinese students should develop a variety of interests, especially those that are popular in the local space. As suggested by Williams and Burden (1997), second language learners should acquire and develop second language through a meaningful process of "interacting, negotiating and conveying

meanings in the language in purposeful situations" ((p. 168). Students' sociocultural awareness needs to be raised by supplying them with information about the history, customs and interests of the local people. Instructors should give students opportunities to share cultural knowledge with native speakers, and to form realistic attitudes toward Canadian culture. It is also recommended that instructional materials in class should involve local and international contexts so that students can effectively communicate. Participants suggested that more class content should be offered about Canadian society, culture, and economic and educational systems. Teachers can also help students gain some techniques of how to jump into a conversation, make new friends, develop hobbies, or get familiar with jokes and history stories, or proverbs that are popular in Canadian society. When provided with more real-life related communication opportunities in diverse ways, students can have a better understanding of the purpose of learning in connection with their lives in the new culture. Canadian students can also be suggested to talk with their peers from China through more frequent exchange of information or personal interests in a causal way.

Additionally, indirect instruction would be beneficial, such as watching TV programs and playing cards for linguistic studies, in achieving education goals as well as promoting communication involvement. Another way to create favourable environments for students to communicate in English would be online communication. Unlike face-to-face interactions, during online communication, students have time to organize their thoughts and form sentences in English. Computer-mediated communication such as online chat is believed to promote speaking, increase student motivation, and self-esteem

(Compton, 2004). Through indirect instruction, students can learn in a more relaxing way.

Further, it is indicative that Chinese students need to be better prepared with both language and intercultural communication knowledge before studying in Canada. They need a better preparation to function adequately and survive harmoniously in the new cultural environment. Chinese educational institutions should put more emphasis on intercultural communication in their English language teaching. Zhao and Edmondson (2005) proposed that some second language cultural knowledge such as human philosophies, religions, and ideologies, should be included in relevant courses in Chinese classrooms. With more cultural and communication knowledge of English, programs or courses might shed light on academic conventions and behaviours favoured in Canadian college context. Chinese students need to purposefully construct an understanding of the new culture in order to speak with English speakers before they go to English-speaking countries.

Taken together, through explicit instruction on cultural awareness, teachers will be able to generate conducive environment for Chinese students, in which they can develop an interest towards Canadian culture and have opportunities to develop comfortable conversations with English speakers. An understanding of Chinese Education schema may help Canadian educators appreciate cultural differences and bridge educational gaps that many overseas Chinese students encounter. Moreover, some knowledge of Canadian culture and heightened awareness of the dynamic nature of communication can promote Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English.

6.2. Significance of the Study

One fundamental issue of English language education is how to generate language learners' willingness to communicate in order to improve their oral proficiency (Wen & Clément, 2003). Yashima et al. (2004) support that variables such as when and where the interaction takes place, and who the communication partner is, do indeed affect how willing one is to communicate in a given situation. In addressing the much needed investigations on contextual and cultural factors of WTC in English, this study generated answers to Chinese students' communication patterns in Canada by turning attention to participants' sociocultural tendencies. These tendencies warrant the attention of educators and Chinese students alike. Educators may utilize this study because it provides meaningful sociocultural knowledge that is not evident in other ESL studies including the well known MacIntyre et al. (1998). The awareness of sociocultural factors foregrounds certain aspects of communication activities that should be taken as important in predicting Chinese learners' communication behaviour and consequently assisting these learners' language use.

The findings of this study, although culturally specific, characterize the climate in which Chinese students are situated; consequently these findings have implications that may be extended to other Canadian cross-cultural interactions. The overall impression that emerges from data sources is that Chinese students, independent of their studying status, have limited communication experiences with other members of the class and native speakers in their daily lives. The findings also reveal reasons why a Chinese student would hold favourable or unfavourable attitudes toward communicating in English in Canada. The factors that either facilitate or prevent communication explain the

considerations undertaken by all participants regardless of their WTC in English scores. Participants' perceptions of teachers' roles in class, their beliefs of communication expectations, as well as their interest in Canadian culture provide a holistic understanding of how they choose to engage or not engage in communication encounters. While still in China, by understanding what factors determine WTC in English and how to increase it, Chinese students may be better prepared when they enter into authentic English language contexts in North America.

Further, this study is significant in terms of employing a mixed-method design that combined quantitative as well as qualitative data collection and analysis methods. By extending results of quantitative data, qualitative interviews showed a better understanding of the interconnected complexities of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English. Previous studies examining learners' willingness to communicate utilized mostly quantitative research methods and focused only on testing MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) willingness to communicate model. This study went a step further by not only testing the model among Chinese students' WTC in English but also describing learners' perceptions and experiences in details through qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Semi-structured individual interviews and the final focus group meeting allowed for an unfolding of the complex nature of Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English and sociocultural factors affecting this.

Finally, the results have implications for foreign language teachers, teacher trainers, and course/program material designers. A Chinese conceptualization of WTC in English with thorough presentation of underlying sociocultural systems can enable English educators to understand what variables determine WTC in English among

Chinese students learning English, and allow them to design effective teaching pedagogy and activities that would enhance WTC in English.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study examined mainly the sociocultural aspects of willingness to communicate in English from the perspective of Chinese students. A longitudinal qualitative study is necessary to examine these learners' willingness to communicate in English in various situations both inside and outside class. Students' actual frequency of language use could be observed and counted in school and in social lives. It would also prove fruitful to examine their willingness to communicate in English through a variety of data collection methods, such as classroom observations, and the responses from communication partners (teachers or peers) to examine the issue in depth in a specific situation.

Further research is also needed to extend our understanding of communication similarities and differences between Chinese and local students in Canadian education contexts in order to promote better intercultural communication experiences. Teacher's perceptions on communication behaviours of their Chinese students are also worth investigation. In order to increase Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English, it is crucial for teachers to monitor different aspects of teaching styles and classroom management, which begs further exploration. Future research can be conducted about the relationship between teaching style and students' willingness to communicate. What is more, how to take advantage of facilitative aspects of sociocultural

factors in a certain situation to enhance willingness to communicate is a big issue to explore.

Next, the study should be extended to other Canadian universities using a larger number of participants so that a more comprehensive picture is given of Chinese students' difficulties and preferences in various communication contexts. Similar studies could be conducted for other students in Canada in a wider range of contexts, such as high school students, postgraduate and undergraduate students to provide deeper insight into intercultural communication difficulties. Factors that could be more closely examined include the relationship between age, gender, background, personality, and students' intercultural communication experiences. Multiple regression analysis could be employed to determine the direct or indirect relationship in between variables.

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APPENDICES

E-mail to students (in Chinese)

各位中国学生朋友们：大家好！

我是温莎大学教育系的博士生。在导师的指导下，我将于今年夏天进行一项学术调查。此调查旨在研究XXXX College中国学生的英语交流意愿的情况(Willingness to Communicate in English)。通过调查，我希望全面了解中国学生的英语交流意愿情况：1)在加拿大中国学生是否更多地主动用英语在校内外交流；2)哪些社会或文化方面的因素促进中国学生的英语交流，以便更有效地提高英语水平。

该调查分为两个阶段。第一阶段是个问卷调查，包括30来个问题，多项选择，大约需要7-10分钟来完成。第二阶段是个人采访，一般需要45分钟。参加个人采访的学生都将获得20加元的现金作为采访费。

我们坚信调查结果会让我们更加深入地掌握英语交流意愿的重要性以及相关因素，并且帮助中国学生更好地进行英语交流。

如果你愿意参加，请点击以下网址，进入网上问卷调查界面：

中文版：http://pierret.edus.uwindsor.ca/~zuochen/surveyc.htm

或者英文版：http://pierret.edus.uwindsor.ca/~zuochen/surveye.htm

根据你所填写的调查表，我们会挑选出一定人数参加个人采访。如果你被选中，我们会尽快与你联系。欢迎大家踊跃参加！

调查表的截止日期是：8月30日。如果有任何问题，请随时联系我，电子邮件为zeng3@uwindsor.ca。

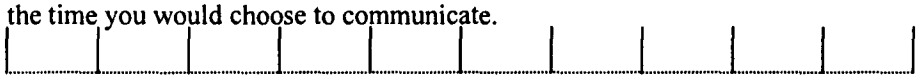
非常感谢！

温莎大学教育系Ms Zeng

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)

1. WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH (WTC IN ENGLISH)

Directions: Below are 12 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate in English. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate.



0% 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%
Never Always

0% means you are never willing to communicate in English
10%-30% means you are least likely willing to communicate in English
30-40% means you are somewhat unlikely willing to communicate in English
50% means you are not sure if you are willing to communicate or not under that context
60%-70% means you are not sure but you may be willing to communicate in English sometimes
80-99% means you are most likely willing to communication in English
100% means you are always willing to communicate in English

_____ 1. Present a talk in English to a group of strangers.

_____ 2. Talk in English with an acquaintance while standing in line.

_____ 3. Talk in English in a large meeting of friends.

_____ 4. Talk in English in a small group of strangers.

_____ 5. Talk in English with a friend while standing in line.

_____ 6. Talk in English in a large meeting of acquaintances.

_____ 7. Talk in English with a stranger while standing in line.

_____ 8. Present a talk in English to a group of friends.

_____ 9. Talk in English in a small group of acquaintances.

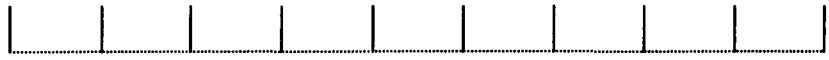
_____ 10. Talk in English in a large meeting of strangers.

_____ 11. Talk in English in a small group of friends.

_____ 12. Present a talk in English to a group of acquaintances.

2. PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOURS (10-POINT SCALE)

Directions: Below are 5 situations in which a person might choose to communicate in English. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate how frequently you would choose to communicate in each type of situation.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always

1 means you never communicate in English in this situation.
2-4 means you use less English in this situation.
5 means you sometimes use English, sometimes not in this situation.
6-9 means you use more English in this situation.
10 means you always communicate in English in this situation.

1. I volunteered to answer or ask questions in class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Always

2. I answered when I was called upon by the teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Always

3. I participated in classroom activities such as pair work.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Always

4. I asked teachers questions or talked to them outside the class period.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Always

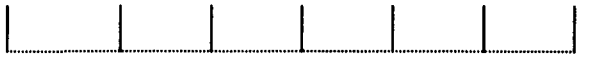
5. I talked with friends or acquaintances outside school in English.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Always

3. INTERNATIONAL POSTURE

Directions: How much does each of the following statements apply to you?



Strongly disagree Strongly agree

1 means you strongly disagree with the statement.
2-3 means you somewhat disagree with the statement.
4 means you are not sure about the statement.
5-6 means you somewhat agree with the statement.
7 means you strongly agree with the statement.

3A. INTEREST IN FOREGIN AFFAIRS (IFA)

1. I often read and watch news about Canada.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I often talk about situations and events in Canada with my family and/or friends.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3B. INTERGROUP APPROACH-AVOIDANCE TENDENCY (AAT)

1. I want to make friends with Canadian students.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I try to avoid talking with Canadians if I can.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. I would talk to an English-speaking student if there were one at school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

4. I wouldn't mind sharing an apartment or room with a Canadian student.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

5. I want to participate in a volunteer activity to help people living in the surrounding community.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

6. I would feel somewhat uncomfortable if I move to live with a Canadian next door.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

7. I would ask for help from a Canadian when I am having trouble communicating in a restaurant or at a station.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3C. INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONS/ACTIVITIES (IVA)

1. I would rather stay in my hometown (China).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I want to live in a foreign country.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. I want to work in an international organization such as the United Nations.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

4. I'm interested in volunteer activities in developing countries such as participating in Youth International Development.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

5. I don't think what's happening overseas has much to do with my daily life.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

6. I'd rather avoid the kind of work that sends me overseas frequently.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3D. INTERCULTURAL FRIENDSHIP ORIENTATION IN ENGLISH LEARNING (IFO)

As a reason to study English

1. It allows me to meet and converse with more and varied people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. It will allow me to get to know various cultures and people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

4. I'd like to make friends with foreigners.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Demographic Information

Gender: Male _____Female _____ Age: _____ Academic Major: _____

Education: _____ not high school _____high school _____college and up

How long have you studied English in China? _____year(s) _____month (s)

How long have you been studying English in Canada? _____year(s) _____month (s)

What made you decide to come to Canada?

_____

_____

What is the main purpose of your study in Canada?

_____

_____

Thank very much for your kind participation in this study. If you are interested in attending a 45-minute interview to talk more about your communication experience in Canada, please say YES! and leave your contact information. The interview content will be kept strictly confidential.

Name: _____

Telephone : _____ ***E-Mail:*** _____

Those who attend the interviews will get an honorarium of $20 in appreciation of your support.

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (CHINESE)

交际英语问卷调查表

1. 交际口语的意愿趋势

提示：以下描述了12情况下，英语学习者考虑是否愿意用英语进行交流。作为英语学习者，你有完全的选择权。请用百分比的方式，来表示出你在每一种情况下，愿意用英语进行交流的程度。请将百分比写在左边的横线上。

0% 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%

从不 总是

0% 表示从来不愿意用英语交流；

10%-30% 表示很不愿意；

30-40%表示你有些不愿意；

50%表示不太确定；

60%-70%表示虽然不确定但是可能有时候会愿意选择用英语进行交流；

80-99%表示你通常愿意用英语交流；

100% 表示总是愿意用英语交流。

_____1. 在一群陌生人面前用英语演讲。

_____2. 排队的时候，和熟人用英语交流。

_____3. 在一大堆朋友面前用英语交流。

_____4. 在一小群陌生人面前用英语交流。.

_____5. 排队的时候，和朋友用英语交流。

_____6. 在一大堆熟人面前用英语交流。

_____7. 排队的时候，和陌生人用英语交流。

_____8. 在一群朋友面前用英语演讲。

_____9. 在一小群熟人面前用英语交流。

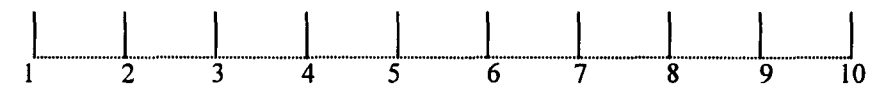
_____10. 在一大堆陌生人面前用英语交流。

_____11. 在一小群朋友面前用英语交流。

_____12. 在一群熟人面前用英语演讲。

2. 交际口语行为表现

提示： 以下描述了5种情况下，英语学习者可能需要用英语进行交流。请表示出你在每一种情况下，愿意用英语进行交流的使用频率大小。请用圆圈勾画出最能显示出你使用英语交流的频率值。



从不 总是

数值1表示你从来不使用英语交流。

数值2-4表示你较少使用英语交流。

数值5表示你有时候使用英语，有时候没有。

数值6-9表示你较多的使用英语交流。

数值10表示你总是使用英语。

1. 在课堂上，我主动回答问题，或主动提问。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

从不 总是

2.老师点名的时候，我才问答问题。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

从不 总是

3. 我参加课堂活动，比如两人小组讨论。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

从不 总是

4. 课堂外，我向老师问问题或者和他们交谈。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
从不 总是

5. 校外，我和朋友或者熟人用英语交流。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
从不 总是

3. 交际口语的相关文化因素

提示：请用圆圈勾画出最适合于你的一个数值。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
完全不同意 完全同意

数值1表示你完全不同意。

数值2-3表示你有点不同意。

数值4表示你不确定 。

数值5-6表示你有些同意。

数值7表示你完全同意。

3A. 对外国时事的兴趣

1. 我经常阅读或观看加拿大的新闻。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
完全不同意 完全同意

2. 我经常和我的家人和/或朋友讨论加拿大的情况和形势。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
完全不同意 完全同意

3B. 不同文化群体接近或回避行为倾向

1. 我想和加拿大学生做朋友。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

2. 如果可能，我会尽量回避和加拿大人讲话。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

3. 如果在学校遇到讲英语的学生， 我会和他/她讲话。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

4.我不介意和加拿大学生共同合租一个公寓。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

5. 我想参加志愿者活动，帮助当地社区的人。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

6. 如果邻居住了一个加拿大人，我会感觉到不舒适。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

7. 在外国餐馆或者汽车站，如果遇到麻烦，我会向加拿大人请求帮助。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

3C. 对国际活动的兴趣

1. 我宁可待在中国。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

2. 我想住在国外。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意 完全同意

3. 我想在联合国或类似的国际组织里工作。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

完全不同意　　完全同意

4. 我对于发展中国家的志愿者活动非常感兴趣，比如说，参加青少年国际发展计划。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

5. 我不认为在国外发生的事情和我的个人生活有所关联。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

6. 我会尽量避免让我频繁到海外工作。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

3D. 文化间友谊交往的倾向

我学习英语的原因是：

1.能够和各种各样的人认识，交流。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

2.能够让我了解不同的文化和其人民。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

3.我能够更加自由地参加其他国家文化团体的活动。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

4.我愿和外国人成为好朋友。

1　2　3　4　5　6　7

完全不同意　　完全同意

个人信息

性别：男_____**女**_____ **年龄:**_____ **专业:**_____

教育程度:_____**高中以下** _____**高中水平** _____**大学或更高水平**

你在中国学习英语有多久了?_____**年**_____**月**

你在加拿大学习英语多久了吗？_____**年**_____**月**

你为什么决定到加拿大来？(Chinese or English)

_____

_____

_____

你到加拿大来学习英语的主要目的是什么? (Chinese or English)

_____

_____

_____

非常感谢你的参与。该调查的第二个阶段为个人中文参访，主要是关于你在加拿大的英语学习经验，时间大约为45分钟，内容绝对保密。参加采访的人将得到20元的采访酬劳。如果你愿意参加，请留下你的联系方式：

姓名：_____

电话：_____ **电子邮件：**_____

UNIVERSITY OF
WINDSOR

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Min Zeng**, a doctoral student from the ***Faculty of Education*** at the University of Windsor ***for her completion of her PhD dissertation.***

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Min Zeng, at the University of Windsor, at (519)253-3000 ext. 3808, or at zeng3@uwindsor.ca.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to investigate how willing Chinese students are to communicate in Canadian context, and how their interactions with their teachers and peers make them more or less willing to communicate in English.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
Step 1: You will be asked to sign a consent form demonstrating your willingness to participate in the study. Your participation will be strictly confidential.

Step 2: You will be selected for a one-on-one interview in Mandarin, on exploring sociocultural factors underlying willingness to communicate in English. If permitted, phone calls will be made with you to arrange the interview time and location. The interview will last 45 minutes to an hour.

Step 3: You may be selected for a focus group meeting. The focus group meeting will be held in a study room, for a length of one hour and a half.

Step 4: Upon request, you will be sent a summary of the results for review or clarification/modification.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks to the subjects in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The findings of the study will enable instructors at the college to gain a heightened awareness of Chinese students' WTC in English, and consequently facilitate their communication with Chinese students. As well, through an understanding of what sociocultural factors determine the individual differences of WTC in English and how to increase WTC in English, Chinese students will become more successful in the attainment of English proficiency, and will be better prepared when they pursue studies in North American countries.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participants who agree to take part in the individual interview will get an honorarium of $20 in appreciation of their participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.
Your participation will be kept in strict confidentiality. The audio tapes and survey questions will be kept in a secure place (locked in a file cabinet in my office at the education building), and will be disclosed only under your permission. You have the rights to review the audio tapes. All the data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You have the option of removing your data from the study.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A summary of the study results will be made available to you by emails upon request. Details will be accessible as requested, too.

Date when results are available: December, 2007

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Min Zeng**, a doctoral student from the ***Faculty of Education*** at the University of Windsor ***for her completion of her PhD dissertation.***

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Min Zeng, at the University of Windsor, at (519)253-3000 ext. 3808, or at zeng3@uwindsor.ca.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to investigate how willing Chinese students are to communicate in Canadian context, and how their interactions with their teachers and peers make them more or less willing to communicate in English.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Step 1: You will be asked to sign a consent form demonstrating your willingness to participate in the study. Your participation will be strictly confidential.

Step 2: You will be selected for a one-on-one interview in Mandarin, on exploring sociocultural factors underlying willingness to communicate in English. If permitted, phone calls will be made with you to arrange the interview time and location. The interview will last 45 minutes to an hour.

Step 3: You may be selected for a focus group meeting. The focus group meeting will be held in a study room, for a length of one hour and a half.

Step 4: Upon request, you will be sent a summary of the results for review or clarification/modification.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks to the subjects in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The findings of the study will enable instructors at the college to gain a heightened awareness of Chinese students' WTC in English, and consequently facilitate their communication with Chinese students. As well, through an understanding of what sociocultural factors determine the individual differences of WTC in English and how to increase WTC in English, Chinese students will become more successful in the attainment of English proficiency, and will be better prepared when they pursue studies in North American countries.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participants who agree to take part in the individual interview will get an honorarium of $20 in appreciation of their participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.
Your participation will be kept in strict confidentiality. The audio tapes and survey questions will be kept in a secure place (locked in a file cabinet in my office at the education building), and will be disclosed only under your permission. You have the rights to review the audio tapes. All the data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You have the option of removing your data from the study.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A summary of the study results will be made available to you by emails upon request. Details will be accessible as requested, too.

Date when results are available: December, 2007

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study **Chinese ESL Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator Date

Receipt for participating in individual interview

UNIVERSITY OF
WINDSOR

Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada

This is to confirm that I have received a $20.00 honorarium for participating in the interview for this research project.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact details & Timing of the Focus group meeting
(Preferably after two weeks of the semi-structured interview)

□ Yes, I am interested □ No, thanks.

Time & Place for the interview: _____

UNIVERSITY OF
WINDSOR

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING INTERVIEW

Research Subject Name: _____

Title of the Project: Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada

ID# Number: _____

I consent to the audio-taping of my interview with you.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that either the taping be stopped or discontinued. If I request to withdraw the tape will be destroyed. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping and viewing will be kept confidential. Tapes will be filed by number only, stored in a locked cabinet, and kept for a year. After the one year period, the tapes will be destroyed.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and the viewing of materials will be for professional use only.

_____ _____

(Research Subject) (Date)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

A: Ice breaking questions:

1. How long have you lived in Canada?
2. How long have you studied here?
3. What made you decide to come to Canada for studying?
4. In general, how has studying in the college been for you?

B: Experience in the classroom:

1. Could you tell me about your experience in the classroom regarding your language learning?
2. Under what circumstances would you like to communicate in the classroom? Why?
3. With whom is it easier for you to communicate in the classroom? Why?
   Could you tell me about your communicative activities with teachers/peers in the classroom?
   Probing questions: What was the experience like for you? What encouraged you to talk to your teacher? If not, could you tell me why it is so hard for you to communicate with your teacher? What would make it easier for you to initiate or take part in the interactions?
4. What content would you like to communicate more?
5. Do these communication activities help your language learning?
6. What sociocultural variables make you more or less willing to communicate? How do they influence your communication behaviours?

C: Experience outside the classroom:

1. Could you tell me about other communication experiences outside the classroom? Outside school? In your daily lives?
2. Under what circumstances would you like to initiate a communication?
3. With whom is it easier for you to initiate communication? Why?
   Could you tell me about your communication experience with teachers/peers/administrative staffs/others (friends, families, native speakers, or strangers) outside classroom?
   Probing questions: What was the experience like for you? What encouraged you to talk to your teacher? If not, could you tell me why it is so hard for you to communicate with your teacher? What would make it easier for you to initiate or take part in the interactions?
4. What content would you like to communicate more?
5. Do these communication activities help your language learning?
6. What sociocultural variables make you more or less? How do they influence your communication behaviours?

D: <u>Your personal understanding of willingness to communicate</u>

1. Compared to your English language learning experience in China, is there any change in your willingness to communicate in English? If so, what are they?
2. What would make communication easier for you? What would make communication hard for you?
3. What is the most important consideration for you when you are (not) willing to communicate?
4. What's the meaning of willingness to communication to you? What are the purposes? (The survey questions mentioned attitudes toward the international culture, and perceived communication behaviours)

E: Do you have anything else to share with me regarding willingness to communicate in English in Canada?

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CONFIDENTIALITY FOR
FOCUS GROUP MEETING

Research Subject Name: _____

ID# Number: _____

This form is intended to further ensure confidentiality of data obtained during the course of the study entitled **Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada.** All parties involved in the research, including all focus group members, will be asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating that they agree to comply.

I hereby affirm that I will not communicate in any manner, disclose public information discussed during the course of this focus group meeting. I agree not to talk about material relating to this study or interview with anyone outside of my fellow group focus group members and the research.

_____ _____

(Research Subject) (Date)

UNIVERSITY OF
WINDSOR

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING
FOCUS GROUP MEETING

Research Subject Name: _____

Title of the Project: Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in Canada

ID# Number: _____

I consent to the audio-taping of my focus group meeting with you.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that either the taping be stopped or discontinued. If I request to withdraw the tape will be destroyed. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping and viewing will be kept confidential. Tapes will be filed by number only, stored in a locked cabinet, and kept for a year. After the one year period, the tapes will be destroyed.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and the viewing of materials will be for professional use only.

_____ _____

(Research Subject) (Date)

Focus group meeting question guide

1. Which one of the three sociocultural enhancers plays the most important role in your willingness to communicate?
   - Goal orientation
   - Teacher support
   - Other's positive response

2. What one of the four sociocultural inhibitors has the most influential impact on your willingness to communicate?
   - Negative teacher response
   - Face protection
   - Value of talk
   - Issue of awareness

3. Could you think of some teaching or learning strategies that incorporate the three educational suggestions to enhance your willingness to communicate?
   - Relaxing environment
   - Awareness-raising and explicit instruction
   - Take good advantage of goal orientation, develop interest
   - Others

VITA AUCTORIS

Min Zeng was born in 1976 in Hubei, China. She graduated from Hubei University in 1999. Since 2002, she went to University of Windsor where she obtained a M.Ed. in 2004. Her major fields are cognition and learning, and English as a foreign and second language teaching/learning.