UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

*WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH AMONG MALAYSIAN
UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY*

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WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH AMONG
MALAYSIAN UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

By

FATIN NABILA ABD RAZAK

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Chair   **: Associate Professor Vahid Nimehchisalem, PhD**
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Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is notably the most significant construct to
facilitate second language (L2) communication. However, studies related to
WTC in Malaysia remain scarce and few available past studies failed to
simultaneously include the three most significant variables predicting WTC
(MacIntyre et al., 1998 & Yashima, 2002). Hence, this study aimed to investigate
the interrelationships between the three affective variables affecting L2 WTC
namely (1) communicative confidence, (2) motivation in learning L2, (3)
international posture as conceptualised in the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC by
MacIntyre et al. (1998) and Yashima (2002). The present study added three other
constructs to help demonstrate the social circumstance in Malaysia among
Malaysian undergraduates in a public university. The three constructs
demonstrating the Malaysian social circumstance are (1) WTC in English based
on four language use domains (education, family, friendship, and transaction),
(2) Ethnic Group Affiliation (EGA), and (3) living area. Specifically, this
quantitative study utilised Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling
(PLS-SEM) as the tool of data analysis. . The data was gathered from 540 public
university undergraduates with a nine-construct questionnaire structured and
adapted to address the study constructs.

Following the data analysis, it was revealed that communicative confidence was
the strongest predictor of WTC in English among all language use domains. The
implicit motivation-WTC relationships through communicative confidence
were also substantial in all language use domains. Notably, direct relationships
between motivation in language-learning and WTC in all language use domains

were significant. On another note, international posture was significant to WTC in English involving all language use domains excluding the family domain. Although EGA positively correlated to the education domain, a negative relationship was detected in the family domain. Additionally, the mediating effect of international posture between the EGA-WTC in English correlation was significant in all domains excluding the family domain. Regarding the living area, the outcome revealed that undergraduates living in urban areas possessed higher communicative confidence that encouraged more WTC in English than undergraduates in rural counterparts across all language use domains. In this light, this research affirmed the implementation and used of the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) in the local context. As such, the accountability of various language use domains, intra-group EGA factors, and undergraduates' living areas was unquestionably essential as proven in the current research.

Overall, the study has suggested the affective variable of communicative confidence as the variable that should be given utmost attention in English language learning alongside other affective variables. The study has also pointed out communicative confidence as the affective variable most lacking among the English language learners living in rural areas as compared to the English language learners living in the urban areas. Hence, future studies can be conducted to test the validation of these results in different contexts of language learning. Focus should also be given towards identifying ways to increase English language learners' communicative confidence especially through reducing their language anxiety and increasing their self-perceived competency.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH AMONG MALAYSIAN UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Oleh

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Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Vahid Nimehchisalem, PhD**
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Willingness to Communicate (WTC) merupakan satu konstruk utama dalam
melancarkan komunikasi dalam Bahasa Kedua (L2), tetapi kajian mengenai
WTC di Malaysia masih terbatas. Selain daripada itu, kajian terdahulu tidak
melibatkan semua pemboleh ubah dalam WTC seperti yang dibentangkan oleh
MacIntyre et al. (1998). Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis
hubungan antara tiga pembolehubah yang mempengaruhi L2 WTC, seperti
yang dikonsepsikan dalam "Heuristic Model of L2 WTC" oleh MacIntyre et al.
(1998) dan tiga konstruk lain yang mendemonstrasikan keadaan sosial di
Malaysia dengan L2 WTC dalam kalangan para mahasiswa dari universiti
awam di Malaysia. Pemboleh ubah yang telah dikonseptualisasikan oleh
MacIntyre et al. (1998) adalah (1) keyakinan dalam berkomunikasi, (2) Motivasi
mempelajari L2, dan (3) minat tehadap kedudukan antarabangsa. Manakala tiga
konstruk yang mempamerkan keadaan sosial di Malaysia adalah (1) WTC
dalam Bahasa Inggeris berdasarkan penggunaan empat domain bahasa
(pelajaran, keluarga, persahabatan dan urus niaga), (2) Ethnic Group Affiliation
(EGA), dan (3) kawasan tempat tinggal. Secara khususnya, kajian kuantitatif ini
menggunakan Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)
untuk menganalisa data. Sampel kajian melibatkan 540 mahasiswa daripada
universiti awam dengan menggunakan borang kaji selidik 9-konstruk yang
diadaptasi untuk kesesuaian kajian ini.

Berdasarkan analisa yang telah dijalankan, keyakinan berkomunikasi adalah
prediktor WTC dalam Bahasa Inggeris yang paling berkesan dalam kesemua
domain bahasa. Hubungan antara WTC dan motivasi melalui keyakinan
berkomunikasi, juga penting dalam kesemua domain Bahasa lain. Secara

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dasarnya, hubungan secara langsung antara motivasi dalam mempelajari bahasa dan WTC dalam kesemua domain bahasa adalah penting. Selain itu, minat terhadap kedudukan antarabangsa amat penting buat WTC dalam Bahasa Inggeris kerana ia dibuktikan terlibat dalam kesemua domain bahasa kecuali dalam domain keluarga. EGA pula berhubung kait secara positif dengan domain pembelajaran, namun hubungan negatif dapat dikesan dalam domain keluarga. Berkenaan kawasan tempat tinggal pula, keputusannya menunjukkan para mahasiswa tinggal di kawasan bandar memiliki keyakinan berkomunikasi yang lebih tinggi dan seterusnya melibatkan WTC dalam Bahasa Inggeris yang lebih tinggi berbanding para mahasiswa di luar bandar, dalam kesemua domain bahasa. Oleh itu, kajian ini mengesahkan kesesuian "Heuristic Model of L2 WTC" oleh MacIntyre et al. (1998). Maka dengan itu, penggunaan bahasa dalam domain yang berbeza, EGA, dan kawasan tempat tinggal mahasiswa merupakan faktor yang sangat penting dalam kajian ini.

Kesimpulannya, kajian ini membuktikan bahawa keyakinan berkomunikasi adalah pembolehubah yang perlu diberikan perhatian dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris disamping pembolehubah lain. Kajian ini juga telah menunjukkan mahasiswa yang tinggal di kawasan luar bandar mempunyai keyakinan berkomunikasi yang rendah berbanding mahasiswa yang tinggal di kawasan bandar. Oleh itu, kajian lanjut perlu dilakukan untuk mengesahkan keputusan ini dalam konteks kajian yang berbeza. Selain daripada itu, fokus juga perlu diberikan dalam mengenalpasti cara-cara untuk meningkatkan keyakinan berkomunikasi dalam kalangan pelajar Bahasa Inggeris terutamanya dalam mengurangkan kerisauan dan meningkatkan tanggapan kecekapan berbahasa Inggeris.

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Alhamdulillah. Thank you.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (date of viva voce) to conduct the final examination of (student's name) on his (her) thesis entitled ("Title of Thesis") in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the (insert the name of relevant degree).

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Date:9 December 2021

Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
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Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

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Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:	Dr. Lee Geok Imm

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BPKP	Bahagian Pengurusan Kemasukan Pelajar
CB-SEM	Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
COREC	Central Office for Research Ethics Committees
CR	Composite Reliability
DEU	Dokuz Eylul University
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGA	Ethnic Group Affiliation
ELF	English as a lingua franca'
EM	Expectation Maximisation Algorithm
ESL	English as the Second Language
HCM	Hierarchical Component Model
HOC	Higher-Order Component
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MGA	Multi-Group Analysis
MOE	Ministry of Education Malaysia
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
PC	Self-Perceived Communication Competence
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UHM	University of Hawaii at Manoa

UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UPU	Unit Pengambilan Universiti
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions and significance of the study. This chapter also presents the limitations of the study, and operational definition of the key terms. Finally, the organisation of the thesis and the summary of the chapter are provided at the end of this chapter.

1.1   Background of the Study

In Malaysia, the importance given to the English language for economic development reached its peak in the 90s, which was the era of the fourth prime minister of Malaysia (also the seventh), Tun Dr Mahathir Muhammad, in the effort of realising 'Vision 2020', which was the aspiration of becoming a developed nation by the year 2020. Aligned with the government's vision, the role of English language as the international language would open the access to the world, especially in relation to knowledge of science and technology, economic trades, and international organisations. As stated by McKay (2003), knowing the English language is like possessing the fabled Aladdin lamp, which permits access to international business, technology, science, and travel. Thus, the need to empower the English language among Malaysians is undeniably important and the status of English language as the second language (L2) in Malaysia shows the focus given by the government to increase English language proficiency among the people.

Nevertheless, after more than 20 years, problems related to the poor level of English language proficiency among students and graduates in Malaysia still exist. Despite the attention given by the government, 64% of Malaysian undergraduate candidates have been reported as limited and very limited users of the English language, based on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) results. This finding explains the 48% rejection rate of graduates in the real working world due to their poor level of English language proficiency (Sani, 2015). Hence, it can be concluded that the 11 years of English language exposure in primary school and secondary school is unable to provide the students with adequate English language proficiency that prepares them for tertiary education. Consequently, studies have shown that the 3 to 4 years of tertiary education is also incapable to prepare the graduates with the English language skills required in the workplace.

Therefore, lack of communication skills, especially in the English language, is one of the most reported factors denying graduates employment (Lim et al. 2016). According to Omar and Rajoo (2016), employers focus on not only the candidates' knowledge and specific technical competencies, but also their ability to communicate in English. Employers have argued that the significant need of good English communication skills is based on the status of the English language as the language of communication in the corporate world (Zainab et al. 2017). Malaysian undergraduates' lack of English communication skills becomes more obvious in a national study, which concludes that more than 58% of final-year undergraduate students from six universities are considered as limited users in writing, while 77% of Malaysian undergraduates are considered as limited users in speaking (Sarudin & Zubairi, 2008). This study also highlights the poor level of English oral communication skills among Malaysian undergraduates. The problem is due to limited oral communication skills embedded in the curriculum (Rahimi et al. 2008). Other than that, it is also related to limited exposure to the English language outside of the classroom, whereby exposure is restricted to only the classroom environment (Taki, 2008). Communication anxiety is also another factor contributing to poor communication skills among English language learners (Debreli &Demirkan, 2015). Nonetheless, these factors are only a few among various factors contributing to poor communication skills.

The high demand for English communication skills has placed huge attention on studies related to developing English language learners' communication practice. However, it is claimed that communication practice can only be developed through the learners' willingness to look for opportunities to be involved in a communication event (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), the language learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) using the target language is the primary goal of language learning. Therefore, it is imperative to study this construct, especially in relation to the factors influencing one's WTC in various authentic communication events and specifying the construct in the context of Malaysian English language learners in the current study.

The construct of WTC is first introduced in the context of first language (L1) or native language by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in the field of communication. McCroskey and Baer (1985) have conceptualised WTC as the probability to engage in communication under one's own willingness whenever there is an opportunity to do so. WTC is considered as a trait-like variable in which it is seen as dependent on one's personal-trait. In contrast with the view regarding WTC presented by McCroskey and Bear (1985), MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualise WTC in relation to the variability of communicative situations such as acquaintance between communicators, formality of the situations, and the number of people present in the communication events. Furthermore, MacIntyre et al. (1998) also include the language of discourse as one of the situational variables that leads towards the conceptualisation of WTC in the L2.

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The manifestation of WTC in L2 is different from WTC in L1 because the uncertainty of inheritance in L2 is more complex. For example, an adult speaker can be competent in his or her first language. However, the L2 competency of an adult language learner can range from almost 0% competence to a full competence of 100%. Other than that, WTC in L2 is also different from WTC in L1 as it involves many other social and political implications, especially in relation to intergroup aspects that are irrelevant in the use of L1. To conceptualise WTC in L2, MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC. It is a pyramid-shaped model that anticipates the interrelations between constructs that would lead towards one's WTC in the L2. Details of the model are presented in the next section.

1.1.1 The Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC

MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualise WTC in L2 through the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC. Their study is an effort made to explain the interrelations between affective variables in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This pyramid-shaped model, as presented in *Figure 1*, is developed based on numerous language researchers' perspectives on communication behaviours and past empirical studies. It covers the aspects of linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables that might affect one's WTC. The model includes affective variables such as motivation, confidence, attitudes, and personality to explain the interrelations of the affective variables influencing an L2 learner's WTC in the L2.
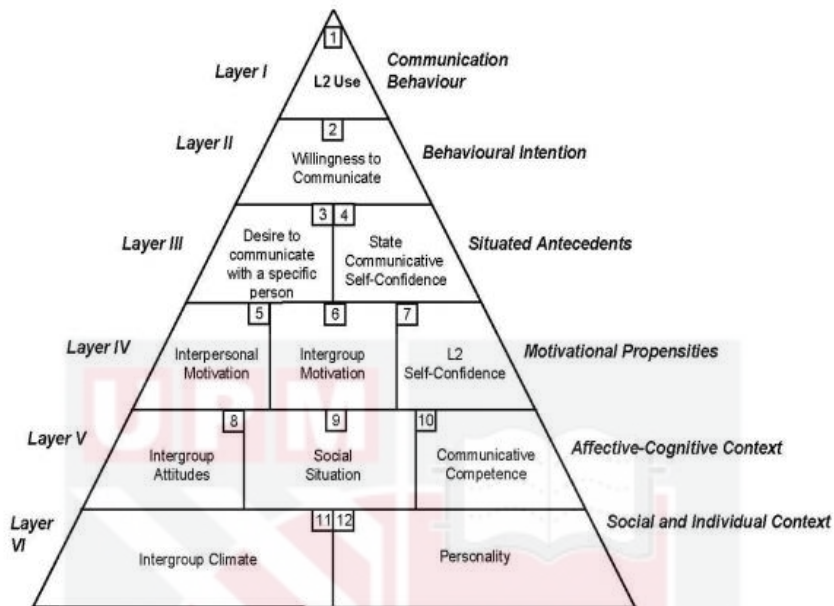
Figure 1.1: The Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998).

This concept of L2 WTC also postulates that WTC generates individual differences in communication behaviour, which consequently produce individual differences in the attainment of language proficiency. Generally, this theory proposes that language students who are more active with language use have a greater potential to develop language proficiency by having more opportunities to converse with others. Thus, the more willing-to-communicate language students are, the more likely they are to succeed in the achievement of language proficiency (Clark, 1989; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Yashima, 2002).

1.1.2   L2 WTC in Malaysia

As L2 WTC has become an essential construct in relation to SLA, many studies, such as Yashima (2002) and Peng (2014), have been conducted to investigate WTC in the context of individual countries. The results from these empirical studies complemented the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998). In the context of English language learning in Malaysia, before a more elaborate study of WTC is conducted, there are a few significant characteristics that are essential to be addressed.

First is the multi-ethnic and multilingual nation characteristic. Due to this unique characteristic of Malaysia, some linguistic policies are implemented to ensure the unity of the multi-ethnic society, such as designating the Malay language as the official language of Malaysia and the language of unity among the multi-ethnic community, while denoting the English language as the language of knowledge and technology (Gill, 2004). Other than that, another factor included in the discussion of the current study is concerning the socio-geographical aspects of the English language learners in Malaysia. A poor command of the English language among students from rural areas has been extensively reported by the media (Farah Zulkefly & Abu Bakar Razali, 2018; Wreikat et al. , 2014; Hazita Azman, 2006; "Big Gap in Mastery of English between Urban, Rural Students," 2018). Thus, it is worth to explore this significant attribute so that overgeneralisation of L2 WTC in Malaysia could be avoided.

Overall, as stated by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), a higher level of WTC in L2 will encourage more meaningful L2 communication practice and consequently facilitate the improvement of L2 communication skills. As such, reflecting on the poor English language communication skills among Malaysian undergraduates, the present study is important as it not only has addressed the construct of WTC in L2 by itself but also all the variables influencing L2 WTC. Moreover, the current study has also considered the unique characteristics of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic and multilingual country that could potentially produce results that differ from findings in past studies from other countries.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Ever since the need to improve undergraduates' English language communication skills to prepare them for the working world has reached its peak and WTC has been acknowledged as the most significant construct that is capable of facilitating communication, many studies to address this matter have been conducted. Nevertheless, studies in relation to WTC in Malaysia are very limited and have just started to gain interest in recent years. Among the studies addressing WTC in the Malaysian context are Fatima et al. (2020), Maryam Jahedi and Lilliati Ismail, (2020), Yousef et al. (2013), Tan et al. (2016), Lo (2017), Shamsudin et al. (2017), and Kho Yar et al. (2018). However, among these studies, only two studies (Reem Yousef et al., 2013 and Kho Yar et al., 2018) utilised structural equation modelling (SEM) in which the variables are investigated simultaneously. The participants targeted in these past studies also vary and does not specifically represent Malaysian undergraduates in public universities. In addition, Segar (2018) claims that the variables examined in past studies are limited and do not cover all the variables influencing WTC as suggested by MacIntyre et al. (1998). Therefore, the current study is very crucial to shed light on L2 WTC in the context of Malaysian English language learners

that involve variables such as Communicative Confidence, Motivation in Learning L2, and Attitudes towards the International Community.

Besides that, studies on L2 WTC in countries other than Malaysia have rapidly bloomed in recent years. Specifically, more studies on WTC have been conducted quantitatively using SEM. Mostly, these studies analyse the correlations between variables embedded in the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) in relation to a specific country. For example, Hashimoto (2002) and Yashima (2002) in the context of English language learning in Japan and Wen and Clément (2003) and Peng and Woodrow (2010) in the context of English language learning in China. Nonetheless, such studies concerning L2 WTC in Malaysia have not been sufficiently conducted (Pragash et al. , 2018).

On the other hand, Yashima's (2002) study that examined the relationships among L2 learning and L2 communication variables in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan has introduced the construct of International Posture. This construct, which can also be referred to as Attitudes towards the International Community, is proposed in the effort to symbolise the views Japanese language learners have towards the English language.

In the study, Yashima claims that in the context of Japan, the English language represents something more to the L2 speakers as it symbolises something that connects them to foreign countries and people, with whom they can communicate using the English language. Thus, the attitude that they have towards the world beyond Japan can be measured and vary across individuals. The introduction of the construct of International Posture is the best example of how the variables in L2 WTC can be empirically proposed in the effort to represent a country's unique social background. Hence, the present study aims to investigate the interrelations between variables influencing WTC in English among Malaysian undergraduates without neglecting the within-group aspect of multiracial Malaysia. The researcher found that the aspect of within-group through the construct of Ethnic Group Affiliation (EGA) to be very crucial as the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) focuses only on the perspective of intergroup.

WTC in L2 is mostly measured using the WTC scale adapted from McCroskey (1992). The instrument measuring WTC developed by McCroskey identifies language learners' WTC via four context-type scores, which are group discussion, meetings, interpersonal, and public speaking. It also measures language learners' WTC in the aspect of receiver-type scores, which are stranger, acquaintances, and friend. Most of the studies using this instrument are conducted in the western context such as in the United States and Canada (e.g.,

Clément et al. ,2003; MacIntyre et al. , 2001; MacIntyre et al. ,2003). There are similar studies conducted in the context of the east, such as in Japan (Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide et al. , 2004) and China (Peng, 2007; Xie, 2011). However, Siti Bariah (2018) has argued that these studies approach WTC in L2 based on the monolithic idea of east versus west and not from the pluralistic view angle that can represent an eastern multi-racial society such as in Malaysia. Thus, in the current study, it is crucial to consider the socio-cultural as well as the psychological factor of a multiracial and multilingual country like Malaysia in measuring WTC in L2 (details on multilingual Malaysian in page 17). Therefore, the present study measures Malaysian undergraduates' WTC according to four domains of language use as suggested by Fishman (1972), which are Education, Family, Friendship, and Transaction. This was done due to the policies (Rahman Talib Report; Tenth Malaysia Plan) implemented by the government and the influence of media that have resulted in Malaysians addressing the importance of English language in a certain domain more than the others (Fatin Nabila et al. , 2018).

Other than that, a huge gap in English language proficiency, especially in L2 oral communication among Malaysian English language learners from urban and rural areas has been widely reported by the media (The Star Online, November 2017; New Straits Times, February 2018). The issue of English language proficiency concerning the socio-geographical aspect among English language learners has not only been reported in Malaysia but also in other eastern countries such as in India and Bangladesh (Jaisre &Thangavel, 2016; Mahroof Hussain, 2016). Nonetheless, among the numerous studies conducted in relation to L2 WTC, very few studies have addressed the differences of language learners' WTC in English between students living in rural and urban areas. Since the current study focuses on the interrelations between variables influencing L2 WTC, comparing the model from the two groups of Malaysian undergraduates allowed the researcher to identify the variable that lacked or advanced that might have caused the differences in English language proficiency between Malaysian undergraduates living in rural and urban areas.

In summary,   as L2 WTC is a very significant construct that is considered as the goal of L2 learning, especially concerning L2 communication, this has led to many researchers giving attention to this construct. Nevertheless, besides identifying correlations between the variables, it is crucial to consider the differences in socio-cultural, psychological, and socio-geographical aspects of Malaysia that differs from other countries. Having stated that, the gaps in the existing literature have been addressed in this thesis.

1.3   Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to examine the interrelationships between the three affective variables influencing L2 WTC that have been conceptualised in the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and another three constructs that reflect the social situation in Malaysia among Malaysian undergraduates in a public university. The affective variables involved in the study are (1) communicative confidence, (2) motivation in learning L2, and (3) attitudes towards the international community also known as international posture, while the three constructs that reflect the social situation in Malaysia are (1) WTC in English according to four domains of language use which are Education, Family, Friendship, and Transaction, (2) EGA, and (3) area of living. Specifically, the study is developed to address the following objectives:

1. To identify the levels of the three affective variables (communicative confidence, motivation in learning L2, and international posture) among Malaysian undergraduates in relation to the English language.
2. To examine WTC in English across the four domains of language use (Education, Family, Friendship, and Transaction) among Malaysian undergraduates.
3. To identify the relationships between the affective variables and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates.
4. To investigate the interrelationships between EGA, affective variables, and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates.
5. To compare the interrelationships between the affective variables and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates living in urban and rural areas.

1.4   Research Questions

To achieve the research objectives, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What are the levels of communicative confidence, motivation in learning L2, and international posture of Malaysian undergraduates in relation to the English language?
2. How willing are Malaysian undergraduates to communicate in English across the four domains of language use (Education, Family, Friendship, and Transaction)?
3. What are the relationships between the affective variables and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates?

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4. What are the interrelationships between the affective variables in influencing WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates?
5. What are the relationships between EGA and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates?
6. What are the interrelationships between EGA, affective variables, and WTC in English across the four domains of language use among Malaysian undergraduates?
7. How do the interrelationships between the affective variables and WTC in English across the four domains of language use differ among Malaysian undergraduates living in urban and rural areas?

Further details on the hypotheses reflecting the research questions developed in the study can be referred in Chapter 3, Table 3.1.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Since communication has become a major requirement for employment and by realising the potential of L2 WTC in facilitating L2 communication skills, this construct has become a significant concept in English as the Second Language (ESL) learning and teaching. The model proposed in this study involves various variables that measure the three main affective variables (communicative confidence, motivation in learning L2, and international posture) influencing Malaysian undergraduates' WTC in English. Understanding the relationships between these variables help to improve one's WTC in English as it enables language learners and language teachers to address the affective variables that language learners are lacking in to attain better L2 WTC and consequently improve their communication practice.

The affective variables involved in this study are measured through several variables or dimensions. For example, communicative confidence is measured based on Malaysian undergraduates' anxiety to speak in English and self-perceived communicative confidence. Meanwhile, motivation in learning L2 is measured through the undergraduates' desire to learn English and their motivational intensity, whereas international posture as proposed by Yashima (2002) is measured through intercultural friendship orientation, intergroup approach-avoidance tendency, interest in international vocation/activities as well as interest in foreign affairs. Even though international posture was firstly introduced in Japan in which English is considered as the foreign language, this affective variable is deemed significant to be included in the current study as English language is not the mother tongue of any ethnic group in Malaysia. Reflecting to the new status of the language "World English" (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), English language is now largely spoken by the international community

and does not only restrict to the native speaker's community. International Posture refers to the language learners' motivation to integrate with the international community that speaks the English language and not only to the native group of the language. Hence, the capability of speaking the language allows the language learners to feel "connected" to the world internationally.

These multi-variables have proven the complexity of the model proposed in the current study. The selection of these variables depicts the variables involved in the Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998). Thus, the interrelationships between the variables in the study could be compared to the model by MacIntyre et al. (1998). Consequently, based on the results of the current study, the researcher has managed to confirm the model in the context of Malaysian English language learners.

Another significance of the present study is the representability of the results to Malaysian English language learners. An effort is made by the researcher in addressing the three variables that characterised Malaysian English language learners as a pluralistic society coming from a multiracial and multilingual background. Since Malaysia is a multilingual country, the government has implemented some language policies such as the use of English language as the language of knowledge and technology, while the Malay language is considered as the first language of the country and thus the symbol of unity in the multiracial society. Therefore, these characteristics of Malaysian language learners will surely influence the use of certain languages at a specific domain. The identification of the undergraduates' WTC in English according to the domains of language use might shed light on the real linguistic situation in Malaysia. Besides that, the study also investigates the within-group aspect of multiracial Malaysia through the variable of EGA. This construct focuses on how language learners view their own ethnic group. Identifying language learners' EGA could contribute towards the understanding in the aspects of language and identity and whether this construct inhibits learners' WTC in English.

Other than that, by considering the socio-geographical aspect of Malaysian undergraduates, the present study tries to identify the affective variables that need more attention from language learners, teachers, and curriculum developers by comparing the results between two groups of Malaysian undergraduates i.e. undergraduates living in the urban area and those living in rural areas. The media and past literature have largely claimed that the English language proficiency among students from the rural area is lower compared to students from the urban area (Farah Zulkefly & Abu Bakar Razali, 2018; Wreikat et al. , 2014; Hazita Azman, 2006; "Big Gap in Mastery of English between Urban, Rural Students," 2018). The variable with a significant result based on this comparison should be given more attention to improve WTC in English among English language learners from the rural area.

1.6   Scopes and Limitations of the Study

The construct of WTC has gained a lot of attention in recent years and both qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted. Many quantitative studies have utilised SEM as it allows the simultaneous examination of relationships between constructs. Compared to most past quantitative WTC studies that utilise a co-variance-based approach named as Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) (such as Yashima, 2002; Cetinkaya, 2005; Aliakbari, 2016), the current study utilises a variance-based approach named as Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This decision is made due to the nature of the current study that explores new variables such as EGA and area of living and the existing variables embedded in the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998) best suited the variance-based approach (PLS-SEM). On top of that, as compared to past studies that contain single dependent variable as WTC is measured generally, the current study identifies the undergraduates' WTC in English across four domains of language use that requires the proposed model to have four dependent variables. It resulted to a very complex model with various interrelationships. Henceforth, the current study is exploratory in nature, and it involves the extension of an existing structural theory that obviously directed to the rules of thumb of selecting PLS-SEM as stated in Ramayah et al. (2018).

The limitation in the current study concerns the participants, who are selected among Malaysian undergraduates in their second to final year, i.e. excluding first-year undergraduates. This decision is made to ensure that the undergraduate participants are comfortable with their campus life and are familiar enough with the people in their surroundings to communicate with them. Even though this decision might affect the aspect of generalisation of the study, it is important for the researcher to ensure that the measurement of the undergraduates' WTC in English is not interfered by any other social-environment factors that might influence the reliability of the results.

Furthermore, another limitation is in relation to the definition of WTC. The researcher has narrowed the definition of WTC to the aspect of English spoken communication only as this study focuses on oral communication. Oral communication has become a crucial aspect in the advancement of the fields of human endeavour such as science and technology as well as job opportunity (Tengku Mohani et al. , 2015). Zhang (2009) has stated that oral communication in English appears to be difficult for L2 learners. This might be due to the interrelationships between speaking and social-psychological factors such as confidence, motivation, and anxiety. Hence, these interrelationships are highlighted in the current study.

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1.7   Definition of Terms

This section provides the operational definitions of the important constructs and terms used in this study. These definitions are operationalised as a measured definition based on Ary et al. (2002) who state that the measured definition is how the researcher measures a construct in performing a study such as scores from a scale.

1.7.1   Ethnic Group Affiliation (EGA)

In the current study, EGA refers to learners' attitude towards their native culture and language. The undergraduates' EGA is measured by adapting the questionnaire developed by Gatbonton and Trofimovich (2008) that includes four dimensions, which are ethnic group affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity, language, and ethnic behaviour. Each dimension is measured using its indicator variables known as items in the questionnaire. For example, the item 'I have a strong belief that our children should have names that represent their ethnicity' represents the dimension of ethnic identity in the questionnaire. The participants have to choose from the scale of 1, which is completely disagree, to the scale of 5, which is completely agree.

1.7.2   L2

In language learning, Second Language (L2) is defined as the language that language learners are learning or know in addition to their mother tongue or first language (Velliaris & Coleman-George, 2016). In the current study, the term L2 refers to the English language. This is in line with Malaysian education system founded by the educational policy that has placed English language as the L2 (Gill, 2002). Hence, English language has become a compulsory subject at all levels of education starting from pre-school to tertiary education. This decision is made by the government with the purpose to initiate a balance between the national and international needs towards the social, educational, and economic development of the country (Gill & Kirkpatrick, 2013). On top of that, according to the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, English is considered the second important language after Bahasa Melayu that is declared as the first language (L1) as well as the language of unity of the country. English language also has been declared as the international language of communication. Due to that, the students in the higher education are expected to be proficient in both Bahasa Melayu and English language.

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1.7.3   WTC in L2

WTC in L2 refers to the L2 students' intention or desire to communicate in L2 when he or she has the chance to do so. In the current study, WTC is measured by adapting McCroskey's (1992) 12 item-scale that is specified into four domains of language use, which are education, friendship, transaction, and family. Other than that, WTC in the current study is specifically refers to the undergraduates' WTC in the English language. More importantly, WTC is focused on the speaking mode than other communication modes such as listening, writing, and reading.

1.7.4   Communicative Confidence

According to Ganschow and Sparks (1991), confidence in language refers to students' perception of the ease of L2 learning. Clément (1980) has claimed that communicative confidence can be measured through two dimensions, which are perceived communication competence and language anxiety. Perceived self-competence in English is the undergraduates' self-assessed competence in English communication. In this study, perceived self-competence is assessed by a scale with 12 items adapted from MacIntyre and Charos (1996). Anxiety associated with language learning is defined by Horwitz et al. (1986) as specific anxiety reactions to a variety of language learning situations. In this study, anxiety is measured using a 12-item scale adapted from MacIntyre and Clément (1996).

1.7.5   Motivation in Learning L2

According to Gardner (1985), motivation refers to 'the combination of effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language' (p. 361). In this study, motivation is assessed by two instruments, which are Desire to Learn English and Motivational Intensity. Desire to Learn English is measured using items adapted from Yashima (2002) and Gardner and Lambert (1972). On the other hand, Motivational Intensity is measured by items adapted from Gardner and Lambert (1972).

1.7.6   International Posture (Attitudes towards the International Community)

Davidson (1980) has stated that 'an attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in an evaluative (from extremely favourable to extremely unfavourable) manner toward some attitude object' (as cited in Gudykunst, 2004, p. 130 and

Kim, 2004). Attitudes towards the international community refer to the International Posture in the context of this study. The researcher refers to Dörnyei (1990) and Yashima (2002), whereby 'in ESL, attitudes to learning English are formed in accordance to their direct contact with native English speakers in which according to Gudykunst (1991), the language functions as something that connects them to foreigners or strangers'. Thus, International Posture (attitudes towards the international community () is measured using indicator variables adapted from Yashima (2002), namely, (1) intercultural friendship orientation, (2) interest in international vocation/activities, (3) intergroup approach-avoidance tendency, and (4) interest in foreign affairs.

1.8   The Organisation of the Study

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, which is largely related to WTC. This chapter also presents the statement of the problem, the objectives and research questions, significance of the study, limitations, definition of terms, and the organisation of the study.

Literature review is presented in Chapter 2 that mainly discusses WTC in L2, the constructs in the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC, and additional constructs that help in contextualising the model to the Malaysian context such as the EGA, domains of language use, and undergraduates' area of living. The discussion also highlights the gap of knowledge that the researcher has aimed to address.

Next, Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach of the current study. The researcher has rationalised the selection of data collection and data analysis procedures. Since the study utilises PLS-SEM, all the constructs and the dimensions involved are introduced in the form of figures. This chapter also informs and discusses the respondents' characteristics and instruments employed for collecting the quantitative data.

Chapter 4 presents the validation process of the measurement models and the structural equation model. The validation involves all the statistical measures necessary in the PLS-SEM such as internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, variance inflation factor, and collinearity. Based on these validations, some omissions and deletions of the constructs are explained.

In Chapter 5, the quantitative analysis of the SEM and the findings are presented.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the study. It also provides a summary of the study, implementations and suggestions for further studies.

1.9   Summary

Overall, this chapter has introduced the construct of WTC as the main subject of the study. It is postulated that WTC generates individual differences in communication behaviour, which then produce individual differences in the attainment of language proficiency. Nevertheless, individual differences in SLA are not the result of a single affective variable but the interrelationships of one affective variable with other variables. These interrelationships are presented in the Heuristic Model of L2 WTC by MacIntyre et al. (1998). The researcher aims to investigate the interrelations between the selected variables (communicative confidence, motivation in learning L2, and attitudes towards the international community) in the context of Malaysian undergraduates from a public university. Additionally, a few other constructs (domains bounded to WTC, EGA, and undergraduates' area of living) are proposed in the study to ensure that the study represents the socio-cultural, psychological, and socio-geographical situations of Malaysian English language learners. In conclusion, the study is conducted in a way that the results can explain Malaysian undergraduates' WTC in English and how the WTC is achieved through the interrelations of the affective variables involved in the study.

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