The Kindergarten Effect: Exploring the Influence of Communities of Practice on Adult L2 Willingness to Communicate

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ABSTRACT

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Kym Taylor

Though previous research suggests that adult second language (L2) learners can face a number of struggles (e.g., Gallagher, 2013; Mady & Arnott, 2010), one of the biggest challenges for these learners is finding the confidence to communicate with their interlocutors, often native speakers of the L2. At the center of this challenge is the construct of willingness to communicate (WTC), which is typically operationalized as a measure of a learner's comfort level in initiating communication with native speakers (MacIntyre, Babin, & Clément, 1999). One example of a rich, welcoming, nonthreatening, and nonjudgmental learning environment that might encourage WTC is a kindergarten classroom, where young children acquire group communicative, social, and academic skills. The goal of this longitudinal case study was to examine the impact of adult L2 learners' experience in a kindergarten classroom as a means of enhancing their WTC. The target participants included four female international university students from China of similar age, L2 proficiency, and English instruction background. Two students attended a local kindergarten classroom three times per week for five weeks, in addition to their regular university ESL courses; the other two attended regular ESL instruction at the university, but did not visit the kindergarten classroom. All students were pre- and posttested using a willingness to communicate scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) and evaluated through weekly language use logs (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). The experimental participants were observed through weekly kindergarten observations (Spada & Frohlich, 1995). Journals were completed by the students after each visit, and exit interviews were conducted with the participants' university professors.

Results revealed a positive impact of the kindergarten environment on the students' WTC (shown in both self-reports and observations) that has extended to the students' L2 use outside the kindergarten context. These results support the use of communicatively rich, nonthreatening communities of practice as vehicles for increasing WTC. I discuss implications for WTC as a construct and for the use of volunteer opportunities to supplement regular L2 instruction.

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Contribution of Authors

As the first author of the manuscript version of this thesis, Kym Taylor was responsible for conceptualizing and creating the study; conducting all pretesting, posttesting, observations, and interviews; collecting and analyzing data, such as surveys and language use logs; organizing the coding of data; and writing up the results. Pavel Trofimovich shared advice throughout all stages of the project, providing particular guidance in the analyses of data.

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Foreword

This study is based on my observations as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for the past 10 years in two large K-12 public school districts and a state university in upstate New York. In working daily with students of different ages, often back to back, I have observed many similarities in learning strategies and patterns of acquisition. These observations led me to consider the possible benefits of multi-age ESL interaction and the role of context factors (such as interlocutors, level of formality, and language spoken) in second language (L2) learning. In the spring of 2015, I stumbled upon the inspiration for this study.

Pengyong, an intermediate-level L2 English university student from China (one of my former students) offered to volunteer for eight weeks in the kindergarten of a local elementary school in upstate New York, where I also teach ESL. While assisting in the classroom, the student asked many questions about the visual aids in the room, and marveled at how many words he was learning that had once been only briefly, if ever, a part of his English speaking vocabulary. He also self-reported a better understanding of English pronunciation because the curriculum focuses heavily on phonics, and he was excited about how comfortable he was communicating with young native speakers. The student attributed these improvements to the breakdown of information into pieces, the fun atmosphere full of music, movement, and visual aids, repetition of information, and simplification of the language.

The student, who was reluctant to use English with native speakers at the university because he lacked confidence, also noted that he was far more willing to communicate with the young native speakers. Although they might gently correct at times, they never judged. He once commented, “They do not laugh at my poor English.” Furthermore, these students were emerging English language learners themselves, and perhaps understood better, compared to

their adult counterparts, how difficult the learning process was. Both the university student and I noticed that the kindergarten environment seemed to allow for the filling in of many gaps in the learner's L2 knowledge, which might be attributed to the unique methods of instruction present in a kindergarten environment. The experience, while not a formal study, points to the value of further research in order to investigate effect of a kindergarten environment on adult L2 learners.

Chapter 1

For decades, researchers and theorists have studied the intricacies of language and how it connects people not only within individual communities (Irvine, 1996) but also to a larger global network (De Swaan, 2013). At the center of continuing language research is a steadily increasing interest in oral communication (e.g., Sterling et al., 2016; Sun, 2015; Yaman & Özcan, 2015). A prominent line of this research focuses on the willingness of a speaker to engage in conversation with other interlocutors, a construct known as willingness to communicate (WTC), which is a critical element determining L2 use (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre 2003). In the 1980s, researchers in the field of communication (like McCroskey, Baer, and Richmond) presented WTC as a unilateral construct: as the likelihood to communicate in a given situation. The construct became of special interest to linguistics researchers in the 1990s through the work of Clement, Baker, MacIntyre, and others, who identified its specific relevance to second language acquisition (SLA). By the end of the decade, there was a push toward deeper understanding of WTC as a multifaceted construct, encompassing both linguistic and psychological variables (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998), and a recent interest in reimagining WTC has surged in SLA research (e.g., Cameron, 2015; Peng, Zhang, & Chen, in press; Tedescoe & Patterson, 2015; Yashima, MacIntyre, & Ikeda, 2016).

In a seminal position paper, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested that two primary sets of factors should be considered with respect to WTC: personality (or trait-like) factors and contextual (or state-like) factors. While WTC can manifest itself differently between speakers' native (L1) and their second (L2) languages (MacIntyre et al., 1998), some aspects of WTC (like task, topic, and interlocutor) can be controlled more easily compared to others (like anxiety, shyness, and confidence), regardless of whether the language is primary or secondary. This

distinction is important in understanding how to encourage WTC through the manipulation of such changeable factors.

WTC was first thought of exclusively as a trait-like construct, primarily because L1 speakers are assumed to exercise control over communicative opportunities, and it is most likely the stable personality traits of the speaker (like shyness, introversion, and reticence) that determine whether or not communication with another interlocutor will occur (Dörnyei, 2010). In short, the L1 speaker needs to have an inclination to communicate; it is assumed that he or she always has a choice (Ortega, 2013). But L1 WTC is not the primary predictor of L2 WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000). L2 WTC appears to be uniquely situational (Dörnyei, 2010) in that it changes from context to context, making it a complex aspect of language learning. For example, in a study of 243 Iranian EFL university students, an L2 WTC model was created to monitor the interaction and combined influence of contextual factors and other variables (like motivation and communicative confidence) on WTC (Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Fatemi, & Choi, 2016). Classroom environment (particularly in the context of task type and dynamics between the student and the teacher or the student and her classmates) best predicted WTC, lending support to the idea that L2 WTC is a product of more than just a speaker's personality or fixed communicative tendencies. While it must be acknowledged that fixed personality traits play *some* role in an L2 learner's WTC, it is the myriad of ways in which these traits interact with other contextual variables that is of primary interest in current SLA research. Furthermore, while consideration of trait-like factors, such as general motivation toward language learning and gender, can be useful in predicting WTC (e.g., Hashimoto 2002; Munezane, 2015), their lack of malleability as language features makes them a poor choice for isolated pedagogical focus toward improving L2 learner communication.

So, if trait-like variables are not to be considered as operating alone in determining L2 WTC, by which collective factors should the construct be determined? With a healthy roster of psychological and personality variables to consider, combined with countless potential interlocutors, situations, and topics, the possibilities are seemingly infinite. For example, Kang (2005) studied four Korean university ESL students enrolled at a U.S. university. Self-reported changes in WTC were measured using interviews, videotaped conversations, and stimulated recalls. While the study targeted psychological conditions presumed to be in place prior to the study (e.g., excitement, responsibility, and security), the goal was to investigate interactions of these variables with contextual variables such as topic, interlocutors, or conversational context. For these students, WTC was subject to constant shifts depending on which psychological condition was interacting with which contextual variable. For example, topic choice influenced security, which in turn influenced WTC. If the subject of the conversation was something about which the student had prior knowledge or understanding, then the students self-reported that it was more comfortable to communicate with their interlocutors. If the topic was not only familiar but also of great interest to the student, then excitement also rose, prompting even more favorable comments from the students about their WTC.

Self-reported participant comments about WTC have long been the bread and butter of measurement when investigating individual variables like personality (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2013; McCroskey, 1984). However, for a complex construct such as WTC involving both trait- and state-like variables, Cao and Philp (2006) found it to be of further importance to monitor the consistency between self-reported WTC and demonstrated WTC, based on MacIntyre's (2001) distinction between estimation of WTC and actual engagement in the act of conversation. Through a month-long study of eight ESL classroom learners from various L1 backgrounds

studying in New Zealand, the researchers examined WTC at both the trait level (through self-reported survey) and the state level (through classroom observation and interviews). Results of the study showed that self-reported WTC did not always match demonstrated WTC in the classroom. This provided further support for the idea that both trait- and state-like variables are at work in determining WTC. If a speaker indicated that they were naturally anxious or shy about communicating, for instance, then the demonstrated WTC still varied based on whether that speaker was in dyadic conversation or whole group conversation, as students universally demonstrated the lowest WTC when interacting in large groups.

In a more recent study that also showed the interplay between trait- and state-like WTC through both qualitative measures (i.e., classroom observation data, self-reflection, and interviews) and quantitative measures (i.e., self-perceived WTC and trait anxiety surveys), Yashima, MacIntyre, and Ikeda (2016) studied 21 Japanese EFL students to see how trait-like characteristics interacted with contextual factors. Like Kang (2005) and Cao and Philp (2006), the researchers also found that a combination of more fixed characteristics (such as personality and L2 proficiency) and contextual factors (e.g., interlocutor response and classroom interactional patterns) combined to influence changes in WTC, as shown by the frequency of self-initiated turns. This pattern of findings is important, as many researchers are able to support the idea of WTC as a dynamic system through the demonstration of its constantly changing interactions between trait- and state- like variables. If the field of SLA largely acknowledges WTC as a malleable construct, then the implications for improving WTC among L2 learners are encouraging.

Previous research has investigated the interaction of trait- and state-like variables, with situational context emerging as one of the most substantial influences on WTC. Therefore, this

study focused on a purposeful manipulation of context in order to improve adult L2 learners' WTC, targeting an unusual community of practice (kindergarten classroom) to determine to what extent, if any, WTC could be altered by contextual variables, such as interlocutor, task, and classroom interactional patterns. It was hypothesized that, within the boundaries of their preexisting personality and psychological traits, L2 learners would be given a chance to maximize their WTC potential thorough their experience in a kindergarten classroom, where interlocutors and topics are familiar, classroom interactional patterns provide plenty of security and encouragement, interactive environment is nonjudgmental, and learning tasks are fun and easy. The following chapter is a manuscript.

Chapter 2

Language is necessary for successful interaction and, in an increasingly diverse global environment, native speakers of one language must often acquire one or more additional languages in order to continue that interaction (e.g., DeAngelis, 2007; Fry & Lowell, 2003). Language learning is not without its challenges, however, as previous research suggests that adult second language (L2) learners can face a number of struggles. Some of these difficulties include increased communication anxiety (Young, 1991), communicative isolation (Morita, 2004), and even cross-cultural adaptation leading to language loss (Lewthwaite, 1996). However, one of the biggest challenges for many L2 learners is finding the confidence to communicate with native speakers (Mady & Arnott, 2010). In the case of university students studying abroad, for instance, particularly those whose cultures differ greatly from that of the L2 community, the struggle can be particularly stressful. For example, Chinese university students attending a UK university self-reported reluctance toward L2 communication among native speakers due to issues of identity, face-saving, and conflicting cultural ideas of authority (Gallagher, 2013).

At least some of the problems faced by L2 learners in communication are relevant to the construct of willingness to communicate (WTC), which is typically operationalized as a measure of a learner's comfort level in initiating communication with native L2 speakers (MacIntyre, Babin, & Clément, 1999). Although learners can become reasonably proficient in a classroom setting, comfort is not something that can be taught. There are ways to overcome this challenge, however. Students who can find a welcoming environment in which to ease the transition from classroom speaking to an L2 community setting may find it easier to practice if they are in the midst of nonjudgmental native speakers. Consistent speaking opportunities, such as those provided by socialization with a rich L2 community, can play a large role in the process of L2

acquisition. For example, in a study targeting Chinese learners of L2 English (ages 5–16), Jia and Aaronson (2003) found that students who were exposed to rich communicative environments showed substantial advances in L2 proficiency, particularly when exposed to these communities at a young age. Although these findings cannot be generalized necessarily to an adult population, they do point toward socialization as a positive force in improving WTC and, subsequently, in facilitating L2 acquisition.

The present longitudinal case study, focusing on four adult language learners, examined the effect of situational context on WTC. Although WTC is typically framed as a measurement of a learner's comfort level in initiating communication with native L2 speakers, this study further explores WTC as a measurement of a learner's comfort level in initiating and *sustaining* communication with native L2 speakers across multiple contexts. In this case, WTC was investigated in an unconventional adult language learning space—the kindergarten classroom. The kindergarten classroom is a communicatively rich, welcoming, nonthreatening, and nonjudgmental learning environment in which young children acquire literacy skills in their first language (L1), but it could also be beneficial for adult L2 learners. One of the most important features of the kindergarten classroom as it relates to language learning is its role as a low-stress communication environment. Kindergarteners are generally eager to communicate and pay little attention to language errors, as most of their peers are also emerging language learners. For instance, Biemiller (2001) estimates that children acquire approximately 600 new root word meanings per year from infancy through the end of elementary school. There are other advantages to conversing with children as well. For instance, primary school children are capable of dialogue modification and negotiation for meaning in order to ensure comprehensibility by their fellow interlocutors (Oliver, 1998). Therefore, despite their young age and status as

emerging language learners themselves, young children can hold their own as conversation partners. It appears, then, that a relaxed but active communication environment of a kindergarten classroom can be helpful to an adult L2 learner, because it might foster WTC and provide motivation for interaction due to the existence of an attentive audience and conversation partners. Therefore, the goal of the present study was to explore potential benefits of adult L2 learners' exposure to a kindergarten environment for their L2 WTC.

Willingness to Communicate and L2 Learning

Since its introduction to the field of L2 acquisition in 1985 by McCroskey and Baer, the notion of WTC has grown from a trait-level (stable) construct focusing on self-esteem, apprehension, introversion/extroversion, and other factors which entail a predisposition to engage in communication, into a more comprehensive phenomenon that also takes into account state-level (changeable, situation-specific) characteristics like interlocutor relationship, environment, and situational context (Dörnyei, 2010; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2013; Peng, 2007). Macintyre et al. (1999) define WTC as "intent to initiate communication" (p. 219). In light of existing research that considers both trait- and state-level factors to be important (e.g., Cao, 2011; Gallagher, 2013; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), four representative factors—identity (considered here in terms of a speaker's self-esteem, confidence, and face preservation), communication apprehension, perceived communicative competence, and situational context—were explored as possible targets for enhancement in a kindergarten, an alternative community environment for adult L2 learners.

According to McCroskey and Richmond (1990), self-esteem, confidence, and face-preservation are considered a part of identity maintenance. Due to the desire to maintain their identity and save face, many L2 learners are nervous about communicating in the L2, particularly

with more advanced L2 learners or native speakers. There are many factors that can influence the way L2 learners are perceived by others or even by themselves. Peer influence, for instance, can discourage an L2 learner (who might be perfectly confident in the L1) from communicating for a number of reasons. In de Saint-Leger and Storch's (2009) study of L2 French university students, participants self-reported a reluctance to speak among their peers, and whole class discussion was cited by the participants as the most difficult speaking task. Reasons for this reluctance included feeling intimidated by peers who were perceived to have a higher proficiency in the L2, used complex vocabulary and sentence constructions, and demonstrated better fluency. In this case, students were also worried about face loss, as they were concerned that their more accomplished peers would be critical of their less-than-perfect attempts to communicate in the L2. It stands to reason that in order to overcome such fears and preserve their identity, learners would have to either believe themselves to be more accomplished as an interlocutor, or engage in conversations with interlocutors that are unlikely to either notice or criticize their errors. In fact, Cao's (2011) study of New Zealand university students (from various language backgrounds) found that students' familiarity with the interlocutor could increase their self-confidence and, therefore, WTC, especially when the interlocutor's personality, mannerisms, and general disposition were (from the L2 learner's perspective) enough to motivate students to communicate.

By contrast, though, depending on the interlocutors, situation, and context, some L2 learners may question their communicative competence and may therefore become apprehensive about attempting to communicate in certain situations. In a study designed to explore connections between competence, language anxiety, and WTC, MacIntyre and Doucette (2009) found that a "typical" L2 speaker, who often exhibits L2 speech disfluencies such as pausing and

hesitation, can experience high learner anxiety and low perceived communicative competence. Over time, this anxiety can snowball to have a significant detrimental effect on L2 communication, preventing the speaker from engaging in L2 interaction. The reverse is also true, as shown by MacIntyre et al. (1999): When communication apprehension is low, university-level L2 learners' self-perceived communicative competence increases, and they become more willing to communicate. In this light, any attempt to lower communicative apprehension through controllable elements (e.g., atmosphere, interlocutor patience and acceptance, modified interaction) could prove to be beneficial for L2 learners.

Situational context, including the communicative environment, can be influenced by everything from task type to patterns of class interaction and interlocutor response (Cao, 2006; Cao & Philp, 2006). If learners feel socially accepted and welcome for instance, then they are more open and feel less self-conscious about communicating (MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011). L2 learners studying in target language contexts, as compared to foreign language environments where exposure to the target language outside language classrooms is limited, might be at a disadvantage simply because they are surrounded by native-speaking interlocutors. To put it another way, learners residing in target language communities often lack the "home field advantage" because they are both speaking a foreign language and operating in a foreign environment. As a result, they might be apprehensive about communicating and could therefore benefit from any accommodations that can enhance their communicative comfort level.

The L2 learner's perception of power imbalances can also contribute to situational context (McIntyre et al., 1998). Therefore, if L2 learners can be given some positive power advantage over their interlocutors (in terms of age difference, for instance), WTC might also increase. Situational context can further be enhanced by real-life community experience, as

found in Hummel (2013), who placed L2 English university students in a community service-learning environment (elementary school). Participants noted that interacting with native-speaking elementary students gave them the confidence to communicate in their L2, likely as a result of the nonthreatening interlocutors and situational context. To sum up, existing research supports the idea that there are many variables that can limit a learner's WTC. But what if identity could be preserved, apprehension could be lessened, and learners could see themselves as competent L2 communicators? One possible environment in which these challenges could be addressed is the kindergarten classroom.

Kindergarten and Language Learning

The kindergarten classroom is a rich environment of sights and sounds, all of which are designed to enhance learning for young native speakers. It is an example of language learning as a dynamic (constantly evolving) system, and it is designed to "excite students about the prospect of learning" (Catsambis & Buttaro, 2012, p. 485). From a curriculum standpoint, the current goal of American elementary education is to deliver information in a "deeper, not wider" fashion (Rothman, 2011). This attention to depth makes for a perfect environment for L2 learning; not only is the curriculum dosed manageably, but the classroom is also rich with supplementary images in the form of posters and other visual resources; learning is regularly reinforced through songs, stories, and poetry; repetition of material is standard, and the interlocutors are both patient and nonjudgmental. Many of these factors can support L2 learning (e.g., Abbott, 2002; Fomeche, 2014; Hagiwara, 2014; Hart, 2014), which suggests that to find them all in one environment could be a distinct advantage. In essence, the kindergarten classroom can be viewed as the best of two worlds: foundational language instruction in a naturalistic environment.

In a kindergarten classroom, special attention is paid to simplification of language between the teacher and the young native speakers. L2 learning shares a common bond to childhood L1 learning in that conversations are highly learner-centered (Brown, Salerno, & Sachs, 1972; Ferguson, 1977, 1982; Granowsky & Krossner, 1970). For instance, both L2 instructors and caregivers of young children slow their speech rate, simplify syntax, and use fewer words. Drawing on this research, Gaies (1976) also showed that the communication strategies used by ESL instructors are similar to those used in adult-child interactions, such that language is often simplified through strategies such as repetition, prompting, modeling, and correction by expansion. Therefore, the teacher-student interaction in a kindergarten classroom could work quite well for adult L2 learners. Furthermore, adults adjust their language when interacting with children through many strategies such as slowed speech, over-enunciation, shorter utterances, clarification requests, pauses between turns, and repetition, all of which have also been found to ease L2 communication (e.g., Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres, & Fernández-García, 1999; Harklau, 1994; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 2001).

One of the specific issues for L2 learners is that native speech is often spoken beyond a threshold rate which would be conducive to listening comprehension, for instance, at around 130 words per minute for lower-intermediate learners (Griffiths, 1992) and 125 words per minute for intermediate learners (Kelch, 1985). In a kindergarten classroom, elocution and normal rate are favored and speech is pointedly delivered, often using simplified vocabulary, with specific attention paid to learner comprehension. During group instruction in the kindergarten classroom, young learners are also directed to think before responding so as to give all of the students a chance to answer, thereby lessening the pressure and stress of participation for students who

require more processing time. Thus, L2 interaction could well be more comfortable in a kindergarten classroom than in other situations of L2 use.

Kindergarten as a Rich Socialization Context

From a theoretical perspective, a focus on a kindergarten classroom as an ideal environment for enhancing L2 learners' WTC is supported through several theoretical frameworks, including the dynamic systems theory, community of practice (CoP) theory, and socialization theory. Indeed, prior research has identified WTC as a dynamic system (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007) note that dynamic systems are characterized by the "complete interconnectedness" of variables; when one variable changes, the other variables are affected (see MacIntyre et al., 1999). As a dynamic system, WTC should then be most improved when as many variables as possible can be tipped toward positive influence. To do so would require the existence of a unique communicative environment like the kindergarten classroom. Similarly, the three primary components of CoP theory, as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991), are domain, community, and practice, all of which are highly relevant to the kindergarten learning environment. Perhaps WTC can be improved as part of a CoP in a kindergarten context, as the adult participants and the kindergarteners possess the shared domain (language learning), the strong community (with a common sense of belonging), and the practice through shared curriculum study.

There might be positive effects on WTC from the socialization process as well. Duff and Talmy (2011) describe socialization theory as a methodological approach which can be used to understand L2 acquisition in terms of increased communicative, cultural, and linguistic competence as a result of interaction with native or proficient speakers of the target language. Prior research into this idea (e.g., Schecter & Bayley, 2004; Springer & Collins, 2008) has shown

that socialization in the target language community can be an important factor in language development, and the benefits increase when the socialization occurs in a nonthreatening environment. If L2 learners can be given the opportunity to socialize with native speakers in a context in which the negative factors of WTC can be reduced, the possibility for overall language learning benefit would no doubt be increased.

Thus, it appears that the kindergarten classroom could potentially be used as a pedagogically-engineered naturalistic environment that provides many opportunities for socialization with native speakers in comfortable communicative surroundings, which supply ample opportunities for communicative engagement in both small and large groups. The main communication goal of kindergarten teachers is to invite as many children to speak as possible, model the language, exchange information, and invite the sharing of anecdotal experiences (Florin, 1998). The kindergarten environment, which encourages these facets of rich communication while also providing simplification and redundancy, may provide adult L2 learners with less stressful communication opportunities than would be found in other L2 community environments. While concessions must be made regarding adults' willingness to take part in kindergarten instruction (e.g., due to fear of being ridiculed by peers or unwillingness to let go of inhibitions), adult learners in the kindergarten classroom could be presented in a role such as classroom assistant or student volunteer (e.g., as part of an internship), so that they feel free to participate and the young native speakers are unaware of the adults' primary purpose for participation.

The Current Study

Manipulation of environment in order to enhance WTC is not an altogether new concept (e.g., Hummel, 2013). For instance, Mady and Arnott (2010) studied the perspectives of 60 youth

participants (Anglophones, Francophones, and bilinguals) from five Canadian provinces on L2 communication as part of a volunteer youth experience. Using pre- and post-questionnaires, the researchers found significant change in the areas of motivation and confidence, resulting in self-reported increased interaction in the L2. The participants cited both deepening friendships and an increased sense of responsibility as two of the most influential factors in their WTC. In addition, Springer and Collins (2008), who studied two university students engaged in L2 communities of practice in the form of both a traditional ESL classroom and as tutors in an intensive high school summer program for at-risk native English speakers, found that the participants self-reported greater conversational ease and listening comprehension over time in the real-world context as opposed to the classroom. However, while providing support for the role of situational context in L2 learning, these studies do not show the effects of such alternative communities of practice as the kindergarten classroom on L2 learners' WTC, as this construct was not specifically isolated in these studies. In addition, both studies relied on participants' self-reports, rather than other measures (such as participant observations), to estimate participants' L2 communicative abilities before and after exposure experiences.

In his study of WTC as a volitional process, MacIntyre (2007) suggested that "future research in SLA should focus on the momentary restraining forces that come into play when a speaker is choosing whether or not to initiate communication" (p. 572). The current study thus explored the introduction of a community environment in which these momentary restraining forces might be reduced or even eliminated. The specific objective was to examine the use of an unconventional learning environment (the kindergarten classroom) in order to show that it can enhance WTC for adult L2 learners through socialization with nonjudgmental native speakers in a foundationally-rich instructional/naturalistic community environment, which might also reveal

how various trait-level personality factors (such as shyness and communicative apprehension) and state-level contextual factors (such as perceived communicative competence and attitude) play a role in L2 learners' WTC. The research question was: Does frequent participation in a kindergarten classroom have positive effects on adult L2 learners' WTC?

Method

Participants

Participants included four female university students who attended the State University College of New York at Plattsburgh (SUNY Plattsburgh) as international students, all majoring in global supply chain management or international business at the time of the study. According to the background questionnaires, all participants were L1 Mandarin Chinese/L2 English speakers with no third language study, had between six and eight years of school exposure to English in China, and had 9–11 months of residency in the United States, a period that marks the first time traveling outside of China for all four students. Based on preadmission IELTS scores and intake assessments in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all students were identified by the university as intermediate-level English speakers, who required additional support from the university in the form of concentrated ESL instruction in order to progress to mainstream English courses primarily comprised of native English speakers.

Two of the four students (Chun and Liling, both pseudonyms) were designated as the target participants placed in the kindergarten classroom. The other two (Min and Xiaojing, also pseudonyms), who were matched as closely as possible to the two target students, were designated as the comparison group. The comparison students completed the same assessments and language use logs to assess WTC in daily, social, and academic contexts, but only the target participants visited the kindergarten classroom and completed visit-related tasks. All participants

attended four university ESL courses in reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar at the time of the study, although the comparison group's courses were one semester beyond the target group's. Liling also attended a 1-credit pronunciation course, while the other three did not. Additional background information about the four students can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Data

	Target students		Comparison students	
	Chun	Liling	Min	Xiaojing
L1	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Age	19	21	22	23
Gender	F	F	F	F
Length of residence (months)	9	9	11	11
English instruction (years)	6	7	8	7
Preadmission listening IELTS score	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5
Preadmission speaking IELTS score	5.5	4.5	5.0	6.0
Percentage of time speaking/listening to English at home (h) and school (s)	10% (h) 90% (s)	10% (h) 90% (s)	5% (h) 80% (s)	5% (h) 95% (s)
Self-rated English comprehensibility (1–9 scale)[b]	4	3	3	3

Note. [a]0% = *never willing to communicate*, 100% = *always willing to communicate*. [b]1= *very easy to understand*, 9 = *very difficult to understand*.

Context

The two target participants joined the kindergarten classroom three days a week for two hours each visit during concentrated English Language Arts (ELA) instruction time, for a total of 30 hours of contact experience. The classroom was composed of 18 five- to six-year-olds, all native speakers of English, but two of the kindergartners were also bilingual, one in English and Turkish and one in English and Spanish. The teacher, who held a Master's degree in Education,

had been employed as a kindergarten teacher in the same district for 21 years, and L2 English students had been part of her classroom for 10 years. However, during the study, there were no kindergarten students in need of ESL services.

The teacher acted as a mentor for many teachers in the school; she was warm, engaging, and her lessons were full of humor, with songs and rhymes being some of her favorite learning tools. For the two hours that the university students were in the classroom, the first 20 minutes were spent on individual arrivals and greetings, as well as morning work (usually ELA worksheets targeting letter recognition, vocabulary, or phonological awareness) that took place at tables of 5–6 students each. The two students were each assigned spots at different tables, and they participated in all activities, with conversations between kindergarteners and the two adult students encouraged throughout the classroom. The next 45 minutes were spent in a variety of whole group activities that took place seated on the carpet, including group greetings, calendar, letter and vocabulary reinforcement, share time, morning story and discussion, music and movement. Throughout these activities, students were encouraged to respond to the teacher's questions, as well as to ask any of their own by raising their hands. There were also multiple opportunities for students to consult briefly with a nearby classmate before responding to a whole group question. On the second of each three-day week of the study, this time was cut short and replaced by 30 minutes of physical education class in the gymnasium, which the two target participants attended with the students (without the classroom teacher).

Following whole group time, kindergarteners were broken into smaller pods of three to four for reading group activities that rotated every 10 minutes. Stations included free (silent or quiet) reading in a book nook, assisted reading with the classroom teacher at a table, weekly vocabulary and letter reinforcement with a teaching assistant at another table, and

comprehension practice with a specialized reading teacher. Both the teaching assistant and the reading teacher were in the classroom solely for this section of the day. The two target participants rotated through these activities as part of separate groups, and they were encouraged to participate and to help the children if they were comfortable enough. At the end of each 2-hour period, the students were brought back together for whole group time at the tables, first for snack time (during which conversation was encouraged) then for a writing activity (during which on-task conversations were encouraged). When it was time for the adult students to leave, the teacher encouraged the kindergartners to say goodbye to their college friends.

Materials and Procedure

The materials included several qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. First, the participants completed a background questionnaire (see Appendix A), which was used to confirm the homogeneity of the two participants, as well as to establish similarity between the target and comparison students. As a measure of self-reported WTC, the four students were asked to complete McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) Willingness to Communicate Scale (Appendix B) both in the week before the kindergarten visits began (Week 1) and in the week after the kindergarten visits ended (Week 5). Responses to 20 situational contexts were given in terms of percentages of time the participant would be willing to communicate in the target language in specific situations (e.g., with a small group of friends, with a stranger, with a significant other) on a scale from 1 to 100. For the purposes of comparison and in order to at least partially eliminate personality as a confounding variable in any possible WTC improvement, all four participants were also asked to complete the same WTC scale pre- and post-study, but with respect to Chinese as their L1, being asked to situate themselves as Chinese speakers in a Chinese-speaking environment. Since self-reports can vary over time due to a

variety of outside influences like mood and motivation, the English- and Chinese-based surveys were completed one after another, so that outside influences might at least be consistent across the two language contexts.

In order to provide some measure of WTC from the researcher's perspective, an observation of primary classroom communication was used, adapted for the kindergarten context from the COLT Observation Technique (Part B) (Spada & Frohlich, 1995). The COLT instrument was reimagined primarily through simplification of categories (see Appendix C). For example, the observation scheme was reduced from 11 categories to seven, as some categories were not relevant to a kindergarten environment (e.g., "reaction to form/message"), and categories for total observation time and total instances of communication were added to estimate the frequency of communication (utterances per minute) for each participant and the average time between utterances. The final observation scheme featured seven categories of context, utterance form, utterance type, catalyst, interlocutor, relevance, and duration. This observation scheme allowed for documenting specific types of interaction, for instance, participant interaction with the teacher and with the young native speakers, interaction between the participants, and percentage of self-initiated utterances versus responses elicited by others. The observations occurred on two occasions: early in the study (Week 1) and at its close (Week 5), with each observation lasting for 60 minutes targeting dyad, small group, and whole group communication during ELA tasks. The classroom activities were similar on both days, with the same amount of time devoted to each activity.

In order to collect the participants' daily reports about communicating in the kindergarten classroom, the two target students were also asked to complete journal entry at the end of each session (for a total of 15 entries). The journal was a minimally guided writing activity that

invited the students to share how it felt to communicate in the classroom using the L2 that particular day, and was adapted from Cao's (2011) journal entry guidelines (see Appendix D). Students were encouraged to report, for example, anxiety and comfort levels, new information acquired, unusual occurrences, and anecdotal examples of the day's activity, both in and out of class. They were also encouraged to elaborate on specific occasions in which they felt like speaking often in the L2 and occasions when they did not. In order to ensure completion, the journal was completed each day before exiting the study site. Although the participants were fully aware of the goals of the study, the purpose of the exit journals was not given.

To supplement the two target students' self-reports about their communicative experiences in the kindergarten classroom, two university instructors (who each had both target participants in at least one of their ESL classes) were interviewed at the end of the study regarding their pre- and post-impressions of the participants' communicative abilities in the university classroom, as well as any noteworthy changes (positive or negative) in their WTC that might have taken place while the study was in progress. Finally, in order to measure all four participants' daily use of English in various contexts (e.g., academic, social/recreational), they completed weekly language activity logs (Appendix E) adapted from Ranta and Meckelborg (2013). The five logs were completed on Friday afternoon of each week of the study.

The study took place over seven weeks; the first week was used for collection of background information and baseline assessment of WTC, the following five weeks were designated for exposure, and the last week was used for reassessment of WTC and the interviews with the two instructors (45 minutes per interview). Both target students were presented to the kindergarten students as classroom volunteers, with no monetary compensation offered. All four students continued to receive traditional ESL instruction (one course each in reading, writing,

vocabulary, and grammar) at the university in addition to their content course load, which included two business courses from the mainstream curriculum.

Data Analysis

Following McCroskey and Richmond (1990), the WTC survey was coded by language use situation; the results were summed by context-type (group, meeting, interpersonal/dyad, and public) and receiver-type (stranger, acquaintance, or friend) subcategories and divided by the number of questions in that category. A total mean WTC score, also following McCroskey and Richmond, was calculated across the stranger, acquaintance, and friend subscores. All sets of scores were independently computed by a second coder producing identical values. McCroskey (1992) reported the internal reliability of the instrument's total score as ranging from .86 to .95, with a modal estimate of .92. Furthermore, the instrument's reliability has been established in almost two decades of WTC research (e.g., Cao, 2011; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003; Roach, 1999).

The real-time observations from Week 1 and Week 5 sessions were coded separately for each of the two target students, with simple percentages calculated for each communicative feature, including context, initiative, interlocutor type, and duration. The weekly language use logs from the target and comparison participants were used to calculate the amount of time (in minutes) that each student spoke English for daily use, social/recreational use, and academic use (both in and out of the university classroom), with all estimates summed to derive the total amount of time spent using English.

In order the code the exit journals, which ranged between 60 and 235 words in length, journal entries were first segmented into comments (usually sentences) as punctuated by the students, even if these sentences were fragments. The comments were also coded by date, and

the total number of comments for each student was recorded. A hierarchical system of coding was used, whereby comments were assigned to two a priori defined broad categories: "related to communication" (e.g., *There is no pressure to talk with children*) or "not related to communication" (e.g., *In draw activity, we draw some animals and write its name in different colors*). Within the communication category, responses were further assigned to the subcategories of "likely to encourage communication" (e.g., *Children are eager to ask me questions*) or "likely to discourage communication" (e.g., *I have sore throat these days and I don't want to talk much*). Finally, of the responses that were coded as "likely to encourage communication," each response was further classified into a subdomain by dimension (adapted from Cao, 2011) as "environmental" (e.g., *When I shared my story to the class, I really find myself participate in*), "individual" (e.g., *I want to help them*), or "linguistic" (e.g., *Communicating in English also practice my listening and speaking*), which were thought to best capture the impact of the kindergarten environment from other variables (for further explanation of the coding dimensions and coder training instructions, see Appendix F). The same coding process was followed to code the instructors' exit interviews, which allowed for a comparison of the two target students' and their instructors' perspectives on students' communicative behaviors.

All journal entries and instructor interviews were first coded by the researcher, who elaborated and refined the coding categories through iterative coding. First, each main clause was coded as either a communication phrase or not a communication phrase. Of the communication-related phrases, each was further coded as related to encouraging communication or inhibiting communication. If a communication phrase was coded as related to encouraging communication, then it was further categorized as either environmental, individual,

or linguistic. Afterward, another coder (a graduate student in applied linguistics with WTC familiarity and prior qualitative coding experience), who received detailed instructions (with examples) on the coding categories, independently coded all journal entries. For the daily journals, Cohen's kappa for intercoder reliability was very high, exceeding the .80 benchmark for definite conclusions (Krippendorf, 1980), for the coding of communicative phrases (κ = .98), communicative impact (κ = .98), and communicative dimension (κ = .91). For instructor interviews, intercoder reliability was also very high for the coding of communicative phrases (κ = .93), communicative impact (κ = .92), and communicative dimensions (κ = .94). All coding disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results

WTC Surveys

The purpose of the first analysis was to capture changes in WTC over the course of the 5-week study. The pre- and post-study scores of English WTC are summarized for all students in Table 2. There was a general trend toward increased WTC in the target language across all four participants, who each showed increases ≥ 2.5% in at least four of the seven categories, although the categories of improvement varied. The largest gains, however, were made by Chun (target group), who showed improvement in three categories ≥ 15% (meetings, strangers, and friends). Min (comparison group) also showed substantial gains in these categories, but the improvement was far less than Chun's. For instance, Chun showed a 50% improvement in the meetings category, while Min showed only 20%. Chun also showed a 45% improvement in the strangers category, while Min showed 27.5%. Chun further outperformed Min in the friends category, with a 15% gain to Min's 6.25%. In total, Chun showed an overall improvement in total WTC of 20%, which is nearly 10% more growth than the next highest change percentage of 10.4% (Min).

Liling (target group) also made gains in five categories, but they were smaller than her target group companion's. She did, however, increase her score in the acquaintances category by 10%, which shows 7.5% greater change than any other participant. The lowest overall improvement in WTC was made by Xiaojing (comparison group), who increased her WTC score by only .83%. Her greatest improvement was shown in the strangers category, in which Chun still outperformed her by 20%.

Table 2

Willingness to Communicate (Using English in an English-Speaking Environment) Survey Results Based on McCroskey and Richmond (1990)

	Target students				Comparison students			
	Chun		Liling		Min		Xiaojing	
WTC score	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Context								
Group	66.67	73.33	70.00	66.67	76.67	81.67	70.00	76.67
Meetings	33.33	83.33	60.00	63.33	53.33	73.33	53.33	53.33
Dyad	56.67	80.00	63.33	70.00	36.33	73.33	70.00	50.00
Public	66.67	66.67	56.67	63.33	63.33	70.00	56.67	73.33
Receiver								
Stranger	25.00	70.00	50.00	47.50	41.25	68.75	30.00	55.00
Acquaintance	77.50	77.50	45.00	55.00	75.00	72.50	75.00	50.00
Friend	65.00	80.00	92.50	95.00	76.25	82.50	82.50	85.00
Total score	55.83	75.83	62.50	65.83	64.17	74.58	62.50	63.33

Percent change	+20.00%	+3.33%	+10.41%	+.83%

Note. Values expressed as percentage of time participant is willing to communicate in each category.

All students also self-reported WTC improvements across the board when the survey was framed as speaking Chinese in an imagined Chinese context (Table 3). In fact, the two target group participants, Chun and Liling, showed growth in all seven categories, with Chun reporting growth of 15.42% in overall WTC, compared to 6.25%, 7.92%, and 6.25% improvement in total WTC for Liling, Min, and Xiaojing, respectively. As with the English WTC, Chun also showed the top two greatest improvements in single categories, with a 43.33% improvement in the meetings and an 18.75% improvement in the friends categories. These results suggest that improvement in L2 WTC might have a spillover effect into language users' (imagined) L1 WTC. To further test this idea, Pearson correlations between WTC scores in English and Chinese were conducted for each participant (within each testing time), producing *r* values with a range of .39 – .99. According to Plonsky and Oswald (2014), these values indicate medium to very large correlations between self-reported WTC in Chinese and English, which further supports the idea of WTC improvement carrying over from the L2 back to the L1.

Table 3

Willingness to Communicate (Using Chinese in a Chinese-Speaking Environment) Survey Results Based on McCroskey and Richmond (1990)

	Target students		Comparison students	
	Chun	Liling	Min	Xiaojing

WTC score	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Context								
Group	66.67	71.67	76.67	80.00	81.67	88.33	76.67	83.33
Meetings	41.67	85.00	66.67	71.67	60.00	78.33	63.33	68.33
Dyad	65.00	73.33	75.00	85.00	73.33	76.67	73.33	73.33
Public	70.00	75.00	61.67	68.33	70.00	73.33	63.33	76.67
Receiver								
Stranger	27.50	52.50	55.00	61.25	53.75	70.00	40.00	61.25
Acquaintance	85.00	87.50	61.25	70.00	78.75	80.00	82.50	76.25
Friend	70.00	88.75	93.75	97.50	81.25	87.50	85.00	88.75
Total score	60.83	76.25	70.00	76.25	71.25	79.17	69.17	75.42
% change	+15.42%		+6.25%		+7.92%		+6.25%	

Note. Values expressed as percentage of time participant is willing to communicate in each category.

Classroom Observations

The second analysis was used to document evidence of any target group students' increases in WTC as observable in the kindergarten classroom. A complete summary of these analyses is provided in Appendix G. Chun began the study with 16 utterances over the course of the hour-long observation in Week 1 and increased to 22 total utterances in Week 5, with the average length of time between utterances reduced from 3.75 minutes to 2.22 minutes. In addition, she increased the amount of sustained utterances (i.e., utterances that consist of at least two main clauses) from 8 sustained utterances in Week 1 to 16 sustained utterances in Week 5. Although Chun interacted with all interlocutors (teacher, children, fellow participant, and whole

group) during the first observation, she was able to increase her full group participation by 17.61% in total utterances, which corresponds with her high meetings score on the WTC survey. In relation to context, small and whole group participation shifted slightly to accommodate a sharp increase in dyad participation, which was nonexistent for Chun in Week 1 and increased to 31.82%, of the total utterances in Week 5.

Liling began the study with 11 utterances over the course of the hour-long observation in Week 1 and increased to 19 total utterances in Week 5. This means that her average length of time between utterances was reduced from 5.45 minutes to 3.16 minutes. In addition, she increased the amount of sustained utterances by 12.44%, from 5 sustained utterances in Week 1 to 11 sustained utterances in Week 5. Like Chun, Liling also increased her full group participation, this time by 18.66% of the total utterances made. Liling also demonstrated changes in contextual use as, like Chun's, her small and whole group participation shifted slightly to accommodate a sharp increase in dyad participation. For Liling, these figures grew from 0% in Week 1 to 36.84% of total utterances in Week 5. While Chun's self-initiated utterances were relatively high to begin with (37.5% or 6 utterances), Liling's self-initiated utterances grew substantially from 9.09% (1 utterance) in Week 1 to 26.32% (5 utterances) in Week 5, which reflects her growing comfort in being willing to start a conversation rather than simply respond.

Language Use Logs

The purpose of the third analysis was to measure weekly L2 use through participant-completed language use logs in order to examine communicative patterns outside the kindergarten classroom. The intent was to see if positive changes in WTC, as self-reported by the participants and as evidenced in kindergarten classroom observations, would carry over into an increase of L2 use in other target language contexts, relative to the language use of the

comparison students. The level of academic use by the four students (shown in Appendix I) was consistent and comparable across the five weeks of the study, with English used in the academic domain on average 24–32 hours by the students, reflecting similar academic workload for all students. The levels of daily use and social/recreational use, however, showed the most change. Of the four students, Chun (target group) showed the greatest gains in daily English use, depicted graphically in Figure 1. She began with the lowest time reported in Week 1 (160 minutes per week) and showed the highest daily English use of 205 minutes in Week 5. This progress is consistent with Chun's self-reported WTC increases on the survey and her observed increases in WTC in the kindergarten classroom. The other target group student, Liling, began with a reported 165 minutes, sustained this level of English daily use for the next three weeks, but ended up using English daily 135 minutes in Week 5 (although she had the flu during Weeks 4 and 5, which could explain the drop in daily use of English during those weeks). By contrast, the comparison group showed no positive change in daily English usage over the five weeks. Comparable to Chun's language use, Xiaojing's usage remained relatively stable across the five weeks, at about 195 minutes per week. Min's daily English usage rose and fell slightly during the five weeks, but never rose above her Week 1 reported usage of 175 minutes. In fact, by Week 5, Min reported her daily English usage at only 130 minutes, a 45-minute decrease from Week 1.

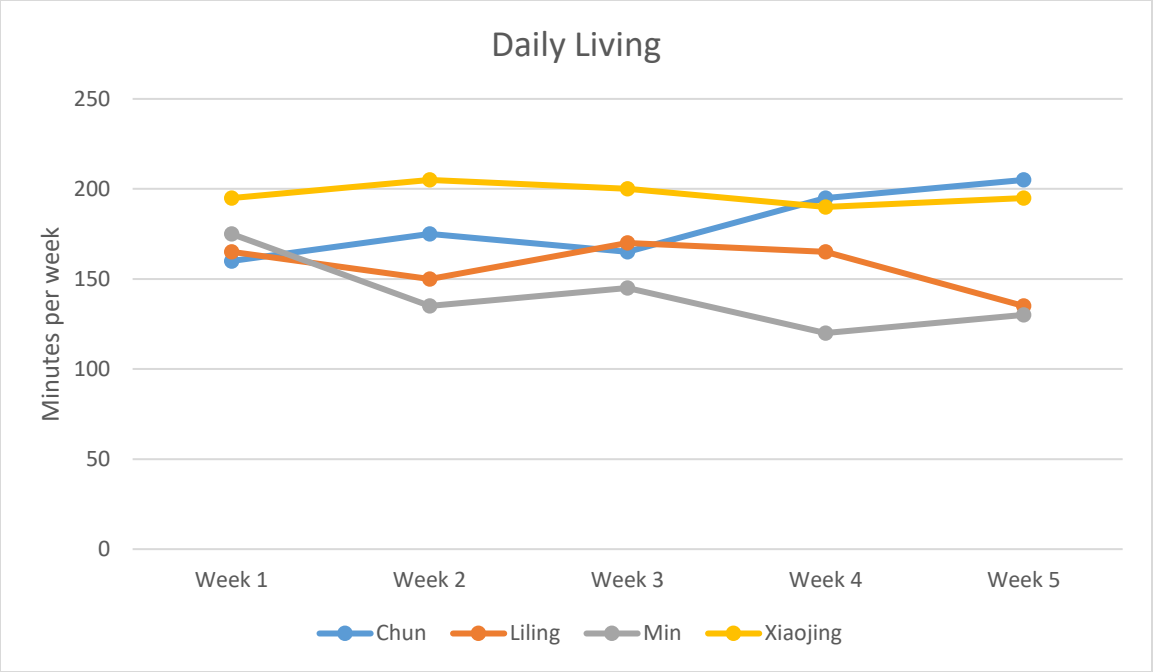

Figure 1. Daily living language use.

The most noteworthy changes in English usage, which were particularly substantial in the target group, occurred in the social/recreational use category (Figure 2). Chun began by reporting her social/recreational English usage at 340 minutes per week in Week 1 and rose steadily to a reported usage of 520 minutes in Week 5. Liling also made large gains in this category; her language use rose steadily from 410 minutes reported in Week 1 to 560 minutes reported in Week 5. Because the kindergarten classroom is largely a social context for the target participants, it is encouraging to see the largest amount of growth *outside* of the classroom to be in the social/recreational use category. These results support the general increase in WTC shown in the target students' WTC surveys, as well as the increased classroom participation seen during the final observation. The comparison group also self-reported gains in social/recreational English use, which would be expected during the first year on a new college campus, but the growth was

not as substantial, with Week 1–Week 5 increase of about 40 minutes for both comparison group participants.

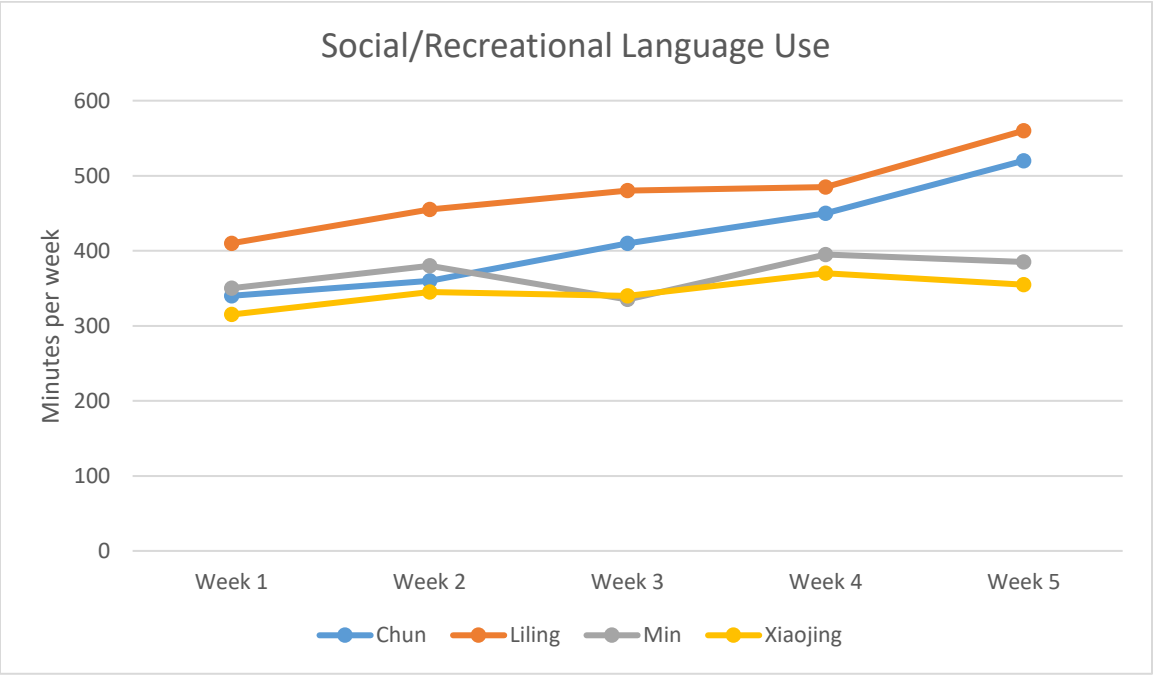

Figure 2. Social and recreational language use.

Participant Perspectives: Daily Exit Journals

The goal of the exit journals was to reach beyond the participants' self-reported general WTC to gather their insight on how it felt to communicate in English in the kindergarten classroom each visit, and what factors of the environment had the most impact on their experience. As summarized in Table 4, Chun made a total of 123 comments, 72 of which were related to communication, 67 positively so, and the majority (82.09%) of those comments were classified as environmental. Chun cited several environmental factors in her positive comments about communication. For instance, in regards to interlocutor she wrote, *I would like to talking with the kids because they are honest* (Week 1), and *I can say more with kids* (Week 2). She

referenced topic with statements like, *There is a activity which is based on pictures to learn words. I think it is a good way to learn and remember words* (Week 4). She also referenced classroom interactional pattern: *American kids have time to enough thinking and speak it loudly without constraint* (Week 5). Based on Chun's comments, the situational context of a kindergarten classroom likely gave her more self-confidence and comfort in communicating.

Liling made fewer comments overall (87 total), 65 of which were related to communication, and 50 of those reflected positive communication experiences. She also attributed the majority of her positive communicative experiences (70%) to several environmental factors. For instance, she cited comfort level with her interlocutors, as in *Communicating with children is easier than adults. Because I feel more relaxed* (Week 1) and *I found communicating with little kids give me the day in a good mood* (Week 3). She also wrote about a positive influence of the classroom interactional pattern: *After two day visiting, I think I integrate into there gradually and children are familiar with me gradually* (Week 2). Liling even noted the positive influence of the teacher: *In the class, teachers focus on children asking questions. Asking questions is important. I think I can improve my English by asking questions. Because asking means you are thinking* (Week 5). In sum, not only did the target participants make many positive comments about their WTC in the classroom, but their comments were largely associated with the situational context; the influence of several different environmental factors (e.g., interlocutor, task, topic, classroom atmosphere) was noted by both participants.

Table 4

Results of Target Participants' Daily Journals

	Chun	Liling

Total communication comments	72 (100%)	65 (100%)
Likely to encourage communication	67 (93.06%)	50 (76.92%)
Environmental	55 (82.09%)	35 (70.00%)
Individual	6 (10.91%)	7 (20.00%)
Linguistic	6 (10.91%)	8 (22.86%)

College Instructor Perspectives: Exit Interviews

The final analysis was conceptualized as a measure of observable changes in WTC in the university classroom, as reported by two of the target participants' instructors, who indicated growth consistent with both self-reported and observable WTC improvements documented throughout the study (see Table 5). Instructor A (*Grammar and Editing*) made 18 comments about Chun related to communication, 72.22% of which had positive association. Instructor B (*Writing: Developing Paragraphs*) made 18 comments about Chun that were related to communication, 38.89% of which were associated with encouraging communication. Although the majority of positive communication comments were classified as identity (e.g., *She wants to learn! She is willing to work hard to do so*), 30.77% of Instructor A's comments were related to environment (*She talked willingly with students in the class from other countries*) as compared to 57.4% of Instructor B's comments. Many of the instructors' comments about Chun's WTC before the study were in reference to her self-confidence and low classroom WTC: *Her lack of confidence with her classmates limited her English in class. At the beginning she did not want to speak in class, but she would speak to me if I was standing next to her desk* (Instructor A). *She showed promise in her writing and critical thinking skills, but she was completely unwilling to engage in oral communication in English* (Instructor B). In fact, Chun's lack of participation was affecting her academic success: *(Chun) did not use any English at the beginning of the semester.*

For example, she was not able to introduce herself to the class on the first day (Instructor B). These comments are consistent with Chun's self-reported WTC in Week 1, although she did use English in the kindergarten classroom when responding to children. At the end of the study, the instructors did notice a change in her WTC: *(Chun) was much more confident and willing to participate in a group with more academically advanced students at the end… By the end she (a first-semester SUNY student) was communicating as well as students in their second or third semesters* (Instructor A). *The main change was that she became more willing to communicate in specific contexts (e.g., answering a question about a reading). She was slightly more intelligible over the course of the semester* (Instructor B). While the smaller changes noticed by Instructor B are inconsistent with self-reported and observed changes seen elsewhere in the study, it's possible that the writing classroom environment was difficult for Chun due to a variety of factors, although this was never mentioned by her.

Both instructors noticed substantial changes in Liling's WTC over the course of the study. Instructor A made 24 comments related to her communication, 87.5% of which were associated with encouraging communication. Of those, 66.67% were connected to environmental factors. Instructor B made 21 comments about Liling related to communication, 76.19% of which were associated with encouraging communication; of those, 56.25% were related to environmental factors. At the beginning of the study, both instructors noted how reluctant Liling was to participate and how self-conscious she was: *She had a harder time speaking in class than any other student*. *She was afraid to speak in a foreign language in front of her peers* (Instructor A). *(Liling) tried to speak, but she was unsure of herself and only spoke when called upon… She was very quiet at the beginning of the semester* (Instructor B). By the end of the study, however, both instructors noticed improvements in Liling's class participation, an increase in comfort level

in certain tasks, and increased dyad participation noting, *She was much more comfortable and at ease with herself. She was clearly enjoying telling everyone about one good thing and one bad thing that happened to her each week. She said she was completely comfortable in the* (kindergarten) *classroom with the little children because they reminded her of home* (Instructor A). *She volunteered to answer questions, and she was even able to provide an explicit description of how she constructed her topic sentence based on the class readings when another student asked her* (Instructor B).

Table 5

Results of Instructors' Interviews

	Chun		Liling	
	Instructor A	Instructor B	Instructor A	Instructor B
Communication comments	18 (78.26%)	18 (100%)	24 (88.89%)	21 (95.45%)
Likely to encourage communication	13 (72.22%)	7 (38.89%)	21 (87.50%)	16 (76.19%)
Environmental	4 (30.77%)	4 (57.14%)	14 (66.67%)	9 (56.25%)
Individual	7 (53.85%)	2 (28.57%)	7 (33.33%)	4 (25.00%)
Linguistic	2 (15.38%)	1 (14.29%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)

Discussion

Although several studies have investigated the importance of communities of practice in L2 acquisition (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009), there are no studies examining the possible benefits of adult L2 speakers working with elementary children in order to improve their WTC. The goal of this study was to investigate whether an unconventional

community of practice (in this case, a kindergarten classroom) could have a positive effect on WTC among adult L2 learners of English. An additional goal was to document possible reasons for such an increase. Pre and post WTC surveys showed that all four L2 speakers (two target students who spent 30 hours in a kindergarten classroom and two comparison students who only continued their university-level ESL studies) improved in their L2 WTC. However, one target student showed the most dramatic growth, as seen in both her self-assessed L2 WTC scores and her language use logs. Moreover, both target students self-reported a positive experience overall, citing several specific factors (i.e., children's friendliness, support from the classroom teacher, entertaining topics) that they believe encouraged them to speak English more often and more confidently both inside and outside kindergarten and university classrooms. Both the classroom observations of the two target students' interactions and the comments made by their university instructors further supported these findings. Not only did the environment of simplified speech, patience, and repetition appeared to have supported WTC among these students when conversing with young native speakers, but this environment also seems to have acted as a confidence builder that carried over into other native speaker environments.

L2 WTC and the Kindergarten Classroom

The instrument used to measure any changes in WTC over the course of the study was the WTC survey (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990), completed with reference to the students' L2 (English) and their L1 (Mandarin Chinese), which was to serve as a baseline. All four participants increased their self-reported WTC in both English and Chinese over the course of the study, although to a different extent. However, the self-reported changes in WTC in English and Chinese were similar within each student (cf. Tables 2 and 3), which implies that perceived speaking confidence in one language likely extends to a speaker's other languages, including

their L1. According to MacIntyre (1994), two dominant variables in WTC, whether in an L1 or an L2, are perceived communicative competence and communication apprehension. Since these qualities are likely present in a speaker's all languages, then it stands to reason that a learner who gains confidence in a low-anxiety environment subsequently reduces their apprehension and may start to see themselves as more competent communicators, especially if their interlocutors are responding positively (MacIntyre et al., 2003). If the primary facets of WTC can spread across languages and, if those are malleable over time, then any improvements in WTC must also carry over from language to language. This would suggest that WTC is indeed a dynamic construct comprised of changeable states (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

With respect to L2 English WTC specifically, it was expected that all four students would show some measure of improvement in English at least, as speaking is a primary component of the university's ESL curriculum. However, Chun (target student) showed substantially more growth in L2 English WTC than the other three students. If this change was due to being in the kindergarten classroom, then why was growth less substantial with Liling (the other target student)? It is likely that personality might have been a contributing factor. Both university instructors noted that Liling was extremely shy, commenting that "she had a harder time speaking in class than any other student" and that "she was completely unwilling to engage in oral communication in English [prior to the study]." Furthermore, Liling also engaged in less interaction inside the kindergarten classroom throughout the study, compared to Chun, as was shown in both the early and late observations (see Appendix G). If WTC is being reimagined as a dynamic, state-level construct, it can be manipulated; however, certain trait-level characteristics (like shyness), which are considered antecedents of WTC, likely cannot (MacIntyre et al., 1999). For instance, several personality variables, like introversion and self-esteem, might limit a

speaker's desire to communicate in the first place. Therefore, a naturally reluctant communicator might not respond as favorably to a welcoming communicative context as someone who is naturally eager to communicate.

It is further possible that the reported changes in the two target students' L2 WTC might be proportional to their engagement in the kindergarten environment. As shown in the early and late study observations, both target students increased the *quantity* of kindergarten participation, in terms of the number of utterances spoken. What is more important, however, was the change in the *quality* of their participation. The students went from mostly speaking in short phrases when the teacher or a child spoke directly to them (e.g., responding to greetings or answering yes/no questions) to self-initiated utterances that became more sustained (containing two or more clauses) and more frequent. Furthermore, the utterance repertoire for both students grew to include frequent communication in dyads, an occurrence that was nearly absent in the early observation, and both willingly supplied whole group choral responses at every opportunity. Of particular note is that Chun showed a 30% increase in clarification requests; for instance, when one of the students shared that she had lost a tooth, Chun responded with *You lost a baby tooth? Which one?* In a kindergarten classroom, it would have been easy to just nod or "play along," but she became comfortable enough to extend communication on several occasions. Liling also showed a 5% increase in clarification requests but, again, she was significantly more reserved than Chun. Furthermore, while any interaction between the two students during the early observation was in Chinese, they interacted only in English in the later observation. To sum up, there were many qualities of the two target students' communication that support an increase in overall WTC, particularly for Chun who fully embraced the kindergarten experience and appeared to have benefitted from it the most.

One area of communication that was not recorded, but was certainly observed, was the change in overall demeanor and body language of the two target students between the early and late observations. During the early observation, both were focused and serious; they sat next to each other with hands in their laps. By the late observation, the two students were smiling and laughing. Several of the children and the classroom teacher gave them hugs when they entered the classroom, and the children were in the students' laps or snuggled against them during whole group instruction when everyone was seated on the carpet. It was clear that both were comfortable and relaxed as recipients of much attention. This level of familiarity and comfort is not to be underestimated as playing a significant role in WTC. For instance, Kang (2005) showed that WTC is a complex construct composed of interactions between situational factors, like task and topic, and psychological factors, like security and excitement (see also de Saint Leger & Storch, 2009). Over time, comfort with the interlocutors and excitement about conversations likely led to the students establishing a new L2 identity as a member of the classroom rather than an outsider, which supports L2 acquisition as a whole. If a learner feels like a member of the L2 community, she becomes invested; she becomes highly motivated to understand the culture and to communicate as effectively as possible with her new acquaintances (Norton, 2000). In fact, as shown in the following sample quotes from exit journals, both students seemed to have associated affection and friendliness of their young interlocutors with the perception of their own confidence and overall well-being, two factors that have been shown to influence WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1999):

- In there, I feel my body is relaxed (Chun, Week 2).
- We develop a deep friendship during the 5 weeks (Chun, Week 5).

- I will miss them and this memory is my best experience at SUNY Plattsburgh (Chun, Week 5).
- I found communicating with little kids give me the day in a good mood (Liling, Week 2).
- After one week's separation, I miss the children so much (Liling, Week 4)!
- I feel more comfortable and confident to talk with children (Liling, Week 5).

What might have been difficult to quantify through the WTC surveys and observations became qualitatively evident in the two target students' journals. Although several questions were given for guidance, the final question invited participants to comment on anything that they felt was worth mentioning about the classroom experience on that particular day. The majority of comments, which fell under the "environment" category—consistent with Cao's (2011) analysis of L2 user journals—suggested a highly positive experience (see Table 4). The students clearly bonded with the new L2 community. Liling, for instance, noted that she was especially eager to communicate with the kindergarteners because she missed her own sister, who was the same age as the kindergarteners at the time of the study. Her study abroad marked the first time she had been away from home. What was especially interesting about some of the comments, beyond the general enjoyment experienced by both students as part of the classroom, was the students' awareness of cross-cultural differences that characterize much of the communication in American culture. The Chinese culture, in particular, is less demonstrative, more formal, with social class and hierarchical authorities playing a more important role than in the American culture (Wen & Clément, 2003). At one point, Chun commented: *Actually, I found that there are a variety of difference between Chinese kids and American kids. They all active*. *American kids have time to enough thinking and speak it loudly without constraint*.

The knowledge that it is more acceptable to speak out and share one's opinion in the L2 community than it is in L2 speakers' native communities could have a positive effect on WTC that extends beyond the kindergarten classroom. In a cross-cultural study of L1 Chinese and L1 English university students in two countries, Lu and Hsu (2008) found that L1 English American students were more willing to communicate in L2 Chinese while studying in China than L1 Chinese students were to communicate in L2 English while studying in America. Several factors contributing to this communication pattern of L1 Chinese students included a lack of oral communication practice in the Chinese EFL classroom and fear of public judgment. Matsuoka and Evans (2005) also argue that the Chinese people's tendency toward (and Chinese society's expectation of) submissiveness can make L1 Chinese speakers less willing to communicate in an L2, compared to learners from other cultures. The L1 Chinese students in this study might have become more willing to communicate once they realized that they were able to communicate without being judged, and that there was no need to be communicatively submissive to five-year-olds. For these reasons, L2 communities of practice that pair adult learners with young native speakers, like the kindergarten experience highlighted in this study, might be especially beneficial for learners from certain L1 backgrounds.

L2 WTC and Patterns of Language Use

The construct of WTC centers on language use in communication, so some of the most useful evidence of changes in the participants' WTC should involve patterns of their language use outside the kindergarten context. As shown through analyses of weekly language use logs (see Figures 1 and 2), the category that showed the most substantial increase for the target students (but not for the comparison students) over the five weeks was social/recreational language use, compared to daily living and academic uses of English. Although the kindergarten

classroom is an academic environment, it does not carry the same weight as a university classroom. Therefore, participation in the kindergarten classroom could largely be seen as a social endeavor. Because the two target students in fact saw the children as "friends," as mentioned in their daily journals, it is not surprising that any improvement in WTC should carry over most prominently to exchanges between friends in other similar social environments.

If WTC is to be seen as a dynamic system, one that can change from context to context, then improvements in WTC due to interlocutor familiarity in one setting might extend to increase WTC between L2 speakers and other language users in similar contexts (MacIntyre, 1994; Kang, 2005). According to De Bot et al. (2007), one of the primary aspects of a dynamic system is its interconnectedness. If the participants in the study grew to associate one social context with an increased desire or motivation to communicate, then it is possible that the positive effect then became connected to other social contexts. This sort of transfer can work both ways, as shown in a study by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) in which high WTC attributed by participants to task familiarity (in this case, involving vocabulary retrieval) often carried over to a feeling of confidence in the next task; conversely, low WTC attributed by participants to task unfamiliarity often remained low in the task that followed. De Bot et al. assert that this interconnectedness is possible for all variables, including those making up the WTC construct, and that there is no limit to how much a system can change, given that contextual factor combinations (task, interlocutor, topic, etc.) are infinite. The comparison group had no known changes in contextual factors, which explains why there was comparatively little growth in social language use.

Additional evidence to suggest that improvements in WTC carried over into the language use domain outside the kindergarten context, including the university ESL classroom, comes from the instructor interviews. Both university instructors noted an improvement in WTC for

both target participants over the course of the study. While Chun was limited in her L2 communication skills before the study, according to the instructor, she became much more comfortable engaging in class discussions and general conversation after the study. As Instructor A noted, Chun "could write her sentences on the board for all to edit and she could offer criticism to any of her classmates with some assurance." Liling, who was reportedly very reserved when the study began, was able to participate more confidently by the end of the study, even engaging in healthy debate. As indicated by Instructor B, "she even kept speaking once when a student tried to interrupt her about a point she was making."

As seen in the participant daily journals, over half of the comments coded as "likely to encourage communication" were further categorized as environmental. This points to the idea that—from both the participants' and the instructors' perspectives—contextual factors such as topic, task type, interlocutor, and classroom interactional patterns are important catalysts for increasing WTC. All of these factors were cited by the participants as positive WTC influences, showing that the kindergarten classroom is an innovative adult language learning environment in which these factors were successfully manipulated. Improved WTC as a result of a welcoming language learning environment is consistent with the findings of Peng and Woodrow (2010), who found that an engaging classroom had a positive influence on WTC for L1 Chinese learners of English. This result is also consistent with Clément's (1980) social context model, which proposes that frequent, enjoyable L2 group contact can lead to increased communicative competence, which Dörnyei (2010) identifies as a key factor in WTC.

Pedagogical Implications

Findings from this study point to the benefits of communities of practice beyond a typical language classroom for adult learners. Of course, L2 classroom instruction is important as it

represents a crucial and often the only source of language input for many L2 learners. But the classroom walls are limited in the amount of input which can be provided to learners and the type of practice available to them. If a classroom can provide high levels of target language exposure, then a high level of L2 proficiency is possible (Housen, 2012). But in some cases, where students' L2 exposure is limited or where students are unlikely to socialize in the L2 outside the classroom environment, it would be important for language programs to supplement the instruction of L2 learners with community service. Not only would such a partnership create a positive connection between individual students and the community, but it would also provide a service for the community, with clear benefits for the L2 learner.

In this study, the two target students became volunteers in the kindergarten classroom, and the children's parents and educators saw these students as a way of providing additional cultural and educational experience to the kindergarteners. In exchange, the students were given a welcoming, rich instructional environment in which to practice and grow as L2 users. Target language community service, internships, and volunteerism could all be linked to university ESL programs, perhaps even for credit. Furthermore, while several prior studies have shown the efficacy of unconventional L2 communities of practice in increasing WTC, like programs that matched L1 and L2 conversation partners through online media (Iiono & Yabuta, 2015), placed ESL students as community volunteers in senior centers and libraries (Hummel, 2013), and paired university L2 learners with native-speaking high school students (Springer & Collins, 2008), this is the first study to explore child-adult interaction of native-speaking kindergarteners with adult L2 learners at a high level of exposure (6 hours per week), and all within an environment full of foundational learning support. Not only did the kindergarten interlocutors encourage the L2 adults to communicate, but the classroom itself provided a safe space for target

language practice, complete with easy language tasks that the learners found to be enjoyable. In some cases, the L2 learners even forgot that they were at a communicative disadvantage and self-reported that they began to help kindergarteners during instructional time, becoming teachers of the target language themselves.

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations to this study that, if addressed, could unlock even more insight into the role of various communities of practice in the enhancement of L2 WTC. The first limitation pertains to the small sample size of only two target participants. In order for results to be relevant to broader groups of learners, much larger experimental and control groups should be studied. In addition, the participant pool could be expanded to include adults of multiple proficiency levels, both genders, varying L1s, differing lengths of residency, as well as different motivational, affective, and personality profiles, which would allow for minimizing the impact of confounding variables or for investigating the impact of these variables systematically. Of these, it is possible that gender and personality played the largest role in this study. Children are naturally drawn to friendly people and, with so many female role models in their lives (e.g., mothers, teachers), it is possible that the children were more open with the study participants than they would have been with male volunteers (although this was not the case with the male student who inspired the study). On the other hand, particularly shy participants (like Liling) might show less improvement in WTC because they might limit their communication and participation in the kindergarten classroom.

The second major limitation was time spent in the classroom (30 hours). If positive changes in the participants' WTC emerged through analyses of several data collection tools (observations, self-reports, instructor interviews), the community of practice impact on WTC

could potentially increase with more time spent in the classroom or could perhaps plateau and be resistant to change, which are the issues that must be investigated further through longer-term longitudinal studies. In addition, most of the data were supplied through self-report. It would therefore be advantageous to include additional measures of WTC, perhaps through appropriately spaced observations that took place in the kindergarten classroom, in the university classroom, and in a social setting.

Conclusion

The current study addressed an important gap in WTC literature, investigating the effect of unconventional communities of practice on L2 WTC. While the idea of getting L2 learners to use the target language outside the classroom walls is not new (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mady & Arnott, 2010; Thorne et al., 2009), investigating unconventional opportunities, like volunteerism within the L2 community, is still largely unexplored. This study provided initial information about the possibilities for WTC enhancement through new communities of practice, and its findings support the idea that WTC can be successfully improved through pedagogically engineered environments, particularly when those environments involve taking L2 learners outside of the language classroom and into the L2 community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Thorne et al., 2009). Kindergarten is likely a naturally safe space for most adult L2 learners. Young children are used to language errors among their classmates because *everyone* is learning the language to some extent and, due to the nature of a typical five-year-old's limited vocabulary, speech is inherently simplified. The warmth and affection that emanates from most children can also help to create a safe communication space for adult learners.

At the very least, the kindergarten classroom should be more thoroughly explored as a secondary community of practice for L2 learning. But are there other such spaces? Could senior

centers, afterschool programs, and even long-term medical care facilities, for instance, also be investigated as unconventional communities of practice? The key might be in locating contexts where interlocutors enjoy talking in a relaxed, low-stress environment and are appreciative of the L2 learners' company to the extent that high-level L2 skills are not required or even expected. Such environments might offer invaluable opportunities for L2 learners to practice language in a high-comfort, low-stress environment and for their interlocutors to enjoy the multiple benefits of interacting with individuals from other cultures.

Chapter 3

Results from the current study suggest that communities of practice, especially those that foster community involvement, can be key catalysts for WTC improvement among L2 learners. While the kindergarten classroom is an atypical community of practice for adult L2 learning, it proved to be effective in increasing WTC not only in the immediate study context but also in the participants' academic and social environments. These findings are consistent with the recent reimagining of WTC as a multi-layered, dynamic construct, beginning with MacIntyre et al. (1998). This reinterpretation emphasizes the role of contextual factors in shaping WTC, which were also the primary focus of the current study. The more comfortable L2 learners become with their environment, interlocutors, tasks, topics, and so on, the more inclined they are to communicate (Kang, 2005).

While face to face interaction in a low-stress communicative environment was a key component of the current study, other options for increasing L2 WTC through context manipulation have also been effective. In the absence of L2 speaking opportunities outside of the classroom, many institutions, particularly in foreign language contexts, have sought to enhance WTC from within. Munezane (2013), for instance, investigated the impact of cultivating the ideal L2 self—a concept which Higgins (1987, p. 320) defined as "your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you, ideally to possess"—as part of classroom instruction for Japanese EFL learners. She found that learners' ideal L2 self was a primary factor in predicting their WTC. The study was motivated by Dörnyei's idea that "L2 WTC is the resultant of the interplay of linguistic self-confidence and the ideal L2 self" (2010, p. 210). If the L2 learner cannot physically be in the L2 community, then imagining a potential community and one's role in this community (e.g., as a highly proficient L2 speaker or a

competent speaker who still retains an L1 accent, for instance) is a valuable substitute. The ideal L2 self concept, so defined, was likely relevant to the target situational context of this study, where Chun and Liling began to see themselves as integral members of the kindergarten classroom, even teachers of the L2 to the children (as reported in daily journals), which in turn encouraged their WTC.

Additional research has also shown the classroom environment as a whole to have a significant effect on L2 WTC, as was the case in Peng's (2012) longitudinal study of four Chinese EFL students. The predominant environmental factor believed to enhance the students' WTC was the overall mood or atmosphere of the classroom, as shared in interviews. Many of the EFL students also attributed increased WTC to a combined effect of multiple variables, including an upbeat classroom mood, interest in the topic being discussed, and ability to confidently participate in the discussion. These findings are consistent not only with the idea of WTC as an ever-changing, complex system, but also with the findings of the current study, in which participants reported not only environmental factors, such as an eager interlocutor or an interesting task, but also linguistic and identity factors (like knowledge of pronunciation and perceived communicative competence) as WTC stimulators.

Although the classroom environment can sometimes be engineered toward enhancement of WTC, there are limitations to this practice. Just as engaging interlocutors, interesting topics, and a comfortable learning atmosphere can lead to enhanced WTC, judgmental interlocutors, dull topics, and a tense learning atmosphere can inhibit WTC and, unless a teacher has been allowed to hand-pick their students, these factors are not always easy to manage in a classroom environment. While a teacher can try to present interesting topics, it is much more difficult to control how students interact with each other. An example of this can be seen in Lee and Sung's

(2014) study of 50 Korean EFL university students, who reported that negative peer pressure and low self-perceived L2 proficiency, as compared to their classmates, contributed to a decrease in students' WTC. The two target participants of this study, Chun and Liling, were also thought to be intimidated by their classmates (as observed by their university instructors), but as their confidence grew in the low-pressure environment of the kindergarten classroom, so too did their WTC in the university setting.

Another limitation of the classroom for enhancing WTC is the presence of friends with a common L1, as is the case in most EFL classrooms. Instructors, in fact, might have to make an additional effort to pair or group students of differing L1 backgrounds in the classroom, so that the temptation to revert to the L1 does not hinder L2 WTC. Students have even self-reported a desire to be required to work with students of different L1 backgrounds, as was shown in Zhong's (2013) study of Chinese ESL students in a New Zealand language school. The use of L1 to communicate did not appear to be an issue in the current study. While Chun and Liling shared the same L1, they were observed using strictly the target language in their classroom conversation with the children, the classroom teacher, and even each other. In fact, one of the benefits of the study was that exposure to an L2 community beyond what can be found at the university made it easier to limit exposure to other L1 speakers. There simply were no other Chinese speakers in the elementary school, whereas the university has a large body of L1 Chinese students, many of whom shared classes with the participants.

Although this study described a novel community of practice for L2 learning, the idea of targeting WTC through opportunities for engagement inside the classroom and through different types of exposure to the L2 community outside the classroom is not new. Study abroad programs, for instance, provide an opportunity for students to become immersed in an L2

community. There are well-established benefits of this practice for WTC, as demonstrated by Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008), who showed that those Japanese high school students who spent one year abroad in an English-speaking country had a higher level of WTC than their schoolmates, who had received only EFL instruction. Although WTC was measured exclusively through self-report, data analysis incorporated both a WTC survey and a communication frequency questionnaire. In addition, the students maintained their WTC advantage for 2.5 years following the study abroad experience. Likewise, D'Amico (2012) found a significant increase in long-term WTC for even short-term study abroad students (this time with L1 English students studying in Spain) over at-home immersion students, as indicated by self-report questionnaires.

While the study abroad context shows promise for enhancing WTC, particularly over long periods of time, it is not without its limitations. In some cases, the culture shock of study abroad immersion can be problematic, as was the case in Gallagher's (2013) study of 104 Chinese students attending a British university. He found that students with high proficiency showed no decrease in WTC, but students who were considered to have low proficiency prior to the study abroad experience (which included most of the students) reported frustration in communicating outside of the L2 classroom, causing them to feel more socially isolated, thereby lowering their WTC. Interestingly, having access to a large group of students speaking the same L1 might be problematic, at least for some study abroad L2 learners. Results from Tanaka (2007) showed that the Japanese students studying abroad in an English-speaking country often had minimal communicative contact with L2 speakers, including their host family, and instead choose to communicate with students of the shared L1. This might have been a problem for the participants in the current study, had it not been for the opportunity to engage in the target language in the kindergarten classroom. Chun and Liling were students studying abroad as part

of a 5,000+ campus population of primarily L1 English speakers, but Chinese students still made up close to 4% of that population, giving the students ample opportunity to communicate in Chinese outside of the university classroom if they so chose. In this study, moving beyond the university campus into another L2 community environment proved to be more beneficial for increasing WTC than the campus-only exposure of the comparison participants.

It is clear from previous research that there are effective methods for improving WTC both inside and outside of the classroom, but the findings of the current study suggested that there are many other opportunities for L2 engagement that have yet to be explored. It is possible that these under-explored contexts, including the kindergarten environment, may in fact be more beneficial for enhancing WTC than "traditional" contexts (such as study abroad programs and classroom engagement targeting learners' imagined communities) as presented through evidence of Chun's and Liling's WTC improvement. Conceptualized within empirical work targeting the role of various L2 environments in enhancing learners' L2 WTC (Mady & Arnott, 2010; Springer & Collins, 2008), the results of this study motivate further research into unconventional communities of practice, their role in enhancing WTC, and improving L2 skills.

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Appendix A

Language Background Questionnaire

Participant # _____

1. Gender M F
2. What is your age? _____
3. How old were you when you arrived in this country? _____ (years)
4. What was your date of arrival in the United States? (MM/DD/YY)

   _____
5. Is your hearing okay, as far as you know? YES NO
6. What is your first language (i.e., your mother tongue)?

   _____
7. What languages were commonly spoken in your home when you were growing up?

   _____
8. Other languages you speak fluently:

   _____
9. Have you studied any other language besides English? YES NO
10. If yes, which languages and for how long?

    _____
11. At what age did you begin to study English?

    _____
12. How long did you study English before coming to this country (in years)?

    _____

13. List any countries you have lived in for more than six months:

_____

14. In what term did you start your studies at SUNY Plattsburgh (e.g., Fall 2014)?

_____

15. What is your degree program (e.g., history, engineering)?

_____

16. Have you taken any ESL classes since you arrived?

_____

Which ones? _____

17. Which ESL classes are you *currently* taking?

_____

Please rate how well you speak, listen to, read, and write **English** by using the scales in the box below.

1 = extremely poor 9 = extremely fluent

Speaking	**Listening**	**Reading**	**Writing**
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

18. Please rate how easy you think your English speech is to understand:

1= very easy to understand 9= very difficult to understand

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

19. What percentage of time do you spend speaking/listening to English in Plattsburgh (e.g., 30%)?

    a. at home: _____

    b. at school: _____

    c. at work (if applicable): _____

    d. overall: _____

Appendix B

Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990)

Directions: Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. 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 of the item what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. (0 = Never to 100 =Always)

_____1. Talk with a service station attendant.

_____2. Talk with a physician.

_____3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.

_____4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.

_____5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.

_____6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.

_____7. Talk with a police officer.

_____8. Talk in a small group of strangers.

_____9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.

_____10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.

_____11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.

_____12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.

_____13. Talk with a secretary.

_____14. Present a talk to a group of friends.

_____15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.

_____16. Talk with a garbage collector.

_____17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.

_____18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend).

_____19. Talk in a small group of friends.

_____20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

Appendix C
Observation Instrument

OBSERVATION OF PRIMARY CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION
Adapted from COLT Observation Scheme B (Spada & Frohlich, 1995)

Participant #: _____ Sheet #: _____ of _____

Date: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

Observation Location: _____

Observer: _____

Utterance #	**Observation of Target Language Use** (*Note time, task, and topic)	**Context** Dyad (D) Small Group (SG) Whole Group (WG)?	**Utterance Form** Choral (C) Individual (I)	**Utterance Type** Simple resp. (SR) Expansion (E) Clar. Req. (CR) Gen. Comment (G)	**Utterance Catalyst** Initiation (I) Reaction (RE) or Response (RS)?	**Interlocutor** Teacher (T) K Student (KS) Fellow Participant (FP) Full Group (FG)	**Relevance to Conversation** On Task (OT) or Off Task (FT)?	**Duration** Minimal (M) or Sustained (S)?
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

Also note: Total observation time (in minutes) _____
divided by total instances of communication _____
= total instances of communication per minute _____ (figure for each column)

Appendix D

Guided Journal Entry (adapted from Cao, 2011)

Think of the classroom session you just attended:

In one of the class activities, I really felt like talking because…

In that activity we (describe the activity…

I was doing that activity with (person/people…

I didn't quite feel like talking in some activities because…

Here are my general thoughts on communicating in English today in the kindergarten classroom:

Appendix E: Weekly Language Use Log

Name		English use/exposure		1 - a little of the language I used/heard/read
Date				2 - some of the language I used/heard/read
				3 - most of the language I used/heard/read
				4 - all of the language I used/heard/read
Category	***Sub-category***			
Daily Living		Use/Exposure (1-4)		Time spent using/hearing/reading English
	a. appointments			
	b. paperwork			
	c. running errands/shopping			
	d. chores and daily tasks			
	e. thinking			
	f. transportation			
Social Interaction				
	a. attending a meeting			
	b. Skype, Facetime, or other electronic chat			
	c. general face-to-face conversation			
	d. personal face-to-face conversation			
	e. face-to-face discussion			
	f. meeting with academic advisor/professor			
	g. online messaging			
	h. reading/writing email			
	i. reading/writing formal correspondence			
	j. reading/writing personal correspondence			
	k. telephone conversation			
Recreation				
	a. attending a party			
	b. eating at restaurant or someone's house			
	c. exercising/sports			
	d. going on a trip			
	e. going to a dance or nightclub			
	f. hobby			
	g. personal writing			
	h. playing computer games			
	i. reading comics			
	j. reading fiction			
	k. reading non-fiction			
	l. surfing the Web/computing			
Academic Work				
	a. borrowing resources from the library			
	b. collecting data/doing an experiment			
	c. computing			
	d. doing language log			
	e. face-to-face discussion			
	f. listening to a presentation/lecture			
	g. making a presentation			
	h. photocopying			
	i. preparing for a presentation			
	j. reading an academic article/text			
	k. reading instructions			
	l. solving problems			
	m. studying for an exam/test			
	n. surfing the Web/library searches			
	o. telephone conversation			
	p. thinking (analyzing, problem solving, planning)			
	q. writing a memo/report			
	r. writing an assignment or paper			
	s. helping other students			
Attending class				
	a. collecting data/doing an experiment			
	b. computing			
	c. face-to-face discussion			
	d. listening to a presentation/lecture			
	e. making a presentation			
	f. reading academic article/text			
	g. reading instructions			
	h. solving problems			
	i. surfing the Web/Library searches			
	j. taking notes			
	k. thinking			
	l. writing a memo/report			
	m. writing an assignment or a paper			
	n. writing an exam			
	m. watching TV/movie			

Appendix F

Coding Instructions for Daily Journal Excerpts and Instructor Interview Excerpts

**Only the responses (written in black font) need to be coded. Questions and question starters (written in blue font) are included on the spreadsheet only for contextual reference.*

1. **Communicative phrase**

   PHRASE DIRECTLY REFERENCES COMMUNICATION? (Y) OR (N)

   Answer yes if the conversational section (question starter and answer inclusive) includes key words like "talk," "communicate," "speak," etc., or clearly references oral communication in the context of the question asked.

2. **Communicative impact**

   LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION (EC) OR LIKELY TO INHIBIT COMMUNICATION (IC)?

   Coding for this category will rely on your knowledge of second language communication in order to judge whether you think the comment refers to something that is likely to encourage communication (or contribute to an encouraging communicative environment) or inhibit communication. If you can't decide or feel as though the question doesn't apply, please put an X in the entry box.

3. **Dimension**

   ENVIRONMENTAL (E), INDIVIDUAL (I), OR LINGUISTIC (L)

   Please decide which dimension of willingness to communicate is the best match for both the content and context of each excerpt (as defined in Cao, 2011):

   Environmental- relates to topic, task type, interlocutor, teacher, or class interactional pattern

Individual- relates to personal characteristics; psychological and affective factors possessed by each individual that influences WTC: perceived opportunity to communicate, self-confidence, personality, emotion

Linguistic-relates to actual and perceived ability to communicate in the L2 effectively, as well as an intention to switch back to the L1 to sustain communication; factors include L2 language proficiency and reliance on L1

***Note**:* If more the excerpt seems to fit more than one category, please choose the category that you feel is the best match.

Appendix G

Results of 60-minute Adapted COLT Observation

(calculations based on Spada & Frohlich, 1995)

	Chun		**Liling**	
	Week 1	Week 5	Week 1	Week 5
Context	25.00% small group	18.18% small group	18.18% small group	05.26% small group
	75.00% whole group	50.00% whole group	81.81% whole group	57.89% whole group
	00.00% dyad	31.82% dyad	00.00% dyad	36.84% dyad
Interlocutor	12.50% teacher	18.18% teacher	18.18% teacher	26.32% teacher
	56.25% K student	45.45% K student	63.63% K student	31.58% K student
	06.25% P2	00.00% P2	00.00% P1	05.26% P1
	18.75% full group	36.36% full group	18.18% full group	36.84% full group
Duration	50.00% minimal	27.27% minimal	54.54% minimal	42.10% minimal
	50.00% sustained	72.72% sustained	45.45% sustained	57.89% sustained
% initiated by P	37.50%	31.82%	09.09%	26.32%
Total utterances	16	22	11	19
Avg. time btw. utterances	3.75 minutes	2.73 minutes	5.45 minutes	3.16 minutes

Note. Shown as percentages of overall utterances, L2 use only

Appendix H

Language Use Log Results

Weekly language use in minutes for target participants

	Chun					Liling				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Daily Living	160	175	165	195	205	165	150	170	165	135
Social/Recreational	340	360	410	450	520	410	455	480	485	560
Academic	1500	1525	1456	1550	1590	1605	1630	1625	1635	1685

Weekly language use in minutes for comparison participants

	Min					Xiaojing				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Daily Living	175	135	145	120	130	195	205	200	190	195
Social/Recreational	350	380	335	395	385	315	345	340	370	355
Academic	1885	1900	1800	1915	1885	1905	1885	1920	1905	1915

Appendix I

Academic Language Use Patterns