

Citation

Kubo, M. (2007). Examining self-confidence variables: An action research inquiry into pair taping (PT) efficacy. *Accents Asia* [Online], 1 (3), 42-62. Available: <http://www.accentsasia.org/1-3/kubo.pdf>

Examining Self-Confidence Variables: An Action Research Inquiry Into Pair Taping (PT) Efficacy

By Michael F. Kubo

Education in and out of the classroom and across the lifespan.
-- Teachers College motto

Introduction

Stevick (1980) claimed that second language (L2) learning success depends more on “what goes on inside and between people in the classroom” (p.4) than on “materials, techniques and linguistic analyses” (p.4.). Paying due respect to Stevick, his belief speaks volumes for my humanistic bent on the ideal L2 classroom, but says little for the “materials, techniques and linguistic analyses” that constitute the impetus for writing this paper. That said, Stevick’s belief challenges but does not diminish my conviction that what goes on *outside* the classroom can have an equally profound and positive social psychological affect on learners. Encouraged by Kluge and Taylor’s (1998) article on outside pair taping (henceforth also referred to as PT) I developed a similar system designed to give my college conversation students more opportunities to speak English outside of the classroom, with the belief doing so would increase their sense of self-confidence, something I felt most of them lacked. My concern over this deficit led to my inquiry into the research on pair taping and self-confidence (Kubo, 2006).

It is no accident that pair taping research was initiated in Japan; in fact, all the



work done in PT has come from EFL teacher-researchers working in Japan, a predominantly mono-cultural society where opportunities for college students to speak English are rare (Norris, 1993, Gilfert & Croker, 1999, Norris-Holt, 2001, Yashima, 2002). It's little wonder, therefore, all work done on PT stemmed from a common rationale: to get students to speak more (Schneider, 1993, 1997, 2001, Washburn & Christianson, 1996, Kluge & Taylor, 1998, 2000). And in that vein, all work done on PT is, therefore, relevant to my own, for I too teach in Japan and implement PT for essentially the same reason. And the overwhelming evidence suggests that PT has met teacher-researchers' mutual objective. PT has become an indispensable aspect of my teaching as well. However, in the interest of contributing something new and insightful to the body of PT research, I am compelled to find a niche.

I have been using pair taping with my students for over six years and have followed the research agenda closely, gathering references as well as data for my own research. Schneider (2001), the originator of pair taping, recently published an article, identifying the motivational attributes he associates with pair taping, including confidence. Schneider, appealing to both student and teacher, stated "Being motivated to continue studying speaking English is especially important for those in their last conversation course" (p.13). Schneider's sentiment resonates with my own. As a college EFL conversation teacher, my goal is to help students develop a sense of self-confidence that will allow them to continue learning on their own, long after graduation day. I feel Schneider (2001), having tackled such a "complex phenomenon" (Lightbrown & Spada, 1993, p.40, referring to motivation), may have overlooked some of the more subtle though salient aspects of self-confidence. While I hesitate to say this paper is written in response to Schneider's (2001) study, considering its expansive scope, I will say that self-confidence in its own regard deserves to be examined in an even broader scope, possibly independent of all other motivational components. More precisely, I choose to respond to Schneider's article with regard to PT and resultant self-confidence only. I argue that students who practice regular, extensive, pair taping experience a greater sense of self-confidence, both "state" and "trait" (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p.547), a distinction Schneider did not make in his most recent study. Due to the fact "little empirical work exists on variations in L2 self-confidence" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p.547),



I review the social psychological assumptions underlying the work done in L2 self-confidence within the frameworks of more encompassing bodies of research, such as motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC), particularly studies that recognize the state/trait distinction within self-confidence and those specific to the Japanese EFL context. In assessing the efficacy of PT in terms of self-confidence building, I turn to the major empirical studies on motivation and WTC done by individual researchers (e.g., MacIntyre, 1994, Clément, 1985, Yashima 2002) and research groups (e.g., Clément & Kruidenier, 1985, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994, and MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004) to support my assumptions. I also discuss how these major findings helped in both the formulation of my MA project research question and theoretical grounding of my study. My research question is: Do students who practice regular, extensive, pair taping report gains in both state and trait self-confidence? The question specific to this paper is, however: Have I found my niche? In other words, does this present inquiry warrant a more in-depth inquiry?

The remainder of this paper is organized into two sections: review and discussion/conclusion. In the review section, I offer a brief explanation and history of the pair taping method, including its L2 educational significance. The literatures of both PT and major studies are divided into two subsections. In the first subsection, I briefly define the methodologies of three PT systems and summarize the action-research studies done on their use, highlighting relevances to motivation or components thereof. In the second subsection, I provide an overview of the major empirical studies involving L2 self-confidence. Throughout each subsection of the review, I credit influential elements each study has had on my PT methodology and theory. Likewise, I make references to the points I differ, offering anecdotal illustrations to support my views. Later, in the discussion and conclusion, I further debate the consistencies as well as discrepancies common to both bodies of literature and address these matters in relation to my research inquiry by summarizing, to some degree, the most salient findings based on the literature reviewed, points considered and/or implemented, and research I have conducted.

Review

The first article to be published on a pair taping titled *Developing Fluency with Pair*



Taping was written by Peter Schneider (1993). Addressing the problem of large enrollment in oral communication classes in Japanese colleges, Schneider proposed a practical system to deal with the problem. Schneider gave his students the option of making frequent audio recordings in pairs outside of the classroom and over an academic year instead of attending weekly conversation class, thus giving independent learners an attractive, autonomous option to classroom learning and more classroom contact for more dependent learners. Subsequently, roughly half of his students elected to pair tape. While modestly claiming his study preliminary, Schneider reported impressive and promising results derived from qualitative and quantitative measures. Having measured fluency (in speaking), enjoyment of English (in general), ease of speaking English, and feelings of English speaking improvement, Schneider's PT students reported higher overall gains in these categories when compared with those reported by his regular students. PT students also considered the technique extremely useful. Interestingly, the listening comprehension of PT students improved equal to that of the classroom learners, suggesting it is not necessarily advantageous for learners to be exposed to native speaker input in order to improve listening comprehension.

Since Schneider's initial study, seven additional papers on PT have been published to date, including a literary review of PT research to date (Kubo, 2006). However, for this paper, I review the literature less in terms of methodologies employed, underlining instead, the insight they each lend to my present inquiry.

Pair Taping Studies

It appears Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) in-depth article on motivation inspired Schneider (1993) to develop his pair taping method with the rationale of providing more opportunities for his students to speak English. Crooks and Schmidt (1991) wrote "the possibility often exists for SL learning to continue beyond the classroom" (p.494), suggesting that learners in EFL countries (such as Japan) can practice speaking English with each other outside of the classroom. In developing PT, Schneider simply applied an inventive methodology to Crooks and Schmidt's speculations. Schneider's rationale also included the need to boost his students' speaking fluency, something he believed frequent speaking opportunities would yield. In fact, he suggests the success of PT "may be due



to the efficacy of learning something in multiple short periods, and to students being relaxed, confident and motivated when studying on their own” (p.55), suggesting students learned to speak fluently as a result of the autonomous nature of pair taping. Giving legitimacy to this claim, Schneider cited the work of Dickinson: “Students involved in self-instruction tend to be more confident and less inhibited...” (Dickinson 1987, pp.24-25, quoted in Schneider, 1993, p.60) adding that his PT learners “became perceptibly more open and confident about speaking” (p.60). The results of Schneider’s year-end questionnaire revealed students’ positive feelings about the method. 25 out of 26 pair tapers reported enjoying English more and found it easier to speak, suggesting a possible confidence-building attribute associated with the method, one which his more recent studies shed light on. Schneider concluded his article by claiming that his method “utilizes self-directed learning with its power to motivate, and helps to activate passively learned knowledge by giving increased chances to speak” (p.61).

Washburn and Christianson (1996) initiated a pair taping method with the primary aim of giving students conversation “strategies” they could use to manage communication breakdowns, failures in communication marked by long pauses which, in turn, disjointed fluency. Washburn and Christianson claim that by having students read transcriptions of actual student conversations in which effective speaking strategies were used, gave learners a “much-needed boost of self-confidence” (p.9). The conversations were transcribed verbatim, mistakes and all, to reflect the teachers’ value of meaning over form. Washburn and Christianson felt by doing this, they would not only inspire students to push their abilities to the point of breakdown, but equip them with the strategies to overcome them. The teachers felt that the autonomous nature of their method helped students develop their confidence, comparing L2 free conversation to the game of tennis, stating “learners play with learners; using conversation strategies, they are able to return serves and control the tempo of the game. In this way, they build up confidence to play with those on the next level.” (p.9).

I am fond of the analogies used by researchers, because by doing so invites others to engage in friendly volleys with the research agenda. And the way I respond to Washburn and Christianson’s comparison is to contemplate the various forms of tennis when discussing confidence. As a recreational player of tennis, having learned on the



hard courts at a public park in my hometown in California, I felt pretty confident about my game. It wasn't until I came to Japan that I stepped on my first sand court. I recall thinking "I'm going to slip and break my neck." The point that I lost all games that day is irrelevant (mainly because I rarely ever win!), but how I felt perhaps is. I felt less than confident playing on unfamiliar ground. I've since gotten used to playing on sand courts, but should I ever play on, say, a grass or clay court, I may experience that certain anxiety yet again. With respect to the L2 speaking confidence connection often made in relation to pair taping, I have my reservations. While the tennis analogy helps illustrate the confidence students may gain by "playing" with other (sometimes better) "players", the picture is less clear should the playing ground itself change. Giving socio-psychological terms *state* and *trait* self-confidences a tennis spin: *state self-confidence* is the kind of confidence I felt on the hard courts of California, whereas *trait self-confidence* is the type of confidence felt by, say, Martina Navratilova, undoubtedly a person with experience playing on every type of court imaginable. What this distinction means to my research on self-confidence in L2 speaking is that I must umpire the finer points of the game, and to recognize that the playing conditions can vary greatly.

Schneider (1997), in a continued effort to strengthen the theoretical foundation for his method, considered the prime motivators for language learning as defined by Dörnyei (1994) and Crooks and Schmidt (1991) in relation to his method, arguing PT students can gain self-confidence regarding their English, can discover the relevance of studying English, and can experience "increased satisfaction from studying it" (p.1). The short paper Schneider published in 1997 basically reiterated the points made previously (cf. Schneider, 1993), but served as a precursor to a very ambitious, in-depth study of PT and motivation which I will review at length later in this section.

A teacher-researcher pair contributed greatly to the PT research agenda and, as I mentioned in the introduction, their work inspired me to become involved in PT action-research. Inspired by the work of Schneider (1993), Kluge and Taylor (1998) were attracted to the autonomous element their mentor's method inherently possessed, and developed a similar system boasting an even greater self-governing capacity, as their method's name -- *outside taping* -- implied. Schneider (1993, 1997) had his students tape in a language laboratory while Kluge and Taylor provided portable recorders, allowing



students to record anywhere on campus. Kluge and Taylor felt the method exceeded their expectations, claiming their students experienced “enriched learning, increased autonomy, and improved ability.” (p.33). Two years after publishing their article, Kluge and Taylor (2000) published another practical paper on PT, but with little more to add to the research agenda. Unfortunately the work done by Washburn and Christianson (1996) was not cited in Kluge and Taylor’s (1998, 2000) studies, though it appeared the two teams were making similar inquiries, both concerned with the potential of student self-assessment and *noticing* (Schmidt 1990, 1993, Lynch, 2001) of language recorded. I have since taken a closer look at Lynch's (2001) work in the area of noticing, which involves students transcribing their recorded conversations and taking a closer look at form. I have considered how I might incorporate an element of noticing in my conversation classes using students’ pair tapes as a way to offer my students more in the way of direct feedback, which may prove to be a confidence-building exercise. Evaluating PT from this prospective may be the subject of my future research.

When I first read Schneider’s latest (2001) paper, clearly the most theoretically grounded article written on PT to date, I considered to close the book on my own research, thinking my research question had been answered and the niche I had hoped to carve out for myself filled over. However, after scrutinizing every sentence of his article, I realized my niche was if, anything, more specified and, therefore, encouraging me to respond to a recent call made by Dörnyei (2003), asking L2 teacher-researchers to “focus on specific learning behaviors rather than general learning outcomes” (p.22). I will discuss this and similar proposed directions for L2 motivation research in conclusion.

Schneider (2001) has made a strong argument in support of the self-confidence boosting merits of PT, grounding his assumptions in the major research done in L2 motivation and self-confidence and producing, administering and analyzing a questionnaire resulting in a plausible conclusion: “learners who chose pair taping reported increases in... self-confidence about speaking English (and) motivation for improving their spoken English...” (p.1). However, upon reexamination of Schneider’s research objective, I began to question certain findings based on some questionnaire items relating to motivational variables, thinking they may have been misconstrued by his participants. Namely, I questioned the validity of certain items on Schneider’s



questionnaire. Schneider set out to define a wide array of merits of PT, extending the scope of his research question to inquire the effects PT had on students' confidence, anxiety, motivation, sense of achievement, to name a few. Regarding the self-confidence variable, for example, I feel Schneider's inquiry did not entirely examine the diversity of this major variable of motivation. Again, this discord as well as agreement with Schneider's study will be discussed in more detail later in the paper. At this juncture, it is important I delineate Schneider's research more thoroughly before discussing the overall influence it has had on my work.

Citing various studies done on expectancy-value (e.g., Hunt 1965, deCharms, 1976, 1984, Eccles et al., 1983,), Schneider (2001) built a case for introducing PT to students who have had little opportunities to speak English, stating many "EFL learners who, despite their knowledge of English, have never considered succeeding in speaking it and so lack confidence and are unmotivated" (p.15). Schneider goes on to argue that fluency practices (such as PT) "should encourage learners with low expectancy to overcome their feeling of "I can't"" (ibid.), subsequently learners believe "in the high probability of future success" (ibid.). Schneider, also concerned himself with the aspect of confidence when considering what his students lacked most, claiming "with such limited opportunities for practice, [students] may not be confident about learning to speak, despite the English they already know" (p.1). To substantiate his beliefs, Schneider turned to the self-confidence work of Clément et al. (1994) and recognized that self-confidence was "the sub process most highly related to success, establishing its importance in an EFL context" (p.7). It appears Schneider formulated his (Likert scale) questionnaire based on a combination of expectancy-value and motivation/self-confidence constructs, as his questionnaire items suggest. For students who had elected to do pair taping instead of attending regular class were asked the following questions:

-Is speaking often useful?

-Is taping useful?

and for both pair tapers and classroom students the following questions:



- Do you feel closer to the teacher now?
- Do you feel less worried about speaking English now?
- Has your English speaking improved?
- Is it easier for you to speak English now?
- Do you feel more confident speaking English now
- Do you feel more relaxed about speaking English now
- Do you enjoy speaking English more now?
- Do you want to improve your English speaking more now than before?

The results of Schneider's questionnaire revealed pair tapers' had higher means than their classroom peers for all items except for *feeling closer to the teacher*. Schneider (2001) claimed that after factor analysis, his results reflected those common to expectancy-value theories, and suggested that students' "improvement was related to their increased confidence and their increased motivation to improve was to their increased enjoyment of speaking English" (p.1). Schneider surmised: "perhaps as the pair taping learners found speaking English more relaxed and easier, they also became more confident about it and more proficient in it, and came to like speaking English more and wanted to study it more as well" (p.14). To illustrate Schneider's hypothesis, I created a diagram (see Fig. 1 below) to show the path Schneider suggests his PT participants may have taken.

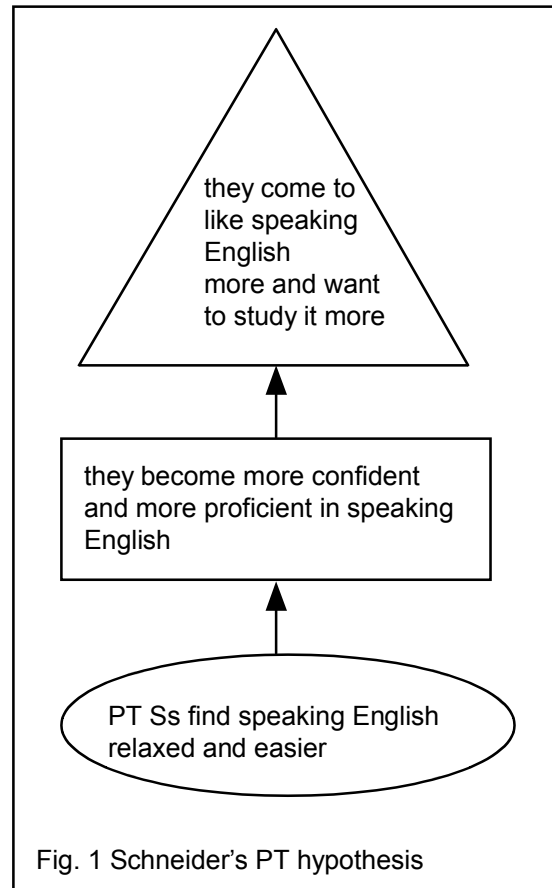
I find Schneider's research very inspiring, but I feel further research will help firmly establish PT's efficacy in L2 education. What is needed is a comprehensive model to test PT's L2 motivational features, particularly self-confidence. This is the subject of the next subsection in which I review the research done in L2 motivation, citing major empirical studies well known in the L2 motivation research community and those specific to the Japanese EFL context.

Major & Japanese Context Specific Studies

L2 Motivation research dates back to the late 1950s (Gardner and Lambert, 1959), but in keeping the scope of motivational research in tune with objectives outlined earlier in this paper, I will begin my investigation of with the work done starting from the early 1980s,



subsequently briefly highlighting the noteworthy achievements over the decades since Gardner's breakthrough research in 1982.



Gardner's (1982) socio-educational model inspired many researchers to either duplicate, modify or build upon. Gardner's early research is well known, discussed and cited even today. The two key terms typically associated with Gardner's model are *integrative* and *instrumental* motivations. For many years after its inception, numerous researchers believed that integrative motivation was more important in the educational setting (Norris-Holt, 2001), but in recent years research done in Japan shows evidence to support the importance of instrumental motivation or even a combination of the two has entered the research arena (ibid.). There is much to report on L2 motivation research in



the Japanese EFL context, and I will discuss this and other trends within the chronological organization of this section.

Almost as soon as Gardner's socio-educational model was published, there were researchers there to challenge it. Clément and Kruidenier (1983) and Ely (1986) argued that it was difficult to draw a clear distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation. Furthermore, the researchers claimed motivational orientations were contingent on other situational factors. In the end, Gardner and his associates recognized the dynamic nature of motivational orientations. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider these orientations with regard to the classroom dynamic. The first thing I ask my students to do is to tell me the reason they are taking my class. Interesting to note, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) identified and proposed *travel* as one of the three additional orientations to be added to Gardner's integrative and instrumental orientations. *Travel English* is the title of my conversation course. In fact, later in this paper, I will describe how the situation specific nature of my curriculum determined how I worded my research questionnaire.

In the mid 1980s, Deci and Ryan (1985), developed the theory (not unlike Gardner's socio-educational theory) of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation, claiming intrinsically motivated students, those interested in learning tasks simply for the enjoyment garnered were more apt to succeed in a L2 than extrinsically motivated learners, those described as reward oriented. Avoiding punishment was thought to be extrinsically driven. The students studying to enter Japanese universities are known to display extrinsic motivational characteristics (see Gilfert & Croker, 1997, Gorsuch, 2000, Norris-Holt, 2001). Also, in the mid 1980s, Clément & Kruidenier (1985) introduced a study that suggested that competence did not equate to self-confidence in the classroom, adding self-confidence resulting from previous pleasant and successful experiences with the target language outside the classroom was more relevant than self-confidence resulting from classroom success. This phenomenon has been noted by other researchers, (MacIntyre et al., 1998, Dörnyei, 2003, Yashima, 2004) yet to this day, very little empirical research has been done to suggest its cause (Dörnyei, 2003, Yashima et al., 2004). With regard to pair taping, PT research might involve identifying a possible crossover of self-confidence gained by pair taping outside the classroom, and the self-



confidence gained in the classroom.

By the mid 1990s, Clément, et al. (1994) refined his motivational model to include three levels of motivation, the learning situation level, the learner level, and the language level and all directly correspond to the L2 learning process: the L2 environment (situation/setting), the L2 learner and the L2 itself. Additionally, the three levels correlate directly with language aspects: the subject matter component, the interpersonal component and the social component. What these meant in practical terms was that combinations of any and all levels and component variables are possible, i.e. L2 learners display varying combinations of these variables, according to the researchers. To put this in more concrete terms, suppose 2 students share a common goal (e.g. they both desire to do a homestay), but one student likes the class (and/or the teacher) and the other does not, certainly the two do not share the same level of motivation. A practical application of this research could involve having students complete a needs survey, the results of which could help teachers more effectively gear their lessons. I use a similar survey designed to get students to form taping pairs based on their individual learner needs.

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), contributing to the self-confidence debate, pronounced that self-confidence is related to L2 learning in an opposite manner to anxiety, however both variables are related to motivation and are rooted in stable personality characteristics. Research conducted in Canada revealed that self-confidence may, however, be more than simply the flipside of anxiety. In multicultural societies (such as Canada) self-confidence may be a combination of low anxiety, and positive opinions of competence using the L2 outside the educational setting. However, in a mono-cultural society (such as Japan), the researcher must question the universality of the Canadian models of motivation and self-confidence. Later, I will mention one such Japan-based researcher who has done just that.

Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994), suggested that many variables were related to motivation, but specifically produced adequate evidence to show that self-confidence is a powerful and major motivational process in multicultural as well as mono-cultural societies. The researchers concluded that classroom activities and atmosphere played a role in promoting self-confidence, but another type of self-confidence (or lack thereof) could be the product of extracurricular acquaintance (both positive or negative) with the



L2. The work Clément et al. helped reopen the motivation research agenda, and their examination of EFL societies attracted L2 motivation researchers and EFL teacher-researchers alike, and by the early 2000s, TESOL journals were filled with new perspectives on the agenda. One of those articles inspired the Schneider's (1993) development of PT. Also in the mid 1990s a new perspective spearheaded by MacIntyre (1994) and borrowed from L1 motivation research termed willingness to communicate (WTC) gained added momentum in the years to follow (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels 1998) and has continued to energize the L2 motivation research agenda to date.

As L2 willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre 1994, MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels 1998) matured, researchers began to realize that the L2 model of WTC was dissimilar to the L1 model of WTC in that the linguistic and psychological variables (e.g. self-confidence, interpersonal motivation, attitudes, etc.) of L1 WTC were stable throughout the model and assumptions of one's L1 performance could be determined relatively accurately and consistently. However, applying the WTC model to L2 learners, researchers realized some variables were not stable and subject to change depending on with whom, at what time, and in what situation the learner was to enter into discourse. The situated nature of L2 WTC models lend themselves to action research, in that teachers can examine specific contents based on them. For example, Yashima (2002) has successfully applied the WTC model when she researched the connections between L2 learning and L2 communication variables among Japanese L2 learners. In a later study, Yashima and associates (Yashima et al., 2004), compared WTC of two groups of Japanese L2 English learners, one group studying in Japan, the other abroad. The researchers learned that many of the exchange students gained competence, but due to the foreign setting produced "situational" anxiety, subsequently reducing students' WTC. On the other hand, the other group of students studying in a familiar situation (i.e. Japan), reported increases in WTC. While these rules apply particularly to intermediate learners, what we can learn from WTC studies is the importance of distinguishing situational or state and trait variables (namely state and trait self-confidence and state and trait anxiety). Yashima and associates (2004) hypothesized that since Japanese learners, given their predominately monocultural society, lacked the



level of motivation L2 students in multicultural societies processed, a latent variable they defined as “international posture” (p.123) predicted Japanese EFL students’ motivation. International posture is a term Yashima, et al. (2004) used to describe learners’ need to identify with the target language’s culture and society and functioned as a motivation to study that target language. Yashima et al. (2004), influenced by the WTC work of both MacIntyre (1994) (see figure 2 below) and Clément and Kruidenier (1985), combined their WTC models with the international posture variable in formulating an L2 WTC proposed model (see figure 3 below) specific to the Japanese EFL context. This model is currently being researched and Yashima et al. (2004) suggest that limitations need to be discussed and the relationship between L2 competence and L2 self-confidence need to be adequately addressed. However, the researchers are inspired by evidence that motivational and attitudinal variables of Japanese EFL students can be examined using WTC models.

What the research in WTC means to my research is that it first, resonates with my belief that L2 self-confidence is a changeable variable contingent on situational factors. Secondly, given the research done by Yashima (2002) and Yashima et al. (2004), with consideration to the attention given to the social/cultural element of language learning (as embodied in the proposed international posture variable) is not only pertinent to my teaching context, but perhaps a suitable model to use when examining the language learning process of students engaged in pair tapping and the travel English based content of my curriculum.



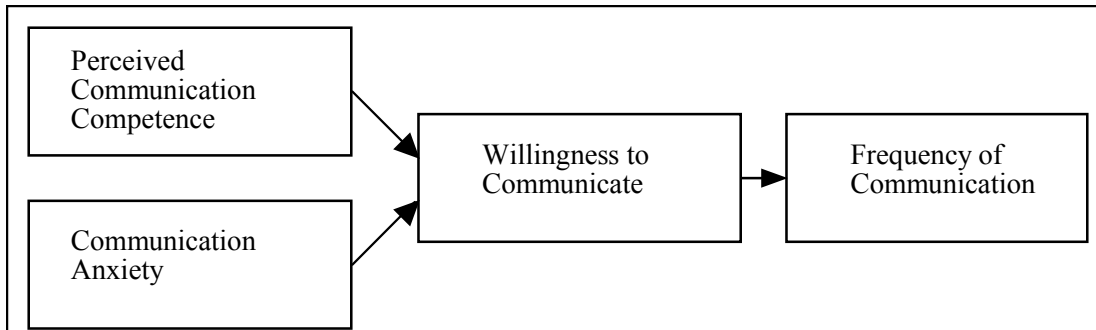


Figure 2 Portion of MacIntyre's (1994) Willingness to Communicate Model

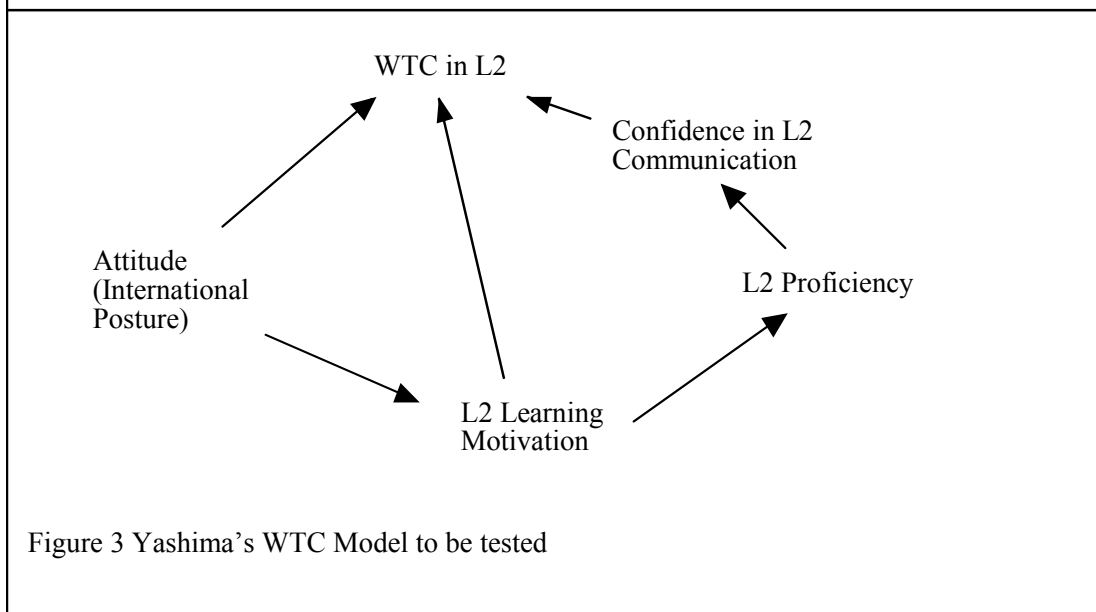


Figure 3 Yashima's WTC Model to be tested

Discussion and Conclusion

In the interest of making a research contribution to both L2 motivation research and PT methodology research and development, I've been encouraged by the work many of the L2 motivation pioneers and major contributing researchers. I've found the recent work done by "context specific" researchers very relevant to my own work and I am following that vein of the research agenda. Given the Japan-context nature of research done in pair taping, the work done by Yashima (2002) and Yashima et al. (2004) should be considered and incorporated when examining students' learning processes related to the use of PT. Two key variables that must be considered in the Japanese EFL context are the state/trait



variables of self-confidence (and state/trait anxiety) and possibly Yashima's (2002) proposed variable, *international posture*. For my MA research (Kubo, 2005) I have used Griffie's (1997) a 12 item Lickert scale Confidence in Speaking Questionnaire that he not only went to great lengths to ensure its validity, but addressed the state/trait nature of self-confidence, by eliciting responses based on students' perceived "ability, assurance and willing engagement" (p.187). In fact, Griffie's confidence construct is similar to MacIntyre's (1998) Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (reprinted in Yashima, 2002, p.57) and other WTC models. I believe Griffie's questionnaire fits my research question well. Additionally, by the focus I place on the examination of self-confidence only, I am answering a plea recently made by Dörnyei (2003), asking L2 teacher-researchers to "focus on specific learning behaviors rather than general learning outcomes" (p.22). In fact, Schneider (2001) concluded in his most recent article on PT that he can only speculate that PT has an effect on students' confidence to succeed in learning to speak, stating "just as people learn to drive a car by driving one, language learners learn to speak a language by speaking it. Allowing learners to focus on developing proficiency by doing fluency practice may enhance their confidence..."

I agree with Schneider on this point. But borrowing his driving analogy, I might add that one accustomed to driving on the left side of the car does not necessarily have the confidence to drive on the right. I have lived in Japan for many years and sweat with anxiety at the mere thought of driving in Japan for that reason.

The *where*, *when*, and with *whom* one drives are distinct situational variables which absolutely play a role in one's confidence to drive a car, as well as speak a second language. Perhaps a more in-depth study on the dynamic nature of these important variables is warranted after all.



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