

STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR USAGE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE IN THE MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

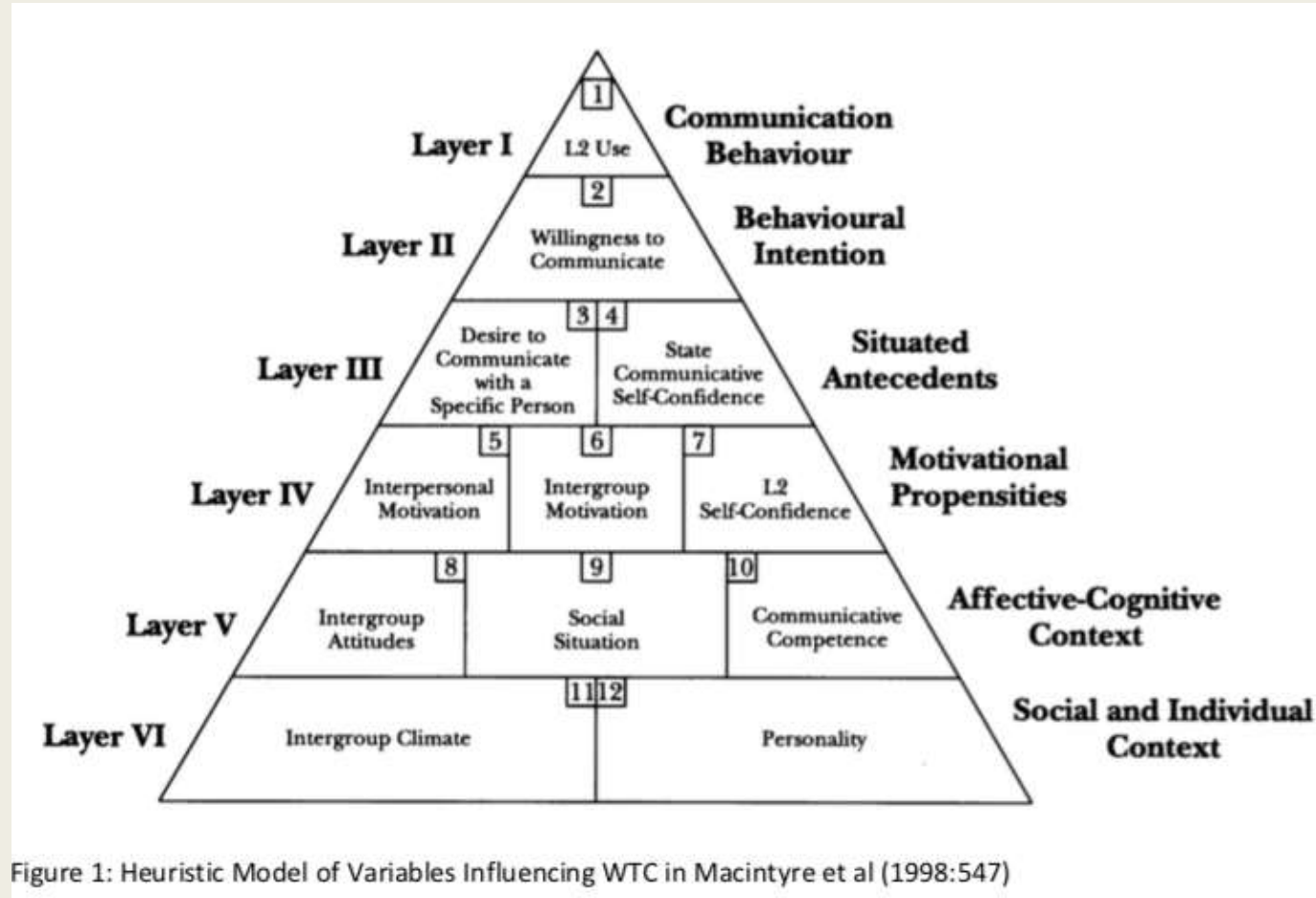
by Anna Maly

Rational

- Teachers at my school have mixed opinions on TL (target language) use – some would like to use it more often than they do
- Most of the teachers at my school find using the TL important
- Department of Education (2013, 2015) says that spontaneous talk is one of the criteria in a GCSE exam
- My personal drive was: the students should be using the TL, not only the teachers

Literature

- Many studies or books offer strategies for spontaneous talk or how to make students respond in the TL
- All of these studies have one thing in common: **students' willingness to communicate**
- The **willingness to communicate** was the main focus of my literature review
- **Reasoning:** if students are not willing to communicate they will not be able to communicate spontaneously or at all
- Many components play a role why a student wants to use the TL or why not
- MacIntyre et al (1998) have visualized this in a pyramid



Research Questions

- RQ1: What do Year 8 students perceive to be the main barriers to their use of the L2?
- RQ2: To what extent do Year 8 students perceive their teachers or peers to influence their willingness to communicate?
- RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the processes involved in fostering students' use of the L2?

Methodology

- Student Questionnaire – quantitative
 - *2 groups*
 - *Group A: 27 students (1st year French, 2nd year German)*
 - *Group B: 25 students (2nd year French, 1st year German)*
- Teacher Questionnaire – quantitative
 - *5 teachers*
- In hindsight: it would have been more beneficial to do a qualitative research for teachers and some interviews with students – a mixed research would have been ideal

Questionnaire - students

1) Do you think modern foreign languages (French/German and others) are important in today's society? **Circle only one!**

Yes No I do not know

2) What is the **most difficult** part of learning a new language? **Circle only one!**

Listening Reading Writing Speaking

3) **Explain** your answer from question 2:

4) In the language classroom do you **actively try** to use the target language?

Circle only one!

Yes No

5) Do you try to use the target language when talking to the **teacher**? Circle only one!

Yes No Sometimes

6) Do you try to use the target language when talking to your **peers**? Circle only one!

Yes No Sometimes

7) When **the teacher talks to us** in the **target language** I am ...

- More likely to try to use the target language myself
- Neither more or less likely to use the target language myself
- Less likely to try to use the target language myself

8) Do you try to use the target language **when your peers talk** in the target language? Circle only one!

Yes No Sometimes

9) Why **do you use** the target language in the modern foreign language classroom? **Circle as many as you like!**

because the teacher uses the target language quite often

because I want to improve my speaking

because my peers do it as well

because it is fun

other, explain: _____

10) Why **do you not use** the target language in the modern foreign language classroom? **Circle as many as you like!**

because the teacher does not use the target language very often

because none of my peers do it

because I cannot express my thoughts like I can in my first language

because I am anxious to fail or embarrass myself

other, explain: _____

Outcomes - Students

RQ1: What do Year 8 students perceive to be the main barriers to their use of the L2?

- Cannot express their thoughts in the TL (35 students of 52 students)
 - Embarrassment (30 students)
 - None of their peers uses it (15 students)
 - Only 2 students are influenced by their teachers' use of TL
- Interesting: the majority of students said that the most difficult skill (4 skills – listening, reading, writing, speaking) was **listening** – some comments suggest that they were only referring back to listening exams and not teachers TL use -
> this might implement that the UK is an exam driven country – **is there actually any space for spontaneous talk in the MFL classroom?**

Outcomes – Teachers

RQ2: To what extent do Year 8 students perceive their teachers or peers to influence their willingness to communicate?

- Greater **difference** between Group A and Group B
 - *Group A is more influenced by the teachers' use of TL while Group B is more influenced by their peers' usage of the TL*

	Group A 27		Group B 25		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
More	23	85%	5	20%	28	54%
Neither	3	11%	20	80%	23	44%
Less	1	4%	0	0%	1	2%

Table 6: Question 7; When the teacher talks to us in the target language I am...

Outcomes – Teachers

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the processes involved in fostering students' use of the L2?

■ In general:

- *Teachers' use of TL is **varied** (see next slide) – compared to a study by Bateman (2006), who did the same questionnaire with trainee teachers, the use of TL is lower*
- *Teachers' perception of what might influence the willingness to communicate **matches** with students' responses*

■ Interesting was Q5: Teachers' choices of what they would change in the education system if they had the chance to support students learning a foreign language

- *More lessons per week*
- *Teaching culture*

Personal Statements:

Other statements by teachers

- Smaller teaching groups
- More time to plan
- General school culture being focused on multi-lingualism
- Bilingual teaching i.e. science, geography etc being taught in other languages
- More time to plan KS3 lessons

Teachers' Use of TL in the Modern Foreign Language Classroom

Frequency of Response

Activity	Nearly all in English	Mostly in English	Half TL, Half English	Mostly in TL	Nearly all in TL	Mean*	Mean Bateman Study (2008)
Teaching new vocabulary	1	0	0	2	2	3.8	4.6
Starting class/ conducting daily routine	1	0	1	2	1	3.4	4.3
Correcting students work	5	0	0	0	0	1.0	3.8
Conducting or preparing activities	1	1	2	0	1	2.8	3.7
Giving instructions for classroom activities	1	1	2	0	1	2.8	3.6
Asking questions to check students' reading or listening comprehension	1	2	1	0	1	2.6	3.6
Debriefing with the whole class after pair- or small-group activities	1	2	1	0	1	2.6	3.4
Explaining grammar concepts	3	1	1	0	0	1.6	3.2
Engaging in casual conversation/building rapport with students	1	0	3	0	1	3.0	3.1
Presenting information about the target culture	1	0	3	1	0	2.8	3.0
Discussing cultural issues as a class	2	1	2	0	0	2.0	3.0
Explaining instructions for assignments or projects	2	1	2	0	0	2.0	2.7
Providing clarification when students don't understand in TL	2	1	1	1	0	2.2	2.5
Giving individual help to students	2	2	1	0	0	1.8	2.3
Dealing with discipline problems	3	0	1	1	0	2.0	1.7

* Means were calculated as follows: Nearly all in English=1; Mostly in English= 2; Half in English Half in TL= 3; Mostly in TL= 4; Nearly all in TL= 5

Table 10: Question 1; teachers' questionnaire

Teaching new vocabulary is when teachers use most of the TL

Correcting students work is when teachers use the first language the most

Conclusion

- Students' Willingness to Communicate depends mainly on anxiety, embarrassment, self-expression
- Group A is more influenced by their teachers' use of TL while Group B is more influenced by their peers' use of TL
- Teachers at this school wish Modern Foreign Languages to be better implemented across the school, to have smaller classes and more time for planning meaningful lessons
- Questions which have developed from this study are:
 - *Are specific age groups more willing to communicate in the TL than others?*
 - *Would strategies such as topic language and interaction language (Harris et al, 2008) promote spontaneity in these particular Year8 groups?*
 - *Would monitored group work increase or decrease TL use in these particular Year8 groups?*

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