《研究ノート》

To What Extent can Questionnaires be used to Investigate Willingness to Communicate in Large Classes in Japanese Universities?

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Abstract

Investigating the attitudes, motivations, and orientations towards second language learning is a valuable step on the path to improving pedagogical practice. This paper discusses the merits of using a questionnaire based quantitative approach to studying willingness to communicate in a second language among students in large, non-elective classes. In particular, the suitability of questionnaires for gathering data regarding attitudes from a large number of participants is discussed. The conclusion this paper reaches is that for researchers with limited time and access to participants, questionnaires can be an efficient and meaningful method of data collection.

Keywords：English, Japan, education, task based, learning, teaching.

1. Introduction

The ability to measure and track any movement in willingness to communicate (WTC) orientations could have useful pedagogical implications. This discussion examines the suitability of questionnaires as a data gathering instrument for researching into WTC among 'reluctant learners' in large classes.

The first part of this discussion looks at a potential topic of research. The context of any study influences the choice of topic and why it is considered a potentially fruitful area of enquiry. Following on from the description of the context the topic and possible research questions are introduced.

The next section examines existing literature related to WTC. Key terms and concepts are defined and previous theoretical work and studies in the area in question are also considered. Finally, the need for research in this area, and how it could contribute to second language acquisition (SLA) research, is discussed.

After describing a potential area of research and its underpinnings in SLA theory, methods

that could be utilised in the study are described and the use of questionnaires as an instrument of data collection is discussed.

The last, and most significant part of this discussion, is the use of questionnaires and their suitability to the research topic. The critical issue of whether questionnaires best answer the particular needs of this research area and context of the study are discussed.

２．Research Context and Topic

The context in which research takes place often, if not always, shapes the research questions and helps narrow the focus of any investigation. In the case of this research topic, the context, and how it affects the learners within it, are key factors. Consequently, this section includes a thorough discussion of the context before introducing a potential research topic and questions.

２．１　Research Context

Potential research that may be undertaken by the authors will take place in the Japanese-English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching context. In recent years the direction of policy in regards to English teaching in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in Japan has been almost exclusively towards a focus on 'communication' (Seargeant, 2008). Foreign language education, primarily English, now commences in grade 5, and the objectives, from the beginning, have emphasised "a positive attitude toward communication" (MEXT, 2011). In addition to the goals set out in government policy documents, more concrete evidence of the desire to move away from the traditional emphasis on the receptive skills of reading and writing has been the introduction of 'Oral Communication' as a subject in upper secondary education (Seargeant, 2008).

Although the increased focus on communication skills that resulted in the provision of oral communication classes to students in secondary education can be traced back to 1989 (MEXT, 1989), communication skills have struggled to have an impact on assessment priorities. Entrance examinations, especially for the leading universities, have started to include English communicative competence as one of the parameters they test (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008), but this is still secondary to comprehension and grammar translation. However, the testing of English ability applies to all university applicants regardless of their intended area of study. This across the board approach to English education, even at the tertiary level, has implications for this particular study. A proposal currently under consideration by the Japanese government will make TOEFL (Test Of English as a Foreign Language) a requisite for all students in order to enter and, most significantly, graduate from university (Yoshida,

2013). At the time of writing it is already common for universities to place English oral communication courses in their curriculum as non-elective courses. Again, in most universities this stipulation affects all students irrespective of their major. As Japan has 60% of its tertiary age population in education (UNESCO, 2012) this has created a very large EFL student body. On the one hand this has potential to form a sizeable target population in which to test second language (L2) theories. However, on the other hand, as each context possesses its own unique set of parameters, the unilingual culture of Japan can also be said to provide the opportunity for investigations distinct to that context. It is the interweaving of these two potentially divergent factors that create the potential for research.

A feature of the English oral communication courses provided by many institutions of tertiary education in Japan, in particular the four-year universities, is the large class sizes. Hoggard's personal experience includes teaching courses with an enrolment in excess of 60 students, and anecdotal evidence suggests that classes of over 100 students are not uncommon. This is perhaps a consequence of departments with no knowledge of L2 education requiring their students to complete one of these courses. Economic and scheduling factors may also lead to class sizes that would not be normally considered suitable for a communicative language course.

Unfortunately, the majority of the oral communication courses seem to have been added to the curriculum as an afterthought. It is difficult to speculate why they appear in such a disparate array of curricula. However, the highly competitive private university sector is constantly struggling to maintain student numbers against the backdrop of a declining population. It is conceivable that they are primarily aimed at attracting prospective students and stakeholders with appeals to nebulous concepts such as 'internationalisation' and 'global citizenship'. This would be in line with the government's 'Hirakareta Nihon' measures to reform Japanese higher education which, in 1983 under the Nakasone government set the goal to attract 100,000 foreign students to study in Japan by the year 2000. Also, as the pressure of a growing global market became evident, in 2000 the Obuchi government started reforming education. Another pertinent government measure that was to send shock-waves across the Japanese higher education sector was the 'Global 30' measure which was taken in July 2009.

Global 30 stands for *Kokusaika Kyoten Seibi Jigyō* which was a 15 billion yen project for upgrading 30 existing institutions with the aim to making them into an 'internationalised' core. However, " 'internationalisation' is mainly interpreted as the recruitment and education of international students in Japan," Burgess, et al. (2010). In May 2009, 92.3% of those students were from Asia and of that figure 59.6% were from China. Subsequently this became known

as 'Asianation' rather than 'globalization' or 'internationalization'. An issue that arose from this was due to the lack of these foreign students' Japanese ability which resulted in more classes being offered in English. This 'globalization' was seen as an indication of "how strong the global pressure towards the use of English has become" (Tsuneyoshi, 2005, p. 67). The government's ultimate goal, however, appears to be that Japanese high school students will be able to communicate in English, "conduct[ing] normal communication with regard to topics" (Hashimoto, 2009, p. 33) upon graduation while university graduates will be able to "use English in their job" (ibid.).

Despite all the government measures, one thing that is clear is that these courses do not occupy a pivotal part of the curriculum and receive little systematic design. An indication that they are not central to the departmental considerations is the common practice of 'farming-out' these courses to part-time teachers who do not work exclusively for one institution. This results in instructors with no clear idea of the intended role of the course in the overall curriculum being left to their own devices in administering the classes. These instructors often do not have the time, or resources, to plan an effective course of study. Furthermore, as noted above, the large student:teacher ratio common to these classes is also symptomatic of the lack of importance attached to these courses.

A classroom with a large number of students clearly does not allow for sustained one-to-one communication between the instructor and the student. Therefore, any communication that takes place in the second language within the confines of the classroom, must be learner-learner based. However, as most of these courses are made up of students who are enrolled in departments and study areas with no connection to English, or even to communication skills, the issue becomes how to promote a willingness or desire to communicate amongst a group of individuals with no discernible goals or motivation. These students are the embodiment of 'reluctant learners'. 'Reluctant' is used because these students are almost always taking these classes involuntarily. Indeed, it could be argued that after completing six years of compulsory English education, then passing the university entrance examinations, and finally starting a university course of their own choosing with no obvious connection to English communication, that some students might actively resent having to continue to study English. This situation is exacerbated by most of the students having no long-term goals or objectives on which to focus their language study.

２．２　Research Topic and Questions

At the time of writing Sato teaches seven, and Hoggard thirteen of these foreign language/

oral communication courses of which Hoggard's span over three institutions with very contrasting fields of specialisation and levels of academic abilities between the students. Several years of teaching these types of courses has produced three main areas of concern. Firstly, the lack of clarification regarding the purpose of these classes. Secondly, how these classes fit in with the students' chosen area of study, and thirdly, the lack of clarity over what the institutional requirements and goals are for students. Despite many enquiries no satisfactory answers to these concerns have been forthcoming. The general consensus is that the courses are required, as discussed above in the research context; and therefore the students have to complete them. As these classes appear to have no discernible relation to the curriculum requirements of the institutions, or to the academic goals of the students, the issue that arises is what is the most advantageous outcome that can be achieved?

In light of the student:teacher ratios present in university-level oral communication classes in Japan, the issue of WTC orientations within the student population becomes central to the question as to what extent it is possible to teach English oral communication in such large groups. If there is a general dearth of WTC in the second language classroom, and the possibilities for direct teacher monitoring are limited, the conceivability of meaningful communication in the second language classroom taking place are reduced. Therefore research questions of a potential study could be:

- What prevalent WTC orientations are evident in large, non-elective, English oral communication classes in higher education in Japan?
- To what extent does a collaborative, creative dialogue production task affect these WTC orientations?
- What other significant factors of motivation are evident?

In the following section the concept of WTC is examined further. Also, a few different models for it are briefly discussed. The creative dialogue task will also be discussed.

3. Reasons for Research

This section provides a brief description of WTC as it has appeared in the literature to date. This description, along with the introduction of two studies into WTC related to the Japanese context, provides background to any potential research in Japanese higher education.

3.1 Willingness to Communicate in the Literature
WTC as a construct emerged from first-language communication studies. It was originally

conceived in an attempt to build upon the terms 'shyness' and 'social-anxiety' that had been previously used to describe behaviour likened to a personality-like trait in communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). The construct was aimed at explaining the reasons that, although talking is central to interpersonal communication, people differ in the amount of talk in which they may choose to engage (Barraclough, et al. 1988, p. 188). The WTC Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) was developed to demonstrate the WTC orientations in four different contexts: dyads, small meetings, large groups and public speaking. It also attempted to show how the orientation changed, dependent on whether the communication was with a stranger, acquaintance, or friend with the supposition being that WTC would fluctuate, depending upon context and receivers, while the underlying level would remain constant. Therefore the supposition was that, an individual who was reticent in small groups would be correspondingly so in front of a public audience, whereas someone who was comfortable in a public speaking environment would be even more at ease in a one-to-one situation.

Due to the term originally being used to describe a personality-like trait it was initially considered relatively constant by McCroskey and Richmond (1987). However, writing slightly later, Barraclough et al. (1988) made allowances for situational factors, such as temporal feelings, prior contact, and the importance of the communication affecting the WTC orientation. It could be perceived that prior contact would, in fact, indicate a movement along the stranger-acquaintance-friend spectrum, and therefore is not independent from the originally conceived WTC scale. However, researchers using the construct in later studies in the field of L2 usage have tended to allow for variation in the levels of WTC. Macintyre, et al. defined WTC "as a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (1998, p. 547). They further noted that it was not necessary to confine WTC to a trait-like status, but that it was possible to ascribe to it both enduring and transient elements.

３．２　Previous Studies in WTC

Since WTC started to be used in L2 research there have been numerous studies utilising the construct. As a potential study would take place in a Japanese context, two prior studies carried out in that area are examined.

Yashima (2002) used a communication model linking L2 learning motivation and L2 proficiency to WTC. She also added the construct of 'international posture' to the model as a way of re-contextualising Gardner's socio-educational concept of integrativeness. In Yashima's model international posture refers to a general interest in English, mainly due to its position as

the international lingua franca. This is in contrast to the original conception of integrativeness as indicating a desire to join, or move closer to the L2 group. Due to the limited opportunities for direct contact with the L2 group in the Japanese context, Yashima (2002) felt that the international posture construct was a more accurate depiction of attitudes likely to be present in learners in Japan.

The participants in Yashima's (ibid.) study were all first year students enrolled in an information science degree course at one university. Significantly, they had all elected to study English (out of 7 possible options) as their main foreign language. Yashima (ibid) discovered a link between international posture and WTC. She also found an indirect link from international posture to WTC through L2 communication confidence. This pathway travelled via the circuitous route from motivation in second language learning, to proficiency and then to communication confidence in the second language. Interestingly, Yashima's (ibid) study did not find a significant correlation between motivation and WTC. The most significant correlation was between second language communication confidence and WTC in the second language. This would seemingly account for those learners who do not let their lack of proficiency hold back their verbal output. However, in Yashima's (ibid) model proficiency is placed before second language communication confidence. This does not, however, tally convincingly with the results in figure 5 (ibid, p. 61). One more observation about the international posture construct in this context is that information science students might be expected to have more interest in English due to its position as the de facto language of the internet. From the standpoint of potential research in Japanese universities, the elective nature of the English courses the students were enrolled in puts them in a different context from the learners that might feature in research into non-elective courses.

Hashimoto (2002), in a statistic laden paper, described an investigation into the motivation of Japanese students in the English as a second language (ESL) context in Hawaii. In this study the most significant factor found was perceived second-language competence. A direct pathway was found from perceived second language competence to WTC in the second language and also to motivation. An indirect link from perceived second language competence to motivation via WTC was also discovered. Unlike Yashima's (2002) study, Hashimoto (2002) found the pathway was from (perceived) competence to motivation and not from motivation to competence. However, as WTC and motivation appear in Hashimoto's (ibid) model as antecedents leading to second language communication frequency, which did not feature in Yashima's (2002) study, it is somewhat difficult to compare them closely. While Hashimoto's study took place in the ESL context, even though the participants were all Japanese, the

presumably elective nature of their choice to study English abroad would classify them as very different types of learners to any research conducted in Japanese universities where participants are in compulsory English language courses.

３．３　Context of Potential Research in Japanese Universities

A potential study project would aim to investigate WTC in groups in Japanese higher education that could reasonably expect to have low second language motivation levels. Due to the nature of the courses these 'reluctant learners' are enrolled in, that is compulsory classes with high student:teacher ratios, it would be illuminating to see how the WTC orientations differ to some of the previous studies carried out into WTC in other contexts.

The second aspect of any potential study project would be to investigate whether WTC orientations are liable to fluctuate under the influence of a short-term pedagogical treatment. Despite its initial conception as a static, personality-like trait, the "theoretical necessity" of change in WTC has now become accepted (Ortega, 2009). There have also been calls for research into how motivation impacts upon, and potentially changes, learning behaviours such as WTC (Dörnyei, 2003b).

A study could aim to measure the effects there are, of introducing a series of collaborative, creative dialogue tasks on WTC to 'reluctant' learners. This could be achieved by administering pre-and post-treatment questionnaire surveys, to try and to track any movement, spaced relatively close together, over a period of approximately two months. The questionnaires could also be used to discover any changes in previously suggested antecedents of WTC, such as self-perceived competence or communicative anxiety.

A collaborative dialogue creation task fits into the parameters imposed by most teaching contexts. The task would have to be relatively time-efficient in order not to have a negative impact on the syllabus requirements. It would also have to be novel to the extent that a meaningful and measurable effect could be reasonably expected by its introduction into the normal classroom pedagogy. Furthermore, the collaborative aspect of the task would hopefully lend itself to the trait of group cohesiveness that has been noted in several studies in the Asian context (e.g., Wen & Clément, 2003). However, that theme is beyond the scope of this discussion.

４．Research Methods

In this section, questionnaires as a method of data collection are discussed. Firstly, the

background of questionnaires as a means of data collection in the field of linguistics is briefly outlined. The potential advantages and disadvantages of using them in SLA research are examined, after which paradigms will be examined concluding with the outcome of the debate regarding questionnaires and their usage in this type of research.

4．1　Questionnaires in Linguistics Research

Surveys, especially in the form of questionnaires, emerged from the social sciences (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). They have often been utilised in SLA research and are useful in that the data collected from a relatively small number of people can be extrapolated to form generalisations about a much larger population. Dörnyei & Csizér (ibid.) also claim their usefulness in surveying people's feelings, opinions and attitudes and how they can help draw general inferences that can be used to direct policy.

Due to their acclaimed usefulness in surveying the opinions of a large number of respondents relatively easily, questionnaires have been used extensively in applied linguistics research (Dörnyei, 2007). In particular, they have been used to gather information regarding people's feelings and attitudes and they are often employed for research into language learners' motivations and attitudes. Hashimoto (2002) and Yashima (2002) used questionnaires in the investigations into WTC in Japanese learners that were discussed above. In Yashima's (ibid) study questionnaires were used to canvass the opinions of almost 400 learners. It can therefore be inferred that these types of questionnaires are particularly useful to solo researchers wishing to gather data from a large number of participants.

4．2　Advantages and Disadvantages of Questionnaires

Seliger & Shohamy (1989) gave several reasons as to why questionnaires are suited to large-scale quantitative research. One of the most salient of these is that questionnaires can be administered to a large number of subjects in a cost-effective manner. Dörnyei (2003a) also points to efficiency in time, resources and effort as some of the most significant advantages of questionnaires. Other positive aspects of questionnaires mentioned by Dörnyei (ibid.) include their versatility in regard to the topics they can address, the respondents they can be used with, and the situations they can be applied in. Finally, Dörnyei (ibid.) notes that the data collected from a well-designed questionnaire should be straightforward to process.

Practical considerations of using questionnaires for data collection aside, there are also advantages in the types of research areas that can be investigated using them. Respondents are more likely to open up about sensitive topics in questionnaires that have been designed

to ensure anonymity rather than in face-to-face interviews (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). In particular, questions regarding attitudes towards figures of authority, for example the teacher in SLA research, are more likely to receive candid responses in anonymous formats.

A further advantage regarding questionnaires is that as they can be administered simultaneously to large groups thus the data collected has the potential to be more uniform and less subject to temporal distortion. One last, and highly significant advantage pointed out by Mackey and Gass is that questionnaires can "elicit longitudinal information from learners in a short period of time" (2005, p.94). This is clearly useful in studies that are looking at any changes that may occur in a target population over a relatively limited time frame.

However, questionnaires are not without their drawbacks. As questionnaires need to be simple in order to be comprehensible to the majority of respondents, they can only deal with issues on a superficial level. Dörnyei (2003a) also points out that they can also be affected by respondents having no vested interest in supplying accurate information and possessing little motivation to complete the questionnaire to the best of their abilities. Other potential disadvantages detailed by Dörnyei (ibid.) include social-desirability bias, self-deception, acquiescence bias, the halo effect, and fatigue. These factors can all have a negative impact on the reliability and accuracy of data collected by questionnaire surveys. However, perhaps the biggest drawback to questionnaires administered anonymously is the inability to double-check the responses and verify or delve deeper into the data once it has been collected.

４．３　Paradigms and Methods

A paradigm is described as perceptions about the world, and how to inquire into that world using correct ways and means (Punch, 2009). Scott & Morrison group the paradigms for educational research into four main categories of which two are applicable to this study: 'positivism' and 'phenomenology' (2006, p. 170). Positivism is objective, only accounting for human feelings if they are observable and measurable. Morrison defines phenomenology as "a form of interpretivism where the emphasis is placed on the way human beings give meaning to their lives" (2012, p. 16) .

With the main aim of a potential study to investigate what factors are affecting willingness to communicate and what other factors are influencing motivation to communicate in compulsory English classes in Japanese universities, it is important to understand "others' ideas and views" (Goldman, 2004, p. 158) about what they perceive is influencing them which means the potential for differing opinions could emerge. Human nature is immensely complex (Cohen et al., 2007) and therefore it is important to acknowledge that two people

may interpret one instance from two different points of view and in two very different ways. The reasons why people do this are beyond the scope of the discussion of this research, but is suffices to acknowledge that human behaviour cannot be likened to a chemical compound that consistently reacts to the same conditions in the same way each time, or even to a sickness that has a cause and effect. Positivists see the world like this: as if there is a cause and effect, with universal laws that govern us. However, even one individual may respond in many different ways to one stimulus as there are internal and external variables which can influence a response at any given time. Therefore, a positivist paradigm does not fit this study. Any potential research is looking to investigate the reasons behind behaviour; a desire to understand and explore issues that influence Japanese students learning communicative English. This in itself calls for qualitative analysis where the participants would have the freedom to express themselves in their own words and explain their feelings from their own perspectives. As researchers it is therefore imperative to open the way for the participants to share, as they desire, about the issues. In seeking to understand the world in which the participants are in holds with the view that interpretivists have, which is that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, p. 8), and from this paradigm qualitative data can be gathered.

The issues surrounding student motivation and the research methodologies that have been employed to investigate it have been of great debate. Fotos (1994) points out that these research methodologies should be more diverse. Traditionally they have used survey methods "that have varied very little since Gardner published his general research design in 1968" (ibid, p. 44). However, as Kimura, et al. (2001, p. 61) point out "is it insufficient to merely replicate this research relying on numerical data." It appears that tradition has held this field of research in a deadlock for too long. Furthermore, for the reasons pointed out above, the foundation of any future research is ultimately for the participants to explain their feelings so the researchers can understand the participants' motivation. Feelings cannot be expressed in numbers. Locking any participant into a questionnaire with pre-selected options will only lead to inaccurate data as it does not allow the participants to express their feelings in their own words.

While questionnaires have been used by solo researchers to collect quantitative data in this field, it has been established that not only has this just been the tradition, but also that qualitative data is needed in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind motivation. Therefore, ultimately, due to restrictions created by the number of participants and the amount of data to be collected surveys as a method are highly applicable, as discussed

below, and questionnaires are indeed a powerful tool (Cohen et al., 2007), however the tool must also be open ended in order to allow for participants to express themselves in their own words. This opens the way for qualitative data to be collected without creating the need for a number of researchers to be involved.

５．Evaluation of Research Methods

When considering which research methods to utilise in carrying out the proposed study a number of practical factors need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, is timing. For any in-class study data collection has to take place in term time during the normal course of administering the syllabus. Secondly, any teaching load during this period is usually extensive which leaves almost no opportunities to conduct research outside of class time. In addition, research that is suggested here would be most fruitful if it could span different teaching groups to allow for a range in the number of students. The final practical consideration that has potential significant impact on the choice of research methods will be the institutional demand for a minimal burden to be placed on the students. These four factors operating in conjunction greatly narrows options for research methodology.

In order not to distract from, or have a negative impact on, any syllabus, the data collection would have to take up minimum class time. Accordingly, the research instrument either has to be administered outside scheduled classes or be of a very time efficient nature. In light of this, qualitative methods, such as interviews, are impractical to conduct during class as they would infringe on precious teaching time. Furthermore, the remaining students would be left unsupervised if the teacher/researcher were focused on the interview process. Another consideration would be the less than ideal conditions that would be the result of trying to squeeze interviews into an extremely limited time frame. Additionally, the potentially large student numbers present in some of the classes could clearly not all be covered in a one-to-one manner. Group interviews would be a plausible alternative in a different context, but in the strongly group orientated Japanese society the risk of participants influencing each other's data is too high and therefore is not a practical consideration. Therefore, an issue becomes whether the very limited number of interviews that could be accommodated considering the time constraints would provide enough useable data to draw conclusions from. Other qualitative methods, for example student journals, share the same drawback of providing in-depth information but only across a very narrow range of students. Journals may also be classified as an 'excessive burden' on the students by the institutions involved. Even if it were

possible to collect journals from all the students, the time needed to collate the information would be beyond the capabilities of a solo researcher. One more point open to debate is whether the kind of data that can be collected from interviews and journals is the most suitable for gathering information regarding attitudes and motivations considering the teacher/researcher relationship which may threaten the validity of the data.

After taking into consideration the severe time restraints on potential research, Dörnyei's (2003a) point, about the efficiencies of time and effort afforded by the use of questionnaires becomes especially telling. Therefore, due to practical considerations at the fore and the risks involved with group interviews, questionnaires are deemed the more appropriate method considering the limited time and access to students available.

Aside from the issues regarding the practicalities involved in data collection, there are further points to be considered regarding the suitability of the methods to the context; the type of data being sought has an obvious influence on the choice of method. As discussed above, in section 4.2, one advantage of questionnaires is that participants are more likely to be forthcoming about sensitive topics. This has clear, and often noted, benefits when the research is looking into the opinions and attitudes of the participants. Considering the topic of the proposed research, and its focus on the attitudes and orientations of the participants in relation to the L2, a method that allows the respondents to provide their answers in an indirect manner is expected to produce frank replies. This could be even more relevant when the participants are being asked about their attitudes towards the L2 and communicating in it during a communication class. There is a danger that the respondents will give answers that they feel are expected of them in that situation, a form of social-desirability bias (Dörnyei, 2003a). It is hoped that by ensuring anonymity of the questionnaires, the potential for such biases to creep in and affect the data will be minimized.

Questionnaires are a common occurrence in most areas of modern life. They are even more prevalent within Japanese society and within the educational context in particular. Customer service feedback questionnaires are a feature in almost every restaurant chain and a large number of private educational institutions employ surveys to monitor levels of student satisfaction. Also, in contrast to what might be expected in other parts of the world, there appears to be little evidence of enmity towards completing all these forms. The familiarity of questionnaires to potential participants in research is expected to help to facilitate the collection of reliable data.

Finally, considering the large number of possible participants that could potentially participate in the research, the questionnaire method seems to be the only practical option.

Taking pre-and post-treatment surveys into account, there could be up to several hundred potential responses. It is plausible for even a solo researcher to collect and process that quantity of data and thus this becomes a very significant factor in the choice of method.

6．Conclusion

Investigating willingness to communicate in reluctant learners could potentially cast an illuminating light upon the differences between second-language learners in diverse contexts. Any upcoming research that this paper preludes is motivated by the desire to maximise the learning experience for a group of young-adult learners who seldom factor in SLA research. It is hoped that by conducting a short-term longitudinal study, the efficacy of a collaborative task and its ability to impact WTC levels can be examined.

The context that research could potentially take place in partially dictated the choice of methods. The need for time-efficiency, in addition to the large number of participants anticipated, would lean towards the tradition of quantitative methods. However, as the purpose of the research is concerned with the attitudes and opinions of the participants qualitative methods are deemed more appropriate. Combining the long history of the utilisation of questionnaires in similar areas of investigation with the restraints likely to be present in any potential research context they are the most suitable instrument in this particular case. It is therefore considered that open-ended questionnaires are the most practical way in which a researcher working alone could canvass the opinions of so many participants in a limited amount of time.

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