

## **Japanese EFL Speakers' Willingness to Communicate in L2 Conversations: The Effects of Code-switching and Translanguaging**

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### **Abstract**

Maximizing English as a foreign language (EFL) students' use of their second language (L2), minimizing native language (L1) can help them to develop L2 proficiency. In the monolingual approach, the exclusion of L1 is preferred. However, students' use of their first language (L1) in code-switching or translanguaging can be advantageous. This study examines the effects of L1 use on six advanced EFL speakers' willingness to communicate (WTC) during L2 conversations to evaluate the potential advantages of L1 use in an EFL context. Participants were recruited for the study, presented short speeches, and underwent interviews. L2 (English) use was required, but selective use of L1 (Japanese) was allowed. Thus, code-switching and translanguaging were expected. All participant utterances were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Participants self-assessed their WTC for each utterance; a stimulated recall interview was used to collect qualitative data. In general, the result showed that the participants' WTC was somewhat lower when talking in their L1 versus their L2. However, the findings also revealed the complex nature of WTC underlying the use of L1 in the form of code-switching or translanguaging, implying that intentional selective use of L1 can be a positive, effective move in L2 conversations.

**Keywords:** Willingness to communicate, Translanguaging, Code-switching, Language proficiency, Affective factors, Conditional factors

For second language (L2) learners studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), communicating in English is crucial, especially in settings where they have limited exposure and daily-life interactions in English. The monolingual approach to instruction of EFL, or English as a second language (ESL), has long prevailed, emphasizing the instructional use of the target language (TL) and excluding learners' L1 to enable thinking in the TL with little L1 interference (Cummins, 2007; Macaro, 2001). However, in a foreign language classroom, the L1 use appears frequently as code-switching or translanguaging (e.g., Wei, 2018), with the former having a negative connotation and the latter a positive one (García & Lin, 2017; Grosjean, 1989).

In Japan, to foster real-world communication skills, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT, 2009) mandated that senior high school teachers conduct English classes mainly in English. This approach was subsequently extended to junior high schools (MEXT, 2017), reflecting a holistic strategy to equip students with practical language abilities. In alignment with this initiative, elementary schools were tasked with incorporating activities that focus on listening, reading, speaking, and writing, integrating diverse perspectives and ideas (MEXT, 2018). However, according to the Course of Study by MEXT (2017), flexibility is allowed in the language of instruction, and teachers are not strictly required to conduct all their classes in English. This flexibility naturally raises several questions regarding its implications and execution: Should the use of L1 be viewed in a negative light in the context of TL learning by both teachers and learners? According to Cook (2001), L1 "can be seen as a failure and the ideal classroom should have as little of the L1 as possible" (p. 404). Conversely, should it be considered a positive aspect, since the L1 invariably exists in the learners' minds, and avoiding its use would be artificial and inefficient? (Cook, 2001). We remain uninformed about whether using the first language (L1) during the second language (L2) interaction has positive or negative effects. There is a dearth of research that contrasts the impacts of L1 and L2 usage, and even fewer studies consider the elements of learners' L1 use. To address this gap, the current study delves into the effects of L2 speakers using their L1 on the emotional aspects, specifically concentrating on their willingness to communicate (WTC) in their L1 and L2. In doing so, it aims to provide insights into how the use of L1 contributes to L2 instruction.

## **Literature Review**

### **L1 Use in the L2 Classroom**

The monolingual approach emphasizes the use of the TL and the exclusion of learners' L1 so that learners can think in the TL without L1 interference (Cummins, 2007). This principle assumes that the languages influence each other. This is also the case with the direct method, which does not allow L1 use in the classroom; learners should learn the TL in the same way the L1 was acquired, and the TL is both a medium and means for language learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

One form of L1 use in the L2 classroom is code-switching, which entails switching languages within or between sentences, from and to codes in one's repertoire, owing to communicative needs (López & González-Davies, 2016). Wei (2000) explained that bilinguals switch from one language to another when communicating with others who have the same linguistic background and that this involves careful manipulation of language and takes many forms. However, based on the traditional model of bilingualism, which assumes that bilingual speakers have two separate languages, code-switching has been viewed as a disruption to communication, rather than a linguistic resource (Grosjean, 1989). Notably, code-switching can be caused by inadequate L2 knowledge, such as a lack of vocabulary or grammar, avoidance of expressing oneself in the TL, or laziness in not searching for the appropriate expressions (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

In second language acquisition (SLA), the monolingual approach has been challenged. Levine (2003, 2011) argued that appropriate L1 use is valuable and effective for L2 learning and that by incorporating L1 into the classroom, L2 learners become more actively engaged, leading to

greater language acquisition. Han and Filippi (2022) conducted a study to investigate the impact of bilingual code-switching habits on cognitive functions, specifically focusing on cognitive shifting and inhibition. They found that those who regularly switch between languages were found to be more effective in maintaining focus on their goals and managing conflicting information, suggesting that dense code-switching experiences can facilitate improvements in these cognitive functions for bilingual individuals. Cummins (2007) summarized that conscious usage of students' L1 can function as scaffolding for higher language achievement.

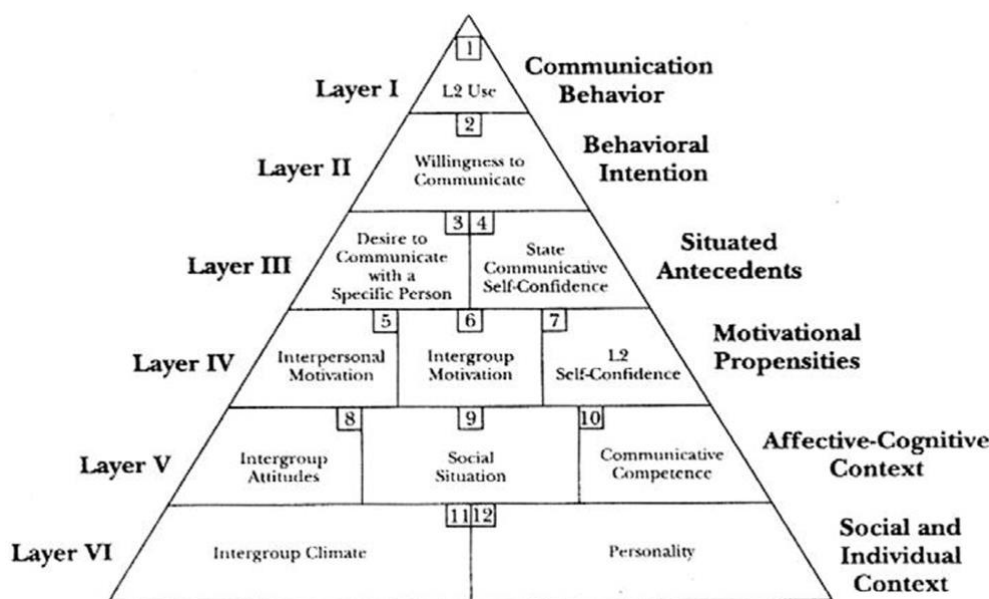
Several previous studies also explored the degree of L1 use in L2 classrooms and generally found learners' frequent use of L1. Most of these studies found L1 use in L2 learning to be beneficial, concluding that L1 use can reinforce and enhance learner participation (e.g., Butzkamm, 2003; Levine, 2003, 2011; Macaro, 2001; Tian & Macaro, 2012).

Recently, a different approach to L1 use in the L2 classroom, known as translanguaging, has gained attention. Translanguaging was defined by Otheguy et al. (2015) as the use of a speaker's entire linguistic repertoire without regard for the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and typically national and state) languages. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2022), practices of translanguaging can be in robust or mild forms, depending on the extent of pedagogical involvement occurring during the learning process and the utilization of multiple languages within a single class period. Certain robust translanguaging approaches incorporate resources from various languages within a single lesson to cultivate metalinguistic awareness, while other, milder forms rely on coordinating activities cross-linguistically in disparate classes. While code-switching as a communicative strategy has at times been perceived as detrimental to second language (L2) learning (e.g., Kang, 2008; Krashen, 1982), translanguaging is generally regarded in a positive light. García and Wei (2014) posited that the creation and utilization of unique, intricate, and interconnected discursive practices by speakers cannot be straightforwardly categorized under one or more traditional definitions of a language. Instead, these practices encompass their entire linguistic repertoire. Moreover, code-switching can be situated within the framework of translanguaging (López & González-Davies, 2016). The difference between code-switching and translanguaging can be roughly summarized as follows: code-switching emphasizes language switching due to a lack of L2 proficiency, whereas translanguaging is a pedagogical practice that maximizes the use of languages available in the classroom for L2 learning. Teachers should be aware that translanguaging often occurs as a more natural, internal process, based on the speaker's linguistic repertoire and the need to convey meaning most effectively, while code-switching is often used to accommodate the linguistic preference of the interlocutor or the social setting.

### **Willingness to Communicate (WTC)**

The idea of WTC was first developed by McCroskey and others to study communicative behavior in L1 communicative contexts (e.g., Chan & McCroskey, 1987; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990, 1991; McCroskey, 1992). He explained it as a predisposition to whether one is willing to communicate with others when given a choice (McCroskey, 1992). L1 WTC was viewed as a stable individual trait resulting from self-esteem, introversion, communication anxiety, and perceived communicative competence (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). WTC was applied and examined in more complex L2 contexts by MacIntyre and Charos (1996). A heuristic pyramid-shaped model developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) presents how various

traits and variables of situated individual L2 speakers interact and converge as WTC (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Pyramid Model of Willingness to Communicate.**

In the model, the first three layers of the pyramid (i.e., communicative behavior, behavioral intention, situated antecedents) are considered situation-specific influences on WTC, whereas the last three layers (i.e., motivational tendencies, affective-cognitive context, social and individual context) are considered more stable, enduring contexts.

WTC has been conceptualized as both a character and situational disposition that changes from moment to moment, the former being defined as trait WTC and the latter as situational WTC (Dörnyei, 2014; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre, 2007; Sato, 2019, 2023). Kang (2005) found that psychological conditions (e.g., feelings of safety, excitement, and responsibility) influence situational WTC in one's L2. Eddy-U (2015) demonstrated that communicative confidence in one's L2 and L2 learning motivation influences situational WTC. Other previous studies have uncovered factors associated with WTC fluctuation, including familiarity with the interlocutor, interlocutor involvement (Cao & Philp, 2006), topic of the task, preparation time, affinity with the interlocutor, opportunity to express one's ideas, mastery of the lexical items required for the task, presence of a teacher (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015), and self-confidence (Cao, 2011, 2014).

WTC has also been studied in the Japanese EFL environment and similar outcomes were noted. Sato (2019) found that the opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinion, sense of duty, and the feeling of being challenged and worthwhile, contributed to increased WTC among highly skilled L2 speakers, whereas concerns about the validity of English explanations and a lack of confidence in one's English skills greatly impacted a decrease in WTC. In Sato's (2023) study, WTC attrition was differentially influenced by speakers with low and advanced proficiency. Although concerns regarding a lack of English proficiency negatively influenced all speakers' WTC, low-intermediate speakers were impacted by the interest in the topic, the effect of interlocutors regarding feelings of safety, and the confidence. By contrast, advanced speakers' WTC was influenced by the opportunity to talk about themselves and their opinions.

Yashima et al. (2018) analyzed the qualitative data of three Japanese university students and discovered that the interaction of traits, such as personality and competence, as well as contextual factors (e.g., reactions of other students and conversational behavior in the group), influenced their situational WTC. In summary, both internal and external conditions significantly impact L2 speakers' WTC variations in the EFL classroom.

Since WTC plays a crucial role in TL learning, especially in an EFL context where communication in the TL (English) does not occur sufficiently or is not necessary for daily life, the effects of L1 use on speakers' WTC and the factors for high or low WTC should be considered. Although previous studies have examined WTC during L2 use, L1 use and its effect on or relationship with WTC during L2 conversation—whether in ESL or EFL contexts—has not been thoroughly explored. Therefore, this mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative case study investigated the following research questions to better understand speakers' L1 use and its impact on, or interaction with, WTC during L2 conversations:

RQ 1: Is there any difference in the degree of Japanese advanced speakers' WTC while speaking their L1 and L2?

RQ 2: What are the affective and conditional factors of advanced speakers' high and low WTC while speaking their L1?

RQ 3: What are the reasons for using one's L1, and how do they relate to the degree of WTC?

## Method

### Participants

The study involved six students from a Japanese national university, majoring in English education. These participants, both from undergraduate and graduate courses, were carefully selected through purposeful and convenience sampling. Notably, Japanese is their first language, with English as a secondary language. Furthermore, their selection was facilitated by their high accessibility and availability, given their enrollment in the researcher's seminar. For confidentiality, pseudonyms are employed in Table 1 to represent each participant. Mai, Sachi, and Kay were undergraduate students and Jun, Ryo, and Fusa were graduate students. All participants were considered advanced speakers because they had already passed the pre-first level of the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) test<sup>[1]</sup>, which corresponds to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). Fusa stands out among the participants due to her extensive experience studying abroad in an English-speaking country for a prolonged period. This, combined with seven years of teaching experience at the senior high school level, distinguishes her background significantly. Her substantial experience could manifest in discernible differences in performance compared to her counterparts, three undergraduate students, and two graduate students. It was expected that these contrasts offer the potential for richer insights into the study. The participants signed a confidentiality agreement and gave their consent for the researcher to record their interactions on video and audio for future examination in the study. Although the study focused on their situational state WTC, their trait WTC level was evaluated because it is useful for obtaining a set point of fluctuating, situational state WTC. A questionnaire created by Yashima (2009) was administered, comprising eight items rated on a scale from 1 to 6 (1=*unwilling*, 6=*willing*; see Appendix ). Table 1 shows that the participants had a relatively high trait WTC, except for Mai.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participant**

	Age	English proficiency level	Trait WTC
Mai (F)	21	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	2.75
Sachi (F)	21	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	3.75
Kai (M)	22	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	5.25
Jun (M)	23	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	5.0
Ryo (M)	24	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	3.87
Fusa (F)	30	Advanced (pre-first grade of STEP test)	4.75

### **Procedure**

This study involved two sessions in which participants had one-on-one interaction with the researcher. Both sessions were captured using a digital video camera and an audio recorder. The use of both recording tools ensured comprehensive data collection, capturing both visual cues and spoken content, which might not be adequately represented with audio recording alone.

**Session 1:** The main objective was twofold:

1. Short speech: Participants presented a concise speech on the topic: "Should more people become vegetarian in the future?" They explored this from various angles such as animal rights, cost, environment, and health. This particular task was derived from the written segment of the pre-first grade STEP test. The idea behind this choice was that expressing personal opinions based on their understanding of the topic would likely enhance their logical reasoning and speech organization.
2. Interview Activity: Following the speech, a semi-structured interview was conducted, probing deeper into topics touched upon in their presentations. Here, while the primary mode of communication was English, participants had the freedom to switch to their first language, Japanese so that code-switching and translanguaging would be recorded. Post this session, every interaction, both from participants and the researcher, was transcribed. During this process, utterances were distinctly numbered, and their definition was based on established research standards.

**Session 2:** In this session, participants self-assessed their WTC and then this session delved into the participants' emotional and affective factors behind the fluctuation on WTC:

1. WTC Self-assessment: By observing the video of the first session, participants were tasked with self-rating their WTC for every utterance they made. WTC ratings were made on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = greatly decreased WTC, 2 = slightly decreased WTC, 3 = stable WTC, 4 = slightly increased WTC, and 5 = greatly increased WTC. They rated their WTC at each instance when they or the researcher produced an utterance. In so doing, the participants were not required to record instances of '3 = stable' but only to record instances indicating a fluctuation. Whenever the changes in WTC occurred, they were noted, together with a WTC rating next to the relevant utterance on the transcription.
2. Stimulated Recall Interview: Participants then explained the reasons behind any fluctuations in their WTC and their choice to use Japanese. This was done by watching the video and cross-

referencing with the transcript. During the explanation, the video was paused. Without engaging in conversation, the researcher listened passively and avoided asking any suggestive questions (Egi, 2008; Gass & Mackey, 2000). It's crucial to note that this entire session was carried out in Japanese, their first language (L1), to ensure clear comprehension and mitigate any potential misunderstandings. The flow of the procedures across both sessions is detailed in Table 2. Additionally, it's worth highlighting that participants granted explicit permission for their involvement, and the recording of their conversations, ensuring confidentiality and the potential for review by external parties.

**Table 2. Sequence of Procedures**

	<b>First session: Short speech, Interview activity</b>	<b>Second session: WTC self-assessment, Stimulated recall</b>
Mai	18 mins (February 21, 2022)	62 mins (March 14, 2022)
Sachi	20 mins (February 21, 2022)	65 mins (March 14, 2022)
Kai	19 mins (February 7, 2022)	62 mins (February 24, 2022)
Jun	18 mins (February 15, 2022)	68 mins (February 27, 2022)
Ryo	20 mins (February 16, 2022)	58 mins (March 3, 2022)
Fusa	18 mins (February 15, 2022)	70 mins (March 2, 2022)

## Analysis

To analyze whether there is any difference in the degree of speakers' WTC while speaking different languages (Japanese or English), a chi-square test with Yates's correction was conducted. Factors influencing WTC fluctuation in participants' L1 (Japanese) were scrutinized by perusing data obtained through stimulated recall interviews. The participants were asked to explain the reasons for the rise and decline of their WTC when speaking Japanese compared with the average stable situation. The data were analyzed qualitatively with reference to prior findings (Cao, 2011; Cao, 2014; Eddy-U, 2015; Kang, 2005; Sato, 2019, 2023;). In our study, we employed a detailed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun et al. (2019). This analysis consisted of six distinct phases: Data Familiarization: An initial review of the data to gain an understanding of its depth and breadth; Code Generation: Systematically creating codes from the data to represent emerging patterns; Theme Construction: Grouping similar codes to form overarching themes; Theme Revision and Definition: Refining and finalizing themes to ensure clarity and coherence; Reports of Analysis: Compiling the findings and insights derived from the analyzed data. We chose this method based on its theoretical flexibility, as it offers a comprehensive approach to investigating qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From our analysis, factors increasing WTC were identified: (1) interest in the topic, (2) confidence in the content, (3) the opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinions, and (4) the influence of interlocutors on one's sense of security. Conversely, factors leading to a decrease in WTC included: (1) a lack of English proficiency, (2) anxiety, (3) a lack of ideas and confidence in the content, and (4) a lack of interest in the topic. (see Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 3. Definitions and Examples of Factors of Increased Willingness to Communicate While Speaking in One's Native Language (L1).**

	Factor	Definition and example
1	Interest in the topic	Participants are interested in the topic: <i>"I was interested in the topic."</i>
2	Confidence in the content	Participants feel confident in what they are discussing: <i>"As I had confidence in what I was talking about, I was highly motivated to speak."</i>
3	The opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinions	Participants talk about themselves and their own opinions: <i>"I really wanted to let you know what I did and my opinions about it."</i>
4	The influence of interlocutors on one's sense of security	Participants feel safe from fears, including when positive feedback is provided and scaffolding is created through interactions with the interlocutor: <i>"The teacher nodded when I said Shoninsha (novice) and felt relieved because he acknowledged my use of Japanese."</i>

**Table 4. Definitions and Examples of Factors of Decreased Willingness to Communicate in One's Native Language (L2)**

	Factor	Definition and example
1	Lack of English proficiency	Participants feel their English proficiency is not high enough to communicate what they really mean, causing them to decide to speak in L1: <i>"As I thought I couldn't say what I really meant in English because of a lack of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, I talked in Japanese."</i>
2	Anxiety	Participants feel fear or anxiety while speaking in L1: <i>"I felt anxiety that the teacher may have thought I was not a good speaker of English when I was speaking in Japanese."</i>
3	Lack of ideas and confidence in the content	Participants do not have ideas about what to say: <i>"I felt frustrated because I didn't have good ideas and confidence about what to say then, so my motivation to speak decreased."</i>
4	Lack of interest in the topic	Participants do not have an interest in the topic: <i>"My motivation to speak was decreased because I was not interested in the topic."</i>

The reasons participants used their L1 were (1) a lack of English proficiency, (2) the interviewer's use of L1, (3) content clarification and emphasis, and (4) appropriateness of L1 use. Table 5 shows definitions and examples from the stimulated recall.

**Table 5. Definitions and Examples of Reasons for Native Language (L1) Use**

	Factor	Definition and example
1	Lack of English proficiency	Participants feel their English proficiency is not high enough to communicate what they really mean, making them decide to use L1: <i>"I thought it was difficult to say what I meant in English because of a lack of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, so I decided to talk in Japanese."</i>
2	Interviewer's use of L1	Participants feel it is natural to use L1 as the interviewer used L1: <i>"As the teacher spoke in Japanese, I spoke in Japanese as well."</i>
3	Content clarification and emphasis	Participants intentionally use L1 to make clear and emphasize what they really mean: <i>"I felt it better to speak in Japanese to emphasize my message."</i>
4	Appropriateness of L1	Participants feel it is better to use L1 to keep the original meaning. <i>"I thought there was no correct English equivalent."</i>



The same researcher double-checked all categorizations a week after the initial coding, in line with Alderson et al. (1995) who asserted that multiple rating sessions enhance reliability. During interviews, participants verified these categorizations.

## Results and Discussion

Research Question 1 investigated whether there is a difference in the degree of WTC of Japanese advanced speakers when speaking L1 and L2. In English, the participants produced 170 utterances with a high WTC score of 4 or 5 and 103 utterances with a low WTC score of 1 or 2. Of the Japanese utterances, 52 had a high WTC score and 61 had a low WTC score. In Japanese, there were more instances of lower WTC than higher WTC, whereas in English, more instances of higher WTC than lower WTC were recorded. Table 6 is a cross-tabulation summarizing the findings.

**Table 6. Cross-tabulation of High or Low Willingness to Communicate Based on the Language**

			Low WTC	High WTC	Total
Language	Japanese	Frequency	61	52	113
		Adjusted standardized residuals	2.9	-2.9	
	English	Frequency	103	170	273
		Adjusted standardized residuals	-2.9	2.9	
Total		Frequency	164	222	102

The differences were analyzed using a chi-square test with Yates's correction, indicating  $\chi^2(1)=7.99$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $\phi=0.15$ , which suggests that different languages may have different high and low WTC. The participants' WTC may have been higher when speaking English versus Japanese. However, since the effect size is small, this finding should be interpreted with caution.

The participants' WTC generally tended to be higher when they spoke their L2 as opposed to their L1, which is understandable since they were supposed to have interactions in their L2 with permission to use their L1. They tried to speak in their L2 but sometimes spoke in their L1 for certain reasons, which lowered their WTC. Hence, L1 use is related to decreased and lower WTC, consistent with the negative view of code-switching caused by insufficient L2 knowledge or skills (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). However, it is notable that the L1 WTC of Kai and Ryo, who sometimes used L1 intentionally, was not lower than their L2 WTC. This will be discussed later.

After showing that participants' WTC fluctuated during the communicative interactions, the influencing affective and conditional factors while speaking in one's L1 were investigated. The recorded data of the interactions and the data obtained through the stimulated recall interview were analyzed to answer Research Question 2 following the thematic analysis. Table 7 displays the factors for low WTC (1 or 2 items), and Table 8 summarizes the factors for high WTC (4 or 5 items) during L1 use.

**Table 7. Factors of Low Willingness to Communicate (1 Or 2 Points) in One's Native Language (L1)**

	Factor	Mai	Sachi	Kai	Jun	Ryo	Fusa	Total
1	Lack of English proficiency	5	6	-	10	1	16	38 (66%)
2	Lack of ideas and confidence in the content	4	8	-	1	3	-	16 (28%)
3	Anxiety	1	-	-	2	-	-	3 (5%)
4	Lack of interest in the topic	1	-	-	-	-	-	1 (2%)
	Total	11	14	-	13	4	16	58

Note. 1) In cases of multiple factors being reported for an utterance, they were all counted.

2) Kai did not report low WTC.

3) In five cases, participants did not know the reason.

**Table 8. Factors of High Willingness to Communicate (4 Or 5 Points) in One's Native Language (L1)**

	Factor	Mai	Sachi	Kai	Jun	Ryo	Fusa	Total
1	The opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinions	10	18	6	3	5	-	42 (77%)
2	Interest in the topic	4	1	2	-	-	-	7 (13%)
3	Confidence in the content	-	-	2	-	2	-	4 (7%)
4	Influence of the interlocutors on one's sense of security	-	-	1	-	-	-	1 (2%)
	Total	14	19	11	3	7	-	54

Note. 1) In cases of multiple factors being reported for an utterance, they were all counted.

2) High willingness to communicate was not reported by Fusa.

*Lack of English proficiency* contributed most to low WTC, followed by *lack of ideas and confidence in the content*, whereas *the opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinions* was a dominating factor for high WTC. These three factors were qualitatively examined.

### **Lack of English Proficiency**

As Table 7 shows, *lack of English proficiency* was most frequently cited overall as a factor for low WTC in one's L1, based on two-thirds of the L1 expressions demonstrating low WTC. Qualitative data are presented in one of three ways: interactions between the researcher and participant, the participant's utterances in the stimulated recall interview, or both. The researcher translated the participants' interview data. Japanese phrases are in italics, and English translations are in parentheses.

#### **Excerpt 1: Jun.**

Researcher (R): Why?

Jun: Because the cow... (3-second pause)

*Ushi no geppu de nisanka tanso no noudo ga agatte shimau*

[Cows' burps raise the concentration of carbon dioxide.]

In this excerpt, Jun was talking about cows as a cause of global warming. He started explaining in English, but after a three-second pause, he switched to Japanese. In the stimulated recall interview, Jun said he wanted to continue in English, but owing to a lack of vocabulary he had

to use Japanese, which made him feel bad or even guilty. For Fusa, *lack of English proficiency* was the only cause for low WTC in her L1 use.

**Excerpt 2: Fusa.**

R: To reduce the amount of waste of food, there may be something we can do.

Fusa: Ah... (3-second pause)

*Un, tatoeba konbini toka de, shomikigen ga chikaku natte iru yatsu wa yasuku uru toka*

[Yes, for example, at the convenience stores, they can sell items that are close to their expiration date cheaper.]

Fusa, who studied abroad and taught high school for 7 years, and who firmly believed that English language class should be taught in English, said in the stimulated recall interview that she had decided to speak in English as much as possible with the researcher. However, she sometimes resorted to Japanese because she lacked vocabulary, despite feeling uncomfortable speaking Japanese. For Fusa, her code-switching was a manifestation of her lack of relevant vocabulary or insufficient knowledge of the L2. This excerpt and the interview data suggest that L2 speakers with a strong desire to speak English may decrease their WTC when speaking in their L1 due to their lack of English proficiency.

For Mai and Sachi as well, the *lack of English proficiency* was an influential factor of low WTC in their L1. The following is an excerpt from a stimulated interview with Mai.

**Excerpt 3 (Stimulated recall interview with Mai).**

“As I was allowed to use Japanese, I did, because I didn’t have the confidence to show what I really meant in English. However, while I was speaking in Japanese, I often felt ashamed of my lack of English proficiency.”

Using one’s L1 or code-switching can be a communicative strategy (e.g., Rossiter, 2005; Tarone, 1977). However, when it is caused by a lack of English proficiency, it may negatively affect WTC.

**Lack of ideas and confidence in the content**

*Lack of ideas and confidence in the content* was an influential factor for low WTC, experienced most frequently by Sachi.

**Excerpt 4: Sachi.**

Sachi: *Shomikigen ni motto chikai tabemono kara kau toka*

[For example, to buy foods closest to the expiration date.]

In this excerpt, Sachi used her L1 to explain how we can reduce food waste. In the interview, Sachi pointed out that she was unsure whether her idea was correct, and that she could not produce any more ideas on the topic, thus decreasing her motivation to talk. She acknowledged that, in this case, it was not a lack of English skills that contributed to her low WTC, but rather a lack of ideas and confidence in the content. This factor was observed by Sato (2023), who found that L2 speakers expressed frustration or confusion because they did not know what to say or were not sure what they were discussing. This problem is not rooted in language but in

the topic itself. As Hughes (2003) argued, teachers may need to choose task topics that can be discussed without difficulty, even in the students' L1.

The participants' WTC was generally lower when they spoke in their L1 (Japanese) than in their L2. However, in some cases, high WTC was observed for L1 utterances.

### **The Opportunity to Talk About Oneself and One's Opinions**

As Table 8 shows, more than two-thirds of utterances with high WTC were related to *the opportunity to talk about oneself and one's opinions*, which was the factor most frequently experienced by participants.

#### **Excerpt 5: Mai.**

R: What kind of teacher or educator do you want to be, whether in Tokushima or Nara?

Mai: *Hai, moshi Tokushima ni kaeru to shitara, Nara de keiken shita koto o tsutaerareru sensei*

[Yes. If I return to Tokushima, I would like to be a teacher who can share what I experienced in Nara.]

Mai was thinking of returning to her home in Tokushima Prefecture to become a teacher, which conveyed a crucial message to the researcher, who was also her academic adviser. She spoke Japanese intentionally, determining that L1 use is not a failure, but rather a distinct force.

#### **Excerpt 6 (Stimulated recall interview with Mai).**

"This is what I wanted to tell you. To do it correctly without causing any misunderstanding, I did it in Japanese. I could not have done it accurately in English."

Sachi had a high L1 WTC while talking about the ideal qualities of a teacher.

#### **Excerpt 7: Sachi.**

Sachi: *Jugyou dake de wa naku, chanto jinkaku o sodateageru sensei*

[A teacher who can teach the class well and improve students' character.]

In the animated query, Sachi admitted she did not dare to say this in English as she lacked English skills. However, her strong desire to share the message increased her WTC, even in her L1.

In the following excerpt, Jun spoke in Japanese about his beliefs.

#### **Excerpt 8: Jun.**

Jun: It is important to emphasize the good points of students.

R: You mean praising? *Homeru koto?* [Praising?]

Jun: *Hai sou desu. Ii tokoro o homeru. Taisetsu da to omoimasu. Soko wa ichiban taisetsu ni shitai. Zutto omotte kita koto nanode.*

[Yes, it is. Praising a good point. That is very important. I want to value it the most. I have been thinking so.]

When the participants decided to share important information about themselves, their opinions, or their beliefs, their WTC increased regardless of the language they used; this is consistent with translanguaging, which is a process of meaning and sense-making (Wei, 2018).

Research Question 3 explored the reasons for using one's L1 and sought to identify its relationship with the degree of WTC. In this analysis, all of the utterances by the participants, including ones with a WTC score of 3, were included. In the stimulated recall interview, the participants were asked to explain the reasons behind using their L1. While they often used Japanese unconsciously (Mai, 6 times; Sachi, 15; Kai, 5; Jun, 6; Ryo, 8; Fusa, 12), the most frequent reason given was a *lack of English proficiency*, followed by *the interviewer's use of L1*, and then, *content clarification and emphasis* and *appropriateness of L1 use*. The average degree of WTC for utterances based on the factors was also calculated. Table 9 summarizes the results.

**Table 9. Factors of L1 Use, Frequencies, and Degree of Willingness to Communicate**

Factor	Mai	Sachi	Kai	Jun	Ryo	Fusa	Total
1 Lack of English proficiency	21 (3.0)	25 (3.0)	6 (3.7)	8 (2.0)	6 (3.3)	4 (1.0)	57 (2.9)
2 Interviewer's use of L1	8 (3.8)	11 (3.8)	2 (4.0)	-	1 (4.0)	8 (1.0)	25 (3.0)
3 Content clarification and emphasis	1 (4.0)	3 (3.6)	-	2 (3.0)	2 (4.0)	-	5 (3.6)
4 Appropriateness of L1 use	-	-	4 (3.7)	-	-	-	4 (3.7)

Notes: 1) In cases of multiple factors being reported for an utterance, they were all counted.  
2) In each cell, the factor frequency and average willingness to communicate are reported.

### **Lack of English Proficiency**

A lack of English proficiency was the most frequently reported reason for L1 use, recording the lowest degree of WTC. This can be interpreted as compatible with the outcome of RQ2 that *lack of English proficiency* was the most influential factor for low WTC while speaking one's L1. The participants spoke in their L1 because they could not speak in their L2, or felt they had insufficient abilities in their L2, thus maintaining a low WTC while speaking. In the following excerpt, Jun discussed his plan. He started speaking in English, but owing to a lack of vocabulary, he switched to Japanese.

#### **Excerpt 9: Jun.**

Jun: But these days I'm interested in ... (3-second pause)

*Kenkyuu. Hakushi katei ni iku* [Research, advancing to a doctoral program.]

In the next excerpt, Fusa code-switches during her talk.

#### **Excerpt 10: Fusa.**

Fusa: But she lacks ... (a pause longer than 3 seconds) *Tetsubun* [iron.] So she takes supplements every day.

In the interview, Fusa explained that she wanted to avoid speaking Japanese as much as possible; however, her lack of English skills often made this difficult. Thus, she felt disappointed and her motivation to speak decreased.

Using their L1 was intentional given the difficulty of expressing themselves in their L2. In these situations, communication was successful. However, when code-switching was triggered by linguistic inadequacies, it negatively impacted their WTC.

### **The Interviewer's Use of L1**

During the interviews, a noticeable pattern emerged. When the interviewer employed their L1, the participants frequently responded by using their L1. This behavior resulted in a moderate degree of WTC.

#### **Excerpt 11: Sachi.**

R: I cannot understand. *Douiu imi desu ka?* [What do you mean?]

Sachi: *Nanika* [well...]

R: *Wana ni hamatte damasareta tte koto?* [Were you trapped and deceived?]

Sachi: *Iya, ima furikaeru to, chanto seichou dekiru you ni, sensei ga yatte ita no da na to*

[Looking back now, I think the teacher was doing it so that we could grow properly.]

#### **Excerpt 12 (Stimulated recall interview with Sachi).**

“As the teacher (researcher) asked in Japanese, I felt I could answer in Japanese. I could not have said what I really meant in English. I may not have been able to say what I really meant correctly in English.”

#### **Excerpt 13: Fusa.**

R: Have you ever seen videos or the kind of documentary films that show how animals are brutally killed? *Mita koto nai desu ka?* [Have you ever seen them?]

Fusa: *Aru to omoimasu.* [I think I have.] *Demo tabete ikanai to ikite ikenai node.*

[We cannot survive without eating them.] *Kansha shinakereba ikenai to omoimasu.*

[I think we must be thankful to them.]

#### **Excerpt 14 (Stimulated recall interview with Fusa).**

“I felt it would not be unnatural to speak in Japanese after the teacher spoke in Japanese.”

The researcher intentionally used Japanese in a few instances to emphasize the meaning and ensure participants' understanding, or sometimes unconsciously, to which participants often responded in Japanese without decreasing their WTC. We can assume the researcher's use of L1 triggered—or even encouraged—the participants' use of their L1, as this may be more natural in discourse. In this situation, the participants did not have to feel a lack of English proficiency that could cause low WTC. Sachi's comment, “I may not have been able to say what I really meant correctly in English,” could be considered in line with the concept of

translanguaging, which calls for maximum use of languages available in the classroom for L2 learning (e.g., Otheguy et al., 2015).

### **Content Clarification and Emphasis; Appropriateness of L1**

These two reasons for L1 use led to relatively high WTC. Four participants recorded the former, while only Kai recorded the latter.

In the following excerpt, Ryo asked for permission to use his L1, even though it was already allowed.

#### ***Excerpt 15: Ryo.***

Ryo: *Sou desu ne. Ano, Nihongo de ii desu ka?* [Yes, um, can I speak in Japanese?]

He expressed his opinion on the importance of education for international understanding and explained some world events. He said he spoke in Japanese, rather than English, to present his opinion more clearly and convincingly. During the conversation, his WTC reached the highest score of 5. Another example of using L1 for the same purpose is presented below.

#### ***Excerpt 16: Mai.***

R: We have to make use of everything. You can do it.

Mai: Yes, *Yarimasu*. [I do.]

#### ***Excerpt 17 (Stimulated recall interview with Mai).***

I said it in Japanese because I wanted to emphasize that I'm trying not to waste food in my daily life.

This code-switching in the same utterance was not done to compensate for a lack of knowledge, or as a sign of linguistic deficiency, but rather as a deliberate use of the L1 to express the speaker's intended social meanings to the interlocutor in the interaction (Edwards, 2004; Gibbons & Ng, 2004).

In four instances, Kai felt it more appropriate to use the L1 rather than English and did so while maintaining a high WTC.

#### ***Excerpt 18: Kai.***

Kai: She visited my junior high school and she said she cannot eat ordinary *Kyuushoku* [school lunch.]

R: Ah, *Kyuushoku*

Kai: We were, like, surprised.

#### ***Excerpt 19 (Stimulated recall interview with Kai).***

Kai: As I thought *Kyuushoku* is unique in Japan, so I used it as it is.

*Kyuushoku* can simply be translated as "school lunch" in English. However, its history is surely unique in Japan as he claimed.

**Excerpt 20: Kai.**

R: I would like to hear about your dream.

Kai: So, my dream, dream, now I want to be *Eigo Senka* [a teacher who specifically teaches English only at an elementary school.]

R: *Eigo Senka*

Kai: At an elementary school.

In Japan, elementary school teachers usually teach all subjects. However, *Eigo Senka* teachers only teach English. This system was introduced recently (MEXT, 2018) and has some pros and cons. In the interview, Kai explained that *Eigo Senka* is a unique system that cannot simply be translated as “English teachers in elementary school,” which made him decide to use the Japanese term. In the next example, Kai used the Japanese term *Fukukyouka* [supplementary subjects.]

**Excerpt 21: Kai.**

Kai: But I also would like to teach some *Fukukyouka* as well. *Fukukyouka* can literally be translated as “supplementary subjects.” However, in Japan, it refers to topics such as art, music, and physical education, which are not required for entrance exams. The term *Fukukyouka* has a negative connotation because such subjects tend to be given less importance. As he mentioned in the interview, there might not be an exact counterpart for *Fukukyouka* in English. In the following example, Kai used another Japanese term intentionally.

**Excerpt 22: Kai.**

Kai: Yes, but I don’t have any plans because maybe in the past, *Shuushin Koyou* [lifetime employment] is like virtue.

When asked if he had thought about using the English term “lifetime employment” or “lifelong employment,” Kai replied that he had. However, these translations differ slightly from their Japanese counterparts because *Shuushin Koyou* is part of Japanese culture. Code-switching—or using the abovementioned Japanese words in a single utterance—is not a sign of weak language skills or a lack of L2 proficiency, but is intended to represent Japanese cultural concepts that cannot be accurately expressed in one’s L2 (Dubey, 1991). This may also show Kai’s sense of solidarity (Lightbown & Spada, 2013) toward the researcher, as demonstrated by his remark that, as a Japanese person, the researcher would correctly understand what he meant, including subtle nuances intentionally expressed in Japanese.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated advanced Japanese speakers’ WTC when speaking L1 in the form of code-switching or translanguaging by first comparing the degree of WTC in L1 with that in L2 during interactions. Quantitative analysis revealed that the speakers’ WTC in their L2 was generally higher than that in their L1, although with slight individual differences.

Major factors related to low WTC in L1 were found to be a sense of *lack of English proficiency* and a *lack of ideas and confidence in the content*, while *the opportunity to talk about oneself and one’s opinions* contributed considerably to high WTC. The most frequently recorded cause



of L1 use was *lack of English proficiency*, followed by *the interviewer's use of L1*, the former being closely associated with low WTC, whereas the latter was not. *Content clarification and emphasis*, and *appropriateness of L1 use* were correlated with higher WTC.

Qualitative data analysis of the participants' language, interactions with the researcher, and the stimulated recall interview indicated a complex, dynamic relationship between L1 use in code-switching or translanguaging and WTC fluctuation, which has pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, especially those teaching relatively proficient learners with the same L1. First, although the source language must be the L2, the use of L1 should be tolerated or even encouraged, depending on the situation. Learners can thus use their full linguistic repertoire while learning (e.g., García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015) to express real meaning, as this can contribute to high WTC. Second, because code-switching triggered by linguistic deficits negatively impacts WTC, L2 interactions should ideally be designed to avoid learners feeling their L2 proficiency is insufficient. For example, learners may succeed in acquiring new knowledge and producing correct L2 utterances on their own with the teacher's support and feedback (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Another way of practicing scaffolding is to provide useful expressions or vocabulary before the activities or encourage learners to use the dictionary when needed. Third, teachers can intentionally use their shared L1 when it is assumed learners will need to use L2 skills or knowledge higher than their current level to express their meaning. Finally, the use of L1 vocabulary closely related to or rooted in one's culture, system, or habits should be encouraged during L2 conversation. This can also strengthen solidarity with interlocutors who share the same L1 (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). When designing L2 instruction, care should be taken not to base it on the monolingual approach. The bilingual approach allows speakers to "treat the different languages that make up their repertoire as an integrated system" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401).

The findings and implications of this study expand our understanding of the complex relationship between learners' L1 use and their WTC and provide useful suggestions for the judicious use of a rich repertoire of multiple languages. However, some caveats must be mentioned. The sample size was small, and the six participants were all advanced English learners with a high motivation to speak English. In addition, the speech by the participants and the interaction between the participants and the researcher in session one may not have been long enough for the data analysis, which makes it difficult to generalize the results to broader EFL situations. To increase the rigor of the data, future studies will require more data from a larger sample of participants with different learning backgrounds, levels of English proficiency, and personalities over long intervention periods. In this study, the stimulated recall interview was conducted to examine participants' thinking processes when using their L1. However, this measure may not have fully revealed their emotions or thought processes. For example, they sometimes did not elaborate on the reasons for using their L1; rather, they simply said they used their L1 unconsciously. Other valid and reliable measures should ideally be applied to compensate for the limitations of the stimulated recall interview.

This study—which examined L1 use among advanced L2 speakers in terms of code-switching and translanguaging and its relationship to WTC—is significant and unique. Owing to the limitations mentioned above, the study should be considered preliminary. We are hopeful this study will be a harbinger of future studies that will reveal intricate, dynamic relationships between L2 speakers' L1 use and their affective aspects of WTC.

## Note

[1]The STEP Test is an English proficiency test conducted by a Japanese non-profit organization, the Society for Testing English Proficiency, Inc. (STEP), and supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). The test comprises listening and writing sections followed by a speaking test and is regarded as one of the most reliable and valid English proficiency tests in Japan. MEXT requires Japanese teachers of English to possess at least pre-first grade scores on the test.

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## Appendix

Examples of items from the Questionnaire Measuring Willingness to Communicate (8 items,  $\alpha=0.77$ ).

- When you give a speech in front of many people.
- When you have a discussion with a small group of friends.
- When you meet an acquaintance standing before you in line.

*Note.* The questionnaires were written in Japanese and translated into English by the author.

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