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## **Initiation of World Englishes into EFL Writing Classrooms in Japanese Secondary School**

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### **Bio Data**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses primarily on the potential for the teaching of writing which incorporates the concept of varieties of English into writing classes in Japanese secondary school. The purpose of this paper is to identify the issue of teaching writing in Japanese junior and senior high school and to discuss the possibility of initiating the concept of World Englishes (WEs) in this context. The current situation of writing instruction in Japanese secondary school contradict the communicative language teaching that the government has proposed. Ideally, the teaching of writing at the secondary level should accommodate the approaches based on WEs that go beyond over-emphasizing on grammatical accuracy. As there has been little attention to research on writing in foreign language (FL), applying WEs into writing instruction provides a deeper insight into FL writing research. Moreover, further inquiries of EFL/FL writing grounded in teacher education viewpoints (teacher identity construction and pre-service teacher preparation programs) need to be explored. This paper argues that EFL/FL writing research is necessary among scholars to raise awareness of the issues in second language writing scholarship.

**Keywords:** *Foreign language writing, EFL writing, Japanese English education, World Englishes, secondary school, critical pedagogy*

## **Introduction**

For decades, Japanese secondary school (junior and senior high school) teachers who taught English as a foreign language (EFL) used the grammar-translation method, focusing on the development of grammatical structures and the translation of the native language into English. Lately, the revised guidelines of English education, issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), have recognized English as an international language and advocated the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) in secondary school, with the aim of developing English communication skills and understanding language and culture (MEXT, 2010). However, this goal of English education overemphasizes the benefits of speaking and listening proficiencies, sidelining the development of writing skills. Despite writing being an important means of communication, the teaching of written English has been neglected in the current English curriculum because administrators might believe that traditional grammar-oriented and writing-focused instruction creates a mental block that impedes the progress of oral proficiency.

For several years now, MEXT has been promoting the use of CLT for imparting writing instruction to Japanese students; however, there is a considerable discrepancy between the government-advocated educational concepts and the ground realities of teaching writing. Writing instruction in secondary school still emphasizes rote learning of grammar translations and memorization of grammatical rules in a bid to prepare students for college/university entrance examinations. In fact, offering effective strategies for gaining higher scores on entrance examinations is a goal of English writing instruction in Japanese senior high school—a situation that leads to a conflict between the actual and the ideal objectives of learning to write. Most Japanese students have few opportunities to practice paragraph writing or to express their opinions freely in English. Rather, they are coached for framing short sentences that are grammatically accurate. Owing to the lack of writing practice in secondary school, students are confounded by the writing performance expected of them in higher education. Thus, improving the quality of written English education offered in

Japanese secondary schools is an urgent need.

To improve the present situation of writing instruction in Japanese secondary schools, two questions need to be explored: (1) how should English teachers at the junior and senior high school level improve their teaching of writing skills and (2) what developmental aspects should be investigated in research that focuses on writing instruction and English teachers in Japanese secondary schools? These questions stem from the paucity of discussions on the improvement and implications of teaching EFL writing in Japanese settings, especially at the secondary level, even though several studies on writing have targeted Japanese EFL contexts (Casanave, 1994, 1995, 2009; Hatasa, 2011; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2008; A. Matsuda, 2003; McKay, 2000; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009; Sasaki, 2009). To achieve a breakthrough in the teaching of writing, English teachers in Japanese secondary schools need to first become aware of the emerging issues in English such as varieties of English or World Englishes (WEs). Initiating students into the different English varieties through teaching writing can enable them to enhance their negotiation of discourse patterns, thus helping them to appropriate the language to local contexts (Canagarajah, 2006a, 2006b; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010). Further, teachers at the secondary level need to extend their identities beyond the realm of language teachers from the standpoint of teacher education (Lee, 2010) and understand the experiences of other teachers who incorporate different approaches for teaching writing. Investigations into Japanese EFL writing at the secondary school level conducted in diverse contexts can be valuable for widening the scope of research on writing in foreign language (FL) in the field of second language (L2) writing (Cimasko & Reichelt, 2011; Manchón, 2009a; Ortega, 2009).

This paper primarily discusses the potential for applying the concept of English varieties to teaching writing in Japanese secondary school. The discussions offer implications for future research as well as pedagogical orientation in EFL writing contexts at the Japanese secondary school level. The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of improving writing instruction by fostering a greater interest in the concept of WEs among students. To this end, this paper first discusses the limitations of writing in FL scholarship and the importance of understanding the

purposes of teaching to write in a FL. The paper then discusses EFL writing in Japan, contextualizing English education. Finally, the study provides recommendations for teaching EFL writing in Japan grounded in the framework of WEs and offers research directions for EFL writing from the theoretical viewpoints of teacher education.

### **Writing in Foreign Language Contexts**

L2 writing has flourished as a specialized field, with numerous studies being undertaken on the subject. However, the majority of the studies on L2 writing focus on writers of English as a second language (ESL) in ESL-centric settings rather than on EFL/FL learners across diverse EFL/FL contexts (Cimasko & Reichelt, 2011; Manchón, 2009b). The tendency to attach excessive importance to research in ESL contexts, termed as “L2-bias research” (Ortega, 2009), has an adverse pervasive effect and typically leads to a dissonance between various studies on L2 writing. Various theoretical and pedagogical issues of EFL writing, including FL writing, are underdeveloped because there have been few critical discussions on how to apply the theoretical and teaching implications into FL settings (Manchón, 2009a). Moreover, unlike ESL writing, EFL writing is contextually unique as “the manner in which writing is learned and taught in FL contexts is dependent upon a whole set of material conditions and social practices that do not necessarily coincide with those of SL contexts” (Manchón, 2009a, p. 2). Namely, an important characteristic of EFL contexts is that they capture the idiosyncratic features of writing (e.g., purpose, instructional goals, and roles). In some countries, the teaching of writing is controlled by the guideline of the Ministry of Education (e.g., China, Japan) or by the institutional policy. In addition, practices of writing highlight the way in which learners attempt to write to learn rather than learn to write (Harklau, 2002; Lee, 2010). Despite the distinctions of situated writing conditions, earlier findings pertaining to ESL writers continue to dominate the L2 writing perspectives (Manchón & de Haan, 2008). Thus, the overemphasis on ESL contexts in L2 writing studies needs to be addressed. In fact, exploring writing in EFL/FL contexts can play a pivotal role in broadening the knowledge within the scope of L2 writing.

In the last few years, mounting academic concern over FL writing has led to a spurt in the number of EFL studies. Ortega (2009) reviewed two key journals of L2 education, *Journal of Second Language Writing* (JSLW) and *TESOL Quarterly* (TQ), to determine the frequency of discussions related to EFL writing that appeared in these journals between 1999 and 2007. Her survey showed that 36% of the articles in JSLW and 33% of the publications in the TQ discussed EFL writing concerns. Thus, she concludes that in recent years EFL writing studies have attracted much attention and figured prominently in L2 writing scholarship. L2 writing scholars have also acknowledged the importance of exploring FL writing in local contexts since writing in EFL settings is a localized activity (Manchón, 2009a). A special issue on FL writing in JSLW (Manchón & de Haan, 2008) featured three studies in different FL settings (Dutch learners of Italian and of French, Japanese learners of English, and Spanish learners of English). The special issue offered valuable insights about the emerging role of FL in L2 writing scholarship. The authors also claimed that more theoretical as well as pedagogical discussions, approaches, and practices are needed for developing FL writing into a field of expert inquiry, and to combine the notions of writing within L2 and FL. Manchón (2009a) argues that the actual conditions of EFL writing highlight the paucity of theory and research on the subject. By analyzing previous issues in FL research, Manchón offers suggestions for further research related to learning and teaching in EFL settings. The recent theoretical and pedagogical discussions on EFL/FL writing have helped L2 writing scholars deepen their knowledge and bridge the gap between FL and L2 writing.

Unfortunately, several limitations impede further exploration of writing across diverse FL settings. A dearth of opportunities for writing in FL outside the classroom leads to flawed research and pedagogical designs. Reichelt's (2001) critical review of thirty-two studies on writing in a FL in the U.S. indicates the absence of a well-defined purpose of writing within the FL curriculum and lack of familiarization with comprehensive studies on FL writing among researchers. Hence, FL researchers need to investigate the purpose of writing in FL settings and the role of FL writing outside the classroom.

Further inquiries into EFL as well as FL writing should address issues raised in recent studies (Cimasko & Reichelt, 2011; Lee, 2010; Manchón, 2009b; Manchón & de Haan, 2008; Ortega, 2009) because the studies of FL writing is still less understood. Moreover, empirical research on writing in FL indicates a lack of studies based on the local contexts of various countries. As the purposes of writing in FL depend on the local contexts, detailed investigations of problems, practices, implications, and the realities of the classroom writing are vital in a given situation.

Within the framework of L2 writing, future studies in EFL writing should explore the purposes, significance, and approaches in specific settings apart from the influence of the writer's sociocultural factors on writing performance. Research findings on EFL writing can contribute to filling the gap between writing in ESL and EFL settings and enhance the understanding of the meaning of writing in the target language. FL researchers should contextualize the target writing situations explicitly and possess a sufficient understanding of empirical studies to clarify how the investigating issues relate to studies conducted previously (Ortega, 2009; Reichelt, 2001). L2 writing researchers cannot afford to neglect the contributions of EFL and FL writing to the field of L2 teaching and writing.

### **English Education and Writing in English in Japanese Secondary School**

As discussed in the previous section, research on FL writing should be context-specific. As an example of writing in FL, this section discusses the general issues and the status quo of EFL writing in Japan, within the context of English education.

Secondary school Japanese students are taught English as a mandatory FL from their first year in junior high school. English classes consist of fifty minutes of instruction twice or three times a week. Typically, the class strength is around forty students, and teaching is not proficiency-dependent. Teachers adhere to the stringent curriculum guidelines established by MEXT, and use only government-authorized textbooks. The general purpose of English education in secondary school is to express one's ideas and understand others' intentions, thus developing four integrated skills in

the process (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

The English education guidelines in Japan have criticized the traditional grammar-translation approach used in the classrooms because it is not conducive to promoting oral and listening proficiencies. The current objective of English education is to build an active attitude to superior English communication skills, solidifying cultural as well as language understandings (MEXT, 2010). In addition, the new English guidelines of senior high school proposed by MEXT has removed writing and replaced writing with “English Expression” (*eigo hyogen*) classes (MEXT, 2010). Thus, English classes have shifted their focus away from the grammar-translation method toward CLT, which offers students more opportunities to use English in the classroom, allowing them to develop speaking and listening skills.

Nonetheless, writing instruction in senior high school is essentially grammar-oriented. Although teachers adhere to these prescriptive guidelines of foreign language instruction, teaching writing tends to emphasize the language requirements laid down by university /college-level entrance exams. Writing practice in high school is geared toward these exams, which require grammatical competence and production of sentences with accurate grammar. Teachers often produce supplemental prints of specific entrance exams and ask students to complete them instead of teaching them structured writing or paragraph building. The importance given to exam preparation in writing in English classes stems from a deep-seated social expectation to succeed among students, teachers, and even parents. Thus, given that students’ writing skills rarely progress beyond the sentence level, it could be argued that the writing class in Japanese secondary schools was conceptually nonexistent (Casanave, 2009).

Although MEXT clearly favors the use of CLT in Japan’s English curriculum, a few scholars have highlighted the value of teaching writing and indicated the need for more theoretical as well as pedagogical investigations of writing in Japanese EFL settings at the secondary school level. Various studies focusing on Japanese EFL writers reveal constructive outcomes; however, most of them involve learners in higher education settings and focus on a specific issue (e.g., process writing or

feedback approach) (Matsuda, P. K., 2010).

P. K. Matsuda (2010) critically reviewed the research history of L2 writing to identify dominant academic issues related to writing in Japan. Empirical studies of writing in Japanese EFL contexts predict grave consequences for theoretical and pedagogical approaches to writing in classrooms. Yet, past research lacked a broader perspective (e.g., context, learners' characteristics), which suggests that these research results do not necessarily lead to effective approaches for teaching per se in the Japanese EFL context. According to P. K. Matsuda, writing involves numerous complex factors related to the learners such as their social background and cognition.

From the above discussion, it is apparent that the English curriculum of the Japanese secondary school lacks adequate practical approaches to teach writing. To improve classroom-based writing activities, writing teachers at the secondary school level need to combine multiple teaching approaches with the existing practices. Initiating varieties of English or WEs into writing classrooms, as an alternative to the traditional writing instruction, can be helpful in re-establishing writing as the cornerstone of communication.

### **Concepts of World Englishes**

The number of nonnative English speakers (NNES) has been on the rise across the world. The issue of English varieties has sparked considerable debate on WEs as a value among researchers (Canagarajah, 2006a, 2006b; Jenkins, 2006; Kachuru, Kachuru, & Nelson, 2009). Since dominant English is a powerful language, English teaching in L2 contexts tends to adhere to usages dictated by English-speaking countries (e.g., U.S. or U.K.), forcing learners to adapt their styles (e.g., accents, discourses, pronunciations, word use). However, NNES have outnumbered native speakers of English, thus giving rise to internationalized English or English as a lingua franca (Berns, 2009). Even though the concept of WEs is defined in many ways, it consists of varieties of English that are valuable and unique to the local contexts (Jenkins, 2006). Thus, English utilized throughout the world needs to be considered as WEs or diversities of English that comprise sociopolitical components,

such as ideology, gender, and social backgrounds (Kachuru, Kachuru, & Nelson, 2009).

The concept of WEs has received recognition in mainstream language education. This awareness of WEs has prompted L2 writing scholars to discuss the possibility of assimilating the notion of multifaceted discourse patterns in writing (Canagarajah, 2006a). Typically, writers attempt to realize their discourse patterns and identities to better fit the context. Hence, it is valuable to contextualize the discourses within the writers' sociopolitical situations. It is important to note that these writers are not oblivious to writing in standard structured forms but choose to produce written texts that are unique to their rhetorical traditions. These discourses represent productive and constructive ways in which writers can produce local varieties of English. By initiating students to WEs within the classroom, teachers can offer students writing strategies for communicative purposes, without strictly following the rule-governed conventions of standard English.

Understanding diverse cultural discourse patterns in various languages offers numerous implications for developing critical pedagogy of multicultural discourse writing (Canagarajah, 2006a). As multicultural learners interact with English speakers, they give rise to diverse English usages. Such multiplicity of discourses necessitates greater learner awareness that extends beyond the widely recognized dominant English discourse patterns which follow the rigid rhetorical conventions targeted for English native audience (Horner, 2010; Horner & Trimbur, 2002). Even though contextualizing multicultural discourse patterns in academic literature has been a challenging task, Canagarajah (2006a) attempts to promote a better understanding of diverse discourses by grounding them in writer's sociocultural and rhetorical contexts. As Canagarajah (2006b) claims, the discourses that multilingual writers make are creatively unique rhetoric because "whatever language the authors are using, they can vary their style and discourse depending on the rhetorical context" (p. 601).

Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) discuss implications for writing teachers that emerge from introducing WEs in ESL/EFL settings. They argue that teachers should

encourage students to interact with standardized and multiple English forms. For instance, teachers should provide students with materials focusing on dominant forms when students are expected to learn from them. Further, teachers should nurture learners' language diversities as social discourses instead of treating them as mistakes. By guiding students' varied models and features of English, teachers should promote a better understanding of language diversities. Such awareness will help learners realize how English changes and evolves. Writing teachers thus need to enforce changes in writing instruction and promote legitimacy of varieties of written English to help students gain more awareness of the cultural value of their written texts.

### **Applications of World Englishes into Teaching Writing: Japanese EFL Contexts**

English teachers in Japan need to make conscious efforts to better understand the different varieties of English. Incorporating WEs into learning activities, though challenging, presents a constructive approach for realizing dynamic alternatives. The prevailing WEs compel English teachers to employ innovative teaching methods, and such application of WEs in Japanese EFL contexts can be meaningful in developing student writing skills.

To incorporate varieties of English into writing, teachers can develop several writing activities within the classroom. The aim should be to ensure that writing produced by students is viewed as a variant of English (Japanese-English) rather than as an attempt at producing grammatically accurate text since Japanese English has been still conceived as English fraught with errors (Honna, 2009). As other well-established varieties of English such as 'Singlish' used in Singapore have been contextualized (Lourdes, Bautista, & Gonzalez, 2009), Japanese English needs to be recognized as a legitimate variety of English.

However, some teachers might resist efforts by incorporating all components of WEs. To blend standard English into WEs, a balanced approach that Farrell and Martin (2009) suggest is suitable. Farrell and Martin stress that a balanced approach is essential to reinforce the value of students' products, giving teachers' teaching context. In what follows, I present three sample classroom activities based on a

balanced approach to WEs and standard English (using Farrell and Martin's (2009) examples as a reference). These cases are flexible to accommodate the activities due to the teaching context and students' level.

Before conducting these writing exercises in the classroom, teachers should have a clear understanding of how they will treat grammatical errors found in student compositions. The corrections should be minimal because the application of WEs in writing assumes that the unique discourses and texts generated strengthen the writer's identity, position, and power. If students expect teachers to correct their grammar mistakes, teachers can hold writing sessions to negotiate the meaning of the texts. Alternatively, teachers can conduct a short lesson in grammar, highlighting common mistakes found in student compositions. This technique will not only save teachers the trouble of correcting all grammatical errors, whether or not the students expect it, but also prevent them from adopting a judgmental attitude to teaching writing.

*Sample 1: Writing a Letter to an English Teacher in English*

*Level:* Beginner to Intermediate

*Purpose:* To encourage students to express their feelings and ideas and have opportunities to write in English

*Main Activity:* Ask students to brainstorm for topics that they want to write within certain writing genres (e.g., greeting, invitation). The students can jot down some English or Japanese words/phrases on the notebook or paper. To assist students' brainstorming, bilingual dictionaries are appropriate to use in the classroom. After the brainstorming phase, ask students to form sentences which flesh out their ideas. They do not have to worry about the grammar and expressions. Teachers ask students to write at least five sentences as a draft and encourage students to express their ideas, allowing them to put words together. If possible, pair work will be effective to help students develop the sense of audience. When students complete their drafts, ask each student to write up a short letter. As an option, teachers can ask students to send their letters by e-mail or texting message if they have their own mail account. Alternatively, students can post their message on the blog if teachers can set up a blog

site.

*Tips for teaching:* This activity would facilitate the process of writing and enhance their written communicative proficiency. Students should be placed in a stress-free environment where they first learn to be expressive and then revise their writing so that each sentence is communicative. Teachers should respond to each writing with some comments. If teachers cannot understand the meaning of the message, they can guess what students are trying to say by asking “Do you mean...?”

*Sample 2: A Short Journal Writing*

*Level:* Intermediate to Advanced

*Purpose:* To engage students in paragraph writing to express their ideas and thoughts freely

*Main Activity:* Elicit students to reflect on their daily work at school or outside and summarize it in two or three paragraphs. In the classroom, students write a draft of their journal entry using their native language first. Teachers should direct students to express their ideas and thoughts freely, illustrating some clear details of the events. Ask students to produce some text without worrying about grammatical accuracy and surface-level errors. In addition, students do not have to focus on the discourse patterns so that they can write their journal freely. After students have finished the rough drafts, encourage students to share their drafts in pairs or groups as well as ask some questions about the texts or content. If time permits, students can pen a complete journal entry in the class. If there is a time constraint, assign students to write a short journal entry at home.

*Tips for teaching:* In this practice, learners’ discourses should not be assessed for adherence to rigid conventions. Vivid descriptions of students’ thoughts and emotions contained in the journal entries will reflect the true power of their communicative strategies. This exercise can promote mutual understanding between teachers and students or among students. The practice of producing texts is essential for engaging students in paragraph writing. In fact, most Japanese government-approved writing textbooks include samples of paragraph writing; however, this section is largely

neglected because it is not deemed necessary for entrance exam preparation. If paragraph writing is identified as a performance objective, a suitable writing assignment would be encouraging students to maintain a journal.

*Sample 3: Understanding 'Engrish'*

*Level:* All levels

*Purpose:* To promote better understanding of 'Engrish' used in Japanese social contexts

*Main Activity:* First, introduce 'Engrish' to students, addressing careless and misguided English words shown in products, signs, or advertisements (Ikeshima, 2005). To elucidate the exact cases, show a website which illustrates various examples of 'Engrish' (see <http://www.english.com> - This source introduces many cases of 'Engrish' with numerous categories). After providing some examples from the website, assign students to form small groups. Then, give different cases of 'Engrish' words as a supplemental material. Guide students' to discussion of the meanings of the words, leading them to realize how the words are mistakenly used. Ask students to speculate on possible accounts for the etymologies of the 'Engrish' words. For instance, when students have an example of 'guesthouth' (see <http://www.english.com/category/signs/>), they will recognize 'guesthouth' as 'guesthouse'. They might find out 'guesthouth' is used due to the phonological conflicts between English and Japanese; The English pronunciations of 's(e)' or 'th' have similarities with the Japanese syllables, 'su'. Call on students to present their findings of each 'Engrish' words in the classroom. Next, ask each group to invent one 'Engrish' word and describe the pseudo-word origin explanations in detail as well. Alternatively, after each group forms an 'Engrish' pseudo-word invented by another group. Ask each group to guess the pseudo-word meaning. Their guess will be assessed by the authors of the pseudo-word. As an extension activity, ask students to discover the cases of 'Engrish' in their neighborhoods, examining any signs and advertisements.

*Tips for teaching:* The 'Engrish' words are actually 'incorrect'. However, teachers

need to raise more awareness of such examples of English variations since there are no clear boundaries to define standard, creative, and incorrect English (Ikeshima, 2005). Furthermore, as Ikeshima points out, 'Engrish' contains the viewpoints of product design and the creativity rather than a means of communication. Teachers have to apply 'Engrish' into the classroom so that learners can deepen their understanding of the creative use of the words in the social context, even though 'Engrish' may lead to resultant international unintelligibility as Japanese English. Thus, incorporating 'Engrish' words into writing instruction activates students' schemata and engages them.

### **Implications for Teaching EFL Writing in Japan**

The popularity of WEs or English variations has sparked discussions on how the concept can be applied to teaching writing (see Canagarajah, 2006a, 2006b; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010). To improve EFL writing instruction in Japanese secondary schools, English teachers should view the concept of WEs as a potential tool for navigating the future approaches to writing instruction. English education in Japanese secondary schools must clarify the specific pedagogical purposes of writing, prioritizing English variations over the formulaic approaches in accordance with the definition of WEs (Omori, 2010). In other words, English education in Japan should significantly promote writing development and the teaching of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and context.

What steps are needed to promote writing education in the Japanese EFL context at the secondary level? What should teachers do to fulfill the pedagogical need? As discussed earlier, Japanese-English education has recommended the use of a specific language approach: CLT. Going beyond the adherence to one specific English convention, writing educators need to advance writing principles by accepting and adapting to the globally nurtured English varieties (Matsuda, A., 2003, 2009). Traditional English pedagogy in Japan has relied only on the dominant models of Western English, especially American English. Breaking away from this trend, English language teachers have to broaden the concept of different Englishes such as

Japanese-English by incorporating them into their teaching. This approach can accelerate the move toward developing writing instruction that promotes a better understanding of language variables rather than rigidly focusing on accuracy.

Some English teachers at the secondary school level argue that adopting a WEs-based approach in writing instruction can be challenging given the present state of entrance examinations. However, Japanese English teachers need to transform the current methods of teaching writing, acknowledging that changes in English language teaching cannot be successfully implemented without their participation (Matsuda, A., 2009).

Ideally pedagogical efforts should target writing activities that teachers use in the classroom. While the importance of acquiring grammatical accuracy cannot be overlooked, excessive dependence on the grammar comprehension at the sentence level can hamper the ability to express oneself through writing. The texts and discourses that comprise different English variants are legitimate and cultivate the power of the self-expression. English teachers need to encourage students to develop different English varieties because such forms can no longer be considered erroneous (Canagarajah, 2006b). Attempts to advance beyond the sentence level can ameliorate the situation of teaching written discourse and serve as an intermediary stage of writing performance between secondary and higher education.

Naturally, teaching writing through fundamental written structures of English is valuable if successful with the students. However, resolutely enforcing the writing conventions of dominant English is an unsuitable practice. Since the English discourse patterns are not necessarily universal, writing with broad-ranging views, attributable to sociocultural influences, contributes to entertaining variations, especially in Japanese EFL writing.

### **Suggestions for Further Research on Teaching Writing in Japanese Secondary Schools**

In the past years, few pedagogical and practical studies have focused on EFL writing in Japanese secondary school contexts. It is imperative that researchers take the onus

of providing secondary school English teachers with multiple approaches to teach writing because most Japanese junior and senior high school teachers are unable to pursue academic research owing to their hectic work schedules (i.e., class preparations, class management, club activity). Teaching journals act as optimal resources that allow teachers to selectively apply instruction techniques that they believe will be effective in the classrooms. However, the limited number of studies on Japanese EFL writing at the secondary level precludes the possibility of applying new teaching approaches. To help writing teachers discover new horizons within the realm of teaching, the professional community of L2 writing should investigate issues relevant to teacher education (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007) as well as to the incorporation of WEs into writing. Ironically, even though teacher education and development is a chief concern faced by language teachers, studies on L2 writing have not fully explored these aspects yet. Studying writing teacher education can help researchers and teachers comprehend the reality of writing instruction and the various aspects of teaching writing within specific contexts.

As an alternative to writing teacher education, researchers can investigate the construction of teacher identities of Japanese English teachers as teacher educators with unflinching commitment to thoroughly examining the issues of writing teacher education. Given that teaching involves a complex web of factors in specific conditions or governed by specific policies, teachers need to be fully aware of their own actions in the classroom. A critical reflection on the prevalent conditions of teaching and on the challenges of teaching can serve to reinforce teachers' autonomous growth and development (Miller, 2009). Teachers require a critical understanding of their own teaching contexts, the realities of written instruction within classrooms, the problems and challenges encountered by teachers, and the learner expectations that need to be fulfilled in order to shape their identity as writing teachers.

This inquiry will be highly valuable in the EFL writing classrooms within the Japanese secondary school because much of the research has been on EFL writing centers on higher education. This is particularly true of the research on Japanese EFL

writing at the secondary level because empirical studies emphasizing the teacher's voice on teaching writing in junior and senior high school are conspicuously absent. A discussion of the difficulties and problems in teaching writing at the secondary level is necessary to understand the contextual factors and find appropriate alternatives. Moreover, the complexities of teaching writing in specific contexts and their interrelatedness with the learning of writing grounded in an ecological perspective can be explored (Casanave, 2009; van Lier, 2004). This can be achieved by undertaking a narrative-based inquiry that reflects the voice of secondary school teachers and their awareness of the current situations of teaching writing within the ecological framework, which "involves exploring the deep script of human interaction with the learning processes" (Tudor, 2003, p. 10). Narrative stories that capture the teachers' understanding of their own teaching can be utilized as a tool to facilitate a critical reflection on particular teaching events and beliefs (Clandinin & Connolly, 2004).

Finally, applying the concept of WEs to the teaching of writing serves as a practical technique in diverse Japanese secondary school settings. However, research on incorporating WEs into writing classrooms has been scanty. Prospective inquirers should attempt to highlight findings that promote the development of different approaches for writing instruction. Researchers can observe the writing classroom or interview English teachers to explore the two issues: how does incorporation of WEs lead to discovering heuristic techniques of writing instruction and what are the effects of utilizing WEs in writing? Further, it would be worthwhile to explore the real-ideal conflict in the teaching of writing to see if the investigation offers pedagogical alternatives to writing instruction at the secondary school level. Examining teacher learning through such a critical lens can extend the identity of a writing teacher to beyond that of an English teacher (Lee, 2010).

Although the insights gained from EFL research can enrich our understanding of the L2 writing discipline, the field of L2 writing has largely ignored the subject of EFL writing. Studies of EFL writing at the Japanese secondary school level provide greater impetus to delve into the local contexts where writing pedagogy is grounded in the framework of teacher education (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007; Lee, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

This paper primarily focuses on the suggestions for implementing the concept of WEs in the EFL writing classrooms of Japanese secondary schools, in a bid to identify alternative pedagogical approaches to writing. Further, as future research directions for EFL writing at Japanese secondary school level indicate, critical discussions on constructing the teacher's identity and incorporating WEs into writing classrooms are necessary.

The teaching of writing grounded in WEs is capable of providing deeper insights into FL writing research. To remedy the scant attention paid to FL writing issues and the use of WEs in writing, further studies on EFL/FL writing focusing on writing teacher education need to be undertaken. Teachers' reflections on their experiences in writing classrooms and the challenges involved in teaching can significantly help in shaping the identity of the L2 writing teacher. Given the dearth of research in junior and senior high school settings, a study that articulates the teacher's voice and investigates the gaps between the target and the real objectives of teaching in the secondary school can be immensely valuable.

Opportunities for writing in English at the Japanese secondary level have come to being marginalized due to the elimination of writing classes. However, teachers should implement various writing plans with materials or original classroom activities. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about the notion of writing. Writing is a process of memorizing grammatical structures and constructing accurate sentences rather than one of the practical ways of communication. Even though acquiring accurate writing proficiency is significant, teachers need to dispel the misconception about writing, fostering learners' willingness to identify as well as develop their ideas and thoughts through writing. Likewise, teachers should avoid appropriating students' texts with heavy grammatical corrections and optimize their texts. This is a great opportunity to broaden students' minds and sense of ideal English variations. It is important to make students recognize that writing is not the only way to communicate with English monolingual speakers (Horner, 2010).

English education in Japan is governed by internationally viable guidelines that

promote oral proficiency through the communicative teaching approach. However, acquiring communication skills entails proficiency not just in speaking but also writing. To accomplish the goal of cultivating learners with international sensibilities, the teaching of writing at the secondary level should include approaches that respect Japanese cultural values and the set of English variations unique to the region. Thus, English teachers in junior and senior high schools should adopt a broad approach to improve their teaching of writing: introducing varieties of English in the classroom.

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## **Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English in an Internet-Based Informal Context: Perceptions of Iranian University Students**

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### **Bio Data**

Kobra Jamshidi is an independent researcher with a MA in TEFL and a BA in English literature from Allameh Tabatabai University. Kobra has taught general English courses at Imam Sadigh University, and General English, Reading Comprehension, General Linguistics, Teaching Methodology, & Research Methodology at Tehran Tarbiat Moallem University.

### **Abstract**

The present study examines how Iranian university students are motivated to learn L2 in informal contexts and whether they have integrativeness and attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context as necessary attitudinal foundations to sustain motivation. The data were gathered from 108 participants by means of Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret's (1997) version of the AMTB to investigate the participants' motivation and attitudes. A second questionnaire was developed to explore the characteristics of the Internet that may contribute to participants' attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. The results indicated that the participants were moderately motivated to learn EFL in this informal context, and had positive attitudes toward the use of the Internet which is recognized as an attitudinal foundation to support their motivation. It was also found that these attitudes are significantly correlated with computer and Internet self-efficacy. The findings provide information about the characteristics of the Internet that would facilitate second language teachers' endeavors to integrate the Internet into their pedagogical practice.

**Key Words:** *motivation, informal learning contexts, computer-mediated communication*

## **Introduction**

Language learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Krashen (1981) refers to informal context as any naturalistic setting where learners use the target language to interact with others. According to Gardner (1985, 2001), formal learning contexts refer to situations in which language instruction occurs, and informal contexts are settings where there is no L2 instruction. In 2006, Gardner redefined informal context as the outside classroom settings that provide opportunities to use and experience the language, for instance television, social settings, and language clubs.

Krashen's (2004) comprehension hypothesis explains why informal contexts are so important in L2 learning. He states that we acquire language when we understand messages as well as form that we read and what people say. Many research studies have been conducted to examine the contributions of informal language learning contexts. St. Martin (1980) found that language learners who lived with an American family had significantly higher linguistic achievements than another group who lived near speakers of their native language. In a more recent study (Li, 2006), the results of interviews with four ESL students revealed that students value their informal learning environment in general, and see it as supportive of their language learning goals.

With the development of the computer and Internet, language learning occurs in new contexts. The Internet creates new communication situations for language learners and provides opportunities to develop and enhance learners' speaking, reading, and writing proficiency (Backer, 1998; Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2004; Yang, 2001). When Internet activities involve the target language, L2 learners, consciously or not, acquire new knowledge and skills of the language, and practice what they have learned. The Internet provides convenient and instant access to a wide range of target language experiences, and leads L2 learners to target language environments where real people use real language in real context (Osuna & Meskill, 1998). Furthermore, online L2 communication has impact on communication apprehension (CA), which is defined as the degree of anxiety, fear, or discomfort

which is associated with actual or perceived communication with others (McCroskey, Fayer & Richmond, 1985). Communication Apprehension (CA), one of the three components of Foreign Language Anxiety, is closely associated with communication avoidance. But online L2 communication has been demonstrated to help reduce communication anxiety, facilitate communication without producing communication apprehension (Kivela, 1996), and develop oral proficiency (Vetter & Chanier, 2006).

Among the various benefits of computer-related technologies, its positive effects on L2 motivation have been frequently reported (Busch, 2003; Kasper, 2002; Shea, 2000; Trosko, 1997). Learning which is integrated with technology, according to Colombo (2002), motivates L2 learners to engage in literacy learning. Osuna and Meskill (1998), for example, found that the Web is a suitable tool to increase language and cultural knowledge as well as language motivation. It has also been found that students are usually motivated when they use computers in L2 class (Warschauer, 1997), and computer conferencing has a positive effect on L2 motivation (Skinner & Austin, 1999). Over the years, many researchers have found that the Internet is an effective learning and instructional tool in L2 classroom and has been found to have a positive effect on learners' motivation (Kern, 1995; Padron & Waxman, 1996; Shea, 2000).

Motivated by a desire to understand L2 motivation in informal contexts, the aim of the researcher is to explore Iranian EFL students' attitude and motivation toward English learning, to investigate the Internet-based learning situation, and to examine how it influences their language learning motivation. My experience, both as an L2 learner and teacher, has shown that some students who are very talented language learners do not turn out to be the most proficient, and not all proficient students show an aptitude for language learning, but they are always the most motivated ones in the class. This shows the important role motivation plays in language learning. Like in classrooms, language learners demonstrate various levels of motivation in informal situations. Computers and especially the Internet are good examples of informal situations for language learning; they also demonstrate the effect of technology on language pedagogy.

There is, however, a scarcity of research about the motivation and attitudes of Iranian EFL learners towards second language learning although some researchers have investigated the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on Iranian EFL learners' language learning (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011), compared integratively motivated students and their instrumentally motivated peers in terms of their speaking achievement (Soozandehfar and Souzandehfar, 2010), and studied the possible relationships between multiple intelligences, listening proficiency, and motivational orientation of Iranian TEFL university students (Naeini and Pandian, 2010). Lack of research on this group of learners specifically in the informal context of computer mediated communication inspired this researcher to conduct the present study. This survey study will identify the general L2 motivation in informal contexts among a group of Iranian university students, examine how students' attitudes toward an Internet-based informal context influence their L2 motivations, and explore the characteristics that may have an impact on these attitudes.

## **Background of the Study**

### *Motivation*

Motivation is an abstract concept that is difficult to define. Yet this term is used widely in situations involving learning a second language. When motivation is applied to a learning situation, "it is related to one of the most basic aspects of the human mind, and most teachers and researchers would agree that it has a very important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation" (Dornyei, 2001a, p.2). The study of motivation to learn a second language (L2) or foreign language has a history spanning more than four decades. Robert Gardner (1979, 1985, 1996) is the forerunner and most influential researcher in the L2 motivational research field. The key element in Gardner's research is 'language attitude', or the language learners' perceptions of the L2, the L2 speakers and the socio-cultural and pragmatic values associated with the L2. Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model proposed that "integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation are two correlated variables that support the individual's motivation to learn a second

language, but motivation is responsible for achievement in the second language” (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003, p. 124).

While no one questioned the significance of the socio-cultural dimension, there was a shift in focus from socio-psychology to cognitive psychology during the 1990s. According to Crooks and Schmidt (1991), motivation in second-language learning has been limited to the field of applied linguistics, which emphasizes attitudes and other social psychological aspects of second language learning processes. However, this does not meet second language teachers’ expectations of motivation. They expect definitions that are more congruent with learners’ needs in educational settings. This indicated that L2 motivation research has become increasingly ‘education-friendly’, focusing on motives associated with the ‘situated approach’ of classroom learning with attention to the main components of the learning situation, such as the teacher, the curriculum and the learner group (Dornyei, 1994).

In the past decade, a new approach toward motivation in second language learning, the process-oriented approach, was developed by Dornyei (2000, 2001a, 2001b). The underlying principle to the process-oriented approach is that motivation is ongoing and changes over time, which means that motivation is not seen as a static attribute but a dynamic factor that displays continuous fluctuation (Dornyei, 2000, 2001a, 2001b) depending on many contextual variables. The process-oriented approach to motivation consists of three phases. First, student’s needs have to be matched to the goal they have set. Second, once motivational needs have been generated, they have to be maintained. Finally, when needs are executed, a person still must constantly go back to evaluate the progress to determine the kind of activities he will be motivated to pursue in the future.

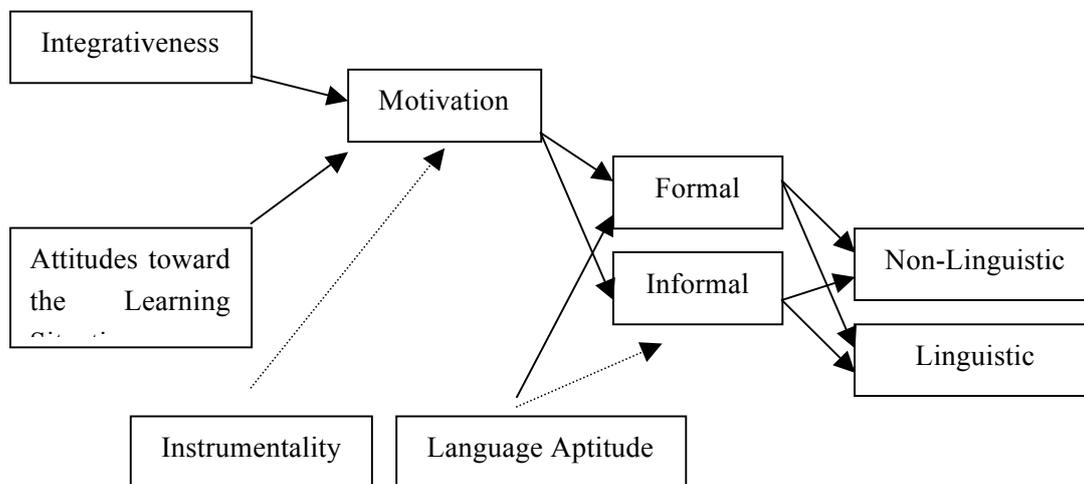
In 2005, Dornyei proposed a newer approach, the L2 motivational self-system, to the understanding of L2 motivation. The key tenet of the L2 motivational self-system is that the construct of integrativeness/integrative motivation is equated with the “ideal L2 self” (p.102). Dornyei’s (2005) L2 motivational self-system posits three dimensions: (a) ideal L2 self, (b) ought-to L2 self, and (c) L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self, according to Dornyei, is “referred to the L2-specific facet of one’s

‘ideal self’” (p.106). The ought-to L2 self is what one believes he has to (ought-to) possess in order to avoid negative consequences (Dornyei, 2005), and students’ L2 learning experience is related to their immediate learning environment and experience.

Despite different approaches and arguments associated with motivation research, the underlying principle is simple. That is, in order to become motivated, one must have or set a goal. In order to motivate someone who does not have a goal in mind, it is important to identify their needs and provide reasons or incentives to keep them going.

Among many theories on L2 motivation, the socio-educational model proposed by Robert Gardner (1985) has been the most frequently used model, and it has remained dominant and influential for decades. Attitudes and motivation are at the core of Gardner’s 1985 model. Figure 1 shows a schematic presentation of the socio-educational model. In this model, learners’ integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation serve as the cause and support for motivation. Motivation and aptitude are two major determinants of learners’ linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes in both formal and informal contexts. Non-linguistic outcomes refer to attitudes, values, or motivation which develop from the learning experience. It is worth noticing that language aptitude is shown to have an indirect effect in informal contexts (as indicated by the broken line) since it can only come into play when the individual has been motivated to enter the informal learning situation.

Figure 1. Gardner’s Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 1985)



In the socio-educational model, L2 motivation involves three elements: the effort expended to learn the language, the desire to achieve the goal, and the positive affect of the learning task. These elements are measured by three scales: Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, and Attitudes toward Learning English. Integrativeness is reflected and assessed by three scales: Integrative Orientation, Attitude toward the L2 Community, and Interest in Foreign Languages. Attitudes toward the learning situation is reflected by two scales: Teacher Evaluation and Course Evaluation. Instrumentality, which refers to conditions where an individual learns an L2 for practical, economic, and utilitarian benefits, is measured by one scale: Instrumental Orientation. The major constructs and scales in the socio-educational model can be assessed by Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), the validity and reliability of which has been supported by research results. The model has also been tested in informal contexts (Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner, 2001).

*The Internet and L2 Learning Motivation*

The development of computer-related technologies, such as the Internet, multi-media, and hypermedia, have been transforming both content and delivery form in almost all fields of education. In L2 classroom, these technologies, particularly the Internet are

increasingly used and their effects on L2 learning are drawing the attention of many researchers. L2 learners and teachers find that computer-related technologies may serve as a valuable potential language learning tool. This is particularly true for English learners since English is the language used in most computer-related technologies. These technologies are found to provide opportunities to develop and enhance learners' speaking, reading, and writing proficiency (Backer, 1998; Yang, 2001).

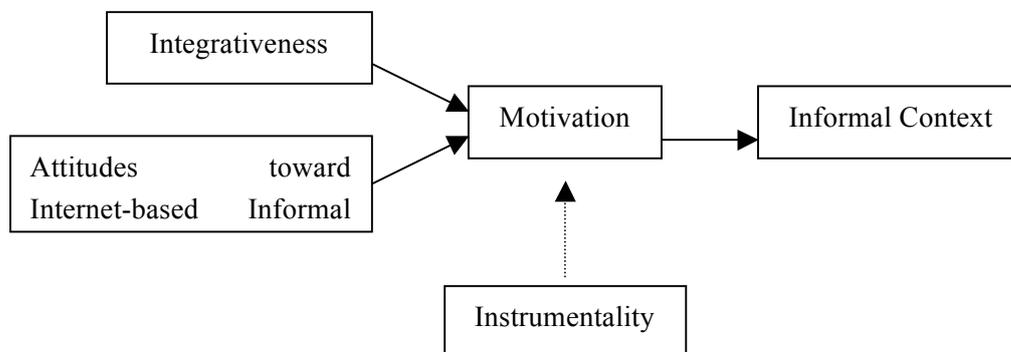
Computer-related technologies as a whole are found to help increase students' enthusiasm and motivation and develop their communication skills (Lauterborn, 1997; Trosko, 1997). Among the various benefits, its positive effects on L2 motivation have been most frequently reported (Shea, 2000; Kasper, 2002; Busch, 2003). Colombo (2002) indicated that technology integrated learning seemed to motivate L2 learners to engage in literacy learning. Over the years, research on L2 motivation in the Internet-assisted situations has shown that the Internet is an effective learning and instructional tool in L2 classroom and has a positive effect on learners' motivation (Kern, 1995; Padron & Waxman, 1996, Shea, 2000).

### **The Present Study**

The present study seeks to add to the current literature on L2 motivation. Taking university level Iranian students as the participants, this survey will identify the general L2 motivation in informal contexts; examine how students' attitudes toward an Internet-based informal context influence L2 motivation; and explore the characteristics that may have an impact on these attitudes.

Among the motivation theories discussed above, Gardner's model is the most appropriate model for this study because it has a standardized instrument to assess L2 motivation and attitude, it has been used as the framework for many studies, it has considerable influence in L2 motivation literature, and it is one of the few frameworks in L2 motivation which include informal learning contexts. Figure 2 is a presentation of the modified socio-educational model used in this study.

Figure 2. The Modified Gardner's Socio-Educational Model used in this Study



The significance of the present study is three-fold. First, the findings will add to the current knowledge of L2 motivation and the understanding of attitudinal foundations that sustain motivation. Second, L2 learners in both formal and informal contexts will benefit from the findings of the study, specially the less motivated learners. It is important for them to understand the factors which motivate others and this knowledge would, in turn, help promote their language learning motivation. Finally, L2 educators and instructors will benefit from gaining a better understanding of the characteristics of an Internet-based context which help support language learning motivation. Such knowledge would direct curriculum designers and language teachers to incorporate these factors into their instructions, activities, and the teaching syllabus in order to promote learner performance.

## Method

### *Participants*

For the purpose of this study, Iranian university level students were surveyed in order to understand their motivation and attitudes toward learning English in an informal context. The sampling process began with a convenience sample. The participants were recruited by means of a poster advertising the study. Then, through a snowballing effect, those participants helped recruit others. A total of 126 Iranian

university level students who were currently enrolled at Tehran Payame Noor University participated in this study. Among these participants, 11 did not complete the questionnaire and 7 were taking an EFL class in the time they responded to the questionnaire. The responses of this group of participants were not analyzed because it was not possible to control what happened in these EFL classes. Many intervening variables such as motivating and enjoyable classroom activities, an enthusiastic and motivating language teacher, or even a particular teaching methodology or course book could positively influence these students' motivation. In order to control the influence of the potential influence of these variables, the responses of these seven participants were not considered in data analysis. Therefore, 108 responses were used for data analysis and the participants met the following criteria: they had to be familiar with the Internet, they had access to the Internet, they were not currently taking an EFL class.

The participants had a relatively high English proficiency. They were all graduate students who had passed a standardized English language test before beginning their graduate program. This standardized L2 test is developed by Sazman Sajesh Amoozesh Keshvar (Education Assessment Organization of Iran) and it is a part of the national entrance exam to graduate programs. The participants' ages ranged from 19-26 (mean=22.4). There were 59 females and 49 males and all of them were graduate students. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Results

	N (%)	Range	Mean
Age	108	19-26	22.4
Gender			
Male	49 (45.37%)		
Female	59 (54.62%)		
Hours on Internet daily		0.5-12 (hours)	1.58
English gained from Internet			
10%	9 (08.33%)		

20%	66 (61.11%)
40%	27 (25.00%)
60%	5 (04.62%)
80%	1 (00.92%)

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### *Instruments*

The researcher used Gardner's socio-educational model (1985, 2001) to explore students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English in informal contexts and to investigate how the use of the Internet has an impact on their motivation and attitudes.

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three sections. The first section, which aimed at investigating students' motivation and attitudes, was adapted from Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret's (1997) version of the AMTB. The items in this section were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from -3 (strongly disagree) to +3 (strongly agree). Four constructs consisting of eight scales were used in the present study (see Table 2). This section consisted of 23 items (see Appendix). Six items measured the construct of motivation, 2 items for each of its scales (Motivational Intensity: Items 5 and 10; Desire to Learn English: Items 2 and 11; Attitudes toward Learning English: Items 3 and 6). The construct of integrativeness was also measured by 6 items, 2 items for each of its scales (Attitudes toward English Culture: Items 1 and 12; Interest in Foreign Languages: Items 8 and 13; Integrative Orientation: Items 4 and 14). The construct of instrumentality was assessed by 2 items (items 7 and 9). For the last construct, attitudes toward the learning situation, teacher evaluation scale was not used because the present study is about L2 motivation in informal context which does not involve any teacher. In the modified version of AMTB in this study, course evaluation scale was adapted in order to fit into the Internet based situation. This scale was measured by 8 items (items 15 to 22). The last question (question 23) was used to assess the participants' self-efficacy in working with the Internet and computer. A high score indicated high level of perceived computer and the Internet self-efficacy.

Table 2. Constructs and Scales Assessed in the Present Study

Constructs	Scales
Motivation	Motivational intensity Desire to learn English Attitudes toward learning English
Integrativeness	Integrative orientation Attitudes toward English community Interest in foreign languages
Instrumentality	Instrumental orientation
Attitudes towards the learning situation	Attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context

The purpose of section two was to explore the characteristics of the Internet that may contribute to participants' attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. It consisted of five questions (see Appendix), two Likert-type and three open-ended. The third section obtained demographic information. It contained 7 items and the following information was requested: Age, gender, educational level, access to the Internet, length of time spent on the Internet daily, and the proportion of English knowledge gained from Internet experience (see Appendix).

## Results

The data obtained were computer coded and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform data analysis. Table 3 represents the mean score and standard deviation of each construct and sub-scale of the motivation questionnaire. The results of motivation sub-scales indicated moderate positive means for motivational intensity (mean=1.41) and attitudes toward English (mean=1.48), and a higher mean for desire to learn English (mean=1.92). A mean score of 4.82 and

a standard deviation of 2.67 were found for this construct, which indicates that the majority of the participants (68%) reported their motivation between 2.14 and 7.50.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Motivation and Attitudes

	Mean	SD
Motivation	4.82	2.67
Motivational intensity	1.41	1.08
Desire to learn English	1.92	0.92
Attitudes toward English	1.48	1.10
Integrativeness	5.50	2.33
Integrative orientation	2.09	0.84
Attitudes toward English culture	1.79	0.97
Interest in foreign languages	1.60	0.97
Instrumental orientation	1.94	0.92
Attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context	1.06	0.88
Computer and Internet-based self-efficacy	1.57	1.10

A mean score of 5.50 and a standard deviation of 2.33 were found for the construct of integrativeness. The results of this construct's sub-scales showed moderate positive means for the scales of attitudes toward English culture (mean=1.79) and interest in foreign languages (mean=1.60), and a higher mean for integrative orientation (mean=2.09). The mean of integrative and instrumental orientations were also computed. A high mean of 2.09 was found for integrative orientation as compared to that of the instrumental orientation (mean=1.94). The results of a paired t-test revealed that the differences between the two means was statistically significant at  $p < 0.5$  level.

The inter-correlations among students' attitudes and motivation were also calculated (see Table 4). Motivation was found significantly correlated with

integrativeness ( $r=.76$ ,  $p<0.1$ ), integrative orientation ( $r=.64$ ,  $p<0.1$ ), and instrumental orientation ( $r=.53$ ,  $p<0.1$ ). A strong positive correlation was also found between integrative orientation and instrumental orientation ( $r=.60$ ,  $p<0.1$ ).

Table 4. Inter-correlations among Attitudes and Motivation

	Motivation	Integrativeness	Integrative orientation	Computer&Internet self-efficacy
Integrativeness	.76*			
Integrative orientation	.64*			
Instrumental orientation	.53*	.61*	.60*	
Attitudes toward the Internet-based context	.50*	.46*		.46*

\*  $p<0.1$

For attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context, a moderate mean of 1.06 and a standard deviation of 0.88 were found (see Table 3) which indicates that the participants had positive attitudes toward learning English using the Internet in informal context. Motivation and attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context showed a significant moderate correlation ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<0.1$ , See Table 4). This indicates that 40% of the variance of motivation is accounted for by the change of attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. As compared to integrativeness, attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context has a relatively small effect on motivation. However, it was found significantly correlated with integrativeness ( $r=.46$ ,  $p<0.1$ ).

One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare age and gender differences in attitudinal variables. There was no significant age difference in participants' motivation, orientation, integrativeness, and attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. Males and females also showed similar motivation, integrativeness, integrative and instrumental orientation, and attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. Gender difference, however, was found in participants' computer and Internet self-efficacy. Males reported significantly higher self-efficacy than females (mean=1.75 vs. 1.30;  $p<0.5$ ). Computer and Internet self-efficacy and

attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context also showed significant moderate correlation ( $r=.46$ ,  $p<0.1$ , See Table 4).

In the second section of the questionnaire, which included three open-ended and two Likert-type questions, the participants reported the characteristics that contributed to their choice of using English in on-line communication. Sixteen participants reported that they prefer on-line English communication in general because of its cheap, quick, and convenient access; 29 participants wrote about the asynchronous character of on-line communication. They had enough time to organize their ideas, do editing and spell-check, and use computer dictionary; 19 participants reported that on-line communication in English helped avoid face-to-face interaction, and made them less nervous. They did not have to worry about their deficiency of pronunciation and listening. And 11 participants mentioned that they had to use English while communicating on-line because it is the popular and dominant language in on-line communication.

The participants were also required to write about their experiences in obtaining and reading information on-line. Twenty eight participants mentioned English as the dominant working language on the Internet; 38 participants reported they liked obtaining and reading information on-line in general, because of its easy, cheap, (sometimes free) and convenient access; 16 participants wrote that they could easily edit and save the information on-line; 19 participants wrote that English is the most powerful language to retrieve on-line academic information since most on-line journals are in English; and, 11 participants mentioned that on-line English information is more up-to-date.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore second language learning motivation in informal contexts, particularly an Internet-based situation. The participants demonstrated an above average level of second language motivation, showed a strong desire to learn the language, and had favorable attitudes toward learning English. Integrativeness, which reflects an interest in the target group and an openness to take

on characteristics of the target culture and community, was shown to be a primary attitudinal foundation that supports and sustains second language motivation in informal contexts. This result corroborates the findings of Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) who reported that motivation has a strong correlation with integrativeness ( $r=.61$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Though being investigated in different learning situations, the findings in these two studies indicate the primary role integrativeness plays in supporting and sustaining L2 motivation in informal contexts.

Instrumentality was also found to be an important motivational foundation. The participants were both integratively and instrumentally motivated, but they showed a stronger integrative orientation. The results, therefore, suggest that although gaining practical benefits and advantages is a reason for students to learn English, a dominant reason is that they want to better understand English-speaking people, their culture and community.

According to Gardner (1985, 2001), favorable attitudes toward the learning situation act as a foundation for sustained L2 motivation. A correlation between them would suggest the amount of impact the attitudes toward the learning situation have on motivation. The students reported that on average, 30% of their recently developed English knowledge and skills were gained from the Internet experience. They displayed positive attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context, and the moderate correlation ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.0.1$ ) between attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context and motivation suggest that positive attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context serves as an important foundation for second language motivation. This suggests that the Internet-based situation helps support second language motivation in general informal contexts. Therefore, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, accounts for a significant and meaningful proportion of the difference in motivation and they act as attitudinal foundations for sustained second language motivation.

Some important characteristics of the Internet were found to have an impact on language learners' attitude toward the Internet-based informal context. It was found that text-based on-line communication helps alleviate communication apprehension.

Language learners feel less apprehensive in on-line communication because they can make full use of their advantage of reading and writing skills and it is easier for them to understand written messages and have smooth and explicit communication. This finding is similar to the study of Freiermuth (2001) who found L2 learners feel more comfortable in their on-line text-based communication, as compared to face-to-face interaction, and feel less worried about their language deficiencies that may hold them back from oral interactions. On-line communication leaves students more time to figure out expressions they do not understand (they can check the dictionary, for example), and enough time to organize their ideas, and revise / edit their message before sending it off. This finding is consistent with Kivela (1996) and Kroonenberg's (1994) results, who found that net-based discussions slowed down communication, allowed students to pay closer attention where needed, and provided opportunities for reflection during the communication.

Computer and Internet self-efficacy was identified in this study as a factor that influences students' attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context. This is consistent with the results of some other studies (Levine & Donitsa-Schmidt, 1997, 1998; Wu & Tsai, 2006). It seems reasonable and likely that individuals who have strong computer and Internet self-efficacy would show more favorable attitudes toward their language learning in the Internet-based context.

This study was set up in an informal context; however, its findings have instructional significance. The Internet is increasingly used in educational instructions and has been found to have a great and dramatic effect on instruction (Peng, Tsai & Wu, 2006). The most important goal of implementing an Internet-based context is to apply the medium to promote and facilitate learning. But this goal can not be achieved if students are not willing to be involved in or do not actively participate (Lee, Cheung & Chen, 2005). The findings of this study provide important information about the characteristics of the Internet that would appeal to L2 learners, which would facilitate educators' endeavor to computerize their pedagogical practice and to integrate the Internet into their instruction.

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## Appendix

### The Questionnaire

#### Part I

For the following statements, choose the response that best represents your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would like to know more about English culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
2. If it were up to me, I would spend a lot of time learning and practicing English.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
3. I really enjoy learning English.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
4. Studying English is important for me because it will allow me to communicate with English speaking people.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
5. I make an effort to understand all the English I see and hear.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
6. I plan to learn as much English as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
7. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
8. I wish I could speak additional languages perfectly.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
9. Studying English is important because it will help me compete with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
10. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost everyday.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
11. I wish I were fluent in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
12. The more I get to know about English culture, the more I want to be fluent in the language.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
13. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
14. Studying English is important because it will enable me to better understand English speaking peoples' life and culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Learning and practicing English using the Internet is							
15. enjoyable	<input type="checkbox"/>						
16. interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>						
17. rewarding	<input type="checkbox"/>						
18. simple	<input type="checkbox"/>						
19. colorful	<input type="checkbox"/>						
20. important	<input type="checkbox"/>						

21. necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>						
22. good	<input type="checkbox"/>						
23. I have a lot of self-confidence when it comes to working with computer and the Internet.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

**Part II**

For the following two statements, choose a response that best represents your opinion, and explain why you chose that response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like using English to communicate with others by e-mail, instant message, and on-line text chat.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please explain why you chose that response:

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like using English to obtain and read information on-line.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please explain why you chose that response:

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Is there anything you would like to say about learning English using the Internet?

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**Part III**

Please answer the following questions.

1. I'm female  / male .
2. I'm ..... years old.

3. I'm a graduate student. Yes  No
4. I'm taking  / not taking  EFL class.
5. I have access to the Internet at home.
6. I usually spend ..... hours on the Internet everyday.
7. 10%  / 20%  / 40%  / 60%  / 80%  / 100%  of my newly developed English knowledge and skills are gained from the Internet experience.