[Book Review]

Online Communication in a Second Language: Social Interaction, Language Use, and Learning Japanese

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Title	*Online Communication in a Second Language: Social Interaction, Language Use, and Learning Japanese*
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With the proliferation of socially oriented approaches such as those initiated by Firth and Wagner (1997), and the widespread adoption of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in our daily lives, attitudes towards CMC media and its integration into second language (L2) learning have evolved. While prior studies have generally taken place in educational settings, Pasfield-Neofitou's *Online Communication in a Second Language: Social Interaction, Language Use, and Learning Japanese* evaluates CMC's strengths, risks, and implications from beyond the L2 classroom, and places particular emphasis on its social dimensions. In parallel, the book also attempts to deepen the reader's understanding of CMC media's culturally and contextually sensitive nature. This work is a pivotal contribution to the field at a time when increased accessibility to the Internet allows learners worldwide to interact with native speakers in their target languages.

By performing research in natural, everyday L2 settings where more complex social interaction occurs, Pasfield-Neofitou thoroughly illustrates the dynamic nature of CMC media. CMC is no longer limited to "spoken vs. written" or "synchronous vs. asynchronous" forms. It is also not based on the traditional assumption that such communication occurs in a "placeless" domain where learners can practice L2 interactions without being labeled a learner. Furthermore, she questions conventional assumptions regarding the nature of language in CMC, and suggests an alternative understanding of CMC interaction that focuses on learners' identities, the skills required of them to communicate online effectively, and the crucial aspects of learners' agency in interacting with technology.

The study employed a social realist framework (Sealey and Carter, 2004) derived from applied linguistics and sociology that was carefully designed to address the aforementioned assertions. Agency is at the core of the analysis, which successfully identifies the forms of CMC used by L2 learners dependent upon the task, affordance, and constraints of the situated contexts. An ethnographic approach comprising multiple longitudinal case studies adequately captured the participants' CMC practices as they changed over time. Special care was taken to document the complex and dynamic social characteristics. The results and data are organized into chapters

according to the four domains suggested by the social realist approach (Layder, 1997): *psychobiographies* (Chapter 2), *social setting* (Chapter 3), *situated activity* (Chapter 4), and *contextual resources* (Chap. 5).

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the social realist framework and a literature review pertinent to CMC in both the first language (L1) and L2. Pasfield-Neofitou argues that the use and potential of CMC are not restricted to its media-specific features. A detailed explanation of the author's methodologies for data collection and analysis is also presented. This includes participant interviews, qualitative surveys, transcripts from focus groups, and computer log files spanning more than four years from 12 Australians learning Japanese.

In Chapter 2, the participants are profiled according to Japanese language proficiency, Internet usage, and connection to Japanese-speaking communities. The ethnographic data suggests that L2 learners are generally exposed to on-line L2 resources via offline exchanges (e.g., while meeting with new Japanese friends). They gain such exposure by purposefully searching for Japanese speakers within their established L1 communities on-line, or through a formal Japanese language course. Face-to-face contact with native-speaking (NS) peers also plays a crucial role in learners' abilities to determine which social networking sites they should use to connect to their NS contacts, since the popularity of specific CMC tools is highly dependent upon a person's age and community.

Chapters 3 and 4 assert that characterizing the Internet as "placeless" space is incorrect. Pasfield-Neofitou identifies several language-specific domains where learners can be exposed to the L2 yet fear exclusion from some native speakers due to their foreignness. How learners display L2 identity or code-switch between languages on-line is often dependent upon the interaction's sociopolitical geographical domain.

Chapter 5 addresses how CMC provides numerous opportunities for L2 acquisition. The data illustrates how each participant's completion of a college course, or his/her experience as an exchange student in Japan, has impacted his/her skills and awareness of various on-line resources. With regard to the types of repair and corrective feedback identified in the CMC data, some of the repair found in the data took advantage of the media-specific affordance of text-based CMC.

In the final chapter, the author highlights her major findings and their implications for L2 learners' habitual online interactions outside the classroom. Through the inclusion of multiple case studies in the longitudinal data, Pasfield-Neofitou successfully demonstrates how the social realist approach's four domains are interconnected and subsequently affect L2 learners' preferred L2 CMC. As the participants were exposed to various offline communities, their interests, skills, and perceptions of self-development slowly changed. Such shifts impacted their agency to choose specific types of CMC and their form of participation. Although a number of recent studies have identified CMC's contextually dependent features, *Online Communication in a Second Language* enhances their findings by providing rich longitudinal data that successfully documents the developmental shifts in learners' use of L2 CMC.

The social realist approach that the author employs to challenge preconceived ideas concerning CMC media is a unique contribution to the field that opens many new paths. There has been an increased number of CMC studies using post-structuralist frameworks, which emphasize the relationship between agency and the social dimensions of L2 learning. Most of these studies, however, have been based upon the Vygotskian approach (e.g., Basharina, 2007) or a sociocultural perspective (e.g., Thorne, 2003; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

The social realist view and other emerging social approaches seem to share many attributes. For example, both recognize the crucial interrelationship between the subject/agency, the social contexts of language, and the dynamic and interrelated nature of technology in L2 education. There is, however, a significant difference concerning their notions and evidence of learning. The sociocultural approach tends to examine L2 learners' development according to their community participation or through a situated learning activity. In Chapter 5, Pasfield-Neofitou incorporates a cognitive-oriented interactional approach to L2 acquisition (e.g., Smith, 2003), which concerns the types of input (e.g., repair and corrective feedback) available for learners' cognitive development. Other CMC studies that have adopted the social realist framework (e.g., Belz, 2002; Belz and Müller-Hartmann) also incorporated various analytical methodologies to facilitate L2 learning and teaching in a flexible manner.

Unlike in a formal educational setting where teacher-researchers often design CMC activities according to their beliefs, an L2 learner in his or her own natural setting can actively choose to engage in certain online communities that address his or her belief(s) and purpose(s). Some learners simply seek an opportunity to be exposed to the Japanese language online, even though they are not active participants in any online communities. In contrast, other learners may use CMC to construct or maintain relationships with Japanese friends; others may use a mixture of purposes. To address the complex reality of CMC's role in accommodating each learner's need(s), theoretical approaches in the field of technology-mediated language learning must move beyond dichotomies such as "cognitively-oriented vs. socially-oriented," and embrace the diverse approaches in the field as suggested by Thorne and Smith (2011).

Pasfield-Neofitou also addressed the scarcity of CMC research for languages other than English, and explains how one's L2 online identity could be framed within the sociopolitical dimensions of an engaged online community. It would be exceedingly informative to document the experiences of learners of Japanese whose native tongue is not English as they establish their L2 identities online. English native speakers seem popular and attractive to young Japanese people. This would explain why the Australian students exposed their nationality in an online Japanese community. Would Chinese and Korean students readily reveal their nationalities as the Australian students did, despite Japan's historically turbulent relationship with these nations? Future studies may build upon Pasfield-Neofitou's research by examining learners' sociopolitical backgrounds in relation to Japanese language/society, and how those factors might shape one's L2 online identity. Efforts such as the aforementioned may foster increased interest in the application of CMC to languages other than English and, as suggested by Norton and McKinney (2011), in L2 learners' identity in languages other than English.

Pasfield-Neofitou competently corroborated her assertions by providing substantial longitudinal data to accompany her framework. She also provided educators with information to aid students' CMC use outside the classroom. Furthermore, *Online Communication in a Second Language* encourages the adoption of progressive, dynamic, and multilayered approaches that reach beyond traditional dichotomies such as "online vs. offline" or "formal vs. informal." Learners continually encounter new contexts where they actively use opportunities to fulfill a purpose in L2. As such, researchers must likewise search for dynamic and progressive solutions that match mass communication and technology's increasingly rapid development.

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