Recognizing factors from the social context that influence second language teaching and learning with ideas for the classroom to help overcome these

Mitchell Fryer[*]

Abstract: *This paper outlines various features of the social context in Japan that have the power to influence the teaching and learning of English as a second language (L2). The features of the social context that can influence L2 learning and teaching presented here for discussion include the attitudes, age and identity of L2 learners, the classroom environment, teaching methodologies in addition to the views and perceptions regarding English teaching and learning that permeate the broader social milieu. The discussion outlines the influence that these features can have on L2 teaching and learning and explores the implications these may have for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers within the Aichi Gakuin University (AGU) Policies Department. By recognizing and understanding the influence these factors can have on L2 English teaching and learning within the AGU policies department, teachers are better equipped to understand the factors that influence teaching and learning should they experience them, and as such be able to effectively create L2 learning environments that facilitate the needs of learners.*

keywords: social context, language teaching, L2 learning, classroom methodology.

Introduction

Candlin and Mercer (2001) highlight the need to recognise language learners as individuals, whose learning of English is shaped by the contexts in which they learn. In addition, the same authors note the importance of understanding the influence that factors from the wider social context can have on EFL teaching and learning. These factors include the attitudes, age and identity of L2 learners, the classroom environment, teaching methodologies in addition to the views and perceptions regarding English teaching and learning that permeate the broader social milieu.

Learners' age, attitudes and identity.

In L2 language learning, the learners' age and identity can influence L2 learning by affecting learners' motivations and perceptions gained through the experiences the learners' have had with the L2 and the L2 group/culture (Ellis, 2008). In addition, learners' motivation and attitudes towards L2 learning can be influenced through ideology that permeates the social milieu (Candlin & Mercer, 2001). The age of acquisition has the capacity to influence L2 language learning in several ways. Lightbown and Spada (2001) noted that many learners that undertake the learning of an L2 wish to remain identified with their first language (L1). In addition, Norton (as cited in Ellis, 2008) noted, adolescents and young adults have begun to form stereotypes about their own social and cultural identities and this has the power to influence learning. These issues affect learning as students are often reluctant to learn English for fear of losing their own cultural identity and as a result some learners begin to

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* *Adjunct Lecturer, Faculty of Policy Studies, Aichi Gakuin University, Japan*

question their own social identity. Furthermore, the learners often have formed various attitudes towards the target language (TL) and L2 acquisition due to previous formal and informal learning, home-stay programs and travel abroad opportunities. Ellis (2008) posited that learners' attitudes affect the level of L2 proficiency achieved by individual learners. Learners will manifest attitudes towards the TL, TL group and may question the social value of learning an L2. This is nowhere more prominent than in Japan where students display varying attitudes towards learning EFL. Kobayashi (2000) found that Japanese students displayed positive attitudes towards their EFL studies based on whether they liked English as a subject. Additionally, the study postulated that when Japanese students perceived that they were making progress with their L2 learning, they were likely to hold positive attitudes towards EFL studies, especially in the longer term.

McKenzie (2010) noted that due to learners' experiences, some learners display negative attitudes towards the TL and TL group and question the value of learning English, which have implications for teaching and learning. L2 learners' attitudes towards the TL and TL group need to be nurtured and developed through a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment with a focus on understanding and recognizing learner needs and cultural differences. Moreover, teachers can facilitate positive attitudes in their learners towards EFL learning and increase their L2 motivation by implementing various classroom strategies and learning methodologies. Teachers should target the use of methodologies and classroom strategies that increase linguistic self-confidence, intrinsic motivation and that nurture positive attitudes towards EFL learning based on the positive perceptions learners have regarding their progress in their EFL studies (Dörnyei, 1994; 1998; 2001; Kobayashi, 2000; McKenzie, 2010). This can reduce the influence of the social milieu on language teaching and learning and promote a learning environment that is conducive to effective learning that can positively influence L2 learner motivation (Dörnyei, 1990; 2001).

Learner attitudes have the power to influence the motivation of the learners. Due to their previous experiences with English learning, many of the learners display characteristics of instrumental motivation as they become primarily interested in pursuing the acquisition of Englis for immediate goals such as university exams and language proficiency exams such as EIKEN and TOEIC (Ellis, 2008). However, some students display integrative motivation and wish to pursue the acquisition of English to facilitate cultural enrichment and personal growth (Lightbown & Spada, 2001). As a result, it is imperative for teachers to recognize the needs of learners and implement teaching methods and learning activities and tasks that contribute effectively to the different needs of learners that facilitate and sustain the learners' L2 motivation. Moreover, as learners have different attitudes and motivations towards the TL and the acquisition of the TL, this affects the types of activities that are viewed as relevant and facilitating learner needs (Dörnyei, 1998). This in turn will affect the learning and acquisition that takes place, the perceptions the learners have towards their L2 learning and their continued motivation for L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Fryer, 2012a).

The effect of classroom methodology on learning and learner motivation.

Traditional views of teaching that remain embedded in Japanese education ideology result in many teaching contexts being teacher-centered, whereby the teacher takes on an active role and students take on a passive role (Kubota, 1998). Furthermore, teachers have unquestioned authority and often do not encourage the students to engage in authentic discourse. Willis (2006) highlighted that in many Japanese EFL classrooms teachers'

instruction consists of merely repeating what they say, extensive and detailed explanation of grammar and passively take notes and the translation of L2 discourse into their L1. These types of teaching methodologies influence the learning environment as many students expect to remain passive while the teacher takes on an active role (McGreevey, 2001). However, as L2 learning literature shows (Ellis, 2008; Skehan, 2001; Nunan, 2004), this is not conducive to L2 learning and more and more learning contexts are now employing more communicative methods, recognizing the context in regard to language use and adopting more learner-centered environments that have shown to be more effective for language learning and more effective at facilitating L2 motivation and L2 acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001; Ellis, 2008; Jones, 2007).

The adoption of a more learner-centered L2 learning environment facilitates the use of such teaching methodologies as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL). Nunan (2004) defined TBL as the kind of learning based on various tasks that incorporate content and process into L2 learning. Skehan (1998, p. 95) stated that an activity in which; meaning is primary and has some sort of relationship to the real world can be defined as a task. Burns (2001, p. 200) advocated the use of CLT as it provides teachers and learners with the means of exploring language use within a framework of cultural and social purpose. Fryer (2012a) noted that in his study of Japanese high school study abroad students, when students were able to identify with a purpose for L2 learning, this contributed to positive changes and perceived improvements and increases in L2 acquisition and motivation. The study also highlighted the value of CLT and TBL in Japanese EFL contexts as these helped students overcome negative attitudes towards EFL learning and identify with EFL learning as means for communication both inside and outside the classroom. Most importantly, these types of methodologies contribute to teachers employing scaffolding techniques that contribute to autonomous learners, which has shown to positively influence L2 motivation and facilitate acquisition.

Techniques such as scaffolding, which Bruner (1983) defined as assistance by the teacher that guides learners through activities that are initially too complex but that results in the creation of zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) that encourage students to engage in discourse, tasks and learning that they would not normally be able to complete on their own. Van Lier (2001) posited that the teacher that implements scaffolding techniques in the classroom should be aiming to adopt the role of a 'guide on the side' and act as a facilitator by guiding the students, offering assistance and helping them to manage their activities and direct their learning. These learning opportunities result in ideal learning opportunities for L2 acquisition and when the scaffolding is faded away, the learners have improved competence, confidence and acquisition (Jones, 2007; van Lier, 2001). The learning that is facilitated through scaffolding can contribute to self-confidence and promote the learners' intrinsic motivation, which is ideal in the long and arduous process of L2 acquisition (Dornyei, 2005). Feez (2001) highlighted benefits of scaffolding such as joint construction, increased inter-language development and language socialization as learners become socialized to the TL language forms. Scaffolding that encourages students to negotiate meaning with TL vocabulary and grammar and engage in the language for communicative and/or real-world purposes facilitates effective L2 learning as learners engage strategies for language input and output which contributes to effective L2 acquisition via interlanguage development through the development of discourse skills, automaticity, syntactic processing, negotiation of meaning and strategic competence (Skehan, 2001).

Jones, Llacer-Arrastia and Newbill (2009) emphasised the importance of creating learner-centered classroom environments that support learners and contribute to L2 learner motivation through the use of TBL and CLT as

these contribute to students becoming more active and inter-active. Jones (2007) noted that when students are able to work in pairs and in groups and communicate by sharing, comparing and discussing their ideas, opinions and experiences they have many more opportunities for L2 use. Students learning in this type of L2 learning environment are learning from each other and are more involved and less anxious. In addition, students are enjoying using English for communicative and task-based activities that increase their opportunities for TL use and strategies associated with learning the TL (Skehan, 2001; Jones, 2007). This contributes to language-learning courses that more effectively facilitate the learner's communicative needs and goals through the creation of learning environments that are more conducive to effective language learning (Dörnyei, 1998; 2001; Kiely, 2013).

Lightbown & Spada (2001) highlighted the importance of a supportive atmosphere that positively contributes to students' motivation to learn. A supportive atmosphere is characterized by the teacher showing a genuine interest in learner development which is important for developing learner identity and facilitating L2 motivation (Hirano, 2009). Supportive L2 learning environments can positively influence the L2 learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as learners become more adept at completing tasks and working towards their L2 learning goals respectively (Dornyei, 1998). The creation of a supportive L2 environment also helps to ameliorate the negative effects of anxiety. The undertaking of learning a L2 is a difficult task and often learners experience anxiety when learning a L2. It is imperative that the teacher create a learning environment that is non-threatening and that supports L2 learners and facilitates their goals and reduces negative anxiety and promotes positive anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Ellis (2008) outlined that both facilitating and debilitating anxiety exists; when conceptualized as a situated L2-specific construct, learner anxiety has a consistently negative influence on L2 performance and can negatively influence learner's motivation if it results in avoidance and a non-willingness to communicate (Horwitz, 2001).

A supportive, non-threatening and learner-centered L2 classroom is ideal for promoting a learning environment that facilitates increased intrinsic motivation in L2 learners, which is vital in the L2 acquisition process as it involves the learners in the learning process and promotes self-regulation in L2 learners (Cotterall, 2000). This positively influences learner interest which Ellis (2008) highlighted as a major element of motivation as it initiates and sustains motivation. MacIntyre (2002) highlighted the need for language teachers to recognize and understand the complexity of L2 motivation and the many interrelated factors such as the learner, the context of learning and the learning environment that affect and/or contribute to motivation. In addition, Williams and Burden (1997) state that language teachers must be aware of both initiating and sustaining motivation in learners to facilitate successful second language (L2) development. Dornyei (2005) emphasised that learners who are better able to maintain their motivation and monitor their own performance are in a better position to continue and sustain the L2 learning process. Jones, Llacer-Arrastia and Newbill (2009) highlighted the importance of a self-determination perspective that encourages learner autonomy and by involving learners in the learning process and creating enjoyable and interesting classes that sustain L2 motivation in students by intrinsically motivating them and that facilitate self-regulation in students, vital in the long process of L2 acquisition.

The broader social context and its influence on L2 teaching and learning.

The broader social context influences learning resulting from perceptions about English that permeate Japanese society. The L2 acquisition of English by Japanese in some contexts is constrained by the view that

English is a language spoken by foreigners that varies little despite the global use of English (Hane, 1996). Kubota (1998) stated that ideologies permeate Japanese educational institutions that result in Japanese L2 learners creating stereotypes regarding L1 speakers of English and as a result it is common for Japanese students to hold the view that their language teacher should be North American and that American English should be the target language. As a result, many L2 learning environments are not recognizing the globalization of English and the varieties of English spoken throughout the L1 and L2 English speaking worlds (Kachru, 1985; Kachru & Nelson, 1996). This does not promote English as a means of communication in a globalized world. Furthermore, these types of ideologies constrain the teaching and learning of English which result in learners being unaware of different varieties of English and as result they struggle to communicate and function in real world communication situations for business, education and travel (Kubota & Lin, 2009).

Other ideologies that permeate the social milieu in Japan include native-like English proficiency or English proficiency similar to that of people within the inner- circle (Kachru & Nelson, 1996) by Japanese being extremely rare and idiosyncratic. This has the power to not only influence L2 English learning but also to constrain it (Horsley & Buckley, 1990). These views affect EFL learning significantly, as many learners form a learner identity that does not lend itself to the acquisition of a L2. Learner identity is the way learners view the world and their perceptions of themselves in learning situations and this plays a major role in the learning and construction of knowledge. A L2 English learner that has poor learner identity often displays a lack of perseverance and acknowledgement of one's own learning and often gives up on tasks too easily, fails to acknowledge their own inter-language development and/or fails to see activities through to the end (Hirano, 2009). Moreover, many Japanese students place unreal demands on their EFL learning by expecting to acquire native-like proficiency (Kubota, 1998); when they really should be setting more realistic goals that will facilitate their L2 motivation and acquisition.

Implications for English language studies in the Policies Department

The following section outlines the implications arising from the issues identified above. In addition, suggestions for overcoming the negative effects of these issues are presented should teachers experience the negative effects of these issues related to the social context to facilitate effective English learning within the department.

Fostering positive learner attitudes

As the students in the Policies Department are young adults that have been learning English formally for several years, many of them will have formed attitudes and various stereotypes towards the learning of English based on their experiences to date. Lightbown and Spada (2001) advocate that many L2 learners experience external pressure to study a L2, which can result in negative attitudes towards L2 learning. Kubota (1998) noted that many Japanese university students require English for the purpose of entrance exams and for other testing purposes. This alone can create negative attitudes towards the learning of English as many Japanese students question the social value of studying English. Likewise, many learners form negative attitudes towards L2 learning because of how they perceive it will change their current identity. Kobayashi (2007) posited that Japanese learners of English learn better when their identity is comfortable with learning a second language and when this does not

diminish their cultural identity. Similarly, Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009) highlighted how Japanese learners' attitudes and language identity will influence their attitudes towards L2 learning.

To overcome the potential constraints to English learning in the Policies Department, teachers can implement various classroom strategies to help create positive attitudes, overcome L2 learning stereotypes, promote L2 learning that doesn't threaten cultural identity, ensures instruction is relevant, interesting, learner-centered and facilitates increased confidence and L2 motivation. Lightbown and Spada (2001) advocate that by varying classroom activities and tasks in addition to ensuring the learning goals are challenging yet achievable, teachers can foster positive attitudes and make a productive contribution towards students' motivation to learn. Gao (2009) stated language is a socialization process that requires learners to be engaging in and using the language to facilitate real L2 acquisition. Similarly, Breen (2001) highlighted that learners need to be active in the discourse of the class as the social context for each individual will differ and because language is socially constructed. Moreover, ensuring materials, tasks and content are culturally relevant and relevant to student needs is a good way to ensure English learning doesn't threaten the students' cultural identity and create negativity towards L2 English learning as well as contributing to positive learner attitudes (Canagarajah, 2001).

Creating a learner-centered environment that facilitates linguistic self-confidence in addition to promoting international posture are ways we as teachers in the Policies Department can promote positive attitudes towards L2 English learning. The concept of linguistic self-confidence (Clément, 1980, 1986) refers to the beliefs a learner has about their ability to produce results and accomplish goals and tasks and from an L2 motivational perspective it is an important factor for learners. Yashima (2002, p. 57) defined international posture as 'a willingness to go overseas to study or work, an openness and favorable disposition towards other languages and cultures and a readiness to interact with intercultural partners'. Implementation of teaching methodologies such as TBL and CLT and ensuring all tasks and activities are scaffolded can increase learners' linguistic self-confidence which can facilitate their L2 motivation and in addition help them feel like they are improving and capable of improving with their language studies.

Teaching materials/methodologies and promoting L2 motivation

Classroom materials and tasks that contribute to learners engaging in authentic discourse for real world communicative purposes can help foster their international posture. Yashima (2000) and Irie (2003) noted that many of the Japanese learners in their studies did not feel that identifying with the L2 community was important. Teaching that promotes L2 motivation, acquisition and that facilitates communicative ability with people living abroad and that encourages students to visualise themselves in the future in a way that does not threaten current identity is a good way to facilitate positive attitudes, linguistic self-confidence and promote L2 learning and motivation in students. Encouraging students to create future self-images that are not in conflict with their cultural identity and that incorporate images of themselves as Japanese that use their L2 English ability for possible communicative purposes here in Japan or abroad related to travel, education or business can foster positive attitudes, motivation and L2 acquisition (Fryer, 2012a).

Dörnyei (2005) posited the L2 motivational self system that incorporates an ideal L2 self-image that acts as a future guide to L2 learning. This new construct related to L2 motivation and learning has been shown to be an excellent base for the planning of L2 teaching and learning and as a key construct for understanding L2 motivation

in Japanese EFL contexts (Irie, 2003; Fryer, 2012a; McClelland, 2000; Ryan, 2006). Kobayashi (2000) highlighted the importance of promoting positive attitudes towards language study in the short and long term. Moreover, Lightbown and Spada (2001) as well as Dörnyei (1998; 2001) highlighted the importance of positive attitudes and L2 motivation, as these have been shown to directly influence the rate and level of L2 acquisition.

Many publishing companies are now recognizing various varieties of English by including the lexical items and pronunciation based on Kachru (1985) and Kachru and Nelson's (1996) inner-circle countries such as America, Great Britain, the Antipodes as well as some outer circle countries and expanding circle countries such as Japan and China. Crystal (2001) emphasised that the emergence of English as a global language has resulted in the decrease in distinguishing between first, second and foreign language users. Providing learners with the knowledge of the various varieties of English and the global use of English and the purpose of English as a communication tool in its own right or as a lingua franca can help learners in the Policies department appreciate the value of English as a communication tool (Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Crystal, 2001). Hirano (2009) identified the importance of bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world to encourage the learners to view the classroom as a microcosm of the outside world to enable the students to understand the relevance of classroom activities and discourse. Bringing the real world into the classroom via various media such as DVD, TV, newspapers and internet articles can help learners identify with English as communicative tool and facilitate the learners engaging with English for communicative purposes.

Pedagogy and instruction: Ideas for the classroom

To promote positive attitudes towards L2 learning and to facilitate L2 motivation in the classroom, varying the materials, activities and tasks can be effective. When using a textbook teachers, can provide simple tasks related to the textbook that encourage students to work in pairs or groups to promote cooperative learning and active participation. Varying these activities to include various dictation, interview, pair reading and/or conversation activities can increase the learners' participation, which can promote positive attitudes towards learning and increase their task motivation and L2 motivation (Jones, 2007; Fryer, 2012b).

To ensure the learners' identity is not threatened, teachers can implement classroom activities that incorporate the TL vocabulary and/or grammar and sentence structures and have the students relate these to themselves, their surroundings and/or their native country Japan. In this way, students feel less threatened and will be less likely to develop negative attitudes towards EFL learning when they are able to maintain their cultural and self identities. This can create increased interest in EFL learning and maintain positive attitudes that can foster their learning in the short and long terms (Kobayashi, 2000; 2007).

Incorporating TBL and CLT into the classroom via lessons that use TL vocabulary and grammar from set textbooks or selected textbooks facilitate the classroom becoming a learner-centered environment that is highly conducive to L2 learning. Encouraging the students to perform certain tasks enables them to engage with the language as well as produce, negotiate and understand intention and meaning, test language hypotheses and to develop automaticity and their interlanguage (Kiely, 2013; Skehan, 2001). Such communicative tasks may include using the TL vocabulary/grammar for the purpose of interviews, pair or group conversations, taking telephone messages, ordering pizzas or McDonalds from authentic menus, introducing themselves, their friends, family, clubs and/or their interests. Other tasks can include discussion and presentation of popular culture related to Japan

such as food, useful language, places to visit and popular customs, people manga and music.

Ryan (2009) posited that for Japanese L2 learners, the one-size-fits-all model of L2 learning prescribed by the international ELT industry and the Japanese specific model of L2 learning both seemed unsatisfactory for effective teaching and to facilitate L2 motivation and acquisition as the former failed to identify with the local context and the latter placed too greater emphasis on contextual particularities. He prescribed Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system as a potential framework to identify and understand the process of L2 motivation and SLA in Japanese L2 learners. This construct is comprised of the L2 ideal self that incorporates the individual learner's own vision of themselves sometime in the future and the attributes they believe they would ideally like to possess related to their L2 learning. The construct also includes the ought-to self, which is a complementary self-guide and is a representation of the attributes a learner believes they should or ought to possess (Dörnyei, 2009). Conceptualising L2 motivation through Dörnyei's self-system facilitates the identification and understanding of a dynamic self-synthesis process within L2 learners that incorporates self-regulation and which is closely aligned with Noel's (2003; 2009) suggestions of more self-determined extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation that are associated with increased L2 motivation and more positive responses regarding learning the L2.

Teachers can use this effective and relevant construct in their classes by encouraging learners to introduce themselves to the classroom, both as the person they are now and also at a determined time in the future. Tasks such as these encourage students to think about and visualize themselves one, two or five years in the future and can help them identify with the L2 learner they wish to become and the role English will have in their lives in the future. These types of tasks are effective for nurturing identity, improving English and promoting motivation through discrepancy reduction, which Dörnyei (2005, 2009) highlighted as a powerful motivation tool.

The final idea for the classroom presented here is very simple; however, this is something that should be implemented from the first lesson. There is a lot of research that suggests that for effective SLA to occur, learners must be thinking about or engaging in the TL more than once a week. Encouraging the students within the Policies department to think about their English studies and engage with the language more than once a week in class and outside the classroom can improve their learning, attitudes and motivation. Teachers can set these tasks as homework that will include in their overall assessment grades, or use these tasks to form parts of their lessons. Such tasks may include finding relevant online articles from websites such as Japan Today or the BBC for reading, discussion and/or presentation. Other tasks can include using online learning that is linked to various textbooks, such as the online learning tool through Oxford University Press' Smart Choice series. These online learning tasks incorporate TL vocabulary, grammar, reading and conversation activities that the students can complete for homework or to prepare for the following week's classes. Linking these tasks that students are to engage in outside the classroom encourages them to become more self-determined regarding their English studies and to take more responsibility more their L2 learning as well as getting them to think about and use English outside the classroom, which is difficult in the Japanese context, but that is vital to ensure effective L2 acquisition.

Conclusions

Factors from the social context such as learners' age, identity, attitudes and motivations as well as the classroom environment and methodology and views and ideologies regarding EFL teaching and learning within the broader social milieu can impact and constrain L2 learning. Understanding how these factors can influence

teaching and learning and the effects of these can help teachers to identify and understand the factors that constrain teaching and learning. In addition, this can facilitate the amelioration of negative influences and outcomes that arise from these constraining and influencing factors. Moreover, this understanding can highlight practices, methodologies and tasks that can contribute to positive learning environments, increase learner participation and motivation and create EFL classes that are conducive to effective SLA and L2 motivation.

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外国語教授と学習に影響する社会的要因を認識する
——その克服の手助けとなる教室運営のためのアイデアとともに——

要約　本論は，外国語としての英語（以下 L 2 英語）教授・学習に影響力を持つ日本の社会的文脈の様々な特徴を概括する．本論が提示する L 2 英語学習と教授に影響を及ぼす可能性のある社会的文脈の特徴とは，より広い一般社会コンテクストに浸透している英語教授・学習に関する見方と認識だけでなく，L 2 英語学習者の学習態度，年齢と，彼らの自己認識，教室環境，教授方法を含んでいる．議論は，これらの特徴が L 2 英語教授・学習に及ぼし得る影響を概括し，これら特徴が愛知学院大学（AGU）総合政策学部の外国語としての英語（EFL）教員に対してもちうる含意を探っていく．これら関係因子が AGU 総合政策学部における L 2 英語教授・学習に及ぼし得る影響を認識し，理解することによって，教師は，彼らが経験することになるはずの教授と学習に影響する要素をよりよく理解して授業に臨め，そのうえで，学習者のニーズに応えた L 2 学習環境を効果的に作り出すことができる．
キーワード　社会的文脈，言語教育，外国語学習，教室運営方法