

Enhancing Social Media-Based Participation in L2 Communities of Practice

by

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B.A., Konan University, 2011

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## **Abstract**

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This thesis is a literature review that reports on the use of social media for language learning and teaching. I argue that the use of one's first language as well as their second language (L2) on social media is a useful technique while learning L2 because code-switching can play a vital role in communication among users. I also argue that social media-based participation in Communities of Practice (CoPs) can provide learning opportunities for language learners. In the course of my argument, I examine a wide range of studies relating to social media, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, and I discuss the benefits and risks of the use of social media in language learning. After amalgamating the key points from the literature, I propose a curricular framework for language classrooms which serves as a scaffolding activity for the use of social media for participating in L2 CoPs through objective analysis of linguistic resources.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my family, friends and Dr. Kentaro Nakatani, my undergraduate supervisor.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

According to OED Online (2016), the term *social media* refers to “[w]ebsites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.” Social media has been rapidly increasing in popularity in the past decade. Users access social media for multiple purposes, including reading and sharing insights about trending news topics (Nakov, et al., 2016), creating and sharing multimedia content (Kim and Gweon, 2016), building communities (Roblyer, et al., 2010) and forming and disclosing lists of connected users (boyd and Ellison, 2007; van Dijck, 2013). Such activities are not necessarily unique to social media, since before social media was introduced, there were already platforms that allowed users to accomplish these activities (e.g. personal websites). However, for many people it was not easy to build and publish such sites, due to reasons such as slower internet speeds, the affordability of tools and the lack of digital literacy skills (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). In contrast, what makes social media distinct is the particular context in which it came into being, namely, during a period characterized by the rapid advancement of web-based technology and the introduction of different types of platforms that built on this technology (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). These developments made it far easier for users to engage in online networking activities.

Various social media platforms have been introduced since the advent of social media. For example, Twitter is the biggest microblogging platform, a space where users can publish short text messages (maximum 140 characters) which are called tweets. More than 500 million users access this platform every month (Lambert, 2016). Facebook is

another major social media platform, where users interact with each other and form networks of friends. In December 2016, an average of 1.23 billion active users accessed Facebook every day (Facebook, Inc., 2017). There are many other notable examples of social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Google+ and Instagram. Each of them offers different but overlapping characteristics. For example, LinkedIn is built and commonly used for professional networking. The user statistics clearly illustrate that social media has become a part of everyday life for many people.

Studies in applied fields have noted the potential of social media for educational benefits. For example, Lantz-Andersson et al. (2013) noted the significant amount of time that young people spend using this technology when communicating with friends in their everyday lives, and how such communication can be used for language learning (p. 294). Klimanova and Dembovskaya (2013) noted the educational potential of the ability to engage in interactions with other users all over the world without the constraint of physical distance, which can be of benefit when language learners do not have access to a native speaker of their second language (L2) with whom they can practice (p. 69). Studies have also demonstrated that outside of school settings, language learners can engage in opportunities to extend their L2 skills using social media (Chen, 2013; Mitchell, 2012; Richards, 2015; Shafie, et al., 2016). Such L2 practice using social media in out-of-school settings can often be more authentic than social media-based L2 practice in classrooms, in that the interactions are more natural than classroom activities, which are set up and guided by a language educator (Richards, 2015). Thus, language instructors who wish to incorporate social media into their classrooms for educational purposes may

find it desirable to do so in a way that replicates the positive aspects of interactions that occur outside of the classroom.

### **Contemporary Language Classrooms and the Use of L1**

To incorporate social media platforms into language instruction pedagogy, curricula must be flexible enough to accommodate the unpredictability of social media interactions in casual settings. Modern language classrooms are often structured such that teachers have more control over the linguistic variety that is to be taught than do students. The literature to date has not revealed how common this phenomenon is in each stage of education. Nonetheless, it appears to be the case that regardless of the level of education, there are a number of instructors who believe that a language is learned more effectively by avoiding the first language (L1) as much as possible (e.g. Cummins, 2007; 2009; Levine, 2013). Some language classrooms may allow students a degree of freedom in choosing learning outcomes, but insofar as linguistic norms are set by the instructor, they are generally structured as a more or less closed-ended learning space (e.g. Levine, 2013).

Interaction on the internet often involves alternating between multiple languages within a sentence and/or a conversation (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2013; Thorne, et al., 2009), which is commonly referred to as code-switching (Bullock and Toribio, 2009; Matthews, 2014a). However, in many language classrooms, this practice is often not accepted as belonging to a valid communicative style. Instead, it is considered an error (e.g. Firth and Wagner, 1997; Levine, 2013; Thorne, 2009; Thorne, et al., 2009). This is because many language classes are structured around the assumption that L2 can be acquired more effectively if the use of L1 is avoided in the classroom, and that students

should aim to speak in a way that is as close as possible to the speech of an idealized monolingual native speaker of L2 (e.g. Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Levine, 2013; Pavlenko, 2003). Teaching approaches informed by the direct method, which sees L1 involvement as undesirable noise (discussed further below) are common and notable examples of the exclusion of the use of L1 in the language classroom (Cummins, 2007; 2009).

Having a defined set of language forms that is to be taught allows instructors to set specific goals and attempt to evaluate progress in terms of achievement of those goals. Nevertheless, in turn, such teaching practices can lead to closed-ended learning goals, such as an overemphasis on stereotypes about gendered forms of language use and norms (Siegal and Okamoto, 2003) and marginalization of code-switching, as mentioned above (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Levine, 2013; Lee and Macaro, 2013). The use of closed-ended learning goals also appears to directly impact the use of social media for language learning in formal settings. For example, Morofushi and Pasfield-Neofitou (2014) argued that when students were asked to engage in communication or diary writing online, some students may have focused on grammatical accuracy to obtain better grades, a practice that inhibited their ability to freely express themselves (p. 15). This suggests that it is difficult to meet learning goals set by the instructor while ensuring a student-centered learning experience when the two objectives are not aligned. Furthermore, it appears that simply introducing the use of social media into the language classroom does not replicate the way in which users interact with each other outside of school settings. Rather, the schooling context can impact how communication is structured in social media (see also

Lantz-Andersson, et al., 2013). Thus, the use of social media for language learning can pose practical challenges in formal settings.

Does this mean that language classrooms should give up on incorporating social media interactions and community participation? I argue that it is possible to incorporate social media-based communication into the language classroom while maintaining the naturalness and other positive characteristics of casual participation in virtual communities that are typically found in social environments. In order to do so, the following three elements are necessary: (1) pedagogical perspectives that acknowledge social media-based communication that occurs outside of school as “learning”, (2) a proper understanding of these experiences, and (3) an understanding of the limitations of classrooms in integrating these experiences. For example, one of the characteristics of L2 use in virtual space is the switching back and forth between the L1 and L2 as a method of self-expression. To address the first of these elements, in this chapter I will discuss the debate concerning the efficacy of the involvement of L1 in language learning and set out the background for the rest of this thesis. The next chapter will address the final two elements.

### **The Use of L1 in Language Learning**

The extent to which the use of L1 should be allowed in language classrooms, as well as its effect on language learning, have been the subject of debate (Chavez, 2016; Cummins, 2007, 2009; Macaro, 2001 Lee and Macaro, 2013). Those who promote the exclusion or minimal use of L1 in the language classroom see the use of L1 as an error or stumbling block in the process of acquiring language, while others see L1 as a support in language learning (Cummins, 2007; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Levine, 2013; Macaro,

2001; Meiring and Norman, 2002). This thesis supports the latter view, and the following sections will outline some of the major arguments supporting both sides to demonstrate why the use of L1 should be allowed in a language classroom.

The exclusion of L1 from language classrooms has a long history, and this principle is still shared among many language instructors today. According to Bayley (1998), over 100 years ago, there was a reform movement in language teaching in the western world, during which a series of new methods were introduced (pp. 42-43). These methods had common principles such as “language should be learned by associating ideas directly with the spoken word, not by translating or memorizing grammar rules” (p. 43). The direct method was also one of these methods. In the direct method, students engage in communication in L2 without the aid of any languages with which they are familiar (Matthews, 2014b). The underlying aim is to “enabl[e] learners to think in the [target language] with minimal interference from L1” (Cummins, 2007, p. 223).

The direct method has significantly influenced many language teaching and learning practices in modern and contemporary settings (Cummins, 2007; Meiring and Norman, 2002). However, since the early 1990s there have not been any major empirical works that have expressed support for the direct method or its related approaches. Even so, the idea that the use of L1 should be avoided remains prevalent among many language educators, with the belief that being completely immersed in the L2 and aiming to speak like a native speaker leads to a more effective acquisition of L2 (for discussion see, e.g., Lee and Macaro, 2013; Levine, 2013). Accordingly, school instructors often set the monolingual native speaker of the L2 as the norm, and educate students to come closer to this norm (Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Levine, 2013). The

variety of instructional methods and approaches that are predicated on the idea that a language is best learned by excluding L1 and/or maximizing the amount of L2 use in the language classroom is now commonly called “the monolingual approach” (Levine, 2013, p. 423). Therefore, the above-mentioned direct method can be considered as falling under this broader umbrella term.

Several studies have pointed out that the monolingual approach can be pedagogically problematic. Despite its widespread influence, no study to date has provided sufficient evidence to justify exclusion of L1 from the language classroom (e.g. Cummins, 2007; Levine, 2013). In addition, Huang (2017) argued that prohibiting the use of L1 in language classrooms during learning activities “can cause cognitive overload when the input is too complex” (para. 6). What this means is that without the scaffolding of L1, the input in L2 can be too difficult for students to process, causing negative impacts in the completion of given tasks. Hence, the stigmatization of L1 is not only unsupported by evidence, but can be a barrier to language learning. In what follows, I will further discuss why the monolingual approach is not a viable approach for language learning and teaching.

As discussed above, in many language classrooms, switching between the L1 and the L2 is not treated as a legitimate communicative technique, even though it is ubiquitous outside the classroom and plays a vital role in communications that involve L2 in casual settings both offline and online (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2013; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Kharkhurin and Wei, 2014; Söderberg and Jørgensen, 2003; Thorne et al., 2009). The monolingual approach sets closed-ended pedagogical goals which assume that language learning is in essence the internalization of a norm. Within the scope of the

monolingual approach, the multilingual interactions which occur on social media would not be considered to be ideal as a form of language learning.

The idea of prohibiting the use of L1 makes sense if the goal for the learner is to emulate the norm of a monolingual native speaker, because the speech of such a monolingual native speaker would consist of their native language only. As such, switching between L1 and L2 is an “error” in that it is a deviation from the norm. In spite of that, there is no empirical evidence that supports the efficacy of this monolingual approach (Cummins, 2007). In addition, the focus on monolingual native speakers can also be questioned. Levine (2013), for example, points out that setting a native speaker as the ultimate linguistic model that students should aim to replicate is essentially an unobtainable goal (p. 425). The fact that it presents many challenges may be difficult for some learners to understand and may ultimately act to discourage them (Levine, 2013, p. 425).

The closed-ended learning goal to assimilate learners to the monolingual native speaker norm is also problematic when the mixing of languages in a conversation is seen as a communicative style. Contrary to the assumption that language learners should aim to emulate native speakers, criticisms of the approach point out that switching between L1 and L2 is not necessarily a sign of error. For instance, in the context of linguistic studies on subjects other than language learning, it is often the case that switching between L1 and L2 is considered to be a complex communicative skill used by multilingual speakers. This means that the switching is not only used in speech by speakers with low levels of proficiency in L2; rather, people with high levels of competence in multiple languages also perform switching (e.g. Kharkhurin and Wei,

2014; Söderberg and Jørgensen, 2003). From this perspective, the involvement of L1 in interactions that occur during social media-based language learning can be considered to be a legitimate communicative style.

In addition, in spaces outside of the classroom, there are a variety of ways in which a language is spoken, written or typed, which makes it difficult to justify the view that a particular variety is the standard which is “more correct” compared to others. For example, in the casual interactions that occur in virtual space outside of educational settings, users may encounter communications that involve switching between L1 and L2. Furthermore, the imposition of the native speaker ideal also ignores the fact that language learners do not necessarily learn a language intending to master all aspects of L2, but rather their aim may be to appropriate aspects of L2 for their particular needs (Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011, p. 3). When the variety of goals that learners have is recognized, then the diversity of online multilingual interactions becomes a benefit in allowing these language learners to reach their own goals. All of these render the monolingual approach, in which a form of a language is established as a standard norm, questionable. Accordingly, the approach that stands in opposition to the monolingual approach (which, following Levine (2013), this thesis will refer to as the “multilingual classroom approach”) suggests that language classroom activities should be designed in a manner that accounts for the backgrounds of language learners and facilitates their desired learning goals.

Some scholars have been critical of the stigmatization of L1 use in language classrooms (e.g. Cook, 1999; Cummins, 2007; 2009; Lee and Macaro, 2013; Macaro, 2001), and the term “multilingual approach” is not yet in common use. It is also

problematic because while it refers to a specific perspective of language learning, it sounds like a very general term and may be confusing when used in discussions that also use the term “multilingualism” in a broader sense (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of multilingualism). Thus, this thesis will use the term “multilingual classroom” to refer to an approach to language learning that encourages the use of multiple languages as a legitimate communication technique.

In sum, criticisms of the monolingual approach tend to focus on the way in which people actually learn L2 as multilingual speakers. Language learners are not necessarily aspiring to be native speakers. When learners acquire an L2, it does not overwrite their L1; the languages will co-exist (e.g. Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011; Levine, 2013). In addition, communication by multilingual speakers can involve switching between an L1 and L2, which also plays a vital role in their communication with peers. Therefore, according to the multilingual classroom perspective, the involvement of L1 is considered to be a communicative style used by the multilingual speaker, rather than a speech error or deviation from a monolingual norm. These premises underlying the multilingual classroom approach are in line with the educational potential of social media that other studies suggested (e.g. Chen, 2013; Mitchell, 2012; Richards, 2015; Shafie, et al., 2016), namely the provision of opportunities to engage in the authentic use of language. Hence, in this thesis, building on the multilingual classroom approach, I will argue that the use of L1 in addition to L2, which can be supported via social media, is an important and viable technique in learning L2.

## **Research Question and Structure of This Thesis**

In order to build a case for my argument, this thesis will critically examine both recent and older literature related to social media, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition (SLA) and applied linguistics. Throughout this thesis the following research question will guide my discussion: *How can language learning be fostered through the use of social media?* In order to argue for the use of social media for language learning purposes, we need to understand the ways in which social media is used as a communication tool, and identify what kind of activities can facilitate the learning experience. Hence, in order to tie the arguments from each chapter together, this thesis aims to address this overarching question.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 will identify the ways in which social media is beneficial for language learning and will discuss the merits of training students with analytical skills relating to linguistic practices as a potential activity. Chapter 3 will examine some of the potential stumbling blocks that language learners may encounter when social media is used for language learning. Chapter 4 will then address the theoretical underpinnings supporting the feasibility of the analysis activity proposed in Chapter 2. Finally, Chapter 5 will incorporate the findings from the previous chapters and suggest a framework for classroom activities.

## **Limitations**

There are two notable limitations on the scope of the discussion in this thesis. First, while there are many different stages of education (e.g. K-12, undergraduate and post-graduate), the thesis does not focus on the differences among these levels. This is because this work is situated in alignment with the criticism of the prescriptive view of

language learning, and the prescriptive approach applies regardless of the level of education in question. Nonetheless, due to the author's experience with language learning and teaching in higher education, the discussion in Chapter 5 will primarily target higher education settings in North America. Second, because this work is fundamentally a literature review, the outcomes of the discussion will be heavily theory-based. Empirical investigation is needed to account for different types of language classrooms and social media platforms. Having said that, the wealth of literature that is available in the fields of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and related fields provide substantial evidence to make a case that addresses the issue at hand: leveraging the use of social media for language learning and teaching. As such, this thesis will make a case to support an answer to the question of how social media can be operationalized to facilitate formal language learning, thereby contributing to the state of the knowledge in this field and to language educators who seek to leverage the potential of social media in their classrooms.

## **Chapter 2: A Variety of Communicative Styles and Social Media**

### **Introduction**

In order to address the question of how language instructors can assist students with using social media for language learning, we first need to gain an understanding of how social media can be used to support L2 acquisition. Thus, this chapter will examine the characteristics of interactions in L2 through social media in casual settings, and address how the multilingual classroom approach can be applied to L2 interactions occurring in virtual space. An understanding of interactions on social media is important because it is the basis for the central argument of this thesis: the use of both L1 and L2 on social media is an important technique for learning an L2. The central hypothesis of this thesis inherently assumes that the use of social media is beneficial for language learning and teaching. Thus, before proceeding, the next section will address the context in which the use of social media for language learning is argued to be beneficial.

### **The Participationist Perspective and Social Media**

The theoretical underpinnings of the educational benefits of social media can be elucidated in terms of the participationist perspective of learning (Dohn, 2009; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2013). From this perspective, learning consists of participation in a community (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Sfard, 1998; Wenger, 1998) rather than being a process through which a person acquires and internalizes knowledge and competence. The *Community of Practice* (CoP) framework provides helpful insight into how such communities function (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The CoP is defined as a community of “people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para 4). Within the CoP,

learning is a process through which participants incrementally gain deeper membership in a community founded on shared common knowledge and engagement in common practices, albeit in varying ways among participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). For instance, some people may engage in a CoP more deeply than others, or may have multiple roles in the CoP. Central to the CoP is the notion of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). This refers to the process through which a learner engages in a CoP, engaging initially from its periphery and achieving deeper levels of participation as they progress in their learning experiences. Although learners may have different mindsets toward determining their learning goals, they are equally legitimate as participants. Thus, if social media is conceptualized as a space where users mutually engage in and construct a community (cf. Dohn 2009, p. 351), it constitutes a promising medium for learning when analysed through the participationist lens.

The participationist perspective also views language learning as a form of participation in a community of language speakers (Duff and Talmy, 2011; Levine, 2013, pp. 429-30; Norton, 2000). This means that there are multiple ways in which people acquire language, and the state of mastery can vary depending on the learners' goals, where they want to belong and who they want to be. Furthermore, some scholars oppose the monolingual approach based on this perspective (Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Levine, 2013). When a learner acquires an L2, it does not override the L1 but becomes part of the repertoire that allows them to express themselves (Canagarajah and Wurr, 2011, p. 3). Based on this assumption, there are three main

reasons why this participationist viewpoint aligns with the multilingual classroom approach.

First, the monolingual approach fails to account for the way in which multilingual speakers interact outside of school, where use of both the L1 and L2 may be involved (Levine, 2013). From the participationist perspective, language and communicative styles are conceptualized as a common form of behavior among community members (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Duff and Talmy, 2011). Participation in a CoP involves constructing and learning particular behaviors and their significance (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Duff and Talmy, 2011). Communicative styles that involve switching between L1 and L2 are not an exception. They can also be considered as a skill that allows speakers to share a common practice within a group with their own meaning attached to it (Söderberg and Jørgensen, 2003, p. 50). This further supports the view that switching between the L1 and L2 is not an error or sign of deficiency, but rather is a skill that allows speakers to maintain and construct relationships with other people. In other words, L2 interactions can legitimately contain L1 usage.

Second, as discussed in the first chapter, the monolingual approach attempts to train learners to replicate the idealized monolingual norm. However, its deviation from the ways in which L2 learners actually participate in L2 language CoPs can be problematic (Levine, 2013). When a multilingual engages in a CoP as a L2 speaker, the way in which they do so differs from the engagement by native speakers of the CoP (pp. 429-430). What this means is that multilingual speakers engage in L2 CoPs in a way that is typical of multilingual speakers, and the community engages with the learner as a multilingual speaker, not as a native speaker (Levine, 2013, p. 429-430). For example, L2

speakers can feel that they are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis native speakers (Norton, 2000). This means that a speaker's background or origin also matters when participating in an L2 CoP. In addition, Levine's usage of the term "L2 community of practice" is not limited to communities that use a particular language as L1 (i.e. communities made up mostly of native speakers of the language that is L2 for the learner). An L2 CoP includes any community or society that uses the particular L2. Even if the language is L2 for all of the members of the CoP, when a learner first engages in the CoP, the learner is a newcomer to the L2 CoP (Levine, 2013, p. 429-430). It is important to note that although Levine (2013) argued that multilingual speakers engage in L2 CoPs as legitimate participants regardless of their L2 skills (p. 429-430), there are varying degrees to which multilinguals may deviate from how a native speaker in a CoP behaves. This is because in some cases, L2 speakers may speak and act in a way that is almost identical to the way native speakers in the L2 CoP would behave, in which case the L2 speaker in the CoP is less likely to feel disadvantaged within the CoP.

Finally, as discussed above, when learning is seen as progressive participation in a given CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Sfar, 1998; Wenger, 1998), the learner is seen as a participant in the CoP who progresses as they attain deeper engagement in the CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). What this means is that outside the language classroom, learners are not aspiring native speakers, but rather develop their own sense of selves as multilingual speakers. Socially-oriented SLA studies also previously revealed that when language learners engage in L2 communities, they do not acquire language by merely imitating monolingual speakers, but rather that they integrate into L2 society through the use of L2, and the negotiation of social relationships (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). This

provides further support for the multilingual classroom approach view that switching between L1 and L2 can be a communicative skill.

In sum, from the participationist perspective, language learning is open-ended in that it is difficult to determine when a learner has reached a state of mastery. The primary reason why the CoP is a useful framework in this context is that the model focuses on the diverse ways in which people engage in learning such as different approaches and motivations for learning in general, including the involvement of L1 in language learning. Acknowledging and accommodating these differences is one way to improve the learning experience of each student as a multilingual speaker in the L2 CoP and to help them achieve their learning goals through the use of social media. Thus, the value of social media as a language learning tool depends on whether it enables or assists users in gaining access to the community to which they wish to belong. As well, the multilingual classroom approach (Levine, 2013) lends strong support for this purpose. How then can the opportunities for participation that social media offers contribute to a contemporary language classroom?

### **Multilingualism and Virtual Space**

If social media is to be effectively used for educational purposes in the context of language learning, we need to understand the ways in which users interact in virtual spaces using their L2. One characteristic that is frequently noted is *multilingualism* (Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012), the involvement of multiple languages within a particular interaction or series of interactions. In this thesis, “multilingual” will refer to the involvement of two or more languages in any communicative event. In what follows I

explore what it means to choose a particular language during participation in an online community, and how the choice is made.

Empirical findings from studies of multilingualism reveal that L2 use plays a vital role in presenting who a person is in virtual space (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2013; Hillewaert, 2015; Lee and Barton, 2011; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012; Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010). This expression is accomplished through the complex interplay of fixed and fluid views of language (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010, p. 244). The fixed view refers to a connection between language and a defined culture. In presenting a certain persona linguistically, one may choose to use a particular language based on the view that the language has a strong connection to a certain culture (a sense of authenticity), thereby implying a fixed tie of the language to a culture. In this context, culture is not limited only to cultural practices, but may also extend to geographical locations and ethnicity (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010). In contrast, the fluid view of language explains instances where a speaker's language choice is made beyond the constraints of conventional cultural boundaries (Androutsopoulos, 2013; Lee and Barton, 2011; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012; Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010). The fluid view of language sees language choice as occurring through the use of multiple linguistic resources to express oneself within a single context. This view has increased in popularity since earlier studies of multilingualism in virtual space (for example, Androutsopoulos, 2006) because of an increasing number of online instances that have been observed where use of a language is not necessarily determined by association with a culture. One might choose a particular language based on multiple factors, such as who they are communicating with or what they are communicating about.

An example of the fixed view of language is the way in which Hip Hop fans outside of English-speaking countries strongly associate English with “Hip-Hop-ness” (Androutsopoulos, 2004; Leppänen, 2007). Androutsopoulos (2004) examined the use of English among Hip Hop fans in Germany. An inquiry into their language use in online discussion forums showed that English serves a vital role in the fan community by adding a sense of authenticity to their interactions and lyrics. Studies with similar findings have focused on the use of English by youth in Finland (Leppänen, 2007) and use of Japanese on Facebook (Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014). For example, the adolescents examined by Jonsson and Muhonen (2014) were fans of Japanese pop culture (such as Anime). The learners also used their L2, Japanese, in their online profiles on social media sites to increase their authenticity as “real” Anime fans. This illustrates that the findings concerning the fixed view of language discussed above also apply to social media platforms in situations where a sense of membership in a community (such as a fan community) motivates a user to use L2. These studies highlight that the ties between language and culture constitute a key characteristic of language choice when the language serves as a sign of authenticity.

At the same time, it is often argued that a multilingual speaker’s choice of language is fluid, in the sense that the speaker may use more than one language in the same context (Lee and Barton 2011; Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010). The choice is seen in such a manner because a speaker does not present themselves as being tied to one particular category. Rather, the use of multiple languages shows ties to multiple social categories with which the speaker associates, and also shows their ties to the languages themselves. In other words, a speaker’s choice is not necessarily restricted by ethnicity,

geographical location or cultural practices (Lee and Barton 2011; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012; Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010). Accordingly, a simplistic connection between a language and culture (be it popular culture or ethnic culture, for example) is not necessarily enough to explain a speaker's choice of language. For instance, the use of English does not necessarily signal a speaker's "English-ness" or "American-ness" or identify them as a Hip Hop fan. Rather, self-expression through multilingualism can involve a choice of languages based on a speaker's attitude towards a language, and situational factors such as intended audiences.

Some scholars argue that the two views of language —fixed and fluid— are a dichotomy, often preferring the fluid approach (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Lee and Barton 2011). Nonetheless, it can also be argued that a full understanding of multilingual communication involves the amalgam of both the fixed and fluid views (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010, p. 247). While it is true that a speaker may switch between languages without being constrained by cultural boundaries (fluid), a speaker may also base their choice of language on its connection to a particular culture or ethnicity (fixed). More recent studies by scholars such as Androutsopoulos (2013) and Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) question the approach that favors fluidity over a fixed view of languages, arguing instead that the fluid and fixed approaches coexist. The presentation of self by a multilingual speaker may appear fluid because it can involve the use of multiple languages. In spite of this, the fixed view of culture and language serves as a component of fluid switching between multiple languages (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010, p. 244).

In an earlier sociolinguistic study of multilingualism, Androutsopoulos (2006) demonstrated that users based their self-expression on multiple languages without being

constrained by cultural boundaries on an online discussion board for a diaspora group. The characteristics of users' language choices were fluid because their choices were not determined solely by ethnic affiliation. Although the study emphasized the fluidity of the language choices that were made, some instances observed in the study also showed language choices made based on the fixed ties of a language to a culture, thus supporting the view that language choice can be both fixed and fluid. Further supporting Androutsopoulos' (2006) argument that language choice does not merely equate to a marker of affiliation with a particular ethnicity or nationality, Lee and Barton (2011) investigated how users' language choices on a photo sharing site, on which users create profiles and share photos with captions, were motivated. Based on empirical data, they also contended that language choice is not an automatic marker of ties to "one's ethnicity, age, gender, and geographical location" (p. 57). Again, the authors emphasized the fluidity of language choices in their writings. However, since some of the findings in the study showed that users' fluid self-expression was based on fixed views of culture and language, Lee and Barton's study (2011, p. 57) ultimately supports the conclusion that self-expression in virtual space consists of both fixed and fluid ties between language and culture.

Findings relating to the fixed and fluid views of language and culture are mainly based on communications occurring in more open spheres of the internet (e.g. discussion forums), which allow for interactions with strangers and unexpected encounters. In contrast with conventional communication platforms in virtual space such as discussion forums, some social media platforms such as Facebook also allow users to engage in communication in a closed network of limited users using privacy settings and non-public

special-purpose groups. Users can limit what people can see on their profile and other content. Earlier research suggested that the majority of users' connections on social media are based on pre-established relationships outside of virtual space (Zhao et al., 2008). In such spaces, users tend to be careful about privacy settings and to hide their posts from strangers (McKee and Porter, 2009). If this remains true, the use of social media would require pre-established connections before allowing users to interact in their second language. Nonetheless, more recent research has demonstrated that more complex factors govern users' privacy-related concerns and the use of privacy settings (Bartsch and Dielin, 2016; Dienlin and Trepte, 2015). For example, many Facebook users may have privacy-related concerns and wish to interact in closed spheres of online space as (cf. Zhao et al., 2008), yet their behavior often does not quite match what they are hoping to achieve (Dienlin and Trepte, 2015). While some users may thoroughly understand what they are disclosing to and hiding from strangers or deliberately leave their posts and comments visible to the general public, others inadvertently disclose their posts to the public due to a lack of knowledge about how privacy and related settings work on Facebook (Dienlin and Trepte, 2015; Bartsch and Dielin, 2016). This implies that users can have a strong sense of intended audience, which may in turn mean that they act differently in establishing CoPs in public forums. Therefore, we cannot assume that the socialization which occurs through these media, such as Facebook, is the same as that observed on discussion forums.

Facebook-based studies of multilingual communications have also highlighted the ways in which users deploy multiple languages as a shared practice of a community (Sharma, 2012; Androutsopoulos, 2013). For example, Sharma's (2012) longitudinal

study of Nepali youths on Facebook suggested that Facebook served as an arena where participants maintained social relationships among peers—close friends who communicated in English, their L2, on the site. Sharma (2012) argued that the youth were using English to present themselves as bilinguals in Nepali society, where English is not commonly spoken and bilingualism is a sign of elitism (p. 500). Hence, within the relatively closed network of close friends, the participants in Sharma's study (2012) were engaging in L2 interactions and their L2 played a vital role in presenting themselves as elite bilinguals.

Androutsopoulos's (2013) concern was the way in which complex connections between user profiles on Facebook affect the way in which users choose to use a language when they write diary entries (known as status updates) and share photos. Similar to Sharma (2012), Androutsopoulos's study (2013) examined a network of students who already knew each other outside of virtual space. Androutsopoulos (2013) paid close attention to the way in which a user's connections with friends on Facebook affected their use of language. He observed multilingual communication which involved code-switching among German, Greek and English. The choice of language was determined according to factors such as which language would be understood by their intended audience, and by the theme or topic of the content generated by the participants. For example, one commonly used feature of Facebook is the ability to post a link to a video clip from video-sharing websites such as YouTube, which can then be viewed by friends. When participants shared a video clip featuring a song, their choice of language for their accompanying comments was influenced by the song's origin. Androutsopoulos argued that the writing practices of participants involved the complex interplay of fluid

and fixed views of language (p. 17). Specifically, he found that users' language use as a whole expressed fluid language use by switching languages, while it simultaneously included instances in which the participant used only one particular language based on a certain set of patterns (p. 17).

Hence, the question is, how can the kinds of multilingual communication reported by Sharma (2012) and Androutsopoulos (2013) be beneficial for the language classroom? Their findings illustrate that the mixed use of L1 and L2 plays a vital role as a shared practice in a network of friends. Of course, communication which involves switching between languages can only be mutually understood if the interlocutors have some understanding of the languages involved. In this way, the utility of switching as a communicative skill may be limited because it cannot be used effectively by speakers who do not share the required linguistic knowledge. However, as shown in this section, mixing languages can be used successfully in particular contexts or communities, including online communities, such as in the case of learners who use this skill to show authenticity as a fan of particular aspects of a culture (Androutsopoulos, 2004; Leppänen, 2007; Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014). Furthermore, empirical studies in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology have shown that switching between languages is a natural phenomenon, and it has been observed as a norm all over the world (e.g. Cheng and Butler, 1989; Myers-Scotton, 1998, 2005; Poplack, et al., 2007). Therefore, from the participationist perspective, the mixing of language is not only justifiable but also represents an important communicative norm. As such, L2 interactions on social media may be learning opportunities to the extent that they involve the use of a second (or third,

etc.) language. How then can we manage to incorporate such multilingual linguistic resources into a language classroom?

### **A Curricular Architecture for Classroom Code Choice**

In order to address the question posed at the end of the previous section, this section examines a model proposed by Levine (2013). While there are other similar models (e.g. Norton, 2000; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008), Levine's model was specifically designed for language classrooms that aim to take a multilingual approach. Indeed, Levine (2012; 2013) has been a key advocate for the involvement of L1 in the language classroom. He has proposed a model that incorporates switching between L1 and L2 in the classroom, which he calls the "curricular architecture' for classroom code choice" (Levine, 2013, p. 431). This model is intended to help learners gain grammatical and cultural knowledge relating to an L2 CoP through the analysis of communications occurring in the L2 (Levine, 2012, p. 339).

He argued that this enables learners to gain "awareness" of their position as newcomers to the L2 society, rather than adopting the role of an aspiring native speaker. The importance of Levine's model lies in the fact that it allows learners to recognize themselves as legitimate speakers of the L2 even though their utterances may include L1 use. In addition, the reflection on language use in the classroom as well as language use by others within the CoP outside of the classroom allows learners to gain awareness of how their language choices can function as a communicative style, and to position themselves within a given communication with others (Levine, 2012, p. 342).

Levine is not the only advocate for allowing the involvement of the L1 in the language classroom. For example, Cook (1999) was an earlier proponent of the efficacy

of L1 use in the language classroom. However, I will focus on Levine's work because his model incorporates the CoP perspective in designing the classroom (Levine, 2012; 2013). This is important because this perspective conceptualizes learning as open-ended experience as discussed above. This point may provide insight into ways to enhance participation in a linguistic CoP through social media as well. Therefore, the following discussion elaborates on his model and inquires into the potential benefits of this model for the purpose of enhancing social media-based participation in L2 CoPs, as well as potential issues that it may raise.

Levine's model (2012; 2013) consists of four principles: *Learner Training*, *Co-construction of Multilingual Norms*, *Multilingual Content Instruction* and *Critical Reflection*. The principle of *Learner Training* involves the training of learners in the classroom to gain skills to think about what functions the switching between L1 and L2 plays in interactions in the classroom (Levine, 2012, pp. 340-41; 2013, pp. 431-32). Rather than having the instructor tell students what language to use in different parts of classroom activities, the students themselves reflect on their interactions, and become conscious about how a particular language choice was useful in completing tasks. Levine suggests that the student be taught to use terms and concepts used by linguists for analyzing communicative styles (2012, pp. 340-41; 2013, pp. 431-32). Levine (2012) believes that through *Learner Training*, learners will become able to understand how much L1 involvement was effective in their communications, and when L1 use is unnecessary (p. 341).

The second principle is the *Co-construction of Multilingual Norms*. Levine argued that the decision on where and how to use L1 and L2 should be reached through

negotiation between learners and their teacher (Levine, 2012, pp. 341-42; 2013, p. 432). Through this principle, Levine attempts to design the classroom as a CoP of multilingual speakers, where they construct and practice shared norms. Thus, it is up to the members of the classroom CoP (in an offline environment) to decide how much L1 use is desirable (Levine, 2012, pp. 341-42; 2013, p. 432). According to this principle, learners reflect on their classroom communications and then construct the norm for switching between L1 and L2 based upon their reflections, thus determining how much L1 use can be involved in classroom communications (Levine, 2012, pp. 341-42; 2013, p. 432). In other words, members of the classroom CoP will develop the linguistic repertoire of the community. In addition, the term “norm” does not necessarily mean that the behaviour of students is strictly defined (Levine, 2013, p. 432). The norm is not a monolingual norm or closed-ended learning goal that students are supposed to aim for. Rather, the reason for constructing a multilingual norm in the classroom is so that learners can autonomously gain an awareness of effective L1 use by examining their own language use in the classroom, and develop their own suggested line of L1 use (Levine, 2013, p. 432).

In order for learners to gain cultural knowledge of L2 society and awareness of their roles as newcomers to the society, Levine advocates the use of studies of linguistic minorities in L2 society in the language classroom (Levine, 2012, p. 342; 2013, pp. 432-33). This is expressed in the third principle, *Multilingual Content Instruction*, which involves an analysis of L2 culture in contact with other cultures. This could include the study of cultural works such as movies and texts that deal with linguistic minority groups or multilingual communities in an L2 society (Levine, 2012, p. 342; 2013, pp. 432-33). Levine (2012) mentions “South Tirolian German, Russia German, Pennsylvania German,

or even urban varieties in immigrant communities within Germany” as examples of minority language varieties which consist of both German and other languages (p. 342). Following this principle, the members of the classroom CoP analyze instances of L2 culture where it is in contact with other cultures, so that the members can link this knowledge to their own learning experience, and gain ideas relating to joining the L2 society as a linguistic minority (Levine, 2012, p. 342).

The fourth principle, *Critical Reflection*, plays a crucial role in assisting learners with gaining an awareness of themselves as multilingual speakers. Levine argued that through critical reflection by learners on their own language choices as well as the language choices made by other speakers inside and outside of the classroom, learners could refine the classroom norms relating to language choice and also gain a sense of being legitimate speakers of the L2 in the CoP that exists outside of the classroom (Levine, 2012, pp. 342-45; 2013, p. 433). For example, when learners reflect on their own communications in the classroom, it would lead them to refine the norm developed in the *Co-construction of Multilingual Norms* principle (Levine, 2012, pp. 342-45). Also, reflecting on multilingual speakers and CoPs in L2 society outside of the classroom in accordance with the *Multilingual Content Instruction* principle would help learners gain a sense of being immersed in L2 society as legitimate participants rather than as work-in-progress copies of an ideal native speaker (Levine, 2012, pp. 342-45; 2013, p. 433).

In sum, in Levine’s model, the classroom functions as a preparatory phase for integration into L2 society, during which learners gain knowledge of L2 society and use that knowledge in future interactions for deeper engagement in L2 CoPs. The four interrelated principles of his curricular architecture aim of training learners to make their

own conscious language choices in specific contexts and to constantly refine their language usage through reflection.

Levine's model may provide insight into ways to enhance social media-based language learning and effectively incorporate various communicative styles into the language classroom. This is because the classroom does not have a defined communicative style that is considered legitimate. Rather, learners engage in identifying the preferred set of communicative styles in a variety of contexts. For example, under the *Co-construction of Multilingual Norms* principle, the norm for language use is not something given or forced by the teacher, and learners are not necessarily evaluated based on their deviation from the norm (Levine, 2012, pp. 341-42; 2013, p. 432). Instead, learners in the classroom autonomously apply their knowledge and analytical skills, and the learners in the model evaluate and refine their communicative styles through *Critical Reflection*. This would also be an effective way to incorporate the various communicative styles that exist in social media because although language use outside of educational settings may be open-ended, this does not mean that there is no set of conditions that speakers would comply with in choosing a language or speech style. Even if there are varying degrees of strictness, there are norms that people comply with in a society. Therefore, learners' reflection and application of their insights about language use would maintain the open-endedness of the casual interactions, while also allowing them to learn about how certain behavior is expected in varying contexts.

Similarly, Norton (2000) has found that training learners to analyze their own interactions through reflection on their experiences is effective in language acquisition. She argued that classroom activities in which learners reflected on their interactions with

native speakers of the L2 helped learners gain linguistic competence. More specifically, Norton (2000) argued that learners who engaged in such activities gained skills in expressing their ideas and thoughts more effectively (p. 148). The enabling of critical reflection on interactions is one of the things that the classroom environment can contribute to L2 speakers' learning experiences involving social media-based participation in an L2 community. Furthermore, this critical reflection and analysis of language use may be utilized to enhance engagement in community building on social media as well. In Sharma (2012) and Androutsopoulos (2013), participants used multiple languages as their repertoire for self-expression. In regular casual interactions, the classroom may add an extra layer that helps learners to further reflect on their language use, and thereby refine their linguistic skills.

Nonetheless, the examination of Levine's model (2012; 2013) also leaves us with at least a couple of questions. First, supposing that a classroom will employ this model or something similar to enhance social media-based participation in CoPs, what role does social media play in the classroom? The answer to this question partly depends on the kind of social media that is being considered. We also need to determine how the classroom should aim to enhance students' engagement in interactions occurring outside of the classroom. In addition, the subsequent question concerns how a learner gains access to L2 interaction if they do not have friends who speak the L2. These questions will be addressed in Chapter 3.

Second, Levine's model (2011, 2012) did not clearly address how students' performance in class will be evaluated. The model succeeds in taking various communicative styles into account in designing the classroom by adding a layer of

objective analysis to the communications that occur. However, in schools, the functionality of the model may be limited if the learner's classroom performance cannot be evaluated. Furthermore, instructors may attempt to address this by introducing different activities outside of the model for grading purposes which could potentially conflict with the intention of the model. To further examine the potential role of social media in language learning, and the issue of learner evaluation, the next chapter will discuss various studies that examined the use of social media. Since findings in the following chapters are relevant in addressing this issue, it will be discussed in the Chapter 5 where I synthesize the findings of the thesis.

### **Final Notes**

In sum, the use of social media can be beneficial for language learning insofar as it allows and encourages users to build a CoP and engage in maintaining social relationships. In social media-based participation in a CoP, L2 can serve a vital role as a repertoire for self-expression. Studies of online multilingual communication showed how switching between L1 and L2 serves as a resource for self-expression (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2006; Androutsopoulos, 2013; Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014; Lee and Barton, 2011; Leppänen, 2007; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012). In the lens of multilingual classroom approach, which sees switching between L1 and L2 as a legitimate communicative style, this can provide valuable learning experience for language learners. In order to address how this can be incorporated into language classrooms, I turned discussion to examining a model proposed by Levine (2013). Drawing on the multilingual approach, he (Levine, 2012, 2013) suggested training learners to objectively analyze language use, having them reflect on communications

which involve switching between L1 and L2, and implementing the resulting insights in order to refine their language skills.

This model provides insight into how social media could be incorporated into language learning. This is because Levine's model allows the incorporation of various communicative styles by adding the layer of analysis by students (Levine, 2012, 2013). In spite of that, Levine's model also raises problems such as a difficulty in determining the role of social media in the classroom and evaluating student's performance.

## **Chapter 3: Challenges with Participating in L2 CoPs in Virtual Space**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter addressed some of the potential benefits of using social media for language learning—namely that social media offers users the opportunity to build and to participate in L2 CoPs, and to use a variety of communicative styles for self-expression. However, as raised in the previous chapter, it may not be the case that students are readily able to find partners with whom to engage in L2 interactions on social media. The multilingual communication that was observed in the studies discussed in the previous chapter was based on instances of communication that occurred successfully, in the sense that a communication did occur (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2013). Studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have shown that for L2 speakers, it can sometimes be difficult to engage in communication in L2 society (e.g. Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that learners are always able to participate in an L2 community upon the desire or need to do so, even if they use social media. This is particularly the case if they do not have friends who speak the target L2. If the aim is to design a classroom that enhances each student's experiences in an L2 CoP, then the instructor must ensure that students are able to engage in interactions using the L2.

Identifying and having an awareness of the issues and challenges associated with accessing L2 CoPs will help determine the potential role of social media in the language classroom, which is a question raised at the end of the previous chapter and is a necessary step to address the main question of the present thesis (i.e. to assist students with participating in an L2 CoP using social media). Therefore, this chapter will turn to a discussion of potential challenges in using social media as a source of real-life

interactions. The following section will begin by addressing how challenges with gaining access to L2 CoPs may arise.

### **Potential Challenges for L2 Learners**

The previous chapter suggested that the objective analysis of L2 CoPs (as in Levine's studies) is a promising approach for assisting students with participating in L2 CoPs using social media. Nonetheless, this also left us with the question of the role of social media. One possibility is to task students to try to find L2 CoPs on social media and engage in interactions with native speakers (NS), so that they can analyze their own experiences in the classroom. However, a variety of research on online interaction using social media also provides evidence that interacting with other users online is not necessarily an easy task and can be challenging (e.g. Belling and de Bres, 2014; Chun et al., 2016; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011). Therefore, this chapter first examines two main factors relating to why participating in L2 CoPs can be challenging on social media. The first is the prevalence of linguistic norms and the complexities inherent in trying to navigate them, and the second is the occurrence of verbal attacks from other users in non-supervised contexts. While other factors such as technical difficulties or the affordability of devices can also pose challenges to the use of social media for language learning, these points are not examined here because the focus is mediated context and learning experience in it, rather than access to the context.

To start with the issue of the linguistic norms, a notable example is provided in Pasfield-Neofitou (2011), which investigated how cultural and national boundaries are reflected in a virtual space and how that affects the learning experience of L2 speakers. In the study, a student shared their experience on a Japan-based forum where some users

expressed negative and sometimes hostile reactions relating to the use of foreign languages and poor writing skills in Japanese (p. 100). Although many users welcomed Japanese L2 learners, the forum's moderators announced the creation of a separate "international" forum in response to the situation. This exclusion of L2 speakers from a virtual CoP suggests that without a given level of language skills, it can be very difficult for users to participate in L2 CoPs using social media. The degree of the language skills that are required is determined by other users and moderators who are supposedly native speakers of Japanese. This adds an extra layer of difficulty for L2 learners to participate in CoPs with similar (ad hoc) parameters of engagements. However, it is not clear from Pasfield-Neofitou's study whether such L2 exclusion is common in virtual spaces (2011). In addition, the forum was not specific to language learners or to a specific group of users (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2013).

While this issue has not yet been investigated adequately in the SLA field, studies in the field of language ideologies provide further insight into this matter. Research to date has discovered that while social media can be a place where multilingual linguistic resources play a vital role in expressing oneself (as was also examined in Chapter 2), social media can also be a space where users enforce the "pure", "homogenous" and monolingual use of language (Blommaert et al., 2009; de Bres, 2015; Phyak, 2015). That is to say, on some social media communities not all languages are always welcomed, and users and platforms may develop monolingual norms within a CoP. This could potentially lead to the exclusion of certain users who cannot comply with the norm, as examined in Pasfield-Neofitou (2011).

A similar instance was observed by Belling and de Bres (2014) in a Luxembourg-based CoP. Their study examined the language choices of users in a Facebook discussion group about local topics in Luxembourg over a period of 16 months (Belling and de Bres, 2014). Facebook groups allow users to create a forum-like space to post content such as text, pictures, web links and comments on these contents shared among the participants of the group. The debate on language policy that occurred in this study started when users began to express frustration about the use of languages other than Luxembourgish in the group (p. 81). This debate occurred despite the fact that the administration of the group was conducted primarily in English and that Luxembourg is a multilingual society: Luxembourgish is the official language, and French and German are used for administrative purposes. One user even posted an aggressive statement to the forum that he would ignore posts and comments that were not written in Luxembourgish, and also expressed frustration toward migrants who do not “adapt” to Luxembourgish society (Belling and de Bres, 2014, p. 81). This suggests that even if a given society is multilingual, it does not necessarily mean that each citizen is willing to accept multilingualism in all spaces, potentially giving rise to negative reactions to the use of other languages. Findings such as this run in contradiction to the cases discussed in the previous chapter, which were fluid and multilingual. Rather, in some cases, there can be users with strict ideas about how the use of linguistic resources should occur even in multilingual societies, and they can act to “police” other users in accordance with their ideological beliefs.

Both communities examined in Belling and de Bres (2014) and Pasfield-Neofitou (2011) had specific purposes, and it seems that users did not have social ties with each

other outside of these communities. In addition, these communities did not cater to language learners. In contrast, multilingual communication reported by Sharma (2012) and Androutsopoulos (2013) occurred within a relatively small community of friends that already had established relationships, and also shared common demographics. It seems that language norms were not easy to detect in the former case compared to the latter case because of the lack of ties outside of the online environment. Therefore, some users in Belling and de Bres (2014) and Pasfield-Neofitou (2011), ended up violating the norms held by some other users, probably without any intention to offend those users. These instances demonstrate that not all communities equally accept multilingualism, and thus, learners may need to be careful in selecting a CoP in which they attempt to participate, if they want to avoid interpersonal conflict. In so doing, learners would need to understand how language norms are negotiated within the CoP and implement this knowledge when participating in it, which lends support for the importance of objective analysis as a useful technique.

These reactions in Belling and de Bres (2014) and Pasfield-Neofitou (2011) are by no means the general consensus of users from Luxembourgish or Japanese societies respectively and should not be regarded as the dominant norm of these societies. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that on social media, a variety of ideas about language use co-exist. According to Phyak (2015), Facebook can be “a space where multiple language ideologies are constructed and contested” (p. 377). That is to say, users have a variety of attitudes toward languages, and that linguistic norms (both multilingual and monolingual) are constructed by a complex interplay of social and cultural factors within communications among users (Blommaert et al., 2009; de Bres, 2015; Phyak, 2015).

Hence, linguistic norms are a “dynamic composite of elements, constantly under construction and always subject to change” (de Bres, 2015, p. 309). This complexity of linguistics norms can be a rich source of L2 cultures for language learners. However, as demonstrated in the studies discussed above, they can pose difficulties for learners in participating in L2 CoPs using social media because they may block students from such participation. This is particularly true for student at a beginner level because they may not have enough linguistic skills to understand and comply with norms. Potential negative reactions, such as those that users faced in the above studies (Belling and de Bres, 2014; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011) certainly cannot be ignored as a potential challenge, which leads to the next point.

As discussed in Chun et al. (2016), several studies reported cases where students encountered verbal attacks from other users when interacting online in the course of learning language (p. 69). In some cases, the attacks were harsh ad hominem attacks during debates of a kind that it is not ideal to let students face in an institutional curriculum (Hanna and de Nooy, 2009). In another case, a student took comments from other users personally and initiated an exchange of verbal attacks (Kramsch and Thorne, 2002). Since it would be preferable to avoid having students encounter emotional discomfort as part of a school activity, the issue of verbal attacks needs to be addressed in order to implement social media-based participation in L2 CoPs in language classrooms.

While it is hard to predict when verbal attacks will occur, it seems to be a widely held assumption that anonymity in the online environment is a significant factor that contributes to verbal attacks against other users (e.g. Chun et al., 2016). Chun et al. (2016) argued that anonymity entails a risk of facing such hostilities (p. 69).

Nevertheless, the question of to what extent anonymity is significant as a cause of verbal attacks in virtual space is subject to debate. For example, Chui (2014) suggested that anonymity itself does not adequately explain flaming behavior (i.e. verbal attacks on other users). Similarly, Kim and Ahn (2013) showed that users encounter interpersonal conflicts even within existing networks where users already know each other outside of the virtual space. Also, Hutchens et al. (2015) showed that anonymity does not have a significant influence on users' intentions relating to flaming in political discussions. These studies instead suggested that there are more complex mechanisms that lead to verbal attacks among users. Hence, it is difficult for instructors to predict when and how students will experience verbal attacks from other users.

Although anonymity may not adequately explain the complex nature of insults in virtual space, Chun et al. (2016) suggested that the risk of attacks from other users tends to be high when there is no supervisor (p. 69). This makes sense, considering that supervisors would have control over students' interactions. Ensuring supervision may be a suitable approach in some cases. However, as mentioned in the last chapter, one of the aims of the present thesis is find a way for instructors to avoid inserting themselves in student's interactions. Thus, supervising interactions would also not be an ideal approach. How then can we assist learners with participating in a L2 CoP while addressing these issues?

### **Addressing the Challenges**

Despite the fact that there is a wealth of literature that suggests that there are potential challenges in participating in L2 CoPs using social media, very few studies have attempted to address these challenges. Some studies to date have suggested that training

students to use social media in accordance with cultural conventions would have some effectiveness in helping students participate in L2 CoPs (Lai et al., 2016; Prichard, 2013; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011; Thorne et al., 2008). For example, Prichard's study (2013) focused on training students to use cultural conventions to avoid interpersonal problems. Nonetheless, the methods that were used to train students in the study were not ideal when viewed from the point of view argued by this current thesis, because the study relied on imposing pre-established norms on the students, which fails to enhance open-ended participation. A preferable approach is to assist learners with their ability to recognize and to comply with norms of a diverse variety of CoPs on their own. In contrast to Prichard (2013), Reinhardt and Zander's approach (2011) is similar to the objective analysis that was examined in the previous chapter. Within their approach, instructors tasked students to find platforms that they would want to participate in, and assisted them with learning the communicative conventions of the platform. How then can the objective analysis approach help determine the ideal role of social media as well as address the issues examined above?

To date, several studies have suggested that social media is a rich source of linguistic resources and cultural conventions that can be used for educational purposes (e.g. McBride, 2009; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011; Thorne et al., 2009). Within Reinhardt and Zander's approach (2011), students obtain texts of interactions and learn cultural norms and communicative conventions by analyzing the interactions. This allows instructors to avoid tasking students with interacting using social media when they do not feel they are ready to do so, or imposing predetermined norms. Rather, students can study interactions by focusing on the linguistic norms of the CoPs of their choice (e.g. Norton,

2000) and thus build their knowledge of these norms. Several studies in the SLA field have suggested that learning about cultural conventions and norms within an L2 CoP can help learners with effective participation in L2 society (e.g. Hanna and de Nooy, 2003; Norton, 2000). Furthermore, if students are not required to interact in L2 CoPs before engaging in the preparation described in this section, language classrooms can also mitigate the risks of verbal attacks in virtual space. There are still very few studies that have empirically addressed how objective analysis would play out in actual classrooms (e.g. Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). Thus, more research is needed to make firm conclusions about what the best practices in an actual classroom environment would look like. In spite of this, even with this lack of empirical studies, based on the discussion above it appears that one viable role of social media could be as a source of real life interactions which students can analyze in classroom activities before actually engaging in social media interactions.

### **Final Notes**

In conclusion, training learners to analyze interactions and study linguistic norms would be an ideal approach to successfully implementing social media into the language classroom. This is because interactions outside of school settings can pose potential challenges such as difficulties in complying with linguistic norms and interpersonal problems (Belling and de Bres, 2014; Chun et al., 2016; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011). With the objective analysis approach, instructors do not necessarily have to task students to handle interacting with other users on their own; rather, by analyzing interactions, students are able to understand linguistic norms and apply that knowledge when they actually immerse themselves in L2 CoPs. Since this approach serves as a preparatory

phase before involving direct interaction with other users, students would also be able to avoid interpersonal problems on social media. With this understanding of the characteristics of social media interactions, the next chapter will discuss why self-expression is important in language learning using social media, in order to address the theoretical foundation of objective analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Self-Expression, Language Learning and Social Media**

### **Introduction**

The findings discussed in Chapter 2 suggest that the self-expression of language learners plays a vital role in their participation in a CoP. It also discussed how self-expression is achieved in virtual space through cultural meanings that are attached to linguistic resources. These findings related to self-expression also suggest that the objective analysis of linguistic resources is a promising approach for language classrooms that seek to enhance participation in L2 CoPs through the use of social media because: (1) this approach allows language instructors to avoid imposing closed-ended goals, and (2) it allows students to gain awareness of the communal linguistic norms of an L2 CoP and help avoid negative interactions. Nonetheless, further discussion is required to determine whether the suitability of this approach, because the previous chapters did not discuss how objective analysis can enhance participation in L2 CoPs in virtual space. Many studies that featured the objective analysis of linguistic resources have contained arguments that the choice of linguistic resources is the area where students should focus on during classroom activities (e.g. Levine, 2012; 2013; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Thorne et al., 2009), which is consistent with the findings of the current thesis so far. However, when implementing objective analysis in the language classroom, the expected outcome of the activity in question must be clearly identified, because the role of social media in the activity will vary depending on what the expected outcome is. Hence, it becomes necessary to identify how students analyze linguistic resources and instances of self-expression, and for what purpose. To address this question, the present chapter will examine theoretical works on self-expression.

## **Self-Expression and Language Acquisition**

Previous research used the term *identity* to refer to what is called *self-expression* here (e.g. Bucholtz, 1999; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Hall, 2000; Lam, 2000; 2004; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Norton, 2000; 2001; Ochs, 1993; Wenger, 1998). This thesis avoids *identity* because this word can refer to multiple different concepts, depending on context and theoretical perspective. For example, it can refer to a personality that is innate to a speaker, or could alternatively refer to a persona that emerges in interactions (e.g. Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Lee and Anderson, 2009). Following Livingstone (2008), I will use self-expression as a term for the persona of a speaker indexed in actions, which is enacted through the choice of linguistic resources. Several studies to date examined this in relation to how people speak (e.g. Bucholtz, 1999; De Fina, 2007). For example, Bucholtz (1999) used the notions of positive and negative identity practices to assess the way in which a speaker's persona is indexed in their behaviors. This model classifies what a group of people in a CoP do in common to associate themselves with certain social categories (positive identity practice) and what they avoid doing in order to dissociate themselves from different social categories (negative identity practice). Similarly, De Fina (2007) also demonstrated how code-switching from English to Italian played an important role in indexing affiliation to Italian ethnicity among participants of a CoP.

Traditionally, before self-expression became a key concept in the field of SLA, language learning was predominantly conceptualized as the accumulation of linguistic knowledge and the development of linguistic competence in the cognitive realm of a learner (Ellis, 1997; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Menard-Warwick, 2005). As discussed in Chapter 2, I refer to this as the acquisitionist approach. Under this approach, social

factors such as who the learner is or what the learner is aspiring to be were not considered to be an important parameter in studying effective language learning (Ellis, 1997; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Menard-Warwick, 2005).

Do all people learn language in the same way? The approach to language pedagogy which focuses on a learner's self-expression says no (e.g. McKay and Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000). Learning language as an immigrant is a different experience than learning language as a student in their home country. In contrast to the above-mentioned traditional approach, the social approach to SLA takes into account the ways in which an individual's language learning process and motivating factors are influenced by social and contextual factors, and addresses questions that the traditional approach did not address (e.g. McKay and Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000). For example, when using the acquisitionist approach, the ability of L2 speakers to engage in interactions with native speakers is not a primary focus (Norton 2000). However, in the real world, it can be a struggle for L2 speakers to be able to engage in interactions with native speakers because of differences in the power of the speakers to initiate conversation (Bourdieu, 1977; Norton, 2000). Thus, the social approach to SLA has advocated that language educators focus on learners' social experiences as part of the learning process (e.g. Norton, 2000). According to this approach, the learner's personality, social category and social roles are also important parameters in language learning because they affect the learning experience (McKay and Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000; Siegal, 1996).

How then does self-expression lead to differences in the language learning experiences of learners? There are two main aspects that are relevant to the present aim of this study. First, there is the issue of gaining access to CoPs, and second, self-

expression is also related to the motives of learners for language learning (e.g. Kanno and Norton, 2003; Kinginger, 2004). The following sections address each of these points.

### **Linguistic Resources and Self-Expression**

The acquisition of cultural knowledge and the development of linguistic resources can be considered a process of becoming a new self, because linguistic resources describe a speaker's characteristics within interactions, as discussed above (e.g. Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; De Fina et al., 2006; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Kroskrity, 1999; Lemke, 2008; Menard-Warwick, 2005; Ochs, 1993; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). People enact different personae based on their own understandings of themselves and the environment in which an interaction takes place (e.g. De Fina et al., 2006). As such, speakers act or perform differently in a variety of contexts. For example, when people situate themselves in relation to other people, they judge social factors including others' attributes such as social category, cultural affiliation and personality, and change their behavior accordingly (e.g. Bourdieu, 1991). An understanding of these social factors is gained based on a variety of verbal cues as well as non-verbal cues (including accents, vocabulary, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language) (Jenkins, 1994). Such non-verbal cues also appear in text-based online communication such as through the use of emojis/emoticons to show facial expressions and associated emotions (e.g. Dresner and Herring, 2010), and alterations of the spelling of words to express different accents and tones of voice (e.g. Darics, 2013; Shaw, 2008). Furthermore, people manipulate such information to "position" themselves in a given relationship with others, and to maintain social relationships (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; De Fina et al., 2006; Lemke, 2008; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1987; Kroskrity, 1999; Ochs, 1993).

However, it is not always the case that individuals are able to present themselves as they wish when engaging in L2 CoPs. In addition to their communicative competence, issues of ambivalent power among speakers may also be involved in self-expression and when engaging in a CoP (Bourdieu, 1977; 1991; De Fina et al., 2006; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Kroskrity, 1999; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Norton observed that native speakers generally have more power in initiating conversations than L2 speakers do (Norton, 2000, p. 113). Immigrant language learners experience difficulties in engaging in interactions using their L2 and sometimes feel inferior or as if they are illegitimate participants in the society. Hence, Norton suggested the importance of the ability to confidently impose reception in an interaction within a communication (p. 113). Pedagogical approaches that follow the acquisitionist approach, or set closed-ended learning goals for learners fail to take this power issue into account (e.g. Levine, 2012; 2013; Menard-Warwick, 2005). In contrast, authors of studies that do take the power issue into account argue that educators must assist learners with gaining an awareness of themselves as legitimate speakers of the target language, and with becoming able to critically view and critically reflect on their own experiences in language acquisition (e.g. Levine, 2012; 2013; Norton, 2000). In other words, learners need to be trained to be able to analyze how their utterances shape and are shaped by interactions in L2 CoPs. This will allow them to have more control over how they position themselves in particular interactions (Norton, 2000).

### **Imagined Communities and Self-Expression**

The second reason why self-expression is relevant to the enhancement of students' participation in L2 CoPs is that language learning is largely motivated by who a

learner wants to be and which CoP they hope to participate in (George, 2014; Kanno and Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000; Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998). For example, some people may see the English language as having a strong association with Hip-Hop (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2004, 2006). In accordance with this image, a learner may learn and use English motivated by their interest in Hip-Hop culture while imagining themselves as being a member of the Hip-Hop community. This is an example of an association with a very particular/specialized community. On the other hand, some people may see English as a global language (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Lee and Barton, 2011)—a much broader orientation to a cosmopolitan community. To raise a set of examples that illustrates the narrow versus broad associations of another language (Japanese) with certain communities, some people may learn Japanese because of their interest in elements of Japanese pop culture, for example, anime, and so may desire to write in Japanese in order to appeal to a global community of anime fans (e.g. Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014). Alternatively, some may see the Japanese language as a tool of business, due to the country's economic power (e.g. Haneda, 2005). Since a language may be associated with different aspects of a culture and society, learners may be drawn to a variety of CoPs. In turn, these CoPs can both motivate and support language learning, as well as allow learners to express a variety of desired identities, based on a diverse range of interests. Consequently, what learners desire to be can make the learning experience different for each individual.

SLA studies describe such varying interests and motivating factors using the notion of the imagined community (Norton, 2001; Kanno and Norton, 2003; Wenger, 1998). An imagined community is a community that a learner participates in at a

conceptual level (Kanno and Norton, 2003; George, 2014). In other words, learners get the sense of belonging to a community “through the power of imagination” (p. 241). This notion was inspired by the concept of the CoP (Anderson, 2000) and shares basic assumptions with CoPs (e.g. that learning occurs through participation in a community which consists of members who engage in shared social and cultural practices). Nonetheless, CoPs and imagined communities are not parallel constructs. In CoPs, participation is achieved through direct engagement in social and cultural practices with peer members. On the other hand, in imagined communities, learners envision themselves as being members, but do not directly engage in any practices (Kanno and Norton, 2003; George, 2014). In other words, an imagined community constitutes the way a learner thinks about themselves and where they wish to belong. Thus, individuals have unique imagined communities while learning a language.

The idea that students have different types of imagined communities raises the possibility that the varying interests of students may pose challenges for instructors in designing classroom activities. Indeed, SLA studies have shown that a mismatch between a language learner’s imagined community and classroom activities can result in a reluctance to engage in a classroom activity or a refusal to participate (e.g. Norton, 2001; Kanno and Norton, 2003), i.e. “non-participation”. Working with two students who withdrew from ESL class, Norton (2001) found a discrepancy between each student’s sense of self and the classroom’s learning goals. Intuitively, this outcome makes sense. If an activity is irrelevant to an individual’s learning goals, there is little motivation to participate. In spite of this, in the study (Norton, 2001), learners did not resort to non-participation simply because they felt the classes were a waste of time. Rather, the

decision was depicted mostly as a learner's attempt to protect their sense of self (i.e. who they think they are, and where they think they belong) from being violated by classroom activities that do not accommodate it (e.g. Norton 2000; 2001).

If one is to apply the concept of imagined community to a classroom that involves the use of social media, is non-participation also an issue? Recent research on the use of social media in higher education observed non-participation when a student felt that activities were not relevant to their own goals, and that the activities did not align with how they thought about themselves (Klimanova and Dembovskaya, 2013). In this study, the authors recruited Russian language students in an American university and native speakers of Russian, and observed their interactions using V Kontakte, a Russian equivalent of Facebook. An American student who was an ethnic Russian repeatedly refused to engage in communicative activities. In an interview with this student, Klimanova and Dembovskaya (2013) found that this reluctance was due to a discrepancy between the student's expectations and their perception of the task: while the student perceived interaction with native speakers of Russian as a way to engage and connect with fellow Russians, the activities imposed the role of "student" on them. The student's imagined community was a community of ethnic Russians, but the student felt that engaging in a language learning task with the native speakers of Russian would signify them as a mere student, instead of as a fellow ethnic Russian (p. 78). Although this single study does not show the prevalence of the impact of imagined communities on non-participation in activities using social media in school settings, it does provide some evidence that when students have a specific goal and have envisioned themselves as belonging to certain community, course activities that do not meet their objective can

discourage students from participating in a classroom. Hence, if an instructor aims to enhance student participation in an L2 CoP of their choice, the incorporation of students' various imagined communities into activities is one challenge that needs to be addressed.

### **Final Notes**

This chapter has identified two reasons why self-expression serves as an important focal point in enhancing participation in L2 CoPs. One, language learners are not necessarily able to present themselves as they wish due to power relations with other speakers and their insufficient communicative competence, which can lead to difficulties in participating in L2 CoPs (e.g. Norton, 2000). Two, language learners can have different imagined communities, and a failure to take these into account can lead to non-participation by learners (e.g. Kanno and Norton, 2003; Norton 2001). To accommodate these challenges, instructors should train learners to gain an awareness of themselves as legitimate participants of L2 CoPs and build language classrooms so as to take the interests of students into account (e.g. George, 2014; Kanno and Norton, 2003; Klimanova and Dembovskaya, 2013; Norton, 2000; Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Bearing these points in mind, the next chapter will address the kind of skill set that language classrooms can help students develop, and how language classrooms can assist learners with participating in CoPs, incorporating findings from the thesis thus far.

## Chapter 5: Curricular Recommendations

### Introduction

This thesis has addressed the ways in which instructors can assist learners with participating in L2 CoPs using social media, drawing on a variety of studies from SLA, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics related to both face-to-face and social media-based communication. Incorporating these findings, the present chapter will propose a framework to incorporate the use of social media into the language classroom. In so doing, the present chapter will address how objective analysis should be incorporated and how students can be assessed in the classroom. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications of using social media for objective analysis in British Columbia, which has not been addressed in previous studies.

### Building an Objective Analysis Framework

As shown in previous chapters, there is a need to incorporate multiple communicative styles into a language classroom in order to assist students with social media-based participation in L2 CoPs. Chapter 2 showed that the use of objective analysis as outlined by Levine in his *architecture of classroom code choice* (2012; 2013) would be a potential method to achieve this objective. In addition, as examined in Chapter 3, different types of linguistic norms are present in L2 CoPs (e.g. Belling and de Bres, 2014; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011), which can pose difficulties in using social media to participate in L2 CoPs. Furthermore, Chapter 4 showed that students have different interests, leading to the desire to present themselves as having various different kinds of personae while pursuing participation in imagined communities (e.g. Norton, 2001). How can these points be incorporated when building classroom activities?

In addition to Levine's model (2012; 2013), several studies have proposed frameworks of objective analysis that ask students to analyze interactions in a naturally occurring context that would inform the present thesis (e.g. Norton, 2000; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). These are namely *classroom-based social research* (Norton, 2000) and the *bridging activity* model (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). These three models have different analytical focal points (Norton, 2000; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011; Levine, 2012; 2013). One point of agreement, which would be beneficial to this thesis, is the emphasis on the ability of students to analyze interactions and articulate the process through which certain actions have consequences for learning languages. For example, Norton (2000) suggested that language learners should critically reflect on their own interactions with native speakers of the language (p. 152). In this way learners are able to better understand how opportunities to communicate with native speakers are conditioned by social factors (e.g. power relations) and better position themselves in gaining access to interactions. As a further example, in the bridging activity model, learners select an L2 CoP and engage in analyzing their interactions and practices (Reinhardt and Zander, 2011; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). This allows for the language classroom to be able to scaffold the participatory experience of students in L2 CoPs outside of the classroom, incorporating multiple communicative styles (Reinhardt and Zander, 2011).

### **Textual Analysis**

The bridging activity focuses on linguistic resources and communicative styles used in virtual space based on text-based materials found by students on the internet (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). The model is intended to

address an aim similar to that of this thesis—to incorporate multiple communicative styles into language classrooms. In this framework, students pick a platform (e.g. blog, social media and online chat) that they are interested in and analyze texts that they collected from those platforms to learn how communicative norms are present in interactions on the platforms (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). They then evaluate how a particular mode of communication differs from a different mode of communication (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). For example, while participating in the activity, students address questions such as how blogs and news articles differ from each other as media or what is unique about writing styles used in blogs (p. 564). Through the comparison, students come to understand why a particular use of a linguistic resource has a meaning in a given context (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, a variety of communicative styles (e.g. code-switching) play a vital role in one's self-expression, and self-expression is a significant part of participating in an L2 CoP. Thus, it would be ideal to train learners to understand aspects of language use, such as linguistic resources having a certain function in interactions or a particular cultural meaning in different social contexts (Levine, 2012; 2013; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008) and to apply this knowledge for their own self-expression. Therefore, textual analysis would be useful in assisting students with participating in L2 CoPs. Furthermore, if students are able to choose platforms and CoPs that they are interested in when collecting data, this would also allow instructors to avoid violating the imagined communities of students.

### **Incorporating Macro-social Factors**

While the bridging activity model focuses on linguistic resources, it lacks a focus on the macro-social context in which the students are situated when learning language. Nonetheless, a student's opportunity to participate in L2 CoPs is partly conditioned by social factors as seen in Chapter 4 (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991; Norton, 2000). Thus, it is necessary to incorporate this aspect into language classrooms to help students participate in L2 CoPs outside of school. In the classroom-based social research framework, students critically reflect on the interactions with native speakers in which they engaged (Norton, 2000, pp. 152-3). This would help students to understand cultural practices, social norms and other characteristics of L2 CoPs. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 3, it is beneficial for students to be able to understand linguistic norms and ideologies that are present on social media. By paying attention to such social factors, students can examine how community members negotiate membership in virtual space using both linguistic resources and non-verbal cues (e.g. Thorne, 2009; Thorne et al., 2009), and how self-expression is performed within interactions using linguistic resources (e.g. Bucholtz, 1999; De Fina et al., 2006; Norton, 2000). This would be especially useful, since as Bucholtz and Hall (2005) suggested, self-expression encompasses both micro-linguistic interactions and macro-social factors (p. 9).

### **Journal Writing**

In implementing the above-mentioned analysis activities, students would benefit from documenting their findings in written format, because writing journal reports based on their analyses is an effective way for students to constantly reflect on and critically analyze their L2 interactions (e.g. Norton, 2000; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). In doing

so, they can incorporate insights from both bridging activities and classroom-based social research. They can record characteristics of language use in an L2 CoP (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011) and the ways in which interactions in L2 CoPs are influenced by social factors and cultural practices within the L2 CoP in which they hope to participate (Norton, 2000). Such written works would also allow the instructor to track a student's findings as well as their progress, enabling them to provide necessary feedback to students, or alternatively allow students to peer review each other's work (Norton, 2000).

### **Community Building**

In proposing the bridging activity model, Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) briefly suggested that students should actually try to implement the findings from their analyses, for example in conversation with other students. To practice language based on their findings would be an important step in learning their L2. However, this suggestion was not sufficiently addressed in the study. In contrast, as examined in chapter 2, Levine's model theorizes the language classroom as a CoP where students mutually engage in objective analysis, and construct linguistic norms among each other (2012; 2013). Levine (2013, p. 432) argued that by reflecting on their own interactions involving code-switching, students gain a deeper understanding of the "optimal use" of L1 in a language classroom. Building a CoP and reflecting on their own linguistic norms would add more depth to practising L2 (and L1) in the language classroom because students also get to practise participation in a CoP and also because this would help students to gain a sense of how cultural practices constitutes a CoP by analyzing their own interactions. Also, since community building, as well as the objective analysis activity as a whole, act as a

preparatory step before direct interaction with other users, the knowledge gained by students can be expected to assist them in acting as legitimate participants in social media CoPs. Due to the unpredictability of interpersonal conflicts, it is not easy to completely mitigate the risk of such conflicts occurring, but this approach should help students avoid them to some extent during interactions that occur as a part of school activities.

In addition, it is often argued that framing a classroom as a CoP through feedback and critique among students facilitates peer help and collaboration among students (e.g. Arnold and Paulus, 2010; Blattner and Fiori, 2009; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). Blattner and Fiori (2009) suggested using Facebook Group as it is an effective way of enhancing sense of belonging to classroom community (p. 25). This strength of social media use in the classroom was investigated by Arnold and Paulus (2010). They suggested that social media can be used by students to function as a hub to share their work (p. 195), and strengthen their teamwork as they work through face-to-face classes. Hence, community building can also be an effective way of using social media to engage students and facilitate peer help in working on the journal writing activities.

### **Assessment**

The present chapter has made four recommendations. They relate to textual analysis, the incorporation of macro-social factors, journal writing and community building. This section will discuss an assessment strategy based on these four phases of the objective analysis activity.

While a variety of studies (e.g. Levine, 2012, 2013; Norton 2000; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt and Zander, 2011) informed the above-mentioned recommendations, none of them had a clear set of assessment strategies to evaluate the

progress of students. The setting of a clear grading standard has been a common practice in higher education, generally implemented via a grading rubric, and by marking students based on transparent standards (Bloxham et al., 2016; Howell, 2014; Price, 2005). Hence, if objective analysis is to be implemented as a learning activity in higher education language classrooms, assessing the progress of students will in most cases be an inevitable part of academic language courses. While there is a need for assessing the progress of students, there is the consequent problem of setting “linguistic norms” (i.e. the correct way of saying things in a language) if a student’s progress is to be evaluated based on communicative competence. Reconciling this dilemma requires assessment of the progress of students based on factors other than communicative competence.

As seen in the previous sections, the proposed learning activity involves constant reflection and analysis of an L2 CoP and interactions that occur. Hence, this thesis recommends that assessment be based on three elements: (1) the development of analytical skills, such as the student’s ability to evaluate the use of linguistic interactions in naturally occurring settings online, and to critically reflect on these interactions; (2) the ability to compare texts spanning different modes of communication, and identify differences in communicative conventions; and (3) the identification of characteristics of an L2 CoP (e.g. Levine, 2012; 2013; Norton, 2000; Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). When summative and formative assessments are based on such skills, students will not be forced to adapt themselves to a set linguistic norm (such as a monolingual norm). Rather, they will be able to analyze linguistic norms and communicative conventions by themselves. At the same time, instructors will be able to monitor a student’s progress

based on how observant and articulate a student's analyses are, as reflected through their written assignments.

### **Participation in L2 CoPs**

The above-mentioned activities and assessment strategy leave us with the questions of how actual participation in L2 CoPs occurs and where this framework can be useful. To begin with the former question, there are many ways this can be facilitated. Students could formulate an L2 CoP with their peers and engage in multilingual communication as observed in Sharma (2012) and Androutsopoulos (2013). This might to some extent be a safer approach than participating in a CoP that includes many strangers. Alternatively, students could also try to find friends who share a particular interest and build a community around it, another option would be to try participating in a CoP that has already been established, like the students in Hanna and de Nooy (2003). In short, once the objective analysis has been implemented, students will be free to engage in any social media interactions that they choose. This is because, as discussed in Chapter 4, students have their own interests related to the pursuit of their learning experience and it is not ideal for instructors to impose pre-established learning goals. For students, choosing their own endeavour when selecting and participating in a L2 CoP is itself part of the actual language learning experience (according to the participationist perspective). Hence, objective analysis serves as a scaffolding activity to support the learning experience. This thesis considers the use of social media to be an important way for students to gain access to L2 CoPs. However, the activity could potentially be expanded to assist students participating in L2 CoPs in a face-to-face context as well.

As for the second question, since in the objective analysis activity students are expected to select and analyze interactions occurring in a L2 CoP, the activity assumes that students have a certain level of proficiency in L2—enough to understand interactions occurring in the CoP. That means the activity would not be helpful to students in introductory level language courses. In addition, the activity is not aimed at training students with specific language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening or speaking). Rather, as mentioned above, its aim is to train students with analytical skills to study L2 CoPs and to use linguistic resources in interactions. Therefore, it would be well-suited for classrooms where students have some knowledge of the L2 and already have an imagined community in mind.

### **Considerations in Pursuing Activities**

The objective analysis activity outlined above is not research in the strict sense because it is aimed at training language learners, rather than being intended “to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, et al., 2014, p. 209). However, because the activity involves the collection and analysis of data online, the instructor needs to take care to avoid violating the privacy of users with whom students interact. In addition, many social media platforms require user registration, in which case the personal information of students can be collected by the owners of the social media sites. Therefore, the use of social media for educational purposes as outlined here involves several privacy-related risks and concerns. This aspect has not yet been addressed in previous studies. Thus, the following sections will discuss how the above-mentioned framework can be applied in higher education, addressing these privacy-related implications.

### **Data Collection and Ethical Considerations**

The studies discussed thus far which employed objective analysis did not consider the ethical aspects of data collection in terms of user privacy. Nonetheless, because the activity involves students going online and retrieving text-based interaction data for their learning activity, particularly in textual analysis phase, instructors and students must be cognizant of the risks and implications of collecting and handling data obtained from the internet. It is generally agreed that the fact that social media content is available to a researcher does not necessarily mean it is publically available information, and that collecting user data from social media platforms requires careful consideration of human subjects research ethics (e.g. Association of Internet Researchers, 2012; Moreno et al., 2013; Stevens et al., 2015; Zimmer, 2010). This is because a user's data is only considered public when it is reasonable to expect that a subject is aware that their data is being retrieved by strangers (Association of Internet Researchers, 2012). In practice, however, social media users are not always aware that their online interactions can be or are being observed by strangers (as discussed in Chapter 2). If it is not reasonable to posit that users expect their content to be public, then students may not be able to retrieve the data from social media without consent. In Canada, for example, all higher education institutions are subject to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2) (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, et al., 2014). This document states that unless “the information is publically accessible and there is no reasonable expectation of privacy” (p. 15), there has to be approval from a research ethics board and the content-creators in order to conduct research involving people, even for course-based activities.

The “reasonable expectation of privacy” articulated in the TCPS2 is not defined in the document. Determining the boundaries of the concept requires a careful analysis of the online platform in question in order to ethically conduct the objective analysis activity. Major social media such as Facebook and Twitter often allow users to restrict the visibility of information from other users based on certain rules (see D’Arcy and Young, 2012 for a discussion of the networked public). Hence, even if the data of a user can be accessed by strangers, users may still have reasonable expectations of privacy. Some privacy scholars have also suggested that what counts as private and public can also change based on platforms due to differences in their privacy policies and options for privacy settings (e.g. Moreno et al., 2013).

However, according to Stevens et al. (2015), several studies have suggested that if a platform does not require user registration to access site content, then it constitutes a viable reason to consider the data to be publicly accessible (p. 159). Hence, although it would be ideal for students to be able to retrieve data consisting of interactions solely based on their interests, depending on the platform (such as Facebook), the process of textual analysis might entail a negotiation between personal interests, privacy policies, and human research ethics.

### **FIPPA and Privacy Considerations**

In addition to ethical challenges, there is another privacy-related risk in using social media. An example of this risk is found in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* (Revised Statutes of British Columbia, 1996, C-165) of British Columbia, Canada, which recommends that public institutions store personal and confidential information on servers hosted within Canada (Revised Statutes of British

Columbia, 1996, C-165). Under FIPPA, a student's personal information cannot be stored on foreign servers without their consent (Portal, 2011; Klassen, 2011). Since creating a social media account (such as on Twitter or Facebook) to retrieve data, or to engage in communication can leave a digital footprint (e.g. registration information and user-created content) on foreign servers, both instructors and students need to be aware of the privacy-related implications of using social media. In a document dedicated to assisting faculty members of higher educational institutions in BC, Portal (2011) recommended that instructors should thoroughly understand the platform that will be used and its privacy policy (pp. 4 -5). This will allow them to properly communicate the type of information collected and how students can protect their privacy when obtaining their consent for using a social media platform in a classroom (Portal, 2011).

In the objective analysis presented above, students choose platforms and obtain texts based on their interests. Thus, some may argue, that when students register for a social media account in order to participate in a classroom activity and provide personal information as part of the registration process, FIPPA does not impose a requirement to ensure that students explicitly consent to the provision of personal information because their choice of platform is voluntary. Nonetheless, as some users are not knowledgeable about the privacy-related risks in using social media (Dienlin and Trepte, 2015), it is important that instructors ensure that students fully understand the privacy-related risks in selecting a particular platform and allow them to opt out if they wish.

### **How Can We Implement the Use of Social Media?**

When collecting data for the textual analysis phase of the objective analysis activity, if students opt out of signing up for social media accounts one possible

alternative is to limit the collection of interactions among users to those which can be obtained without user registration. For example, Twitter accounts are set to be visible without user registration by default. Several parts of Facebook do not require user registration to view user-generated content either. Hence, students can still obtain social media-based content that is publically accessible without leaving their personal information on foreign servers or worrying about the privacy rights of other users. Unfortunately, this would also mean that they would not be participating in L2 CoPs using social media as a part of classroom activities because social media platforms generally require user registration to interact with other users. While it would be ideal for students to be able to interact on social media as a part of classroom activities, privacy concerns mean that they should be given the choice to opt out. In such cases, the analysis of publically accessible texts would still allow students to gain the analytical skills which would scaffold their participation in L2 CoPs in the future.

In addition, Facebook or Twitter cannot be used to develop a classroom CoP as part of a required activity in classrooms without student's consent and without providing an alternative that allows students to opt out. This is because these platforms are based on foreign servers. As a potential alternative, using servers located in Canada, the University of Victoria currently hosts their own version of *Moodle* (an open-source learning management system) and *WordPress* (a blogging platform), which allow students to develop a learning CoP through online interaction on a forum, collaboratively engage in writing a journal, and comment on each other's work in a manner that is compliant with FIPPA and University of Victoria privacy policies.

Some may wonder about the impact of instructor presence in learning experience of students, especially if those platforms are hosted and branded by the university. As discussed in Chapter 2, the type of instructor involvement that I problematized was the imposition of a linguistic norm on student L2 use. Therefore, I would argue that it is unlikely that an instructor's presence in Moodle or on a WordPress site would negatively impact students, as long as the instructor's role is to facilitate analysis activities and to assist in the building a CoP by providing guidance, as outlined in this chapter.

### **Final Notes**

This chapter contains several recommendations for incorporating the use of social media into the language classroom. Through analysis of communicative styles, CoPs, journal writing and community building, it is recommended for students to be trained with analytical skills, so that they gain a deeper understanding of how self-expression is performed using linguistic resources, as well as of the characteristics of L2 CoPs. The chapter also argued that focusing on the development of analytical skills would allow instructors to shift away from limiting the linguistic knowledge that students acquire. In addition, the chapter also identified some of the ethical and legal obligations that need to be considered in using social media in academic courses in BC, which is an aspect that has not yet been discussed in studies of objective analysis and the use of social media.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This thesis has reviewed a variety of academic works to explore the use of social media for language learning, and has argued that switching between L1 and L2 while using social media can be an important technique in learning L2. In arguing this, this thesis addressed how the language classroom can foster such usage by drawing on the CoP perspective. Three components were identified as necessary for the successful implementation of social media-based interactions. These were an understanding of social media-based interactions occurring outside of school settings, an understanding of the limits of the classroom environment in implementing these experiences, and a pedagogical perspective that sees such experience as a learning process.

Studies of online multilingual communication provided a useful example of L2 use outside of school settings, which is the way in which switching between languages plays a vital role as a resource for self-expression (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2006, 2013; Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014; Lee and Barton, 2011; Leppänen, 2007; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012). Language classrooms that draws on the monolingual approach does not acknowledge such switching between languages as a communicative style (Levine, 2013). In contrast, the multilingual approach to language teaching, which is in alignment with the CoP perspective, does see this as a legitimate communicative style. Drawing on this perspective, this thesis argued that objective analysis allows for the incorporation of different communicative styles by making students analyze these styles instead of imposing a linguistic norm onto students (Levine, 2012; 2013). Findings related to potential difficulties that students may encounter on social media (Belling and de Bres, 2014; Chun et al., 2016; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011) added further evidence supporting the

efficacy of objective analysis, as it can help to address these difficulties. With the objective analysis activity, students are able to study linguistic norms and apply the knowledge they gain to mitigate the risk of interpersonal problems. Regarding application of the activity, studies in self-expression and language learning suggested the importance of focusing on self-expression by language learners and building classrooms that acknowledge the varying interests of students (e.g. George, 2014; Kanno and Norton, 2003; Klimanova and Dembovskaya, 2013; Norton, 2000; Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Incorporating these findings, this thesis made a recommendation on how the objective analysis activity can be of benefit to language classrooms. As revealed in the discussion, a focus on training students with analytical skills would allow instructors to shift away from limiting the communicative styles that students learn. Instead, the instructor can assist students to pursue their individual interest in learning the language. The framework is designed to achieve this by assisting students to gain a deeper understanding of interactions occurring in L2 CoPs, and to better position themselves in CoPs by confidently and effectively presenting themselves as legitimate participants. Thus, objective analysis is an ideal approach to integrate social media-based interactions in the language classroom without missing out on the positive characteristics of interactions that occur outside of school settings.

To highlight the limitations of this framework, the framework is not intended to train students with specific language skills (i.e. writing, reading, listening or speaking). This is because the focus is on helping students with attaining deeper participation in their desired L2 CoPs through analysis of the CoP. In the course of their participation, students may gain proficiency in L2 to some degree, but this is not the primary focus. In

addition, as discussed in Chapter 5, the use of the framework requires some already established level of cultural and linguistic knowledge. Therefore, the framework would not be useful at the introductory level where students cannot be expected to be able to understand interactions occurring in L2 CoPs. Nonetheless, the framework would be an effective teaching/learning technique when used in a classroom where students have a strong interest in the L2 culture and language, and are hoping to participate in a CoP.

This thesis focused primarily on the use social media due to its ubiquity and the accessibility to authentic L2 interactions that it offers. If students find access to L2 CoPs through other modes of communication (e.g. face-to-face), the framework may still be useful. However, there remain several limitations to the review presented here. As this is a literature-based report, empirical research is required to evaluate the extent to which objective analysis is effective in real-life language learning situations. For example, it would be valuable to survey how students perceive the activity (e.g. whether they found it useful or not) because the learner's experience was not fully captured in this literature review. Such findings would add further insights into how the activity would turn out in relation to the imagined community and learning goals of learners.

Furthermore, differences in educational stages and countries/linguistic contexts should also be investigated in future studies. For example, it is often argued that large scale national exams have a strong impact on how English education is structured in the Japanese schooling system (e.g. Kikuchi and Browne, 2009), and previous studies pointed out that English education in Japanese high schools lacks the practical application of language skills because the structure of the curriculum is biased toward preparing for university admission exams (e.g. Kuramoto and Koizumi, 2016; Steele, et al., 2016).

Hence, implementation of objective analysis in this context may require negotiation with the educational requirements of the Japanese schooling system. However, at the same time, the analysis activities and the use of social media, if implemented successfully, may assist students with learning the practical application of English skills. Therefore, addressing differences in educational systems in other countries in empirical research would provide further insight into how objective analysis activities may foster language learning experiences of students in different contexts. More importantly, because of the ever-changing nature of technology, there is a need to keep assessing what the positive elements of each particular communication technology are and how they can be leveraged for educational purposes.

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