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EMPOWERING IMAGINED IDENTITIES:
SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN A CHINESE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by

James Andrew Kelley

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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ABSTRACT

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Little work has yet to explore the potential for the use of social network sites (SNSs) in the English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) classroom, but recent trends in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) research suggest that SNSs may be a powerful context for language learning: offering students access to online communities of practice and/or imagined communities (as interpreted by Norton et al.); increased control of co-constructed/negotiated identities; and opportunities for empowering positions in authentic intercultural exchanges. This dissertation reports on a largely exploratory, empirical study of how the use of an American-based SNS in a Chinese EFL class affected specific self-reported student attitudes toward motivation. Results showed that students using SNS showed a statistically significant increase in motivation orientation traditionally considered “integrative” with the most significant comparative gains being made by those measured to be “more integrative” at the outset of the study. Detailed survey results suggest that students were not just passive receivers or learners of language and culture, but they also saw the empowering possibility of taking up *expert* positions in this new context that they did not find in the –SNS classes. When considered together with recent motivation research, these results seem to create a picture of SNSs as an *imagined international community*: one in which cultural exchange is seen as going both ways.

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Chapter 1

Playing in the Park 2.0: Social Network Sites as Communities of Practice and Imagined Communities

Networked Publics

Throughout my years living abroad, mostly in mainland China, whenever I felt my language learning routine growing stale or found myself drawing away from the target culture often all I needed to do was go outside. Usually I “retreated” to a public park or a street side food stall. Mostly I would just sit. Sit and watch. Sometimes someone might engage me in conversation or I might be unable to contain my curiosity and begin asking silly, “foreigner” questions. But more often than not, this experience of being out and about, being among, if not with, the locals helped me feel better. I do not know that it increased my communicative competence or directly fostered social connections that would lead to greater cultural understanding, but I usually felt better and had found something to spark renewed interest in language and culture learning: old couples waltzing; young kids trying to get a flimsy kite to fly; teenage couples trying not to be seen; an old man and his bucket of water, painting Chinese characters on the concrete with a giant brush. Sometimes for this introvert in a foreign country, there was no substitute for such unmediated public spaces.

In a recent introduction to a special issue on social network sites (SNSs) in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, boyd and Ellison (2008) describe Myspace and Facebook (two popular American-based SNSs) as “ ‘networked publics’ that support sociability, just as unmediated public spaces do” (p. 221). In defining SNSs, boyd and Ellison, describe these online web-based sites as having three crucial components: 1) “a public or semi-public profile in a bounded system,” 2) “a list of other

users with whom [the profile creator] shares a connection” (called *friends*, *contacts*, or *fans* depending on the site), and 3) means to “view and traverse [a user’s] list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211). Profile pages are the “backbone” (p. 211) of these systems and ask users to represent themselves using text descriptors (such as age, relationship status, education, interests etc.), uploaded photos, and often other multimedia content such as music and videos (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Clip of Myspace SNS profile page.

Much like my own experience in public places in foreign countries, these *networked publics* have different groups or *networks* (represented by the social ties visible on each profile page) engaged at different levels and doing a number of different things together (pp. 220-221). Participation on these sites can consist of a number of different activities: simply browsing profiles, leaving comments on profile pages, instant messaging, viewing posted photos and videos, reading and commenting on blogs, and playing web-based games together; in fact, it is quite difficult to catalog the available functions on most

SNSs because of their ever-expanding nature. This multiplicity of function, allowing users to engage with others in various ways and on different levels is one of the most intriguing features about SNSs.

Much like the public spaces I visited in my times abroad, these networked publics might also be able to serve a vital purpose in cultural and linguistic learning. These 21st century gathering places are a largely untapped arena for language development, one whose benefits may be of particular use to English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Participation in these networked publics might not immediately lead to greater linguistic achievement, but it is hypothesized here that they might be able to create a context for attitudinal or affective change in EFL learners. It is the aim of this study to begin an exploration of how SNSs might possibly be used in TESOL—specifically, how the use of an American-based SNS might affect specific attitudes toward English language learning motivation in Chinese EFL learners.

Theoretical Frameworks for This Study

Imagined communities. In his fascinating study on the birth of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1991) points out the importance, among other factors, that the emergence of print capitalism played in the creation of national consciousnesses and eventually nations—in his formulation, *imagined communities*. Anderson’s study shows how a new form of imagining “fraternity” was born out of a complex mix of cultural, technological, and economic changes in a way that seems to prefigure many of the changes we are witnessing today. Globalism and international market forces have changed the cultural and economic playing field in profound ways; and the internet, particularly Web 2.0 services like blogs, wikis, and SNSs, has created a

modality for a new *international* consciousness in much the same way that Anderson posits national consciousness, connected to vernaculars, traveled on newspapers of the past.

Anderson's work, especially his conception of *imagined communities*, has lately been adopted in the field of TESOL as a framework to shed light on how imagination and identity affect language learning. Most the work in TESOL conceives of these imagined communities, following Anderson, as "groups, intangible or not readily accessible, to which an individual desires to belong" (Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008, p. 167) and sees language learning as aiding in attaining an identity associated with such future-oriented communities (Carroll et al., 2008; Norton, 2001). Kanno and Norton (2003) describe this framework as useful in helping to "examine how learners' affiliation with [such] communities might affect their learning trajectories" (p. 242).

In their 2008 overview, boyd and Ellison point out that SNSs as networked publics often are a representation and enhancement of various "real-world" communities (p. 211) that users are already engaged in on some level. In other words, SNS can be conceived of as both *imagined communities* and online versions of *communities of practice*.

Communities of practice. The Communities of Practice (COP) model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) has become a widespread heuristic for understanding the learning process in the last 10 to 15 years. It is one that recognizes the social dimension of learning at the heart of everything we do. In addition to emphasizing the social nature of learning, it also seeks to locate the negotiation of meaning and its reifications in language and practice in specific local contexts. In other words, it emphasizes a view of

language learning that asks us to see what it means in specific social terms: what does our language allow us to do? What relationships does it afford or make feasible? What practices does it allow us to engage in? It is a theory of learning that also sees imagination and identity as crucial components. Stated most simply, a COP is “collective learning [that] results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 45); we are all involved in multiple COP “at home, at work, at school, in our hobbies... [they] are everywhere... [and] so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus.” (pp. 6-7).

Most SNSs can be accessed internationally and present the possibility of interacting with a global community of English speakers and learners in a diversity of contexts doing a number of different things (e.g., discussing, sharing, playing). These contexts can offer authentic interaction to language learners. Interacting with an international community or simply watching the discussion of a community could be a form of what Wenger (1998) in the COP model calls “legitimate peripheral participation.” Though starting on the periphery, and perhaps only observing, after time, practice and increased interaction, students may be able to fully participate, share in, and shape the practices of these online communities. Students, especially in EFL contexts, may have access to COP previously unavailable to them. Even if students choose simply to browse open profiles rather than more active forms of participation, they may be able to imagine possibilities for themselves that others have indexed: “nonparticipation” could help to shape the hopes and desires of students as they see and imagine their desired place in such conversations. While engagement in COP “creates a shared reality in which to act

and construct an identity... imagination is another process for creating such a reality” (Wenger, p. 177).

SNS and Affordances for English Language Learners

Multimodality. SNS can be conceived of as both COP (as students participate in the life of online communities) and imagined communities (as they imagine their futures); but it is here hypothesized that SNS might also offer language learners special affordances that could make them uniquely useful for language development. In addition to offering learners access to authentic interactions (online COP), the multimodal nature of self-presentation on SNSs may offer new opportunities for self-expression for different levels of English competence.

While classroom-based and traditional models of language learning, can cordon off beginning learners from full interaction with native and/or more advanced speakers in some situations, SNSs allow students to form a profile that represents them through the use of text and uploaded pictures, music, video and links. These things can *speak* for the learner and perhaps open streams of communication and connection between participants that may have been impossible through the traditional skills of speaking and writing. A new mother, by posting pictures of her newborn child, receives a number of comments telling her how “cute” her baby is. This learner now has a conversational topic and can receive authentic input and feedback on her chosen—and crafted—topic. She has initiated a genuine conversation in a way that her limited proficiency and/or access may not have previously allowed. Such interactions are potentially packed with linguistic and cultural knowledge crucial to language learning.

A great amount of research is currently being done into multimodality in discourse (Kress, 2003; Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Stein, 2004) and it may be that through using such multimodal tools in EFL classes we are preparing students to express themselves in ways that will serve them well in the future rather than emphasizing basic skills that may have (in much of the world) already passed into common currency. There is no doubt that the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening should be the foundation of language learning, but is it possible that the future will demand a sort of multimodal self-presentation skill (the kind practiced on SNSs) as well? Just as the printing press and cheap paper expanded the educational demands for a new set of skills, is it possible that the Internet and its technologies will demand a new mode of semiotic expression?

In *Literacy in the New Media* (2003), Gunther Kress suggests that to remain focused solely on *words* (as opposed to *images* and multimodality) risks missing out on the monumental shift in how meaning and identities are now being made: “we can no longer treat literacy (or ‘language’) as the sole, the main, let alone the major means for representation and communication... linguistic theory cannot provide a full account of what literacy does or is” (35). “Representation is always multiple” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. vii) and SNSs might be a context that allows language learners to practice and develop these multimodal literacies that the future may require and that a new generation of language learners may demand.

Wikidentities. To affirm that identity is co-constructed is to suggest that there is a “distributed responsibility among interlocutors for the creation of sequential coherence, identities, meaning, and events” (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995, p.177). Whereas early personal

web pages focused more on self-authored narrative descriptions of the self via likes/dislikes and personal data (Dominick, 1999, p. 651), SNSs activate this “distributed responsibility” by making social connections explicit and including *friend-authored content* on the profile owner’s page. Early personal webpages helped serve the function of actualizing the self through narrating as described by Ochs and Capps (1996) but co-construction suggests that we are not actualized until our selves are negotiated with others in a social context. SNSs are a medium in which this negotiation is not only popularly being undertaken but also significantly foregrounded.

Part of the appeal of SNSs is the ability of participants to both create *and* control a narrative about their lives, and to do so in a way that is not completely divorced from the “real world,” a narrative not created *alone but done so in public*, one that is co-constructed yet still controlled. The asynchronous (and often physically masked) nature of SNS profile creation and online interaction creates a situation in which learner language can be reviewed, researched, and chosen in the relative safety of the learner’s time and space rather than formed on-the-fly through face-to-face interaction (Kern, Ware & Warschauer, 2004). This feature of SNS self-representation has sparked debates about the changing nature of authenticity and deceptions in online communication (Mallan & Giardina, 2009; Sessions, 2009). This feature also makes SNS work resemble written English (when compared to spoken), but it has the added feature of being a lower register that often invites more direct interaction. Danet and Herring (2007) have pointed out this hybridity (like writing *but also* like speaking) in online communication (p. 3) and much of the writing that is done on SNSs reflects this hybridity. SNS work allows the

time to prepare and compose of writing plus the heightened possibility of getting quick feedback that is often a feature of interactional talk (Kern et al., 2004).

This interactive yet constructed nature of SNS self-representation is one of its most fascinating characteristics in that it seems to approximate the co-constructed nature of identity as described by much post-structural criticism in which identity is conceived of as “dynamic, contradictory, and constantly changing across time and place” (Norton, 2006, p. 503). A profile author presents a position (e.g., *new mother* via written text or, perhaps, a photo of her child) and profile-viewers respond to the authored position through comment functions (see Figure 2). This feedback allows for the negotiation of a profile author’s position through response to (or, even, deletion of) profile viewers’ comments. It is a reification of the co-constructed nature and negotiation of identity that takes place in interactional talk (Kelley, 2009). Playing off of the *wiki* in *Wikipedia* and defining it as “collaborative or cumulative knowledge endeavors,” Mallan and Giardina (2009) describes these “virtual identities” (p. 1) formed through interaction on SNS profile pages as “wikidentities” due to their evolving and collaborative nature.



Figure 2. Detail of comment function in Renren (Chinese SNS).

And while the process of identity negotiation or simple intercultural communication has the prospect of being quite demotivating (Norton, 1995), at times leading to student non-participation (Norton, 2001), the user-controlled environment of SNSs allows for this to be done in a “safer” environment (Pearson, 2009). Profile authors (in most SNSs) have the ability to hide or delete comments and feedback that they do not want public. The ability to control their narrative and at times subvert the internal logic of the SNS (Mallan & Giardina, 2009) leads to a heightened sense of user agency. With the sometimes serious face risks involved in L2 self-presentation it helps to have a place to

play with identity formation, to try on guises with, perhaps, less severe, “real world” consequences. These sites could be “screens to project identities onto” as Gao and Xiu (2008) suggest English language media can be for Chinese students. Online SNSs seem like the perfect mode for this due to their co-constructed, yet ultimately author-controlled nature.

Empowerment. One final but crucial consideration for the use of online SNSs in an EFL context is the notion of learner empowerment. While the internet has not turned out to be the *level playing field* that many hoped it would become—research suggests that gender even when not disclosed is still ascribed (Herring, 1996, p. 4)—it is still a place that can background (even hide) many of the physical “gating features” (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008) normally used to ascribe identities. In addition, it is a space that exists outside of and above nationalities and countries in a way that can create true intercultural interaction that empowers language learners, making them *experts* of their chosen field of expression.

Park (2007) describes how a native speaker (NS)/non-native speaker (NNS) asymmetry was undone in interaction by a NNS’s talk about their home country. And McCarthy (2009) describes Japanese EFL students’ excitement in sharing about their country via videos on the Internet. In discussing the power of Web 2.0 applications in computer-assisted language learning, Antonie Alm (2006) points out that one comment from “a real-life audience [apart from the teacher] is likely to have a stronger motivational impact on the learner” (p. 33). When students feel as though they are communicating with a real audience with real consequences (in the “outside world”) this adds a sense of agency (Kern et al., 2004). All this work suggest that by giving students a

context in which they can take up expert identities before a real, though perhaps virtual, audience puts them in an improved position for language learning, helping them claim what Norton (1995) describes, borrowing from Bourdieu, the “right to speak.” SNS, it is hypothesized, can create a platform for such motivational, truly intercultural, learner-empowering exchanges.

Playing in the Park 2.0

And still very little work has yet explored the possibilities that might exist for the use of SNS in EFL classes. This study is a step in the direction of beginning a conversation about how SNS might impact L2 learning and/or be used in EFL teaching. This largely empirical study aims to examine how a component of SNS work in one EFL context affected the language learning orientation toward motivation of one population of students. The small number of studies of SNS in EFL have noted their motivational potential (Halvorsen, 2009; McCarty, 2009) but supplied little or no quantifiable evidence. I am attempting to quantify changes in specific elements of student orientation to motivation that touches on the social and contextual (what has in much past research been called an *integrative orientation to motivation* or *integrativeness*). Limiting the scope of our questions thus, we hope to explore, as prompted by recent research (Dörnyei, 2005; Warschauer, 2004; Warschauer & Kern, 2000), how specific teaching contexts and practices might utilize the new media tools that are out there—already being used by so many—toward their language learning goals.

The “social turn” of the web has created generous possibilities for language teachers interested in the social and interactional nature of language learning. It is my hope that considering SNSs in the light of imagined communities, communities of

practice, and recent research in TESOL focused on learners and their identities in specific language learning contexts will stimulate further investigation, exploration and experimentation leading to exciting new projects in teaching, learning and research. Regardless of what we might call student participation in these new contexts (online communities of practice in which students participate in dialogue with others or imagined communities in which students project where they would like their language learning to take them), it seems a worthwhile activity, a sitting in—or playing in—the 21st century public park. It is a context in which there are so many varied activities and different ways to participate that it may be possible to *virtually* sit and observe and somehow come away feeling better, to come away a better learner, to come away with a new [imagined] identity. To be changed like my time on those park benches in China changed me. This study begins the exploration of attempting to measure those affective changes.

Structure of this Dissertation

This introduction serves to lay the metaphorical and theoretical groundwork that motivated this project. It is followed by a more detailed look at relevant scholarly literature that has been done in areas related to this research. This project finds itself at the intersection of many quite dynamic elements of scholarly pursuit (i.e., computer-mediated communication, L2 motivation, and L2 identity research) some of which are undergoing exciting changes at this moment: for this reason, the researcher has chosen to use more open categories that might allow for the more/less expansive definitions that develop throughout these debates. The review of literature is following by a narrative description of the procedures for the study and then a discussion of the empirical results. The paper ends with a summary of the findings that uses student voices culled from

language learning journals that will help to situate the results in the specific Chinese context and explain how student attitudes toward motivation are expressed in their own words.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature: “I’m Not the Shy Boy as Before”

Exploring Identities and Social Contexts in TESOL

New directions. The student’s voice that lends itself to the title of this chapter entails a vital insight into the nature of language learning, one that has moved to the center of the TESOL research discussion within the last two decades: second language learning is more than acquiring a new grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; it is also about changing the self: what one can do, how one feels, and at times how one conceives of one’s self. This shift (along with the rise of global/world English) has had a profound impact on the field of L2 learning motivation that has been reflected in a move toward a more complex understanding of the learner and the learning context. Much of this research has built upon poststructural views of the self, positing the self as multiple, contradictory, and a site of struggle (Canagarajah, 2006; Gao, 2007; Lam, 2004; Lu, 1994; McKinney & Norton, 2007; Norton, 1995, 1997, 2001; Norton & Gao, 2008; Park, 2007; Pavlenko, 2001).

The work of these researchers, drawing on critical social theory, has often attempted to problematize older, more static notions of the self and add complexity to our understanding of the language learner and the language learning context, conceiving of them as fluid and co-constructed through dynamic social processes. This shift in direction has created a number of new avenues for discussing and researching second language acquisition (SLA) that tries to more clearly reflect the natural depth and complexity of language learning.

Assumptions about Identity	
SLA THEORY	CRITICAL THEORY
▪ unique, essential -	multiple, fragmented
▪ coherent core -	site of struggle
▪ fixed, ahistorical -	changing
▪ inherent -	produced

Figure 3. Assumptions about identity. Norton, 2008 TESOL address.

Imagination in language learning. Describing the language learner’s identity as multiple, contradictory, and changing over time and socially negotiated or co-constructed places an increased emphasis not only on the tangible language learning context but also on contexts that exist only in the minds of learners. Because of this, imagination is seen in some recent research as a crucial element in language learning (Carroll et al., 2008; Dornyei, 2005, 2009; Lam, 2004; Norton, 1995, 2001). Norton describes language learning as finding a way to different futures: “learning helps us attain the identities we desire” (Norton, 2001, p. 166). This emphasis on future selves and possible identities demands a work of the imagination. In explicating this notion, Norton borrows from Benedict Anderson’s (1991) idea of “imagined communities.” Anderson’s work seeks to explain the roots of nationalism and describes its rise in historical processes (e.g.

newspapers and the rise of vernaculars) and popular imagination, explaining that communities (and nations) “are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6). A number of researchers (Carroll et al., 2008; Dörnyei, 2005; Gao & Xiu, 2008; Gu, 2008, 2009; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko, 2001) have deployed this notion of imagined communities in an effort to describe more accurately the goals and pathways of language learning in today’s Global/World English context (emphasizing that the *target language/culture* is not always anchored in historical/geographical social communities).

Dörnyei (2005) describes the notion of imagined communities (in its language learning sense) as useful in describing, “various international or World English identities... as these identities concern membership in a virtual language community” (p. 98). These researchers have emphasized how imagined communities—while conceived of in the imagination—can be a significant motivating factor in language learning. Gao and Norton (2008) give one description of an imagined community for a group of language learners in China: “English is not only associated with the target language culture, but an imagined community of ‘Chinese elites’ ” (p. 111). Dörnyei’s (2005) work emphasizes the way that imagined communities are related to the “idealized L2-speaking self” whose “mental construction is partly based on our real-life experiences of members of the community/communities speaking the particular L2 in question and partly on our imagination” (p. 102). The last 15 years has seen the social nature of language learning become axiomatic and this field of research has sought to demonstrate how the social is often a product of the imagination but still has a profound impact on the development of new identities and language learning.

Social network sites and imagining identities. There has been much research that has explored this connection between language learning and the development (or destruction) of empowering identities (Norton, 1995, 1997, 2001; Park, 2007; Pavlenko, 2001), but little work has yet to explore it in the light of recent technological trends—especially the popular rise of social network sites (SNS). SNS are the culmination of a shift in online communities from Web 1.0 (publishing) to Web 2.0 (interacting) that emphasizes the social connections in (often already existing) online communities; this shift has changed the context of online communities from interests to people and made the individual “the center of their own community” (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 219).

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
authentic materials text, pictures, audio, video	live materials RSS, Flickr, last.fm, podcast, videocast
webpages	blogs, wikis
discussion forum	blogs
separate applications for email, chat, photos, music, video etc.	social networking (e.g., MySpace)

Figure 4. Highlight of changes from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Alm, 2006, p. 30.

Due to this shift, research on SNSs has focused extensively on issues of identity. Walther et al. (with Tong & Langwell, 2008; and with Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008) has explored the ways in which the number of friends collected and the friends’ behavior affect perceptions of the profile author’s own self-presentation. Zhao et al. (2008) explore the ways that profile authors create “hoped-for possible selves” through using words, content, etc. and how the self is socially constructed through

implied associations with friends and groups. Pearson (2009) explores the particular way that self-presentation works on the internet and joins a number of scholars that point out the negotiated nature of identity on the web, co-constructed through the interaction between authors and their audiences (boyd, 2006; Kelley, 2009; Mallan & Giardina, 2009; Sanderson, 2008). Pearson sees identity creation on the web as “deliberately playful” and sees such identities reflecting Goffman’s (1959) idea of self-presentation created in reaction to one’s cohorts. Mallan and Giardina (2009) describe negotiated online identities as “wikidentities” due to their open, negotiated, collaborative nature. And boyd (2006) suggests that this negotiation can function to “write community into being,” with friendships and people as the context in Web 2.0 applications such as SNSs. This research, largely being done in the fields of communication or computer-mediated communication (CMC), has been useful in explicating the way that identity is developed and indexed on the Internet and particularly on SNSs. All these models and understandings highlight the highly interactive nature of self-presentation on the web.

There is an element of imagination and change inherent in self-presentation on these sites that aligns well with the recent critical and poststructural theory that has been incorporated into TESOL research. The potential for social change through the elimination of prejudice based on gender and race distinctions is a dream that goes back to the early days of the internet (Glaser & Kahn, 2005) and though it has not developed as hoped, these sites do allow for a more overtly constructed version of the self: one that can reflect an “imagined self” (Sanderson, 2008; Sessions, 2009; Zhao et al., 2008). This idea of an “imagined self” is not simply a dream from the early days of the Internet, but (as

discussed above) it is also a central tenet in much recent research on language learning itself (Dörnyei, 2009).

Technological development has always created new tools and contexts for language learning (Warschauer, 2004) and recent research on technology in language learning has also posited ways in which it (and these contexts) can be deployed in student-empowering ways. While research has not always confirmed hypotheses about the positive effects of technology on language learning—Arnold (2007) shows that face-to-face discussion and synchronous chat were more effective in lowering FL anxiety than asynchronous chat (contrary to the suggestion in Warschauer & Kern, 2000)—this simply points out the necessity of interrogating specific technology in particular local contexts rather than adopting a “one-size fits all” approach to its use (Kern et al., 2004). The recent shift toward Web 2.0 online social software deserves special exploration due to its investment in identity, interaction, and social networks. For these same reasons, Warschauer describes online communication as “an ideal medium for exploration and expression of identity” (in Kern et al., 2004, p. 253).

Empowerment depends on contexts where resources can be used (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) and empowering language learning contexts have been described in a number of different ways: a place that is safe and supportive (Norton & Gao, 2008); that gives learners freedom and control (Pennycook, 2001; Stein, 2004; Trent, 2008); that is motivating (Coniam & Wong, 2004; Halvorsen, 2009; Kitao, 1998; McCarty, 2009); and creates opportunities for access to students that may have been previously excluded from authentic discourse (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008; Kern et al., 2004). Early—and limited—

research suggests that SNSs may be a place where L2 identities can be explored in such empowering ways.

While extensive work has been done on both SNS (boyd & Ellison, 2008 for a summary) and the use of online interactive technology in pedagogy and research (Kern et al., 2004 for summary), few studies have yet to explore the specific use of SNS as a component of TESOL. Exceptions to this are Halvorsen (2009) and McCarty (2009) who both explore the use of SNSs in a Japanese EFL context. Halvorsen uses the popular American-based SNS Myspace and its blogging function to host online discussions and writing assignments organized into a series of tutorials on hot topics. Halvorsen's work reports the SNS work as motivating and "exciting" for almost all of the students and suggests that future research consider using a control group (not participating in SNS work) and that students have a stable group of native speakers of English with which to interact. McCarty (2009) participated in a Japanese-based SNS, Mixi, and saw his involvement as potentially breaking down barriers between teacher and student and "positively blurring the distinction between the classroom and real life" (p. 181), concluding that "the potential affordances of social networking... have been shown to run deep in terms of personal engagement, which in turn is linked to motivational factors enhancing possibilities for transformative learning" (p. 196). These two studies, while very limited, have suggested the potential for SNS in an EFL context for increasing motivation and creating empowering new contexts for L2 learners.

Motivation and Attitudes

Motivation has long been seen as one of the most important individual variables affecting L2 learning success. Dörnyei (2005) in a recent overview of motivation

research describes it as “presupposed” by all other factors: “Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement” (p. 65). Due to its crucial positioning in the learning process, a great deal of research has focused on motivation, but many of the changes described above that have shifted TESOL research toward exploring identity and context have also affected motivation research in important ways. Additionally, the rise of Global/World Englishes and the evolving understanding(s) of English as an international language have changed how important concepts about the ultimate aims of English learning are being framed.

In his 2005 overview of L2 motivation research, Dörnyei divides L2 motivation research into three periods: the social psychological (1959-1990), the cognitive-situated (1990s), and the process-oriented (2000—present). And while there may be some debate about the details in such an effort, almost all overviews of L2 motivation begin with the work of Gardner and Lambert and their associates in Canada. (Dörnyei refers to their work as social psychological, but it has also been called the socio-educational model in Gardner, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2003.) Their work is still foundational to most studies of L2 motivation despite existing for half a century and being subject to numerous modifications and reformulations.

Gardner (et al.) and integrative motivation. At the center of the social psychological approach is the well-worn, oft misunderstood, yet somehow enduring concept of *integrative motivation*. This concept is so central to the L2 motivation research despite being coined half a century ago that even the most recent conceptions of

motivation (Dörnyei, 2009) must grapple with it. Dörnyei (2005) points out that the early motivational theory of Gardner and Lambert is often misrepresented as the sum of instrumental motivation—language learning as a *tool to get* something (e.g. a new job)—and integrative motivation—a much more challenging and more researched approach. In fact the two were never seen as exclusive categories and the instrumental dimension was left undeveloped in much of the social psychological research. Yet, the challenges and confusion surrounding the integrative aspect in the social psychological approach are apparent as Gardner, in 2001, writes to address perceived ambiguities in the integrative motivation, saying that it has meant many things to many different people.

Early conceptions of the integrative motivation grow out of Gardner and associates' general theory of language learning:

Languages are typically learned in the process of becoming a member of a particular group; the sustaining motivation is usually one of group membership, not of language acquisition per se... and refer to the willingness to become a member of another language group as an integrative orientation. This term is useful in that it denotes the desire for integration (common in both situations) but distinguishes it from identification in terms of the antecedent conditions leading to such a motive. (Gardner, 1960, p. 12)

This approach with its emphasis on the social situation and social meaning seems, in fact, far ahead of its time. Their prescience certainly accounts for some of the endurance these ideas have experienced. While even today the *social* nature of their theory is esteemed, many of the changes and challenges to these ideas have come from dislocating their work from its original setting in Canada and *situating* their work in new—often strikingly different—language learning contexts. Language learning today—and especially English language learning—is quite different than it was 50 years ago.

While Gardner and associates did posit two different orientations toward motivation (*instrumental*—language learning as a *tool* to *get* something e.g. a new job—in addition to the integrative), their work largely focused on the integrative dimension (Dörnyei, 2005). Their studies initially seemed to show a connection between integrative motivation and L2 learning success (Gardner, 1985 & 1991), but later studies showed this to be inconsistent (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Lam, 2004; Warden & Lin, 2000) and perhaps a function of the specific research site (English speaking Canadians studying French).

In 1991, Gardner described the integrative motive as “a constellation of attitudes and motivation” consisting of three broad categories:

integrativeness, was viewed as involving attitudes toward the second language community as well as other groups. In the context of English Canadians learning French, the concept of *integrativeness* was assessed in terms of three measures: Attitudes toward French Canadians, Degree of Integrative Orientation, and Interest in Foreign Languages. The second category involved *attitudes toward the learning situation* and was measured in terms of Evaluation of the French Course and Evaluation of the French Teacher. The final component involved *motivation*. It was assessed in terms of the effort expended in learning French (Motivational Intensity), Desire to Learn French, and Attitudes toward Learning French. In this representation, *integrativeness* and *attitudes toward the learning situation* were viewed as determinants of *motivation*, while *motivation* was considered to be the major determinant of second language achievement. (Gardner, 1991 p. 49)

Both integrativeness, as defined above, and attitudes toward the learning situation describe abstract attitudes and are seen as determinants of motivation while motivation is associated with L2 learning success. This description highlights the foundational importance of attitudes, suggesting the direction of future research that would begin to dive into the complexity of such attitudes.

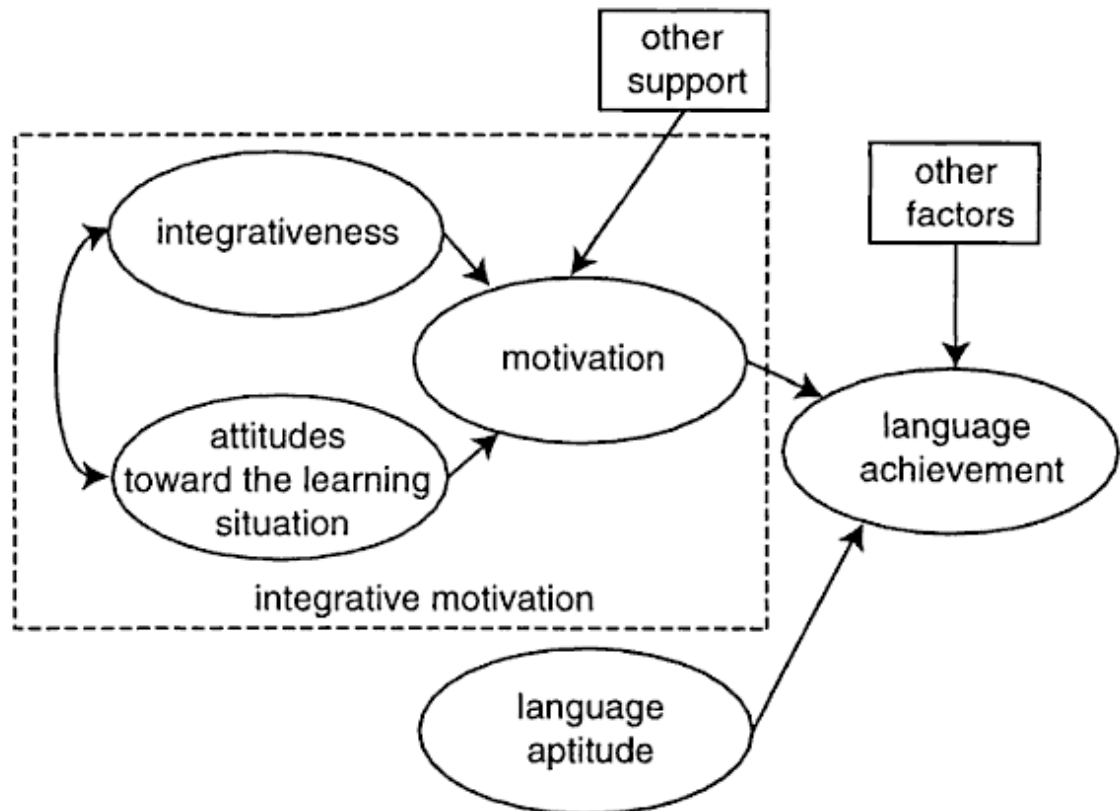


Figure 5. The integrative motivation. (Gardner, 2001, p. 5.)

Anticipating this shift, Gardner (1985 & 1991) points out that results in his work indicate “there is a relationship between attitudes and motivation (and language aptitude) on the one hand and second language achievement on the other, but the process underlying the relationship is certainly open to question” (Gardner, 1991 p. 50). Do certain attitudes lead to L2 learning success or does language learning success change learner attitudes? Gardner puts forward the proposition that learners with high levels of integrative motivation will choose situations where they can improve their language (e.g., visiting a target language community), but does not go much further in attempting to resolve this question.

Also in the work of Gardner (1991) and associates, attitudes and motivation are shown to have a relationship with the continuation of language study when a course ends—especially learners’ demonstration of integrative motivation characteristics were more predictive of who would continue language study than language aptitude (p. 51). In summarizing the results in 1991, Gardner states “there is converging evidence in support of one particular causal sequence, namely, that attitudes and motivation (along with other variables, of course) influence second language achievement” (p. 52).

Gardner’s work (Gardner & Smythe, 1975) also has shown how language anxiety (classroom anxiety and language use anxiety) negatively correlates with attitude and motivation. Furthermore, these anxiety measures also have a stable negative relationship with L2 achievement (Gardner, 1991 p. 57). Clement (1980, 1987; Clement & Kruidenier, 1985) has negatively linked these anxiety measures to self-confidence and posited that self-confidence is a function of the frequency and quality of second language interactions (Clement, 1980 p.151). Work in EFL situations where there is little opportunity for authentic interactions with second language groups has shown this anxiety also to be related to unpleasant experiences in the language classroom (Gardner, 1991 p. 58). Gardner’s (1991) summary of the work on research into attitudes and motivation ends with a hint at the direction in which things are going as he points out the importance of exploring specific social contexts. And this is indeed the direction from which challenges and critiques of his foundational body of work would come.

Norton’s social theory and investment/identity. In the 1990s, what Dörnyei (2005) describes as the *cognitive-situated period* (p. 66), the integrative motive began to be challenged and a number of new motivation models were proposed. One of the most

enduring of these is the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985) who proposed the influential notions of *intrinsic* (arising from within the learner, e.g., a *desire* to learn) and *extrinsic* motivation (prompted by circumstances outside the learner, e.g., to pass a test)—lying on a “continuum of self-determination” (Noels, 2003, p. 38). This model has existed alongside Gardner’s mode for the last two decades (perhaps deceptively) creating an easy template for describing learners as integratively/instrumentally and intrinsically/extrinsically motivated learners. In Dörnyei’s (2005) overview he details the advances in cognitive psychology that pushed forward L2 motivation research in the 80s and 90s, but largely omits insights brought to L2 motivation research from social theory—especially as concerns learners’ changing motivation based on social context.

Perhaps the most influential figure in bringing the methods and insights from social theory to SLA research has been Bonny Norton (especially 1995’s “Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning”). In it she contends that language is constructed by and constructs our social identities (pp. 12-13). If language is responsible for constructing who we are and is constructed by who we are, then language teaching must consider the language learner’s sense of self in its social context. Norton even contends that part of the problem with understanding “differential success” (a problem at the heart of foundational motivation research) is that SLA has not come up with a comprehensive theory of social identity and has misunderstood the relationship between the learner and the social world.

Central to Norton’s 1995 work is a challenge to the traditional idea of motivation. She reports the cases of several Canadian students of ESL; what she describes as *very motivated* learners that are, nonetheless, silenced in situations that would be considered

prime situations for language practice and modified interaction. She contends that these learners are silenced by the social conditions of inequality that position some subjects as not worthy of speaking (without the “power to impose reception” p. 18, borrowing from the social theory of Bourdieu). Her work contends that motivation does not account for the power relations inherent in social interaction (and therefore language learning).

Norton does not (to my mind) propose a “comprehensive theory of social identity” but she does give us a framework for better understanding the complexity at the heart of language learner motivation and goes a long way toward answering Gardner’s open chicken-and-egg question about what comes first: attitudes or success. She creates this framework by drawing heavily on a feminist poststructural reading of social identity as drawn up by Chris Weedon (1987). Weedon’s work theorizes that language is where social identity is constructed and that the subject is multiple (often contradictory), a site of struggle (which emphasizes agency), and changing over time (Norton emphasizes this because it highlights the productiveness of language learning as an intervention).

In addition to proposing a new framework for seeing the social language learner, Norton also seeks to reinterpret “motivation” as “investment” in an effort to explain why her highly motivated students were silenced. Investment seeks to highlight that when students learn a language they do so assuming that they will get a return in (here Norton borrows again from Bourdieu) “cultural capital” (i.e., symbolic resources like new relationships or material resources like more money or a house). Investment seeks to highlight the often contradictory and changing nature of learner involvement in language learning processes. And in this formulation “the right to speak” is often tied to language learners claiming social positions or identities. For example, Norton relates the story of

one of her participants who is silenced by her co-workers largely because she is an immigrant (and NNS of English) and they are Canadians (and NS), but when she decides to take action and speak up in defense of herself it is because she claims her position as *mother* and positions them as *children* (because they are much younger than her). Norton writes about another participant who claims the right to speak by talking about her travels in Europe when her co-workers describe where they would like to go on vacation; her involvement repositions herself as *multicultural citizen* rather than *immigrant*. This work highlights the ways in which discourses of power encroach into the language learning process in ways that had previously been left undeveloped.

Like Gardner's work, Norton's work shows attitudes to be foundational to language learning motivation (or investment), but her work, drawing on social theory, locates these changing/developing attitudes in the identities of language learners. In other words, she attempts to get at the underlying process left open by Gardner (1991), suggesting that it is often a social process related to learner's—sometimes imagined—identities.

Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system. Zoltan Dörnyei's work (2005, 2009) has not drawn specifically on Norton's (1995, 2001) notion of *investment* (described above)—that critiqued the static nature of motivation as conceived in previous SLA research—but it offers a framework for understanding motivation that includes her idea of flexible/changing notions of the self and the social transactional nature of language learning (i.e., students *invest* in identities to get cultural resources). He does, though, draw on her use of *imagined communities* (2001) remarking that, “our idealized L2-speaking self can be seen as a member of an imagined L2 community” (p. 102).

In his L2 Motivational Self System, Dörnyei seeks to maintain the core of Gardner's *integrative motivation* while adding the cognitive and process-based insights of the last three decades of research (Dörnyei, 2005): "if our ideal self is associated with the mastery of an L2, that is, if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described in Gardner's (1985) terminology as having an integrative disposition" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 27). Motivation is cast, essentially, as "perceived discrepancies between the learner's actual and possible selves" (Dörnyei, 2009, p.29).

Where Gardner and associates' integrative motivation was developed (and often proved most useful) in bilingual Canada, Dörnyei's model seeks to make itself more useful in the new climate of globalization and World Englishes (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009): a context in which the concept of *integration* is less salient than in the original Canadian contexts and in which concepts like native speaker and even language community are less meaningful. In Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, integrative motivation is conceived of as the *ideal L2 self*—a notion that contains what the learner aspires to become through language learning, attitudes toward L2 speakers (the closest approximation to *target language/culture* in his system), and the *instrumental* benefits to come through language learning (p. 29).

This model is built on Dörnyei's (2005) analysis of the interrelationship between motivational variables that showed *instrumentality* (conceived of as a "practical/ utilitarian dimension associated with the concrete benefits that language proficiency might bring about" p. 70) and *attitudes toward L2 speakers* as direct antecedents to *integrativeness* (see Figure 6). Dörnyei (2005, 2009) points out that this suggests integrativeness is still a crucial—if bigger and wider than had been imagined—element in

the motivational picture. When integrativeness is understood as the ideal L2 self, it creates a context for more theoretical interaction with the identity and investment elements put forward by Norton. This model not only accounts for the transformed nature of English language learning in the 21st century, but also the social/transactional nature of language learning that Norton’s “investment” sought to highlight and that seems to be a product of the place English has taken up in the global economy.

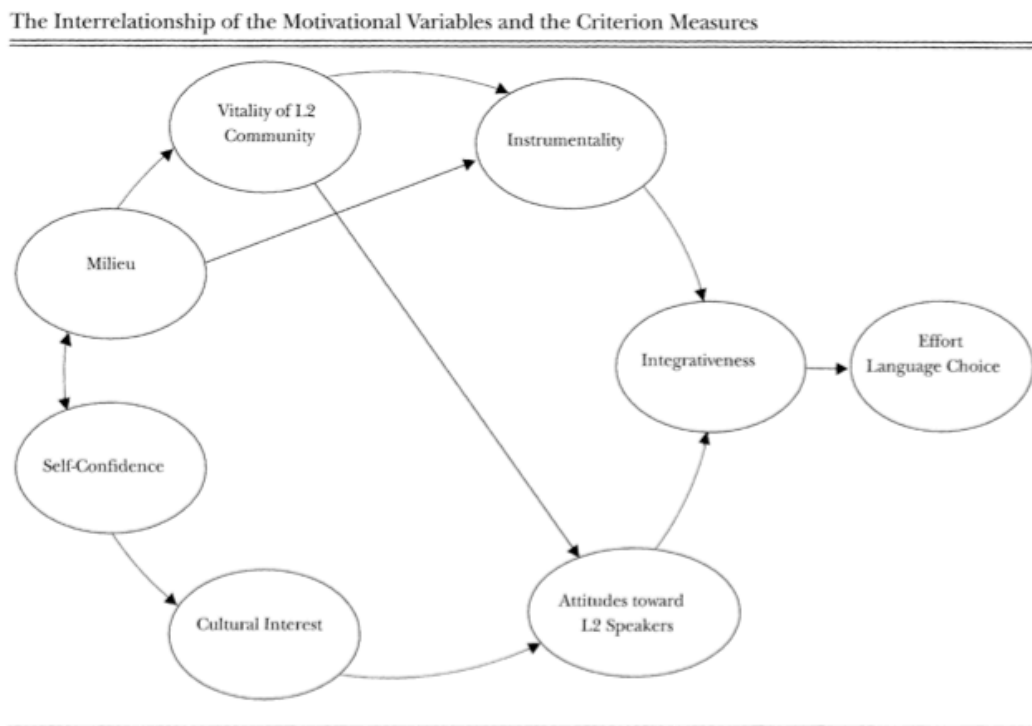


Figure 6. Interrelationship of motivational variables. Dörnyei, 2005, p. 27.

With this expanded notion of integrativeness—one that sees it to contain ideals about the self (future possible selves and imagined identities) and how these identities might be socially actualized (imagined communities)—it seems natural to examine the ways that SNS (with their focus on identity creation) might make such identity work

more meaningful for language learners. “Technology can create new social contexts that shape how learning takes place” (Warschauer, 2004, p. 15) and SNS may be one such empowering context with their emphasis on identity creation through interaction and theoretically international reach.

Motivation and attitudes in Chinese EFL. In describing avenues for future motivation research in his 2005 study, Dörnyei pointed out the dominant theme of *context*. Based on poststructural and constructivist views of the self, research on the L2 self is inseparable from that of the learning environment. When we begin to look at Chinese English language learners we need to consider them in their particular context: one in which they have the largest number of English language learners in the world (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008), yet very few communicative contexts in which to practice English speaking and listening, leading some to call Chinese English “lungya yingyu” or “deaf and mute English”(Tsui, 2007). Additionally, and importantly, China has the greatest number of Internet users, yet access it in a context that is both filtered and censored heavily (MacKinnon, 2009).

For most the history of English teaching in China, motivation research has focused on linguistic outcomes (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2007). But more recently, research has begun to explore issues of identity and “self-concept” in Chinese EFL learners (Gao, 2007; Gao, Cheng, Zhao, & Zhou, 2005; Gao et al., 2007; Gao X., Cheng, & Kelly, 2008, Gu, 2008, 2009). This work has shown that language learning can be associated with attitudinal and identity changes in the Chinese EFL settings: resulting in increased global self-confidence (Gao et al., 2005; Gao et al., 2007) and viewed as a tool for developing a “desired social status and identity” (Gao X., Cheng, & Kelly, 2008, p.

24). These results suggest that Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (with its expanded view of integrativeness to include notions of the self) might be a useful theoretical framework for further motivation research in China.

Yang (2008) emphasizes the important role of the English teacher in motivation in the Chinese EFL context, noting that "the language teacher is critical because s/he teaches the language and often is the first person, and commonly the only person, to introduce the language to the students and the only person who uses the language whom students can contact" (p. 95). This suggests one way in which the learning environment might be related to attitudes toward L2 speakers and integrative motivation. It is quite possible that the important motivational affect of the teacher could easily be intensified by the teacher being from an English speaking country (as *foreign teachers* often are in China) and therefore seen to be a direct representative of the L2 culture.

The role of the teacher and specific learning environments has started to be empirically tested using Dörnyei's identity-based motivation model and at least one study has used it to examine the Chinese (Taiwan) context. In it Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) replicate a study of motivational strategies used by Hungarian teachers (Dörnyei & Cziser, 1998) with EFL teachers in Taiwan. This study, among over things, reported two "trouble spots" or underutilized macrostrategies for motivation in the Taiwanese context: "making the learning tasks stimulating" and "familiarizing learners with L2-related culture" (p. 172). Other work that has not used the L2 Motivational Self System, but has examined attitudes and motivation from a self or identity perspective has turned up interesting results (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008; Gao, X., Cheng, & Kelly, 2008; Gao, Y. & Xiu, 2008; Gu, 2008, 2009; Norton & Gao, 2008; Trent, 2008): showing that static

motivational categories often do not accurately represent Chinese language learners and that particular social contexts/ strategies often have a great impact on creating student *imagined identities*.

Gao and Xiu (2008) have shown how this idea of *imagining the self* is often related to cultural interest products. They describe English songs and movies as “a screen where students could project their ideal selves or imagined identities” (p. 98). These English language products are seen not only creating *imagined communities* that students might aspire to join (often in abstract terms such as “a double culture person”), but they are also portrayed as creating *communities of practice* in which real groups of “fans” participate in activities together (e.g., it is common practice to have regularly scheduled English movie viewings on many university campuses in China). This work clearly hints at one practical way that SNS might be useful for EFL learners as they often feature cultural products (music, movies, sporting events, etc.) and communities/groups of fans that meet and associate based on their common interests.

Shy No More

Returning to the voice of the “shy boy” (now changed) that began this chapter, research now clearly tells us what that voice entails: language learning changes subjects/subjectivities (even in an EFL context) and that motivations are not constant and predictable (e.g., framed in terms of “native speaker” and “target language/culture”) but instead are often related to attitudes and identities (e.g., “shy boy” or “Chinese elite”). This highlights the need for more detailed research into particular contexts and how they can change attitudes and foster identities that lead to language learning success. We cannot assume that all learners will have the same aims, goals, motivations, and

investments (Gao et al., 2008). But instead we need to create contexts that facilitate opportunities for the development of identities students desire and exploring ones that might expand their imaginations (and possible resources for imagined selves or possible identities).

Our language classes should seek to tap into student “expertise” (i.e., put them in positions of power that give them the “right to speak”) in ways that can reframe crippling asymmetries (Park, 2007; Trent, 2008) or self-defeating attitudes. This is a move toward seeing language learning as adding to one’s repertoire of communicative strategies—Canagarajah (2006) calls it “shuttling between languages”—and empowering identities: ones that might include, as reported in Norton (1995), “multicultural citizen” or, in Gao and Xiu (2008), “world citizen.” The present study seeks to continue this exploration of how specific learning contexts and strategies might foster positive affective and motivational changes in language learners, specifically how a use of SNS might affect students’ integrative or ideal L2 self-related motivation.

Chapter 3

Methods: Myspace in a Chinese EFL Class

In outlining avenues for future motivation research in his 2005 study, Zoltan Dörnyei suggested that the dominant theme to be explored should be *context*. Based on poststructural and constructivist views of the self, research on the L2 self is in some ways inseparable from that of the learning environment and/or acquisition context. Research over the last two decades has also shown how “technology can create new social contexts that shape how learning takes place” (Warschauer, 2004, p. 18). This study aims to explore how technology might aid in the creation of a new social context for language learning and how that context might impact student attitudes toward integrative and identity-related motivation.

Research Questions

Because of the fluid, social nature of interaction; the inherent support of “sociability” (boyd & Ellison, 2008); and the emphasis on “imagined identities” (Walther et al., 2008; Zhao et al., 2008) in SNSs as described in chapters one and two, it is hypothesized that adding a component of such work to an EFL class might be effective in raising students’ integrative/ideal L2 self attitudes toward motivation. Also, because of the multimodal and ultimately user-controlled nature of presentation and communication on such sites in addition to the variable modes and levels of participation, it is hypothesized that previously less motivated students might feel more motivated by the SNS context. In an effort to explore these hypotheses, the following research questions were examined:

1) Is there any correlation between SNS work and comparative increases in self-reported questionnaire measures of integrative/ideal self-related motivation?

2) Does SNS work affect those more/less integratively motivated more acutely?

3) What specific elements of integrative/ideal self-related motivation (if any) show signs of being impacted by the use of SNSs?

Teaching and Data Collection Context

The research site was a large urban university in mainland China and the participants were all non-English major first year graduate students. Eight classes of Advanced Level Oral English students participated in the study and each class consisted of students from different majors. Four of the classes were randomly selected to participate in the SNS component for the duration of the term (+SNS) with the remaining four classes acting as a control group (-SNS). The author acted as participant-researcher and *foreign teacher* by instructing all eight classes of students based on the same syllabus (see table in appendix A) that focused on intercultural communication activities and student-led small group discussions. Each class met once a week for two sessions of 45 minutes and the teaching term lasted 15 weeks. Class sizes ranged from 29 to 34 students.

At the beginning of the term, students in +SNS classes were invited to visit the instructor's Myspace profile page (see Figure 7), join the US version of Myspace, and "friend" the instructor. The decision to use Myspace was based on a number of factors. In an effort to create the possibility of a more authentic—and motivating—intercultural audience, it was chosen because of its popularity with American youth. Also, at the outset of the project, Myspace was almost completely accessible (with the exception of the online chat function) from the research site—whereas, Facebook, another popular

American-based SNS, was completely inaccessible without virtual private network (VPN) access. Finally, there was precedent for its motivation-generating use in Japanese EFL classes (Halvorsen, 2009). There was almost one hundred percent participation in this phase of the activity with many students publishing blogs before any instructions or assignments had been given.

Andy www.myspace.com/jamesakelley

hope this works better on my ipod... **Mood:** thankful 😊

Posted at 11:04 PM Jan 19 from Mobile

[View My:](#) Photos | Blog | Gifts

Andy
Male
Tianjin, US
Last Login: 3/25/2010
Online Now!

Details

Status:	Married
Hometown:	Nashville, Tennessee
Zodiac Sign:	Aquarius

Interests

General
Music, Baseball, and sports in general.

Music
Presently: Mastodon. Always: Bob Dylan; Neil Young; Morrissey; Joy Division; Kraftwerk; Wilco.,

Books
Paolo Coehlo

Latest Blog Entries

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- Dec 11, 2009 10:39 PM [Sentence Completions.... now Complete!!!](#)
- Dec 8, 2009 1:48 PM [Reflective Writing Assignment #4](#)
- Dec 1, 2009 9:08 PM [Everybody needs to go shopping \(says one American economist\)](#)
- Nov 11, 2009 3:50 PM [Ivory Coast = France = Japan, in language habits at least](#)
- Oct 13, 2009 11:52 PM [Tuesday Night Movies](#)

Post Comment 16 Comments

Write your comment here...

[Submit](#)

Friend Space (Randomized)

Andy has 143 friends. [View:](#) All Online New

Gong Xu He Xiabing Stanley Mr. Chris

Figure 7. Clipping of researcher's Myspace profile page.

All students (-SNS and +SNS) were asked to keep language learning journals throughout the semester (see Figure 8). These journals included a number of writing assignments that asked students to prepare for specific speaking activities and to reflect on their experiences throughout the term. Emphasis was placed on the content of the journals: student writing was not evaluated for grammar and technical errors. +SNS were asked to post their journals as blogs in their Myspace profiles and were invited to visit their classmates' sites and comment on their work. To facilitate this process, the researcher created and hosted a group for each class that students could join to more easily find and read their classmates' blogs (Figure 9). All +SNS students were also given the opportunity to turn in journals and discussions on paper. Again, participation in +SNS classes was almost one hundred percent with only two of 125 +SNS students posting no blogs.


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November 2, 2009 - Monday

A romantic Chinese proverb

Today I'll introduce a romantic Chinese proverb----“情人眼里出西施”. We can translate it into English, like “love is blind” or “Beauty is in the eyes of beauty”. Benjamin Franklin expressed a similar sentiment: If Jack's in love, he's no judge of Jill's beauty. An interesting thing is that, whenever I praise my boyfriend for his handsome, he always mentions this line in a contrary way that Jill is so deeply in love with Jack that she cannot say anything else. So, Jill is in no judge of Jack's handsome.


There is a story about this proverb: a man, who called Zoo Jin, a handsome minister in old China of Warring States, once asked other people if he is more handsome than Mr. Xu. His wife said that “Of course, you are!”, and his concubine and customers replied the same. However, he knew the truth that he was not as handsome as Mr. Xu, but what his wife said was because of love, while his concubine was because of afraid, as to his customers, they wanted to ask for help from him, so they using flattery to get favours. In this story, his wife was telling the truth, we call it “情人眼里出西施”, but others were liars.

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[Xue yong](#)



NO PHOTO


Xue yong Zhong

It's a very beautiful story,and it now also hold true in the loves.

Posted by [Xue yong](#) on November 2, 2009 - Monday - 10:24 AM

[\[Reply to this\]](#)

[Baokuo](#)



Baokuo Chen

that is true ! haha

Posted by [Baokuo](#) on November 6, 2009 - Friday - 10:27 AM

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Figure 8. Language learning journal as Myspace blog.

TJU Oral English Class 1



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Figure 9. Myspace group homepage for one English class.

In addition to the language learning journal, each student was responsible for leading an in class small group discussion on a topic of their choice at some time during the semester. Group leaders were responsible for preparing a short introduction and list of discussion questions for their topic (see Figure 10). +SNS students were also asked to post their language learning journals and discussion topics/questions as blogs on their own profile pages while –SNS classes turned their journals and discussion introductions and questions in on paper.

October 24, 2009 - Saturday

discussion topic --Offer seat

It is a traditional virtue to bring along with the old and the young .Offerng seat in a buss is an usual phenomenon,which also give rise to debate recently.



1. Please give an account of one of your offering seat experience,including the time ,place ,people and your thoughts in that time.

2.What do you think how to define the right people for seat ?

For example,you offer seats to old people, but what kind of people will you select,with white hair or with a walking stick ? And what about the young?Of course,the pregnant is easy to define.



3. When you are so tired,would you like to offer seat as well ? Do you have such experience?

Once I took a three-- hour train from Zhangjiakou to Beijing.Beause I bought the ticket late,I did not have a seat and had to stand all the way.After I got off the train,I felt so tired.When I got on the bus and have a seat,I felt a little better.But just ten minutes later,there comes an old lady who looks healthy and strong,the ticket seller called'Please offer seat for olders'repeatedly. I stood up and offered the seat ,but in my heart,there was full of reluctance.After that,when I feel tired,I will select a seat in the back of the bus. What about you ?

4. You can talk about other things in the bus .Such as some interesting stories and so on.

Wish we have a great discussion.😊😊😊😊

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Figure 10. Discussion topic introduction and questions as Myspace blog.

These in class small group discussions surprisingly became a highlight of the semester in both +SNS and -SNS classes. Every other week for a 10-week period six students in each class would prepare a short introductory speech and a list of five to 10 discussion questions focused on their topic of choice. Group leaders and their topics were announced at the beginning of class and each leader was given a random small group of three to four classmates. After leading the discussion with a small group for five to ten minutes, all discussion leaders were asked to stand up and move to a new small group. Leaders would then introduce their topic and pose their questions to a new group of

students. This activity allowed for students to demonstrate their expertise and indulge their interests in ways that many of them had not previously experienced in language classes.

By meeting with several small groups of students from different majors and backgrounds, they were also able to collect a variety of opinions and interact with their classmates that displayed varying degrees of English competence. Topics discussed in these small groups ranged from World Cup soccer to death and dying to dating as a graduate student. Group leaders that prepared interesting topics were rewarded with enthusiastic classmates and (often) fascinating discussions. Students in both +SNS and -SNS almost uniformly seemed to enjoy this portion of the class time. One student reported on her experience as a discussion leader in her language learning journal: “The Discussion section is my favourite. Everyone in a group can show their opinions freely. I know that what everyone cares about is so different. My deepest personal experience is that to put up a good question is vital. It reflects your thinking ability and thinking depth” (SMLF 14).

Questionnaire Instrument

At the beginning of the term each of the eight classes was administered a bilingual questionnaire that collected demographic data, technological variables, and information about students’ integrative/ideal self-related attitudes toward motivation in the form of 19 six-point Likert scale items (See appendix B). At the end of the term, all students were asked to respond to the same questionnaire with an abbreviated version of the variables sections and the identical motivation-related items.

Many of the motivation items were selected and adapted from items used by Gao, Y. et al. (2005, 2007) in analyzing the motivation and identity change in Chinese undergraduate students. Gao's items were designed in response to "several hundred anonymous answers" provided to the open-ended question "*What drives you to learn English?*" (Gao, Y. et al., 2007, p. 137). This bottom-up, Chinese-specific approach was seen as more useful than more global instruments like Gardner's (1985) test battery. While Gao, Y. et al.'s work revealed seven factors of "motivation type," items were selected from only four groups to reflect the author's understanding of integrative/ideal self motivation: *intrinsic interest* (because of its relation to the ideal self), *learning situation* (as a factor of integrative motivation in both Gardner and Dornyei), *going abroad* (traditional integrative motivation), and *individual development* (connected to the ideal self).

Plan for Analysis

Pre and post results to the motivation questions were averaged separately and compared for each participant to give each student a *change value*. Change values were averaged and compared for each class of students; -SNS and +SNS groups; and less/more integratively motivated students. Students posting values below the mean value for integrative motivation in pre questionnaire results were designated less integratively motivated students (LOW INT) and those above the mean in pre results were classified as more integratively motivated (HIGH INT). In addition, values for each questionnaire motivation item were averaged and compared for both -SNS and +SNS groups in order to see if there might be any correlation between SNS work and changes in specific questionnaire item responses. Results showing the greatest pre/post changes were also

subjected to unpaired t-tests to analyze the statistical significance of any differences between -SNS and +SNS groups.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion: Empowering Imagined Communities

Narrative Description of Results and Local Limitations

While initial student response to Myspace was strong and the site seemed to provide relatively open access (with the notable exception of online chat), as student involvement began to increase the availability of certain functions in Myspace became progressively limited. Soon after the initial wave of student profile creation, participants attempting to post comments on each other's profile pages were greeted with the following message (Figure 11):

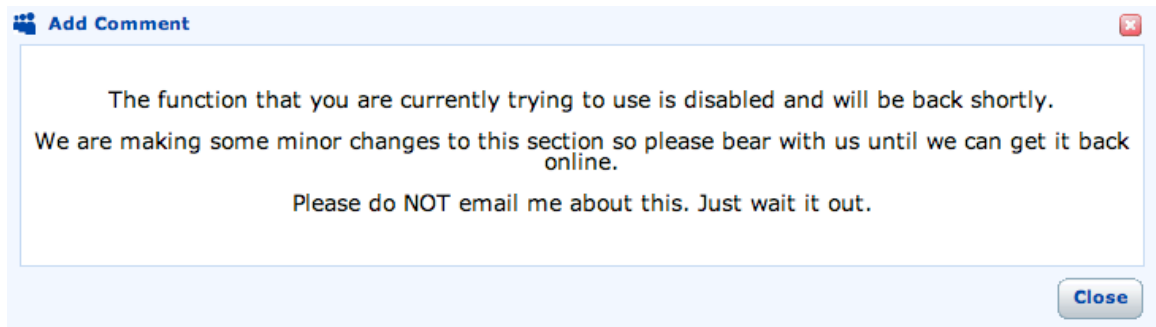


Figure 11. Myspace generated error message.

These public comments serve an important function in the co-construction of identity on SNSs as they reify interaction between profile owners and their friends in ways that others can see. Students that did not join Myspace in this first two week period did not have the opportunity to negotiate their identities in this way.

After the first few weeks of students adding photos and setting up profiles, attempts to add new pictures were frustrated and then weeks later viewing pictures was

met with the same result. These efforts were not met with the seemingly Myspace-generated error message shown above, but instead were continually re-routed until the browser reported failure (MacKinnon, 2009 gives a fuller description of this phenomenon), suggesting that this was due to the Chinese “Great Firewall’s” filtering.

Despite these limitations, participants were still able to post blogs, respond to blogs, and leave and respond to status updates: many students continued to do this enthusiastically and used status updates to express frustration or dismay with the limits of other functions. These posts themselves became an interesting expression of participants using available resources in unintended ways toward their communicative goals (as described in Mallan & Giardina, 2009). The most enthusiastic posting and commenting revolved around the language learning journals with very few students commenting on discussion topics and questions despite their lively and interesting in class face-to-face discussions. These topics were usually posted just before the class times in which the actual small group discussions would take place whereas the language learning journal responses were often written over the course of two to four weeks.

October 25, 2009 - Sunday

discussion about the annoying habits between boys and girls

During our life time,we can't live without communicating.And the love which is the one of the most important things can't exist if girls and boys don't get close to know each other.So when we get together,even work together,we may find some behavior or habits we don't like between two different genders.This is a very helpful topic to let you know what to do and what not to do in front of you girl friend or boy friend.it makes you get along with him or her,also let the one you like possible fall in love with you.De you think it's helpful?OK,let's begin our discussion.

BOYS' QUESTIONS:

- 1 What do the boy like to do in your spare time?
- 2What do you think the girls will do in their spare time?
- 3Can you accept the girls habits such as go shopping, dress up,gossip with their friends,have an intimate friendship with a boy?What' your opinion?
- 4which thing you can't bear the girls do?What do you hate the girls doing? Or talk about which kind of the girl you don't like.

GIRLS' QUESTIONS:

- 1 What does the girl like to do in your spare time?
- 2What do you think the boys will do in their spare time?
- 3Can you accept the boys habits such as addict themself to play games, don't tell their feelings to hide it in their heart, don't wash their socks often,smoke,forget the girl friend when they are with the boys?
- 4which thing you can't bear the boys do? What do you hate the boys doing?Or talk about which kind of the boy you don't like.

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Yevette Yu

I think most of the girls have the same habits like go shopping or watch TV program and most of the boys have the same habits like play basketball or other ball. But there is interesting phenomeon. Some girls like to do things in our opinion belongs to boys. Some girls like play basketball and she maybe skillful. Even some girls addict themself to play games like World Of Warcraft. Also there maybe some boys like do the things we think sepecial for girls like cooking. now the phenomeon that boys like cooking is not rare. Maybe questions about this is interesting.

Posted by [Yevette](#) on October 25, 2009 - Sunday - 9:53 PM
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Li Nan

I think boys always like playing games, if they don't like, just because they don't realize how interesting the games are, but clever boys can provide themselves be addicted.

Posted by [Li](#) on November 3, 2009 - Tuesday - 10:22 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Song ting Chen

I usually read novels in my spare time. What about you?

Posted by [song ting](#) on October 26, 2009 - Monday - 12:47 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Sisi Lan

I like the novel, especially the Wu Xia novel written by Jin Yong. I read them when I was very young. I also like the movies

Posted by [Lan](#) on October 26, 2009 - Monday - 10:17 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Yu Lei

Truly it is useful, it will make us know each other better form the topic, and it will give some suggestion to those who want to have a boyfriend or girlfriend....

Posted by [Yu](#) on October 26, 2009 - Monday - 1:51 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Wang Pengfei

interesting!

Posted by [Wang](#) on October 26, 2009 - Monday - 7:34 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Andy

This sounds like a fun topic!! 😊

Posted by [Andy](#) on October 26, 2009 - Monday - 8:49 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Li Nan

But the discussion time was not enough that day 😊

Posted by [Li](#) on November 3, 2009 - Tuesday - 10:23 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Andy

You guys will have to continue the discussion outside of class 😊... I am glad to hear that you wanted more. Nice job, Cici.

Posted by [Andy](#) on November 11, 2009 - Wednesday - 3:10 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)



Sisi Lan

Thanks, it's my pleasure~ 😊

Posted by [Lan](#) on November 11, 2009 - Wednesday - 10:32 AM
[\[Reply to this\]](#)

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Figure 12. Discussion topic post with comments.

Finally, with two weeks left in the teaching term, attempts to read blogs and view profiles were met with the same failure to connect that previously frustrated the posting and viewing of photos. There was no message from the website, browsers simply were not allowed to connect to profiles, blogs, and photo albums beyond the user's profile home page. At the time of writing, the only modes of participation still open were the posting of status updates and sending of private messages. Students were able to view their Home pages to see their friends' status updates, but were not able to respond to them or participate in even the most basic modes (e.g., browsing blogs, profiles, etc.). Students continued to share frustration and dismay about the inaccessibility of the site through status updates through the end of the term.

Questionnaire Results

Despite the above limitations, some statistically significant changes seemed to emerge between –SNS and +SNS groups suggesting that future projects with increased access and functionality might prove even more useful toward affecting student integrative/ideal self-related motivation.

Research question 1. *Is there any correlation between SNS work and comparative increases in survey measures of integrative-related motivation?* All eight classes reported a mean increase in the integrative/ideal self measure. All the +SNS mean increases are considered statistically significant, while two of the four –SNS mean increases were significant. Additionally, when the –SNS mean change value ($M = 0.18$) is compared to the +SNS mean change ($M = 0.31$), a statistically significant difference emerges ($p = *0.0307$). These results seem to suggest that while all classes did experience

an increase in integrative/self-related motivation, this affect might have been intensified by the use of SNS.

The fact that all classes reported a positive mean change in the integrative measure suggests that this increase might be a function of the learning environment in general rather than the use of SNS. It is worth noting that the participant-researcher was also a *foreign teacher* from the United States and therefore could be seen as representing an L2 speaking community. Dörnyei (2005) points out that attitudes toward L2 speakers is a direct antecedent to *integrativeness* and Yang (2008) emphasizes the important role of the English teacher in motivation for Chinese students. Future work might specifically explore the role of the foreign teacher toward affecting integrative/ideal self motivation.

In her language learning journal, Jia, +SNS student, shows the connection between the foreign teacher as a representative of L2 /L2 culture and greater language learning motivation—not to mention how that motivation is difficult to separate from views about the self:

I have learned English for about ten years. At the first several years, the study channel was from my English teacher and English papers. So in those years, English for me was just a course which I must study hard to get a good grade. But after I centered to university, I contacted with some foreign teachers who were very different from our native English teaches in their daily teaching in which I was not very interested. Their classes were more vivid and closer to reality and had many topics we were interested in. Now, looking back, I think those foreign teachers changed me so much though I am still little shy now. They did make me more confident than before. And at that time, I had much time and chance to watch western movies and read western novels. They both reflect some western culture and their view of the world. And they also affected me much. Some foreign movies have a broader way of thinking, at the same time, they don't rigidly adhere to secular dogma. They make me think much and deeply about the world. (JLH 8)

Liu, a –SNS student, also points out the connection between the class environment, feelings about one’s self and attitudinal change: “The English lessons and interactive classroom let me get self-confidence, once I am very shy, afraid to talk in front of everybody, right now I am more courageous” (LLJ 18).

Table 1

Class by class mean changes and ranks

Group/Class	Pre	Post	Change	P-value (pre/post)	Rank (1=most change)
-SNS 1 (N = 30)	M = 3.74 SD = 0.35	M = 3.86 SD = 0.40	M = 0.12 SD = 0.43	p = 0.1349	8
2 (N = 25)	M = 3.80 SD = 0.51	M = 4.11 SD = 0.46	M = 0.3074 SD = 0.44	p = *0.0019	4
3 (N = 22)	M = 3.93 SD = 0.45	M = 4.06 SD = 0.44	M = 0.13 SD = 0.46	p = 0.1919	7
4 (N = 26)	M = 3.98 SD = 0.50	M = 4.16 SD = 0.48	M = 0.18 SD = 0.39	p = *0.0268	6
ALL -SNS (N = 103)	M = 3.85 SD = 0.46	M = 4.03 SD = 0.46	M = 0.18 SD = 0.43	p = *0.0001	
+SNS 1 (N = 26)	M = 3.87 SD = 0.45	M = 4.21 SD = 0.53	M = 0.34 SD = 0.38	p = *0.0001	1
2 (N = 28)	M = 3.94 SD = 0.57	M = 4.24 SD = 0.55	M = 0.3083 SD = 0.38	p = *0.0002	3
3 (N = 27)	M = 3.84 SD = 0.45	M = 4.17 SD = 0.38	M = 0.33 SD = 0.38	p = *0.0001	2
4 (N = 24)	M = 3.95 SD = 0.50	M = 4.18 SD = 0.43	M = 0.23 SD = 0.42	p = *0.0118	5
ALL +SNS (N = 105)	M = 3.90 SD = 0.49	M = 4.20 SD = 0.48	M = 0.31 SD = 0.39	p = *0.0001	
ALL -/+ (N = 208)	M = 3.88 SD = 0.47	M = 4.12 SD = 0.47	M = 0.25 SD = 0.41	P = *0.0001	

* = statistically significant

Research question 2. *Does SNS work affect more/less integratively motivated students more acutely?* While the group exhibiting lower integrative motivation values at the beginning of the study (LOW INT) did show more significant overall changes in

motivation when compared to the HIGH INT group, this was to be expected based on their lower base motivation values. Within the LOW INT group the difference in mean change values between –SNS and +SNS groups was not statistically significant, suggesting, again, that their increases might be a function of the general language learning environment in addition to their lower base levels of integrative motivation. Surprisingly though, when the HIGH INT groups were compared, a statistically significant difference emerged between –SNS (M = 0.03) and +SNS (0.20) groups ($p = *0.0124$).

Table 2

Mean change values for LOW/HIGH INT

Group	Pre	Post	Change	P-value (pre/post)
LOW INT (N = 99)	M = 3.47 SD = 0.27	M = 3.86 SD = 0.40	M = 0.39 SD = 0.42	$p = *0.0001$
-SNS (N = 51)	M = 3.47 SD = 0.28	M = 3.81 SD = 0.42	M = 0.34 SD = 0.44	$p = *0.0001$
+SNS (N = 48)	M = 3.47 SD = 0.26	M = 3.90 SD = 0.38	M = 0.44 SD = 0.40	$p = *0.0001$
HIGH INT (N = 109)	M = 4.25 SD = 0.27	M = 4.36 SD = 0.40	M = 0.12 SD = 0.36	$p = *0.0010$
-SNS (N = 52)	M = 4.23 SD = 0.22	M = 4.26 SD = 0.38	M = 0.03 SD = 0.36	$p = 0.5873$
+SNS (N = 57)	M = 4.26 SD = 0.31	M = 4.46 SD = 0.39	M = 0.20 SD = 0.34	$p = *0.0001$

*=statistically significant

The hypothesis that the use of SNS would lead to more integrative change for less integratively motivated learners was based in part on the multimodal nature of communication on these sites, a condition that, in the end, was compromised in the present study due to the local access and functional limitations of Myspace in China. From early in the semester, students were not allowed to post and comment on pictures. LOW INT students may have joined late and less enthusiastically, perhaps not posting pictures, and met frustration in not being able to express themselves in ways that other students who joined earlier did.

In the case of HIGH INT students, they may have joined earlier and more enthusiastically and therefore were able to post pictures and view pictures more freely (at least for a time), giving them a more empowering overall experience with an increased sense of agency. The comparatively great +SNS HIGH INT change could be a function of, as suggested by Gardner (1991, pp. 50-51), more integratively motivated students seeking out increased opportunities to interact with the L2 community and Myspace allowed them another context in which to do so. The difference between -SNS and +SNS HIGH INT means reflects the +SNS excitement in having an exciting new avenue for interaction.

It is certainly an interesting, if surprising, result that suggests more integrative learners were impacted comparatively more by SNS work. This finding suggests an area for further study: an analysis of how habits of participation in SNS might correlate to the integrative motivation level of students. Do LOW and HIGH INT students participate differently and do these differences correlate to motivation change? While measuring participation on SNSs can be tricky due to the varied modes available (How do we

measure those who browse/read without posting?), this is certainly a question still worth investigating with a fully functionally SNS that offers learners an array of levels and approaches to participation.

In her language learning journal Shi, a –SNS HIGH INT student, explains how she independently used Internet tools to create new avenues for L2 interaction and how this was a supplement to her formal English lessons:

Secondly, I learned the real value of studying English – to communicate. For years I studied English language with teachers' attention paid to grammar, so what I have learned is “dumb English”. In China, a large number of students don't know what to say except for a few sentences such as “Hello” and “How are you”, even though they get high scores in English language tests. So I started to take listening and speaking seriously. For practice, I usually log in to the 12allchat website and chat in English with people from all over the world.

Now I have got a net friend who is an Indian-American and taught me a lot about India and USA. He is like a bridge connecting a Chinese girl who has never gone abroad with the outside world. So, finally, it is the English language that brings me the chance to know more about the world. (SW 20)

Research question 3. *What specific elements of student motivation (if any) show signs of being impacted by the use of SNSs?* The aim of this question was to attempt a preliminary exploration of what specific student attitudes SNS work might target in order to see how such sites might best be strategically deployed in TESOL. Additionally, by looking at the detailed ways that SNS affected this population of students we may get insights into the underlying process of how attitudes and motivation might be related to success.

The items that experienced the highest mean change values among both –SNS and +SNS were directly related to the language learning environment. Both groups exhibited

significant change in attitudes toward motivation based on their fellow students (item F in Table 3): +SNS mean change was 0.68 (p-value less than 0.0001) and –SNS mean change was 0.61 (p-value also less than 0.0001). This affect seems to be a function of the general class environment and perhaps more particularly the mixed-major nature of the classes and the student-led small group discussion activities. In their language learning journals, several students commented on their excitement about being in classes with others from outside their major and how much they enjoyed leading and participating in discussions based on student interests. The motivating effect of giving students the “freedom and control to shape the processes and products” of their investment in English through bringing in their interests, expertise, and knowledge from their diverse communities has long been established (Trent, 2008, p. 45) and these classes seemed to offer further evidence to support the motivating effect of such a student-centered approach to TESOL. The Chinese educational system largely depends on a cohort system in which a group/class of students advance through a series of courses together, making these mixed-major classes feel new and exciting to this population of students.

Two other changes associated with the learning environment seemed to be intensified by the use of the SNS. +SNS responses to both the *affect of the teacher* (item C) and the *quality of the class* (item D) showed significant attitudinal changes in ways that did not appear as conspicuously in –SNS classes. +SNS responses to affect of the teacher (item C) showed a mean change of 0.53 (p less than 0.0001) while –SNS responses reported a mean change of 0.15 (p = 0.2947). Similarly, +SNS responses to quality of the English class (item D) showed a mean change of 0.46 (p = 0.0004) and –SNS reported a mean change of 0.20 (p = 0.17). It seems possible that SNS use might

have created another avenue for teacher/student interaction and this increased opportunity for student/teacher contact affected measures related to the teacher and class quality. This affect could have been both positive and negative with +SNS students feeling more connected through the use of Myspace and –SNS feeling left out or denied a first-rate experience. (I have no evidence that –SNS were aware that other students were using Myspace in English classes, but assume that there may have been sharing between +/- SNS classes.) Still these measures seem to suggest that SNS may be an effective tool for improving the learning environment: making the affect of the teacher and the quality of the class more motivating for students.

As suggested by Yang (2008) the English teacher in China does seem to have a great role in student motivation. This was obvious also in reading student language learning journals as they often cited the intervention of certain English teachers in their youth as important in transforming their interest from extrinsic (and test-driven) to intrinsic (and interest-motivated). Jin, a +SNS student, explains how a good teacher helped change his attitude toward English study:

When I was 12 years old, English was taken into my life. I started to learn English by reading A,B,C first. At that time ,I don't know why I have to study English. What I only know is to get more scores as I can. Fortunately I met a good teacher when I was 14 years old. She made me realized that English is also a type of language and needs more practicing and reading. After that time, I began to take interests in English and read more English article. A new world appeared in front of me. (JHL 1)

The use of SNS seemed to intensify this affect considerably—whether that was a result of *teacher affect* or *L2 speaker interaction* (as the teacher was a foreign teacher and direct representative of L2) is an important question for future consideration: one that could begin to be explored through a SNS component used by Chinese English teachers. When

the following significant +SNS changes (in regards to cultural products) are considered though, it seems that SNS may have allowed another avenue for communication and connection between students and *L2 speakers*—rather than between students and teacher strictly considered.

The results to items M (interest in songs and movies) and P (interest in English literature) seem to suggest that attitudes toward cultural interest products might have been significantly impacted by the integration of SNS. –SNS classes did show some change in response to these items: songs and movies (item M) mean change was 0.14 ($p = 0.1626$) and English literature (item P) was 0.22 ($p = 0.03.13$). But +SNS changes were much greater and considered extremely statistically significant: +SNS songs and movies mean change was 0.35 (p less than 0.0001) and English literature was 0.41 (p less than 0.0001).

Table 3

-SNS Significant questionnaire item results

Questionnaire item	-SNS pre N = 103	-SNS post N = 103	-SNS change N = 103	-SNS p-value
F) My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my fellow students in the English classes.	M = 2.59 SD = 1.01	M = 3.20 SD = 1.12	M = 0.61	p = *0.0001
C) My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my teacher or not.	M = 3.18 SD = 1.28	M = 3.33 SD = 1.22	M = 0.15	p = 0.2947
D) My desire to learn English depends on the quality of my English classes.	M = 3.86 SD = 1.34	M = 4.07 SD = 1.18	M = 0.20	p = 0.1700
M) I have developed an interest in English because of my love for English songs and movies.	M = 4.66 SD = 1.06	M = 4.80 SD = 0.99	M = 0.14	p = 0.1626
O) I learn English in order to let the world know more about China.	M = 4.00 SD = 1.12	M = 4.05 SD = 0.92	M = 0.05	p = 0.6801
P) I am interested in English because of my love of English literature.	M = 3.32 SD = 1.08	M = 3.54 SD = 1.03	M = 0.22	p = *0.0313

Table 4

+SNS significant questionnaire item results

Questionnaire item	+SNS pre N = 105	+SNS post N = 105	+SNS change N = 105	+SNS p-value
F) My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my fellow students in the English classes.	M = 2.87 SD = 1.23	M = 3.54 SD = 1.19	M = 0.68	p = *0.0001
C) My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my teacher or not.	M = 3.49 SD = 1.39	M = 4.02 SD = 1.26	M = 0.53	p = *0.0001
D) My desire to learn English depends on the quality of my English classes.	M = 3.98 SD = 1.37	M = 4.44 SD = 1.00	M = 0.46	p = *0.0004
M) I have developed an interest in English because of my love for English songs and movies.	M = 4.51 SD = 1.11	M = 4.87 SD = 0.98	M = 0.35	p = *0.0001
O) I learn English in order to let the world know more about China.	M = 4.10 SD = 1.08	M = 4.35 SD = 0.99	M = 0.26	p = *0.0061
P) I am interested in English because of my love of English literature.	M = 3.15 SD = 1.04	M = 3.56 SD = 0.99	M = 0.41	p = *0.0001

* = statistically significant

Movies and literature were not a component of the class at all (though a small amount of music was used in all +/-SNS classes) making the results to items M and P quite surprising. But if these items are viewed as *cultural interest* products and related to Dörnyei's (2005) analysis, we can see them as directly related to *Attitudes toward L2 Speakers*. When these results are combined with the response to item C (about the teacher) and the teacher is viewed as an L2 speaker and representative of L2 culture then

a fuller picture of SNSs as impacting traditional *integrativeness* (which Dörnyei, 2005 and 2009 equates with the *ideal L2 self*) via *cultural products* and *attitudes toward L2 speakers* begins to emerge.

The Interrelationship of the Motivational Variables and the Criterion Measures

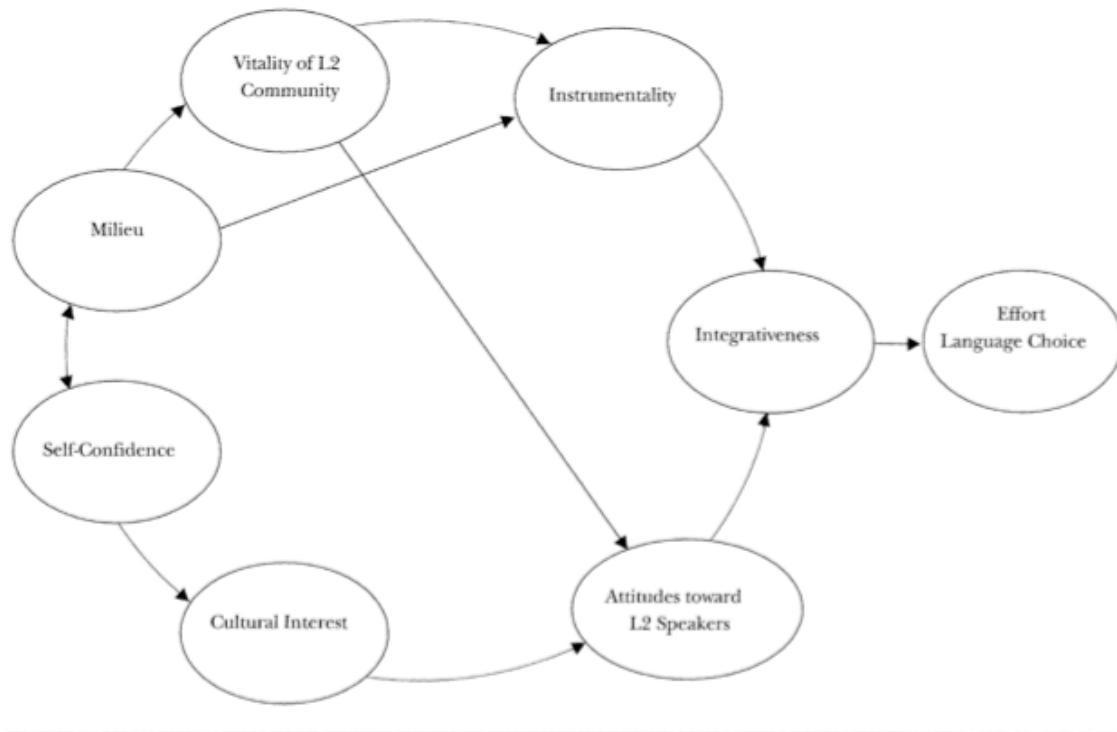


Figure 13. Interrelationship of motivational variables. Dörnyei, 2005, p. 27.

These more detailed results seem to suggest that SNS could be effective for fostering imagined communities as conceived in the reviewed literature. All these classes (-SNS and +SNS) showed signs of building a sort of learning community—what we might call *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998)—and this was related to their desire to learn English. This community of practice effect is evident in the strong mean changes in both +SNS and -SNS classes to the affect of fellow students. This affect was

intensified only a hair by SNS, but their attitudes toward more *virtual* and *imagined communities* (here represented by L2 cultural products and L2 speakers or *their teacher*) did show signs of being significantly impacted by SNS work. In fact, the notion of *imagined communities* when considered with Dörnyei's (2005) description of the interrelationship of motivation variables (see Figure 13) aids greatly in making a coherent picture of these findings.

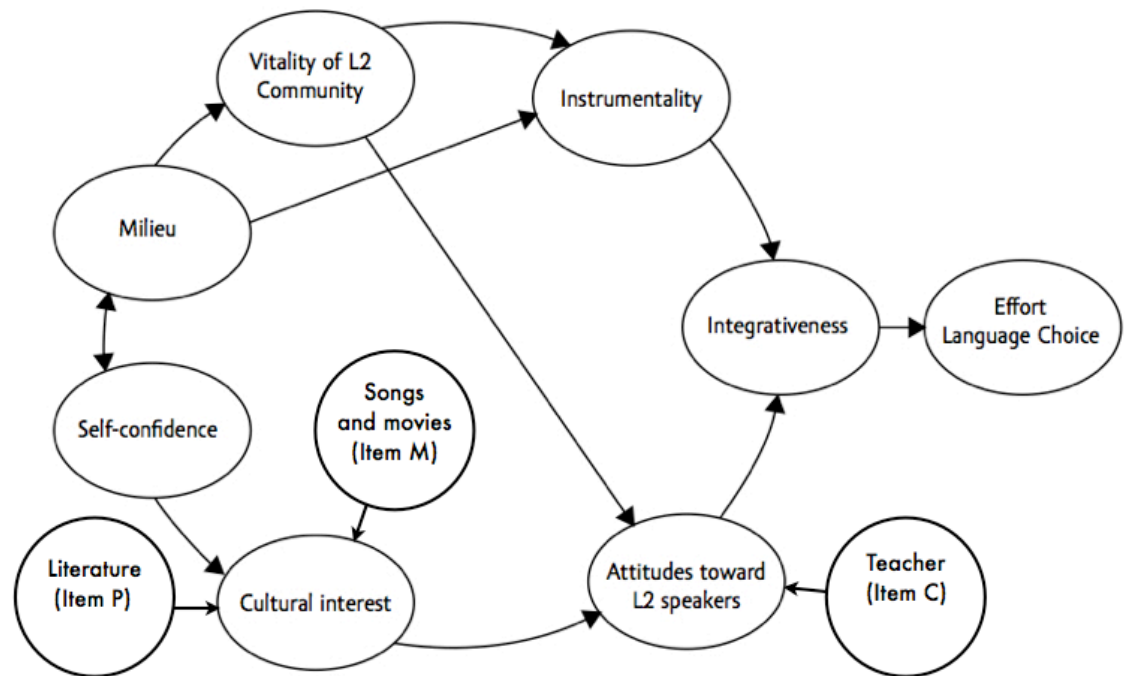


Figure 14. Interrelationship of motivational variables and significant +SNS change items.

This imagined communities affect of SNS seems to be corroborated by another item showing signs of being significantly affected by SNS work (item O): *I learn English in order to let the world know more about China*. This item was adopted from Gao, Y. et al's (2007) category of *social responsibility* items that she described as perhaps

“particular to Chinese or Asian contexts” and associated with Confucian tradition (p. 141). It was included in the present study because it includes the idea of intercultural exchange—though not in the direction that is examined in traditional *integrative motivation* studies. As described by Gao (2007), this item seems to include an element of the *ought-to L2 self* (described by Dörnyei, 2009 as “the attributes that one believes one *ought to* possess to meet expectations and *avoid* possible negative outcomes” p. 29 *italics in the original*) but it also includes the notion of intercultural exchange in a more egocentric, student-purposed way.

+SNS responses to letting the world know about China showed a mean change of 0.26 ($p = 0.0061$) while –SNS responses reported a mean change of just 0.05 ($p = 0.6801$). This could be interpreted as a kind of *pushing back* against the pressure of foreign cultural influence via the SNS or as leveling the exchange of cultures. This suggests that students were not just passive receivers or learners of language and culture, but they also saw the empowering possibility of taking up *expert* positions in this new context. The SNS gave them a context in which to do this that they did not find in the –SNS classes.

When considered together these item results above seem to create a picture of SNSs as an *imagined international community*: one in which cultural exchange is seen as going both ways. Students’ attitudes toward both L2 cultural products (songs, movies, and literature) and L2 speakers (as represented by teacher and class) appeared to have been impacted by SNS work. Not only this, but students also saw a motivating opportunity to share about their own country and culture. Gao, Y. (2005) and Gao, Y. et al. (2005, 2007) have proposed the notion of *productive bilingualism* in which the two

languages “positively reinforce each other” and “a deeper understanding and appreciation of the target culture goes hand in hand with deeper understanding and appreciation of the native culture” (2005, p. 40). In their 2007 study, Gao, Y. et al. suggest this notion of productive bilingualism as an educational objective: one in which “Teachers may simultaneously cultivate learners’ intrinsic interest, and positive attitudes and beliefs associated with the target language and culture on the one hand, and the native language and culture on the other” (p. 149). This seemed to happen quite naturally in +SNS classes as their attitudes toward both L2 cultural products *and* their attitudes toward letting the world know about China were significantly changed.

Norton’s socio-cultural critique of traditional motivation research has emphasized the role of power relations in language learning and SNS may be a context in which students can create empowering positions that give them the agency to represent themselves in ways not dictated exclusively by *native speakers* or *target culture* but instead in ways that allow them to reverse some of the, at times, de-motivating asymmetries inherent in language learning. This might lead to greater confidence and confidence to more success. This empowering attitude is expressed by Zhang, a +SNS student, in declaring: “English belongs to the whole world” (ZH 9).

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions: “The Consciousness of a World”

“English gives me confidence. It makes me believe that I am no longer a little [sic] from a little town, because I know English and I can use it while not everybody can.”

Toward Productive Bilingualism and Empowering Imagined Communities

EFL identities in China toward productive bilingualism. The broad results of this study seem to support the contention of Gao, Y. (2007) that research on identities in Chinese EFL is an important area for future research. As suggested in the introductory quote above, students think of language learning in terms of how it will affect who they are and who they want to be. The second highest item mean in both –SNS and +SNS questionnaire results was in response to *Good English skills can help me be the person I want to be in the future.*

Many students made the connection between English study and the self overt in their journals: “In English class we get more chance to show yourselves [sic]” (ZP class 1) and more strikingly, “English change [sic] me, in the soul, if possible” (XCF class 9). Also corroborating the work of Gao, Y. et al (2005, 2007) whose survey showed a strong link between English study and student confidence, the most prevalent self-reported change in language learning journals was that of self-confidence. Roughly half of the students in both –SNS and +SNS classes reported some kind of positive change in self-confidence related to language study: “I can feel more confident when speaking English” (a typical student response taken from +SNS class LYW class 1). One student vividly described the process of confidence change in this way: “English study brings me the superiority complex, then the self-confidence comes with it” (ZH class 4).

Language learning journals also helped to show that there is often a connection between the student confidence developed through English study and imagined identities: “English gives me confidence. It makes me believe that I am no longer a little [sic] from a little town, because I know English and I can use it while not everybody can” (WQY class 9). Similarly, “When I speak in English, it seems like that I have changed to be another person who is more talkative and humorous than the person who I really am” (BYL class 12). These responses show clearly how an ideal self understanding of motivation makes sense in the Chinese EFL context, suggesting that Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System might be a useful framework for future motivation studies in mainland China. These comments also add weight to the contention that achieving a certain social status often factors heavily into motivation in the Chinese context (Gao, X. et al., 2008; Gu, 2009). One student made this quite clear, stating [Chinese] “even have a saying that if your English is not good, then you lose a favorable condition to become elite” (LD class 18).

The question of social status is one that goes unnamed in most language learning journals, but a few students did make reference to cultural identities that exist in previous literature: “I can use English to become an *international person*” (TC class 9); “In the multi cultural world, being an *international Chinese* is the very thing we need do” (LY class 18); and English study can help “you can become an *international person*” (WQP class 20). Where there is much discussion about the cultural hegemony that has resulted from global English study, most students see their study not as a danger to their Chinese identities, but rather a powerful tool to expand themselves and their possibilities: as stated by Zhang, a +SNS student, “I get the consciousness of a world” (ZZQ 9).

Responding to Lambert's (1974) categories of subtractive and additive bilingualism, Gao, Y. (2005) and Gao, Y. et al. (2005, 2007) proposed the notion of *productive bilingualism* in which the two languages “positively reinforce each other” and “a deeper understanding and appreciation of the target culture goes hand in hand with deeper understanding and appreciation of the native culture” (2005, p. 40). In their 2007 study, Gao, Y. et al. recommended this notion of productive bilingualism as an educational objective: one in which “Teachers may simultaneously cultivate learners’ intrinsic interest, and positive attitudes and beliefs associated with the target language and culture on the one hand, and the native language and culture on the other” (p. 149). This seemed to happen quite naturally in +SNS classes as their attitudes toward both L2 cultural products *and* their attitudes toward letting the world know about China were significantly changed.

It is quite natural to conceive of one's identity as fluid and complex in an online environment where they are subject to constant change and various representations, and students in +SNS classes seemed to simultaneously embrace L2 cultural products and the dissemination of Chinese culture: they appeared empowered not just as language and culture students but also as experts/teachers. This is one of the most important results to emerge from this study: SNS could be a tool for developing a kind of productive bilingualism—bringing them a motivating encounter with L2 culture while at the same time creating an empowering context for L1 cultural representation. In the above quoted words of Li (LY 18), students had a chance to develop an “international Chinese” identity, one that suggests no loss of their Chinese cultural identity but rather simply an added dimension of, the “international person” (TC 9 and WQP 20).

Productive bilingualism also hints at the notion of *instrumentality* that has classically (and mistakenly) been seen as the opposite of *integrativeness* (Dörnyei, 2005), but in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System is subsumed under the Ideal Self. This conflation of instrumentality and identity also was a prominent element in student journals: one student describes English as “a tool to help us learn the world” (CZF 4). This view of English and bilingualism also emphasizes student agency, an important result to come from the questionnaire data that showed not only increased interest in L2 cultural products but also representing China in front of the world. One +SNS student makes this international and productive view of English clear by stating: “English belongs to the whole world” (ZH 9). This is an empowering position for EFL students, one that might help them to reverse “knowledge asymmetries” (Trent, 2008), take up expert identities (Park, 2007), and put themselves in social positions that give them the “right to speak” (Norton, 1995). Research on online communication and pedagogy has suggested the power of online contexts for creating a heightened sense of student agency (Kramsch, A’Ness, & Lam, 2000) and these results seem to bear this fact out. This is an important result to consider as the debate goes on about the global dominance of English language learning.

Communities of practice and empowering imagined communities. At the outset of this study, I introduced two complementary frameworks for considering SNS in the language classroom: communities of practice and imagined communities. While all eight classes showed signs of significantly increased motivation based on their fellow students (item F), only +SNS classes registered significant changes in regards to *attitudes toward L2 speakers* and *cultural interest* (via items C, M, and P). It is the contention of

this researcher that this response was related to the SNS acting as a kind of imagined community for these students. They created a new *virtual* context in which contact with foreign media and L2 speakers impacted their attitudes toward L2 learning and motivation. All eight classes created motivating communities of practice via their classmates and classroom practices (led, perhaps, by the student-led small group discussions), but the four +SNS classes also engaged in motivating imagined communities via L2 speakers and L2 cultural interest products that significantly impacted their motivation matrix.

This study not only corroborates the work of Yang (2008) that suggests the teacher has a heightened role in student motivation in EFL settings like China, but also seems to recommend SNS as a means to further amplify this effect. Whether the results related to teacher affect were a result of *teacher affect* or *L2 speaker interaction* is an important question for future consideration: one that could begin to be explored through a SNS component used by ethnically Chinese English teachers. But when the other significant +SNS changes in regards to cultural products are considered, it seems that SNS may have allowed another avenue for communication between students and *L2 speakers*. Was this a function of a culturally L2 teacher or a culturally L2 SNS? This is another important question for future research. This researcher is already engaged in a project to test one side of this proposition by using the Chinese-based SNS Renren.com (Figure 15) to fulfill the same functions performed by Myspace in the present study.



Figure 15. Researcher's Renren (Chinese SNS) profile page.

Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) results in Taiwan showed the underutilization of teaching strategies related to *stimulating language tasks* and *familiarizing learners with L2 culture*. The results of this present study suggest that an integration of SNS work would seem to be a useful strategy toward fostering more student interaction with L2 culture. The SNS seemed to impact attitudes toward important L2 cultural products (songs, movies, and literature) despite any overt emphasis on their integration into class and the local limitations on the site that did not allow for a seamless integration of multimodal elements: music players posted on sites often would not play and video links would fail to connect. Still students seemed to find something motivating in the cultural products in this context.

Here again it will be interesting to see if a more functional Chinese-based SNS would prove more motivating—especially given that many of these can easily incorporate English language cultural products including music and movies quite seamlessly. Xiami is a popular Chinese-based forum for sharing music that can be integrated into Renren (and other Chinese SNSs); it’s content includes extensive popular music from all over the world. Youku, known popularly as the Chinese Youtube, boasts a more extensive collection of popular American movies than such video-sharing sites in the United States and also is easily integrated into Chinese SNSs like Renren.

It is the contention of this researcher that the +SNS response to cultural interest products was related to the formation of *imagined identities* and these cultural products were, following Gao and Xiu (2008), viewed as a “a screen where students could project their ideal selves or imagined identities” (p. 98). Participation on these sites, as limited as it may have been, inspired interest and excitement in possible selves and imagined identities related to these works of imagination. Gao and Xiu emphasized that such connections “might help to shape the future self in reality” (p. 100). A +SNS student’s response to how English study has affected him shows this emphasis on changes to the self clearly as he describes him and his classmates as “ordinary Chinese liberate [sic] from the traditional thought” (WH class 9). It is possible that the Myspace site, littered with pop music and movie advertisements and audio/visual stimuli, simply loosened or expanded the imaginations of students allowing them to visualize alternative realities for themselves. Student language learning journals seem to bear this interpretation out as well: a common theme running through them was that English language study has

“broadened their horizons” or “opened their eyes”—or as put by Peng, a +SNS student, “[English study] shows me another magic and various world” (PJH class 1).

It was this “magic and various world” that first attracted me, pulled me, toward foreign language study. It was for glimpses of that world that I went out into those parks and food stalls all over China. It is that world and the notion that there is more variety and more magic still out there that continues to motivate my efforts in language learning and teaching. This study suggests that SNS might offer EFL students another window into that magic world and that what they glimpse there might keep them learning, keep them playing, keep them sharing what they know. After all, “English belongs to the world” now.

Future Research

This study is meant to begin an investigation of how SNSs might best be used in EFL and as an attempt to begin to quantify how this context might affect language learning attitudes. The results of this study suggest several areas for further exploration. Most obviously it would be interesting to see how a fully functional SNS might affect student attitudes. The local limitations imposed on the American-based Myspace site as the semester progressed severely limited the multimodal elements available for students to use, closing off modes of expression that were hypothesized to be especially useful to less integratively motivated students (e.g., pictures, music, and video). A fully functional SNS might increase its motivational affect, but it is also possible that the restricted nature of participation on Myspace in this study had its own motivational affect. Students could have felt excited and empowered simply to be participating in an online community that exists in a contested area of Chinese society. The limitations could have been perceived

as evidence that their participation mattered—a kind of tacit demarcation of their “right to speak” even as this right was being limited.

Finding a fully functional SNS in the Chinese context most likely would mean adopting a Chinese-based site (e.g., Renren.com). Further research should aim at exploring whether such a Chinese site might have a similar affect as the present Myspace study. This researcher has already begun a small-scale investigation of this question, but results have yet to be analyzed. Anecdotal evidence, though, suggests that student participation on a Chinese-based site was very different and less motivating. It will be interesting to see if the quantitative evidence bears this impression out. It is hypothesized that because the majority of students involved in the study were already invested in online identities through renren.com, they would not experience the same kind of “empowering imagined identities” they did on Myspace. This is a fascinating question that could begin to explore some difficult questions about how L2 communities are defined in the global/world English milieu. Would English language interactions and media on a Chinese-based site motivate in the same way as those on an American-based SNS? Would the audience still be viewed as an authentic L2 community? These are particularly important questions in the Chinese EFL context where there is still a great degree of political control over all types of media.

Another question prompted by these results is whether the significant affect the SNS seemed to have on the affect of the teacher is a reaction to the teacher as a representative of L2 community (as an American and native English speaker) or as an English language teacher. As mentioned above, this could begin to be explored by Chinese English language teachers using a similar SNS component and comparing the

results to the present study. When results become available for this researcher's study on his use of Renren.com, they could serve as a foundation for a comparative exploration of both Myspace and Renren as used by a Chinese EFL teacher. Such studies will help us understand student motivation more clearly and the place that such new media tools might have in TESOL. All of these questions should also help us get at the quite complicated contextualization issues that come with using the Internet in the mainland Chinese context. These are important questions for future consideration, ones that I hope these results and this discussion will help to activate.

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Appendix A

Course Syllabus (used in both –SNS and +SNS)

授课 周数 Weeks	教学主要内容 Teaching Content	讲课 学时 Hrs	自学 学时	实验 学时	备注
第1周	Introductions/Syllabus	2			
第2周	Careful vs. Relaxed pronunciation Principles of Intercultural Communication	2			
第3周	Pronunciation practice Culture and identity	2			
第4周	Pronunciation practice Cultural dimensions: individualism/collectivism	2			
第5周	Pronunciation practice Cultural dimensions: proverbs	2			
第6周	Pronunciation practice Cultural dimensions: masculinity/femininity	2			
第7周	Pronunciation practice Cultural dimensions: power distance	2			
第8周	Pronunciation practice Cultural dimensions: uncertainty avoidance	2			
第9周	Thanksgiving activity Cultural exchange activity: word associations	2			
第10 周	Pronunciation practice Cultural exchange activity: sentence completions	2			

第11周	Pronunciation practice Cultural exchange activity: reaction to situations	2			
第12周	Pronunciation practice Cultural exchange activity: review and wrap-up	2			
第13周	Christmas Activities	2			
第14周	Final evaluation and test preparation	2			
第15周	Final evaluation	2			

Appendix B

Questionnaire Instrument

Gender 性别	Male 男	Female 女				
Age 年龄						
Major subject 专业						
English study start age 第一次学习英语时的年龄						
Do you have a computer at home? 你住的地方是否有电脑?	Yes 是	No 否				
Are you connected to the internet at home? 是否可以住你住的地方上网?	Yes 是	No 否				
How many hours do you spend weekly on the internet? 平均每周上网多少个小时?						
Rank the following activities according to which ones you spend the most time on while you are online? 右侧的网络事项中, 请由多到少依次用数字1-7表示出你所用时间的次序。1为花费时间最多, 7为花费时间最少。(如果不上网, 不用做任何排列)	games 游戏 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	email 信件 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	chatting 聊天 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	reading news 读新闻 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	surfing the web 随便看看 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	research 研究 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
What activity will represent the activity that you spend the most time on, 2 for the next activity, and so on. If you do not participate in the activity please leave it blank. You can write another activity in the blanks if it is not listed. (如果上面6项内容不在你上网的范围, 可在右侧空白处做补充, 并按照花费时间的多少用数字1-7表示出次序)	social network sites 网络社会关系网 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Other 其他 1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
What social network sites do you belong to? 你属于以下哪个网络社会关系网?	none 无	QQ/Qzone	163	Niwota 你我他	Facebook	Myspace
Check all that apply and if a social network site that you belong to is not listed please write it in the blanks (可多选。如果上列关系网不在你的范围内, 请在空白处补充)	Kaixin wang 开心网	Zhanzuo 占座	Other 其他			
	1=Strongly Disagree 完全不同意	2=Disagree 不同意	3=Somewhat Disagree 不太同意	4=Somewhat Agree 有点同意	5=Agree 同意	6=Strongly Agree 完全同意
I am comfortable using a computer. 我可以熟练运用电脑。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I enjoy spending time on the internet. 我喜欢上网。	1	2	3	4	5	6

	1=Strongly Disagree 完全不同意	2=Disagree 不同意	3=Somewhat Disagree 不太同意	4=Somewhat Agree 有点同意	5=Agree 同意	6=Strongly Agree 完全同意
I love English for no particular reason. 也没有什么原因, 我就是喜欢英语。	1	2	3	4	5	6
My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my teacher or not. 我学习英语的兴趣在于我是否喜欢我的老师。	1	2	3	4	5	6
My desire to learn English depends on the quality of my English classes. 我学习英语的兴趣在于课堂的教学质量。	1	2	3	4	5	6
My desire to learn English depends on the quality of my English textbooks. 我学习英语的兴趣在于英语教材。	1	2	3	4	5	6
My desire to learn English depends on whether I like my fellow students in the English classes. 我学习英语的兴趣在于我是否喜欢我英语课堂里的同学。	1	2	3	4	5	6
Learning English is an important tool for me to connect with society. 英语是一个重要的与社会沟通的工具。	1	2	3	4	5	6
Learning English makes me feel like a success. 学习英语让我有成就感。	1	2	3	4	5	6
Good English skills can help me be the person I want to be in the future. 有良好的英语基础在将来可以帮助我成为我想成为的人。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I learn English because I am interested in connecting with English-speaking people in other countries. 我学英语是因为我希望自己能与其他国家讲英语的人进行交流。	1	2	3	4	5	6
	1=Strongly Disagree 完全不同意	2=Disagree 不同意	3=Somewhat Disagree 不太同意	4=Somewhat Agree 有点同意	5=Agree 同意	6=Strongly Agree 完全同意
I learn English because I am interested in connecting with English-speaking people in China. 我学英语是因为我希望自己能在中国的讲英语的人进行交流。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have special personal interests in language learning. 我英语学习的目的比较特殊, 比较个人化。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have developed an interest in English because of my love for English songs and movies. 因为我喜欢英语歌曲和电影所以我学习英语的兴趣更加广泛了。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I learn English just because I like the language. 我学英语仅仅是因为我喜欢英语这门语言。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I learn English in order to let the world know more	1	2	3	4	5	6

about China. 我学英语是因为我想让世界了解中国更 多。						
I am interested in English because of my love of English literature. 我对英语感兴趣，是因为我特别喜 欢英国/美国文学。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am learning English in order to go abroad and experience other cultures. 我在学英语是因为我要出 国，要经历外国文化。	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am learning English in order to emigrate to another country. 我在学英语是因为我要移民到其他国家。	1	2	3	4	5	6
Learning English is a necessary step to success in one's life. 学习英语是一个人成功地必要步骤。	1	2	3	4	5	6
Good oral English is a symbol of good education and accomplishment. 好的英语口语是经过良好教育以及 成功的标志。	1	2	3	4	5	6