

Learning Language with Web 2.0 is so Difficult!!! Hearing Voices of Japanese Language Learners at a Korean University

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Abstract

The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has empowered language learners. Web 2.0 allows learners to practice their target language with native speakers anytime and anywhere they wish, free of charge. Given the significant impact of Web 2.0 on language learning, it is imperative to examine learners' uses of Web 2.0 inside and outside the classroom. Such an inquiry provides insights into the pedagogical actions required to promote the adoption of Web 2.0 to enhance language learning. Therefore, this study examined the extent to which Korean learners of Japanese adopted Web 2.0 to learn Japanese in formal and informal learning contexts. It also examined the factors inhibiting their use of Web 2.0 for language learning. The results identified the following factors inhibiting the adoption of technology in class: lecturers' overestimated learners' computer skills, there was an overreliance by lecturers on learners' voluntary use of Web 2.0 outside the classroom, and there was a general lack of access to computer labs during class. The findings also suggested that learners' insufficient knowledge of websites and applications, the absence of Japanese acquaintances offline, and low confidence to interact with Japanese native speakers inhibited the Korean language learners' interactions with Japanese speakers online beyond the classroom.

1 Introduction

The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has transformed how language learners use and learn their target language inside and outside the classroom. Learners in a foreign language setting tend to have limited opportunities for face-to-face communication with native speakers compared to learners studying in contexts where the target language is predominantly used as the official language (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014; Xiao, 2007). The development of Web 2.0 technologies however has enabled learners to access large online communities of native speakers and thus opportunities to communicate using the target language (de Ramirez, 2009, 2010; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Xiao, 2007). Social Networking Sites (SNSs), in particular, and also videoconferencing platforms have empowered language learners to "set up their own online interaction with the native speakers on their terms, for their own reasons and at their convenience" (Eamer, 2010, p. 37).

Despite the potential benefits of adopting Web 2.0 for language learning, the language learning potential arising from its use is nonetheless determined by the skill and expertise of the user (Levy, 2009). To take advantage of the technology's potential for language learning, learners need to develop their knowledge and competencies to optimise the Web 2.0 language learning functions. Hence, it is important to identify what factors discourage learners from adopting Web 2.0 technologies for learning their target language.

Despite the possibilities, very few studies have examined the factors inhibiting the adoption of Web 2.0 for language learning, particularly in relation to Japanese language education in South Korea. Therefore, the present study examines current practices by lecturers and learners of Japanese in South Korea to use technology to support language learning inside and outside the classroom as well as the factors inhibiting technology use.

2 Literature review

2.1 Social networking sites (SNSs)

Social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/) are online services where users can create connections with people with shared interests, or maintain existing offline social networks (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). For language learners, SNSs also serve as a platform to seek out native speakers of their target language in order to interact with them using the target language. However, the primary motives for using SNSs is to consolidate existing relationships with people whom users have met offline rather than to develop new social networks with strangers (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007). Given this primary motive, the native speaker users may reject friend requests sent by language learners they have never met offline.

Given the constraints surrounding the use of existing popular SNSs for language learning, SNSs that target language learners such as Busuu (<u>https://www.busuu.com</u>)¹ and Lang-8 (<u>http://lang-8.com/</u>)² are being developed. Several scholars have explored the benefits these SNSs to language learners. The findings showed that learners appreciate the capacity of the SNSs to support them in interacting with native speakers and providing feedback (Orsini-Jones, Brick, & Pibworth, 2013), to motivate them by providing feedback and comments from native speakers (Pollard, 2014), and to expose them to linguistic variations (Cho, 2015).

2.2 Videoconferencing

Language educators have adopted videoconferencing applications such as Skype (<u>http://www.skype.com/en/</u>) to engage language learners in synchronous or asynchronous video or audio conversations with native speakers located in different locations (e.g. Hung & Higgins, 2016; Kato, Spring, & Mori, 2016; Terhune, 2015). By using videoconferencing applications as an asynchronous interaction platform, the users use the time lag to consult unknown words in the dictionary or in Google Images, read messages at their own pace, and monitor and edit their writing (Hung & Higgins, 2016; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2009; Sauro & Smith, 2010).

Because of these benefits for language learning, language educators have increasingly adopted videoconferencing in language classes (e.g. Bilbatua, Saito, & Bissoonauth-Bedford, 2012; Mullen, Appel, & Shanklin, 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010). For example, Tian and Wang (2010) conducted an e-Tandem learning project using Skype for university students from Australia and China. They reported that the project improved participants' oral fluency, listening skills, pronunciation, intonation, and intercultural understanding. Similarly, Kato et al. (2016) examined language development using Skype-based e-Tandem between Japanese learners of English and American learners of Japanese over 15 weeks. The findings also suggested that e-Tandem is effective for the development of learners' listening and speaking proficiencies as well as the length of their utterances. Xiao (2007) compared the learning outcomes of Chinese language learners of English who engaged in Skype sessions with English native speakers and those who completed the same speaking tasks with Chinese classmates in face-to-face sessions over 10 weeks. Her study found that the Skype group outperformed the classroom group in terms of their fluency, accuracy and complexity of sentences in the post-test.

2.3 Use of Web 2.0 in class and the impact on informal learning

The impact of technology use in academic and informal learning settings has increasingly caught the attention of academics. For example, Hartshorne and Ajjan (2009) identified that faculty is one of the most influential factors in determining learners' technology adoption. Based on their findings, the scholars advised educators to integrate training and activities using Web 2.0 in class to encourage learners to adopt Web 2.0 for learning. The findings of Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing (2010) also suggested that university students are more likely to adopt technologies used in class in informal learning contexts as well.

In the field of second language education, Lai, Sham, & Tian (2016a) provided Chinese learners of English with an online training course which aimed to promote self-directed technology use for language learning. The researchers examined the impact of the training course on the participants' attitudes and learning behaviours. The findings indicated that the online training course help to develop positive attitudes among the learners towards learning English using technologies, and increased their technology use for learning English outside the classroom. Moreover, Lai, Yeung, & Hu (2016b) demonstrated how teachers' recommendation to use SNSs for language learning and their websites use in the classroom encouraged language learners to adopt the website resources for language learning.

Thus, research studies have identified the impact of technology use in formal contexts and the teacher's role in shaping learners' attitudes towards technology use for informal learning. However, these studies have not answered the question of which factors discourage language learning. To develop pedagogical strategies to encourage Korean learners of Japanese to adopt Web 2.0 for language learning as well as the factors inhibiting them from adopting Web 2.0 for learning Japanese.

2.4 Theoretical framework

This study employed theories of ecological perspectives and the notion of affordance (Gibson, 1979; van Lier, 2000, 2004) as a theoretical framework. The psychologist, James Gibson (1979), coined the term affordance, defining it as "what [the environment] offers to the animal, what it provides or furnished, either for good or ill" (p. 127). Applying Gibson's (1979) notion of affordance in a language-learning context, van Lier (2000) asserts that the environment is filled with a "semiotic budget," that is, the environment in which language learners are situated is filled with language the learners can use for their language learning (p. 253).

Van Lier (2000) further defined affordance as a non-fixed property within the relationship between the environment and organism. What becomes an affordance for the organism is determined by "what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it" (p. 252). Van Lier (2004) also argues that whether or not the affordance serves a language learning function is determined by the learner's "abilities to promote further action and lead to higher and more successful levels of interaction" (p. 95).

When applying van Lier's (2000, 2004) argument to language learning environments where learners use Web 2.0, it may be suggested the technology provides a wide range of potential affordances to learners to create and optimise language learning online and offline³. However, whether or not the learner can use the potential affordances for language learning is determined by a number of learner-related factors as shown in Figure 1. The figure indicates that the learner's actual use of the affordance may be limited or abandoned due to an inability to identify the affordance, negative perceptions of the affordance, lack of desire to use the affordance for language learning, insufficient ability to connect the affordance to language learning, and lack of action to use the affordance for language learning.

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Fig. 1. Limited or abandoned use of potential affordance for language learning

However, the activated affordances learners can use for language learning will increase as they develop their ability to use the affordance for language learning, develop positive perceptions of the affordance, increase their desire to use the affordance to facilitate their learning, and develop their ability to apply the affordance to construct opportunities for language learning as seen in Figure 2.



Fig. 2. Growing use of activated affordance for language learning

The relationship between potential language learning affordances and the constraints surrounding their use is a useful framework for an analysis of why some Korean learners of Japanese use or do not use the affordances in offline and online language learning environments. Drawing on concepts of affordances and their constraints by van Lier (2000, 2004), this study aims to address the following research questions:

- 1. To what extent do the participants communicate with Japanese speakers in face-to-face contexts outside the classroom?
- 2. What factors inhibit the participants from having face-to-face interactions with Japanese speakers beyond the classroom?
- 3. To what extent do the participants use the affordance of Web 2.0 to learn Japanese inside and outside the classroom?
- 4. What factors inhibit the participants from using the potential affordances offered by Web 2.0 technologies to learn Japanese in formal and informal learning contexts?

3 This study

3.1 The research site

This study was conducted at a national university in South Korea during Semester 2, 2012, and Semester 1, 2013. Although the university has adopted a learning management system and installed Wi-Fi connection on campus, lecturers were under no university policy pressure to integrate technology into their classes at the time of data collection. Despite the Wi-Fi connectivity, few students enrolled in the Japanese language learning classes brought their laptop computers to class. In addition, although the university had several computer labs, they were not easy to book for a whole class on a regular basis.

3.2 The participants

Two groups of participants were recruited for the study: 2 lecturers (one Korean and one Japanese) and 84 university students enrolled in the Japanese language program. Although both lecturers use SNSs in their daily life, they had not used them for foreign language instruction. The Korean lecturer was not interested in adopting Web 2.0 in his teaching, whereas the Japanese lecturer was motivated to use Web 2.0 applications for language teaching. As such, he organised Skype sessions as extracurricular activities for learners who wished to practice Japanese outside the classroom by connecting them with learners studying Japanese in different counties. This lecturer had previously worked in the IT sector and was confident of his knowledge of computer technologies.

The 84 student participants (learning Japanese as either a major or an elective) were drawn from all years of their degree programs (up to four years). Responses from five participants were excluded from the analysis, as they did not indicate their Japanese proficiency level in the questionnaire. The participants' length of time learning Japanese is presented in Figure 3, which shows a range from less than one year to more than seven years. Learners with four to six years of learning experience comprised the largest group (41%, 32 participants), followed by learners with two to three years of experience (38%, 30 participants).

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Fig. 3. The length of time learning Japanese (years)

The participants' proficiency levels are presented in Table 1. Approximately one-third of the participants have not obtained an official score on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). Moreover, the university allowed learners to enrol in any Japanese class based on self-assessment. Therefore, as an alternative to assessing the participants' proficiency levels, the researcher requested that they report their highest JLPT level. For participants who had not yet obtained an official proficiency record, the researcher asked them to provide the level they were preparing to take at that time. To support the data analysis process, the researcher allocated the participants preparing to sit a particular JLPT level to the same proficiency category with those participants who had passed that proficiency level. Reflecting on their relatively prolonged learning experiences, 57 participants (72%) reported they had either passed N1 (the highest JLPT level) or had been preparing to take the N1 exam.

| Japanese Proficiency Level | Categories | Number of learners | Total n=79 (100%) |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| N1 or equivalent | Participants who passed N1 | 41 | 57 |
| (Advanced level) | Participants preparing to take N1 exam | 16 | (72%) |
| N2 or equivalent | Participants who passed N2 | 9 | 12 |
| (High Intermediate) | Participants preparing to take N2 exam | 3 | (15%) |
| N3 or equivalent | Participants who passed N3 | 4 | 10 |
| (Intermediate) | Participants preparing to take N3 exam | 6 | (13%) |

Table 1. Participants' Japanese proficiency levels

*Rounded to two decimal places

3.3 Data collection

Two data sets were collected: questionnaire responses from the 84 student participants and interviews responses from the two lecturer participants. The questionnaire was distributed at the end of the second semester (November/December) in 2012. Prior to designing the questionnaire, the researcher had informal conversations with three Japanese major students about their out-of-class interactions with Japanese native speakers (JNSs), their technology use inside and outside the classroom, and their perceptions of using technologies for language learning. Based on the Japanese major students' comments, the researcher developed the questionnaire, which was written in Korean, the participants' first language. It comprised Yes/No and multiple-choice questions divided into three sections: 1) opportunities for face-to-face interactions with JNSs outside the classroom; 2) technology use in the Japanese classroom; and 3) the adoption of Web 2.0 in informal learning contexts. Section 3 included sub-questions such as the benefits of using SNSs, text chat, video conferencing, and the reasons for not using these applications for language learning. This study was interested in identifying the factors related to why SNSs and videoconferencing were not used, as the findings may prove interesting to educators wishing to encourage learners to adopt Web 2.0 to learn Japanese. As the questionnaire include questions not relevant to the present study, the relevant part of the questionnaire is provided in English translation in Appendix 1.

The two lecturer participants were interviewed about their technology use in Japanese language classes at the university in June, 2013. The interview also collected data on the lecturers' technology use in their daily lives, their experiences using Web 2.0 to teach foreign languages, their current teaching practices, and their perceptions of their teaching contexts.

4 Results

The opening section of the results provide findings related to the participants' perceptions of their needs to have face-to-face conversation with JNSs, their current interactions with JNSs outside the classroom, and factors discouraging them from interacting with JNSs. The later sections of this article present the findings related to the participants' technology use for learning Japanese inside and outside the classroom, and factors inhibiting them from adopting Web technologies for language learning.

4.1 Perceived needs for face-to-face interaction with JNSs

First, the researcher asked the participants how they perceived the need for face-to-face interaction with JNSs to improve their Japanese proficiency. As seen in Table 2, approximately 97% of the participants agreed with the statements, "I think it is very important to interact with JNSs outside the classroom to improve my Japanese" (68%) or "I think it is important to interact with JNSs outside the classroom to improve my Japanese" (29%). Thus, the findings suggest that the majority of participants believe it is important to engage in face-to-face conversations with JNSs outside the classroom to enhance their Japanese proficiency.

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|--------|
| | | | | (100%) |
| I think it is very important to interact with JNSs outside the classroom | 37 | 9 | 8 | 54 |
| to improve my Japanese. | | | | (68%) |
| I think it is important to interact with JNSs outside the classroom to | 18 | 3 | 2 | 23 |
| improve my Japanese. | | | | (29%) |
| I do not think it is important to interact with JNSs outside the classroom | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| to improve my Japanese. | | | | (0%) |
| No response | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | | | | (3%) |

Table 2. Perceived need to have face-to-face interaction with JNSs

To identify the extent to which Korean learners of Japanese currently engage in face-to-face conversations with JNSs besides their lecturers outside the classroom, the researcher asked them whether or not they have such opportunities. As presented in Table 3, only 33% of the participants replied that they engaged in face-to-face interactions with JNSs outside the classroom. The finding

implies that the majority of participants do not have such opportunities, although they believe it is important to have face-to-face communication with JNSs outside the classroom to improve their Japanese.

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total |
|---|----|----|----|--------|
| | | | | n=79 |
| | | | | (100%) |
| I have opportunities to converse with JNSs who are not lecturers | 20 | 2 | 4 | 26 |
| outside the classroom. | | | | (33%) |
| I do not have opportunities to converse with JNSs who are not lecturers | 37 | 9 | 6 | 52 |
| outside the classroom. | | | | (66%) |
| Not answer | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | | | (1%) |

Table 3. Opportunities to converse with JNSs who were not lecturers outside the classroom

4.2 The reasons for non-interaction with JNSs

As discussed in Section 4.1, 52 participants currently do not engage in face-to-face interactions with JNSs outside the classroom. To understand the inhibition factors, the study asked these participants to identify the reasons why they do not have face-to-face interactions with JNSs. As seen in Table 4, the most significant inhibiting factor was: "Because I do not have Japanese acquaintances to converse with outside the classroom" (87%), followed by "Because I cannot talk fluently in Japanese and do not have the confidence to converse with JNSs" (27%). These findings imply that many participants currently do not communicate with JNSs in face-to-face contexts outside the classroom due to absence of Japanese acquaintances, the lack of Japanese language speaking proficiency, or a lack of confidence to interact with JNSs. In other words, the findings suggest that Web 2.0 may motivate the participants to interact with JNSs.

Table 4. Reasons for non-interaction with JNSs

(The participants were allowed to provide multiple answers for this question.)

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=52 (100%) |
|--|----|----|----|-------------------------|
| Because I do not have Japanese acquaintances to converse with outside the classroom. | 31 | 10 | 4 | 45 (87%) |
| Because I cannot talk fluently in Japanese and do not have the confidence to converse with JNSs. | 7 | 4 | 3 | 14 (27%) |
| Because I am busy and do not have enough time to converse with JNSs outside the classroom. | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 (13%) |
| Because I am not interested in conversing with JNSs. | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 (4%) |
| Because I think it is better to focus on preparing for the JLPT rather than improving my conversation skills by conversing with Japanese. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (2%) |
| Other reasons | 1 | 0 | 0 | $\frac{1}{(2\%)}$ |

4.3 Technology integration in the language learning classroom

Technology practices in the classroom are one of the important factors determining whether or not learners adopt technologies in informal learning contexts (Hartshorne & Ajjan, 2009; Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Vojt, 2011). Despite the impact of classroom technology use on out-of-class learning, this study identified that a narrow range of technologies have been used at the research site. As Table 5 indicates, 30% of the participants reported they have never used computers in Japanese classes. Although 70% of participants reported technologies have been used in their class, computer-based activities were limited to either producing Word documents in Japanese or to practice typing in Japanese. Specifically, the technology was used for producing Word documents (44%), writing e-mails in Japanese (41%), producing PowerPoint documents (28%), and to practice typing in Japanese (28%). Although SNSs and videoconferencing can serve as alternative affordances to interacting with JNSs for learners who do not have such opportunities in face-to-face contexts, the adoption rate of both technologies was extremely low; 5% for SNSs, and 3% for videoconferencing.

Table 5. Technology use in Japanese classes

(The participants were allowed to provide multiple answers for this question.)

| Experiences using technologies in Japanese classes | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=79 (100%) |
|--|----|----|----|-------------------------|
| I have never used computers in Japanese classes. | 17 | 5 | 2 | 24 (30%) |
| I have learned how to produce Word documents in Japanese classes. | 26 | 5 | 4 | 35 (44%) |
| I have learned how to write e-mails in Japanese classes. | 23 | 5 | 4 | 32 (41%) |
| I have learned how to type in Japanese in language classes. | 15 | 3 | 4 | 22 (28%) |
| I have learned how to produce PowerPoint documents in Japanese classes. | 16 | 4 | 2 | 22 (28%) |
| I have learned how to search Japanese websites in Japanese classes. | 8 | 0 | 1 | 9 (11%) |
| I have learned how to produce multimedia products in Japanese classes (e.g. video, Flash). | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 (10%) |
| I have learned how to use SNSs in Japanese classes. | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 (5%) |
| I have learned how to use an online dictionary in Japanese classes. | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 (5%) |
| I have learned how to produce Excel documents in Japanese classes. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 (4%) |
| I have learned how to use videoconference applications in Japanese classes. | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 (3%) |
| I have learned how to use text-based chat in Japanese classes. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (1%) |
| I have learned how to create a blog in Japanese classes. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (0%) |

As seen in Table 5, the findings revealed limited technology use in Japanese classes at the university. The Korean lecturer provided the following explanation for their limited use during interview:

Every student knows (how to use SNSs) even if we don't teach them. Even though they cannot use Japanese SNSs now, they will be able to use Japanese SNSs as their Japanese proficiency improves. In addition, if students feel the need to use SNSs, they will start to use SNSs themselves anyway. (Researcher translation)

Regarding the reasons for not adopting text-based chat and videoconferencing in Japanese classes, the Korean lecturer similarly explains that he does not see the need, because "learners who wish to use these tools will start to use them by themselves." Thus, he stresses that learners' strong technology competency is the reason that Web 2.0 has not widely been adopted at the university. However, he also confessed other hidden reasons why the technologies have not been integrated into Japanese classes:

Honestly speaking, some lecturers may not know how to use these tools well. As they do not use these tools, they do not feel the need to teach, and they do not know how to integrate them into their classes, and have not realised the potential they offer for learning Japanese. (Researcher translation)

While the lecturers' limited technology skills might have discouraged them from adopting Web 2.0 in Japanese classes, a lecturer competent in technology use would also be discouraged from adopting the technologies in his class due to poor computer resources at the university. Regarding this negative aspect, the tech-savvy Japanese lecturer commented:

There are no computers for learners in the classroom, and access to computer rooms is limited. Therefore, all I can do is to ask the students to do homework using computers. I cannot assign collaborative activities using computers to learners in class. (Researcher translation)

The Japanese lecturer also elaborated on the challenges to technology integration in classes for lecturers in low-tech teaching environment as follows:

Well, if I were in a situation where I could use computer rooms anytime I wished, I would consider implementing videoconferencing in my class. Right now, I only consider what I can do in a given teaching context, so I have never thought about adopting videoconferencing. Such ideas have never crossed my mind because I am not in a teaching context where I can easily access computer rooms. (Researcher translation)

Thus, the interviews with the lecturers revealed that they overestimated learners' technology abilities, over-relied on learners' voluntary use of technologies outside the classroom, have limited knowledge of computers and their pedagogical benefits, and experienced resource constraints, all of which resulted in a low technology adoption rate in Japanese classes at the university.

4.4 Searching for JNSs on the Internet

For learners who do not have offline Japanese acquaintances, websites particularly designed for language learners can serve as an alternative affordance where they can find JNSs and communicate with them using their target language. Despite the potential affordance for language learning, the findings showed that only 38% of participants used the Internet as a resource to search for JNSs for communicative interactions. As seen in Table 6, N1 or N1-equivalent learners most frequently use websites to search for JNSs; whereas low proficiency learners are less likely to look for JNSs online. This is probably because their high language proficiency allows them to easily navigate Japanese websites and interact with JNSs in Japanese.

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total |
|---|----|----|----|--------|
| | | | | n=79 |
| | | | | (100%) |
| I use the Internet to search for JNSs. | 24 | 4 | 2 | 30 |
| | | | | (38%) |
| I do not use the Internet to search for JNSs. | 33 | 8 | 8 | 49 |
| | | | | (62%) |

Table 6. The rate of participants searching JNSs online

4.5 Factors inhibiting searching for JNSs online

As discussed in section 4.4, more than half of the participants (n = 49) do not use the Internet to search for JNSs despite the potential affordance to connect them to JNS communities online and to create opportunities to practice their target language. To understand the inhibiting factors, the study asked these participants to provide reasons for not searching for JNSs online. As Table 7

shows, the most common reasons for non-participation in online interactions were: "Because I do not know which websites I can find JNSs to interact with" (67%), followed by "Because I hesitate to interact with strangers online" (33%), and "Because my Japanese proficiency level is not high, and it is difficult to interact with Japanese online" (22%).

Table 7. Reasons why participants do not look for JNSs online

(The participants were allowed to provide multiple answers for this question.)

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=49 (%) |
|--|----|----|----|----------------------|
| Because I do not know which websites I can find JNSs to interact with. | 20 | 6 | 7 | 33 (67%) |
| Because I hesitate to interact with strangers online. | 12 | 3 | 1 | 16 (33%) |
| Because my Japanese proficiency level is not high, and it is difficult to interact with Japanese online. | 4 | 3 | 4 | 11 (22%) |
| Because I prefer studying to raise my scores in JLPT and JPT rather than interacting with Japanese online. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (2%) |
| Because I do not have a computer at home. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (2%) |
| Because I do not have time to surf the internet at home. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (2%) |
| Because I think that interacting with Japanese online is not useful to improving my Japanese. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (0%) |
| Others | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 (4%) |
| No reply | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 (4%) |

4.6 Pedagogical support and technology adoption

As the findings in Section 4.4 show, many participants currently do not use websites to search for JNSs to interact with in Japanese despite the potential affordance for language learning. Given the research findings concerning the impact of classroom technology use on learners' technology adoption in informal learning contexts (e.g. Jones et al., 2010; Lai et al., 2016b), educators could motivate learners to use the Internet to search for JNSs to practice their Japanese language by sharing websites in Japanese classes. To assess the potential pedagogical impact on learners' technology adoption in informal learning contexts, the researcher asked the participants whether or not they would look for JNSs online, if their lecturers introduced websites that facilitated the process. Table 8 shows that 63% of participants would agree to use such websites to support learning Japanese. The findings suggest pedagogical support may encourage learners to use the affordance of websites to look for JNSs and create opportunities to communicate with JNSs online beyond the classroom settings.

| Table 8. Willingness to interact | with JNSs online | with pedagogical support |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=49 (100%) |
|---|----|----|----|-------------------------|
| I will use the websites to interact with Japanese if lecturers introduce websites that allow interaction with JNSs in Japanese classes. | 19 | 5 | 7 | 31 (63%) |
| I will not use the websites to interact with Japanese if lecturers introduce websites that allow interaction with JNSs in Japanese classes. | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 (16%) |
| No reply | 7 | 2 | 1 | 10 (20%) |

4.7 Videoconferencing for learning Japanese

Videoconferencing can serve as an alternative affordance to communicate with JNSs for language learners who do not have Japanese acquaintances to converse with face-to-face on a regular basis (e.g. Mullen et al., 2009; Xiao, 2007). As such, this study sough to identify whether or not participants currently use videoconferencing to interact with JNSs. As Table 9 indicates, only 5% of participants engage in videoconferencing with JNSs. Thus, the majority of participants have not adopted videoconferencing for practicing Japanese despite the potential affordance to communicate with JNSs regardless of their geological location or time zone. All of the videoconferencing users were learners who had passed either N1 or its equivalent. The findings suggest that high proficient learners are more eager to interact with JNSs via videoconferencing than low proficient learners.

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=79 (100%) |
|--|----|----|----|-------------------------|
| I use videoconferencing to communicate with JNSs. | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 (5%) |
| I do not use videoconferencing to communicate with JNSs. | 53 | 12 | 10 | 75 (95%) |

Table 9. Use of videoconferencing for learning Japanese

4.8 Factors inhibiting participation in videoconferencing

As discussed in Section 4.7, the majority of participants currently do not use videoconferencing to interact with JNSs despite the potential positive affordances. To identify the inhibiting factors, the researcher asked the 75 non-users why they did not adopt videoconferencing for learning Japanese. Table 10 shows that the most common factors included participants' lack of knowledge about videoconferencing applications (31%), and the absence of offline Japanese acquaintances to interact with via videoconferencing (31%). These findings reveal that approximately one-third of the participants from the so-called "Digital Natives" generation (Prensky, 2001, p. 2) are not familiar with videoconferencing applications. The finding also suggests that videoconferencing may not serve as an alternative affordance to practicing Japanese online for learners who do not have Japanese acquaintances offline. Hence, educators need to provide pedagogical support so that learners can locate JNSs and create opportunities to learn Japanese through videoconferencing beyond the classroom.

| (The participants were allowed to provide multiple answers | for this c | uestion. |) | |
|---|------------|----------|----|-------------------------|
| | N1 | N2 | N3 | Total n=75 (100%) |
| Because I did not know such applications were available. | 14 | 5 | 4 | 23 (31%) |
| Because I do not have Japanese acquaintances to do videoconferencing with, although I have heard of "화상채팅" (videoconferencing). | 14 | 5 | 4 | 23 (31%) |
| Because I am busy. | 15 | 3 | 2 | 20 (27%) |
| Because I do not have a microphone or a speaker at home. | 9 | 2 | 3 | 14 (19%) |
| Because my Japanese is not proficient enough to do videoconferencing with Japanese. | 2 | 5 | 4 | 11 (15%) |
| Because I do not have a computer at home. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 (1%) |
| Other reasons | 9 | 1 | 0 | 10 (13%) |
| No replies | 1 | 0 | 0 | $\frac{1}{(1\%)}$ |

Table 10: Factors inhibiting videoconferencing adoption

Ten participants provided additional reasons as to why they did not engage in videoconferencing with JNSs. As presented below, their reasons may be classified either as "lack of perceived need to use videoconferencing" or "different preferences for communication platforms."

- 1. Lack of perceived need to use videoconferencing:
 - I think that talking on the phone or sending messages are enough.
 - I do not feel the need to use videoconferencing.
 - I have a Japanese girlfriend to talk to face-to-face.
- 2. Different preferences for communication platforms
 - I do not like videoconferencing.
 - I do not like to chat with strangers while looking at their faces.
 - I prefer to talk face-to-face rather than chat via videoconferencing.
 - I feel more comfortable interacting with JNSs via Facebook rather than via videoconferencing

Thus, the participants' comments show that the lack of perceived need to use videoconferencing to communicate with JNSs and different preferences for communication platforms inhibit their use of videoconferencing to connect with JNSs in different locations and time zone for synchronous or asynchronous language learning interactions.

5 Discussion

This study analysed the technology practices for language learning by Korean learners of Japanese, drawing on the concepts of ecological perspectives and affordance (van Lier, 2000, 2004). The analysis revealed that various factors discourage Korean learners of Japanese from adopting Web 2.0 for learning Japanese both in class and outside the classroom, even though the technology provides a wide range of potential affordances that learners can use to enhance the language learning process.

As to the factors inhibiting technology adoption in Japanese classes, this study found that lecturers' over-estimation of learners' computer proficiency and their over-reliance on student voluntary technology use for learning Japanese outside the classroom discouraged lecturers from adopting Web 2.0 in Japanese classes. Contrary to the lecturers' predictions, this study found many language learners did not access the affordances of Web 2.0 for language learning because of insufficient knowledge of websites and applications. Lai et al. (2016b) also pointed out the difficulties for learners to locate appropriate websites for language learning and to use them effectively. Thus, these findings highlight the need to provide pedagogical support to learners who are often categorised as "Digital Natives" (Prensky, 2001, p. 2) but who have not developed enough knowledge and skills to access the affordances of Web 2.0 to enhance their language learning beyond the classroom.

Regarding the factors limiting technology adoption by Korean learners of Japanese outside the classroom, the analysis identified that both contextual factors and learner-related factors discouraged the adoption of Web 2.0 to accelerate language learning outside the classroom. An important contextual factor was the absence of Japanese acquaintances offline for communicative interactions. Situated in a foreign language learning setting, approximately one-third of participants indicated that they do not engage in videoconferencing, because they do not have Japanese acquaintances to do so.

For learners who wish to communicate with JNSs online, but do not have Japanese acquaintances to interact with, language exchange websites such as Conversation Exchange (<u>http://www.conversationexchange.com</u>) can serve as an affordance to connect learners with communities of JNSs online and to create opportunities to communicate in Japanese. Language exchange websites are what Gee (2004) refers to as "affinity spaces" where "people can affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals" (p. 67). Therefore, learners can easily establish common ground with other native speaker members on the websites, which may mitigate their hesitation to interact with strangers online to practice Japanese.

Another contextual factor inhibiting technology adoption outside the classroom was learners' busy schedules. Many participants indicated they do not look for JNSs to interact with online, because they do not have enough leisure time to surf the Internet at home. However, mobile applications for language learners such as HelloTalk (<u>http://www.hellotalk.com</u>) allow them to locate JNSs and communicate with them synchronously and asynchronously via a smartphone. Thus, the affordance of mobile applications for language learners has transformed learners' spare time into opportunities to communicate with JNSs in different locations synchronously and asynchronously.

In addition to the contextual factors, this study identified several learner-related factors inhibiting their access to potential Web 2.0 affordances to promote language learning: 1) insufficient knowledge of websites and applications; 2) lack of confidence to communicate with JNSs online in Japanese; and 3) preferences for different communication platforms.

First, the findings showed that learners' insufficient knowledge of videoconferencing applications discouraged them from engaging in videoconferencing to interact with JNSs. The results were probably due to the types of chatting applications ubiquitously used in Korea. At the time of data collection, 94% of chat application users in Korea used Kakao Talk, which had offered text and voice chat functions only, according to a 2013 survey by Onavo (Cutler, 2013). Therefore, many participants may not have been familiar with videoconferencing applications such as Skype, which offers both text and video chat functions. However, given that Kakao Talk now provides videoconferencing functions (The Korean Times, 2015), more Korean university students may adopt these applications as daily communication platforms and as alternative learning tools to practice Japanese with JNSs outside the classroom.

Another major learner-related factor inhibiting the adoption of Web 2.0 outside the classroom was the lack of confidence to communicate with JNSs online. Many participants indicated they did not interact with JNSs online due to low Japanese language proficiency. As the findings of the study show, all videoconferencing users were advanced level learners of Japanese. Given that synchronous communication platforms require learners to respond immediately to maintain on-going interactions, low language proficiency learners may feel intimidated to participate in videoconferencing. In turn, educators may suggest to language learners at this level to interact with JNSs asynchronously using text-chat functions provided by Line (http://line.me/en/) or Kakao (http://www.kakao.com/services/8)⁴. A wide range of emoticons in the applications may also serve as affordance to learners to express their emotions in depth while interacting with JNSs in the target language. Lang-8 is another asynchronous communication platform where learners can receive

feedback from native speakers about their writing as well as interact with them using personal messages and comment functions. The time lag in asynchronous communication platforms allows learners to check their vocabulary using an online dictionary and Google images, plan their answers at their own pace, and check their spelling (Hung & Higgins, 2016; Sotillo, 2000). Thus, such affordances in asynchronous communication platforms allow learners with low language proficiency and low confidence to communicate with JNSs more competently and confidently.

Finally, the study identified that participants' preferences for communication platforms also inhibit their use of the affordance provided by videoconferencing to communicate with JNSs in different locations or time zones. As the findings suggest, some participants choose not to use videoconferencing to interact with JNSs because they prefer face-to-face interactions or asynchronous communication platforms such as Facebook. Given their preferences for these communication platforms, educators may motivate the language learners to interact with JNSs outside the classroom by sharing websites supported by their preferred communication platforms. For example, Conversation Exchange (http://www.conversationexchange.com), a website designed to search for language exchange partners, allows users to choose communication platforms rather than meeting face-to-face or through e-mail or videoconferencing. For learners who do not have Japanese acquaintances offline, but who wish to communicate with JNSs in face-to-face contexts, Meetup $(http://www.meetup.com/)^5$ serves as an alternative affordance to meet JNSs with similar interests for face-to-face conversations. Meetup is the website designed to connect people with similar interests online and offline. As Meetup groups organise Japan-related social events offline, learners of Japanese can attend events such as dining at Japanese restaurants or having BBQs at the beach. Attending such offline social events enables Japanese language learners who do not have Japanese acquaintances to have face-to-face conversation with JNSs and develop social networks for further opportunities to use their target language beyond the classroom.

To sum up, the Web 2.0 learning environment offers a wide range of potential affordances to learners to optimise their language learning. Despite the potential for language learning, the present study demonstrated that various contextual and learner-related factors inhibit Korean learners of Japanese from using Web 2.0. Indeed, many participants have not realised or experienced the affordances Web 2.0 offers language learners because of their learning contexts or personal attributes. To encourage learners to use the affordances offered by Web 2.0 for language learning, educators can provide the following pedagogical support: connect learners to native speakers' communities in online and offline environments; share online or mobile resources so that learners can interact with JNSs; and provide communication platforms that cater to the proficiency level and preferences of the learners. Such support may develop the language learners' willingness to adopt Web 2.0 for learning Japanese and expand the activated affordances they can use to optimise their language learning.

6 Conclusion

This study drew on the concepts of affordance and constraints in learning environments (van Lier, 2000, 2004) to analyse the technology adoption of Korean learners of Japanese for language learning inside and outside of the classrooms. The analysis included the factors that inhibit the language learners from adopting technologies that can optimise their opportunities to practice their target language with JNSs. The ecological perspectives enabled this study to identify various contextual and learner-related factors inhibiting the adoption of Web 2.0 to enhance language learning despite the wide range of potential affordances offered by the technology. A major learner-related factor was insufficient knowledge of websites and videoconferencing applications. The findings suggest that Korean university students require pedagogical support to effectively use the potential affordances offered by Web 2.0 for language learning.

There are however several limitations to the findings. First, this study was conducted in a lowtech teaching environment (a local national university) where there are no technology requirements imposed on lecturers. This context may influence technology adoption practices by lecturers and learners. Therefore, studies undertaken in research sites where Web 2.0 has been widely integrated into the curriculum may identify different learner attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 and different levels of Web 2.0 adoption by language learners outside the classroom.

Moreover, data collection in this study was limited to interviews with two lecturers and a questionnaire completed by 84 students. Studies that incorporate a larger interview sample of student participants may access deeper and richer perceptions and experiences of learning Japanese using Web 2.0.

Another limitation of the study is that it examined only the potential impact of pedagogical support to encourage Web 2.0 use for learning Japanese, not the actual impact on Web 2.0 adoption by participants. Given the expansion of Web 2.0 technologies, further studies should incorporate a wider range of Web 2.0 uses for analysis and examine how pedagogical support affects learners' attitudes towards Web 2.0-based language learning, the choice of Web 2.0 applications, and the language learning strategies used.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings in this study are robust and highlight the need to provide pedagogical support which caters to the learners' proficiency levels, affections, learning contexts, and preferred communication platforms. Such pedagogical support may motivate learners to utilise the affordances of Web 2.0 to optimise their language learning beyond the classroom.

Notes

¹ Busuu (<u>https://www.busuu.com/</u>) is a website developed for language learners. The website not only provides language learning content, but also social networking functions. Users can search for native speakers using the search engine and exchange personal messages using the embedded mail functions. The language lessons include vocabulary learning, listening practice, writing exercises, and speaking tasks. Although users can receive feedback on their speaking and writing responses for free, feedback on speaking responses is limited to premium plan users.

² Lang-8 (<u>http://www.lang-8.com/</u>) aims to help language learners improve their writing skills, and to interact and develop social networks with native speakers. Users can submit their writing to the site and receive feedback from native speakers free of charge. To motivate users to contribute to the community, Lang-8 ranks users depending on the number of corrections they provide to other users and display compositions written by high-ranking users so that they can receive more feedback. To encourage learners to interact with native speakers, Lang-8 provides communication functions such as personal messages or comment functions.

³ Language learners can create opportunities to communicate with native speakers either online or offline via language exchange websites such as Conversation Exchange (<u>http://www.conversationexchange.com/</u>) or other websites that aim to connect people with similar interests online and offline such as Meetup (<u>http://www.meetup.com/</u>).

⁴ Line (<u>http://line.me/en/</u>) and Kakao (<u>http://www.kakao.com/services/8</u>) originally started text-chat applications for mobile phones, and then offered free voice functions. Now both applications are also available for computers. The advantage to language learners to using both applications lies in the text-chat and stamp (emote-con) functions. Learners with limited proficiency can express their emotions in depth by strategically using different stamps.

⁵ Websites such as Meetup (<u>http://www.meetup.com/</u>) allow users to search offline social events according to their interests and geographical locations. Users can develop social networks with other members by attending offline social gatherings and by interacting with them using embedded communication tools on the site. Naver (<u>http://www.naver.com/</u>) and Daum (<u>http://www.daum.net/</u>) are widely used search engines in South Korea that also offer similar functions in an online space called $\Box\Box$ (café).

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire to the participants

| (Name) | (e-mail |) |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|
| (The year you entered un | iversity |) |
| (The length of absence fr | om university |) |

| Length of learning Japanese | year | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Japanese proficiency | Beginner/upper beginner/intermediate/upper intermediate/advanced | |
| Japanese proficiency test | Passed: JLPT N(), JPT (Score) | |
| | If you have not taken any exam, please ten us the level you are preparing now | |
| | I am preparing to take (JLPT /JPT) | |
| Length of staying in Japan | 1) I have never lived in Japan. | |
| | 2) I have studied in Japan. | |
| | (The length of study in Japan:) | |
| | (Types of study: Learn Japanese/Exchange student/Japanese high school) | |
| | (Age when you were in Japan:) | |

1. Interacting with Japanese

1) Do you think it is important to interact with Japanese outside the classroom to improve Japanese? Please choose an answer similar to your opinion.

1. I think it is very important to interact with Japanese outside the classroom to improve my Japanese.

2. I think it is important to interact with Japanese outside the classroom to improve my Japanese.

3. I do not think it is important to interact with Japanese outside the classroom to improve my Japanese.

2) Do you have opportunities to converse with Japanese who are not lecturers outside the classroom? Yes/No

3) Answer this questions if you chose "No" in 2)

Why you do not converse with Japanese outside the classroom?

Please choose all answers applicable to you.

1. Because I do not have Japanese acquaintances to converse with outside the classroom.

2. Because I am not interested in converse with Japanese.

3. Because I cannot talk fluently in Japanese and do not have confidence to converse with Japanese.

4. Because I am busy and do not have enough time to converse with Japanese outside the classroom.

5. Because I think it is better to focus on preparing for the JLPT rather than improving my conversation skills by conversing with Japanese.

6. Others (Please explain your reasons.)

2. Technology use in Japanese class

1) Have you used computer technologies in Japanese classes?

Please choose all applicable answers for you.

- 1. I have never used computers during Japanese classes.
- 2. Practice to type in Japanese
- 3. Write e-mail in Japanese
- 4. Search Japanese websites
- 5. Produce Word documents
- 6. Produce PowerPoint
- 7. Produce Excel documents
- 8. Create a blog
- 9. Create multimedia products (video, Flash etc.)
- 10. Use SNSs
- 11. Use text chat
- 12. Use video chat
- 13. Practice to use online dictionary
- 14. Others

3. Interact with Japanese online

| 1) Do you use Internet to search for Japanese? | |
|---|--|
| Yes/No | |
| 2) Please answer this question if you chose "No" in 1) | |
| What is the reasons you do not interact with Japanese online? | Please choose all applicable answers for |
| you. | |

- 1. Because I do not know which websites I can find JNSs to interact with them.
- 2. Because I do not have a computer at home.
- 3. Because I do not have time to surf internet at home.
- 4. Because my Japanese proficiency level is not high, and it is difficult to interact with Japanese online.
- 5. Because I hesitate to interact with strangers online.
- 6. Because I think that interacting with Japanese online is not useful to improving my Japanese.
- 7. Because I prefer studying to raise my scores in JLPT and JPT rather than interacting with Japanese online.
- 8. Others (Please explain your answers.)

3) Please answer this questions if you chose "No" in 1)

Do you use websites to interact with Japanese if lecturers introduce websites that allow interaction with JNSs in Japanese classes?

Yes/No

4) Do you use videoconferencing applications to interact with Japanese using Japanese?

Yes/No

5) Please answer this question if you chose "No" in 4)

Why you do not engage in videoconferencing? Please choose all applicable answers for you.

- 1. Because I did not know such applications were available.
- 2. Because I do not have Japanese acquaintances to do videoconferencing with, although I have heard of "화상채팅" (videoconferencing).
- 3. Because I am busy.
- 4. Because I do not have a computer at home.
- 5. Because I do not have a microphone or a speaker at home.
- 6. Because my Japanese is not proficient enough to do videoconference with Japanese.
- 7. Because I believe preparing exams such as JLPT is better than do videoconferencing with Japanese.
- 8. Others (Please explain your answers.)