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Individual differences in second language acquisition: attitudes, learner subjectivity, and L2 pragmatic norms

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Abstract

Anecdotal reports from classroom language teachers suggest that students' professed positive attitudes towards learning English and their language-related behaviors often do not match. Many claim "interest" in the language and, when pushed to explain, the learners tend to state that "it is necessary" to study English for their future careers or for study abroad. Very few seem to be motivated to acculturate to the target language culture or norms of communication. These reports motivated my decision to look into the attitudes of EFL learners in the form of a study of individual differences, specifically, one which focuses on the relationship among attitudes, learner self-identity, and willingness to accommodate to L2 pragmatic norms. This paper reports on evidence of the extent Japanese EFL learners seek to adopt L2 communicative norms. The descriptive account explores learners' self-reports on attitudes towards the target language, subjective reactions to L2 pragmatic norms, and motivations towards accommodating to those norms. While the level of resistance to acquiring proficiency in the use of L2 pragmatic norms is not strong, the learners' accounts indicate their efforts to establish a L2 self-identity compatible with their own individual goals. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Anecdotal reports from classroom language teachers suggest that students' professed positive attitudes towards learning English and their language-related

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behaviors often do not match. Many claim “interest” in the language and, when pushed to explain, the learners tend to state that “it is necessary” to study English for their future careers or for study abroad. Very few seem to be motivated to acculturate to the target language culture or norms of communication. These reports motivated my decision to look into the attitudes of EFL learners in the form of a study of individual differences, specifically focusing on the relationship among attitudes, learner self-identity, and willingness to accommodate to L2 pragmatic norms.

Research on individual differences in second language acquisition (SLA), whether conducted from the perspective of traditional social-psychological theory and methodology (e.g. Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret, 1997) or social constructionist approaches (Peirce, 1995; Siegal, 1996; Wertsch, 1991), has sought to explain the relationship between socio-affective factors and second language acquisition. Early SLA research examined the role of attitudes and motivation in promoting language proficiency; much of that research (e.g. Gardner and Lambert, 1972) focused on target language proficiency in terms of grammatical accuracy, native-like pronunciation, and unexamined target language cultural norms. More recently, SLA researchers have become interested in the notion of pragmatic competence, clearly an important component of current definitions of successful language learning. The models of communicative competence of Canale (1983) and Bachman (1989), inspired by Hymes’ (1972) construct of sociolinguistic competence, are evidence of attempts to integrate L2 pragmatic norms and behavior into a theory of second/foreign language development. In conjunction with this expansion of what it means to know a language, questions arise with regards to individual differences and the role of attitudes, motivation, and learners’ willingness to adopt L2 standards for linguistic action.

However, the interaction between such factors and pragmatic development has only recently been addressed. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) acknowledged that learners’ willingness to adopt L2 pragmatics may be particularly sensitive to their attitudes towards the L2 target community and their motivation for learning a L2. In one recent study, Hinkel (1996) examined ESL learners’ knowledge of L2 pragmatic norms, their attitudes towards them, and their self-reported behaviors. She found that the non-native speakers’ recognition of L2 pragmatic norms was not matched by their willingness to adopt L2 communicative practices. In Macintyre, Clement, Dornyei and Noels (1998), an integrated analysis of linguistics, communicative, and social psychological variables is discussed in an attempt to account for willingness to communicate in a L2.

There is clearly a need for more research on relationships among attitudes and motivation, and pragmatic development. Whether one adopts Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model of integrative/ instrumental motivation, Brown’s (1990) extrinsic/intrinsic dichotomy, or Peirce’s (1995) construct of investment, the learners’ social identity, i.e. the construction of the self in the target language, is implicated. Do the learners want to integrate into the target language community, thereby implying acceptance of L2 pragmatic norms? Or do they resist and contest the reconstruction of the self which the integrative motive implies? If so, does such

resistance, explicit or implicit, introduce a stumbling block to their ability to adjust to, or even adopt the interaction patterns and linguistic action norms of the target language community? Does such resistance obstruct their language learning?

This paper reports on a study on the extent to which Japanese EFL learners seek to adopt L2 communicative norms. This descriptive account explores the learners' self-reports on attitudes towards the target language, subjective reactions to L2 pragmatic norms, and motivations towards accommodating to those norms. It comprises an aggregate, hypothesis-generating picture of EFL learners in Japan with regards to individual differences and accommodation to L2 communicative norms.

First of all, brief summaries of relevant contributions from the literature are presented, followed by a description of the methodology. The findings and discussion are in the third section. In the final section, conclusions and implications for classroom practices are considered

2. Literature review

According to Kasper and Schmidt (1996), “willingness” has been assumed by researchers and educators; however, there is a little empirical support for the assumption that L2 learners seek to achieve native-like competence. It would appear that the learner and SLA form a complex constellation of variables which interact with each other. The literature review addresses aspects of the theoretical framework adapted in this study.

2.1. *Learner subjectivity*

Social constructionist, learner subjectivity, and learner socialization approaches, originally concerned with first language acquisition (Ochs, 1993), have recently been applied to SLA research (e.g. Poole, 1992; Peirce, 1995; Siegal, 1996). As language learning involves the self-identity of the learner as an individual with a personal history and as a member of a group, a society, and a culture, the input provided may not become intake due to reasons that implicate the learner's beliefs and values as well as features of the sociocultural context. Gillette's (1994) study of the correlation of learner goals and L2 success demonstrated that “a learner's goal depends on a learner's social history and the use value ascribed to foreign languages in his or her environment” (p. 210). Peirce (1995, p. 12) directly challenges SLA theorists to integrate “a theory of social identity” into a more comprehensive view than has been the case so far in language learning, despite the fact that sociolinguists long ago provided ample evidence that language use and choice is a powerful means of identifying oneself as a member of a particular speech community.

2.2. *Attitudes and motivation*

The literature on attitudes and motivation is extensive (see Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; Oxford, 1996, among others). Only recently did Gardner,

Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) publish a study assessing the relationships among individual variables, finding substantial links between affective measures and achievement. Specifically, they measured correlations of attitudes, motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, aptitude, and learning strategies with achievement. Despite the more inclusive set of factors, the operationalization of individual difference features remains problematic. Potter and Wetherell (1987) claim that attitudes are not “enduring entities”. Further, informants’ notions of attitudes may not match the categories of the researchers; the status of the “object” which the attitude is said to assess may also not be viewed in the same way by researcher and informants. The connection between attitudes and behavior is notoriously difficult to predict and assess; social pressure from peers, for example, can radically change an individual’s attitude towards the “object” within the space of a classroom discussion.

Graham (1984) reviews assimilative motivation, contrasting it with definitions by Schuman (1978), Brown (1983), and Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). All attempt to provide a representation of the variables involved in SLA. Assimilative motivation is claimed to imply “that the learner desires to become an indistinguishable member of the target speech community” (Graham, 1984, p. 76). Further, Graham claims that such motivation is characteristic of learners who have “experienced prolonged contact with the target culture” (Graham, 1984, p. 77). Clearly, in the case of Japanese learners of English who have not resided in an English-speaking country, assimilative motivation as defined cannot be a useful analytical framework for a study in that EFL situation. However, one characteristic of assimilative motivation is of interest, specifically, the claim that the motivation to learn a second language appears to decrease in strength during adolescence. Baker (1992) found the same relationship with regards to the development of Welsh–English bilingualism in Wales amongst adolescents. A number of alternative explanations are offered by both Baker and Graham, mostly involving the effect of peer pressure. It must be kept in mind, nevertheless, that the research discussed by both authors refers to adolescents residing in the target language community and/or acquisition of the L2 by children.

Another approach to motivation has been suggested by Peirce (1995, p. 17); she claims that “investment” would be a more appropriate term, signaling that learners “invest” in learning a second language in order to increase their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). According to this view, “the notion of investment... attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world” (Peirce, 1995, p. 17). Further, rather than prioritizing acculturation to the L2 community, as many previous attitudes studies have done, the notion of investment focuses on the individuals’ self identity as the locus of concern. Analyzing language learning histories and diaries, Gillette (1994) concluded that language skills are viewed as either a valuable asset or an external imposition by language learners in her study. Clearly, language transmits referential or ideational content; however, it also carries out an interpersonal or integrative function, implying a L2 speaker’s desire to be viewed by co-participants as a competent user of the L2. However, particularly in non-target language community environments, native-like L2

competence may not be viewed as desirable; in fact, maintenance of one's first language identity may be a symbol of efforts to reject the hegemony of English in the world today (Hoffman, 1989)

2.3. Pragmatic development

The literature concerning the relationship of attitudes and L2 pragmatic ability is not extensive. Successful L2 language development has been assumed to involve grammatical competence, specifically language-based knowledge and competencies (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 285). Indeed, the word "competence", it is argued (see Gregg, 1993, cited in Firth and Wagner, 1997), denotes exclusively a formalistic, context-free linguistic knowledge, with contextual, interactive dimensions relegated to the performance aspect of Chomsky's dichotomy, performance and competence. This theory of language is being challenged (*Modern Language Journal*, 1997) and arguments are made (Hall, 1997) for a more inclusive SLA base which would comprise more "participant-relevant" (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 285) individual learner factors.

Attempts have been made to look at the actual teaching of L2 pragmatic behaviors (e.g. "Studies in Second Language Acquisition", 1996). However, studies on the effect of instruction are not numerous (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Kasper, 1997; Sato and Beecken, 1997). Bouton (1994) assessed the effect of instruction on the use of implicature by NNSs in an ESL context; his study, however, does not consider attitudes. More recently, Hinkel (1996) compared attitudes towards L2 pragmatic norms with self-reports of actual behaviors. Clearly, given the paucity of studies, there is a need to consider the role of attitudes in pragmatic development.

2.4. Rationale for current study

There is no question that the work of Gardner and his colleagues as well as that of many others who have contributed to building the considerable knowledge base in the field of attitudes and motivation constitute seminal contributions to the study of the relationships of attitudes, motivation, and language proficiency. Nevertheless, commenting on the results of studies conducted by himself and his associates (Schmidt, 1995), Schmidt (1996) stated that studies based only on a quantitative approach have not taken the field beyond what is already known. Research adopting qualitative techniques or a multi-dimensional methodology may generate insights into language learning closer to learners' views and interpretations. Both Peirce (1995) and Gillette (1994) are examples of the kinds of studies which are needed. Emphasis needs to be placed on obtaining individual learners' accounts with as little interference as possible from the researcher and the methods used to elicit them (Agar, 1996). The present study seeks to contribute to the development of the expansion of our understanding of individual differences by presenting ethnographic evidence collected in an English as a foreign language environment.

2.5. *Research questions*

There are two research questions which motivate the present study:

1. What is the evidence that learners seek to integrate into the target language community, thereby signaling a readiness to adopt L2 communicative norms?
2. What is the evidence that learners resist and contest the construction of the self which acceptance of the L2 pragmatic norms would entail?

Data from four sources were collected to generate answers to these questions.

3. **Methodology**

This section explains the methodology employed to collect ethnographic data from Japanese learners of English studying in Japan during the academic year 1997–1998. The purpose of the study is to provide hypothesis-generating data for future research on interactions between and among learner subjectivity, attitudes and motivation, and pragmatic development.

4. **Subjects**

The learners were students at International Christian University (ICU) in Mitaka, Japan. Most of them were in their first and second years, with third and fourth year students as well for the spring and winter term data collection. About one third of the informants were male, and two thirds female, reflecting the overall ratio of the student population at the university. TOEFL scores for ICU students over the past several years (figures for 1994) have been an average of 548, with a range of a low of 501 and a high of 593. All the third and fourth year students were majoring in languages and education. The first and second year learners came from a variety of majors; at the time of the data collection, they were all enrolled in an intensive English program.

4.1. *Data collection*

The data were collected in the context of four courses: Spring 1997, Attitudes and motivation in language learning (AMLL); Fall 1997, Pragmatics; and Winter, 1997–1998, Pronunciation, and Sophomore English (SE). The main purpose of the AMLL and Pragmatics courses was the development of a knowledge base in the fields. Although the language of instruction was English, the courses were not aimed at language proficiency development. Consequently, explicit teaching of L2 pragmatics did not figure directly as a course objective. Nevertheless, within the context of instruction, accommodation to the norms and expectations of the target language community and the social appropriateness of language use were explicitly addressed in the readings and discussion. The second aim was to activate the learners' thinking about the course content in tandem with their self identities and the degree to which

they would seek to acculturate to the target language community; the researcher as the teacher used an inductive approach. That is, she did not explicitly state the nature of the goal. Focus groups, reaction papers, and essays on exams enabled the researcher to collect evidence of their attitudes towards L2 pragmatics norms.

It was in the two Pronunciation classes that pragmatic norms were directly addressed in the form of language awareness-raising and comprehension tasks. One task adapted from a listening comprehension textbook (Jones and Kimbrough, 1987) involved six different speakers of English, two NSs and four NNSs, making airport announcements. A worksheet was developed to assess the learners' reactions to the different types of accents. Second, two video-based lessons targeted segments of the film, "The Rising Sun" (Bryce, Connery and Kaufman, 1993), to focus on attitudes towards the language used by two actors who are Japanese speakers of English and the enactment of linguistic politeness and use of related speech acts in the film. Finally, video clips from another film, "It could happen to you" (Adelson, Hartwick, Baumgarten and Lobell, 1994), were used to draw attention to and teach the enactment of the speech acts of arguing, calming a person, and expressing understatement. The learners developed role plays to reuse the language and the communication strategies for the speech acts.

Awareness of pragmatic norms was also addressed in the context of the SE class; the course syllabus involved the use of Tannen's (1986) "That's Not What I Meant", not only to teach language through content, but also to learn about gender-related, situationally appropriate communication strategies. In addition to reading the book and class discussions on the topics, the students wrote essays on their own efforts to change their behavior with members of the opposite sex. Their final projects required they give group presentations; they presented their analyses of film clips or of data they had collected of gender-based language use. Although the course did not focus on any particular target language norms, the aim was to develop awareness of appropriacy of language use.

4.2. Data collection procedures

Due to the impossibility of using one particular class for experimental treatments and data-collection, the four different courses and classes served as opportunities to elicit the learners' views on their attitudes towards the target language, their identities as English language learners, and their reactions to expectations that they accept L2 pragmatic norms.

In the AMLL course, the 34 students were asked to write their reactions to in-class essay prompts six times during the 10-week term as part of the syllabus. They were given 20 min to comment in English on the topics, all of which were directly related to what would be or had already been studied in the course. In addition, both mid-term and final exam essays included opportunities for the learners to provide accounts of their attitudes.

In the Pragmatics course, following the final week of lectures, and a reading on learner subjectivity, the 33 students engaged in focus group discussions, prompted by a worksheet which sought to elicit their awareness of their self identities as EFL

learners. The content of the discussions, in English or Japanese, was tape-recorded, transcribed, and then summarized. In addition, the informants were asked to write on the topic of “whose pragmatic norms”.

In the context of the Pronunciation classes for first year students ($n=36$), five language awareness worksheets were developed. Video- and audio-tapes of native and non-native speakers of English were employed to increase their awareness that speaking “properly” includes more than improving their pronunciation and intonation contours. The learners’ worksheets were analyzed to assess the extent to which they were aware of situationally appropriate language. The final class included focus groups to discuss the following topics: (1) attitudes towards the language awareness tasks; (2) attitudes towards the pronunciation lessons; and (3) the importance to them personally of learning English, especially for their futures. It was judged that, without directly asking them about pragmatic norms, their attitudes towards them, and their study of situationally appropriate language, the learners would be likely to produce talk in which they would divulge their attitudes and motivation towards L2 pragmatics.

Finally, an attitudes and motivation questionnaire (see Appendix) was administered to the learners in the pronunciation classes and the SE class in the winter term, giving a sample size of 43. The questionnaire is a modified version of Baker’s (1992), used in his work with Welsh students in Wales.

In sum, the data sources used in this current study are: (1) two tape-recorded group discussions, summarized; (2) essays and reaction papers; (3) language awareness worksheets; and (4) questionnaire results.

4.3. Data analysis procedures

A content analysis was carried out on all of the data collected from the group discussions, essays, and language awareness worksheets. Recurring themes (Words, L2 culture, and Identity concerns: see Section 7) and comments which would provide insights into the informants’ perceptions, attitudes, and subject positions were isolated. The questionnaire results are a quantitative source, that is, alternate input, to contribute towards a composite view of the learners’ attitudes, self-identity, and awareness of L2 pragmatic norms.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Research question No. 1

1. What is the evidence that learners seek to integrate into the target language community, thereby signaling a readiness to adopt L2 communicative norms?

5.1.1. Language awareness worksheets

The Language Awareness worksheets reveal attitudinal tendencies. One exercise assessed their general attitudes towards NNS accents in English. The learners

listened to a tape with six different speakers of English, two NSs and four NNSs, and they were asked to guess the L1 of each speaker. One of the NNS speakers was an L1 Japanese speaker. Second, they were asked to rate each speaker along the following semantic differential scales:

Easy to understand- - -	- -Difficult to understand
Pleasant to listen to- - -	- -Unpleasant to listen to
Sophisticated- - - - -	- - - - - Unsophisticated
Intelligent- - - - -	- - - - - Not intelligent
Friendly- - - - -	- - - - - -Not friendly

This matched guise approach was employed to elicit out-of-awareness attitudes. All of the 36 informants indicated that the Japanese speaker was easy to understand and friendly, but unpleasant to listen to, not sophisticated, and not intelligent.

The third exercise asked them to state which of the six speakers they would like to be if they could and to give reasons. Only 33 of the 36 answered this question and out of those 33, 21 wished to be like the Canadian speaker, with six wishing to be like the American. Only one of the 33 said being the Japanese was “okay”. This demonstration of out-of-awareness negative attitudes towards Japanese speakers of English is revealing; in particular, in the context of the current study, the negative view of fellow speakers of the L2 suggests a desire to learn English well enough to avoid the stigma of speaking Japanized English.

In sum, the data collected reveal a positive orientation towards learning English, which is assumed to be an indicator that students would seek to learn the language to be pragmatically proficient. However, it should be noted that such an orientation does not necessarily result in goal-oriented behavior to achieve a high degree of pragmatic ability in the language.

5.1.2. Questionnaire results

Some evidence from the questionnaire results (see Appendix) is relevant to the present study. Part 2 of the questionnaire asked the informants to indicate which activities on a list of 22 items would involve them in the use of English. On a four-point Likert scale, they indicated how important or unimportant English would be for them to do certain activities. Only those activities selected by more than 20 informants are discussed.

For statements regarded as Important, 32 (74%) of the 43 respondents selected two, No. 18 “To work abroad,” and No. 11 “To live in a country where English is spoken.” The next most frequently chosen items were No. 17 “To travel abroad,” (30 or 70%) and No. 16 “To go to graduate school” (28 or 65%). These four choices all involve activities outside Japan (i.e. “graduate school” tends to connote study abroad). Two additional items selected by more than 20 of the 43 informants were: No. 2 “To get good grades” (22 or 51%), and No. 21 “To be successfully academically” (23 or 54%). These two reflect informants’ concerns at ICU, a bilingual Japanese-English institution.

Under “A little important,” the most frequently chosen items were No. 19 “To work in Japan” (25 or 58%), No. 2 “To earn plenty of money” (24 or 56%), and, chosen by 23 (53%) each, No. 5 “To become cleverer” and No. 13 “To be successful in life”. These statements demonstrate the informants’ interest in employment in Japan where pressure to employ Japanese-English bilinguals has increased in the business world. The only item rated as “Unimportant” by 19 out of the 43 informants (44%) was No. 6 “To be liked”. The general tendency revealed in the questionnaire data is that English language proficiency would serve instrumental purposes with the signaling of some concern with self-identity.

Part 3 of the questionnaire required the informants indicate degrees of agreement or disagreement with statements about the English language. Under Agreement, i.e. either strong agreement or agreement, 10 items were selected by more than 20 respondents. The two most frequently chosen were: No. 4 “I’d like to speak English fluently” (43 or 100%) and No. 19 “Speaking both Japanese and English helps people to get promotions” (33 or 77%). Thirty (70%) indicated that Japanese people should speak English (No. 20), while 39 (91%) acknowledged “English is an international language” (No. 24). Other statements selected were No. 1, that they liked hearing English spoken (30 or 70%) and No. 15, that if one is bilingual, it is easier to get a job (37 or 86%). Further, 42 (98%) agreed with No. 7, that “English is a language worth learning,” 22 (51%) would like their children to speak English (No. 12), and then 31 (72%) consider it important to be able to speak English (No. 13).

As for Disagreement (that is, disagree or strongly disagree), the most frequently chosen items demonstrated support for the learning of English for instrumental purposes. The informants disagree with the following: No. 8 “English has no place in the world” (39 or 90%); No. 3 “It’s a waste of time to study English” (41 or 95%); No. 28 “Any other European language is as useful as English” (23 or 54%). Further, 39 of the 43 respondents (91%) strongly disagreed with the statement No. 30 “Knowing another language well might cause me to lose my Japanese identity.”

The questionnaire results suggest the informants in this study have, overall, a positive view of the target language and of the value of proficiency in English for themselves and other Japanese as well. They see connections between English language ability and their future careers, graduate study, travel and living abroad.

In order to assess the informants’ concerns relating to their self-identities and the target language, the following items in Part 2 were coded as relevant to this factor: 1, 5, 13, 14, 15, and 21 (see Appendix). These seven statements were judged to reflect possible issues of self-identity as a non-native speaker of English, based on feedback from native Japanese informants involved in the study. Thirty-three indicated that they considered English to be important (16 or 37%) or a little important (19 or 44%) with regards to making friends (No. 1). Similar responses were observed for No. 5 (“to become cleverer”) with 27 (67%) responding that English was important to some degree. For items Nos. 13, 14, and 15, English is viewed as important “to be successful in life,” (32 or 79%) “to be regarded as sophisticated” (27 or 63%), and “to be regarded as educated” (29 or 68%). The final item, No. 21, which asks

how important English is with regards to academic success, 23 (54%) thought it was important and 14 (33%) a little important. Clearly, English is implicated in the Japanese learners' self-image and in their academic and future careers.

Further questionnaire items related to learners' self identities are found in Part 3, items 4, 10, 12, 14, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, and 30. However, on only three of the items did the informants' responses reach 20 or more. Item No. 4, "I'd like to speak English fluently," all 43 respondents indicated strong agreement (31 or 72%) or simple agreement (12 or 28%). For No. 12, regarding their desire to have their potential children speak English, six (14%) said that they strongly agreed, while 16 (37%) indicated they agreed. Finally, for No. 22, five (12%) strongly agreed that "to be able to speak English is important to be cosmopolitan" and 16 (37%) agreed. With regards to attitudes towards whether or not they would like to have been born a native English speaker, only seven (16%) agreed, with two (5%) strongly agreeing that it would be desirable (No. 21). When asked if they think it is important to learn to behave like a native speaker of English (No. 25) when studying English, only two (5%) agreed strongly, with five (12%) agreeing. Finally, item 30, which asks if "knowing another language well might cause me to lose my Japanese identity," only one (2%) strongly agreed, with 22 (51%) strongly disagreeing and 17 (40%) disagreeing. Again, the picture which emerges is that of the learners' viewing English proficiency through a prism of instrumental goals, with rather clear attitudes towards their Japanese identity as something apart. This can be seen particularly in items 25 and 30.

With regards to willingness to adopt L2 pragmatic norms, the following items in Part 2 only were coded as relevant: No. 8 ("to talk to friends in school"), No. 9 ("to talk to teachers in school"), No. 10 ("to talk to people outside of school"), No. 11 ("to live in a country where English is spoken), and No. 18 ("to work abroad"). With four of these items, English was regarded as important or a little important by more than 20 of the informants: Nos. 8, 9, 11, and 18. Their responses reflect a realistic assessment of their environment: a bilingual Japanese–English university surrounded by a Japanese-speaking only community. The highest figures were for No. 18 (42 or 97%) and No. 9 (39 or 91% as important to some degree).

Clearly, the respondents consider English to be important to their current and future lives. Nevertheless, their concerns are decidedly instrumental and they do not appear to feel their Japanese identity would be threatened by English language proficiency.

5.2. *Research question No. 2*

2. What is the evidence that learners resist and contest the construction of the self which acceptance of the L2 pragmatic norms would entail?

5.2.1. *Informant accounts*

Learner accounts from the summary/reaction papers in the Pragmatics course demonstrate both positive attitudes as well as some resistance to the learning of a second language. First of all, several of the learners expressed opinions which

indicate that becoming like a native English speaker would be desirable. The following accounts are unedited, direct quotations from four informants:

Wanting to become like a native speaker can't possibly have negative effects.

I've liked English. It's because everything good or new seemed to be from USA. Although my English is far from that of native speakers now, I got some Mid-western accent, which some Americans recognize while talking. That is when I feel that I am *kind of* native Midwesterner, which is my pleasure.

I also think that the fact that I am eager to speak like a native speaker, which has not achieved yet, helps me to improve my English.

Necessity is not enough. Desire is important.

The following quotation comes from a learner who had gone to the USA for the last year of high school.

First, learning to speak English was just a way to "survive" in that situation. I had to learn to speak in order to go to the bathroom, etc. But as time went by, I wanted to speak so that I could get along with other people. . . Otherwise, I'd be in ESL classes forever and not have any native friends.

However, not all of the informants expressed positive attitudes. Here are accounts from seven different students.

There are more than one set of pragmatic norms for English speakers, because those who use English as mother tongue have difference backgrounds.

I still have to study English, but I'm not obsessed, feeling negative about my ability in English.

I'm proud that I'm Japanese and that would never be changed. Even if I could speak English fluently as a native speaker, my personality and characteristics of Japanese won't change.

Somehow we may have to change our way of thinking when we speak foreign language and it's necessary. But it doesn't mean that we throw our own identities out, instead, we should keep "ourselves." It's completely impossible to become a perfect native speaker and it's unnatural. . . One may come to think about one's own identity when speaking the language and aware of importance of existence of the learner at the core.

The desire to be like a native speaker might discourage the learner later because fluency and accuracy of sounds are not something you can be perfect with. Just

wanting to read a novel in the original language or to watch a movie without subtitles will make a good motivation, too.

I myself have motivation in learning a language. It's to express "myself", not to become like a someone in other culture.

What would you do with your first language and its identity? Should you throw it away and head for a new one? I don't think it is possible to erase your first identity even how hard you try.

Obviously, these are accounts from learners at one university in Tokyo and, consequently, generalizations to other populations cannot be made. However, the learners' statements do give a view of what may be the tip of a large iceberg. Two themes were mentioned frequently: (1) the fact that each culture or region has its own norms and (2) that it is impossible to operate with just one norm. The second theme, in particular, co-occurred with comments that one must adjust to the other people or group in a particular interaction. Several cited concern about NS interlocutors and claimed that the ability to adjust depended on personality, level of motivation, and confidence. They predicted that a person would feel "uncomfortable" in going from one country to another and noted that it is difficult to establish norms as they perceived there is an underlying problem of discrimination. Finally, several revealed frustrations about not being understood in cross-cultural contact situations despite efforts to accommodate to local norms.

6. Focus groups

As for the focus groups at end of the Pragmatics course, the content analysis (Agar, 1996) of the summarized tape-recorded data generated three recurring themes: (1) words, (2) L2 culture, and (3) identity concerns. The three themes are listed below with summary statements from the informants' accounts.

6.1. *Words*

- Language proficiency is more than just words in dictionaries: NNSs must understand "images of words" in the L2.
- If words borrowed from Japanese are used, this could lead to failure to be understood.

6.2. *L2 Culture*

- There is a need to learn the culture of the L2: otherwise, "our grammar and pronunciation may be fine, but pragmatic failure may occur."
- There is a willingness to study about the TL culture; but the strength of the willingness is related to the level of motivation of the learner.

6.3. *Identity concerns*

- There may be a change of personality from one culture to another; the change is related to the power differences between the two cultures, which may result in a lack of self-confidence.
- There is an awareness of the reactions of listeners when learners use the L2; the learners may attempt to interact in a new way in reaction to the power differences between the NSs and the NNSs.
- There is an awareness of language transfer from one L to another, from one culture to another.
- Two informants felt that a person's name is an expression of him/herself; a NNS may feel she is "denied" if there are strong or bad meanings connected with her name. Here is a direct quotation from one of the informants.

In Italian, boy's name usually ends with 'o' sound and girl's name with 'a' sound. My name ends with 'o' sound and I really hated it. It didn't decrease my motivation to learn the language, but I didn't want them to call me by my name.

- There was a concern expressed about not being able to feel comfortable, to be oneself in the L2:

I speak Japanese in a rather sharp tone. I take French course, but I feel I can't do that. French sounds very soft, but it is not my way of speaking.

Finally, from the focus groups in the Pronunciation class come these direct, unedited quotations; the second is a rhetorical question posed by one of the three learners.

We don't have to pronounce exactly like English native speakers, but to make them understand, it's very important.

Why do we have to communicate with people from other countries?

We don't need perfect abilities of more than two languages. We can communicate with incomplete ability.

6.3.1. *Language awareness worksheets*

Examples in this data source indicate actual resistance to accommodating to NS pragmatic norms. In the Language Awareness task cited above, the one learner who chose to be like the Japanese speaker gave the following reason: "I think it's good enough to communicate with people in English." Still another learner wrote: "If one learns for business, it is not necessary to speak like a native speaker. For one, the target language is only a tool for one's business."

6.3.2. *Essays*

In the AMLL course, the 38 students wrote their reactions to an essay prompt about the "best" type of motivation to have in learning a L2. In all of the essays,

there were numerous comments about their self identity as learners. The informants commented on the demotivating influence on learners once they realize they cannot attain NS level of proficiency in the L2, and they wrote of their desire to become members of the English speaking “community” without becoming like NSs of English. With regards to integrative motivation, one learner wrote: “I think this is not the best one. One should keep his own cultural background. Without it, he/she will easily lose his/her identity.”

7. Conclusion

The various data sources have generated an aggregate picture of the informants as having an overall positive, yet instrumental orientation towards the learning of English as a foreign language. Further, there is evidence of a keen awareness of socio-affective dimensions of SLA, in particular motivation, self-identity, and the L2 culture. Nevertheless, resistance to convergence towards NS behaviors and L2 communicative expectations is apparent with at least some of the learners, although the extent of the resistance in the collected data is not strong. Desire to become like a NS of English, which is assumed by Gardner’s socio-educational model of motivation as the key to successful L2 language proficiency, may not be the underlying source of positive orientation towards the L2. The results suggest that individual differences, specifically attitudes, motivation, and learner self-identity, may influence and constrain the willingness to adopt NS standards for linguistic action. Many favor retaining their own identities as Japanese, suggesting it as inappropriate for them to accommodate to the L2 pragmatic norms.

Given the results of the present study as well as the findings of other studies such as that of Peirce (1995) cited above, a revision of the current theoretical framework is warranted. In particular, the components of motivation in Gardner’s socio-educational model need to be expanded to give a greater role to individual differences, particularly those related to a learner’s identity as a NNS of the target language. Perhaps as a result of the massive world-wide movement towards adoption of English as the language of wider communication and the threat of hegemonic tendencies on the part of the native English speaking world that many countries consequently experience, the issue of constructing an identity that includes being a competent speaker of English while retaining one’s L1 and the L1 culture needs to be recognized as an important contributing factor in the attainment of successful language proficiency. To do otherwise smacks of neo-colonial and hegemonic pretensions.

8. Applications

Although the informants expressed generally positive attitudes towards the target language and have realistic, instrumental goals for themselves, the next step, from a pedagogical point of view, is to seek means to activate those attitudes so that

motivation is heightened and expanded in the classroom environment. One student commented as follows:

I learned pronunciation in junior high school, but I don't know if it helped me. We didn't have chance to listen to actual conversation between native speakers. We practiced pronunciation but we could not imagine how they speak actually. It's a problem of Japanese English education.

It is possible that teachers, teaching practices, and materials are demotivating to the extent that, even with the most positive, though instrumental attitudes, pragmatic competence remains underdeveloped. The author is not assuming that attitudes are a sole predictor of pragmatic ability; however, the argument throughout this paper is that attitudes and motivational level are contributing factors. Classroom research is needed to document carefully what happens with regards to pragmatic development and what practices can promote it. Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay and Thananart (1997) make the claim that, in foreign language teaching contexts, explicit teaching of pragmatic routines is needed and evidence that it can be successful.

In addition to attention to teaching approaches, what also appears to be needed is greater attention to the social, historical, and ideological context of the language acquisition or learning process. For example, when Japanese learners of English state that they "love English", the researcher needs to know what that statement means in their terms. McGroarty (1996) surveys language attitudes and motivation in the context of standards in both second and foreign language environments and acknowledges the need for educators to increase their awareness of learners' needs to have their L1 respected while, at the same time, develop their skills in the L2.

Another area of pedagogical importance concerns the evaluation of learners' pragmatic ability. McNamara (1997) suggests that language testing should adopt a social perspective in order to formulate appropriate testing instruments to evaluate performance, specifically, interactions between individuals.

Finally, better understanding of how successful language learners construct their self identities as speakers/writers of second languages would inform teaching practices. More classroom-centered research utilizing individual accounts is needed as well as studies which take a social psychological perspective. Such constructs as accommodation, intergroup, and ethnolinguistic identity theories may enlighten our studies, leading to a more participant-sensitive pedagogy for pragmatic development.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

n = 43

Part 1

Listed below are some of the things people of your age do when not in school. Please answer each one in terms of whether you do these. Check your chosen answer.

Check column 1 if you do the activity Very Often, No. 2 if you do it Fairly Often, No. 3 if you do it Sometimes, No. 4 if you do it Rarely, and No. 5 if you Never do it.

Note that the respondents were not required to select all of the items in this part and so the sample size varies between 30 and 43. The figures in parentheses are the percentages.

	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5
1. Play sports	7 (17)	3 (7)	14 (33)	12 (29)	6 (14)
2. Watch TV/Videos	14 (33)	13 (31)	14 (33)	1 (2)	0 (0)
3. Read newspapers	9 (22)	9 (22)	13 (32)	9 (22)	1 (2)
4. Read books out of school	14(33)	17 (40)	8 (19)	3 (7)	1 (2)
5. Read magazines/comics	9 (20)	12 (27)	11 (25)	10 (23)	2 (5)
6. Go to discos	1 (2)	1 (2)	4 (10)	9 (22)	26 (63)
7. Play records/cassettes/CDs	29 (71)	7 (17)	3 (7)	0 (0)	2 (5)
8. Practice a hobby	17 (40)	12 (29)	7 (17)	4 (10)	2 (5)
9. Spend time with men your age	11 (26)	10 (24)	14 (33)	5 (12)	2 (5)
10. Spend time with women your age	13 (31)	12 (29)	10 (24)	5 (12)	2 (5)
11. Go shopping	6 (14)	15 (35)	17 (40)	5 (12)	0 (0)
12. Go to a library	6 (15)	12 (29)	11 (27)	5 (12)	7 (17)
13. Do nothing much	3 (7)	5 (12)	20 (48)	7 (17)	7 (17)
14. Take part in a club activity	11 (26)	8 (19)	9 (21)	7 (17)	7 (17)
15. Go to a concert	1 (2)	4 (10)	12 (29)	17 (40)	8 (19)
16. Watch sports	2 (5)	2 (5)	18 (45)	13 (33)	5 (13)
17. Go to a movie theatre	2 (5)	13 (30)	11 (26)	13 (30)	4 (9)
18. Part time work	3 (7)	12 (29)	7 (17)	10 (24)	9 (22)
19. Travel abroad	0 (0)	7 (18)	7 (18)	17 (43)	9 (23)
20. Attend events	2 (5)	2 (5)	13 (32)	15 (37)	9 (22)
21. Other	5 (17)	3 (10)	13 (43)	4 (13)	5 (17)

Use this space to give more complete answers to the following questions:

8. What is your hobby?
18. What kind of part time work do you do?
19. If you travel abroad, where do you go?
21. Other: please specify:

Part 2

How important or unimportant is English for you to do the following? There are no right or wrong answers.

Indicate whether it was Important (Column No. 1), A Little Important (Column No. 2), A little Unimportant (Column No. 3), or Unimportant (Column No. 4).

	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4
1. To make friends	16 (37)	19 (44)	6 (14)	2 (5)
2. To earn plenty of money	9 (21)	24 (56)	9 (21)	1 (2)
3. To watch TV/videos	17 (40)	18 (42)	6 (14)	2 (5)
4. To get a job	20 (47)	18 (42)	5 (14)	0 (0)
5. To become cleverer	5 (14)	23 (53)	10 (23)	5 (14)
6. To be liked	1 (2)	10 (23)	13 (30)	19 (44)
7. To pass exams	19 (44)	19 (44)	3 (7)	2 (5)
8. To talk to friends in school	7 (16)	16 (37)	12 (28)	8 (19)
9. To talk to teachers in school	20 (47)	19 (44)	3 (7)	1 (2)
10. To talk to people outside of school	5 (14)	10 (23)	17 (40)	11 (26)
11. To live in a country where English is spoken	32 (74)	9 (21)	2 (5)	0 (0)
12. To get good grades	22 (51)	10 (23)	7 (16)	4 (9)
13. To be successful in life	11 (26)	23 (53)	8 (19)	1 (2)
14. To be regarded as sophisticated	6 (14)	21 (49)	6 (14)	10 (23)
15. To be regarded as educated	9 (21)	20 (47)	7 (16)	7 (16)
16. To go to graduate school	28 (65)	6 (14)	7 (16)	2 (5)
17. To travel abroad	30 (70)	13 (30)	0 (0)	0 (0)
18. To work abroad	32 (74)	10 (23)	1 (2)	0 (0)
19. To work in Japan	10 (23)	25 (58)	6 (14)	2 (5)
20. To keep up with class work	22 (51)	17 (40)	4 (9)	0 (0)
21. To be successful academically	23 (54)	14 (33)	6 (14)	0 (0)

Part 3

Here are some statements about the English language. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as possible. Answer with ONE of the following choices.

Column No. 1: Strongly Agree

Column No. 2: Agree

Column No. 3: Neither Agree nor Disagree

Column No. 4: Disagree

Column No. 5: Strongly Disagree

	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5
1. I like hearing English spoken.	10 (23)	20 (47)	12 (28)	1 (2)	0 (0)
2. I prefer to watch TV in English than in Japanese.	2 (5)	4 (9)	20 (47)	17 (40)	0 (0)
3. It's a waste of time to learn English.	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5)	13 (30)	28 (65)

4. I'd like to speak English fluently.	31 (72)	12 (28)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
5. English is a difficult language to learn.	1 (2)	13 (30)	14 (33)	11 (26)	4 (9)
6. There are more useful languages to learn than English.	0 (0)	3 (7)	26 (60)	11 (26)	3 (7)
7. English is a language worth learning.	22 (51)	20 (47)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
8. English has no place in the modern world.	0 (0)	1 (2)	3 (7)	10 (23)	29 (67)
9. Children should not be made to learn English.	3 (7)	7 (16)	14 (33)	14 (33)	5 (12)
10. You are considered a higher class person if you speak English.	3 (7)	12 (28)	9 (21)	13 (30)	6 (14)
11. In future, I would like to marry an English speaker.	0 (0)	3 (7)	23 (53)	10 (23)	7 (16)
12. If I have children, I would like them to be English speaking.	6 (14)	16 (37)	15 (35)	4 (9)	2 (5)
13. It is important to be able to speak English.	13 (30)	18 (42)	10 (23)	2 (5)	0 (0)
14. Knowing English makes people cleverer.	1 (2)	9 (21)	13 (30)	14 (33)	6 (14)
15. Speaking both Japanese and English helps one get a job.	16 (37)	21 (49)	4 (9)	2 (5)	0 (0)
16. It will cause problems if English is introduced into the primary schools.	4 (9)	10 (23)	8 (19)	16 (37)	5 (12)
17. People who speak Japanese and English have more friends than those who speak only Japanese.	5 (12)	8 (19)	12 (28)	11 (26)	7 (16)
18. I respect people who speak both Japanese and English.	5 (12)	11 (26)	16 (37)	8 (19)	3 (7)
19. Speaking both Japanese and English helps people get promotions in their jobs.	5 (12)	28 (65)	6 (14)	4 (9)	0 (0)
20. It is preferable for Japanese people to be able to speak English.	6 (14)	24 (56)	11 (26)	2 (5)	0 (0)
21. If it were possible, I would prefer to have been born an English speaker.	2 (5)	7 (16)	10 (23)	11 (26)	13 (30)
22. To be able to speak English is important to be cosmopolitan.	5 (12)	16 (37)	15 (35)	6 (14)	1 (2)
23. People who speak English fluently are well-educated.	3 (7)	4 (9)	14 (33)	14 (33)	8 (19)
24. English is the international language.	16 (37)	23 (54)	3 (7)	1 (2)	0 (0)
25. When we study English, we need to learn to behave like its native speakers.	2 (5)	5 (12)	12 (28)	15 (35)	9 (21)
26. The Japanese Prime Minister should give a speech in English when he is in the country where English is spoken.	4 (9)	7 (16)	10 (23)	15 (35)	7 (16)

27. To be sophisticated, one must speak English.	0 (0)	6 (14)	6 (14)	16 (37)	15 (35)
28. It is not necessary to study English; any other European language (for example, French or Spanish) will do.	0 (0)	7 (16)	13 (30)	21 (49)	2 (5)
29. It is not necessary to study English: another Asian language (Korean or Chinese) would be just as important.	1 (2)	6 (14)	16 (37)	17 (40)	3 (7)
30. Knowing another language well might cause me to lose my Japanese identity.	1 (2)	0 (0)	3 (7)	17 (40)	22 (51)

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