Learners' language management in internet-based communication with Japanese peers

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This paper reports on an empirical analysis of the language management strategies of Australian learners of Japanese in Internet communication with their Japanese native-speaking peers, in order to evaluate the interpersonal and technological factors that contribute to learner noting processes. The paper makes use of the language management model, including the concept of "noting", to explore learners' Internet communication, not only in terms of occurrence of noting and perceptions of norm deviations on the micro-level, but also the impact of macro-level language planning in Internet communities.

Keywords: internet, Japanese, language management, noting, online communication

Introduction

While the majority of research on contact situations has focused on face-to-face communication, recently Internet communication tools, such as email, chat, blogs and social network sites have created opportunities for what Yoon (2004) describes as "distant" contact situations. Such situations differ slightly from Neustupný's original definition of the contact situation, which is characterised in part by a "particular setting (time and space)" (1985: 44). This may vary in Internet communication. These computer-mediated contact situations have been widely claimed to provide opportunities for language learning due to increased chances for interaction with native speakers. In particular, many researchers and educators have claimed that Internet communication affords opportunities for the noting and evaluation of deviations, which in turn may lead to adjustment in the form of negotiation of meaning, conversational repair, or dictionary use, possibly resulting in language learning (Hashimoto, 2006; Jepson, 2005; Smith, 2003, 2004). However, while many researchers have identified such opportunities in Internet

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communication, it certainly does not follow that learners always note norm deviations, or, indeed, decide to make any adjustment when they do. The majority of studies thus far have not sufficiently probed learners' underlying language management processes, relying instead on surface level management evident in their written communication. Furthermore, aside from a large body of work relating to the dominance of English on the Internet, there has been very little attention paid to the influence of macro-level language planning engaged in by large corporations and virtual communities on the micro-level management of individuals.

A large number of studies on computer mediated communication (CMC) within the field of applied linguistics have centred on concepts related to negotiation of meaning. Negotiation of meaning is classified by Miyazaki (2001) as a subset of language management adjustment. Within the body of research on negotiation of meaning, a number of variables have been found to affect the occurrence and frequency of negotiation. For instance, individual, cultural and background differences were found to affect the frequency of negotiation in Hashimoto's (2006) study, in addition to language-specific factors. Smith (2003) also investigated computer-mediated contact situations between non-native speakers of English and found that almost one-third of turns were negotiation. However, Hashimoto cites a number of studies that show most cases of negotiation of meaning on the Internet are caused by lexical confusion (Blake, 2000; Kitade, 2000; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Tudini, 2003). In a subsequent publication, Smith (2004) claimed that learners' negotiation of meaning using Internet communication was extremely effective, and that learners also provided pre-emptive input for helping their partners to learn a new word. Comparing text and voice chat rooms, Jepson (2005) also found that potential learning opportunities were created by repair or adjustments in both types of chat rooms, and suggested that teachers may want to direct their learners to CMC for out-of-class language use, which is the focus of the current research. Despite a number of authors suggesting the potential benefits of the social use of CMC, out-of-classroom situations have generally been under researched.

In addition to out-of-classroom situations, further research in the growing area of Internet-based intercultural communication is necessary. In some more or less obvious ways, contact situations on the Internet differ from traditional face-to-face contact situations. One such comparison was drawn by Kötter (2003), who investigated the communication between students from classes at a German and a North American university. Analysis of the logs from student discussions revealed that there was a difference between repair in Internet discussions and the results from research on comparable face-to-face situations. One difference was the absence of repetitions, which are unnecessary in a text-based environment.

The potential of Internet-based intercultural interaction to provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning is also viewed positively by Shekary and Tahririan

(2006). The authors found that learners did focus on form in their chat sessions as instructed, and in fact retained 56.7% of the noticed forms in a delayed post-test. However, it is important to bear in mind that participants in this particular study were explicitly instructed to negotiate for meaning, so it is unclear what level of language management would occur naturally in a social setting. In fact, like the majority of research on language learners' use of CMC, the studies outlined above took place in an institutional (classroom or laboratory) setting. Furthermore, studies which concentrate on negotiation of meaning to the exclusion of other processes have been criticised for their narrow focus. Miyazaki (2001) argues that a broader analysis of adjustment processes is necessary, including single adjustments, in which deviations are corrected in one attempt, complex adjustments, in which multiple single adjustments are chained together, and negotiation, in which adjustments are sequentially expanded. Most negotiation studies focus exclusively on single adjustments, failing to recognize the importance of sequence (Miyazaki, 2001). Consequentially, although CMC is widely promoted as beneficial for raising awareness of forms and language learning, the language management processes of learners in social interactions on the Internet are for the most part unknown.

The present study demonstrates the application of the language management model to research CMC. The paper reports on an empirical analysis of Australian learners' language management strategies in Internet communication with their Japanese native-speaking peers, in order to evaluate the interpersonal and technological factors that contribute to learner noting processes. What language problems occur, and how they are managed (when, and by whom) are the main focuses of the first section. The paper then concludes with a discussion of language management on the Internet at both the micro level, in concrete interactions and at the macro, societal level.

Conceptual framework

The study uses Neustupný's (1985) language management model, developed by J.V. Neustupný and Jernudd (see B.H. Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987) to explore learners' Internet communication, in terms of occurrence of noting and perceptions of norm deviations. The various adjustment processes that learners engage in, which may develop their language competence, are also examined. As Jernudd (2000) points out, all language management acts are positive, in that they help to enable continued communication.

According to the language management model, interaction can be seen as patterns of behaviour called 'norms'. Deviations from these norms may be noted by one or more participants, or else remain unnoted. Subsequently, noted norms

are evaluated negatively, neutrally, or even positively, and finally, adjustment of a negatively evaluated deviation may be planned and implemented. In contact situations, the norms of more than one system are present in a particular context, thus adding to the complexity of the interaction (Neustupný, 2004).

Like traditional face-to-face contact situations, what differentiates "distant" contact situations from native situations (where participants share a native language and culture) is the frequency and type of deviations, and the processes that deal with these deviations. The language management framework facilitates the examination of deviations that are noted, and those which remain, as well as participants' attitudes or evaluations of deviations, and their selection of corrective adjustment strategies, usually in the case of a negative evaluation.

'Participant' is used here instead of 'speaker' due to the controversy surrounding the categorization of CMC language as 'spoken' or 'written' (cf. Baron, 1998, 2001; Crystal, 2006). The term participant is applicable across a wide variety of text-based and audio-based Internet communication tools, and, as such, is employed here. However, it is important to note that the language management model is equally applicable to spoken and written language (see Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005). Pausing to think (about word choice, spelling, flow), erasing and rewriting are examples of written language management processes (Björn H. Jernudd, 2000) which also occur in virtual settings.

One of the main benefits of this framework is the ability to examine both surface and underlying evaluative behaviour (Marriott, 2003). While the majority of studies on learners' use of CMC have relied upon surface corrections evident in the transcripts of learners' Internet communication, the present study, as described below, uses the language management framework to also frame and examine interviews with learners, from which evidence of other management processes (including avoidance of communication) can be gained.

Methodology

In order to examine learners' language management processes in Internet-based contact situations between speakers of Japanese and English, 12 Australian university students (six females and six males, aged between 18 and 28 years) and their Japanese interlocutors were asked to record their naturally occurring Internet communication over a data collection period of several months. In most cases, the computer programs that participants used could be set up to automatically record and save communication. This proved to be a relatively unobtrusive method of collecting data, as most participants were already making use of this function prior to the commencement of the study. Participants were asked to provide any

saved communication they had archived prior to the commencement of the study, providing both parties involved in the communication gave consent, which resulted in the collection of up to four years' worth of data from some participants. This type of data is especially valuable in examining patterns of use, change over time, long-term language acquisition and use, and may help judge whether (or to what extent) participants were affected by any 'observer effect'. The saved communication consisted mostly of 'chat logs' (text-based dialogic conversations), 'email transcripts' (saved sent and received mail), and 'blogs' (publicly accessible 'diaries' intended for an audience). These files include the names of the sender and receiver, time and date of receipt or posting, as well as the participants' communication.

The data sources described above were triangulated with two kinds of interview. The first kind, audio-recorded background interviews, were used to investigate learners' language learning, time spent in Japan, and Internet experiences, among other personal factors. The second kind were video-recorded follow-up (or stimulated recall) interviews (based on Neustupný, 1990; and Neustupný & Miyazaki, 2002). After being asked to describe their circumstances at the time of the most recent interaction, participants were shown a copy of their latest communication. This allowed for the clarification of some segments of the learners' communication with their peers, and questions were asked regarding their language management processes. Meanwhile, similar questions were sent to the learners' Japanese interlocutors in the form of an email interview.

A small subset of participants in the present study also participated in a previous study (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2006), which focussed on one form of Internet communication, chat. Where relevant, examples from this prior study are used to supplement the data collected in the present research.

Characteristics of the interactions

Three case studies have been selected for the discussion of learners' language management and noting in the first following section, Elli, Kaylene, and Lucas, and their Japanese peers. A further four case studies will be referred to in the second following section, Hyacinth, Jacob, Zac, and Cindy. The characteristics of these learners, their peers and their Internet-based interactions focused on in the current paper are described below.

In order to investigate students' language management processes in social uses of Japanese on the Internet outside-the-classroom, learners were not paired with Japanese participants by the researcher, as has been the case in the majority of past studies. Instead, all interactions described in this paper took place between Australian and Japanese participants with relationships established prior to

Table 1. Participant details

	Age	Gender	Japanese Level	CMC Type	Japanese Peer
Elli	24	F	Intermediate	SNS	Atsuko (F)
Kaylene	28	F	Very Advanced	Chat	Ruriko (F)
Lucas	18	M	Lower Intermediate	Email	Hisayo (F)
Hyacinth	18	F	Intermediate	Forum	
Jacob	23	M	Advanced	Mobile phone	
Zac	23	M	Advanced	SNS	
Cindy	18	F	Beginner	Blog	

the commencement of the study. For instance, Elli met Atsuko at a bar in Japan, Kaylene became friends with several Japanese students including Ruriko through a language exchange program, and Lucas met Hisayo on a high school exchange.

Participants were located in a variety of physical settings while communicating, ranging from the learners' university library, workplace, or bedroom. What is more important here is the participants' virtual setting. While the participants engaged in a variety of communication forms, the cases chosen illustrate the use of three specific tools: social networking, chat and email. Here, Kaylene made use of the chat program MSN Messenger (http://messenger.msn.com) to communicate with her Japanese friend Ruriko, while Elli connected with Atsuko via the popular Japanese social network site Mixi (http://mixi.jp), where participants can construct and view profiles, compose public 'diaries', link profiles with friends and write comments to one another. Lucas utilized email to communicate with his friend Hisayo.

All of the interactions included in the present study are characterised as social, and language selection varied. Lucas wrote to his Japanese interlocutor Hisayo mainly in Japanese, while she replied to him in a mainly English variety. According to Fan's (1992, elaborated in Neustupný, 2004) classification of contact situations, Lucas and Hisayo's use of each other's native language may be described as a 'two-language situation', in which participants use a completely different language to one another, regardless of whether it is their native language. Elli and Kaylene's communication with their Japanese peers was more balanced overall, with frequent code switching, although Elli's social network profile, hosted on a Japanese website, showed greater use of Japanese and adherence to Japanese norms.

Interviews with participants revealed that language choice was motivated by perceptions of the interlocutor's English proficiency (Elli stated a preference to use Japanese with some of her less proficient peers) and the learners' desire to practice Japanese (Lucas and Kaylene both reported using Internet-based interaction as an opportunity to use their second language). Participants' micro-level language

choices, in terms of management processes and noting, are described in the following section.

A final important aspect of managing Internet use is avoidance of communication. Nekvapil and Sherman (2009) define avoidance strategies as a type of management strategy. Avoidance strategies may include the selection of a communicative act that requires either less work, less confrontation, or does not threaten one's image, or even the choice of not performing a communicative act because of associated difficulties. On the Internet, strategies to avoid communication include 'blocking' (banning others from contacting you), 'appearing offline' (preventing others from seeing your 'online' status, hence dissuading them from attempting to contact you), and 'lurking' (acting as a 'read only member' — reading others' communication but not actively participating). Such practices have rarely been addressed in intercultural situations, but are discussed with examples below.

Micro-level management

In order to engage in CMC successfully, learners make use of extensive self- and other- management processes. Using Neustupný's concepts (Neustupný, 1978), pre-management (before the appearance of a potential deviation), in-management (after the start of generating an utterance) and post-management strategies (after the appearance of the deviation) were evident in learners' CMC use. For the purposes of CMC interaction, pre-management is defined here as before typing begins, in-management as after typing begins, but before the sending of the message to the interlocutor, and post-management as when the management is executed after the "send" button is hit and the message is delivered to the other participant. In the case of post-management, the participant requires the use of a subsequent e-turn in order to make any corrective adjustment. The e-turn (electronic-turn), coined by Thorne (1999) is a derivative of a turn unit, defined as a distinct block of text that is tagged with the sender's name. This may be one "message" in chat, one email, or one "comment" on a social network site. The e-turn differs to the traditional turn unit defined by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), in that a user may take multiple e-turns in a row without relinquishing the floor (see Pasfield-Neofitou (2007) for examples and discussion).

Four examples of deviations are given below, drawn from the three cases described above, along with participants' evaluations and adjustments.

Example 1 — Elli's Mixi (SNS) profile

The first example of a deviation, evaluation and adjustment is an example of post-management from Elli's Mixi social network profile. Mixi profiles, a form of Internet-based, language-mediated identity construction, usually consist of basic details, such as age, gender, location, and a series of personal categories, such as favourite television show or sport, which users select for display and then fill out. These profiles act as a portal site, listing the user's friends, their blogs, and any photos they have uploaded for others to see. An excerpt of Elli's Mixi profile is shown in Figure 1 below, accompanied by an English translation of its content.

(Names and other identifying features have been deleted from the screenshot, and pseudonyms are used for all participants in the present study.)

During a follow-up interview, Elli revealed that when she first constructed her profile on Mixi, her reading ability of Japanese characters[1] "wasn't as good as it was before", as she composed her profile during a break from university study. She stated that as a result, she had "gotten wrong" some of the characters in her profile, although she did not note any deviation until her friend Atsuko pointed out a mistake in the title of a TV program.

Figure 1. Elli's Mixi Profile

Name	Censored
Gender	Female
Location	Overseas- Australia
Age	24
Birthday	Censored
Interests	Sports, karaoke bands, cooking, drinking, shopping, driving, languages, TV, games.
Occupation	University Under/Graduate student
Self-introduction	Hallo~ I am Elli ^_^v I am Australian and English, but I live in Australia! At the moment I am studying Japanese at university. Next year, I intend to study in Tokyo for a year from March. I am looking forward to it! So~! Pleased to meet you~! ^o^/
Favourite TV shows	Dramas!! For example, *Hana Yori Dango*!!
Favourite sports	Ice skating and Australian football (AFL)
Favourite foods/drinks	Downtown, the Mango-and-Coco-Pine at the 300 yen bar.

In the ninth section of the profile above, entitled 好きなテレビ番組 (Favourite TV shows), Elli listed the drama "*Hana Yori Dango*" as an example. As well as the title of a popular TV show, "*Hana Yori Dango*" (dumplings over flowers) is a phrase commonly used in Japanese to mean that practical items like food bring more satisfaction than aesthetic beauty. However, while "*Hana Yori Dango*" is usually written as 花より団子, (dumplings over flowers) the name of the TV show is actually a pun — 花より男子 (boys over flowers) — where the second to last character is changed to give the meaning 'boys' instead of 'dumplings'.

Typing *dango* into a computer using Microsoft's Input Method Editor will invariably bring up the first character set, meaning 'dumpling', not the second, meaning 'boy'. As the two variables, the standard 団子 (dumpling) and the non-standard 男子 (boy), look relatively similar, having only one character different, it may be difficult for a learner to notice the difference, particularly when there appears to be an assumption that the computer knows best. Accordingly, Elli reported that she did not notice the deviation at all until Atsuko pointed it out to her and provided the appropriate character in a Mixi message (a form of email service provided to users of the site). This is an example of a deviation that remained unnoted, unevaluated and unadjusted by the learner who produced it, until it was other-adjusted. Subsequent to Atsuko's message, Elli implemented this adjustment, updating her profile with the correct character, as shown in Figure 1 above.

Kaylene and Ruriko's MSN (chat) conversation

Another example of an orthographic deviation, although of a different type, is evident in the opening of Kaylene's chat conversation with Ruriko, illustrated in Extract 1 below.

Extract 1: Kaylene and Ruriko's Chat

1. kay says:
   へイるりついん*hugs*
   (Hey Ruri-twin *hugs*)

2. ruri-twin says:
   hey Kay❤遅れてごめんね*hugs*
   (hey Kay❤ sorry I'm late *hugs*)

3. ruri-twin says:
   元気？？
   (How are you??)

4. kay says:
   うん元気だよ。るりちゃんも元気？
   (Yeah I'm fine. How are you Ruri-chan?)

5. ruri says:
   うん！！元気だよ❤
   (Yeah!! I'm fine❤)

6. ruri-twin says:
   Kay手話始めたの？？
   (Have you started sign language Kay??)

7. kay says:
   ね、ね、奨学金も大学のプレースメントmo絶対もらった。＾__＾！
   イエイ！
   (Hey, hey, I definitely received my scholarship and my university placement. ^_^ Yay!)

8. kay says:
   はい、勉強している。楽しいよ。
   (Yes, I'm studying it. It's fun.)

9. ruri-twin says:
   thats great!! すごいね！！
   (thats great!! Wow!!)

10. ruri-twin says:
おめでとう！！
(Congratulations!!)

Kaylene stated in the follow-up interview that she noted the "typo" in line 7 above — the use of 'mo' in the Roman alphabet rather than in Japanese *hiragana* script (も) as Japanese written norms dictate. According to Kaylene, the origin of this deviation was technological. Like the majority of Internet users, Kaylene was multitasking — in this case, chatting to more than one person at the same time during her conversation with Ruriko. While she carried out a conversation with Ruriko in one window, mostly in Japanese, she was simultaneously communicating with other interlocutors in separate windows, in English.

In the interview, Kaylene said "I must have swapped between the windows partway through… and accidentally hit the key and then didn't hit it again to get back in, and then accidentally left that bit still in *romaji* (Roman characters)"(Pasfield-Neofitou, forthcoming). Kaylene reported that she often used the key combination ALT (alternate) + ~ (tilde) to switch between English and Japanese orthographies. In the example above, the deviation that occurred was a result of forgetting to complete this technical step after switching to converse in English with another interlocutor. Kaylene reported noting this deviation at the time of conversation. She said, "I didn't notice until after I'd hit Enter, but then I thought, it doesn't matter, because it's the right word anyway, although not the right *kana* (Japanese symbol)". In this way, Kaylene noted and evaluated the orthographic deviation, but decided not to implement any sort of adjustment, assuming correctly that her message would be understood anyway. Ruriko's understanding of Kaylene's utterance in e-turn 7 is evident in e-turns 9 and 10, where she congratulates Kaylene on her scholarship and success in gaining a university placement.

Decisions not to implement corrective adjustments appear frequent in chat, a relatively fast-paced medium of communication. Several such examples were found in my previous research, where the participant would often use avoidance as a management strategy rather than attempting any corrective adjustment (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2006). In the earlier study, one participant, Jacob, often avoided topics involving certain vocabulary once a deviation occurred, preferring to "get out of there" by changing the topic. Jacob stated he was afraid that "if we'd kept talking about it, that it would have popped up again". While Kaylene did not use avoidance as a strategy as frequently as Jacob in the earlier study, in this case, the pressure of chatting to several interlocutors in more than one language simultaneously appears to have influenced Kaylene's decision not to implement any adjustment.

Lucas and Hisayo's peer editing

In some cases, other-management, previously seen in the case of Elli and Atsuko, took on a more formal dimension, and Lucas and Hisayo, among other participants, often engaged in the editing of one another's emails. This language management was undertaken informally, in the course of their normal social interaction, as well as more formally, when Lucas asked Hisayo to take part in an email exchange that formed part of his assessment at university. However, participating in this email exchange was not the main focus of Lucas and Hisayo's language management practices. Rather, Lucas stated in an interview that they began correcting each other's informal communication spontaneously, and that he viewed Hisayo's corrections as a favour that he should return to her. That is, when Hisayo provided Lucas with linguistic feedback on his messages, he felt an obligation to provide her with similar feedback and suggestions.

In Extract 2 below, I have selected an email from Hisayo to Lucas, which Lucas subsequently pasted into a Word document, corrected and sent back to her as an attachment, as an example of the kinds of conventions for peer editing that this pair employed in their language management behaviour. Lucas' changes to Hisayo's email, excerpted below, are obvious in the formatting that he has used, yellow (in the original) highlighting and strike-throughs for deletions, and red (in the original) text in parentheses for additions and suggested replacements.

Extract 2: Hisayo's email — edited by Lucas

> Hi Lucas!
> Thank you for your birthday message(@•ω•@)ノ I've ~~been~~(turned) 21~~st~~ years (old)… I can't believe that, because it's old for me…lol And I worked on my bday. Usually, we celebrate with our family or friends. We also eat a "birthday cake". It's (the) same ~~to~~(as) Australian style, isn't it?
>
> I don't need to use the internet with wii?!? じゃあ、I'll try it♪♪
>
> And I'll go to US and work in a Japanese company, but I must (be able to) speak ~~in~~ English.:Plol
>
> Didn't you know about my arubaito? I work in/(at) a convenience store ~~for~~ once a week. And I've started new job ~~that~~(where) I teach English to junior high school and high school students!!!
>
> By the way, I've found some grammar mistakes. I wrote correct Japanese with red and wavy line.
> I'll explain them later.
>
> Henji matteru ne^^

In Lucas' suggested changes to Hisayo's email text, a total of seven editing episodes can be identified in which language management took place. In addition to these edits, however, Lucas provided justifications and elaborations upon these changes in an explanation included after the original email, as shown in Extract 3 below.

Extract 3: Lucas' explanations of corrections to Hisayo's email

EXPLANATION

Your English is a lot better than when I first met you. There are very few grammar mistakes, and they are only very small. People will still understand what you are saying, but these corrections will make it clearer and more accurate.

1. "Been" implies that you were 21 years old before your birthday yesterday. "turned" is similar to なります and we usually say somebody "turns 21 years old" when it's their 21st birthday
2. "21st" and "21 years old" are used differently. It's hard to explain, but you can use "21st" the way I used just before, where "21st" comes before a noun.
3. We usually say "_____is the same as_____". It's similar to "____は____と同じ"
4. There is nothing wrong with "but I must speak in English". I just think it sounds better the way I corrected it because when you go to USA, it implies that you will be speaking English anyway. "I must be able to speak English" fits your situation better because you are learning to English and still facing some trouble.
5. "in a convenience store" is still correct and is the same as "at a convenience store". There's nothing wrong with it, I just want you to know that you can use "at" as well.
6. "Once a week" is not a duration, so you don't use "for". Not sure but this is same as 毎週一回, yes? If you said "six hours a/per week", then you have to say "I work in/at a convenience store for 6 hours a week".
7. "that I teach" sounds awkward, so I put "where" instead. "where" is a very strange word because you usually use that the same way you use どこ, but it works in some other sentences. You might want to ask your English teacher about the word "where" and how I used it.

(Source: Pasfield-Neofitou, forthcoming: 200)

As can be seen above, Lucas provided rather elaborate explanations of his suggestions and clarified to Hisayo the ways in which he had identified these deviations. Throughout this explanation of his rather extensive edits, however, it may be observed that Lucas employed softening strategies, such as beginning in the preliminary paragraph by complementing Hisayo's improved English, or downplaying the seriousness of her deviations, and by assuring Hisayo of the comprehensibility of

her original message. These strategies are then seen continually employed throughout Lucas' explanations, via the repeated use of softeners such as "we usually", and references to how Lucas personally would use language, as further discussed in Pasfield-Neofitou (forthcoming).

In her study of peer editing in academic contact situations, Marriott (2003) also found that the variability of discourse style was highlighted by the fact that, for the editor, various alternatives were sometimes possible. Similar degrees of variability appear true of more informal, and electronically mediated discourse, in this case, email. In points 4 and 5 above, Lucas emphasises that there is "nothing wrong" with Hisayo's phrasing and that it is "still correct", but wants to point out an alternative to her anyway. Drawing attention to such varied possibilities has important implications for the form that noting takes, as well as the relationship between noting, evaluation, and language problems. One participant, Oscar (not included in the three case studies here) commented of his Japanese friends' online texts: "It's just…the very bare bones. They drop particles; they do funny things to the end of words and whatnot. So it doesn't really matter if it's grammatically correct, just make sure there's no miscommunication." (Cited in Pasfield-Neofitou, forthcoming). Although some participants like Oscar indicated that they had noticed that a variety of linguistic alternatives were often possible in CMC, further research is needed to determine to what extent the variability of informal Internet discourse is recognised by participants.

Dictionary use

Finally, one of the most interesting aspects of language management in computer-mediated contact situations is the possibility of drawing upon various resources to assist with the adjustment planning process. The Internet offers a large number of different dictionaries and translators, as well as websites from which to find grammar instruction or sample sentences. In one example, Lucas, who had only been studying Japanese for just over a year at the time of interview, reported searching the Nintendo website to find the names of video games he wanted to write about in his emails to Hisayo.

The fact that participants are usually separated geographically in Internet-based communication also means that conventional resources may be used with greater ease and less embarrassment. One participant previously mentioned, although not included in the three case studies selected for in-depth discussion, Oscar recounted his experience of being told during a face-to-face contact situation "while we're speaking, don't use your dictionary" by a Japanese student in the guitar club he joined while in Japan. Oscar said "I was told don't do it, it looks bad. Maybe it's because it looks too nerdy". Such concerns are less apparent in "distant"

contact situations, where participants may consult a dictionary in the privacy of their own home, for example, without their interlocutor's knowledge.

Dictionary use forms an important part of learners' language management (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2009). The majority of participants in my previous research stated that they used some form of reference source while communicating via the Internet, including electronic dictionaries (5/10 participants), and online dictionaries (3/10 participants). The online dictionaries used were Eijirō (http://www.alc.co.jp), Rikai (http://www.rikai.com), and Jim Breen's dictionary (http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html). In the present study, Elli also reported the use of her paper dictionary during an Internet chat conversation. It is evident that the Internet facilitates not only the use of Internet-based resources, but also conventional resources such as electronic and paper dictionaries, because of the relatively relaxed pace compared with face-to-face conversation, as noted by Herring (2001), and the added privacy of being physically distant from one's interlocutor. Herring argues that CMC allows users to choose words with greater care, and reveal less doubts and insecurities, which is very important for learners' language management.

The impact of macro-level language management in Internet communities

It is virtually impossible to separate a discussion of language management and learning opportunities in the concrete computer-mediated contact situations described above from an examination of the macro-level language management that goes on in these settings. One of the strengths of language management theory is its continuous interest in the interplay of simple and organized management. Similar to the situations that may be observed in multinational companies (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2009), organised language management in international Internet communities occurs as an attempt to remove problems that occur in individual interactions. One of the ways this is achieved is through the establishment of an official or preferred language on a particular website or forum. Therefore, needless to say, language management at this level influences individual interactions, even if the problems which prompted the management are not always solved. This section explores the interplay between the simple management described in the previous section and organised management in Internet communication.

In the present study, language planning decisions of Internet communities and commercial policies of large corporations were found to affect learners' opportunities for communication, and their language use, in a number of ways. While much attention has been paid to the dominance of English on the Internet, there has been little research undertaken to explore the effects of macro-level language

management on the micro-level management of Internet users, for example, individual language choice, or the avoidance of communication altogether.

One example of language management at the level of virtual communities can be seen on the website ウェブカレ ("*WebKare*" or "Web Boyfriend"), a virtual boyfriend game with a forum attached. One participant, Hyacinth, joined this website and played the game; however, while she read the forum postings, she often decided not to contribute herself due to the abusive nature of some posts. As reported in Pasfield-Neofitou (2011, forthcoming), although a large number of Japanese-speaking users were welcoming and helpful to Japanese learners, this was not always the case. Some members expressed dissatisfaction about the use of other languages, apparently perceiving the use of, in particular, Chinese and Korean, and the 'poor' use of Japanese on the website as a deviation from the norm. While it is difficult to find examples of the more abusive posts as the moderators have been vigilant about censoring as many as possible, hostility towards language variation on the WebKare forum is evident. One example of a post from an anonymous user written in Japanese is given in Extract 4 below, which shows a strong negative evaluation of the use of languages other than Japanese:

Extract 4: Anonymous comment on WebKare

日本語で書きなさい。
ここは日本人のためのサービスです。
日本語が理解できないなら日本のサービスを受ける資格はありません。
中国だの韓国だのそれぞれの国で勝手に暴れなさい。

(Write in Japanese.
This is a service for Japanese people.
If you cannot understand Japanese you have no right to use Japanese services.
Whether you're from China or Korea, go act like savages in your own country.)

Anon. 2008/09/20 (Source: Pasfield-Neofitou 2011: 100)

As previously reported in Pasfield-Neofitou (2011), the moderators eventually announced a split which would segregate the forum into two boards, "Oekaki Japanese" and "Scribble International", a move which also provided an official policy on language use. Japanese was designated for use on the Oekaki board, which, until its codification in writing by WebKare, had been little more than a norm established by the Internet community. Such organised language management is common in multinational companies too, Nekvapil and Sherman (2009) demonstrate, and usually aims to help remove problems in individual communication.

However, while this move may have appeased a number of Japanese users who wanted a Japanese-only forum, dissatisfaction is still obvious among users of the International board, which was developed with an English interface, although the majority of posts appear to be in Chinese. As another anonymous user commented in English on the newly-formed International board, here in Excerpt 4 below:

Extract 4: Another anonymous comment on WebKare

> "First of all; WEB-KARE's oekaki [the Japanese forum] is good so why people won't use it?
> ;o;
> Second; Chinese is over-rated! Let's use English too so that us non-asian people can also understand! (to tell the truth, I like more being in JP BBS since at least I can UNDERSTAND that. >__>)"
> Anon. 2009/07/22 (Source: Pasfield-Neofitou 2011: 101)

This user's comment shows that despite her desire to use, or at least, read, Japanese, the new forum setting did not facilitate this desire, and furthermore, it is evident that the introduction of a new international ("Scribble International") board has not gone far in alleviating tensions over the use of Chinese. For Hyacinth, an Australian-Chinese background student of Japanese, such hostility towards Chinese languages affected her motivation to engage actively on the forums (Pasfield-Neofitou 2011). This example demonstrates the interplay between micro and macro language planning, which can be viewed in terms of a language management cycle. This cycle, according to Nekvapil and Sherman (2009), follows the trajectory of management acts performed by individuals, through social networks (like the social network community on Mixi) and more complex institutions (like the Mixi corporation), then back to the particular interactions of particular interlocutors — or the avoidance of communication, as is evidenced in Hyacinth's case.

Hyacinth also related a similar experience of hearing about a new Japanese blog site devoted to drawing, one of her main interests. However, she ultimately decided not to try that either after she "heard a lot of negative feedback from people who weren't Japanese". Although such experiences do not appear widespread, exposure to this kind of environment may have severe effects on a learner's desire to attempt communication in their second language, as well as, in the case of mobile phone use or social network membership, actually preclude their ability to communicate at all.

Jacob, who participated in both the pilot and current study, reported that, in Japan, his choice of mobile (cell) phone was limited to the providers that would actually sell phones to non-Japanese nationals. Furthermore, Mixi, the most popular social networking site in Japan, of which Elli was an early adopter, recently introduced a rule that requires prospective users to have a mobile phone email

address to sign up, in addition to the necessary invitation. The invitation takes the form of an email sent by someone who is already a member and contains a private link for the recipient to click in order to sign up. While it can be quite difficult for learners who do not have many Japanese friends to receive an invitation in the first place, access to this community is made more difficult with the introduction of this requirement, which has meant that many potential users outside of Japan have been unable to join.

Another participant located in Australia, Zac, described how he would not have been able to create his Mixi account if it were not for the assistance of his Japanese sister-in-law, who allowed him to use her mobile phone email address, and received the confirmation message, that unlocks membership to the site, for him. However, obviously, not every learner has a Japanese sister-in-law to help initiate them into Japanese Internet spaces. Another participant, Cindy, described how she was not so lucky, and, having not been able to sign up to Mixi, eventually gave up and joined a different site, Ameba (http://ameblo.jp/) instead. In the above examples, corporate policy decisions at the macro-level regarding the access to technology afforded to non-Japanese influenced participants' mode of communication, or prompted avoidance of communication on the micro-level.

However, Cindy's motivation to blog in Japanese does not appear to have been diminished by this experience, as she went on to blog prolifically on Ameba, posting 35 blogs in the space of a month, only two of which were written exclusively in English, despite the fact that she had only studied Japanese for a short time. Yet, being a member of the most popular social networking site, Mixi, has specific advantages. For example, according to Elli, when she lived in Japan, "everyone else had Mixi". Elli related how face-to-face social interactions would often end in the exchange of Mixi details. Even in Australia, Zac, who attended a face-to-face conversation group called 'Meet-Up' described how he used the short 'speed-dating' format of the face-to-face conversations to obtain the Mixi details of his interlocutors. He too remarked that most young Japanese people he knew used Mixi. Thus, it can be seen that being allowed membership to a popular site such as Mixi has the power to transform not only individual computer-mediated, but also face-to-face, contact situations.

When a Japanese learner does gain access to these communities, their motivation to use Japanese is increased by the perception of having entered a 'Japanese space'. In fact, it appears that many learners may share the view of the anonymous bulletin board poster quoted above — that services such as WebKare and Mixi, which are owned by Japanese companies and hosted on Japanese domains, are primarily services for Japanese people, and, if one does not understand Japanese, one has little right to use them. Despite claims that the Internet is a 'placeless space', the almost exclusively Japanese make-up of the membership (for example, due

to Mixi's invitation-based membership) and the fact that these sites are not only moderated in Japanese but have a Japanese-language interface appears to influence users' perceptions of these 'spaces' and their language use. For example, Elli, whose Mixi profile was shown above, blogged in Japanese nine out of 10 times. The only time she wrote in English, she felt the need to signal this deviation in the subject line of her blog, titling it "English…kyaaa!" (English…arrrgh!). When asked in the follow-up interview why she normally wrote in Japanese, Elli said "Just because, most of the people on there, in fact, 99% of the people on there can't actually read English". The only reason Elli chose English for this particular blog was because she "couldn't be bothered to look up all the words" as she was tackling the relatively difficult topic of describing her role in an upcoming play. In another example, Kaylene said the reason behind her use of mostly Japanese on Mixi was that "generally, I tend to view Mixi as a Japanese forum". Other macro-level features that influence micro-level language management include the construction of the dictionaries or Input Method Editor (previously mentioned). Decisions made at the macro-level by the corporations or organisations that construct and compile these tools condition individual users' language choices and management on the micro-level, as was seen above in Elli's selection of the Japanese characters automatically produced by the Editor.

Concluding discussion

The above examples illustrate that in addition to its use in face-to-face contact situations, the language management model may be successfully applied to Internet mediated "distant" contact situations, and the interplay of language management strategies at both the micro and macro levels. Furthermore, this study hopefully demonstrates the importance of undertaking research on naturalistic interaction, and employing such innovative methods as the follow-up interview in order to analyse learners' social communication outside the classroom beyond the surface level. Without the use of follow-up interviews, it would not have been possible to determine, for example, Kaylene's noting of an orthographic deviation, or Jacob's negative evaluation of misunderstood utterances, as no adjustment was made to correct the deviation in these cases. Avoidance of communication, including the practices of 'blocking', 'appearing offline', and 'lurking' (as Hyacinth did) mentioned above, appeared widespread. Similar findings have been noted in research on monolingual Internet communication also (Mason, 1999; Nonnecke & Preece, 2000; 2003; Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2006). A lack of confidence in one's language ability also appears to be a particularly important factor contributing to lurking behaviour in L2 environments, as shown in Hyacinth's case.

The examples above suggest that a number of technology-related factors across the range of communication tools available, as well as individual factors and social factors, influence noting and language choice. Furthermore, these factors also influence participants' opportunities or motivation to communicate, and to evaluate and adjust deviations in social situations. Even when language learners do note a deviation from the norm and evaluate it negatively, some decide to ignore it, or in the words of Jacob, "get out of there!" (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2006) because of technological or interpersonal constraints. Yet, others, working with different Internet tools, in different 'spaces', or with different communication styles, are able to manage their language more, taking advantage of some of the medium's affordances.

Research on intercultural CMC is a growing area, and empirical studies conducted in naturalistic settings are still few in number. There are several topics relating to language management and noting processes in "distant" contact situations deserving further attention in future research. One is the role of setting in defining Internet mediated contact situations. Neustupný states that the setting (time and place) of an interaction "is frequently the reason for interaction problems when non-native participants cannot adhere to host norms of structuring interaction, or the system by which certain interaction is conducted in certain places and at certain times" (1982: 44, cited in Neustupný, 2004: 18–19). Furthermore, to what extent it is possible to differentiate 'hosts' and 'guests' in situations on the Internet needs to be considered. Closer examination of what constitutes 'setting' on the Internet (cultural norms, medium-based norms, the domination of English on the Internet, 'Japanese spaces' such as Mixi etc.), and their influence on language use, management, and learning, is needed.

In addition to setting, the "foreignness factor" is also identified as a major cause of problems in the acquisition and use of foreign languages (Neustupný, 1985). The example given in is one of corporeal features that may appear 'foreign' to a Japanese speaker ("blue eyes, blond hair, height etc.", Neustupný, 1985: 48). On the Internet, identity is constructed mostly via language. This was most obviously illustrated in the example of the WebKare forums given above, where participants were identifiable by language choice alone, given their choice to remain anonymous and not use any photographs. Obviously, on the Internet, where the display of photographs or use of video is entirely optional, interlocutors' perceptions of one another's 'foreignness' based largely on language use will be of much interest in future research.

Note

1. The Japanese writing system consists of three scripts: characters, hiragana, and katakana. Characters, or in Japanese, *kanji*, mostly originated in China, and each character, in principle,

stands for a single morpheme. The other two sets of symbols, hiragana and katakana, were later developed in Japan and each of the symbols in these sets normally stands for one syllable. According to Neustupný, any modern Japanese text is likely to contain an assortment of characters, hiragana, and katakana. Generally, characters are used to write the base forms of nouns, verbs and adjectives, grammatical elements are written in hiragana, while katakana is mostly used for writing loan words from foreign languages, although there are exceptions.

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