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Abstract

This paper examines the issue of motivation and language socialization in FL writing contexts (e.g. Japanese universities). After describing probable reasons for a paucity of studies in this area, the author proposes a theoretical framework for pedagogy and research. This framework draws upon two developments within a quickly blossoming “social turn” in SLA. Discussed first are socio-dynamic models of motivation that have reconceptualized the notion of integrativeness – a central construct in the previously dominant socio-educational model of L2 motivation – and thereby the roles of identity and community in fostering motivation. Also explored are two influential social theories of learning: socio-cultural theory and situated learning theory, both of which provide a rationale for encouraging the purposeful agency of FL writers within communities of practice. The paper concludes with some general implications for FL writing pedagogy and suggestions for future research.

1 Terminology and context: L2, SL, and FL

At the outset I should clarify my usage of three fundamental terms that will recur throughout this paper: L2, SL, and FL. I do so not only because the wide variety of learning environments has made consistent definition of these terms problematic, but also because for my purposes the distinction between the latter two is crucial in working toward a fuller understanding of the dynamics of
identity, community, and socialization in foreign language writing.

To simplify, I will use $L2$ (second language) to refer to any language that has not been the primary medium of daily communication in an individual's native culture, one that is learned after that person's native language, and one that is generally learned in response to educational, occupational, social, or political need, wherever that may be.

Contained within a general L2 learning environment are two specific possibilities (though again for practical purposes I simplify¹). SL (confusingly also second language) will here describe a language learned within a target language community by a non-native resident, often for the purposes of integration, such as immigration, study, or work. An SL is a dominant language in a community. In contrast, a FL (foreign language) environment is marked by its relative distance from a clearly identifiable target language community. A foreign language is not a dominant community language; it can therefore characterize the English as learned by the vast majority of Japanese, including our own university students here in Japan.

Again, at the risk of generalizing or dichotomizing the enormous range of learning environments, I address these basic distinctions to emphasize the often understated impact of context and socialization in language learning, particularly in L2 writing. The focus of this paper, then, is the nature of motivation in foreign language (FL) writing contexts.

2 The scarcity of research in FL writing motivation

The impetus for this paper springs from a lacuna of motivation research in FL writing contexts. First of all, research in L2 writing itself has focused

¹ For example, here I ignore a third and very common possibility, a heritage language (HL), for the reason that it is marginal in the field of L2 writing.
predominantly on SL contexts rather than FL ones. This has mostly been due to clear and immediate need: SL writing studies overwhelmingly revolve around non-native students in Western academic institutions. These students are expected to quickly demonstrate the writing skills they need for acceptable participation in surrounding academic communities. Although interest in FL writing has increased greatly in the past decade (Ortega, 2009a), the need for competence in English-language academic achievement and publication has helped to maintain a dominant SL focus in L2 writing research.

At the same time, L2 motivation research has tended to favor oral communication over written communication. Even in the large number of motivation studies that have evaded an explicit skill focus (treating language as a packaged commodity), there is often an unwritten assumption that learning a language is synonymous with learning how to conduct spoken discourse. This may reflect an ancient Western cultural bias of “phonocentrism” (Derrida, 1976) in which speech is presumed more direct access to the “logos” (truth) of meaning and representation, and in which writing is secondary, an “interpreter” of speech. Or more specifically in the discipline of language teaching, I suspect that this is partly a subconscious but influential remnant of audiolinguism, where writing was considered a prop to support the historical and behavioral antecedence of talk. More specifically yet, I would argue that because of the residual effects of the primacy of socio-educational models during the first four decades of motivation research (which I will discuss later), there has long been an implicit bias toward proximal social integration (i.e. within SL contexts) and therefore toward the more immediately apparent role of spoken communication in such clearly recognizable migrations.

As a result, research on motivation in FL writing contexts is virtually non-existent (see Sasaki, 2009). I contend that this oversight which has suppressed
investigation of FL writing motivation is of the same quality that has blinded much of L2 writing pedagogy to issues of language socialization – particularly issues of identity, purpose, audience, and community – and to the potential role social context plays in the motivation of FL writers. In short how do FL writers purposefully engage their identities within communities located in contexts far removed from a clearly identifiable target language environment? And in what manner does that influence motivation? In the following section, I will propose a theoretical framework that may provide an initial guide toward tackling these questions and widen the pedagogical and research possibilities in FL writing motivation.

3 A framework for pedagogy and research

A new framework for investigating motivation in FL writing contexts is afforded by what has been termed a “social turn” (Block, 2003) in the second language acquisition (SLA) field that has over the past 15 years challenged the longstanding dominance of cognitive paradigms and metaphors (e.g. the “learner-as-computer”) in researching and conceptualizing language learning. This current movement includes (among others) socio-cultural theory, complexity theory, identity approaches, language socialization approaches, and socio-cognitive approaches. All of these paradigms situate learners’ cognitive processes within social and historical contexts, and thereby examine language learning as a complex, dynamic, emergent, and often non-linear system based on interaction between individuals and their environment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2002; Norton, 2000), evolving not along one developmental trajectory but across multiple timescales (Lemke, 2002). Such a shift will potentially awaken the neglected study of FL writing motivation with questions about the interplay of self and community in written discourse.
Motivation and communities of practice in foreign language writing contexts

While perhaps confounding quantitative, cross-sectional research methods that generalize or typify language learners and learning, a framework based on a more socio-dynamic (or eco-social) perspective will rightly turn the focus in FL writing and motivation toward issues of the individual writer’s unique identity, purpose, agency, and participation that emerge and develop within communities across time.

I will now look at two particularly relevant areas of research included in this social turn – two important developments that will hopefully redefine and redirect FL writing pedagogy and research. They are 1) a shift in conceptualizations of motivation in language learning, and 2) the relevance of current language socialization theories (or social theories of learning) for application to FL writing. Together these theories highlight the importance of identity, community, and participation to FL writing, and to the motivation of the individuals who engage in it.

4 Conceptualizations of motivation in language learning

Corder famously stated in 1967 that "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data” (p. 164). Regardless of the strict cognitivist “learner-as-computer” bias within this assertion, it nonetheless rings as experientially true now as then. Conation is essential; that language learners rise and fall on their own purposes, determinations, and commitments is generally taken for granted by anyone who has learned or taught a second or foreign language. The difficulty has been in how to identify and measure the psychological and social dynamics of what creates and what sustains motivation in language learning, in the hope that (presumably) some set of appropriate stimuli or interventions might be offered as correction.
The problematic endeavor of conceptualizing and measuring something as subjective and unstable as L2 motivation has resulted in a complicated and sprawling research history, which started in the late 1950s. Since the focus of this paper is motivation in FL writing (as opposed to SL writing), I will briefly outline the evolution of one of the most extensively investigated constructs in L2 motivation, integrativeness, and how it has been transformed into a more dynamic variable that can be applied more meaningfully to a wider range of personal contexts.

4.1 The socio-educational model and integrativeness

The earliest and long most influential research in L2 motivation was conducted by Robert Gardner and his associates, developing into what came to be termed a socio-educational model of language learning. With a focus on immersion programs in Canada, a central theme in these studies was integrativeness (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; 1972; Gardner, 2001). Gardner (2001) defined this as a “motivational substrate” (or “antecedent”), an attitude that precedes motivation itself and is marked by “a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community” (p.5). This perspective led researchers to investigate possible correlations between a) learners who set out with a higher intensity of assimilative motivation and b) subsequent success in their endeavors.

For Gardner and his associates the “other language community” for the subjects was usually clearly identifiable: neighboring French or English speaking communities in Quebec or Ontario. The results, furthermore, could be conveniently gauged within the immediate and relatively closed and delineated borders of an immersion program. Therefore, because of the SL focus of these studies, they were taken to be applicable to other contexts where learners’ integrative motivational antecedents could be directed toward proximal,
Motivation and communities of practice in foreign language writing contexts

tangible, and immediate language communities, particularly in immigrant or study-abroad settings.

In short, integrativeness remained the most significant paradigm in L2 motivation research until the mid-1990s, when it started to wither under harsh criticism. Although the framing of integrativeness in socio-educational models underwent considerable revision over the years, it was often misunderstood by its critics and the construct as such has been all but abandoned by L2 motivation scholars (Dörnyei, 2005). Notwithstanding unfair dismissals of the socio-educational model in its entirety, there are indeed fundamental problems with its central notion of integrativeness.

The most significant criticism has been that the traditionally narrow focus on identification with L2 communities and their cultures does not make sense in many FL contexts. As Dörnyei (2009) points out, learners in places affording little or no physical contact with members of the target language community (e.g. Japan) cannot count this type of integrativeness as a motivational antecedent. The emphasis by Gardner and his associates in measuring the quantity (or "intensity") of integrative orientations ultimately failed to sufficiently address how the quality of integrativeness differs within learners and across contexts and time, and thus the construct remained vague (Ortega, 2009b, p. 175). The socio-educational model, which started as an essentially social theory of motivation, ended up being hamstrung by its own cognitivist and reductionist research methodology.

Another dead end for socio-educational theory came with the question of who the “owner” of the learner’s L2 is. With the rise of globalization and World Englishes, the answer has become increasingly complicated. In FL contexts, therefore, the notion of a simple unidirectional impulse toward integration seems untenable. Learners in these environments seem more driven by a need
to develop a *bicultural identity* (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006), in which one facet of their identity is rooted in the local culture and another directed toward communities they perceive to be part of an international mainstream. Such multidimensional aspects of identity play at least as important a role in FL written communication, where learner conceptions of audience and community are inherently more opaque.

### 4.2 Multidimensionality

Attention to the *multidimensionality* of the learner is clearly part of the recent social turn in SLA mentioned earlier, as it acknowledges the complexities of individual learners’ motivations in particular social contexts, motivations that are not rooted in static antecedents or orientations, but are emerging, dynamic, and sometimes contradictory (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). However, multidimensionality is also reflected in a broader movement in SLA that seeks to reconcile cognitive and social paradigms, traditionally thought to be antithetical.

A *dynamic systems theory* (DST) approach to SLA, for example, emphasizes the unpredictable and nonlinear nature of language learning, regarding “real-life messy facts” not as ‘noise’ but as part of the ‘sound’ you get in real life” (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007, p. 7). Working from a similar *chaos/complexity theory* (C/CT) perspective, Larsen-Freeman (2002) explains how, unlike traditional scientific approaches that examine components in isolation (e.g. integrativeness), C/CT “considers the synthesis of emergent wholes from studying the *interactions* of the individual components” (p. 38). Lemke (2002), writing on the interactions between individuals and communities across multiple timescales, calls these dynamics “ecosocial” in that “communities, like other ecosystems, are not defined by what their participants have in common, but by how their interdependence on one another articulates across differences” (p. 74). These views highlight the contrast between the
previous socio-educational emphasis on static and unidirectional integrativeness in learner motivation – which has long hindered FL motivation studies – and current socio-dynamic perspectives which have informed current motivation research.

4.3 Socio-dynamic views of L2 motivation

The genesis of socio-dynamic views of motivation lies in personality trait psychology and motivational psychology, the latter of which produced goal theories and self-determination theory (for an overview see Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Research in these fields came to look at how personality translates into behavior, i.e. the doing side of personality. What this has recently meant for L2 motivation research is a shift away from static self-representations (again, such as target culture identification) and toward autopoiesis (i.e. “self-creation”) – a more active and dynamic self-system, in which self-regulation mediates and controls learner behavior across space and time.

In 1986, Marcus and Nurius conceptualized a highly novel, powerful, and influential theory to explain how individuals carry out this regulation between self and action. Their theory centers around the concept of “possible selves”, which represent the learner’s vision of the self in a future state and which drive the learner toward that possible future. Specifically, these possible selves act as “future self guides”, as learners imagine what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. Marcus and Nurius also include in their theory the negative regulating force of “ought selves” (p. 958), which are internal representations of societal expectations. The two most innovative aspects of this model are 1) the focus on a future-oriented conception of motivation (as opposed to a current or past state) that can account for how learners progress toward goals, and 2) an emphasis on the importance of
imagination and fantasy in motivation. For Marcus and Nurius, possible selves are made up of tangible images and senses; the future thus becomes a reality that can be viscerally felt. Segal (2006) notes how Marcus and Nurius add psychoanalytic theory to social psychology by balancing “the social cognitive act of future planning with the equally human act of generating fantasy”; or put another way, “future selves are fantasy tempered by expectation (or expectations leavened by fantasy)” (p. 82). Because of the importance placed on the future and imagination, this view of motivation is adaptable to a much wider range of learners and contexts than earlier socio-educational models.

This reorientation in L2 motivation research has sparked a number of noteworthy studies built around the idea of imagination. Norton (2001), for example, examines two ESL learners in Canada, linking their changing expectations, identities, and social investments to the imagined communities they see themselves in participation/non-participation with. On a more global scale, Pavlenko and Norton (2007) discuss this membership in imagined communities vis-à-vis English as an international language, particularly in terms of five possible facets of learner identity: postcolonial, global, ethnic, multilingual, and gendered. Pavlenko and Norton implicate L2 writing as particularly empowering in resistance to the restrictive (and thereby demotivating) ideologies of monolingualism and monoculturalism, as writing offers “uniquely safe spaces in which new identities can be invented” (p. 678). It is important to remember, however, that such identities are prone to flux and that affective factors such as motivation are often “socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). This is bound to be as true in Japan as it is in Canada.

Applying the role of imagination to Japanese EFL settings, Yashima
(2009) and Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) demonstrate how high school students’ participation in imagined international communities such as a Model United Nations (MUN) helps them to bridge their current identities with ideal future identities and thereby to develop a motivating and sustaining “international posture”. This concept exemplifies how the problematic construct of “integrativeness” can find meaningful translation in FL contexts such as Japan. As Ryan (2009) concludes from his study of Japanese secondary and tertiary learners, “the idea of [a target] L2 community tied to location and nationality . . . is not as powerful a motivating factor as a vaguely-defined English-speaking community which allows the young Japanese learner the possibility of membership and participation in the events of that community” (pp. 137-138). Indeed, for many Japanese learners who are inculcated with the notion that language, ethnicity, and nationality are inseparable, a freer definition of “target language community”, one that draws on imagination, may create a more inviting landscape for active engagement. I will turn to the issue of community and participation (and their importance in FL writing) in more detail later, but for now I mention these concepts only in their relation to how the idea of cultural integrativeness has been transformed under socio-dynamic views of motivation and how the role of imagination has been central to that transformation.

The current model of L2 motivation that is most representative of this socio-dynamic direction, and one that owes much to the inspiration of Marcus and Nurius, is Zoltan Dörnyei’s motivational L2 self system (2005). Dörnyei sees this model as a progression from Gardner’s socio-educational model, and not as a repudiation of it. The model consists of three components. The first, the ideal L2 self, represents what the learner desires and imagines is possible. Therefore, it may include traditional integrative substrates one may find in
immigrant populations, though enveloped in a “possible selves” imagination. Or it may not, in the case of many FL learners. Dörnyei argues that the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator because it draws out the learner’s desire to reduce the discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self, the self that extends into the future. The second, and complementary, component of Dörnyei’s model is the ought-to L2 self, which is more extrinsic and often involves the avoidance of negative outcomes or social pressures. Finally, Dörnyei includes the L2 learning experience, that which builds internal constructs with the present. The inclusion of this component is important not only because it takes into account the ever-changing dynamics of motivation in language learning, but also because Dörnyei has recognized the need to account for L2 motivation in a wide range of contexts, particularly FL ones. Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) claim several quantitative studies in various FL environments having provided firm validation of the motivational L2 self system and thereby encouragement for a focus on learners as real and unique people in ever shifting contexts.

An excellent synthesis of SLA, educational psychology, and social theory, Ema Ushioda’s (2009) person-in-context relational view of motivation provides an ontological counterbalance to the positivist establishment in SLA and L2 motivation studies. Hers is a “teleological” view of motivation, a shift away from linear cause and effect characterizations of what make an ideal or typical learner. She promotes:

... a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between the self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple
micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. My argument is that we need to take a relational (rather than linear) view of these multiple contextual elements, and view motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations. (p. 220)

Ushioda argues that traditional dichotomies between internal (the “learner-as-computer”) and external (context or culture as a “pre-existing, stable, independent background variable” [p. 218]) leads to a tendency of viewing one of the two as objectified by the other. Her rejection of this fallacy thereby meshes neatly with the DST and C/CT approaches to SLA discussed earlier in this paper, in which socio-cultural and socio-historically situated processes are mutually constitutive with the complexities of self.

Now that we have looked at evolving conceptions of motivation (i.e. purpose) in FL writing, we should now consider more closely how such individual purposes are facilitated within communities of practice.

5 Social theories, learning, and FL writing contexts

Over the past century there have been various movements in the fields of psychology, social anthropology, social theory, literary criticism, education, and linguistics to challenge deterministic and structuralist tendencies toward dualism. These dichotomizing tendencies, still extant, have shut out much of the “sound of real life” by working to locate, isolate, and characterize dominant dyads or constructs within what is a very complex interplay between individual and society, cognition and social structuring, and learner and educational environment. I previously discussed dynamic systems theory (DST) as a starting point toward reconciling the traditional polarity between the cognitive and social strands in SLA. Here I wish to focus on dialectical, post-structuralist, and
dynamic social theories of learning. These social theories avoid the disjunction of an either/or approach to language learning. I present this examination as part of a necessary framework for research and pedagogy in FL writing motivation. I will do so by affirming the significance of community vis-à-vis its role in the formation of identity, and vice-versa, specifically as applied to FL writing contexts, in which issues of identity and community – and thereby purpose, motivation, and agency – are too often overlooked.

5.1 Socio-cultural theory

The earliest application of social dynamics to language, psychology, and education was in Soviet-era socio-cultural theory (SCT), most widely associated with the literary theorist and philosopher of language Mikhail Bakhtin and the educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

One of Bakhtin’s central theories expresses both the process of communication and the inherent nature of language itself as “dialogic”. That is, meaning is constructed both externally and internally as a dialogue between self and other. Bakhtin (1981) extends this dynamic to a wide range of language use: “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (p. 354). Thus, utterances are forged and addressed with an anticipation of response. Bakhtin’s theory proposes that this “double-voiced discourse” is formative not only in the creation of language but also in identity. Morson (1986) argues that too often language education is predicated on the assumption of an ideal native speaker, a universal linguistic code, and a predictable set of social contexts. In this sense, language identity is based on ownership and mastery. Although many recent SLA theories have come under the influence of a social turn, the learner-as-computer metaphor is still a powerful force and is all too frequently, as Morson
puts it, “deaf to the play of voices and insensitive to the cacophony of values” (p. 4). We humans, then, are not just monolithic users of our own language; rather, “we are the voices that inhabit us” (p. 8). We are not entirely ourselves.

As a literary theorist, Bakhtin applies this dialogic principle of “double-voicedness” in language and identity to both oral and written discourse alike. Marchenkova (2008) points out that, as in speaking, the substantive goal of a Bakhtin-inspired approach to writing is “the formation of a person” (p. 47) and, as such, it forms an integral part of a “lived human experience” (p. 56). Writing does not occur in a vacuum. Written texts and meaning are formed in response to the ideas of other people – and in expectation of a response – and are therefore part of an ongoing and forever unfinished dialogue.

Working in child psychology, Vygotsky echoed this dialogic foundation. Basing his research on Marx’s views on the social origin of human consciousness, Vygotsky’s central claim is that higher forms of mental activity are brought about through social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). That is, children learn primarily by doing with others. Vygotsky also attempts to reconcile the millennia-old dualism of mind/language and body/action by integrating them into a dialectical unity of social mediation. This approach was far ahead of its time (the 1920s and 1930s), and it would be decades before SCT exerted influence more broadly in the social sciences, including adult SLA.

What is of relevance to my concentration on FL writing and motivation is Vygotsky’s (1978) observation that cognitive development occurs on two psychological planes: first on the inter-psychological plane (i.e. as social interaction) and later on the intra-psychological plane (i.e. within the mind of the learner). Only through mediated social participation do individuals move toward “internalization”, where concrete artifacts (such as hammers) or symbolic artifacts (such as language) change from being mere objects to
conceptualized categories that take on mediating functionality. With this change the learner achieves a sense of relevance and thereby agency and self-regulation, i.e. "the capacity to mediate and regulate his or her own activity through culturally organized meditational means" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 69). Thus, "it is impossible to understand the function of a hammer unless we participate in or observe the activity of hammering; nor can we understand the function of language through an analysis of its structure" (ibid., p. 69). I would extend this principle to FL university writing as well. Students cannot fully internalize the practice of writing and exercise true agency simply by learning about writing; they must recognize and take part in writing as a genuine act of community mediated behavior.

Weissberg (2008) cautions against overenthusiastic applications of socio-cultural theory to L2 writing because Vygotsky's research in children's L1 language learning primarily focused on speech development. Indeed, Vygotsky (1987) saw L1 writing development in children as not only communication with an "imaginary or conceptualized interlocutor", it is also "a conversation with a white sheet of paper" (p. 202). As writing "presupposes the existence of inner speech", it is metaphorically "the algebra of speech" (ibid., p. 204). It is the maximal explication of inner (speech) thought directed at an imagined audience. Weissberg (2008) suggests that it is a mistake to assume L2 writers have sufficiently internalized the target language to the extent that they are able to simply "bootstrap" themselves from the modality of speaking to that of writing. For these reasons, he is suspicious of talk-write activities such as collaborative writing, peer editing groups, and conferencing. Nonetheless, Weissberg does support a "weaker" version of SCT in L2 writing, one "focusing not on speech but on dialogue" (p. 42). This is a view that validates writing itself as a community-based modality of communication, a view I believe Japanese
university language instructors and students should be encouraged to adopt as the motivational core of writing as a practice.

5.2 Situated learning theory: communities of practice and identity

The socio-cultural views outlined in the previous section describe the social process whereby learners formulate knowledge and acquire competencies (e.g. in another language). In terms of the outcomes of these processes of socialization, the focuses are largely internal to the learner: for Bakhtin the development of voice and expression, and for Vygotsky the “development of higher psychological processes” (1978). More recent theories have coupled the language learning process (and language socialization) with socio-cultural transformation. That is, agent (learner), activity, and communities are mutually constitutive.

Lave and Wenger (1991) popularized the term “communities of practice”, using it as a central concept in their groundbreaking and influential theory of situated learning. Their view is a departure from conventional accounts of learning that dichotomize inside and outside, and that reduce the learner to a mere receptacle for knowledge and skills that are preexisting and static. Taking their cue from Giddens (1979) in rejecting such “structural determination”, Lave and Wenger maintain that learning is not a unidirectional, universal process with a predictable outcome. Rather, learning constitutes everyday practices that are situated within communities, and as such it involves “the production, transformation, and change in the identities of persons, knowledgeable skill in practice, and communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 47). Such participation by individuals within communities “can be neither fully internalized as knowledge structures” (i.e. cognitive processes), “nor fully externalized as instrumental artifacts or overarching activity structures” (i.e. social influences) (p. 51). In this way, activities, tasks, functions, and
understandings take on meaning as negotiated within systems of interpersonal relations. And because social practice involves people and the way they accommodate each other and change from context to context, learning necessarily involves the formation of identities. As Lave and Wenger put it, "learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: they are aspects of the same phenomenon" (p. 115).

Expanding on his earlier work with Lave, Wenger (1998) outlines the pivotal role of identity in the creation and transmission of ideas and skills. Identity, he says, is "the vehicle that carries our experiences from context to context" (p. 268). People find and create meaning by adapting their identities within ever changing communities of practice. In Wenger's social theory of learning, learning and knowing (experiencing the world as meaningful) take place as an individual's lifelong and everyday practice of social participation. Therefore, learning and knowing integrate the components of community, practice, meaning, and identity (see Figure 1). The elegance and sophistication of Wenger's theory lies in the way these elements are deeply interconnected.

![Figure 1: Components of a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)]
and mutually constitutive. In fact, as Wenger points out, one could move any of the peripheral components to the central focus and the ensuing theory would still make sense (ibid., p. 5). For example, a theory of identity would involve community, practice, meaning, and learning. Theories of community, practice, and meaning could likewise be formed through their co-constitutive elements.

It would be wrong to limit Lave and Wenger’s theories of situated learning to immediate or isolated communities of practice. Knowledge and skills often find a way to transfer beyond the confines of a particular community or practice, and as teachers we generally hope that they do. As was pointed out previously, individuals carry their experiences from one context to another, and the manner in which this happens is a central issue in any theory of education. Wenger (1998) explains the process by placing it as a dynamic interplay between identity and community. In his view, an individual’s movement from one community or practice to another involves three distinct modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment (see Figure 2). Engagement entails the active negotiation of meaning within specific communities of practice. More internally, imagination allows the participant to extrapolate from personal experience, to create images of themselves, the world, and future possibilities (cf. Markus &
Nurius, 1986), and to see connections through time and space. Finally, alignment is necessary to coordinate efforts and actions to fit within the expectations of broader structures, discourses, and enterprises.

Wenger’s (1998) exploration of modes of belonging echo similar concerns raised in the socio-dynamic views of motivation discussed earlier (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2009). Both situated learning theory and current L2 motivation theories emphasize the important role of identity and imagination in shaping meaning by way of community participation, in both immediate and future contexts. These two theories also have great implications for FL writing motivation, as they empower the FL writer with greater agency within a learning environment that often seems (on the face of it) starved of meaning and purpose.

6 Pedagogical implications for FL writing

The previous section has outlined two manifestations of the social turn in SLA: one in current theories of L2 motivation and the other in situated learning theory. I now turn to applying this theoretical framework to real practice in FL writing pedagogy.

We have seen how the notions of an identifiable, stable target language community and integrative motivation are problematic in FL settings such as Japan, and how motivation has largely been ignored in FL writing instruction. For these reasons, I believe it is crucial for writing instructors in Japan to more carefully consider the nature of learner motivation in FL writing, especially in regard to the dynamics of identity, community, and the construction of meaning. Needs, preferences, curriculum requirements, and other logistical concerns do indeed differ from situation to situation, so the following general recommendations can be adapted to fit a wide range of teaching styles and environments.
6.1 Writing as community participation and empowerment

First, writing should be recognized fundamentally as a means of constructive communication within communities of practice. Regardless of the degree to which instruction emphasizes this, such a recognition is nonetheless sensible as a basis for syllabus design. Students may display a certain amount of intrinsic motivation toward completing writing tasks or learning how to construct a basic academic essay, but I strongly suspect that motivation burns brighter and longer when students come to realize that their own writing allows them access to social participation, even in a language they feel is not their own (as is often the case in Japan). This communicative participation, in writing as in speaking, has more than just the intrinsic value of task completion or skill acquisition: it leads to the broader development of a person (Marchenková, 2008), one who senses value in his/her contribution to social discourse.

Repeated and meaningful written interaction inevitably leads to a higher sense of empowerment, a confidence that one’s own voice is a contributing part of a wider world of ideas and change, that one’s own written words can have an impact on others. Although the traditionally vertical power structures in Japanese universities (e.g. expert over novice, teacher over student, senior over junior) seem to pose a considerable challenge to social and political empowerment of individuals, Casanave (2004) nonetheless sees this empowerment as a necessary ingredient in writing pedagogy:

...writing as a complex social and political practice necessarily links improvement in students’ improvement to how students understand, and are able to locate themselves within, the social and political contexts of their writing. With such understanding presumably comes greater control of writers’ own decisions about how to interact with and respond to the instruction they receive. With greater control comes greater agency and an
ability to participate in, and possibly resist, the literacy practices of their academic and workplace communities. (p. 86)

In this view, conscious and confident engagement in social discourse leads to greater control and agency. Plagiarism, by the same reasoning, is one expression of disempowerment. Writers who resort to the appropriation of what others have exerted effort in producing have little respect for writing as a discourse, and little confidence in the power of their own authorship.

One of the goals of writing instructors should be to counter the unconscious (but pervasive) assumption that written communication is at worst impotent and at best an interpreter or editor of speech. Nowhere is this assumption stronger than in FL contexts where legitimate audiences and active communities in the target language are more vaguely defined. A wide range of actions to ennoble writers toward a greater sense of agency is available, as part of syllabuses that take a dialogic approach to the creation of meaning within communities. Such design innovations would ideally expose students to a variety of communities, both near and far. Examples range from peer response writing within a class, an imagined model United Nations (Yashima, 2009; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), student-produced magazines or academic journals within a university department, inter-university debates and exchanges, blogs that attract an international audience, or documentaries written and produced by students and posted online. These activities are based on the conviction that when students realize their written work is part of a meaningful and consequential dialogue, they will rise to the occasion and produce texts that are of higher quality, and ultimately of longer lasting motivational value.

6.2 Writing as formation and negotiation of meaning

In the same dialogic framework, FL writing pedagogy can also benefit from a more concerted focus on learner-driven construction and negotiation of
Motivation and communities of practice in foreign language writing contexts

meaning. Form is indisputably a necessary component in writing instruction, but it emerges more naturally (as it does in any aspect of life) within a meaning-focused frame. Van Lier (2002) describes a socio-cognitive stance that "language is not just a sequence of sentences put together in a coherent and cohesive discourse", but rather is "brought forth and carried along by a complex process involving physical, cognitive, and social actions. Language is one strand woven into this web of meaning making" (p. 147). This Bakhtian view employs language form in the service of the greater goal of meaning formation. Therefore, rather than presenting structures, models, and genres as molds into which content can be poured, writing teachers can utilize a dialogic approach to introduce students to such skills as summarizing, paraphrasing, reviewing texts, argumentation, critical thinking, and critical writing (Marchenkova, 2008). In all of these examples, meaning through community (dialogic) participation precedes focus on form.

A focus on meaning in FL writing also requires consideration of the role and quality of content. In promoting content as a key element in syllabus design, Eskey (1997) observes that in real life people do not initiate discourses based on the structures they wish to reproduce, but on the subjects they are interested in and want to know more about. Seen from the perspective of learner motivation, this has vital importance. As Casanave and Sosa put it, "People who are bored do not learn" (2008, p. 90). These researchers advocate an approach that assumes that "challenge, complexity, and depth (so often absent in L2 classrooms) can promote motivation, critical thinking, engagement, and language development" (p. 88). In this case, the focus shifts from learning to write to writing to learn.

A writing-to-learn approach suggests the possibility of redirecting writing pedagogy toward literacy training, which in a very broad sense means exposing
students to a wider world of ideas and methods of communication. It may also imply content-based instruction (see Eskey, 1997) as an alternative to skills-based approaches. However, teachers need not follow strict literacy- or content-based curriculums in order to stimulate the exchange of ideas in the writing classroom, but both approaches are exciting options. At the very least, FL writing classrooms can benefit from approaching content as "not merely something to practice language with" (ibid., p. 136), but as something to explore with language. Content then provides a motivating locus around which discourse and learning can converge.

6.3 Writing as a transportable facet of identity

Finally, FL writing instruction needs to take into account how learners’ experiences in the classroom will be carried into the wider world. The challenge is in balancing the seemingly antithetical goals of maintaining the relevance of contextual specificity on the one hand, and promoting global application of knowledge and skills on the other – or as Wenger (1998) asks, "How can we broaden the scope of coverage without losing the depth of local engagement?" (p.269). Much of the research into L2 writing skills transfer indicates that adapting previously learned skills to new domains is problematic, especially in far transfer cases where the new context is significantly different in terms of expectation and task type (James, 2009; 2010). Therefore, generalized skills (such as the mythical "topic sentence") acquired under general-writing-skills-instruction (GWSI) or English-for-general-academic-purposes (EGAP) approaches may not carry over well into uncharted contexts. This is where both SLA cognitivism and process models of L2 writing fall short, and calls into question the commonly-held assumption that learning occurs mainly through conscious abstraction and rule-making. If learners truly acquire language skills though a systematic process of abstracting and decontextualizing input, then
these skills should reconstitute more easily than they seem to.

However, two factors that do seem to positively contribute to far transfer are attitude and motivation (James, 2009; 2010) – i.e. learners’ possible future selves. This finding, if true, provides support for many of the socio-dynamic theories discussed in this paper – those that posit learning as the lifelong and multi-situated formation of identity (as opposed to the acquisition, through cognition, of commodified knowledge and skills sets) – as well as the integral role of motivation and imagination in the practice of learning. Lemke (2002) bemoans a parochial tradition in education that is “narrowly focused on informational content which is more or less unique to school experience” instead of taking advantage of opportunities to “pursue longer-term agendas of building identity repertoires and resources” (pp. 76-77). Toward this pursuit, it is in FL writing students’ best interests to experience writing in English not merely as a set of skills to be learned and then applied at a later date, but as a practice that they can engage in now and for the rest of their lives. When students discover the potential of their own agency as writers, the experience becomes a more integral part of their own identity – a motivated identity that can transport understanding and skills beyond the limits of classroom practice.

7 Research implications

This paper has discussed, via a theoretical framework, socio-dynamic aspects of motivation in FL writing contexts and the pedagogical implications of that framework. Beyond the classroom, there is also a pressing need for longitudinal, qualitative studies of learner motivation in FL writing. Cross-sectional, aggregate cause-effect studies will ultimately fail to account for the complex and dynamic factors that constitute an individual’s development over multiple timescales and contexts. FL writing research should therefore
concentrate on the qualities of motivation in the learner as a real person, taking into account the multiplicity of hopes, self-images, commitments, and community involvements (among other components) that foster identity and learning.

FL writing research should also investigate the dynamics of writing communities and how they relate to the learner's sense of agency. Such studies might, for example, consider the differences between immediate and imagined communities of practice in their connection to motivation. Furthermore, if community involvement and agency do indeed stimulate motivation, research will have to confirm whether the texts that learners produce reflect this empowerment.

Finally, there is a need to augment existing research into writing skills transfer, most of which has focused on SL settings. Specifically, researchers should explore the effectiveness of socio-dynamic approaches (as discussed in this paper) in bridging immediate context with subsequent adaptations of writing skills in new situations. The movement away from monolithically cognitivist paradigms in SLA and toward more relational views of the individual and community suggests that one of the central questions in future FL writing research will be the extent to which a meaning-focused, community-in-practice approach to writing aids students in carrying their agency and effectiveness as authors into new contexts. This is a question that should be of interest to all FL writing instructors who are concerned about the relevance of writing to language curriculums and to their students' futures.
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Motivation and communities of practice in foreign language writing contexts

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