

ABSTRACT

There have been potential benefits if learners keep their consistent engagement in learning activities (e.g., Nakata, 2008), but it is always a challenge for language teachers to encourage learners to carry out learning activities outside of formal class time. It has been argued that the social aspect of technologies can be used as a motivational support for learning (Ushioda, 2011), and access to technologies such as mobile phones has become commonplace. There are an increasing number of studies suggesting that such social interaction outside of class appears to provide many of the conditions necessary for fostering learning (Lomicka & Lord, 2016), not the least of which is establishing a supporting platform from the teacher and peers. In addition, social networking entails interaction between participants involved in the communication context, and there has been an extensive amount of work that has been carried out over the past several years to investigate various elements of this kind of interaction (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger, 2005). Discussions on online social networking for language learning have also increased in recent years (e.g., Lamy & Zourou, 2013; Meskill, 2013), and this has started to prompt research into the various features of social networking and its applicability to language teaching and learning. While there are several studies that have started to explore this potential in language learning contexts (e.g., Álvarez Valencia, 2016), results thus far have been rather mixed, with learners showing positive attitudes but limited interaction (Tran, 2016). There is also preliminary evidence to suggest that learners are more likely to engage in tasks and activities if they see a clear relationship between what they undertake and their learning goals, but learners also need to feel that there is sufficient presence from the teacher with appropriate feedback (Heift, 2004). Based on the discussion above, there is evidence that from a theoretical perspective social networking appears to provide many of the conditions necessary for supporting learning (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). These studies have suggested that there is a need

to reconsider the ways in which social interaction tools can be used, ideally to promote social and cognitive aspects of teacher presence (see Lee, 2014), and whether this can link to enhanced task activity outside of the classroom.

In order to shed some light onto the relationship between the online social interactions and the role of teacher presence in facilitating the discussion, the purpose of the study was to explore how social interaction can be used as a support for engaging in language learning activities outside of the classroom, and to determine how social, cognitive and teaching aspects of teacher presence can encourage task engagement. The study was carried out with 109 pre-intermediate learners of English at two private universities in Tokyo over a three-semester period in four intact classes. The two classes at the first university in the first year comprised the first cohort (n=48), and the two classes in the second university comprised the second (n=61). Out-of-class activities were provided as a supplement for class quizzes for all learners, consisting of vocabulary learning activities through Quizlet learning app and listening activities through the website esl-lab.com. Both cohorts were investigated in two phases in consecutive semesters, and support was provided for learners using different treatments to examine the short and long-term effects of teacher presence on task engagement and quiz outcomes. In the first phase of the first cohort, learners were given support in class and could contact the teacher directly or using email, and the second phase learners were provided with encouragement and support by the teacher using the LINE messaging app outside of class time. In the first phase of the second cohort, learners were provided with support by the teacher through LINE in the same way as in the second phase with the first cohort, but in the second phase, teacher presence consisted of just providing support for learners through LINE when required to see if learners could develop autonomy. Learner engagement in the Quizlet activities and listening activities across the two phases of each cohort were investigated, as well as the scores on the vocabulary quizzes, and

the logs of all interactions in the class LINE group and the individual interactions with the teacher. The results are discussed in terms of how teacher presence may be used as a support tool both socially and cognitively as well as determining the role of social tools in the process of learning and teaching outside of class.