Learner Perceptions of Asynchronous Oral Computer-mediated Communication: Proficiency and Second Langauge Selves

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Abstract

The present study addresses the perceptions of international teaching assistants regarding the role of language learning tasks using Wimba Voice (WV) in aiding the improvement of their second language (L2) oral skills. It specifically examines how this asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) technology can foster the development of these learners' L2 selves. According to Dörnyei (2009), the more clearly learners can envision their future L2 selves, the more motivated they will be to achieve their L2 goals. With increased planning of oral production, access to instructor and peer feedback, and additional opportunities for self-reflection, asynchronous CMC technologies have been found to enable L2 learners to express their thoughts at their own pace and feel more relaxed and confident than in more threatening face-to-face situations (Sun, 2009). The findings suggest that learners have a variety of opinions regarding the role of asynchronous WV tasks in motivating them to develop their L2 oral proficiency. Also, many may prefer oral CMC environments that facilitate interaction and meaning negotiation. Results were inconclusive concerning the effect of WV-based tasks on students' perceptions of their future L2 selves; however, this may have been due to the short time frame in which these activities were employed.

Résumé

Nous étudions ici les perceptions d'un groupe d'assistants internationaux sur le rôle des tâches d'apprentissage linguistique à l'aide de Wimba Voice (WV). Le projet avait pour but d'améliorer les compétences orales des participants dans leur langue seconde. La présente étude examine en particulier la voie par laquelle cette technologie de la communication asynchrone par ordinateur peut favoriser l'évolution de la langue seconde des apprenants. Selon Dörnyei (2009), plus les apprenants peuvent envisager clairement un futur emploi de leur langue seconde, plus ils seront motivés à atteindre leurs objectifs linguistiques. Les technologies de la communication asynchrone par ordinateur ont permis aux apprenants d'exprimer leurs idées à leur propre rythme et de se sentir plus détendus et confiants que lors de situations en face-à-face (Sun, 2009). Ces résultats s'expliquent par le temps de préparation de la production orale, l'accès à l'enseignant et les commentaires des pairs, ainsi que les possibilités supplémentaires d'auto-analyse. Les résultats de cette étude suggèrent que les apprenants possèdent diverses opinions sur le rôle des tâches WV dans leur motivation pour élargir les compétences orales en langue seconde. Plusieurs participants préféreraient les environnements de communication orale à l'ordinateur qui favorisent l'interaction et la négociation du sens. Les résultats n'ont pas été concluants en ce qui concerne l'effet des tâches WV sur les perceptions des étudiants quant à l'avenir de leur langue seconde ; cependant, ce résultat pourrait être attribué à la courte durée des activités du traitement.

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Introduction

With the introduction of emerging technologies into the Second Language (L2) classroom, language teachers are concerned with how to best implement these tools in order that new technology-based tasks will have the most positive impact on student language learning (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). In particular, it is believed that technology-based tasks that encourage student development of their L2 oral communication skills may be especially useful for fostering L2 motivation. Students' motivation to improve their L2 oral communication skills is a factor worthy of in-depth exploration since strong, effective oral communication can increase students' confidence in their overall language proficiency and help them be more self-assured about their personal and/or professional goals (Hetherington, 1982). With the proliferation of technologies that focus on spoken communication, namely asynchronous oral computer-mediated communication (CMC), L2 learners' oral performance holds enormous potential for motivational gains that can directly lead to improvements in proficiency (Zhao, 2003).

The object of study for the current investigation is an English communication skills course for international teaching assistants at a large research university in the United States. This course has adopted the use of Wimba Voice (WV), an asynchronous oral CMC tool, with the aim of improving students' spoken L2 performance. Throughout the course, students participated in asynchronous oral CMC tasks using Wimba Voice Board, a threaded voice discussion board, and Wimba Voice Presentation. Both of these features are options within WV and will be described in further detail.

WV was incorporated as a methodological choice in the present study for several reasons. Unlike synchronous CMC tools, such as Adobe Connect and Skype, that provide primarily opportunities for real-time interaction and negotiation of meaning (Lomicka, Lord, & Manzer, 2003), asynchronous CMC technology such as Wimba Voice is less face-threatening, allows students to learn at their own pace, and enables self-reflection on the recorded speech. These advantages may lead to the development of learners' speaking confidence. As a result, students may also sharpen their future vision of themselves as competent target language users or, in other words, their future *L2 selves* (Dörnyei, 2009). Thus, the investigation of student perceptions about the extent to which asynchronous oral tasks created in WV can help them improve their oral communication skills can offer invaluable information about how pedagogical uses of this technology can potentially foster the development of learners' L2 selves (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005).

To date, there have been no investigations of the role of WV-based activities for developing learners' L2 selves and motivation. Therefore, the current study will aim to address this gap by inquiring into the effectiveness of asynchronous oral CMC tasks using WV for encouraging students' motivation and L2 self development. It is hypothesized that this may also lead to an improvement of their oral L2 communication skills. The following section provides the theoretical background on (a) L2 learner motivation, (b) future L2 selves, and (c) the role of asynchronous oral CMC, in particular WV, in the development of L2 motivation and oral communication skills.

Research on Motivation and Selves in Second Language Learning

Pioneer Fieldwork on Motivation and L2 Learning

"It is universally accepted that motivation plays a vital role in academic learning in general, and this is particularly true of the sustained process of mastering an L2" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005, p. 616). Over the past half-century there have been many discordant theories about the way that motivation plays a role in SLA (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972). Gardner and his associates, for example, were the first ones to try to measure motivation (Gardner, 1988; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). These researchers envisioned L2 motivation as a static component of a L2 learner's identity. Their main constructs in their *socioeducational* model were the *integrative* and *instrumental orientations*, which were based on a learner's internal desire to learn a language in order to integrate with the target language culture and his external incentives, such as obtaining a prestigious job or earning a higher salary (Gardner, 1988).

Over the past several decades, there has been a proliferation of studies and theories on L2 motivation in response to the socioeducational model. Examples include the socio-contextual model, self-determination theory, goal theories, and willingness to communicate, to name a few (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Dörnyei, 2002; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). However, a detailed description of these models is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say that most of these studies employed quantitative research methods with large groups of individuals. This research, despite focusing on individual difference factors, tended to typify large groups of language learners (Lamb, 2009). Indeed, Atkinson (2002) argues that such quantitative methodologies "neutralize by design what is variable (in individual in human behaviour or otherwise), [and] produce epiphenominally uniform accounts" (p. 536). Since language learning is an ongoing, cumulative process, some research has suggested that motivation should be studied qualitatively, as something complex, dynamic, and changeable at any point in time. Alternative models for L2 motivation have been suggested, for example, that encompass both qualitative and mixed-methods studies, as these might be able to offer more appropriate evidence of changes in L2 motivation (Ushioda, 2009).

Current Perspectives on L2 Motivation

Some of the most recent research on L2 motivation builds upon Markus and Nurius's (1986) theory of possible selves. Drawing on the field of cultural psychology, Dörnyei's (2005) *L2 motivational self system* claims that possible selves are important regulators of people's behavior (Higgins, 1998; Markus & Nurius, 1986). This system, which includes the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience, posits that people are motivated by the image they have of their possible L2 selves using the target language. It is expected that a clearer picture may also facilitate higher motivated learning behavior (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). Whereas the *ideal L2 self* encompasses the L2-speaking person that we would like to become and is thought to have the greatest impact of motivation, the *ought-to L2 self* is concerned with preventing the negative outcomes that may occur if one is unable to eventually speak the L2 (Dörnyei, 2005).

The L2 selves, in addition to defining an individual, develop along with him or her and serve as an incentive for a person's future behavior. Together, some consider them to be more applicable to current English–as-a-global-language contexts than past theories of L2 motivation. For example, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) integrative orientation posited

that more highly motivated L2 learners may be more willing to identify with members of other ethnolinguistic groups, hypothesized to positively influence L2 motivation. This, however, has been argued to be applicable only to bilingual contexts, where members of different language groups co-exist (Dörnyei, 2005; Lamb, 2009; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). However, the L2 motivational self system incorporates the expectation that speakers may belong to diverse global language contexts, where a fixed target language community may not exist. One example of this may be observed in international chat rooms, where the target language belongs to a global community rather than one group of speakers (Lam, 2000).

The L2 motivational self system is further distinguishable from Gardner's (1988) socio-educational model for its imagery component. This aspect suggests that more vivid and elaborate possible selves make more motivating incentives (Al-Shehri, 2009). In other words, the stronger the learner can conjure up a future self-image as a proficient target language user, the more motivated one will be to improve his or her L2 proficiency. Indeed, language learning activities that stimulate visualization and imaginative capacities may encourage learners to reach their L2 goals (Arnold, Puchta, & Rinvolucri, 2007).

Linking Motivation, CMC, and L2 Oral Skills

One area that shows much promise for enhancing L2 learners' motivation to develop their communicative language skills is computer-mediated communication (CMC). Research has shown that the use of spoken CMC technologies such as chat rooms, voice blogs, and voice discussion boards can encourage students' participation and foster extensive oral production in the target language (e.g., Beauvois, 1997; Rosen, 2009); enhance L2 motivation, collaboration, and learner autonomy (Sun, 2009); and lead to effective language learning (Beauvois, 1998).

Although existing in both synchronous and asynchronous forms, asynchronous oral CMC tools possess certain advantages, as they provide language learners with opportunities for additional practice, as well as peer and instructor feedback (Meskill & Anthony, 2005). Asynchronous CMC can enable L2 learners to express their thoughts at their own pace and to feel more relaxed and confident than in threatening face-to-face situations (Sun, 2009; Zhao, 2003). Sun (2009), for instance, found that using voice blogs encouraged learners to take risks speaking the target language, motivated them to create audio recordings, and allowed for self-presentations and extensive interaction with other bloggers. Similarly, the use of activities designed in Wimba Voice (WV) has been shown to help L2 learners improve their oral proficiency by affording them additional opportunities to practice speaking (Charle Poza, 2005) and receive both instructor and peer feedback (Kabata, Wiebe, & Chao, 2005). These characteristics may allow learners to gain more confidence speaking the target language. By allotting additional time for reflection and speech planning, asynchronous CMC technologies such as WV are expected to motivate students to clearly imagine their future selves as fluent target language users. It is hoped that this envisioning will be just the first step that they take toward improving their oral L2 performance (Al-Shehri, 2009; Arnold et al., 2007).

Research on Wimba Voice and Oral Performance

Wimba Voice Board and Wimba Voice Presentation are two features of Wimba Voice (WV), a suite of web-based voice tools for online communication developed by the Horizon Wimba Company. WV also includes Voice Authoring, Voice Email, and Voice

Podcaster, which will not be discussed here. Figure 1 shows the interface of Wimba Voice Board, a threaded voice discussion board that provides language learners with opportunities for developing their L2 speaking and listening skills.

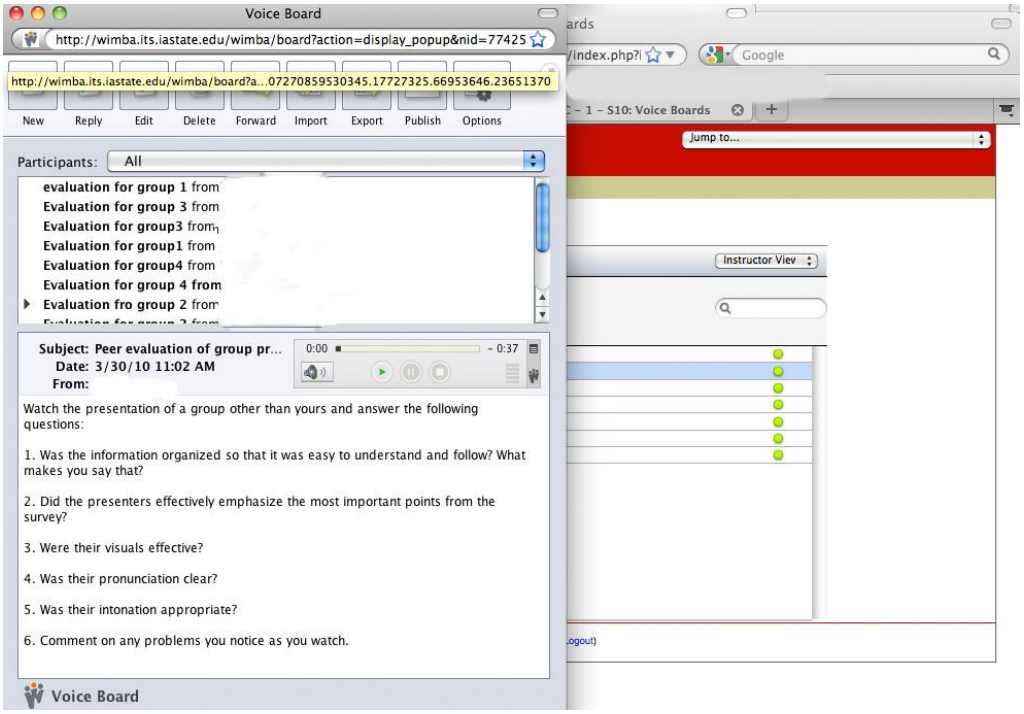

Figure 1. Screenshot of the Wimba Voice Board interface and sample assignment

In Figure 2 one can observe the Wimba Voice Presentation interface, where the instructor can provide any webpage for learners to consult and learners can post written and oral responses to a given assignment.

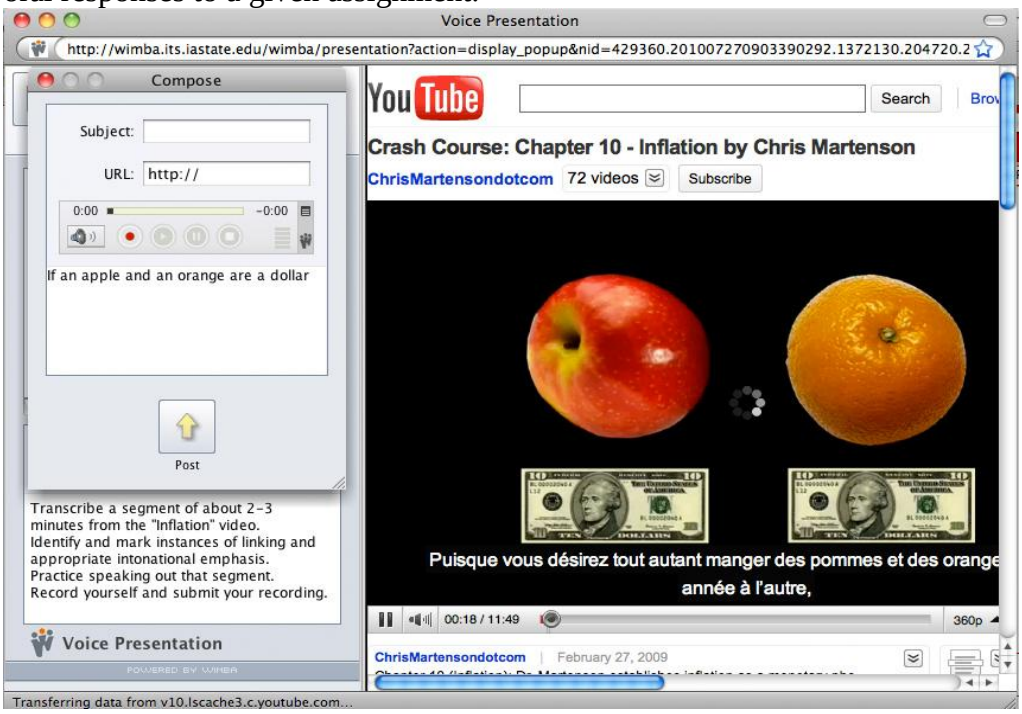

Figure 2. Screenshot of the Wimba Voice Presentation interface and sample assignment

Wimba Voice Board and Wimba Voice Presentation can be used to create different language learning tasks, such as listening and recording reflections, or watching a video and mirroring the speaker's intonation. Such tasks enable a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered activities, empowering students to take control over their learning (Fotos & Browne, 2004). According to Yao (2007), the use of WV activities, in addition to helping L2 learners improve their oral proficiency, can also motivate them to work on developing their listening and speaking skills more frequently outside of class. Several reported instructional merits of WV include its reliability, functionality, user-friendliness (McIntosh, Braul, & Chao, 2003) and its ability to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning (Tognozzi & Truong, 2009).

Currently, there is a dearth of theory-driven research on the role of WV in computer-assisted language learning. While existing studies have focused primarily on students' perceptions about the effectiveness of WV activities for developing oral skills (Kabata et al., 2005; McIntosh et al., 2003; Rosen, 2009; Wang, 2006) and on their potential for reducing language anxiety (Charle Poza, 2005; Cho & Carey, 2001), they have not yet examined the role of asynchronous oral CMC tasks in L2 motivation and the development of L2 future selves. In addition to offering only anecdotal evidence about the role of WV-based tasks in language learning, some of these studies also have important methodological limitations. The following section provides a brief overview of existing research in this area.

Two studies have investigated the role of WV tasks in diminishing learner anxiety. Cho and Carey (2001) found that certain tasks helped language learners reduce anxiety levels while increasing their accuracy and fluency in listening and speaking tasks. Unfortunately, these authors did not provide a methodological description to substantiate the alleged benefits of WV tasks. Charle Poza's (2005) study yielded similar results, indicating that the use of WV activities had a strong potential for reducing anxiety due to the absence of time pressure and opportunity for editing voice recordings. Results also revealed learners' increased willingness to take risks when speaking in the WV environment and a diminished fear of negative feedback.

Further research on WV and language learning has focused on exploring student and instructor general perceptions. Wang (2006) examined how WV could be most effectively used for L2 learning and teaching. Data analysis showed that both the instructor and students had positive perceptions toward WV-based activities and believed them to be especially effective for beginning and intermediate L2 learners to practice speaking. The results of McIntosh et al.'s (2003) evaluation of the instructional merits of WV tasks for enhancing L2 speaking and listening skills in an English for Academic Purposes course indicated that students viewed WV activities positively and perceived them as non-threatening for speaking practice. Furthermore, the analysis of student postings on WV discussion boards revealed that overall oral performance had improved, leading authors to conclude that WV was "a viable tool for language learning and effective in enhancing students' listening and speaking skills" (McIntosh et al., 2003, p. 68).

The findings of Kabata et al.'s (2005) research on student and instructor opinions of WV-mediated tasks revealed that learners had positive reactions to WV and viewed it as helpful for improving L2 pronunciation. Despite some technical problems, learners reported enjoying WV because it provided time flexibility, was less anxiety producing than speaking in class, allowed for individual feedback, and was more user friendly than an audio tape recorder. Finally, Rosen's (2009) analysis found that beginning L2 learners preferred using

a WV discussion board to synchronous classroom-based videoconferencing because they felt more confident speaking in the L2 without the immediate proximity of their peers. The author hypothesized that a WV discussion board might be beneficial for offering learners additional speaking opportunities but concluded that further research in this area was necessary.

A survey of the existing research on WV has revealed that learners have positive perceptions of this technology for the development of L2 oral skills. However, due to the methodological vulnerability of several of these studies, it was not possible to draw a definitive conclusion about the effectiveness of WV-based tasks for the development of L2 oral proficiency. Moreover, it appears that there have been no investigations on the role of asynchronous oral CMC tasks in aiding L2 learners' development of their L2 selves. Therefore, the main goal of the present study is to address these gaps in the body of research by answering the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of WV's effectiveness as an asynchronous oral CMC tool for the development of their L2 oral proficiency?
2. To what extent does the use of WV for asynchronous oral language learning tasks affect students' perceptions of their future L2 selves and desire to use their English speaking skills in the future?

Methodology

The research questions were addressed in a descriptive study, employing quantitative and qualitative data. This research design allowed for examining how students' use of WV affected their perceptions of their future L2 selves, motivation to improve their English speaking skills, and L2 oral proficiency.

The data were collected from ten participants enrolled in a graduate-level English course. The quantitative data consisted of students' responses to 5-point Likert-scale items for both a pre- and post-survey regarding students' use of technology, motivation, and L2 selves. The qualitative data involved (a) learners' responses to open-ended items in pre- and post-surveys concerning their backgrounds, (b) technology use for language learning, and (c) perceptions about the effectiveness of WV tasks for improving their English communication skills. Qualitative data also included learners' responses during a semi-structured interview.

Participants

The participants were ten non-native English speakers enrolled in a course designed to improve students' oral communication skills. These students had failed to achieve a Level 1 (fully certified level) on the Oral English Certification Test, which assesses the effectiveness of communicative English in everyday university classroom situations. All participants were Asian, between the ages of 20 and 30 (M=25), had studied English between four and 20 years (M=11), and had different majors.

Context

The study was done at a large public university in the US and involved a graduate-level English class, the goal of which was to help learners improve their oral skills. The class met twice a week for one hour and a half over the course of 17 weeks. Throughout the semester students were required to give three live videotaped presentations, provide self- and peer evaluations, and complete weekly homework activities. This course employed the

Moodle course management system with integrated WV activities. Starting in Week 7, the instructor implemented Wimba Voice Board and Wimba Voice Presentation into some asynchronous oral tasks. In particular, the students used the former to give audio feedback on their classmates' video-recorded presentations posted in Moodle and to reflect on their own performance. A sample activity with Wimba Voice Presentation asked students to watch a YouTube video and identify the presenter's speaking strategies. The task specifically required learners to transcribe a segment from the video clip, identify instances of linking and appropriate intonational emphasis, and audio-record that segment, mirroring the original speaker. This was the first semester WV-based activities were integrated into this specific English course.

Materials

Pre- and post-surveys.

The materials used in this study included a pre- and post-survey, whose purpose was to elicit students' perceptions about the role of technology, specifically that of WV-based tasks, in aiding their oral English proficiency and developing their future L2 selves. Survey items were partially adapted from (a) a survey used in Csizér and Kormos's (2009) study on attitudes, selves, and motivated learning behavior; (b) a survey on the ideal and ought-to selves among Chinese, Japanese, and Iranian learners of English (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009); and (c) a survey on technology use for language learning (Chapelle, 2008). Both surveys contained four sections with items on a 5-point Likert scale and one section with open-ended items. The questions in both surveys inquired into students' perceptions of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves, their overall use of technology in their native languages and in English, and their motivation to use technology to improve English-speaking skills. Additionally, the pre-survey contained questions about participants' backgrounds and the post-survey asked them to evaluate the usefulness of asynchronous oral CMC tasks using WV for improving their oral communication skills. Both surveys were created and administered in Moodle.

Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit more specific data regarding students' perceptions of their L2 selves and their experiences with WV tasks. These 10-15-minute interviews asked participants to focus on the most and least positive experiences completing WV activities throughout the semester, their overall perceptions of the WV tasks, and whether or not they would recommend the use of WV to future courses. Students were probed about the role of WV-mediated tasks for improving their future language performance and confidence in the target language. Finally, they were asked to envision instances where they might possibly use their speaking skills with the aim of determining whether WV tasks had played a role in clarifying their future language-specific goals.

Procedure

After introducing the study to participants and obtaining informed consent, researchers administered the first survey during Week 11 of the semester, shortly after WV was introduced to the students. The second survey was given during Week 15. Each survey took students 10-15 minutes to complete. Additionally, semi-structured interviews that allowed for elaboration and clarification of participant survey responses (Oxford, 1996)

were completed during Week 16. Out of ten participants who agreed to participate, nine of them completed both surveys and eight partook in the interviews.

Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics since the small sample size did not warrant the use of inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics have routinely been reported in other studies with small sample sizes investigating similar aspects (see, for example, Chang, 2007; Hegelheimer, 2006; Hincks & Edlund, 2009; Kissau, McCullough, & Pyke, 2010; Sydorenko, 2010). For responses to the Likert-type survey items, a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points) was used. Both positively and negatively phrased items were included in order to eliminate response bias (Dörnyei, 2010). However, for data analysis, the point values of the negatively phrased items were inverted so that high values consistently showed positive attitudes and low values demonstrated the contrary. In addition, the semi-structured interview data were analyzed qualitatively. To answer the first research question (What are students' perceptions of WV's effectiveness as an asynchronous oral CMC tool for the development of their L2 oral proficiency?), transcripts of students' interviews and their responses to survey questions about the effectiveness of technology and WV-based tasks were qualitatively analyzed and coded for recurrent themes to determine students' perceptions of the effectiveness of WV-based activities for improving their English speaking skills. To answer the second research question (To what extent does the use of WV for asynchronous oral language learning tasks affect students' perceptions of their future L2 selves and motivation to use their English speaking skills in the future?), descriptive statistics were calculated for Likert-scale items from two sections of the pre- and post-surveys that inquired into students' perceptions of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves (see Appendices A and B for pre- and post-survey sections used to answer research questions). In addition, students' interview responses were examined and compared with their responses to similar questions in the pre- and post-surveys.

Results and Discussion

Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Asynchronous Oral Tasks Using WV for Improving L2 Oral Proficiency

The usefulness of technology, specifically WV, for improving L2 pronunciation.

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics for students' responses to the items from one section of the pre- and post-surveys were calculated and analyzed. Statements 1 and 2, below, elicited students' perceptions regarding technology's usefulness for improving their L2 pronunciation. Descriptive statistics for these two statements are displayed in Table 1.

> **Statement 1:** Recording my voice using Wimba has improved my pronunciation.
> **Statement 2:** My pronunciation did NOT improve by using Wimba in this class.

As indicated in Table 1, the total mean for these two statements in the post-survey (M=3.83, SD=0.95) decreased compared to the total mean for the pre-survey (M=4.33, SD=0.78), and this change was strong based upon the total large effect size (d=-0.60). In particular, six of the nine participants maintained their opinions of technology's usefulness

for improving their L2 pronunciation skills after using WV, whereas the other three participants' opinions decreased. The most noticeable drop came from participant 1, whose ratings of the usefulness of WV tasks for improving L2 pronunciation fell from "strongly agree" in the pre-survey to "disagree" in the post survey. Participants 9 and 10 showed similar decreases of "strongly agree" to "agree" and "neutral". The majority of the students, however, did not exhibit any significant changes responding to the items in this section of the surveys.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Technology's Usefulness for Improving L2 Pronunciation

Statement	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* diff (x_1-x)	Cohen's *d*
1	4.44	0.73	3.89	0.93	-0.60	-0.80
2	4.22	0.83	3.78	0.97	-0.40	-0.50
Total *M*	4.33	0.78	3.83	0.95	-0.50	-0.60

The usefulness of technology, specifically WV, for getting instructor feedback.

The descriptive statistics for statement 3 provide information about students' perceptions regarding technology's usefulness for getting feedback from their instructor about their pronunciation (see Table 2).

Statement 3: Using Wimba in this class to get feedback from my instructor on my pronunciation was helpful.

As indicated in Table 2, the mean for this statement in the post-survey (*M*=4.22, *SD*=0.67) also decreased compared to the mean for the pre-survey (*M*=4.44, *SD*=1.01), but this change was not strong based upon the small effect size (*d*=-0.20). While five of the nine participants maintained their opinions of technology's usefulness for getting feedback from their instructor about their pronunciation skills, three of the other participants' opinions decreased from "strongly agree" to "neutral" and one participant's opinions increased from "disagree" to "agree" after using WV.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Technology's Usefulness for Getting Pronunciation Feedback from Instructor

Statement	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* diff (x_1-x)	Cohen's *d*
3	4.44	1.01	4.22	0.67	-0.20	-0.20

The usefulness of technology, specifically WV, for improving L2 speaking skills.

The descriptive statistics for statement 4, below, are displayed in Table 3. They provide information about students' perceptions regarding technology's usefulness for improving their L2 speaking skills in general.

Statement 4: Using Wimba was a more effective way to improve my speaking skills in English than without Wimba.

As indicated in Table 3, the mean for this statement in the post-survey (*M*=3.67, *SD*=1.12) also decreased compared to that of the pre-survey (*M*=4.22, *SD*=0.67), and this change was

strong based upon the large effect size (*d*=-0.80). While five of the nine participants once again maintained their opinions, four of the others' decreased from "agree" to "disagree" after using WV.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Technology's Usefulness for Improving General L2 Speaking Skills

Statement	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* diff (x_1-x)	Cohen's *d*
4	4.22	0.67	3.67	1.12	-0.60	-0.80

Attitudes toward technology, specifically WV, for improving L2 speaking skills.

The descriptive statistics for statement 5, below, are displayed in Table 4. They offer evidence of students' attitudes toward technology, specifically WV, for improving their L2 speaking skills in general.

Statement 5: I want to continue to use Wimba to improve my speaking skills.

As indicated in Table 4, the mean for this statement in the post-survey (*M*=3.78, *SD*=0.97) increased as compared to that of the pre-survey (*M*=3.44, *SD*=1.01), but this change was not strong based upon the small difference effect size (*d*=0.33). While four participants maintained their attitudes of technology, specifically WV for improving their speaking skills, only participant 1 showed a decrease from "neutral" to "disagree". The four remaining participants' opinions all increased from "disagree" to "neutral", from "neutral" to "agree", and from "agree" to "strongly agree" after using WV.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Toward Technology, Specifically Wimba, for Improving L2 Speaking

Statement	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* diff (x_1-x)	Cohen's *d*
5	3.78	0.97	3.44	1.01	0.33	0.33

In addition to descriptive statistics from the pre- and post-surveys, students' responses to semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions in the post-survey, concerning the benefits and drawbacks of using WV activities, were used to answer the first research question. The analysis of interview transcripts and survey responses revealed that students had both positive and negative perceptions concerning the effectiveness of asynchronous oral WV-based tasks for the development of their English oral skills. As noted by the majority of students, three main advantages of the class activities in which WV was used were WV's (a) convenience and user-friendliness, (b) facilitation of noticing and self-diagnosis of errors, and (c) interactivity that enabled an asynchronous exchange of ideas. For example, participant 7 enjoyed using WV for numerous activities because it was easy to use and did not require any installation on a computer. According to participant 3, the asynchronous activities in WV allowed him to exchange ideas with his classmates and receive feedback. Moreover, participant 6 found asynchronous WV-based tasks to be facilitative of error noticing, allowing him to listen to his recorded speech and recognize his mispronunciation of certain words.

Concurrently, students also reported several shortcomings of WV-based tasks, divided into three main categories: (a) technical problems, (b) WV's similarity to other recording software, and (c) the absence of real-time interaction that could facilitate meaning and/or form negotiation. With regards to the third, participant 10 opined that interacting with a native English speaker would be much more useful for him to improve his L2 speaking skills than using WV. The main technical problems experienced by participants included the difficulty of saving recordings, the inability to edit posted recordings, and the impossibility of accessing WV from outside Moodle.

The aforementioned results indicate that students had a range of perceptions about the utility of asynchronous oral WV-based tasks for the development of their English oral proficiency. On one hand, participants' perceptions of technology for helping them to improve their pronunciation, get feedback, and develop their L2 speaking skills overall declined after using WV-based tasks throughout the latter half of the semester. On the other hand, participants' desire to continue to use WV-based tasks increased. Despite these changes, the majority of individuals did not alter their perceptions of technology's usefulness for helping them to improve their L2 oral proficiency after using WV. These mixed results suggest that individual student differences may play a role in determining perceptions of the usefulness of WV for language learning.

Another interesting theme that emerged from participants' responses in the interviews was a desire to use WV activities to communicate with fellow classmates. Despite the fact that WV was chosen in part because its asynchronous nature allows users to reflect upon the form and meaning of their utterances, many students reported using WV in an interactive way to exchange ideas with peers. As participant 3 states, "it's very good for recording, for exchange of value or ideas… and the most important thing is it can give us a chance to exchange our ideas, to know what my classmates think of my speaking". For this student, the most attractive feature of WV lay not in its ability to allow him to reflect on his L2 performance, but rather in its facilitation of message transmission and interaction between friends. Indeed, when asked if he ever listened to his own speech, participant 6 laughed, stating that he listened only when his instructor forced him and his classmates to do so for homework. The fact that this student uses the term "forced" to describe his use of WV for reflecting on his speech suggests that he found this to be an unfavorable experience. On the other hand, he reports enjoying the act of using WV to reply to other students' posts, which he found "fun" and "interesting." Special attention to the descriptive language that participants use to portray their experiences using WV can give teachers and researchers greater insight into how to best use language learning tasks in asynchronous CMC environments such as WV to facilitate students' L2 motivation and learning.

Effects of WV Tasks on Students' L2 Selves and Desire to Use Their L2 Speaking Skills in the Future

To answer the second research question, descriptive statistics for students' responses to the items from two sections of the pre- and post-surveys were calculated and analyzed. Table 5 and 6 show the results of the sections of the pre- and post-surveys corresponding to the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, respectively. Table 7 presents the combined results of Tables 5 and 6 to provide an overall picture of students' perceptions regarding their future L2 selves.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Ideal L2 Self Survey Section

ID	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* difference	Cohen's *d*
Total	3.44	0.80	3.60	0.85	0.15	0.19

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for Ought-to L2 Self Survey Section

ID	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* difference	Cohen's *d*
Total	3.04	1.12	3.19	1.00	0.15	0.14

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves Survey Sections

ID	Pre *M*	Pre *SD*	Post *M*	Post *SD*	*M* difference	Cohen's *d*
Total	3.21	1.03	3.36	0.97	0.15	0.15

According to Table 5, the total mean for students' responses to items regarding their ideal L2 self on the post-survey (*M*=3.60, *SD*=0.85) increased compared to the pre-survey (*M*=3.44, *SD*=0.80), but this change was not strong as indicated by a small effect size (*d=0*.19). Only participant 4 rated the statements in this section of the post-survey slightly lower (*M*=3.75, *SD*=0.71 for the pre-survey and *M*=3.63, *SD*=0.74 for the post-survey). Table 6 shows that the total mean for students' responses to the section on the ought-to L2 self in the post-survey (*M*=3.19, *SD*=1.00) also rose in comparison with their responses to this section in the pre-survey (*M*=3.04, *SD*=1.12). However, as evidenced by a small effect size (*d*=0.14) this increase was also not strong. Participants 6 and 9 showed a drop in perceptions of their ought-to L2 selves in this section. Overall, as indicated by total means in Table 4, most of the students evinced an increase in their perceptions regarding their future L2 selves by the end of the semester (*M*=3.36, *SD*=0.99 for the post-survey compared to *M*=3.21, *SD*=1.03 for the pre-survey), but a small effect size (*d*=0.15) suggested that this change was not strong.

Additionally, interview transcripts were analyzed to answer the second research question. The analyzed data included students' perceptions concerning the role of asynchronous oral tasks using WV in affecting their desire to use their speaking skills in the future. The majority of students claimed that they would continue to use their English in the future, primarily for professional purposes (e.g., conference presentations, research, teaching, etc.) as well as personal goals (e.g., to communicate with international friends, in social relationships, etc.). Participant 3, for instance, exemplifies a student with concrete future goals to use English,

> [M]y future plan is … I will focus on research and teaching, then maybe I will still stay here or some place else and maybe I will use English almost all the time. And the second choice is that I will go in the industry and find a job and in that case I think that speaking English is the best choice for me in the future career.

The overall means of the pre- and post-surveys concerning students' future L2 selves increased, indicating that they were more prepared to envision themselves as

proficient users of English. Meanwhile, many of them also stated that they would have continued to use these skills regardless of their engagement with WV tasks. While some students could imagine themselves as proficient English speakers in the future, others were less apt to pinpoint a specific future situation in which they would use English. For instance, when asked to imagine himself speaking English in the future, participant 5 hesitated, using many negative statements to express his lack of vision concerning invented subsequent occasions in which he would employ oral English (e.g., "I don't know," "I am not sure," "I don't think so," "I don't have confidence on my English"). Interestingly, this same participant exhibited the greatest gain on the post-survey as compared to the pre-survey in rating the usefulness of WV to improve his speaking skills. This finding might suggest that although this participant held positive attitudes about technology's current potential for improving L2 oral skills, he was reluctant to envision himself as a proficient English speaker in the future.

Based on the interview results, it was found that asynchronous WV tasks could help students improve their L2 confidence by providing additional opportunities for practicing the target language. As stated by one participant, the only way to increase confidence using the target language is to have more opportunities to use the language. When asked about the role of WV activities in improving confidence speaking in English, participant 4 explained, "Um, in my opinion, the only way that I can improve my confidence is to speak and practice more English, so... so in this sense Wimba kind of has helped me improve my confidence." Since motivation is the level of desire to achieve a future L2 goal and confidence is the learner's present perception of their abilities to achieve this goal, one might argue that learners who are more confident in their current L2 skills will also be more inclined to develop these skills further in the future. Thus, by offering increased opportunities for practice that allow students to gain confidence in their speaking abilities, asynchronous WV activities may play a role in encouraging language learners to more clearly envision themselves as proficient speakers of the target language.

These results suggest that students have mixed perceptions regarding the use of asynchronous WV-based tasks for allowing increased opportunities to use the target language. Furthermore, in this study, WV tasks were not directly linked to students' capacity to envision themselves using English in their future lives, which may be due in part to their short exposure to WV-based tasks. As shown by the interview data, two of the eight students did not consider the use of WV to be a significant factor in sharpening their vision of their future L2 selves. This finding might indicate that the perceptions of the role of asynchronous WV tasks in the development of students' future L2 selves as well as the desire to use L2 oral skills in the future were not homogeneously favorable among participants.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, participants appeared to have an array of perceptions regarding the efficacy of WV tasks used throughout the second half of the semester for the development of their L2 oral communication skills. On one hand, students' overall perceptions of technology's usefulness for improving their L2 pronunciation and general L2 speaking skills, as well as for providing additional feedback opportunities, decreased after using WV-based tasks. On the other hand, their overall eagerness and openness to continuing to use technology to develop their L2 speaking skills improved. Despite the possibility that these variations

might be caused by multiple factors, it seems possible that one of the main reasons for the disparity in their perceptions could be the result of individual differences among students.

Also noteworthy were students' reported preferences for using WV to facilitate communication with fellow classmates. Despite the fact that WV was used as a methodological choice for asynchronous oral CMC, where students could focus on their individual speech reflection and planning, many participants reported that, for them, the strengths of WV lay in its ability to promote interaction. Despite running counter to the rationale for including asynchronous activities that allow for self-reflection and error diagnosis, this preference may offer teachers and researchers insight into how CMC tasks that target oral communication skills can be best exploited so as to be most enjoyable for students and encourage them to improve their L2 speaking ability.

Additionally, language learners had mixed opinions concerning the role of the WV tasks in facilitating their future L2 selves and desire to use their English speaking skills in the future. Despite the many features of asynchronous oral CMC tasks, including opportunities for increased L2 practice outside of class, peer/instructor feedback, and self-reflection, the present study could not definitively conclude WV-based tasks as a determinate factor in helping learners to envision their future L2 selves. However, due to students' limited exposure to WV, it has yet to be seen how these asynchronous oral CMC tools may facilitate L2-self development.

According to Dörnyei (2009) and Al-Shehri (2009), the clearer the language learner is able to envision his future L2 self, the more inclined he will be to learn the target language. However, since the results of this study are based on students' self-reported data that demonstrate the differing effects of WV tasks on their perceptions of future L2 selves, there is no clear evidence that those who reported a clear vision of their future L2 selves would necessarily be more apt to improve their L2 oral skills. Consequently, further research is necessary to examine whether the use of certain asynchronous WV tasks in an L2 classroom improves language learners' actual oral performance and language proficiency. Additionally, since confidence and motivation in a target language are both directed at the same goal, in this case gaining L2 proficiency, it would be beneficial to examine whether learners with high levels of L2 confidence are also more motivated to improve their L2 skills.

As all classroom-based research involving semester-long intact classes, this study has certain limitations. First, due to certain timing limitations, the pre-survey was administered to the students several weeks after they had been introduced to asynchronous oral tasks using WV. Consequently, a shorter time span between the administration of pre- and post-surveys made it difficult to determine with any certainty how learner perceptions may have changed over a longer period of time. Thus, future longitudinal studies will be necessary in order to address this shortcoming. Second, since the course curriculum included a limited number of asynchronous WV-based activities throughout the semester, students' reflections may not have been as detailed or comprehensive as they could have been.

Finally, this is the first study that has used both quantitative and qualitative data to examine how students view the role of asynchronous oral CMC tasks, specifically in WV, in the development of their motivation and L2 selves. This type of an analysis can offer interested researchers a springboard from which to begin to investigate the role of L2 selves in the field of computer-assisted language learning. Despite its inconclusive results, this study lays the groundwork for future research on the role of asynchronous oral CMC in the

development of learner's future L2 selves. Specifically, more extensive research on WV can promote our understanding of the potential of asynchronous oral activities created in this CMC technology for developing L2 learners' oral proficiency and future selves. The examination of this potential is not only applicable to face-to-face courses that focus on the development of L2 oral communication skills, but is also vital for online/hybrid and distance language courses where participants do not meet face-to-face everyday. Some existing research shows that learners enrolled in distance language courses have to overcome logistical issues that limit their interaction among learners and with the instructor, which precludes the formation of meaningful relationships (Lai, Zhao, & Li, 2008). In this case, the use of asynchronous oral language learning tasks in online/hybrid and distance language courses must be examined in greater detail to determine if and how they may provide increased opportunities for collaboration, feedback, and self-reflection, which can have a significant positive impact on the development of students' oral L2 proficiency and motivation.

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Appendix A
Pre-Wimba Survey (Includes Only Sections Used to Answer RQs)

Instructions (adapted from Csizér & Kormos, 2009):

We would like to ask you to help us by answering the following questions concerning foreign language learning. This is not a test so there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Your instructor will not have access to your answers, which will be entirely confidential. We are interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. In the following section we would like you to answer some questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 5: 5= Strongly agree, 4= agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree.

II. Motivation (taken from Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009)

Part A: Ideal L2 selves

After I finish my degree, I can imagine myself living abroad and using English in my daily life.

I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with locals.

I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.

I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues.

I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English very fluently.

I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.

Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself speaking in English.

The things I want to do in the future require me to speak English.

Part B: Ought-to L2 selves

I am studying to improve my oral skills in English because close friends think it is important.

I have to improve my speaking skills in English, because, if I do not, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.

Learning spoken English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.

My parents believe that I must improve my English speaking skills to be an educated person.

I consider speaking English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.

Effectively speaking English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family/boss.

It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn to improve my English pronunciation.

Studying English pronunciation is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English well.

Studying to improve my spoken English is important to me because other people will respect me more.

If I fail to improve my spoken English, I'll be letting other people down.

If I fail to improve my English pronunciation, I am afraid I won't pass the SPEAK/TEACH test.

V. Using technology for improving speaking skills in English

1. I believe that recording my voice using technology (Wimba) is a good way to improve my pronunciation.
2. I do NOT think that my pronunciation will improve by using technology (Wimba) in this class.
3. I think that using technology (Wimba) in this class to get feedback from my instructor on my pronunciation will be helpful.
4. Using technology (Wimba) is going to be more effective to improve my speaking skills in English than without technology.
5. I am eager to use technology (Wimba) to improve my speaking skills.

Appendix B
Post-Wimba Survey (Includes Only Sections Used to Answer RQs)

Instructions (adapted from Csizér & Kormos, 2009):

We would like to ask you to help us by answering the following questions concerning foreign language learning. This is not a test so there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Your instructor will not have access to your answers, which will be entirely confidential. We are interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. In the following sections we would like you to answer some questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 5: 5= Strongly agree, 4= agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree

I. Motivation (taken from Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009)
Part A.
After I finish my degree, I can imagine myself living abroad and using English in my daily life.
I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.
I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.
I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues.
I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English very fluently.
I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.
Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself speaking in English.
The things I want to do in the future require me to speak English.
Part B.
I am studying to improve my oral skills in English because close friends think it is important.
I have to improve my speaking skills in English, because, if I do not, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.
Learning spoken English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
My parents believe that I must improve my English speaking skills to be an educated person.
I consider speaking English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.
Effectively speaking English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family/boss.
It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn improve my English pronunciation.
Studying English pronunciation is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English well.
Studying to improve my spoken English is important to me because other people will respect me more.
If I fail to improve my spoken English, I'll be letting other people down.
If I fail to improve my English pronunciation, I am afraid I won't pass the SPEAK/TEACH test.

IV. Using technology for improving speaking skills in English

1. Recording my voice using Wimba has improved my pronunciation.
2. My pronunciation did NOT improve by using Wimba in this class.
3. Using Wimba in this class to get feedback from instructor on my pronunciation was helpful.
4. Using Wimba was more effective to improve my English speaking skills than without Wimba.
5. I want to continue to use Wimba to improve my speaking skills.