Defining the Nature of Online Chat in Relation to Speech and Writing[*]

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Style is considered a pivotal construct in sociolinguistic variation studies. While previous studies have examined style in traditional forms of language such as speech, very little research has examined new and emerging styles such as computer-mediated discourse. Thus, the present study attempts to investigate style in the online communication mode of chat. In so doing, the study compares text-based online chat with speech and writing. Online chat has been previously described as a hybrid form of language that is close to speech. Here, the exact nature of online chat is elucidated by focusing on contraction use. Differential acquisition of stylistic variation is also examined according to English learning background. The empirical component consists of data from Korean speakers of English. Data is taken from a written summary, an oral interview, and a text-based online chat session. A multivariate analysis was conducted. Results indicate that online chat is indeed a hybrid form that is difficult to delineate from speech and writing. Text-based online chat shows a somewhat similar rate of contraction to speech, which confirms its hybridity.. Lastly, some implications of the study are given in terms of the learning and acquisition of style in general and in online contextual modes.

[style/variation/computer-mediated discourse/online chat/English acquisition]

I. INTRODUCTION

Stylistic variation is an aspect of a native speaker's linguistic repertoire that is often elusive to and thus not easily acquired by non-native speakers. Even advanced

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non-native speakers of a target language may not have acquired complete command of the intricate workings of style which vary according to factors such as interlocutor and situation. In this sense, in an English as a foreign language (EFL) setting, where learners are not exposed to various uses of English other than typical contexts such as a classroom, stylistic variation may be an obstacle in ultimate target language attainment. In such a context, style instruction should perhaps be introduced explicitly and specific contexts should be provided. As an almost universal characteristic of language is differential use according to context, learners of a foreign or second language may be somewhat aware of stylistic variation in their own native language and thus may be vaguely aware of stylistic variation in speech and writing in the target language.

Recently unconventional and technology-driven contexts have emerged (Collot & Belmore, 1996; Herring, 1996; Murray, 2000). Computer and network-based communication have unleashed a new array of styles that have yet to be defined and categorized. These styles have not been fully explored and warrant attention as to their true nature and how they relate to conventional styles. Online chat, a form of synchronous computer-mediated discourse (CMD), is a proliferating and burgeoning means of communication. While it has been noted that online chat exhibits features of speech, the claims of the hybrid nature of online chat are still not definitive. Text-based chat, as opposed to oral chat, presents a challenge in that writing is the means through which oral-like interaction takes place.

It appears that synthesizing research on style and CMD is valid in that there has been little effort to do so in a comprehensive manner. Further justification regarding this need is evidenced in the literature review in the following section. The purpose of the present study is thus, twofold. First, an attempt is made to further elucidate the nature of text-based online chat by comparing it to speech and writing. While previous studies have compared online chat to writing, few published research has examined text-based chat and how it measures up to both speech and writing. Second, the acquisition of stylistic competence and whether it is realized in terms of different contexts (e.g., speech, writing, online chat) by learners of English is examined. Acquisition according to different English learning backgrounds is examined to determine whether instruction or rather non-instruction is necessary of new and emerging styles such as online chat and to ascertain if an EFL context can be limiting in terms of exposure to different contextual styles.

Moreover, recent research in EFL in a Korean setting still tends to focus on pragmatic skills such as the acquisition of speech acts (Jung, 2005; Moon & Ahn,

2005; Suh, 2006 among others) or textbook analysis (Han & Bae, 2005; Jeon, 2005; Nam & Park, 2005 among others). Although various other topics in English learning and teaching in Korea have been investigated, stylistic acquisition has rarely if at all been examined in a Korean EFL setting.

In light of the purpose of the study, the following research questions pertaining to Korean speakers of English in an EFL setting are raised:

Research Question 1:
What is the true nature of online chat and how does it compare to speech and writing?

Research Question 2:
Do Korean learners of English exhibit stylistic variation across different stylistic modes? If so, does variable competence arise according to different English learning backgrounds?

Answers to the aforementioned research questions are expected to assist in providing a somewhat holistic picture of online chat and in particular style acquisition of non-native English speakers with different backgrounds. Further rationale for the present study is given in the following section.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This section will present a brief overview of the theoretical constructs related to the present study. Mainly, the fields of stylistic variation and computer-mediated discourse will be touched upon. In addition, a brief review of the linguistic variable chosen for the study (i.e., English contraction) will be given.

1. Stylistic Variation

The sparse statement that "there are no single style speakers" (Labov, 1972, p. 208) is the core principle of stylistic variation research. Beginning with the individual, differential stylistic use can serve as a demarcation among social groups. Acquisition-wise, stylistic variation is a construct which is not readily taught through formal language instruction. In English, where the stylistic gap between spoken and

written language is large, style is an integral factor that cannot be ignored. Broadly, style refers to the degree of formality of language use and is accordingly categorized. The gradient nature of style enables its placement on a continuum. Thus, "styles can be arranged along a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech" (Labov, 1984, p. 29).

In English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, stylistic variation is most likely implicitly acquired. This is due to the paucity of textbooks and instructional materials that offer expositions of style, especially in relation to speech styles. Style is also often considered to be in the teaching realm of advanced learners of English rather than a communicative necessity that needs to be taught early on. While deviant stylistic use from native speakers does not cause miscommunication nor communication breakdown, it is indicative of the non-nativeness of the speaker.

Stylistic variation in language use has continuously served as a pivotal construct in sociolinguistic studies (Labov, 2000; Rickford & Eckert, 2000).. What were once mere observations of style have become tenets of groundwork in variationist research. Whereas early studies such as Labov (1966) emphasized style as an important factor in understanding language change, recent work in online communication has witnessed emerging new styles. In addition to traditional styles, these new styles are full-fledgedly developing. As Irvine (2001, p. 22) states "attention must be directed to relationships among styles—to their contrasts, boundaries, and commonalities."

2. Computer-Mediated Discourse

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) has become one of the main forms of communicative interaction among non-native speakers of English from different language backgrounds (Ma, 1996; Warschauer, 2000). Through computer networked environments, interlocutors engage in mostly text-based CMD that is "typed on a computer keyboard and read as text on a computer screen" (Herring, 2001, p. 1). CMD can be categorized according to its synchronicity. A typical form of asynchronous CMD is e-mail where interlocutors are not logged on simultaneously and messages are sent, stored, and read at the receiver's convenience. In contrast, interlocutors need to be connected through a network in real time in synchronous CMD. A typical synchronous mode is text chatting (Herring, 2001., p. 3). Synchronicity decisively exerts influence over linguistic structures and features used in CMD. That is, temporality and its urgency are observed to affect linguistic

complexity so that asynchronous CMD displays more complexity than synchronous CMD (Warschauer, 1996).

Kelm (1992) (as cited in Lee, 2002, p. 277) argues that "online written discourse tends to be simple" and that the sentences are short rather than complex. Complexity and correctness do not seem to be proportionate to the length of the writing required in CMD exchanges. Regarding linguistic structure, CMD is perceived to be "less correct, complex and coherent than standard written language" (Herring, 2001, p. 5). The hybrid nature of CMD lies in the orality features that are manifested despite the fact that the means of communication may be written. Furthermore, it has been observed that computer science professionals using synchronous CMD "delete subject pronouns, determiners, and auxiliaries; use abbreviations; do not correct typos; and do not use mixed case" (Murray, 1990, as cited in Herring, 2001, p. 5). A generalization that can be obtained from these observations is that CMD is a product of rapid and simple execution that differs from formal writing.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is being regarded as an opportune means to complement the limitations of second/foreign language learning environments. The allegedly oral nature of CMC or network based communication (NBC) enables researchers to examine the potential advantages compared to what can be achieved in traditional strictly oral interaction. As Pellettieri (2000, p. 58) points out the word "chatting" underscores its resemblance to oral interaction and that through this medium the benefits of oral interaction reaped by second language development can be obtained through chatting. In a similar vein, studies (Blake, 2000; Toyada & Harrison, 2002; Werry, 1996; Yates, 1996) suggest that alleged benefits of the Interaction Hypothesis (i.e., negotiation of meaning) can be accessed through computer-mediated communication, which in turn provides a window for examining interlanguage.

3. English Contraction as an Indicator of Style

One English feature that is influenced by style is contraction use. Contractions are primarily considered characteristic of spoken or colloquial written language. Several English handbooks such as the *MLA Style Manual* (Gibaldi, 1998) state that contractions are rarely acceptable in scholarly writing. Other writer's handbooks for native English speakers published in the U.S. also specify that the use of contractions may also be used as a device to relax style in more formal kinds of writing. One such reference even states that "many people disapprove of contractions in any kind of

writing" (Fowler & Aaron, 1995, p. 391). It also has been noted that contraction is a salient indicator of style cross-linguistically (Biber, 1995), preceded only by a small number of features such as 'that' deletion. Furthermore, contraction use was found to be a positive feature of online interaction.[1]

The use of contractions in American English is optional and not obligatory. It is not considered a grammatical error if one does not use contraction. However, perception-wise, interlocutors may find it unnatural or awkward if one does not use contractions in casual speech. In writing, the use of contractions may result in violations of for example, academic writing conventions. Thus, for non-native speakers of English, contraction use is not a communicative necessity and not a prominently taught feature in instruction.

Contractions have been a target feature of analysis in only a few CMD discourse studies (Cho, as cited in Herring, 2001, p. 6). These few studies have dealt with only noticing contraction use in one mode of communication. Herring (1999) is a study that investigated how discourse topic and activity type such as exchanging information conditions linguistic variation in contraction use. According to Herring (1999) contraction use is more rampant in "discussing 'fun' topics such as profanity than serious topics on an academic linguistics discussion list, and found more often in information exchanges than in extended debates." In terms of the technical execution of contractions, a factor that is overlooked but may wield influence on contraction use is said to be the learner's keyboard skills and limitations imposed by computer messaging systems (Herring, 1999, p. 2; Lee, 2002, p. 11). In order to type a contraction, the interlocutor must strike the apostrophe key, which may be relatively time-consuming than striking only letters because the apostrophe key is rarely used other than in contractions and possessives. In this light, contractions can serve as a direct indicator of a particular style.

As the contraction use of non-native speakers of English in different stylistic modes including online communication modes has been sparsely researched, this topic garners attention. Furthermore, interest in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in a Korean EFL context has been increasing as Korea is considered to be relatively advanced concerning the Information Technology (IT) sector. Recent studies (Han, 2005; Jeong & Nam, 2005; Jun, 2005; Park et al., 2005) have examined a variety of aspects concerning web-based instruction such as instructional effectiveness, acquisition, and motivation. In particular, an investigation of stylistic modes including

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[1] I would like to thank Yong-Jin Kim for pointing out Biber's work.

online communication in Korean learners of English seems to be a comparatively novel direction of research.

In light of the literature review given above, the present study attempts to fill a niche in the growing body of research concerning CMC and literature involving English speakers in an EFL setting.

III. METHOD

This section provides a detailed description of the present study. A description of the subjects and the data collection methods are given.

1. Subjects

The subjects in the study were 12 Korean speakers of English enrolled in a course titled "Global English Through Internet I" during the spring semester of 2005 and "Global English Through Internet II" during the fall semester of 2005 at K University in Korea.[2] Due to the diverse nature of the non-random sampling―a sample of convenience―an array of demographic variables was not considered in the present study. Here, a general description of the subjects is given according to a demographic questionnaire that was administered to them. In addition, the factors according to which the subjects were stratified is discussed. Although age was not considered, the subjects ranged from freshman to seniors. In terms of gender, six of the subjects were males and 6 were females. Although gender was not considered a variable for examination, the subjects were purposively selected to obtain a proportionate number of males and females so gender would not be skewed.

A demographic variable which was considered was length of residence in an English speaking region/country. This was noted in order to examine any effects that learning English in a non-Korean-like ESL environment (n=6) would have as opposed to learning English in a completely EFL environment as in Korea (n=6).[3] This variable was chosen over self-ratings of English proficiency and self-reported

[2] The I and II courses are not required to be taken successively and are similar in terms of course content.

[3] In order to balance gender and years abroad, the surplus of subjects who have not lived abroad and those who had experience living abroad in a non-ESL region were intentionally omitted.

standardized test scores that were asked on the demographic questionnaire, because self-ratings are relatively unreliable and often not a direct indicator of proficiency.

TABLE 1

Demographics of Subjects

Subject	Year	Sex	Exp.	Region	Years abroad
SSS	Soph.	M	No	N/A	N/A
CSY	Soph.	M	No.	N/A	N/A
MJY	Soph.	M	No	N/A	N/A
JIY	Soph.	F	No	N/A	N/A
SJR	Soph.	F	No	N/A	N/A
KMA	Jun.	F	No	N/A	N/A
LJW*	Sen.	M	Yes	Africa	5 yrs.
KPS	Soph.	M	Yes	US	1.5 yrs.
KSH	Soph.	M	Yes	US	4 yrs.
LYE**	Sen.	F	Yes	Saipan	12 yrs.
KSH	Soph.	F	Yes	US	1 yr.
CJY	Sen.	F	Yes	US	8 yrs.

Legend: Exp.=Experience living abroad; Soph.=Sophomore; Jun.=Junior; Sen.=Senior; yrs.=years; *=Saipan, **=Africa[4]

As can be seen from Table 1, although the number of subjects is small, the individual backgrounds are relatively diverse.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The courses the subjects were enrolled in are part of a cross-cultural distance learning project between Korean and Japanese students, in which students engage in activities including but not limited to real-time video conferencing and chat sessions. The goal of the project is to provide a cyber forum for learning English and to foster non-native English speaker interaction which transcends place. Video conferencing is conducted using a Polycom ViewStation while online chat sessions are conducted through BizMate, a text-based chat program that combines typing with a video stream of the interlocutors.

Data was collected from three different stylistic modes from each of the subjects.[5] The writing data was in the form of one 150 to 200 word summary, which the subjects

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[4] The subjects who lived in a non-US region lived in Africa and Saipan where English is an official language and thus not taught as a foreign language such as in Korea.

[5] The data is part of the Korea-Waseda Cross-Cultural Distance Learning Program (KWCCDLP) database.

were required to write after a joint cyber lecture was conducted with Japanese students. The online communication data was collected from one individual text-based chat session with a Japanese student that lasted for an average of 30 minutes. The speech data consisted of one 20 minute recorded oral interview.[6] Topic was relatively kept constant in all forms of data so this variable would not greatly influence the results of the study. The two topics of the summary, chat session, and recorded interview were all "seniority" or "dieting" which were also topics of the joint cyber lectures. Please refer to the Appendix for excerpts of data from the subjects.

Tokens of the occurrence of English contraction were collected by examining the possible environments for contraction. The following contraction environments were analyzed: 'not' contraction (e.g., do not → don't); auxiliary verb contraction (e.g., I am → I'm).[7] The total number of possible contraction environments and actual occurrences of contraction were coded.

Data analyses consist of descriptive statistics and a multivariate analysis. The quantitative analysis here is exploratory in nature. First, the possible environments of contraction and actual contraction use were coded and frequency rates were then calculated. Second, an analysis was conducted on subjects who lived abroad and those who did not. To supplement this, further microanalysis was done to examine individual acquisition patterns. A multivariate analysis was conducted using GoldVarb Version 2.1, an inferential statistical tool used in variationist sociolinguistic studies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study in addition to a discussion with reference to the research questions. In particular, the nature of text-based online chat is discussed according to the results obtained from statistical analyses of the data.

Overall, the contraction rate across all modes was found to be 59.36% (n=653/1100). The writing data in the form of a summary was considered to be relatively formal compared to chat and speech data which were considered to be

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[6] The interviews were conducted by an assistant and not by the author. The assistant was given explicit directions for the procedure of the interview. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety by the assistant and reviewed by the author.

[7] Other than 'not' contraction and auxiliary verb contraction, personal pronoun contraction of the type only found in *let's* exists (Huddleston & Pullman, 2000, p. 1596). This last type was not considered due to the almost categorical use of the contracted form.

relatively informal in nature. Focus was placed on stylistic mode and not formality which could differ within an individual mode. First, descriptive statistics are presented according to stylistic mode.

FIGURE 1
Contraction Rate According to Stylistic Mode
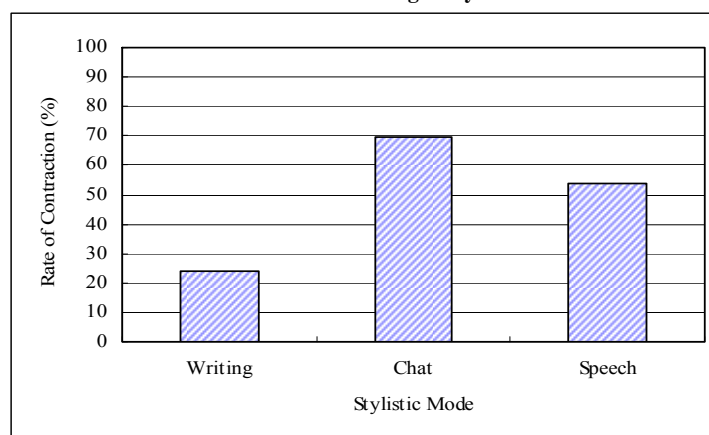
According to Figure 1, online chat shows the highest rate of contraction. This is somewhat of an anomaly as chat was text-based and not oral. It was initially speculated that chat would show similar rates to that of writing. One caveat here, as mentioned earlier, is that when subjects type a contraction they have to reach for the apostrophe key in rapid form. Whether it is more convenient to spell out contractions or contract using apostrophes has yet to be determined. On the other hand, the relatively low rate in the writing mode was somewhat expected, albeit the relatively low rate in the speech mode was not. The rather skewed results seem to tentatively indicate that the subjects may have not properly acquired the stylistic use of English contractions and are showing deviant use.

A multivariate analysis utilizing GoldVarb was conducted in order to supplement the descriptive statistics.[8] The dependent variable in the analysis was the presence of

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[8] GoldVarb is a statistical tool utilized in variationist sociolinguistics studies that analyzes the significance of an independent variable in relation to dependent variables. Each variable is assigned a weight which indicates significance. If the weight is closer to '1,' this indicates the variable is strongly significant, if the weight is closer to '0' this indicates that the variable is not significant.

contraction and the independent variable was contextual style (i.e., writing, online chat, speech). In Table 2, No. refers to the number of occurrences of contraction which is calculated over the total number of environments where contraction could have occurred.

TABLE 2
GoldVarb Results of Stylistic Modes

Group	Factor	No.	Rate	Weight
Style	Writing	14/59	23.72%	0.326
	Chat	345/497	69.42%	0.845
	Speech	294 /544	54.04%	0.762

Log likelihood=-23.433

According to Table 2, the GoldVarb weights all relatively showed that the variables of stylistic mode were significant in terms of their effect on the presence of contraction. Similar to the rates, text-based online chat and speech showed the highest weights which in turn indicate a high degree of likelihood of contraction. As was seen in Research Question 1 which focused on the nature of text-based online chat, the results appear to uphold the hybrid notion of chat and show that although it is text-based here, it bears a closer resemblance to speech rather than writing.

Second, the effects of experience living in an English-speaking region are explored. As aforementioned in regard to Research Question 2, this effect is investigated in order to ascertain whether stylistic variation is differentially acquired according to the circumstances under which English is learned.

TABLE 3
Effects of Experience Living Abroad on English Contraction Use across Styles

	Writing	Chat	Speech
No Experience Abroad	64.28% (n=9/14)	47.24% (n=163/345)	39.45% (n=116/294)
Experience Abroad	35.72% (n=5/14)	52.76% (n=182/345)	60.55% (n=178/294)

In Table 3, the 12 subjects were categorized according to whether they had experience living in an English-speaking region (n=6) or not (n=6). The results somewhat indicate that the subjects who had no experience abroad do not show a clear progression of the use of contractions. These subjects do not seem to be aware of the


Goodness-of-fit is verified through a log likelihood. Figures closer to '0' represent a good fit (Young & Bayley, 1996, p. 273).

avoidance of contractions in writing or that contractions are to be used in speech. As for the subjects with experience abroad, there is a somewhat steady increase as the stylistic modes differ. This may indirectly mean that these subjects have tacit knowledge of stylistic variation of the use of English contractions. The rates of contraction in chat and speech are similar whereas the rate in writing is comparatively low.[9]

As Table 1 earlier showed, the subjects in the study have lived in diverse regions and have had different periods of exposure. Therefore, taking individual differences into account was considered to shed more light on the effects of experience living abroad. While the English learning backgrounds of the subjects who have no experience abroad are quite uniform, the backgrounds of the subjects who do have experience abroad are diverse. Although it is almost impossible to examine a highly homogeneous population in terms of English learning, an initial attempt is made here to determine differences according to English learning environment. Figure 2 shows the results of an individual analysis of the subjects according to their use of contractions across different stylistic modes.

FIGURE 2
Individual Differences in English Contraction Use across Styles

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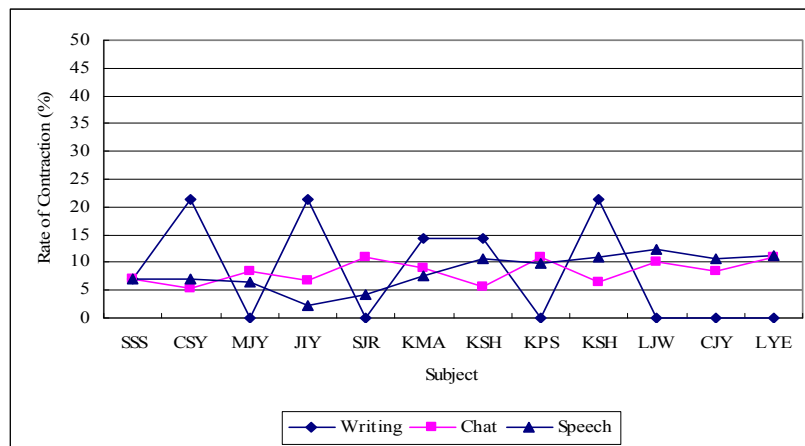
[9] Due to the small number of tokens collected from the writing data, it is difficult to discern the extent of acquisition of style in this particular stylistic mode. As noted earlier, each of the subjects were required to write a summary of less than 200 words, which accounts for the limitedness of possible contraction environments.

In Figure 2, the first six subjects are those with no experience abroad while the next six subjects are ordered according to the increasing amount of time spent abroad. Due to the paucity of the writing data, no clear pattern emerges in contraction presence. However, the chat data shows that there is a slight increase in terms of contraction use as the amount of experience abroad increases. This is also seen with the speech data, which displays a somewhat clearer pattern. It can be tentatively speculated that relatively more exposure to English—natural or formal instruction—seems to facilitate native-speaker like competence of stylistic acquisition.

To recapitulate, both the descriptive and multivariate analyses indicate that style and experience abroad may affect contraction presence. The subjects in the study are more likely to contract if the mode is speech or text-based online chat rather than writing. In terms of the hybrid nature of online communication, here it appears that online chat, even if it is in text form is closer to speech than writing. In addition, differential exposure to English appears to affect the acquisition of stylistic variation.

V. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Several conclusions are reached through this study. First, results appear to suggest that online chat is indeed a hybrid form of language as it does not appear to exactly mirror either speech or writing. It is noted that online chat, even if it is text-based, displays oral features and thus is likely to show more similarities as speech. Here, the subjects may consider chat to be more of a reflection of speech than writing due to the visual aspect of BizMate. Second, contraction use seems to be a somewhat valid indicator of style since it shows variable rates throughout different stylistic modes. As it is difficult to locate a single linguistic feature that shows differences across writing and speech, contraction use has shown to be an effective means of discerning style.[10] Third, differential exposure to English whether it is in formal or informal circumstances may have an effect on acquiring native speaker norms of stylistic variation regarding English contractions. Those with experience in an English-speaking country show stylistic variation which is more in tandem with native speaker norms than those without such experience abroad. For those who have learned

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[10] A reviewer pointed out that there are several features that distinguish speech from writing such as sentence complexity and vocabulary. While this holds true, here, the emphasis is on a *single* feature which displays variation.

English in an EFL environment, stylistic variation may be acquired in the very late or rather advanced stages of English acquisition, if fully acquired at all.

In interpreting the results of the present study, several limitations should be considered. First, it is difficult to generalize the results of the study to a larger population due to the non-random nature and the small number of the subject pool. Second, the writing data is meager in quantity, therefore rendering the results as speculative. Third, the data is not adequate enough to predict that acquisition of stylistic variation is clearly dependent on quantity and quality of English exposure. Despite these limitations, a strength of the present study is that it has attempted to fill a niche in computer-discourse research by examining online chat by comparing it both to speech and writing. Furthermore, it appears that English contraction can be used as a means to delineate stylistic variation. It may suffice to claim that further research is apparently needed and that this study may have served as an impetus.

As for the pedagogical implications of the present study, English instruction is still limited to the traditional four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As computer-mediated communication is proliferating and taking firm root, instruction needs to accommodate this new skill. A question here is whether English instruction can be specialized for computer-mediated communication. For instance, can online chat English be actually taught? A broader issue is the acquisition of style or rather native speaker-like stylistic use. While non-native speakers seem to be aware of English contraction use and how it is distinctively manifested across different styles, it is still not clear whether stylistic variation has been fully and accurately acquired. Perhaps more intensive or explicit instruction is needed so non-native speakers can acquire native-like competence in English. Pedagogy concerning stylistic variation coupled with online chat can serve as an unconventional and current means in the development of overall competence.

The present study has thus attempted to draw attention to and shed light on the nature of online chat through a comparison across different stylistic modes. The archetypal tableau of traditional education must espouse new technological styles that are becoming pervasive in everyday life and new native speaker norms regarding these styles. This indicates a need for English education to accommodate to changing times. Ultimate attainment in a foreign or second language can only be reached through the acquisition of appropriate native speaker norms of the target language.

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APPENDIX
Excerpts from Subjects

Note: Possible contraction environments are in italics. Contractions are in bold face. Excerpts are verbatim—grammatical errors have not been corrected but spelling errors have been in order to facilitate reading.

1. Excerpt from subject who has no experience living abroad

1) Writing

…Mass media always show us very thin stars, and it makes us to think that very thin people as a standard figure, and *we are* really fat comparing with those thin stars…

2) Chat

…Most girls *are not* satisfied their face and body…I love my body, even though **it's** not very beautiful like stars…

3) Speech

…I **don't** think being thin is the most important thing when having a job, but **it's** a kind of showing myself as a girl *who is* good at self controlling because being too fat may mean he or she *does not* care about what he ate…

2. Excerpt from subject who has experience living abroad

1) Writing

…Nowadays more and more companies are opting for a merit oriented pay system in which you get what you are. It means more competition but *you are* competing on fair grounds…

2) Chat

…because it they **don't** the younger employees will not feel comfortable taking off their jackets. If seniors wear suits and juniors wear casual clothes. I think **it's** rude…

3) Speech

…well, *you are* asking me the definition of seniority but how it manifest itself in our society…and the way I feel *it is* perhaps how people do not feel free to do whatever they want but to do what their seniors are doing…**that's** my answer…

> **Examples in: English**
> **Applicable Languages: English**
> **Applicable Levels: Secondary, Post-Secondary**

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