Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

A Web-Based e-Portfolio System Supporting Japanese Undergraduate Students' Out-of-Class EFL Reading Practice and a Self-Determination Theory Approach to the Students' Intention

(日本人大学生のクラス外 EFL 読解訓練を支援する web ベースの e ポートフォリオシステムと学習意欲への自己決定論に基づくアプローチ)

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1. Introduction

"There are two important dimensions to successful second language learning: what goes on inside the classroom and what goes on outside of the classroom" (Richards, 2015, p.1)

The present study was conducted to highlight the importance of out-of-class language learning (OCLL) contexts as one of the essential components of blended learning environments. Literature manifests that unlike the vast number of theories and practical studies for teaching a foreign language inside the classroom, there is no specific area of study that particularly concentrates on OCLL (Benson, 2011). Incorporating learning technologies into the face-to-face classrooms has effectively improved the quality of language learning (Neumeier, 2005). However, these efforts are mainly restricted to the inside classrooms and hardly move beyond the actual classrooms. Blended learning environments that integrates two delivery modes of face-to-face and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) lack the third complementary mode of OCLL (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Whittaker, 2013).

Research reveals that successful language learners are the ones who benefit from learning opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. OCLL opportunities largely affect the learning process and outcomes (Chang, 2007; Lai & Gu, 2011). In addition, this effect can be maximized with the appropriate use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The inherent potential of ICT makes it useful for OCLL. However, regarding the context of the present study, because of Japanese studetns' low digital literacy and their difficulty to implement technology for the purpose of learning (Cote & Milliner, 2016; Gobel & Kano, 2014; Lockley & Promnitz-Hayashi, 2012), it is certain that teachers are responsible to introduce or design effective OCLL contexts. Accordingly, the first study in this dissertation investigates the effectiveness of a web-based e-portfolio system developed for OCLL, particularly out-of-class reading practice.

On the other hand, it is not only an OCLL context that guarantees students' language learning achievements, but it is students' intention to continue OCLL. Fukuda and Yoshida (2013) found that Japanese students are not motivated enough to expand their OCLL time which ranges only between zero to an hour a week. Therefore, students' intention to independently continue using technology even without an actual classroom and a teacher is of crucial importance (Lai, Li, & Wang, 2017; Mobarhan, Majidi & Abdul Rahman, 2014; Richards, 2015). Based on the cognitive theories of motivation and action (Deci, 1975), there is a strong mutual relationship between learners' motivation and their intention for an action. Thus, investigating proper ways to facilitate motivation contributes to our understanding of the means to promote intention.

Over many years of research on motivation, many researchers have proposed different motivation theories that, in spite of having some differences, share overlapping concepts and characteristics. The theories mainly differ in their starting points as they may either have roots in the learners' cognitive beliefs or the contextual factors (Grabe, 2009). However, well-established motivation theories such as achievement theory, social-cognitive theory, and self-determination theory,

see motivation arising from cognitive beliefs and expectations (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Considering the proposed theories, since effective OCLL largely depends on learners' self-determined behaviors and actions (Mobarhan et al., 2014; Reinders, 2014), the self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 1985), as one of the most comprehensive theoretical approaches to human motivation, was chosen as the framework of the present study. This theory (SDT) is commonly employed as a guiding framework to reinforce intrinsic motivation through the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs including, 1) perceived competence, 2) perceived autonomy, and 3) perceived relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000). And this study tests a hypothesized model of the effect of the three motivation determinants defined by SDT (i.e. competence, autonomy, and relatedness) on the learners' intention to continue OCLL as well as their actual OCLL achievements.

In general, the two central concerns, first, the limited efforts to attend to the development of OCLL environments, and second, lack of students' intention to continue language learning beyond the classroom directed this study through the following three research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between the proficiency of the students who practice reading outside of the class through the web-based e-portfolio system and those who have out-of-class reading practice without the e-portfolio system?

2. What are the students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the web-based e-portfolio system with regards to the different aspects of the system such as content of the system, peer-feedback, and post-reading activities?

3. Do the determinants of SDT (i.e. perceived competence, perceived autonomy and perceived relatedness) predict Japanese EFL students' intention to continue OCLL using the web-bases e-portfolio system and their actual achievements?

2. Study I.

(On the importance of out-of-class language learning environments: A case of a web-based e-portfolio system enhancing reading proficiency. Fathali, S., & Okada, T. (2016). *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature, 4* (8), 77-85. doi:10.20431/2347-3134.0408011)

This study tried to answer the first two research questions of the dissertation. Two hundred twelve Japanese EFL undergraduate students participated in this study, the experimental group (N=109) and the comparison group (N=93). All the participants practiced reading skill of *TOEFL ITP*® test in CALL classrooms. The participants of the experimental group continued practicing reading beyond the classroom through the developed web-based e-portfolio system, whereas comparison group students followed the common beyond class practice in which they were only introduced to a list of appropriate language practice websites and were asked to continue reading practice outside of the class without any specifically designed OCLL context. A mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach was taken to test the effectiveness of the e-portfolio system on the students' reading proficiency. The quantitative

phase was investigated through a pretest-posttest controlled group design using *TOEFL ITP*® test scores. The qualitative phase used an end of the term semi-structured interview to seek the experimental group students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the system.

The web-based e-portfolio system was designed with the integration of Google Sites as the collaborative space and Google Drive as the students' personal learning environments. The system's main website (Google Sites) consisted of different webpages that supported students' autonomous learning such as:

- A page including a link to the Cambridge English language assessment website (http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/test-your-english/adult-learners/) that directed each student to an online test, of which the final score was interpreted according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The students found their level of English proficiency at the beginning of the course and then selected reading materials appropriate to their levels.

- A page including five pedagogically and academically approved EFL learning websites such as TeachYa and cK-12.

- A page for the instructor's weekly feedback on the students' assignment and the crucial points figured out through weekly monitoring of the e-portfolios. The instructor tried to find common learning obstacles and eliminate them by referring the students to different online training materials.

- A page guiding the students through self-assessment and setting future learning goals.

- A page in which all the students' individual pages were brought together and categorized randomly into groups for easier access. Each student had an individual webpage on the system linked to his/her personal e-portfolio created in Google Drives. The individual pages enabled receiving instructor and peer feedback on the weekly assignments.

Each student uploaded a weekly file of their reading practice including the links to the passages they read and their preferred post-reading activities. The post-reading activities such as writing summaries, listing newly learned words, making questions, and describing information were assigned to help the students actively interact with the texts and boost their learning outcomes (Rivas, 1999). In order to also facilitate organized mutual feedback on the system, students from opposite groups were randomly assigned into pairs for weekly interactions.

2.1. Results and discussion

The first research question aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the web-based e-portfolio system on the students' reading proficiency improvement. To find the answer to this question, firstly, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the means of the experimental group students' pre-test and post-test scores to examine their reading proficiency improvement at the end of the term. Secondly, in order to investigate how much of this improvement was due to the use of the web-based e-portfolio

system, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the means of the reading gain scores of experimental and comparison groups. It is worth noting that the homogeneity of the two groups was checked at the beginning of the analysis using an independent samples *t*-test [$t\,(197) = 0.445; p = 0.656$].

The descriptive statistics of the scores indicated a difference between the means of pre-test (M = 62.75) and post-test (M = 70.79) scores of the experimental group students, and the results of a paired samples *t*-test (for the pre- and post-test scores of experimental group) revealed a statistically significant difference between the students' performance on the pre-test and post-test [t (106) = -8.57, P<.001]. Moreover, the descriptive statistics of the scores indicated a difference between the means of the gain scores of the experimental group (M = 8.03) and the comparison group (M = 4.54), and the results of an independent samples *t*-test revealed a significant difference between the gain scores of the experimental and the comparison groups of the study [$t\,(197) = 2.55; p<0.05$].

Therefore, the findings of this section demonstrated that the reading proficiency of the students in the experimental group significantly improved at the end of the term compared to their own proficiency level at the beginning of the semester and compared to the proficiency level of the students in the comparison group. In this study, the students of the comparison group were also provided with the same online reading resources and were advised to continue reading practice outside of the classroom, however, they did not make any significant improvement in the reading section of *TOEFL ITP*® test. Accordingly, it can be concluded that OCLL results in the students' significant improvement if it is conducted in a well-organized OCLL context.

The second research question focused on the students' attitudes towards the implemented web-based e-portfolio system. To answer this question, thirty-one students of the experimental group were interviewed and their answers were analyzed and discussed through qualitative content analysis.

The findings of the second research question demonstrated that the students generally held positive attitudes towards using the e-portfolio system to practice reading beyond the classroom. The extracted themes from the interview data indicated some central issues. Firstly, the students emphasized the importance of adequate instruction and support at the beginning stages of using a new learning technology. To put it differently, sufficient instruction might possibly ensure that the students would be less engaged with the technological tool and concentrate more on the content and language learning. Secondly, it was argued that the biggest barrier to the students' OCLL is their lack of information about the available technologies and materials that are appropriate for language learning. However, considering the comparison group students' access to the same materials in the present study, there is no doubt that it was the developed OCLL system that resulted in the students' significant progress. Thirdly, it was revealed that the students considered peer-feedback as the most challenging and less useful aspect of OCLL. It was figured out that the main reason for this finding was the students' lack of trust in their own and peers' comments. The students tried to point out the probable errors in their peers' assignments and provided corrections to the possible extent. However, it was indicated that they could not perceive this effort effective, which reflected their tendency towards teacher-centered educational

contexts (Hirata, 2010). Although one of the main concerns of the implemented e-portfolio system was to prepare the students to move from the teacher-supported environments to more personalized environments beyond the actual classroom, students were still more willing to receive an approval or disapproval of their assignments from the teacher rather than their classmates. Finally, it was indicated that the majority of the students intended to continue using the web-based e-portfolio system because of their observable *TOEFL ITP*® score progress.

3. Study II.

(A self-determination theory approach to technology-enhanced out-of-class language learning intention: A case of Japanese EFL learners. Fathali, S., & Okada, T. (2017). *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 6* (4), 53-64. doi. 10.5861/ijrsll.2016.1607)

This study tried to answer the third research question. In the previous study it was shown that the web-based e-portfolio system could significantly improve the students' final achievements. But, this is not the only goal of any technology-enhanced OCLL. The final success of an OCLL context is achieved through the enhancement of the students' intention to continue long time autonomous learning after the course is finished. Therefore, this study tested a hypothesized model of the effect of the three motivation determinants defined by SDT on the students' intention to continue OCLL. The model aimed to investigate how the satisfaction of these needs could predict the students' intention towards technology-based OCLL, as well as the students' actual OCLL achievements. A total of 164 Japanese EFL undergraduate students participated in this study. The data was collected using an online questionnaire adapted from relevant measures used in previous studies (Table 1). Besides, students' actual OCLL achievements were figured out by the total number of the eligible e-portfolio files in each student's personal Google Drive in addition to the number of his/her interactions in the class website.

Table 1. *Research questionnaire scales*

Scales	Item	Adapted form	Sample item
perceived competence	6	IMI, McAuley, Duncan, & Tammen, (1989)	I think I was pretty good at learning English beyond the class using technology
perceived autonomy	4	Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis (2005)	I feel a certain freedom of action in learning English beyond the class using technology
perceived relatedness	5	South (2006)	I felt that other classmates had similar goals to mine in learning English beyond the class using technology
Intention	3	Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis (2003)	I intend to continue learning English independently beyond the class using technological devices

Drawing on SDT, previous studies have presented several models indicating relationships between individuals' achievements and satisfaction of their basic needs in different contexts. Researchers argue that learners' engagement in doing activities is highly affected by self-determination and satisfaction of their innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Chen & Jang, 2010; Roca & Gagne, 2008). Vallerand and Bissonnette (1992) emphasize on the positive effect of self-

determination on student's continuance intention to achieve their academic goals. When learners have a sense of competence in performing an activity on their own, feel they are the origin of their own decisions, and feel connected to other group members, their intention to continue would be enhanced (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Roca & Gagne, 2008). Hence, based on the abovementioned concepts, hypotheses one, two and three of this research model address the intention of the students to continue OCLL as the product of self-determination indicators.

H1. Students' perceived competence positively predicts their intention for technology-enhanced OCLL.

H2. Students' perceived autonomy positively predicts their intention for technology-enhanced OCLL.

H3. Students' perceived relatedness positively predicts their intention for technology-enhanced OCLL.

Previous studies reveal that satisfaction of the psychological needs could be positively related to the individuals' outcomes (Jeno & Diseth, 2014; Chen & Jang, 2010). As a result, hypotheses four, five, and six of the study propose that perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness positively predict the students' actual achievements in technology-enhanced OCLL.

H4. Students' perceived competence positively predicts their OCLL achievements.

H5. Students' perceived autonomy positively predicts their OCLL achievements.

H6. Students' perceived relatedness positively predicts their OCLL achievements.

3.1. Results and discussion

Structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was taken to test the causal relationships between the variables in the research model. The final research model (Figure 1) indicated that satisfaction of the students' basic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985) positively influenced their intention to carry out technology-enhanced OCLL.
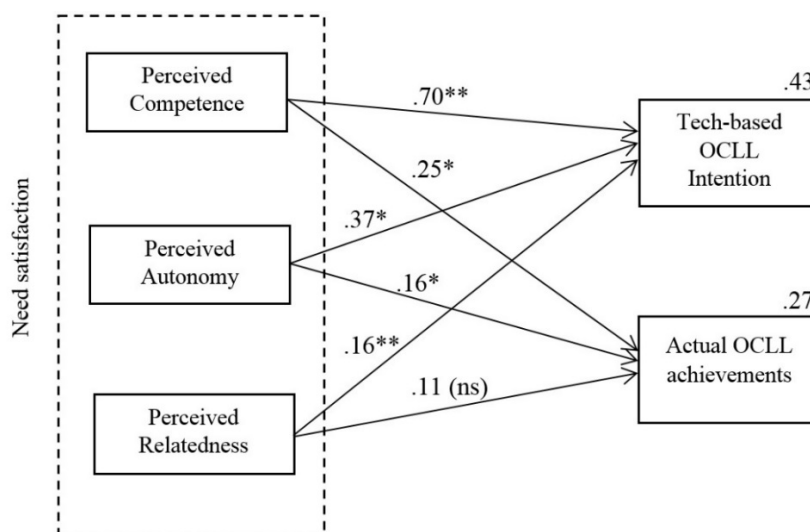

Fig. 1. Final structural model (standardized path coefficients)

Forty-three percent of the variance of the students' intention for OCLL was explained by the determinants of SDT which suggested that SDT is an appropriate framework in the technology-enhanced OCLL contexts. This result was also in line with previous studies that approved the supporting effect of basic needs satisfaction in SDT domains (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004; Roca & Gagne, 2008).

The findings of the final model showed that perceived competence had the strongest effect on the students' intention to continue technology-enhanced OCLL and their actual achievements. Therefore, the crucial issue is to invest time and effort in finding ways to help students feel competent and capable of achieving their goals independently. Although OCLL takes place beyond the classroom and in many cases beyond the teachers' responsibilities, students need to receive teachers' support especially in the beginning stages of learning. Deci and Ryan (2010) argue that teachers' positive feedback as a verbal reward would also make students feel capable of accomplishing their objectives.

The results also reflected the strong association between perceived autonomy and the students' intention towards learning in addition to their final achievements. In line with previous research, students' sense of control over their own learning process improves their willingness to continue independently (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 1997). Even though students require instructors' support for OCLL, the results indicated that they also value their sense of autonomy as their second need to be fulfilled. Consequently, instructors need to find ways in which they support students and simultaneously give them some degree of responsibility to control their own learning. In this way students would be prepared to gradually transfer from teacher-supported environment to their personal learning environments (Reinders, 2014).

The third motivation determinant (i.e. perceived relatedness) is not considered as a crucial predictor as perceived competence and perceived autonomy for the intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2010). However, the findings of this study revealed that it could positively and significantly influence the students' intention for OCLL though with less degree of coefficient. The significant path from perceived relatedness to learning intention suggests that feeling connected to an instructor and other classmates even out of the classroom is likely to facilitate students' intention to continue learning. Since this learning takes place beyond the class belonging to a community of other members with the same learning process learning goals maximizes learning intention.

Furthermore, the model indicated that the students' actual OCLL achievements were explained by SDT in which 27% of the variance of their performance was defined by perceived competence and perceived autonomy. Although sense of relatedness positively predicted the students' intention for OCLL, contrary to our expectations and previous studies (Jeno & Diseth, 2014; Chen & Jang, 2010), the students' actual achievements were not influenced by their perceived relatedness. The researcher assumes that there might be different reasons for this finding. The first reason can be related to the features associated with the implemented web-based e-portfolio system. The design of the system emphasizes the sense of connectedness as well as the individuality of the learners by having an individual e-portfolio (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). All the students were connected to each other on the

website, followed an identical learning process, and interacted regularly; however, the students identified their own learning progress with their own distinct learning styles in the personal e-portfolios. As a result, the students' achievements were not influenced by the other community members. The second reason might be related to the students' language proficiency level. The initial language proficiency test indicated that 83% of the students were at the same level of English language proficiency (B1-B2, according to CEFR). Therefore, it could be explained that due to the same level of proficiency, students' relatedness was an ineffective factor on their actual achievements. The third reason might be related to the Japanese students' cultural beliefs and educational system. Similar to many Asian students, Japanese EFL students are accustomed to the teacher-centered learning environments (Hirata, 2010). Therefore, peer-supported language learning is not highly valued by the students, since they mainly consider teacher as the central figure in actual classrooms or virtual environments.

4. Conclusions and Implications

The findings of the first research question demonstrated that the students of the experimental group performed significantly better in their reading post-test at the end of the semester compared to both their own pre-test scores and the final achievements of the comparison group students. Considering the homogeneity of the experimental and comparison group students at the beginning of the semester, and the fact that both groups were provided with online reading materials, this improvement is attributed to the reading practice out of the classroom through the web-based e-portfolio system.

The web-based e-portfolio system in this study was mainly designed to support the students' particular need which in this case was reading proficiency improvement. However, despite focusing on the reading skill, the system was not aimed for the discrete teaching approach to a single language skill (Oxford, 2001), but it was rather based on the integration of reading skill with writing skill through post-reading activities. Proper engagement with the reading materials and better learning could not be the product of passive reading without any interactions with the text (Peachey, 2013; Rivas, 1999). Although assessment of the students' writing proficiency was not the purpose of this study and was not statistically measured, the observation of the students' works in their e-portfolios and their interactions on the website towards the end of the semester revealed positive changes in their writing proficiency as well.

Furthermore, the findings of the model indicated the positive effect of motivation determinants (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) on the students' intention to continue OCLL, among which perceived competence was the most significant predictor. Additionally, the model showed that perceived relatedness could not influence the students' OCLL achievements which also reflects the students' preference for teacher-supported language learning to peer-supported learning based on the obtained data from the interviews.

In general, the findings of this study yield a number of pedagogical implications for EFL researchers and teachers engaged in technology-based domains. This study supported the importance of OCLL contexts as one of the essential components of blended learning environments. Considering the

unlimited numbers of research on language learning inside the classroom, researchers now need to shift towards OCLL and bridge the existing gap in literature by conducting studies on OCLL. The findings of this study revealed the validity of SDT to explain students' intention to continue OCLL, therefore, researchers may take advantage of the findings and construct other studies based on the framework of this theory in technology-enhanced OCLL domains. Moreover, the overall findings demonstrated Japanese students' reluctance towards peer-supported learning. Consequently researchers dealing with Japanese EFL students should investigate appropriate ways to improve students' perceptions towards peer-supported learning. It is of crucial importance to help the students shift from being exclusively dependent on their teachers to more collaborative works with their classmates.

The findings of this study also have practical implications for EFL teachers by providing insights into the development of appropriate OCLL contexts. Teachers looking for the improvement of the quality of blended learning environments need to incorporate the third learning mode beyond the classroom into their teaching curriculums. The study showed that teachers should implement learning technologies in a way that fulfill students' motivational needs, and as a result they maximize the potential usage of the technology. The significant effect of perceived competence in the model revealed that teachers may increase the usage of learning technologies by decreasing their complexity and providing adequate instructions. Furthermore, another important implication for EFL teachers working with Japanese students is related to the students' idea about the role of the teacher inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers should encourage students to practice collaborative (pair) works inside the classroom in which the teacher is in the margins rather than the center, so that the students would be prepared to rely on their peers and value their comments outside of the classroom.

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論 文 審 査 の 結 果 の 要 旨

学位の種類	博士（国際文化）	氏　名	ソマイェ　ファサリ

学位論文の 題　　名	A Web-based e-Portfolio System Supporting Japanese Undergraduate Students' Out-of-Class EFL Reading Practice and a Self-Determination Theory Approach to the Students' Intention (日本人大学生のクラス外 EFL 読解訓練を支援する web ベースの e ポートフォリオシステムと学習意欲への自己決定論に基づくアプローチ)

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論文審査の結果の要旨

　イラン・イスラム共和国からの文部科学省国費留学生であるソマイェファサリが提出した標記学位論文について、その研究の目的、認められる新しい知見、博士の学位論文としての妥当性、という点に整理して、論文審査の結果を報告する。

　本論文は「外国語としての英語(以下 EFL という)」にとって効果的なブレンディッドラーニング環境の中で、対面式学習、CALL(コンピュータ支援語学学習)、と並ぶ第 3 のコンポーネントとしての、「授業クラス外での語学学習(Out-of-Class Language Learning 以下 OCLL)」を取り上げ、情報通信技術(ICT)の適切な活用に裏付けされた最適な学習環境を、具体的な授業実践と学習者に対する詳細な聞き取り調査等を通して構築し、その効果を量的・質的に分析したものである。

　研究に際して以下の 3 つのリサーチクエスチョンが設定されている。

(1) OCLL 環境で、EFL の読解訓練をする場合に、web 上で稼働する電子ポートフォリオ(以下 e ポートフォリオ)を用いた学習者グループと用いないグループの間に学習後の能力的な有意差が生じるのか？

(2) e ポートフォリオの内容、同僚(ピア)との間でのフィードバック交換、読解訓練後の課題活動などの効果や有用性に対する学習者の受け止め方にはどのようなものがあるか？

(3) 動機付けを決定する 3 つの要因（「能力の向上に対する自覚」「自律性向上の自覚」「帰属意識の自覚」）は、日本人 EFL 学習者が、e ポートフォリオシステムを用いて OCLL を継続する意図や実際の英語読解力の向上につながるものか？

　本研究は大きく 2 つのモジュールで構成され、STUDY 1 では、上記のリサーチクエスチョン(1)に対して精緻な統計的分析が行われ、e ポートフォリオの有用性が証明されている。リサーチクエスチョン(2)に対しては、先行研究の精査に基づいた詳細なインタビュー調査の結果に対する質的な分析が行われ、e ポートフォリオに対する積極的な受け止め方と並んで、日本人 EFL 学習者が依然として教員中心の学習スタイルを求める傾向があり、同僚との協働による学習効果に対して必ずしも肯定的ではないことが明らかになった。

　論文後半の STUDY 2 では、OCLL 環境での学習の進展を保証するのは、自律的に継続して ICT を用いて、その効果を最大限に享受しようとする、学習者自身の意欲であることを、人間の意欲に関する包括的理論としての「自己決定論(Self-Determination Theory)以下 SDT)」に立脚して、質的な調査をもとに明らかにしようとしている。ここでは、 SDT で定義される 3 つの決定要因が学習者の OCLL 継続の意欲に与える影響について、6 つの

仮説を持つモデルを立ててその検証を行っている。その結果、決定要因のそれぞれが ICT を利用した OCLL の継続利用の意欲と意図に明示的に結びついており、同時にそれらの要因のうち 2 つが学習成果向上につながることが検証されている。ここでは構造方程式モデリングによる因子の回帰分析を行うことによって、得られた多くの観測変数を統計的に分析し、SDT が OCLL 環境の分析にとって適格な枠組みであることを保証したうえで上記の結論を導き出している。特に学習者コミュニティへの帰属意識が OCLL の継続利用意欲に強く関わることが判明したことは、先行研究では提唱されてこなかった新しい知見をもたらしたと言える。一方で、この帰属意識は、先行研究で示される結果に反して、実際の学習成果の向上には結び付かないことが導き出されている。この結果に対して執筆者はその理由を、(1)web ベースの e ポートフォリオそのものの性格とデザイン、(2)学習者の EFL 能力の均一性からくる相互能力育成の困難さ、(3)日本人 EFL 学習者の学習スタイルと教育システム、に求めている。特に 3 番目の理由をめぐっては、「教員がクラス内外を問わず教育の中心的存在である」という伝統的な背景が、日本のみならずイランでも根強いことに着目し、今後の研究の課題と位置付けている。

　研究全体の結論として、入念に設計された e ポートフォリオに代表される、ICT を活用した OCLL の有用性が、長期に及ぶ継続学習への意欲と学習成果の向上へつながることを示し、新たに得られた知見から、教員依存の EFL 学習から、より協働的で自律的な学習へのシフトを促進する方略を常に模索すべきと提案している。

　英語が第 2 言語としてではなく、外国語として用いられ学習されるという類似の環境を持つイランと日本の EFL 教育に対して、本論文で示された研究成果が与える影響は大きな意義を持つと考えられ、データに対する高い分析能力と EFL 教育研究に対する強い熱意を有する本論文提出者が、本国帰国後も日本とイラン両国の英語教育界にとっての架け橋的な役割を果たすことが期待できる。

　また、執筆者は在学中に、本論文に関連する 2 編の学術論文を定評のある国際ジャーナルから刊行し、英国応用言語学会の国際大会でも優れた研究発表を行っている。さらに、平成 30 年 2 月 18 日にも、より評価の高い国際ジャーナルから、厳しい査読を経ての投稿論文採択の通知が届いている。

　本論文は質の高い英語で執筆されており、日本人 EFL 学習者の学習スタイルに対する全般的な好みや傾向という将来的な研究課題に関しては、若干不確定な部分を残すものの、審査委員会は慎重な審査の結果、本論文が、提出者が今後自立して研究活動を行うに必要な高度の研究能力と学識を有することを示していると判断するに至った。よって、本論文は、博士（国際文化）の学位論文として合格と認める。