CALL : What's Your Motivation? JALT CALL SIG 2011
ISBN 978 4 939130 52 6

12. Using a social networking site in Japanese class

Claire Ikumi Hitosugi, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA

The Ning social networking site (SNS) was incorporated into a college-level Japanese language class as a supplement to the regular curriculum. SNS activities reinforced face-to-face class activities. The use of Ning was beneficial in that it gave students an opportunity to navigate and interact in an authentic Japanese environment, and served as a one-stop multimedia organizer, as well as a virtual gathering place. Ning served as a showcase for students' work, allowing them to learn from each other, and enabled more engaging teacher feedback. A survey was conducted at the end of the semester. The results showed that students found the use of Ning enjoyable, meaningful, and authentic. However, while students preferred to see more use of technology in the language classroom, they were concerned with privacy issues. This study found that while students are sensitive about privacy, SNS use was effective and provided positive outcomes in Japanese language learning.

Ning ソーシャル ネットワーキング サイト (SNS) は、通常のカリキュラムを補完する目的で、大学レベルの日本語のクラスに導入された。受講生たちは、SNS の活動を通じて、直接的なコミュニケーションをとるようになった。学生が Ning を利用する利点として、実際的な日本語を学習する環境で情報を検索、活用できるようになったことが挙げられる。Ning はまた、マルチメディア形式の総合的なシステム手帳、あるいは、仮想的な集会場の役割を果たした。学生は Ning を通じて自分の学習成果をほかの学生に見せることにより、切磋琢磨する機会を得ることができ、教師の教え方を高く評価をするようになった。期末には、アンケートを実施したが、その結果、学生は Ning を 使用することで、有意義で楽しい時間を過ごし、実際的な日本語を学ぶことができたことが判明した。しかし、学生が語学の授業でテクノロジーをさらに活　用したいと考えている一方で、個人情報の問題を心配していることも判明した。今回の調査の結論としては、学生はプライバシーに関して敏感であるが、 SNS は効果的なツールであり、日本語を学習する上で効果を発揮し、学習を促進させることができた、と言える。

CALL provides foreign language learners with rich learning environments that were not conceivable ten years ago. As the ecology of information systems has evolved in recent years, we have come to use digital tools to share videos, photos, audio files, and texts both synchronously and asynchronously. These tools have become more user-friendly, and ease of

use is a factor that has been proven to motivate users to take advantage of the technology (Davis, 1989).

Integrating interactive Web 2.0 technology in classroom activities and improving students' learning outcomes have been hot topics in recent years (Blake, 2008; Thomas, 2009). In particular, one of the hottest topics is how to take advantage of the social networking technology (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Lomicka & Lord, 2009). Worldwide, there are more than 600 million active users of Facebook. Salaway, Caruso, & Nelson (2008) reported that the majority of US college students (85.2%) have a social networking site (SNS) account, if not in Facebook then in one of the many other SNS websites (p. 81). SNS is particularly conducive to foreign language learning and intercultural learning (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; McBride, 2009). If SNS is intelligently applied in language classrooms, it should motivate students to learn the target language and produce better learning outcomes.

However, the use of SNS in education brings concerns over the privacy and security of students (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Griffith & Liyanage, 2008; Thelwall, 2009). This study explored students' perceptions of the use of SNS, including their privacy concerns, in a Japanese language class. Questions that motivated the study were:

- How comfortable are students with technology use that includes SNS?
- Do students think that the use of SNS contributes to their learning?
- Do they enjoy the multimedia features of SNS such as sharing pictures, texts, videos, and MP3s?
- How do they feel about privacy concerns associated with SNS?
- What do they enjoy the most and the least when SNS is used as part of the Japanese language curriculum?

There has been a limited number of reports of SNS use in foreign language learning (Villa, 2002; Warschauer, 2000), but none in the context of teaching Japanese as a foreign language. In this study, the Ning website was blended into the existing curriculum in a third-year university Japanese language class.

Methodology

Demography

Nineteen students of the JPN302 course at the University of Hawai'i participated in the SNS project and in an end-of-the-semester survey in Fall 2009. Their overall Japanese proficiency level was approximately Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High on the ACTFL proficiency scale. The average age of the students was 21.3 years old. Seventeen students reported using a social networking site for an average of 2.3 hours per day for personal use, but none were using Ning. The two students who were not using SNS indicated that they felt comfortable with technology.

Description of the JPN302 course

JPN302 is designed for students who have successfully completed five semesters of basic Japanese language study. All four skills were addressed

in JPN302. The class met four times a week for 50 minutes per session for 15 weeks. The required textbook was *An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese* (Miura & McGloin, 1994). In this JPN302 course, 20% of the course grade was assigned to homework and participation that included the activities in Ning.

◤ *How Ning was integrated into JPN302*

Ning.com is an SNS platform that allows users to create their own custom social networks. Because of its strict content policy and the absence of third party advertisement, many educators have found Ning well suited to classroom use (Holcomb, Brady, & Smith, 2010). The JPN302 Ning website was created by the instructor prior to the project, and only the students and the instructor could access the site. The class website was introduced to students in the third week of the 15-week semester. An email invitation was sent to students and prompted them to register themselves for the Ning website. The language option was set in Japanese. Students had to read the instructions in Japanese and navigate a Japanese language web environment in order to complete their Ning activities. When Ning was introduced into the course, two online Japanese language resources were also introduced to students: Breen's website from Monash University <www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/cgi-bin/wwwjdic.cgi?1C> and Google Translate <translate.google.com>. Breen's website provides a glossary of Japanese words as well as a *kanji* dictionary and an example search. The Ning activities were closely tied to face-to-face (f2f) classroom activities. All required Ning activities were part of either the homework or the final oral presentation write-up. In addition, extra credit was given for optional assignments that required uploading their work to the Ning website.

Ning was used in conjunction with the following f2f classroom activities:

- Essay writing: The students posted their revised compositions. They were required to submit two essays from pre-selected topics (first the students submitted a hand-written draft, and then posted the revised version on Ning, incorporating the comments by the instructor).
- Cultural study: The students posted their reactions to the MIT Visualizing Cultures "Black Ships and Samurai: Facing West, Facing East" website <ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/bss_essay01.html>.
- J–E translation: The students posted the J–E translation of text from the textbook in assigned groups.
- Midterm oral project: The instructor posted video clips of model small talks for the preparation of the midterm oral test.
- Final oral project: Ning served as a collaboration/communication platform for both students and the instructor through drafting stages.
- Extra credit activities: The students posted an MP3 file of their midterm oral exam and posted their final oral project PowerPoint slides.

Ning also served as a resource repository for videos and website links, a blogging space where the instructor could share comments and

information, and a virtual meeting place for students to interact and share pictures.

Primarily, the Ning site served as a media resource repository for the class activities. In addition to the videos of the model small talks, the instructor posted several YouTube videos on Japanese weddings and the Japanese train systems, as well as an MP3 file narrating the tragic story of Tōjin Okichi as supplementary materials to the history unit. The instructor also blogged about her thoughts on Japanese culture. Ning augmented the university's official courseware, Laulima, the Sakai-based course management system. Laulima was not robust enough to offer the desired multimedia interactivity.

Students were free to post any multimedia appropriate for Japanese class. They voluntarily posted YouTube video clips related to traditional and popular Japanese culture. They also uploaded their own photos from trips to Japan. Several students shared a total of 89 pictures ranging from shots of a *ramen* bowl and a bathtub to shots of old temples, shrines, and the famous Snow Festival in Sapporo. The instructor alone would have difficulty providing students with these culturally rich materials. This demonstrated the power of the Internet's *collective intelligence* (Levy, 1999; Richardson, 2006) on a small scale. These pictures were helpful in generating conversations among students and the instructor in face-to-face classroom activities; a student who was usually shy in class seemed to enjoy answering questions from other classmates regarding the posted pictures. These videos, audio files, and authentic communication created a sense of a learning community and enhanced students' motivation and to learn about Japanese culture and language.

◤ *Survey instrument*

A survey was developed and administered to students at the end of the semester. Fifteen 7-point Likert scale questions and three free response questions asked about students' perceptions of the use of the SNS and technology in the Japanese class (see Appendix A). The survey also included questions on gender, age, and the number of hours students spend on their personal SNS per day. In order to ascertain the validity of the survey instrument, factor analyses, and reliability tests were conducted. The principal component analysis and the subsequent maximum likelihood factor analysis identified three distinctive components which were separately and strongly loaded on the respective factor at a higher value of .60 coefficient in a pattern matrix (see Table 1). Three constructs represent an overall positive learning affect derived from the use of the SNS: SNS learning enjoyment, meaningfulness, and authenticity. Therefore, these 15 survey questions measured seven constructs relevant to SNS use in the Japanese language class – enjoyment, meaningfulness, authenticity, technology preference in language class, SNS preference in Japanese language class, privacy concerns, and students' technology self-efficacy.

Table 1. Factor analysis: Three constructs of SNS positive learning affect

Pattern Matrix (a)		Factor 1	2	3
SNS Enjoyment	enjoyed_1	.61	.56	−.15
	activePart_6	.77	−.02	.19
SNS Meaningfulness	improveJPN_5	.22	.77	−.14
	meaningful_9	.04	.83	.2
	perfect_12	.26	.60	.16
SNS Authenticity	relevant_7	.17	−.14	.87
	real comm_8	−.19	.56	.60

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
a) Rotation converged in 15 iterations.

The reliability test on survey questions showed a strong value. The Cronbach's alpha for each construct, which comprised several pertinent survey questions, was above .78. These high alpha values indicate that the survey instrument reliably measures what it is meant to measure, and that the survey questions are appropriate for this study.

Results and discussion

The results of the survey revealed that students are tech-savvy and enjoy SNS use in class, but are concerned about privacy issues associated with SNS. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for seven constructs measured by respective survey questions.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by seven constructs

Construct (Pertinent survey question #s)	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
V1_SNS Enjoyment (Q#s 1, 6)	19	1	6.5	4.61	1.53	2.35
V2_SNS Meaningfulness (Q#s 5,9,12)	18	1.7	6.3	4.07	1.45	2.11
V3_SNS Authenticity (Q#s 7,8)	19	3	7	4.61	1.16	1.35
V4_More Tech in JPN class (Q# 11)	19	2	7	4.79	1.32	1.73
V5_More SNS in JPN class (Q#10)	19	1	6	3.89	1.45	2.10
V6_SNS Privacy Concerns (Q#s 2,3,4)	19	2	7	4.51	1.70	2.91
V7_Tech Self-Efficacy (Q#s 13,14,15)	19	1	7	5.81	1.23	1.51

The questions on technology self-efficacy had the highest mean (5.81) among the seven constructs. Self-efficacy is an often-used psychological construct in the prediction of a behavior (Bandura, 1977; Luszczynska &

Schwarzer, 2005), and it is the belief that one is capable of accomplishing something successfully. Technology self-efficacy concerns students' own perception of how well they would learn new technology and would successfully use it. If students feel more comfortable with technology in general, they will be more likely to adopt a new technology such as SNS. In this study, technology self-efficacy is positively correlated with the SNS positive affect, enjoyment (.46 at $p < .05$), and the desire to use more technology in the classroom (.60 at $p < .01$) (see Table 3). The next highest mean score was Question #11, which asked whether students would like to see more technology use in Japanese courses (4.79). The responses on "technology self-efficacy" and "preference for more technology in class" questions reflect how comfortable students feel around technology. Teachers' concerns over how students would react to the introduction of new technology in the classroom might no longer be an issue.

The mean scores of the three SNS positive learning affect constructs – enjoyment, meaningfulness, and authenticity – were 4.61, 4.07, and 4.61 respectively. Students identified the use of Ning as "very relevant to class activities and language learning" (Q7, 5.05) and provided an opportunity for real communication (Q8, 4.16) (see Appendix B). They enjoyed the use of Ning (Q1, 4.58), actively participated (Q6, 4.63), and found SNS activities meaningful (Q9, 4.21). Students positively regarded the use of the SNS that provided authentic, meaningful, and enjoyable language learning environments. Furthermore, when students found the use of SNS more meaningful, more authentic, and wished to see more technology use in class, their desire to see SNS in other Japanese classes significantly increased (.48, .49, and .52, respectively, all at $p < .05$) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation matrix of seven constructs on use of Ning

Construct	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7
V1_SNS Enjoyment	1.00						
V2_SNS Meaningful	.79(**) .00	1.00					
V3_SNS Authenticity	.53(*) .02	.74(**) .00	1.00				
V4_More Tech in JPN class	.66(**) .00	.66(**) .00	.44 .06	1.00			
V5_More SNS in JPN class	.36 .14	.48(*) .04	.49(*) .04	.52(*) .02	1.00		
V6_SNS Privacy Concerns	−.30 .22	−.07 .79	−.23 .33	−.09 .73	−.32 .18	1.00	
V7_Tech Self-Efficacy	.46(*) .05	.31 .22	-.15 .53	.60(**) .01	.10 .68	.01 .95	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

However, among all 15 questions, the mean for Question #10, "I would like to see other Japanese classes use a social website like Ning," was the lowest at 3.89. Students did not desire to see SNS use in another

Japanese class. This is an interesting contrast to the positive results of their responses on SNS learning affects. Students' seemingly paradoxical cautious attitudes can be attributed to their privacy and security concerns. The mean score of the SNS Privacy Concerns construct was 4.51, which indicates that privacy concerns were important to students. In addition, the students rejected the notion of making the website public (Q3. 4.84). These results demonstrate their sensitive attitudes toward the use of SNS as part of class activities. These results underscore the fact that students differentiated SNS use from technology use in general. Both male and female students responded similarly to the survey questions, and no statistical gender differences were found in the analysis. Thus, though SNS affords the potential for authentic social networking and communication with native speakers in the target, SNS should be used as a *social network site* rather than as a *social networking site* – the former is primarily for communication among people who are already a part of an established social network, whereas the latter implies the initiation of communication between strangers (boyd & Ellison, 2007), and the class website should not be made public.

Free-response questions

Along with the Likert-scale questions, three free-response questions asked what the students enjoyed most (Q16) and least (Q17), and whether they had any other comments (Q18). There were 15 comments for both Q16 and Q17, and 10 comments for Q18. The responses to Q16, "the most enjoyed," were divided into six categories according to the content of the responses (see Table 4). The most common categories were centered on being able to see others' work (n=9) and sharing one's own work (n=4). These two categories cover 69% of all pieces of information they provided in Q16 (see Figure 1). Three students commented that the activities in Ning improved their Japanese skills in *kanji* use and typing Japanese texts, and reinforced the forms corrected by the instructor.

Table 4. Six categories of Q16 responses (15 entries, 19 pieces of information)

1.	See others' work: read others' work, opinions, experience, photos, and give feedback (n=9)
2.	Sharing own work: enjoyed sharing my own work, photos, and ideas (n=4)
3.	Improved skills: taught me some *kanji* otherwise never looked up, reinforced the corrections the instructor made, learning typing in Japanese (n=3)
4.	Video: The abacus videos (n=1)
5.	As working board: corrections on final presentation were very helpful (n=1)
6.	Ease of access: ease of access (n=1)

Also, one student mentioned that s/he liked how Ning was used in developing a final oral project. Students posted their drafts in Ning's forum, where the instructor gave feedback. As students could submit and revise the draft as many times as they wished at any time before the deadline or until it received an okay from the instructor, it was an ideal work space for both the students and the instructor. Ning afforded the instructor

more timely and efficient feedback. As a result, the students' final products were much richer and more developed, and the delivery in Japanese was done more proficiently. Later, students shared their PowerPoint slides and the audio files on Ning for extra credit.

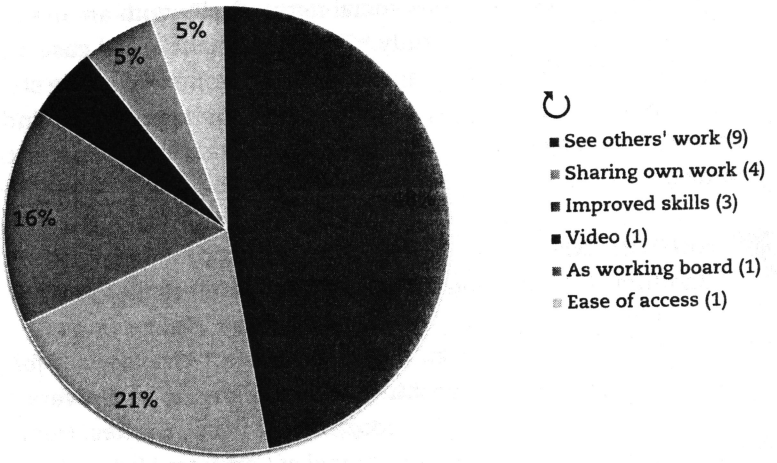

Figure 1. The Breakdown of Q16 Responses

In answering Q17 regarding the students' least-enjoyed Ning experience, four students listed Ning website design issues, including a difficult two-step log-in process. Three students indicated the use of Ning to be not so helpful. They mentioned that they did not know "how it would help" their Japanese skills nor did they think it was "relevant to the exam." Three others responded with "none" to the question of what they enjoyed *least* about Ning. In response to Q18, which asked for other comments, one student suggested that participation in Ning should be part of the grade, and to have a Ning tutorial session when it was introduced.

Though students encountered some navigation issues unique to the Ning web site, Ning provided all the features that current SNS technologies offered, including the ability to upload video and audio files. This feature allowed the instructor and students to create and directly upload their own audio and video files: Ning provided a multimedia communication platform to the existing class.

Conclusion

Ning successfully augmented the face-to-face classroom activities within the existing curricular framework. Primarily, Ning served as a one-stop multimedia organizer and showcased texts, pictures, video clips, and audio files uploaded by students and the instructor. It also served as a social space where students and the instructor could virtually gather and informally share thoughts and digital artifacts not necessarily directly related to class assignments. Students enjoyed sharing their work and learned from each other. Students found SNS use enjoyable, meaningful, relevant and afforded authentic communication. The results were more engaging timely feedback leading to better outcomes on their learning.

This study also confirmed that students are tech-savvy and comfortable with technology. They demonstrated high technology self-efficacy, and a desire to have more technology use in the Japanese language classroom. Yet students differentiated SNS from general technology use. They were concerned with privacy and security issues associated with SNS. Thus, SNS is best used as a social network site with an already known group of people. This study is the first documented case of SNS use in teaching Japanese language, and a testimony that while students are sensitive to privacy issues, a SNS website can be positively and easily integrated into a conventional face-to-face classroom for effective outcomes.

References

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Bulletin, 84*(2), 191–215.

Blake, R. (2008). *Brave new digital classroom: Technology and foreign language learning*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

boyd, d.m., & Ellison, N.B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210–230.

Davis, F.D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly, 13*(3), 319–340.

Griffith, S., & Liyanage, L. (2008). An introduction to the potential of social networking sites in education. Paper delivered at the Emerging Technologies Conference 2008. Retrieved from <ro.uow.edu.au/etc08/9>

Harrison, R., & Thomas, M. (2009). Identity in online communities: Social networking sites and language learning. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies & Society, 7*(2), 109–124.

Holcomb, L.B., Brady, K.P., & Smith, B.V. (2010). The emergence of "educational networking": Can non-commercial, education-based social networking sites really address the privacy and safety concerns of educators? *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 6*(2), 475–481.

Levy, P. (1999). *Collective intelligence: Mankind's emerging world in cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.

Lomicka, L., & Lord, G. (Eds.). (2009). *The next generation: Social networking and online collaboration in foreign language learning* (Vol. 8). San Marcos, TX: Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO).

Luszczynska, A., & Schwarzer, R. (2005). Social cognitive theory. In M. Conner & P. Norman (Eds.), *Predicting health behaviour* (pp. 127–169). Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

McBride, K. (2009). Social-networking sites in foreign language classes: Opportunities for re-creation. In L. Lomicka & G. Lord (Eds.), *The next generation: Social networking and online collaboration in foreign language learning* (Vol. 8, pp. 35–58). San Marcos, TX: CALICO.

Miura, A., & McGloin, N.H. (1994). *An integrated approach to intermediate Japanese – 中級の日本語*. Tokyo: Japan Times.

Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful Web tools for classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Salaway, G., Caruso, J., & Nelson, M. (2008). *The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology* (Research Study, Vol. 8). Boulder, CO: EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research. Retrieved from <www.educause.edu/ecar>

Thelwall, M. (2009). Social network site: Users and uses. *Advances in Computers: Social Networking and the Web, 76*, 19–73.

Thomas, M. (Ed.). (2009). *Handbook of research on Web 2.0 and second language learning*. Hershey, PA: IGI.

Villa, D. (2002). Integrating technology into minority language preservation and teaching efforts: An inside job. *Language Learning and Technology, 6*(2), 92–101.

Warschauer, M. (2000). Language, identity, and the Internet. In B. Kolko, L. Nakamura, & G. Rodman (Eds.), *Race in cyberspace* (pp. 151–170). New York: Routledge.

Appendix A: Survey questions

The use of Japanese language social networking site questionnaire

We have used Ning.com as part of the class activities. I would like to have your brief input on the use of Ning in this class. Thank you for your time.

Strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, disagree somewhat = 3, neither disagree nor agree = 4, agree somewhat = 5, agree = 6, strongly agree = 7

1 Overall I enjoyed the use of Ning for this class very much.
2 The Ning class site was closed to the general public on the web, but we should make it public, so that the world can see what we are doing in class.
3 We should keep our class Ning site private. The access should be limited only to our class.
4 I am concerned with privacy and security issues if the class Ning site were made a public social networking site.
5 I think that the use of Ning helped to improve my Japanese skills.
6 I actively participated in the activities on Ning as the instructor prompted.
7 I thought the use of Ning was very relevant to our class activities and language learning.
8 I enjoyed the Ning activities because I could use the language in an authentic context and I could use Japanese for real communication.
9 Even though Ning activities gave us extra work, I found it very meaningful.
10 I would like to see other Japanese classes use a social website like Ning.

11 I would like to see more technology use in Japanese courses.
12 How Ning was used in this class was just perfect and I enjoyed it very much.
13 I am good at technology in general.
14 I can learn new technology easily and feel comfortable around digital technology and the Internet.
15 I do not like technology. It inconveniences me. I cannot learn new technology easily.

Free Questions

16 What did you enjoy most in the Ning activities for this class?
17 What did you enjoy least in the Ning activities for this class?
18 Do you have any other comments in terms of Ning use for Japanese language class?

Demographic Information

Please circle: I am a male / female.

My age is _____

I use a social network site such as Facebook, Myspace, or Linkedin in my personal life. Yes / No

If you answered yes to the above question, how many hours do you spend a day on your social network site? _____hours per day

Thank you so much for your time and your cooperation.

Appendix B: Descriptive statistics for each survey question (N = 19)

Construct	Survey question	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Variance
	Age for all subjects	19	18	25	21.3	1.91	3.65
	Age for male	12	19	25	21.2	1.80	3.24
	Age for female	7	18	25	21.4	2.23	4.95
Hours per day on personal SNS	19	0	11	2.29	2.94	8.64	
V1_Enjoy	enjoyed_1	19	1	6	4.58	1.30	1.70
V1_Enjoy	active participate_6	19	1	7	4.63	1.95	3.80
V2_Meaningful	improve JPN_5	19	1	7	4.00	1.70	2.89
V2_Meaningful	meaningful_9	19	2	7	4.21	1.55	2.40
V2_Meaningful	perfect_12	18*	1	6	4.17	1.42	2.03
V3_Authentic	relevant_7	19	4	7	5.05	.91	.83
V3_Authentic	real comm_8	19	1	7	4.16	1.57	2.47
V4_More Tech	more tech_11	19	2	7	4.79	1.32	1.73
V5_More SNS	more SNS_10	19	1	6	3.89	1.45	2.10
V6_SNS Privacy	make SNS public_2R	19	1	7	4.53	2.06	4.26
V6_SNS Privacy	keep SNS private_3	19	1	7	4.84	2.03	4.14
V6_SNS Privacy	SNS privacy concern_4	19	2	7	4.16	1.61	2.58
V7_Tech Efficacy	good tech_13	19	1	7	5.37	1.26	1.58
V7_Tech Efficacy	tech comfort_14	19	1	7	5.79	1.27	1.62
V7_Tech Efficacy	not like tech_15R	19	1	7	6.26	1.37	1.87

Note. _# indicates the survey question number. R indicates reverse coded question.
* indicates there was a missing response.